

The Last Days of Atlantis

A 24-Hour RPG

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Characters	Page 2
Task Resolution	Page 6
Guide to Atlantis	Page 8
Possible Endings	Page 12
Final Thoughts	Page 14
Appendix: Action Cards	Page 15

Introduction

Shining Atlantis, jewel of the Mediterranean. A glorious city, founded on the tripartite pillars of sorcery, science, and philosophical enlightenment. Unmatched in power, unrivaled in beauty, and unsurpassed in knowledge, it is the center of the ancient world's culture and politics, and it's dying. Within six months, a magical conflagration of unknown origin will consume the city, sinking the very earth on which it rests into the sea.

No external enemy could accomplish this atrocity, though there are many with the motive to try. No random natural disaster could sink the island nation, its sorcerous protections are too complete. Atlantis's doom came from within. It could have been an accident, a malfunction in the city's life support spells, or a sorcerer's duel that grew out of control. It could have been an act of malice, the handiwork of a psychopathic enchanter. It could have been civil war, the natural consequence of open conflict between thousands of magically active individuals. It's impossible to say. No records remain, and the disaster left no survivors. Only one thing is certain. The end was inevitable.

For all its knowledge and power, Atlantis carried the seeds of its own destruction. Native Atlanteans focused on scholarship and magical power, disdaining the simple physical labor necessary to sustain even the most wondrous civilization. To fill the need, Atlantis resorted to slavery, using their powerful weapons to intimidate their neighbors into paying human tribute.

Its once-proud government, the Council of Atlantis, has degenerated from a model democracy into a group of petty, squabbling oligarches, concerned only with their own power and privileges. In the city's final months, council sessions are dominated by personal vendettas, its members using the law as a weapon in their own petty feuds, rather than as a tool to improve the lives of Atlantis's citizens.

The city's scientific and magical research, once tempered with wisdom and kindness, loses all perspective and restraint. Scientists create new and destructive technologies with no regard for how they'll be used. Sorcerers conduct foul experiments on unwilling people, justifying their excesses in the name of knowledge. The explosion that destroyed the city was nothing. In the final months, weapons are created that can shatter continents and boil oceans.

All these problems and more are what doomed Atlantis. The actual disaster was one of a thousand possible mishaps that could have destroyed the city. Even if it could have been prevented, something else would have eventually come along.

The Last Days of Atlantis chronicles these dark times, taking characters through the events leading up to the end. Players take on the role of one of the city's inhabitants, experiencing their lives in the weeks and months leading up to their untimely deaths. Perhaps they are the arrogant sorcerers who ultimately destroy Atlantis. Perhaps they are some of the few remaining uncorrupted civil servants, struggling valiantly to prevent the imminent disaster. Perhaps they're slaves, wanting nothing more than to escape the wretched place before it slides into the sea. Decadent and magical, Atlantis inspires as many stories in death as it did in life.

Characters

The Last Days of Atlantis is a mostly freeform RPG, and unlike many roleplaying games, characters have no statistics. This makes coming up with a strong character description especially important. To this end, the **Characters** chapter breaks the process down into simple steps.

Step 0: Consult the Gamemaster

It's important to speak to the GM before doing anything with your character at all. The main reason to do this is to make sure she doesn't have any special ideas about the game's content. For example, if the game is to focus on the plight of the Atlantean slaves, it's probably inappropriate to create a powerful sorcerer.

Step 1: One Sentence Summary

At this point, the goal is to encapsulate the character in as few words as possible. When all's said and done, your focus should be narrowed to exclude all but the character's core essence. The one sentence summary should include only the most and fundamental details about the character. More elaborate details are reserved for future steps.

Step 2: Broad Personality

At this stage, it's only necessary to come up with the most general details about the character. Is he kind or cruel? Serious or light-hearted? Wise or foolish? These choices will give context to all the other, more specific character traits chosen in future steps.

Step 3a: Specific Personality

Here is where your character starts to become an individual and not just a stereotype. Come up with things like goals, prejudices, fears, political affiliations, attitudes towards family, friends, and society, repressed memories, romantic obsessions, and anything else you can think of. It's not necessary to completely psychoanalyze your character, but you should make him complex enough to be plausible.

Step 3b: Skills and Talents

What can your character do? Is he a sorcerer? A scholar? A craftsman? A soldier? A laborer? There's no fixed number of "skill points" you have to adhere to. The only limit is what you think is appropriate. It's theoretically possible to make a character that can do everything, but such a superman would likely be very boring to play, especially if everyone in the group makes a similar character. Choose a niche and stick to it. You'll be a lot happier.

