

# IDEALISM ENLIGHTENMENT ADVENTURE

EPIC FANTASY IN THE MODERN WORLD

A ROLEPLAYING GAME BY  
**Stewart Wilson**

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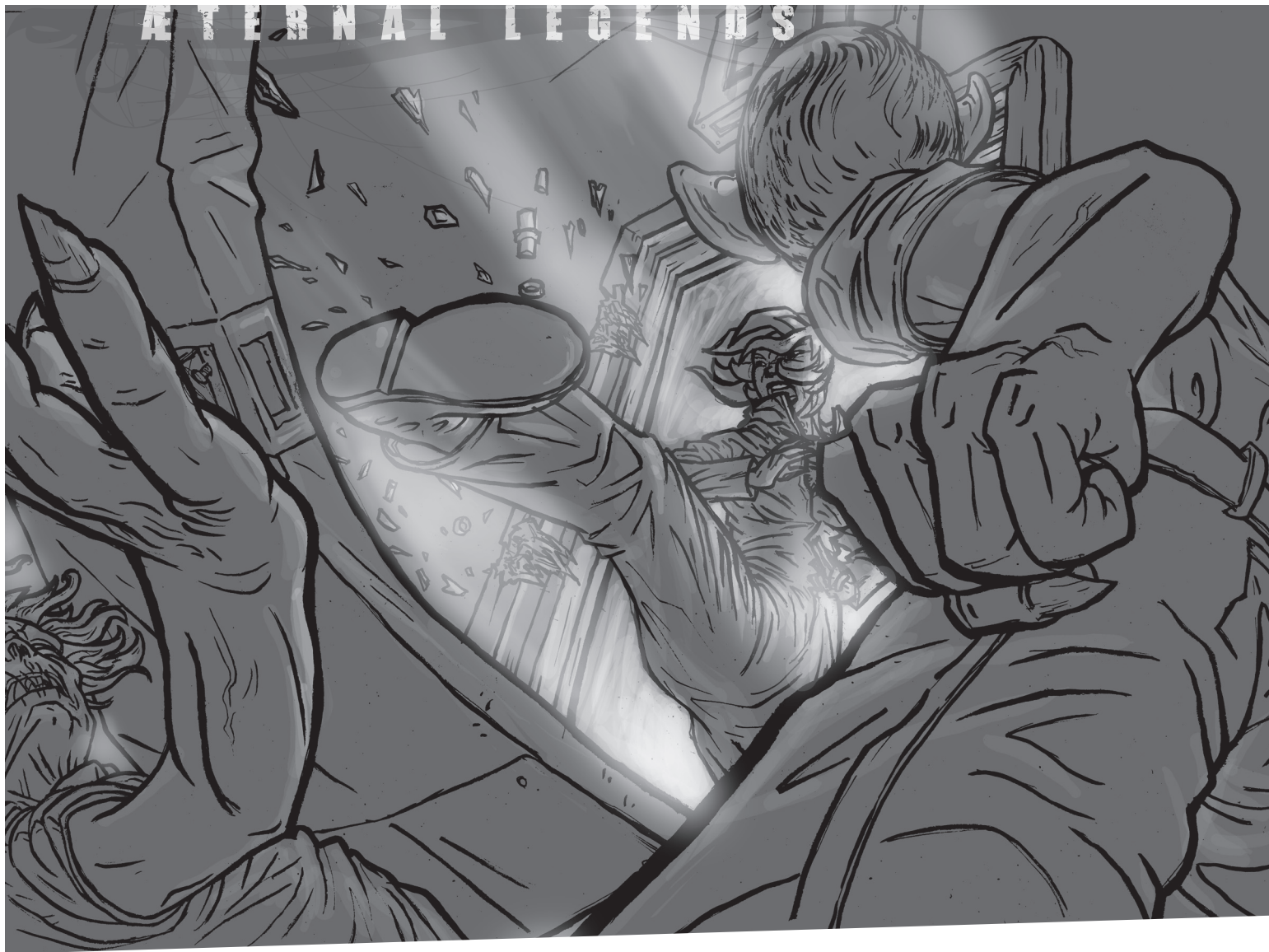
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# ETERNAL LEGENDS



# CHAPTER 0

## INTRODUCTION

*LYDIA WASN'T GOING TO LET ANDY DOWN. He'd given her the address in good faith, but the hope shining in his eyes clinched the deal. He said they'd started the ritual an hour ago and put his sister on the altar. Lydia had no choice. She was a hero, after all.*

*Three locked doors later, she crept past the last guard station. Once she was behind another door, her paintball rifle cracked once. Bright blue paint covered the lens of the security camera. She paused outside the office doors. Screams filtered through from the other side; she grabbed her snap-batons. Time crawled like an old man as soon as her boot hit the door – or maybe she was just stronger than Time. She was stronger than everything.*

*Four goblins condensed out of the shadows and jumped for her. They were too slow, too weak. She ducked under the first strike from the pack, lashing out at an exposed head. She spun, inspected the threat: two swords, two clubs. A sabre plunged straight through where she was half a second ago; she broke the attached arm at the elbow. The rest rallied and got lucky but their blades and batons bounced off her bodysuit. It was black and tight, spun from night claspings a dream of steel – a life-saving union and a bargain at twice what she paid the Beauty man.*



# 0 - INTRODUCTION

*Time flexed a relentless muscle at last, bending back her will. Things ran faster now, and when she looked around, Lydia saw more trouble than she bargained for.*

*Four unconscious security guards littered the floor. No blades, no goblin-sign. An illusion, she thought. No magical circles on the floor either. No runes on the walls and no altar. Instead of a screaming sacrifice she saw a girl with fire for hair. She wore scraps of plate and mail bolted to a surplus flak jacket. She watched Lydia with a cold smile in her eyes.*



## new to roleplaying games?

**Æternal Legends** is designed for experienced roleplayers. It doesn't dwell on common terms and concepts. To learn more about roleplaying games, try Wikipedia's article at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-playing\\_game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-playing_game)

Roleplaying is a form of cooperative storytelling. In **Æternal Legends**, most players take on the role of Legends: adventurers with special powers. One player is the GM (Game Master). He portrays villains, allies and bystanders, describes the world and introduces conflicts to move the story along. The GM also "chairs" the group during discussions about how to apply a particular game rule.

*continued...*



*"Good to see Andy's still loyal." The voice had a prissy, Received accent, just like Andy's. "He's given me something – well, someone to chew on." A double-headed axe unfolded from the golden snake around her wrist. Her grin widened. "You're not good enough for me, much less Da'ath. I'm going to enjoy hurting you."*

*Lydia narrowed her eyes. Her thumb pressed a rune on the hilt of one baton. "You're right. I'm not good enough for you."*

*"I'm better."*

*Magic rent the air as their weapons met.*

Magic doesn't mix with the modern world. Dime-store novels, roleplaying games, and comic books show what might be, but outside of fiction, magic is nothing more than sleight-of-hand and pop psychology. The word 'magic' sends a spark through people's imagination. It speaks to a sense of wonder that most people lose to the grey flow of everyday life.

**Æternal Legends** taps into that sense of wonder.

As one of the Aware, your eyes finally open to magical, mythic things that the mundane world will never know. As one of the Clades, you might transcend the typical definition of "human." You might be a semi-divine elf or a dwarf, kin to metal and stone. You might be an orc demigod or a mountain-like troll. As a Legend, magic is your servant and quest, urging you to enlightenment and glory.

There's a price to pay for all of this. Determination and self belief open your eyes to the world. You can strive on and remain true to yourself and the Light, or you can defile your beliefs and fall to the Dark in a blaze of magical power.

