

CHARM WARS

by Dan Lutts

Religion

Unlike Roman and many other polytheistic religions, Caldonian religion reflects their matrilineal orientation by having their female goddesses play more important roles than their male gods. The chief deity is the One Goddess, who created the world and from whom all life flows. Her main temple, called the Temple of the One Goddess, is in the public square and each neighborhood has its own smaller, satellite temple, called the One Goddess Temple. The high priestess presides over the main temple and chief priestesses preside over the neighborhood temples. A taller-than-life statue of the One Goddess dominates each temple's inner sanctum.

Like people living in Medieval Europe, Caldonians who broke the law can seek sanctuary in any of the temples as long as they remain in the inner sanctum within touching distance of the One Goddess statue. (The high priestess has forbidden deserters from the legions and the sea service from seeking sanctuary in the temples.) The temple is responsible for feeding sanctuary seekers. Members of the City Watch who want to arrest sanctuary seekers cannot enter the temple but must wait in the front courtyard and hope they come out.

The Five Sisters, also known as the Five Weavers or the Weavers, are the goddesses who create the tapestry of a person's life from birth to death. Each Sister has a specific role in the weaving:

- Naela the Spinner—spins the yarn that will be used to make the tapestry.
- Maela the Yarn Chooser—selects the yarn that will make up the person's life. The thickness and colors of the yarn determine the person's health and personality.
- Kaerla the Allotter—draws lots to determine the yarn's length and then warps the loom. The length of the yarn determines the size of the tapestry and the number of years in the person's life.
- Traela the Weaver—weaves the tapestry and chooses the incidents that will make up the person's life.
- Gaela the Thread Cutter—chooses how the person will die when her time comes and cuts the yarn from the loom with her scissors, which results in the person dying.
- The Three Judges—two female and one male—judge the dead. They consign the good to Elustra (the afterworld) and the bad to Shelar (the underworld). People who are not good enough for the afterworld or bad enough for the underworld are reincarnated and sent back to the People World where they are given the chance to live a better life. People who aren't buried in their family tombs don't go before the Three Judges. Instead, they are doomed to wander the earth, halfway between Elustra and the Shelar, for eternity.

Caldonians' household shrines are similar to the ancient Romans'. Everyone's house or apartment has two small shrines inside the front entry way, one on either side of the front door. The shrine to their ancestors is usually located to the left of the door. Family members burn incense to their ancestors before the shrine to make special requests. The shrine to the family's personal goddess is usually located to the right of the door.