Step 3c: Social Relationships

How does your character fit into society? Is he rich or poor? Does he have a family? If so, how large is it? Is he close or distant to them? Is he a social outcast or a pillar of the community? Is he a member of an organization, like the College of Sorcerers or the Council of Atlantis? Like the previous step, there's no limit to what you can have, but for reasons already stated, it's a bad idea to make a character with every advantage and no disadvantages.

Step 4: Physical Appearance

Try to be evocative, but don't overdo it. Remember, this is the aspect of your character you'll be expected to explain to the other players. You don't want to get stuck giving a huge speech (then again, maybe you do . . .). This is also an opportunity to squeeze in some extra characterization by making your character's appearance reflect, in true fantasy fashion, some inner character trait.

Step 5: Minor Quirks

This step is where you give your character real depth. By choosing “unimportant” details like your character’s hobbies or favorite color, you make a more realistic person. The key is to be as specific as possible, and not shy away from the mundane or the trivial.

Final Step: Gamemaster Approval

Often, this step is merely a formality, but it’s important to let the GM look over your character. This allows her to make sure the character isn’t too disruptive to the group, as well as helping her plan for future game sessions.

Note: Aside from the very first and very last steps, the order presented above is merely suggestion. You can work backwards or forwards or in whatever order your inspiration strikes you. The goal is to create an interesting character that’s fun to play. Whatever gets you there is the proper method of character creation.

Additional Considerations

Native or Not

Native Atlanteans are civilized and well-educated. In previous generations, they were also humble and wise. Now, thanks to their magical and technological power, they’ve succumbed to decadence. Racial chauvinism is also common, and rarely commented upon even by Atlantis’s liberals. Most Atlanteans disdain manual labor, preferring to reserve their “superior intellects” for more complex pursuits.

Very few non-natives voluntarily move to Atlantis, and those that do are usually discriminated against or treated as expendable pawns in the natives’ power struggles. Nevertheless, Atlantis does see a small number of immigrants, drawn by the city’s grandeur and wealth. Most are turned away at Atlantis’s shores, but a few (usually those with a gift for sorcery or similar rare talent) are allowed to stay.

Sorcery

Most Atlanteans can work sorcery of one form or another, and magical training is part of the core curriculum in the city’s schools. A person who studies only the bare minimum will still be able to perform a wide variety of minor (but non-trivial) wonders. Basic proficiency includes transmutation of small objects, speaking to animals, light telekinesis, conjuring fogs and breezes, seeing through solid objects, and creating simple phantasms. Those who concentrate on the study of magic will be able to accomplish even greater feats. The upper levels of power tend to be too complex for one person to be able to master everything, though. The greatest sorcerers specialize, having one or two types of spells they do really well, and a great number in which they’re merely above average.

Occasionally, an Atlantean will be born with absolutely no talent for sorcery whatsoever. This is usually taken to be a sign that the person is mentally slow, or that he has a non-Atlantean ancestor. Such is not necessarily the case.

Science and Technology

Science in Atlantis rarely bears much resemblance to that practiced in the modern day. As

a highly magical people, their inventions tend to be somewhat idiosyncratic, and all but the simplest of their devices incorporated sorcery into its design. Despite the culture's technological sophistication, mass production is unknown, and each technomagical wonder must be crafted by hand. This is one of the few forms of respectable manual labor, and many Atlanteans experiment with it at some point in their lives.

While Atlanteans usually focus on practical application, scientific research for the sake of knowledge alone is not unheard of. The most popular subjects are genetics and meteorology. Like its technology, Atlantis's scientific research heavily incorporates magic, subtle and intricate spells replacing the sophisticated instruments used in the modern day.

The Council of Atlantis

The constitutional ruler of the island, the Council of Atlantis is the place to be for any person interested in politics, despite its growing irrelevance. Ostensibly a democratic body, election to the Council is for life, and most of the city's wealthiest and most powerful citizens get around to buying their way in sooner or later. Atlantis's few remaining social reformers have largely given up on the Council, coming in the final months to believe that only a true revolution can restore justice to the city's government.

The Civil Service

Responsible for maintaining the city's weather-controlling machines and infrastructure, and for overseeing its thousands of slaves, the civil service is vital to health of the city. Unfortunately, most Atlanteans don't see it that way. Many view the civil service as a dumping ground for incompetents and morons, as little better than a sinecure for respectable families' disgraces. They believe no one would want to unclog sewers or pave roads if they had the talent to do something better.