Unaware, mundane life is boring, full of dull tastes and washed out sights. Moments of love, rage and intuitive understanding only hint at the greater world of the Aware. Unaware people work a shift, watch television and drink factory-standard beer. Legends rescue princes and princesses, fend off lords of the Dark, steal jewels from long-hidden temples, slay dragons, and transform themselves into Scions of magic. A Legend chooses a life driven by heroic passions. The Unaware don't even know that such a life is possible outside of dreams and fancies. Legends are the summit and source of heroic dreams.

## The World

**Æternal Legends** games take place in our world. The Unaware are the people you pass on the street or stand next to on the subway. The Aware see the world differently. The car mechanic at the end of the block is really a musclebound dwarf. His assistant is a craft-wise gnome. One of the college dropouts at the bar is a powerful wizard, trawling for guardians and apprentices between drinks. He's just recruited the woman at the stool next to him. She decided it was better to be a Legendary hero than a database administrator.

The Unaware can't see real magic. To them, Clade members are just eccentric strangers. Sorcery is coincidence and superstition instead of the boiling blood of Creation. Legends usually fall right off their radar. It's not that the Unaware can't see or interact with Legends, but something stops them from caring too much if an elf breaks into a corporate headquarters or a goblin steals somebody else's car.

## Magic

Magic is self-belief; being true to yourself in the face of adversity is the key to raw power. Knowing who you really are is the first step towards shaping the magical world. Without that knowledge, you can't even perceive the magic – you're Unaware. With it, you can work miracles. While Legends are the most powerful Aware, they're not the only ones who can summon flames or call lightning from a clear sky. Mine-knockers and alley witches populate the secret world, satisfying the same needs as mundane doctors and labourers.

Legends hone their magical natures by taking on a Sphere: an archetypal role that fits their beliefs. A Legend who wants to keep

... This last point brings up something specific to **Æternal Legends** and other **Ready2Run** system games. The rules are “high trust:” loosely designed, so that different groups can interpret them to taste. Some groups will want to apply Aptitudes broadly and on the fly, while others want clearly defined limits. Make sure your group is prepared to trust each other and apply the rules in ways that best suit the games you all want to play.



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his family or neighbourhood safe joins the Sphere of Strength; a thinker who wants to know more about his Legendary state assumes the Sphere of Splendour. Legends join one of six Spheres at first, but some move on to even higher callings.

## Different Eyes

A gang of goblins shows off to new members on the streets of Brooklyn. The gang's boss is a sorcerer who wants to make her mark as a big player. She turns vandalism into murder and with a snarl, throws a bolt of fire at a passing dwarf.



### about the author

Stewart Wilson was born in darkest Yorkshire in the UK, and spent the first twenty years of his life trying to escape. He lives in Edinburgh with his girlfriend, their hamster, and almost enough single malt. A programmer by trade, he spends his days working for a large financial organisation.

### about the developer

Malcolm Sheppard was born in Toronto, Canada and had the good sense to stay in that bland metropolis until something better came along. He lives in Peterborough (in this usage, a smaller part of Canada) with his wife and children. He works as a writer, game designer and online/offline content developer.



An **Unaware** shop clerk strides by a gang hanging out on a street corner, keeping his eyes forward as he counts the seconds until he'll be late back from his lunch break. One thug shouts and gestures in indecipherable slang. Suddenly, a stocky man across the road screams and falls. The clerk glances back. Was some kind of fit? A heart attack? Only timing links the gang to the collapse – even if the fireball passed right through the clerk. It even looks this way on video.

One of the **Aware** – a gnome barman on his way to work – sees the new wizard on the block and instinctively ducks back. Summoning fire in broad daylight isn't the smartest thing for the gang to do, but getting mixed up would make him a target.

A **Legend** sees the attack. She pulls the dwarf to safety, checks him over and turns her attention to his attackers. The goblins pull their weapons but they've already lost. This is the Legend's turf, and she vowed to keep it safe.

## Adventure

Legends eat, drink and breathe adventure. Whether they plot to save a local hero from falling to the Dark or face the goblin hordes of a Dark Lord intent on taking their city, no Legend leads a quiet life. Fortunately, there's no lack of magical equipment to help them, from flaming swords to shotguns of dragon slaying. They walk to hidden, magical places to find strange creatures, solve ancient riddles, and progress on their personal journeys.

The magic that compels a Legend to live on the edge shields her from some of the consequences. The Unaware tend to ignore Legends. This even applies to adventurers kitted out in weapons and armour. When there are too many witnesses or extremely dogged, suspicious Unaware investigators, the Ministry of Administrative Affairs takes interest. The Ministry hides inside government departments, working in areas that Unaware governments scarcely imagine. Different departments cover everything from taxes and licensing for dangerous magic items to covering up the weirder things that even the Unaware might see. The Ministry is often ill-disposed toward Legends who can't exercise the most basic discretion, and have Legends on hand to enforce their policies, if need be.

## Glossary

**Aware:** Someone who sees the world as it is. They can see magic in action, mythic monsters and the true forms of the Clades.

**Bright Clades:** An old term for the Clades of the Light: elves, dwarves, and gnomes.

**Circle:** A group of Legends and occasionally Aware who adventure together.

**Clades:** The secret varieties of humanity. The term is a group noun for Bright Clades, Dull Clades, and Aware humans. Unaware humans might belong to any Clade, but never manifest as anything other than normal people.

**Dark, The:** The embodiment of the antinomian urge. The Dark gains power when people despoil cherished ideals – especially their own.

**Dwarves:** One of the Clades, the Lords of the Earth.

**Elves:** One of the Clades, the Princes of the Otherworld.

**Dull Clades:** A somewhat archaic term for the Clades of the Dark: orcs, trolls, and goblins.

**Fall, the:** The moment that humans turned to the Gods' prison and away from magical places. The act that begat the Unaware.

**Gnomes:** One of the Clades, the Invention-Born.

## on playing it straight

*Æternal Legends* isn't designed to be a cynical re-examination of the fantasy genre. This is a game about sincerity, idealism and a certain amount of innocence. That means it's time to return to things you once dismissed as clichéd and time to commit to your characters and stories, even if you're exploring familiar ground with them. Don't resist the archetypes – celebrate them.

In *Æternal Legends*, wizards really do hire Legends in bars to explore ruins. To a Legend, it's second nature to go on adventures and furthermore, it's part of a spiritual journey. That's the heart of the game: Fantasy adventure is the mirror of a Legend's soul, and even the most derivative stories reflect a search for a greater truth. Legends don't meditate on reality's nature. They find it in treasure chests, mazes and at the point of a Dark Lord's sword. Take this "Gnostic quest" structure by the throat and you'll play the game as it was designed to be played.

# 0 - INTRODUCTION

**Goblins:** One of the Clades, Dark-tainted gnomes.

**Gods:** Primal forces of creation imprisoned by the Unaware world. Conscious shards of the Source that created the world and all the Clades.

**Humans:** The only Clade to be either Unaware or Aware. Humans have no innate connection to the Light or Dark.

**Interstice:** A place where concentrated magic has cut it off from the world. Interstices require a specific action to enter. q.v. Pocket Kingdoms.

**Legend:** Someone empowered by the moment of Manifestation who lives a life of magic and adventure. Legends are not necessarily Aware before Manifesting, but always are once they Manifest.

**Light, The:** The conceptual force of meaning. The Light stands for idealism and sincere belief. It espouses taking the harder path to attain true mastery and understanding.

**Magic:** The energies of the Source on Earth. Originally wielded by the Gods, some Legends can channel magic straight from the Source.

**Manifestation:** The infusion of magic and meaning that turns anyone, Aware or Unaware, into a Legend.

**Orcs:** One of the Clades, Dark-tainted elves.

**Pocket Kingdoms:** An Interstice with a large Aware population or a huge geographical area that the Unaware can't usually visit.

