

WAR

There is no war in heaven. This is heaven. Therefore there is no war.

—Haudra Piremaché, lord commander, Shield of Stars



The lands round the Circle Sea do not suffer war. The tramp of marching armies, the grind of studded wheels, the hiss of evasion fields. Invasion, conquest, capture, erasure. All are absent.

This is not due to the goodness or peaceful nature of the humans of these Rainbow Lands. They are as bloody in tooth and violent in claw as any true human must be. No, it is the ageless grand phylakes that enforce the Garden's Peace.

The traveler from a far-off land may ask, puzzled, "Grand phylakes? What are these guardians you speak of?"

Behold, the winged towers of luminous void-stuff that stud the land and sea like great miles-high needles, penetrating and weaving together the ley meridians of the Rainbow Lands. These are the grand phylakes. Golem guardians made together with the world to protect its Gardens. Up high, visible from an aerostat, their colossal features suggest androgynous humanoid beauty. Their faces reflect their duties and loyalties. Their skin is glossy and harder than time.

The closer one approaches a grand phylake, the less tolerant of weapons and violence it becomes. At a phylake's face, weapons erupt into bale-fire, while aggressive thoughts cause physical pain and colorful hemorrhages. At a phylake's base, weapons burn and angry thoughts weaken the bowels. Over most of the land and sea and sky, where the pacific fields of the grand phylakes weave an anti-war field, concentrations of weaponry and violent intent are required before the grand phylakes awaken. Then, their eyes flare open and star-fire enforces the peace of the Garden.

Bale-fire: A slow and relatively controlled matter collapse. The affected item deals 1d6 damage per stone to all adjacent.

Painful thoughts: Angry thoughts deal 1d6 damage per round, eventually knocking out the creature. Aura reduces this damage.

Weapon-burn: Weapons become radioactive and deal 1 damage per stone to those holding them.

Weakened bowels: Each round, there is a small chance that unsympathetic thoughts will turn the bowels to water.

Star-fire: Also called "the angel death." A beam of blue lances from the grand phylake's third eye. At its ultimate range it spreads a dozen paces wide and ignites weapons with terrible fire, like the indivisible cleaver, hewing matter into energy. Each weapon in the beam's reach deals 2d6 damage per stone to all adjacent as it decoheres.

This is why grand armies do not march in the Rainbow Lands. This is why the war machines remain beyond the curve of World. This is why the timeless cities stand, though a thousand warlords have come and gone in the Vast Lands.

YET THEY BATTLE

Once, the grand phylakes were not alone. Lesser guardians dwelled within them and among the humans, making of the land a pacific paradise. Now, those lesser guardians are gone, and the grand phylakes that remain cannot account for every machete and missile in the many lands.

How do warriors avoid the attentions of the gun-breakers?

1. They gather in small, loose bands only. As the folk hero saying goes, "a hundred will rarely call the angel death, a thousand always must."
2. They blot their minds with spirits, drugs, possession, mantras or cloudy helms, to make themselves less sentient.
3. They disassemble their weapons.
4. They wield multipurpose items not covered by the grand phylake's current weapon recognition algorithms.
5. They offer sacrifices and petitions to the phylake's gods to receive user permissions to enter their domains.
6. They don't, but by some glitch (1-in-12), the grand phylake does not react. Still, few generals would risk an army to such a roll of the dice.
7. Their bodies are their weapons, their minds still as water even as they kill.
8. They march through tunnels and dull-ways, shielded by the weight of rock and world-metal from the eyes of the grand phylakes.

PACIFIC TOWNS

Clans, tribes, and dregs who would deny the blood-truth of humanity's violent nature often find themselves drawn to the grand phylake towers. There they build settlements to live in the peace of the old gods' ageless guardians.

THIS PHYLAKE SETTLEMENT

1. A monastery of mumbling monks and strange servants.
2. Climbing villages and hanging gardens of quarterlings who would live on the luminous flanks.
3. Wagon settlement of rebel vagabonds (*aperu*) who do not recognize the proper authorities of the cities.
4. Lotus-farming collective community attempting to attain a group consciousness.
5. Picket fence exurb of free falschers.
6. Old-fashioned town of post-mortal ancestors living free of any descendants.

THERE ARE SIDE-EFFECTS

Over time, the potent anti-war fields and the other energies coursing through the grand phylakes cause strange changes.

1. Eyes fade and are replaced with glowing screens.
2. Appetites become strange and post-human.
3. Bodies become translucent and luminous.
4. Minds see places long lost to the present.
5. Memories merge into a procedurally generated slurry.
6. Past and future are lost in an eternal now.
7. The ego dies, the will is given to the phylake.
8. Foliage grows on the skin and movement feels unnecessary.

WANDERING PHYLAKES

Once, they were legion. So say the tales of Long Long Ago. Now, they are legend. Guardians of a lost heaven, doomed to wander the Vast Lands till the seas burn and the skies fade.

Number: Alone it was not, alone it will be.

Level: 11 / Life: 155 (+14 per level)

Appearance: The memory of a more perfect time.

Voice: Inhuman perfection, an auditory hallucination.

Wants: To fulfill its duties without question or remorse.

Ethics: Aligned with the Builders and the Maker MBUTE.

Intelligence: Superhuman, alien, savant, sad.

Defense: 16 (as aureate mail), immune to mundane weapons.

Move: Elegant, smooth, flawless. In a word, inhuman.

Morale: 9 (unpredictable)

Attack: Azure beam and razor hands. +13 bonus, 3d12 damage or by weapon.

Special: Severely injured, a wandering phylake collapses into a cloud of golden spores. Trapped in a jar, these spores can heal most wounds. If even a few escape, the phylake will rebuild itself over several years.

Treasure (roll d6): (1) nothing but their words, (2–3) elegant weapons and equipment from a nobler age (€500), (4–6) an oldtech artifact of obscure divine heritage (€5,000).

BEHOLD, THIS DIVINE GOLEM OF TIMELOST ORIGIN

1. Taller than most humans, of ethereal beauty.
2. Duties are written on its face in the words of the source.
3. Their skin is hard like porcelain, yet slides like silk across their synthetic muscles.
4. Their soul, their ka, blazes like a thousand human sacrifices.
5. Dark as ten thousand dooms is their shadow.
6. They speak with two voices, one human, one divine and heart-shattering.
7. The perfection of their form makes humans weep.
8. Those who see them unclothed turn to salt and ash.
9. Four wings of rotating flame lift them to the sky.
10. Their touch restores flawed flesh to its original shape.

WHAT OLDTECH ARTIFACT OF OBSCURE DIVINITY IS THIS?

1. A cup of rare matter, it turns organics into petroleum.
2. A synthetic serpent, its whisper makes the worst ideas seem reasonable.
3. A taxiarch's blade sheathed in blue fire.
4. A face, perfect enough to launch a thousand ships.
5. A golden apple of red gold. It tastes of honey, helps cure afflictions, and does not diminish when eaten.
6. A cube of iron and glass that holds a teacher daemon, full of a hidden knowledge from Long Long Ago.