In a way, they're right. Many powerful Atlanteans do send their black sheep relatives to jobs in the civil service. Where they make their mistake is in believing the job is a sinecure. The Atlantean civil service is a meritocracy, and remains one to the very end. This doesn't stop the civil servants from becoming lazy and corrupt, but it does give them a certain close-knit unity and fraternal pride.

Though they close ranks against outsiders, there's a growing schism in the service. Many believe that in the face of the public's overwhelming contempt, the civil service's only duty is to the enrichment and protection of its members. A small minority believe the service should continue to perform its assigned function, though even they have trouble stifling the resentment they feel at the average Atlantean's attitude.

The Military

The city's military is the one aspect of its society that's as strong and vital as it's always been. The rapid development of weapons technology has been a godsend to the generals, and despite Atlantis's overwhelming strategic superiority, the military's appetite for more powerful weapons is apparently inexhaustible.

The military's corruption is difficult to measure. While it has so far resisted the graft and inefficiency that have plagued all other aspects of Atlantean society, and while it remains completely

loyal to the established order, its continued existence is, in a way, a betrayal of the very ideals on which it was founded. The military is the willing servant of the interests of the rich and powerful, capturing slaves abroad, and intimidating all opposition to the Council at home.

There was, at one time, some internal discontent with this state of affairs, but the ranks have since been purged, dissenters discharged on the flimsiest excuses until only the most unquestioningly loyal drones remain. Many social revolutionaries are ex-military, bringing their combat experience to the struggle against Atlantis's power structure.

Slavery

All slaves in Atlantis are technically owned by the state, and are to be used only for civic purposes. Of course, the reality isn't even close to the ideal. In these corrupt times, many slaves are "lost" in the course of reassignment, winding up in the private orchards of some wealthy council member, or the laboratory of some deranged sorcerer.

All slaves in Atlantis are foreign-born. Many were forcibly captured during raids of nearby villages, but most were given up by their local government as tribute to the mighty Atlantean military. Because of this, many slaves are ex-criminals, people accustomed to disobedience and violence, and in recent years, they've grown to outnumber native Atlanteans.

Technically, any person born on the isle of Atlantis is a full citizen, with all the rights and privileges thereof. At one time, the slaves, treated better by their captors than by their native government, viewed their servitude as a small price to pay so that their children might be citizens of Atlantis. No more. Now, as often as not, the law is simply ignored. Even when it's remembered, the civil service will simply concoct a story about "captured infants" and the child's status will be mislabeled. Coupled with increasingly poor treatment and greater workloads, slave discontent is at an all time high.

Religion

Atlanteans are closely related to the Greeks, and worship local versions of the Greek gods, particularly Poseidon, Zeus, and Athena. Religious worship has declined in recent years. Not because of secularism or atheism, but rather because of the growing belief that through its science and technology, Atlantis has equaled or surpassed the work of the gods (or will do so in the near future). Needless to say, this is blasphemy of the highest order, but it's quickly becoming accepted as conventional wisdom.

Aside from a few temple attendants, Atlantis never had a great number of professional priests. Rather, each person is encouraged to study theology for himself and honor the gods as he sees fit. This has led to a proliferation of competing religious sects, but surprisingly the conflict between them is entirely civil. Most Atlanteans identify primarily as Atlanteans, their differences in belief secondary to their shared sense of racial destiny.

Religious belief among the slaves is similarly diverse, but for different reasons. Atlantis's slaves come from all around the Mediterranean, bringing a variety of cultures together into common bondage. Like their masters, the slaves are surprisingly ecclesiastical. Whether this is because of language barriers or solidarity depends entirely on the individual.

Task Resolution

The task resolution mechanic in **The Last Days of Atlantis** is extremely simple: in the absence of external factors, characters are assumed to succeed at everything they attempt, with one exception. You need only describe the outcome of your character's actions and that's what happens. The exception is in the case of social interaction. You character says only words you yourself can speak. You can't simply say "My character gives a rousing speech to the Council of Atlantis, and the other members are so moved they immediately vote in favor of my proposal." You actually have to give the speech, and the GM will decide how the NPC's react to it. This means, for the most part, that you shouldn't consider playing a suave or charismatic character unless you can fake being suave or charismatic.

On the other hand, if you really want to play the young, firebrand on the Council of Atlantis, but can't manage his hotheaded speeches, the GM should try and be a little flexible, allowing you an unrealistic amount of time to come up with scathing retorts and not counting off too much for botched inflection. Much depends on the type of game your GM wants to run, though the key thing to remember is that games, even hyper-dramatic roleplaying games, are supposed to be fun.