**Source, the:** The fountainhead. The realm of transcendent intelligence that is composed of magic.

**Spheres:** Archetypal roles followed by all Legends. The Dark-tainted versions are Shells.

**Trolls:** One of the Clades, Dark-tainted dwarves.

**Unaware:** Mundane humans, the Unaware see all the Clades as human and cannot perceive the magic in the world.

## Inspirations

**Æternal Legends** draws inspiration from a wide range of subject matter. From fantasy novels to comic books, virtually any heroic tale can influence your game's storylines. With that in mind, the following are recommended starting points.



## Recommended Reading

**DeLint, Charles** – *Someplace to be Flying; The Onion Girl*. While the fantasy elements are distinctly Native American, these stories illustrate the difference between the Aware and Unaware.

**Moore, Alan** – *Promethea*. The mystical journey of the title character in the third and fourth books is a major reference point for the Spheres, and the fictional, fantastic world is a good indicator of what the world could be like if everyone were Aware.

**Morrison, Grant** – *The Filth*. A juxtaposition of the insane with the mundane, melding the bizarre side of the world and the hideously banal in a form of the journey that every prospective Legend must take. “The Crown is in the Kingdom.”

**Rowling, J. K.** – The *Harry Potter* series. These stories tap in to the basic tropes of fantasy fiction, as well as blending the magical world with the mundane in much the same way as this game.

**White Wolf Game Studio** – *Changeling: The Dreaming*. Changeling was the first game to bring medieval fantasy conflicts into a modern world where others can’t see them.

**Willingham, Bill** – *Fables*. Fairytale characters in modern Manhattan. The stories and art display a wonderful blend (and contrast) between the fantastic and the mundane.

**Wynne-Jones, Diana** – *A Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. A satirical deconstruction of post-Tolkien fantasy that highlights and lampoons genre clichés. A must for anyone who has ever wondered about the unstated assumptions behind most fantasy tales.

## Recommended Viewing

**Kung Fu Hustle** – A circle must defend their village, and a newly-Manifested Legend must put right his earlier wrongs.

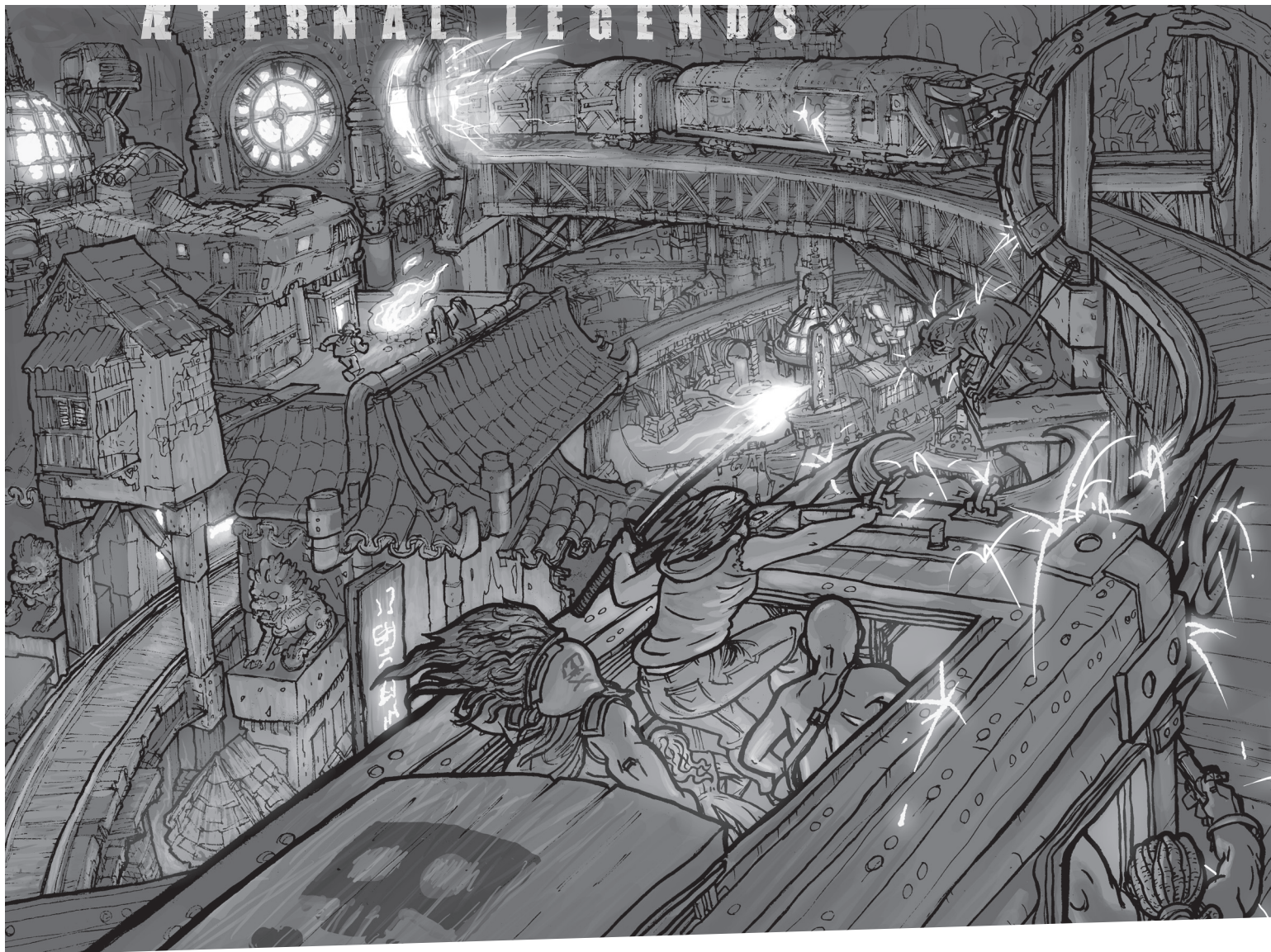
**Neverwhere** – This TV series shows a possible portrayal of Aware society, along with an unlikely hero who is certainly a Legend in the end.

**The Lord of the Rings** – Peter Jackson’s film trilogy combines a strong visual style with a sense of kinetic action that epitomises a circle of Legends on a mission.