Aside from social interaction, there are two other circumstances in which your character might fail an action. One, the GM simply decides your character cannot reasonably accomplish the task. This is mostly a matter of common sense. For example, an eighty year old man is unlikely to be able pick up a fully armored city guard over his head and toss him across the street, at least not without some fairly serious sorcery. Characters can attempt feats they're certain to fail. Indeed, players are encouraged to voluntarily fail the occasional task, just to keep things interesting.

The other means by which characters can fail is if another player uses an action card to cause them to do so. Action cards allow players to alter some pretty fundamental things about the game world, even the statements of the other players or the GM. Unless there's a very compelling reason otherwise, the effect of a card always takes precedence over all other factors. There are four types of action cards, **Death**, **Failure**, **Fortune**, and **Power**, each with a different effect.

Death: This card allows you to kill off any NPC, no matter how important to the story. Minor characters, like disobedient slaves or random muggers, do not require the use of this card. The GM is the final arbiter of what constitutes minor and major characters, but primary villains, relatives of other PC's, powerful sorcerers, and other such luminaries are a good guideline for those requiring the card. The **Death** card can be overruled by every other card, though **Failure** and **Power** must be accompanied by a suitable explanation for how they're applied.

Failure: When this card is used, a character fails an action, only the **Fortune** card can counter its effect. This card can be used against other players or the GM, and its main function is to add a level of uncertainty to the game. As such, there's no right or wrong time to use this card. It can be used to cause a minor mistake at a critical moment or to effect a truly random and pointless disaster, all at the using player's discretion. Unlike other cards, which revert to the GM when used, the **Failure** card goes to the player it's used against. Also unlike other action cards, the GM can use these cards against players, though she's restricted to using only cards she's passed (though, she does not have to use them against the player who passed them to her). The **Failure** card cannot be used to modify

social interactions.

Fortune: This card is used to undo any one bad outcome. It trumps the effects of every other card or statement. Whether it's a literal stroke of fortune, the result of meticulous planning, a previously prepared spell, or an amazing feat of physical dexterity is up to the player to decide. Regardless of how it happens, the character is spared from disaster. This card can be used on the behalf of other player characters, inanimate objects, NPC's, or even abstract things like organizations or ideas.

Power: This card represents a major use of the character's special advantages, be they physical, magical, financial, or whatever. Its primary use comes when the character faces some opposition equal to his strength. The **Power** card breaks the stalemate in his favor. If the opposition uses a **Power** card in turn, the stalemate returns. This process can continue until one side becomes unwilling or unable to use another card, or both sides decide to accept the stalemate. The number of **Power** cards used also gives a rough idea of the scale of a conflict. For instance, if two sorcerers duel, using three **Power** cards apiece, it's likely to be a magical battle of colossal scale. Most NPC's are assumed to have no power cards, though particularly important ones might have one, and extraordinarily powerful ones might have two.

A helpful hint: Since action cards can modify the outcome of your character's actions, it's probably a good idea to announce your intent in general before describing your action in detail. This gives the other players a chance to use their cards, thereby saving you the trouble of having to describe what you're doing multiple times.

Gaining Cards

At the beginning of each session, players receive a fixed number of each card, between three and five. Once they're used, they're passed either to the GM or another player (as is possible with **Failure** cards). Ordinarily, when you run out, that's it until the next game, but there are a couple of exceptions. First, the GM may have simply mis-estimated the number of cards necessary for the session (perhaps it lasted longer than she expected). In this case, she simply distributes more cards to all the players and that's that. Secondly, action cards can be used as a reward for a particularly good piece of roleplaying. This is solely at the discretion of the GM, and should be used sparingly enough that it doesn't become a distraction.

Optional Rule: Trading Cards

If you're so inclined, you might consider allowing players to swap cards between their initial allotments. This should only be done at the beginning of the session. This allows characters to prepare more specifically for what they envision their roles to be, and can be a fun way to get into the character's mind-set.

Guide to Atlantis

This chapter describes in detail the geography of Atlantis, as well as the major sections of the city, including important landmarks.

General Facts

Atlantis is a roughly elliptical island, approximately 180 miles long from north to south and about 100 miles across at its widest point. It lies south of the Ionian sea, between Sicily and Greece. Its natural climate is typical for the region, with hot, dry summers and warm, wet winters. The native ecosystem has, however, long since been replaced by a highly regulated artificial system generated by sophisticated technomagical devices. The residential areas are permanently set to 68 degrees Fahrenheit, with occasional isolated rain showers. The agricultural areas are programmed for a perennial growing season, with warm temperatures and twice daily rain. The main crops are olives, rice, and barley, along with a wide variety of summer vegetables. Atlanteans eat very little meat, with fish being their primary source of protein. Through judicious use of advanced magic and technology, the Atlanteans produce enough food to feed their entire population, with enough surplus to allow them to stockpile three years worth of staple grains.