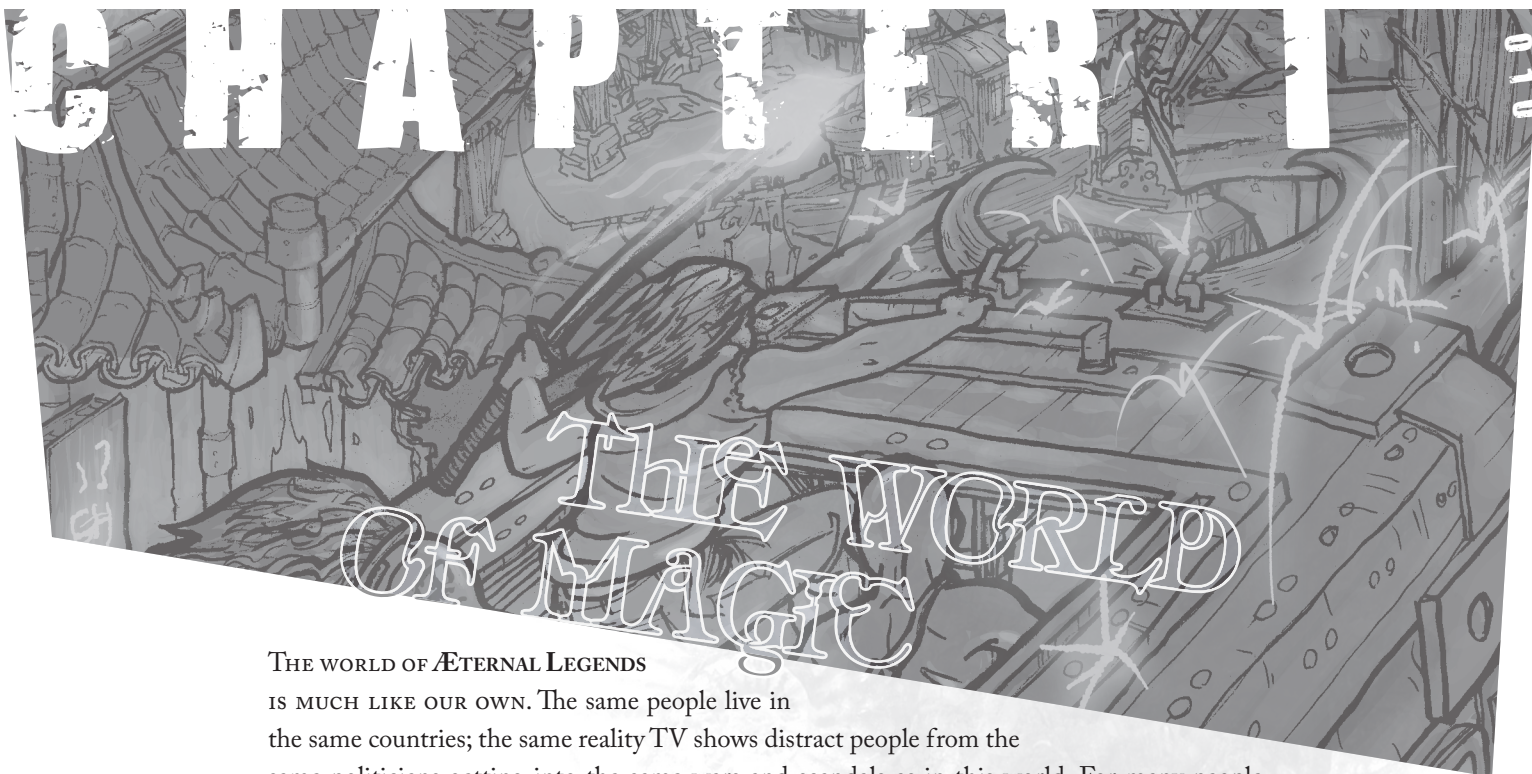
**The 10th Kingdom** – An underrated look at modern protagonists in a fairytale world. The opening credits alone are fantastic inspiration for a Pocket Kingdom.

**Willow** – Showcases both how powerful a Legendary sorcerer can become and the classic struggle between Light and Dark.

# ETERNAL LEGENDS







### THE WORLD OF ÆTERNAL LEGENDS

IS MUCH LIKE OUR OWN. The same people live in the same countries; the same reality TV shows distract people from the same politicians getting into the same wars and scandals as in this world. For many people, that's all the world has to offer. Sometimes they're too busy to see more. Sometimes they're too afraid of disgrace or poverty. And sometimes they just don't give a shit; they're satisfied with the colourless pleasures of the mundane world.

Around one person in twenty knows the difference between their world and ours: that magic is real. Brave knights battle monstrous creatures, powerful wizards work incredible spells and clever thieves steal everything that isn't nailed down. They do this right outside your window, but only that five percent can see what's really happening. And most of the time, they can't tell you about it without losing everything they still love about the Unaware world or facing severe recriminations from the chieftains of magical realms.

# i - THE WORLD OF MAGIC

## Magic and Wonder

Once, the Gods roamed the earth, seas and skies. Now they lie imprisoned within the world, chained in place for overstepping their boundaries. Their power came from the Source and it flows even today, but they can't use it. Mortal creatures tap into that power instead, twisting it to affect the world. All Aware have a spark of this power within them. They capture it within their wills and beliefs. Magicians channel their idealism to collect even more power.

Awareness doesn't always come in a flash. A lot of people gradually change the way they see the world. Some people were even born into Awareness at an Interstice. Many transform into members of one of the secret Clades: parahuman beings who lived alongside mortal men and women before the Fall. One day, they realise that their Unaware bodies were illusions and take on their true forms, from a troll's stony flesh or a dwarf's broad, short stature. The Unaware don't notice these changes.



### play it loose

The divide between Aware and Unaware perception is a loose rationale that keeps the game's setting recognizable, but let's be honest: **Eternal Legends** isn't designed to be a simulation of what the world would really be like if there was magic behind every corner. Players have to suspend disbelief and realize that ultimately, the setting's premise and the players' good faith keep it intact. You can always change the world to let the Unaware know that magic is there, but that only happens when a storyline specifically inspires the change.



A person's Clade reflects her personality and sense of self better than her human form. She used to be slightly out of touch with her body. The change only unveils a person's magical side; to the disappointment of some, nobody has ever changed sex through simple Awareness, but Legends sometimes do change at the moment of Manifestation. This change usually conforms to their favoured gender role, but this isn't a constant. Some Legends thrive on the tension between their gender and biological sex. Others transform into intersexed shapes, fulfilling the role of a two-spirited person or occult hermaphrodite.

A person has to have some sense of who he truly is in order to experience Awareness. Most people either go through life without knowing what they really want or believe, or only have rough apprehensions of their innermost natures. They go to church because it's how they were raised. They surf the Internet to collect memes that make them feel like they belong. They treat their bodies as sources of shame or mere mechanisms, feeling like shrunken pilots throwing the switches of numb, fleshy robots. When Awareness hits, that all changes, but it

*Every thought I ever had hangs in the air like snowflakes. My human skin flakes off. Eyes blaze gold, a sign of the Sun in my blood. I know who I am – who I always was.*

—Lydia Grange, Reflections on Awakening



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isn't good or bad. Pain wounds body and soul, but pleasure lifts one of the Aware to the vaults of the Gods. The Aware tremble before the beauty of a simple wilderness vista, but have trouble pretending to tolerate anything that inspires distaste or boredom. In today's corporate environment, the newly Aware often announce their status to the world by interrupting a presentation or videoconference with the news that they just don't give a fuck anymore.

Love hurts more than ever; hate sparks detailed dreams of vengeance. And behind it all, magic is real. There's potential power in every desire. The impossible can happen. That's not a belief – it's hard fact.

The Aware possess a sense of wonder that their mundane cousins don't have. The world of office jobs and reality television springs from the Gods' earthly prison, whose iron laws discourage idealism and creativity. The Unaware are their cell-mates. For every Aware who stays with her job, three drop out. They work where they think can make a difference (such as with the Ministry) or drop out of conventional society. Executive Andy Malone just walks out of his office block one day and takes a job on the graveyard shift at O'Malley's Diner. He works there every evening, serving coffee to night-owl artists and cops alike. On the other hand, Heather Collins gained pointed ears and a shining aura when she became Aware, but didn't head for the wild or the underworld. She walked straight in to a manager's job and scored three promotions that year. Awareness brings wonder; nobody who sees the magical world can settle for mediocrity. She loves her job; Awareness shows her what her work really means to her.

Ancient stories tell of a time deep in history, when everyone was Aware and magic was free. Even after the Gods were imprisoned, magic lingered in every corner of the world and could not be denied. Nobody knows when or why magic faded from obvious view, but some fringe groups claim they know what's responsible. Some blame religion – often but not always Christianity – for “destroying the Old Ways” – but some Aware dedicate their magical crafts to Christ. Others blame the rise of science and rationality for destroying creativity – but industrious gnomes and Legends of the Beauty seem to contradict this point of view. Others claim that the Fall is humanity's fault, born from a fear of death that locks them in the



the land of  
do as you please

Awareness is a difficult time. Every passion works on overdrive. Beliefs bloom into fanaticism and mute a person's compassion and self-control. This burns away a lifetime of hypocrisy but it also threatens to make the newly-Aware incredibly self-centred – even psychotic. Combine the worst extremes of stalking behaviour, road rage and petty selfishness to understand the potential downsides – and dangers – of new Awareness.

The Ministry watches out for the newly Aware and helps them – by any means necessary – to understand that their desires do not constitute a license to run roughshod over the needs of others. Awareness isn't just freedom – it's the ability to exercise one's will responsibly with full knowledge of the consequences. Abuse others, and even Aware society will punish you.