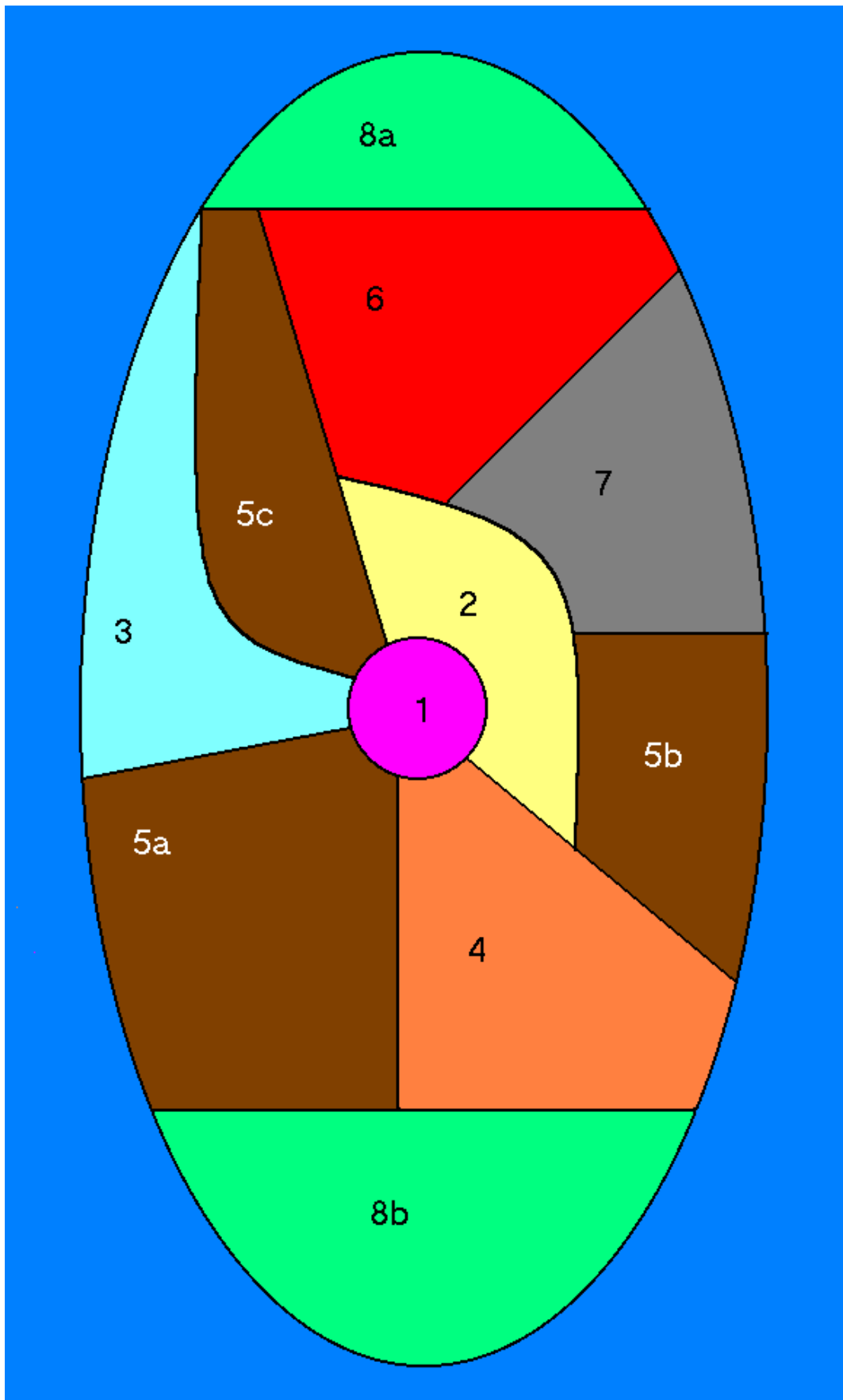
The island has a population of close to a million. Four hundred thousand are Atlantean citizens and 600,000 are slaves, or the immediate descendants of slaves. Atlanteans are, for the most part ethnically and racially homogenous. In general, they tend to be tall and thin, with light to medium brown skin and wavy black hair. Many use sorcery to alter their appearance, the current fashion being blue skin and white hair, which may help explain the rumors of the city's survival under the waves that occur in later generations. The official language, spoken by all natives and assimilated slaves, is a dialect of Greek. Though Atlantis Greek and Athens Greek are mutually intelligible, communication can be difficult between individuals with especially strong accents. Many Atlanteans think Greek from the mainland to sounds rusticated and crude.