# i - THE WORLD OF MAGIC

embrace of the Gods instead of the glory of the Source.

## Belief

People don't open their eyes to magic by accident. The Aware, especially those born to the Clades, are driven to better define their beliefs and challenge barriers to self-realization. They meditate, study their dreams and hurl themselves into artistic pursuits. They step up to hardship whenever it might give them a better handle on themselves.

A person who is born Unaware must find some deeper truth within herself before she can see the magical world around her. Everyone believes in something, even if they suppress it for practical reasons. She must accept her true ideals, cutting past the thick grey fog of expectations and assumptions that society put in her head. She must find the power and horror in her own heart, accept it, and define herself by that yardstick. Once she knows who she is, the fog lifts from her eyes.

Old magical traditions understand this power. Many teachings admonish a practitioner to "Know Herself". Self-knowledge fuels the mystical reserves of both Legends and the other Aware. Practiced mages engage in vision quests and long periods of meditation in the hope that they will better accept themselves.

Belief is also the core of Manifestation. While Manifestation might come hand in hand with Awareness, many Legends were Aware before they erupted into true heroism. A Legend can't walk the Spheres without understanding himself.

## Clouded Eyes

The Aware benefit from magic, but it holds them in chains. Unaware humans don't see the Clades for what they are. They see every Clade as human, though certain traits show through – elves are beautiful humans, while trolls are markedly stronger than average. This also hides magical effects – or prevents them from working – leaving the Unaware ignorant of magic's existence.

*I'm running. Always running. I could stop, I could rest. I've never run this far. I can't stop. I'm not that kind of girl. I have to get the message through. I am the message.*

– Stacia Cameron, A Day in the Life

*I know who I am now. Who I am doesn't like who you are at all. Who you are can change, or die. You have ten seconds to decide.*

– First post-Manifestation words of Ken Gardner, Legend of Strength.

Legends gain more protection from the magical field occulting Unaware minds. The Unaware don't want to pay attention to them. Legends can thus steal, fight, and even kill each other without mundane authorities getting too interested. This protection is an inconstant ally (and in the game, mostly a matter of GM fiat), so Legends mustn't be too blatantly heroic when the cops are out in force.

## Staging hidden

Magic isn't the only thing keeping the Unaware from starting a witch-hunt. The Aware police themselves.

Weight of numbers guarantees that many Aware work in government. Each region initially had its own department or group that dealt with Aware matters. Each organization developed its own cover, grey budgets and ways of dealing with Unaware higher-ups. By the late 18th Century, many of them agreed to work together, joining hands through the structure of the British Empire and its aura of allied states. The idea spread from there. Their descendants now hide in plain sight; their offices occupy obscure corners of government cube farms. Every Commonwealth nation now has a Ministry of Administrative Affairs, referred to among the Aware as just "the Ministry." To the Unaware, the Ministry fulfils obscure intergovernmental duties, making sure that disparate local and regional governments work together smoothly. It's the most boring cabinet post in every Commonwealth nation, making it easy for an Aware politician to smoothly claim leadership. The Ministry consumes a surprisingly modest budget given its secret mission, but that's because its intergovernmental role allows it to nudge funds from other people's balance sheets to do its bidding.

Nevertheless, there aren't quite enough Aware to allow national factions to take root. Each Ministry has joined hands; the whole is now a large, supranational organization. In the 19th Century it even managed to absorb many counterparts outside the British Empire, so that countries such as the United States and France now have their own branches. Some Americans persist in calling the US branch "the Department," but most call it the Ministry as well. Most of Asia and Africa have their own quasi-governments that maintain diplomatic relations with the Ministry.

The Ministry employs no Men in Black. It doesn't have memory-wiping technology or advanced magic. It's got nothing to do

*It's like a flower opening, like layers of saran wrap peeling away from my eyes, like getting a new pair of glasses.  
One perfect moment of transcendence. When that moment's over, life goes on. It's just more interesting.*

— Lydia Grange talks about abandoning Unaware perception.



# i - THE WORLD OF MAGIC

with Area 51 or Robinson Heath. The Ministry is the closest thing the Aware have to a government. It sends people to provide cover stories to the press and Unaware governments – even individuals who might prove too credible to an audience. Through subtle enchantments (and some Legends of the Foundation), agents introduce enough doubt into an Unaware mind to rationalise away almost anything. The Ministry graciously accepts large “donations” or charges user fees for their media-handling services.

Complex accounting procedures launder the proceeds, reduce the public budget and get funnelled back into its programs.



## the secret commonwealth

The Secret Commonwealth is the name of the theoretical “nation state” that’s composed of each nation’s Ministry. Ministers sometimes invoke it when they’re promoting international camaraderie, but never as a literal body.

While it is well known that the Ministries are so well integrated that the whole network is usually called a singular Ministry, few people know what goes on at the highest levels. This has inspired wild rumours of a “privy council” that coordinates Western policy, and even the idea of a “Gloriana Occultae”: a hidden Monarch of the Aware. Some Aware claim that nations outside the Secret Commonwealth have a similar structure – that China has a god-emperor called *Wuangdi*, for example.



The Ministry also taxes the creation and trade of magic items. It’s accrued a great deal of power by confiscating the plans for magical superweapons, holding them in the national interest. If a dragon does try to torch NYC, the Ministry has the tools to handle it. In return, the Ministry provides assistance in every field. They can hook up specialists among the Aware, monitor power-plays, and know who holds the largest collections of magical lore. As long as the request is not grossly illegal and doesn’t upset the status quo, the Ministry can probably help.

Furthermore, the Ministry does the regular work every government does whenever the Aware require it. It regulates witchcraft, handles discrimination complaints from orcs and holds tribunals to deal with everything from murder to lawsuits over watered down potions. There are even elections; the Ministry draws up Secret Counties of roughly 100,000 Aware and monitors elections for the position of Warden. Wardens report to their national Minister (in the US, the obscure cabinet position of Administrator General fills this role) and form National Councils, which function much as other parliamentary bodies do.

To the majority of the Aware, they’re just another fact of life. The Ministry makes sure that nobody audits the Aware and that transcended lords of Light and Dark don’t destroy the laws of causality during a duel. It pays for Interstitial public works and tracks endangered super-

*Slay the dragon. Loot the hoard. Pay your taxes accordingly. Only two of these steps are optional, Mr. Gardner.*

– Julia Weston,

Extraordinary Revenue Agent for the Ministry

natural species. Vital functions like these justify the average dwarf's Ministry tax burden.

## Technology

The existence of magic doesn't preclude technology, and the Aware don't see anything wrong with either. Ancient swords of dragon-slaying are all well and good, but these days the blade might be a laser-sharpened ceramic composite. Armour is still leather, mail, and plate, but an enchanter can make it look like a normal jacket (or a bulletproof vest) to the Unaware eye.

It's not just in the realm of magical items that modern technology sees a lot of use. Like the rest of the Western world, the Aware all have cell phones and use SMS as much as voice. Elven CEOs wouldn't be seen dead without a PDA, 3G phone or the latest ultra-portable laptop. Gnomes were born of invention; they surround themselves with custom-made computers and bleeding-edge hardware. Dwarf guardians put their faith in Smith & Wesson as much as their short swords and great axes.

It's all a matter of time and the place. The Unaware are used to guns; they see them on TV all the time. Strangely, this has a counterintuitive effect: the more exotic the weapon used, the less likely someone will take notice of a Legend using it. Culture has eroded magic's obscuring hand to the point where gunfighting Legends are more likely to be noticed than axe-wielders. People expect guns to accompany any violence and integrate them into their personal, mundane lives. Staves, swords and bows are more likely to avoid the notice of Unaware bystanders. Nevertheless, there's a reason why slings and darts are passé among the Unaware. Guns are powerful weapons and a practical warrior will use them whenever he can. Aware who are not Legends are more likely to stick to firearms, but don't put as much faith in them as the Unaware. Guns don't work in every Interstice. It's easier to cast a spell that breaks a complex machine than a sharpened yard of metal, too.