Atlantis produces no goods for export, considering trade with "barbarians" to be a waste of time. Goods from the outside world can be found in the city's marketplaces, but these are always plunder taken by military expeditions. About half of all native Atlanteans have no formal occupation, living instead off the fruits of slave labor.

Map Key

1: Government Plaza. At the very center of the island lies the heart of its government. The Council of Atlantis meets here, at the Council Hall, a graceful 20 story palace carved from a single piece of magically created white marble. The building is mostly hollow, with enough seating surrounding the central chamber to allow 20,000 people observe the deliberations of the Council. The area around Council Hall contains many other important government buildings, including the headquarters of the civil service, and the gigantic weather-creating machines that service the city.

2: University Village. Home to the College of Sorcerers, the Atlantean Science Academy, the School of Practical Technomagic, and the Astrologer's Guild, University village is the center of Atlantis's intellectual and magical life. Most residents either teach at or attend one of the major



Atlantis

1 inch = 20 miles

schools in the area, though occasionally older, professional sorcerers will move in, to better enjoy the companionship of their peers. Because of the high concentration of magic in the area, many Atlanteans consider University Village to be especially dangerous. While it's true one is more likely to be accidentally transmuted here than anywhere else, University Village actually has the city's lowest crime rate.

3: West Atlantis. West Atlantis is the city's richest neighborhood. Filled with beach-front mansions and large estates, it's also one of Atlantis's least populated. Many Council members live here, and the district features a long, crystal tube that runs along the beach, through several houses, and into Government Plaza, before terminating just a few yards away from Council Hall. People who step into the tube at one of its many stations are comfortably transported along its length, enjoying one of the Mediterranean's most spectacular views on the way. The Atlantean Navy has its headquarters in the northern part of West Atlantis.

4: The Corral. The original name of this area is lost to all but a few historians. Now, it's called the Corral, in reference to its large population of slaves. Containing about half the island's population on about a sixth of its area, the Corral is densely populated and filthy. Because there's no one here to bribe them into maintaining the infrastructure, the civil service has allowed the area's sewer system to fall into disrepair, its roads to crack and buckle, and its public lighting to go out. As if the Corral wasn't unpleasant enough, the Council of Atlantis has recently decided that controlling the area's weather was a needless expense. The end result is an area that's hot, smelly, dark, and crammed with people. The only people who live here are the slave handlers, whose job it is to make sure the slaves get out into the fields each day, and back home each night. They're empowered to use any means necessary to complete the job, and the position has long been a magnet for the cruel and sadistic.

5: Residential Areas. These areas are populated by the majority of Atlantis's middle class. Atlanteans favor sprawling ranch-style houses and broad streets. Those Atlanteans with jobs prefer to put their shops right next to their homes, making the main streets into one, long market place. No place in any of these areas is more than three miles away from a state warehouse, putting most Atlanteans only a short walk away from their share of the slave-grown food.

5a: Intess. The core of this area is the village that eventually grew to be Atlantis. Families from this area, though by and large poorer than those in West Atlantis, are extremely respectable. A common belief, even among people from other areas, is that the people of Intess are somehow "more Atlantean" than everyone else, though what that means exactly has never been made clear.

5b: Daca. Smaller than the other residential areas, and more densely populated than any area but the Corral, Daca is Atlantis's most cosmopolitan zone. Many of the people here are descended from earlier generations of slaves, and as a result have a more diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. This is the area of the city favored by visitors, as its residents have the least pronounced "Atlantis attitude."

5c: The Sliver. Named for its shape, the Sliver is home to many “unemployed” Atlanteans. With nothing productive to do with their time, inhabitants of the Sliver spend their days mired in the twin vices of debauchery and theater. People from all over the island come here for entertainment, and neither the area’s playhouses nor its prostitutes disappoint in that regard.

6: The Proving Grounds. This entire area is reserved for the exclusive use of the Atlantean military. Active duty soldiers are housed along the western edge of the area. The eastern expanse is used for war-games, survival training, and the testing of dangerous new weapons.

7: Ganaxian Park. Ganaxius, father of the Atlantean constitution, lobbied for years to get the Council to set aside a portion of the island as a reserve for its native plants and animals. In the past decade, the Council of Atlantis has considered several times the possibility of tearing down the park to make way for new construction . Each time they did, the popular outcry was so great, the Council was forced to abandon the idea. Even in these corrupted times, Atlanteans enjoy the opportunity to experience untouched nature. Certainly, more people hunt the animals than talk to them these days, but it’s an undeniable fact that the people of Atlantis love their park.

8: Agricultural Areas. Worked by thousands of slaves, and enhanced by the cumulative effect of generations of sorcery, Atlantis’s fields are a wonder to behold. Each area is crisscrossed with a sophisticated network of roads, allowing tools, people, and produce to move quickly into and out of the areas.

8a: Northern Fields This area grows a variety of delicious, but inessential fruits and vegetables. Because the work here is more delicate than that in the south, the slaves are treated a little better, and allowed to live next to their crops rather than in the overcrowded Corral. This, not so coincidentally, saves the civil service the trouble of moving them back and forth each day.

8b: Southern Fields. Here, the city’s staple foods are grown. In addition to having to work in the hot and humid fields all day, the southern slaves must undergo a long commute from the Corral to the fields each day. This commute often begins before sunrise in the morning and lasts until after sunset in the evening. The idea is to make the slaves too tired to rebel, but the price of that oppression is greatly increased inefficiency.

Possible Endings

As stated in the introduction, there are many ways the end could come. The purpose of this chapter is to give some ideas about different scenarios you might want to try.

Scenario 1: Slave Revolt

The civilization of Atlantis is founded on a great injustice. The masses in bondage cry out for freedom, the ringing of their chains a prayer that cannot remain forever unanswered. The combination of an exploding slave population with an increasingly decadent ruling class can only lead to conflict. It's simply a matter of time. In this scenario, the time has come. The slaves turn on their masters, and a brutal conflict ensues.

Let's make one thing clear. The slaves can't win. Despite their numerical superiority and excellent morale, they're no match for Atlantis's sorcery. After all, even a debauched and degenerate sorcerer is still master of forces no mere agricultural worker could comprehend. What the slaves can do is take the Atlanteans down with them, by forcing them to overreact and unleash weapons better left untouched.

This scenario can be played from either side. The characters could be a revolutionary cabal, sworn to destroy their oppressors, or they could be an investigative team for the civil service, seeking to root out the conspiracy before it's too late. Or maybe they're neutrals, a group of slaves or citizens who know what's coming, but want nothing more than to escape before it's too late.

Regardless of the perspective, the main characteristics of this scenario are secrecy and paranoia. A slave revolt can't possibly succeed if the masters find out about it before hand. To be revealed as part of the conspiracy means certain death and the failure of the entire revolution. Slave owners, for their part, fear nothing more than the wrath of their former servants, and even the slightest rumor of a revolt is enough to keep them on continual alert.

Scenario 2: Bureaucratic Meltdown

Atlantis is a highly technological society. Every aspect of its citizen's lives is affected by some form of complex machinery or subtle magic, and despite what certain naive individuals think, those things don't maintain themselves. In this scenario, the Atlantean civil service finally becomes fed up. They quit in droves, the wiser ones leaving the island entirely, the foolish ones returning to their families or having one last fling in the Sliver. At first, the citizens don't take the fleeing bureaucrats seriously, believing they "got bored with menial work." Their tune changes soon enough, as within days the city starts to break down. It starts with backed-up toilets, slaves standing idle, and undelivered mail, but quickly graduates to uncontrollable thunderstorms, streets flooded with sewage, and other dangerous accidents. Eventually, the pressure builds up until BOOM, one of the great weather engines explodes, sinking the island into the sea.

This scenario can be played from a couple of angles. The characters could be civil servants, either abandoning their work with the rest of them, or hanging on to duty, even after all hope is lost. They could be average Atlanteans, trying to cope with a world falling apart. They could even be slaves, enjoying a few days or weeks out from under the heel of their overseers before the whole city's destroyed.

The key characteristics of this scenario are duty, professional pride, and appreciation for the

unspoken heroes of society.

Scenario 3: Uncontrolled Weapon

In the final days, the Atlanteans play a dangerous game. They create ever more powerful weapons, and test them on their own territory. Sure, the proving area is a vacant wasteland, surrounded by powerful sorcerous wards, but accidents happen, and when you toy with the fundamental forces of the universe, mistakes can be disastrous. In this scenario, the Atlanteans create something too big for them to control. It gets loose and destroys the island.