Finally, here's a difference between fighting and duelling. Among the Aware, the sword holds more weight than the gun. It takes effort to hack at someone until his bloody corpse falls at your feet. Putting a .44 magnum round through his skull just isn't the same. Most Aware who go armed carry both. Tradition dictates that formal combat is with melee weapons only. Armour must be obvious.

Legends of the Beauty are engineers and artisans who routinely imbue their work with enchantments. They lead the way in blending magic and modern technology. Tomes of knowledge and mystic grimoires fit into databases and websites. In their hands,

*Swords don't kill people. Diametrically opposed value systems kill people.*

— Jackson Giant-Killer

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vengeful enchantments enhance guns as easily as swords. Legends are the cutting edge, but skilled enchanters and craftsmen soon follow in their footsteps, albeit without the potent magic a Legend can bring to bear. As a device's complexity increases, the magical power required also increases. A gun has moving parts and a circuit board has microscopic traces that the artisan must enchant. The code for a magical program is no easier to create than the wording for a text of power.

Magical complexity limits the number of enchanted devices. Swords are easier to enchant, so neither Aware nor Legends are going to ditch them for firearms any time soon. Disguising armour is simple, but only Legends of the Beauty can make truly wondrous enchantments. They create suits of armour rivalling those seen in science fiction and vehicles that would put James Bond to shame. Still, these feats tax even the most powerful enchanters. They do exist, but they're not common and never mass-produced.

## Pocket Kingdoms

The world is a weirder place than anyone can deal with. When the Unaware can't rationalise a place, it either becomes mundane or seals itself off. Dragons' lairs locked themselves away from Unaware eyes long ago, and whole kingdoms in hide in the middle of urban centres, shielded from the outside world. Whatever the reason, nobody can find the area. Out of sight, out of mind.

Each of these pocket worlds – or Interstices – has at least one anchor in the Unaware world. These anchors can be anything. A hidden alleyway in a major city leads to an Aware bazaar. A locked door under a tower block is the entrance to the Palace of Halls. Its labyrinth of cluttered, bland corridors contains doors that open to buildings across the world. A disused road should lead to a ghost town, but the Aware see a thriving mining outpost where prospectors pan for magical metals. When Legends see these anchors they can step through, into the hidden worlds beyond.

Each anchor imposes a condition that allows any of the Aware to enter if they know the magic word, secret door and so on. Populated areas have obvious requirements, but hidden lairs and unspoiled wilderness require more research. Legends can use their Spheres to gain entry instead of obeying the condition, as long a player can describe a way in which his Sphere might apply to the problem. This is partly a matter of ingenuity and partly a matter of the Legend bending the nature of the anchor with his heroic will. Accordingly, it costs a point of Will every time the Legend tries to breach an Interstice in this fashion. Legends of Strength

*Have you ever wrapped a flat map of the Earth onto a globe? You can do it, but you have to cut bits out. Think of those missing pieces as Interstices.*

– Arturo Smith, A Treatise on the Hidden Earth



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fight gate guardians; Legends of the Foundation gather a host to demand entry. The GM sets the task's type and difficulty. Most Interstices are Difficult (5) Threshold Tasks.

Interstices are all over the place. Those with an Aware population – true Pocket Kingdoms – gravitate to urban centres. Buildings and alleyways become doorways to Aware cities. Magic packs whole towns inside the creases on the map. Major Interstices have larger Aware populations than the mundane cities they're attached to.

The Ministry has an office in every major Pocket kingdom, but they're all usually swamped. The black market thrives. Every dealer sells untaxed magic items, but a few add illegal devices and slaves to their stock. The streets of most Pocket Kingdoms are always crowded. Pushers sell cheap drugs; unlicensed witches offer semi-legal spells. Paid companions of all genders, Clades, and inclinations chalk out their hourly rates. There's a wild atmosphere not seen in the mundane world running through the streets. The Ministry is the only law, but it has an unsteady grip on things. Goblins breed chimera in basements; doorways lead to mazes of steam-pipes and dragons embodied in industrial cables and gears.

Other Interstices hide in the wilderness. Some hold large towns that only the Aware know about, but far more are lairs of ancient beasts. Shaped around the needs of their inhabitants, each wilderness Interstice is different. Hidden lakes offer access to underwater worlds. Mountain eyries have clouds in place of land, but everything can fly. Occasionally, some of the Aware settle in such an Interstice. If they survive, they face the risks of all colonists. They thrive or starve based on their ingenuity, ruthlessness and Fate's fickle hand. Even the presence of strapping sons and daughters is no guarantee that a settlement is doing fine. It might just mean that the dragon only eats a few of them a generation. Everyone needs help in these remote places, and most aren't above forcing the matter. Sometimes, the dragon doesn't mind foreign fare – including visiting Legends.

*"We don't trust outsiders."*

*"Then it is my pleasure to reinforce your prejudice. And steal your horse."*

– Anita Maxwell, Fall's Creek: a Travelogue



## conditions of entry

The moor that leads to the Eternal Fields only allows the companions of a blond child carrying an albino mouse on the third Wednesday of October to enter.

Under the Carpathian Mountains, an ancient stronghold allows entry to any dwarf or troll who knows the correct corridors to traverse.

The town of Fall's Creek requires not only that visitors ride horses when entering or leaving, but nobody can make the journey with technology from before 1850.

The Blue River Dragon's lair only allows visitors – even Legends – who can survive its underwater environment. The gateway is at the bottom of the rapids.



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## Sample Kingdoms

### The Clockwork Palace

Anyone with a mechanical watch can access the Clockwork Palace through a hidden door in a dozen old English clocktowers. They say Big Ben has an ornate entrance with a footman who serves the Minister of Administrative Affairs when he visits. Several people stumble into the Interstice by mistake every decade. A few of them haven't escaped, though the Aware try to clean the place out from time to time. Walls of glass house giant cogs, and the pendulum hanging in the stairwell powers the grand palace. Automata with crystal skins and visible springs and cogs see to visitors' every need, though they can answer only simple questions from their wax-cylinder voice boxes. They direct any complex enquiries to the King. There's only one problem: The King's been dead for decades, and only a skeleton sits in the Throne of Brass and Clockwork. Anyone unlucky enough to take his place has brass rods shoot into his body, fixing themselves to his bones. He is now part of the Palace, and privy to its deepest secret: the entire place is a Babbage engine dedicated to working out a formula to free the Gods.

### Castle Persephone

Travellers heading to this hidden town must arrive during a half-moon, carrying the seeds of a pomegranate. The village is vibrant by day, but nobody ever mentions the castle that dominates the skyline. Someone who asks around will meet the lord in exile: a dishevelled gnome who claims that the castle is his birthright, but that he cannot enter. He begs newcomers to reunite him with his home, but refuses to go with them. Inside the abandoned stately home, beautiful phantoms fight off intruders. They're all magical extensions of the castle's soul. Castle Persephone has its own story: It loves the exiled lord as it has loved all the lords before him, but the gnome spurned her advances. The castle just wants to be with her love, never to part, but the lord slighted her, filling her with unbearable rage. She tries to kill him whenever he enters the castle. If the phantoms didn't turn to stone as soon as they left the gates, he'd have been dead for a long time now – and nobody would know of the magical gem in the basement.

### Tesseract Moor

Tesseract Moor was just too weird for the mundane world. One road passes through, but only people who walk it drunk and singing can enter. The moor is a rolling expanse of wilderness. Streams flow into rivers between the bracken and heather. Wolves, wyrms, and stranger beasts call this wilderness home. Rumour has that there's a beach at the far side of the moor, and one stone from it can cure any disease or malady. There's just one catch: The water is alive. The moor is nothing more than the solidified



dream of the rivers flowing through it. The sea beyond the beach slumbers on, changing the terrain every second. Dream-logic reigns supreme. It summons people made of smoke and cities made of song – anything to distract those seeking the sacred beach. Only the strongest of mind and body have ever reached their goal and returned to tell the tale.