You might be tempted to just make it a big bomb and leave it at that, but there are many other possibilities. Perhaps it could be a bioengineered monster that escapes to prey on the citizenry. The characters could investigate a string of unexplained deaths, find the monster, and then either try to destroy it or harness it for their own purposes. Either way, ultimate destruction ensues, either from the weapons used against it, or from something it destroys in the course of its rampage.

Perhaps the weapon could be a plague, some especially virulent disease that breaks from its containment and ravages the city. Maybe the explosion that destroys Atlantis is the Council's last noble act. Maybe the Atlanteans, recognizing the inevitability of their own demise, elect to destroy themselves rather than risk dooming the human race through their folly.

Scenario 4: Divine Judgement

In a way, this is the easiest scenario to do. When the GM feels the game has reached its ultimate climax, *blam*, she drops a meteor on the city. After all, you can't really accuse the Gods of a *deus ex machina*. This may seem unfair, but the world doesn't revolve solely around the actions of the player characters, and few people wake up in the morning expecting the world to end the following day. Realistically, there are bound to be lots of people who are caught eating breakfast or going to the bathroom when judgement day finally comes. This option allows you to focus on the day to day activities of Atlantis in its decline, rather than the special circumstances that lead to its destruction.

Still, if you don't like taking agency away from the player characters, there's lots that can be done to emphasize religious themes. Perhaps one or more of the characters are priests who warn the Atlanteans that if they don't change their blasphemous ways, they'll be destroyed. Maybe the characters are cynical, arrogant bastards who're warned by an NPC priest. Maybe a strange religious revival among the common folk draws the Gods' attentions to the errant city. Alternatively, a sudden decline in religious faith may be the final straw that breaks the Gods' patience.

Finally, there's always the slaves' perspective. Most slaves worship alien gods. Maybe the destruction is the work of such a God. The explosion could be meant to punish the tormentors of His worshipers, while granting His people the release of death to free them from their suffering.

Scenario 5-ish: Mix and Match

It is, of course, possible to mix the different scenarios, combing their themes into a new whole. Maybe the bioengineered monster escaped as punishment from the Gods. Maybe the slaves revolt because the bureaucracy that restrains them breaks down. Maybe one disaster tumbles into the next, leaving the Atlanteans so miserable destruction comes as a relief. It's a complicated society. Anything can happen.

Final Thoughts

For Players

There is one thing I think will greatly enhance your experience with **The Last Days of Atlantis** if you keep it in mind. Your character is doomed. No matter how powerful or insignificant, he will die the same pointlessly wasteful death as the other million or so schmucks on Atlantis. Personally, I find the idea very liberating. It means you don't have to worry about your character screwing up or getting injured or being declared a heretic and losing all his property. He'll be dead in a couple of months anyway. Of course, by the same token, your character can never accomplish anything, can win nothing of permanence, not even a place in the history books.

So, what's the point? The point is the journey, the things that happen on the way to the grave. The point is to tell a story about how the people of Atlantis spent their last few weeks of their lives. Just as a movie or book can kill off the main character at the end and still be worth watching, a game can be worth playing, even if you know your character is going to die. How does it happen? Does he die heroically? Does he die oblivious to what's really going on? Does he try to bargain with the Gods, or does he accept his fate with dignity? There's an inexhaustible supply of questions only you can answer.

For Gamemasters

I think I've covered most of the basics elsewhere in this book, but I think I'll take a little space to talk about one final aspect of the game's theme. **The Last Days of Atlantis** is about a society coming apart at the seams. Everything is breaking down; religion, politics, economy, even basic civility. It could be tempting to play it as unrelentingly grim, and while there's plenty of darkness there, darkness is not all there is. Atlantis, as presented in this game, is not an evil society. It's a brilliant society that grew too much too quickly. Even in the end, traces of that brilliance remain. I think if you remember that, and temper the darkness with a glimmer of light, the game will be much more satisfying for both you and your players.

For People who don't mind authors looking wistfully back at their own work and patting themselves on the back.

Whew, another 24-Hour game in the can. I think this one turned out much better than **Mutant Space Cowboys**, though perhaps it wasn't as fun to make. Despite being an exercise in creativity under strict conditions, I really hope someone out there gets some degree of enjoyment from this game. To that end, if you play **The Last Days of Atlantis** and have something you'd like to tell me, my e-mail address is SrGrvsalot@yahoo.com. I'd love to hear from you.

Appendix: Action Cards

<p>Death</p> <p>Kill one NPC</p>	<p>Failure</p> <p>Another character fails his or her next task</p>	<p>Fortune</p> <p>Undo any negative event. Trumps all other cards</p>	<p>Power</p> <p>Your abilities overcome the opposition</p>
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