## Waydowntown

Take a widdershins route through Toronto's underground PATH system. Buy six red articles of clothing at six different underground malls and you'll reach Waydowntown, a huge urban Interstice that covers two Shadow Counties. Waydowntown looks like the PATH's network of malls and underground offices a generation after the apocalypse, extended into a giant labyrinth whose outlying regions turn into graffiti-covered sewers and natural cave systems. Waydowntown's full of shops, taverns, hostels and apartments crammed with the Aware. The Ministry has no choice but to accept the will of the Crimson Council that runs the city. They're little more than an armed mob dominated by an ever-shifting handful of Legends. You can buy anything in Waydowntown, from manticore spines to an array of intriguing, morally questionable personal services. Waydowntown is also one of the few Interstices with a working mass transit system. It has five underground rail stations that correspond to the five stations connected to the mundane PATH: Dundas, Queen, King, Union and St. Andrew. Each station has its own trains, controlled by its Rail Clan. The Rail Clans go to war every few years, using their subways as engines of destruction. Trains will stop in the midst of tunnels or explore strange lengths of track that lead to hidden caves, underground rivers and even other Interstices.

## Life Among the Aware

Surrounded by the Unaware, Aware who live in the mundane world have their own way of doing things. With the Ministry acting as government, the Aware group together into communities as much as any mundane cultural group. The Aware cluster at the same coffee houses, bars and diners. They can't avoid the Unaware world, but they can keep its interference to a minimum.

These communities are spread out through a city, but there's usually a hub. Sometimes it's a bohemian district where artists and counterculture aficionados spend their time. The Aware prefer the local demimonde of students, dropouts, addicts and petty crooks

*If you have a complaint, the office is open for that purpose every day at thirteen o'clock. Generally, people who really need me to intervene can, well, make the time, if you get my drift.*

– Kristen Millgate, Castellan

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who overlook eccentricities and secretive habits. Aware communities favour places where mundane authorities rarely interfere. Some towns don't have anywhere suitable, so the Aware stake a claim on a building or street where they buy up the property and exhort visitors to keep quiet.



## jurisdiction

The relationship between a Warden and the local government is much like the relationship between federal and municipal mundane governments. The Warden's chief job is to represent his Secret County in the National Council, and implement its rulings locally. The Ministry theoretically has more authority than the local community, but only as a body; the Warden needs Council backing to get anything done. For the most part, this takes the form of laws that are already on mundane books. Most major offences (murder, theft and so on) are as illegal among the Unaware as the Aware. If local government won't enforce the law, the Warden can ask the National Council for the power to overrule the government. If the community balks, the Ministry will send its own personnel to enforce its decisions. In practice, though, rebellious communities that still pay taxes and don't endanger the rest of the Aware are allowed to do as they please.



Above all, the Aware deal in reputation. Someone in good standing doesn't need as much cash as someone who's got a bum rap. There's no formal enforcement and no centralised authority, so pissing of Mrs. Singh means you pay more in her store and get a hard time from her friends. Jarvis over the street is might cut you more slack, but he expects a favour later on. Only a few people have earned universal respect in their community. They form local governing bodies. The Ministry recognizes their authority as long as they don't contradict federal regulations.

The **Provost** is his community's judge. He hears disputes, interviews witnesses, and accepts counsel from the peers of both accuser and accused. Provosts range from those few gnomes who specialise in understanding their communities to orcs who've stood beside everyone at some point. They enforce their decisions through the respect of their community. If this doesn't suffice, the Provost has the power to appeal to the Ministry, which appoints five additional Provosts from surrounding regions to form a Tribunal. Its decisions stand no matter what anybody else might have to say about it.

A community's **Castellan** should be a shadow. When things are running smoothly, the community never sees her. She deals with the Ministry (usually in the form of the County Warden) and handles day-to-day community administration. Her reputation lets her get away with saying and doing things that may be unpopular in the short term but have benefits further down the line.

The **Sentinel** handles security. She works with the Provost to track down criminals and conduct investigations. It's also her job to keep the Unaware ignorant of the community, so blatant breaches of secrecy land on her desk sooner or later. She can also recruit Stewards to help her. Sentinel and Stewards both serve their community, the respect of their peers ensuring that people will co-operate.

## Peoples

The oldest tales speak of Gods who created the world. Enough common threads run through thousands of tales to hint at an alternate history. The Aware know much of that history and thus, the true nature of the world.

The Gods made the world from formless void, and made dwarves to rule the domain of Earth. They made the creatures that live on the planet, and made humans to rule the domain of Beasts.

But the Gods fell in love with their creations. They descended from their heaven of pure conscious energy. They condensed into flesh and discovered lust. At last, they could experience acts instead of ideas, endless imperfect variety instead of pure, eternal form. Durenal, the Maiden of Deep Waters, spent seven months in carnal embrace with Snorri Glodrisson. The erotic songs that record the story still inflame Dwarf passions. Other Gods simply took what they wanted, using force and glamour to slake ever more obsessive and elaborate lusts.

Without divine contraception, mortals and Gods alike fell pregnant. The offspring of these divine couplings grew into the demi-god elves. Gods lashed out at the spirits of invention who had long ago found a home in the minds of the mortal Clades. They envied this freely exchanged intimacy, so they imprisoned the spirits in mortal bodies and created the gnomes. With that last act, the Gods proved they were not worthy of their power. The Source – the power above all Gods – imprisoned them within their own creation. The Gods' legacy lived on, growing and changing according to the laws set down by the Gods and the Source.

## Convolutèd Lineages

Despite millennia of interbreeding, none of the Clades have ever given birth to a hybrid. Mixed-Clade offspring have an equal chance of adopting the Clade of either parent. One Clade dominates; the other is recessive, or “hidden”. When parents are both the same hidden Clade, their child will be of that Clade. The parental Clades stay hidden a quarter of the time. Hidden Clades

*When Magisters talk about the Gods, they use all kinds of odd names: Iraloth, Zayos, Durenal, that sort of thing. It's all code; the Splendour men take the names from old Aware languages (like Derospeak or Jinnistani) to demonstrate two things: that we don't worship the world's jailers like the Unaware did, and that Magisters are terribly clever people.*

*Sometimes you can trust mundane myths and sometimes you can't. Sometimes reading about Hermes helps you get to know Iraloth – but sometimes you're better off brushing up on Nyarlathotep, instead.*

– Lex Andrews, personal communication to a new Legend



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usually breed out after a generation, but there have been exceptions, where a Clade stays hidden through multiple generations. No matter the specific situation, at least half of the Aware have enough of a mixed heritage to display minor characteristics from other Clades. They retain the appearance and abilities of their Clade but a hidden aspect colours slight details. A hidden-dwarf human is short and stocky. A hidden-orc elf exudes an aura of darkness.

## Humans

Once rulers of the domain of Beasts, humanity has fallen far from its original glory. Nobody knows for sure why the Unaware are trapped in human bodies. Theories and myths abound, but there's nothing concrete to confirm one story or another. From their domain capturing too much power to cosmic vengeance on the other Clades, from increased responsibility to a terrible joke, nobody knows. Able to turn their hand to magic, invention, and philosophy, they are jacks of all trades among the Aware. Dark-driven humans don't have obvious physical signs. Humans just are. They're the unknowing fundament that supports the world.

## The Bright Clades

Long ago, allegiance divided the Clades. Those who favoured the Light called themselves the "Bright Clades" or "Fair Folk." They took pride in bodies and minds that were unmarred by the Dark.

These absolutes no longer hold; some doubt that they ever did. Most Legends of the Clades retain their affinity for the Light or the Dark, but families find sticking together and remaining true to themselves more important than an abstract ideology. Gnomes and dwarves are as likely to follow Dark Lords as goblins and trolls. An elf can use his beauty to ensnare fools in the self-slavery of the Dark or urge hesitant heroes into the Light.

## Elves

The Gods' mortal children are awesome and unworldly. Even the Unaware sense the incredible power shining through an elf's human facade. Their unique heritage makes elves somewhat insular. Many of them give the benefit of the doubt to other elves over even lifelong friends of other Clades. Elves in rural areas sometimes suggest that the Dull Clades should be segregated in their own areas, but no such measure has ever held.

*Iraloth, the Silent Dominion, loved his creations from afar. He was content to watch the other Gods, ah, take their pleasure with mortals in his domain. As such, he's the first recorded voyeur.*

– Natalia Costello, Before the Beginning

## Dwarves

Born of the earth, dwarves are definitely stout of body. In ancient times they found many caves full of mineral wealth, but in a world made for 5'8" humans their height poses a problem. A dwarf's natural inclination is to work through a challenge in a methodical fashion, avoiding shortcuts and understanding the outcome of every decision. They pride thoroughness over speed, so the other Clades seek out their counsel.

## Gnomes

Gnomes are creatures of invention. Their bodies are naturally suited to assembling small parts, but they're also known to employ their light fingers to more larcenous ends. Gnomes focus on one craft at a time. It could be anything from poetry to thievery to technology. Once they fulfil a goal they move on to the next obsession. Some gnomes switch passions in days; others stay with a single craft for a lifetime. Their dedicated focus makes it hard for gnomes to relate to situations where they have no practical experience, because they rarely pick up peripheral knowledge. Still, a gnome can be trusted to know everything of note about one of his interests.

## The Dull Clades

Even the Aware indulge in discrimination. Legends only emerge as one of the Dull Clades when they turn to the Dark, so the Bright Clades have long considered them tainted. For uncounted generations, the Dull Clades have done what they needed to survive and connect with society, even when it means menial, dirty work or efforts that force them to the fringes. Many in the Bright Clades fear that the Dull Clades' Darksider ancestors still taint their wills, but only extremists actually admit to it. The Ministry forbids discrimination against the Dull Clades but doesn't have the resources (and in some cases, the will) to enforce the law.

*The idea that orcs, trolls and goblins should reside in their own areas as second class citizens is not just wrong, but unthinkable to all who truly follow the Light. The only taint of the Dark here comes from the one bringing the motion.*

– Provost Vivian Adams, Maine County Proceedings, 1899

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## Orcs

Orcs are no less divine than their elven brethren, though theirs is the mien of a dark godling. All orcs channel their power through words. Whether they're passionate about politics, religion or the obedience of a platoon, an orc speaks like a demonic tempter and argues like a born philosopher – or a lowbrow demagogue when the occasion demands it. They're powerful, charismatic and wear their heritage with pride.

## Trolls

Born of the living Earth, trolls are enslaved by the stone they once mastered. Their flesh is animated rock. Their eyes are gems and their teeth, diamonds. This makes trolls incredibly strong, even functionally immortal, but they pay a price. Trolls are better suited to thinking on geological timescales, and it's hard for them to grasp the immediacy of a situation. While they're not stupid, they don't often snap to judgments in minutes and seconds.

## Goblins

They're kobolds, gremlins and tengu too, but most call them goblins. They're creatures of darkness. They prefer shades of grey to black and white, and can think through a corkscrew in a hurricane. Rebels, iconoclasts, and antinomians, goblins never stick to one cause when they can drag four down at once. They instinctually dislike equality. They prefer to be assured of their power and grow nervous in face to face negotiations unless they clearly have the upper hand.

## Creatures of Myth

Cockatrice, unicorns, and manticores; all these and more still exist, though outside of Interstices their numbers are vanishingly small. Dragons and other powerful creatures retreated to Interstices. Without a high level of magic they can't survive. Pools of magical weirdness – whether pre-existing or made by the creatures – are perfect lairs. Some even manipulated the mystic constants of their realms, but others remain trapped with no knowledge of how to escape.

Hidden from Unaware eyes in Interstices, magical creatures craft worlds more to their liking. Powerful Darksiders sometimes

*I don't know what you humans are worrying about. It's perfectly simple, if you think about it like a cat. Or if you are a cat.*

– Anatolé the cat.



try to bring them out into the mundane world, but this requires incredible amounts of magical power. Some Dark Lords think the expenditure's worth it; an enraged dragon can demolish a large city in just under an hour. Nobody's tried to release a dragon for fifty years, but it's only a matter of time until the next attempt. Legends of the Light have foiled all such plots up to now. The Ministry maintains pre-designed cover stories that include terrorist nukes and enemy missile strikes, along with enough magical firepower to deliver serious counterattacks.

Other creatures benefit from the same disguises that the Aware use. They bind their essences to mundane creatures. A wizard usually has to perform the binding, but some creatures are intelligent and powerful enough to forge the bond without any help. Bloodlines of hidden creatures propagate like the Clades, but many have gone extinct. Even seemingly mundane animals may be more than they appear. A wizard's talking cat is just one example.

## Legends

Aware heroes serve their beliefs. They're as true to themselves as they can be, but magic's never completely on their side. Magic chooses a few – or maybe, they choose themselves – to attain a higher Awareness. A mundane human goes from flipping burgers to someone marked by destiny in the span of an evening. Magic is capricious. Some people don't discover that they're marked for greatness until long into their lives, but they still bear that mark. It doesn't matter how hard anyone works or who their parents are; something in the ebb and flow of magical energy causes Manifestation. Scholars claim that magic itself is sentient, perhaps omniscient. Whatever the truth, some people – whether they're Aware or not – come face to face with their magical heritage.

These people are Legends. They don't start out as heroes, but destiny grips their lives, forcing them to act. A Legend lives her life immersed in the magic around her: power that drives her to one of the archetypal Spheres. Each Sphere is a core role that channels her magical power. Through that role, she becomes great.

A Legend can stick with one Sphere from Manifestation to death. She's as true to herself as she can be; her Sphere externalises her underlying beliefs. Other Legends walk the Spheres, discovering how each archetype shapes what they believe about themselves.

*I want to go on a lager frenzy. No magic swords. No gems of occult significance. No rune-crusted wedding rings. Just a shitload of beer and a sore head in the morning.*

*Okay, maybe one gem.*

– Grant Cassidy, Unquiet Retirement

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Some Sphere-walkers talk of haunting dreams featuring a Dark Lord who pursues them through their nightmares, of glimpses of impossible knowledge and forbidden thoughts. It seems that nobody can attain one of the three highest Spheres without these phenomena, but none who've strode so far discuss their experiences through anything more than metaphors and puzzles. These rarest Spheres are a trinity, headed by the mystical Crown: a living bridge to the Source.

Legends are adventurers – period. It's just the way things are. A circle of Legends can't go to a coffee shop without someone begging them to go on a quest. Spend a night in a bar, and a wizard might ask one to find a chalice last seen somewhere in the Clockwork Palace. If he wants to clean up part of his town, there's going to be a conspiracy or a magical threat to bind. No Legend can deny his destiny. Once magic gets its hooks into your soul, you can't ignore its call.

## Manifestation

Manifestation is a deeply personal experience. No Legend goes through exactly the same ordeal when they find that magic has chosen them. Some Manifestations are sudden infusions of power, often out of the new Legend's control. Other Legends walk a slow path towards the realisation of their personal potential. All Manifestations resonate with the Legend's personal beliefs and show him a part of himself that he may not have known about before.

There's no obvious trigger for Manifestation. A gang of orcs attack an Unaware guy on his way home from work. In the middle of the fight, something reminds the victim of all he holds dear, all he has to protect. There's a blinding flash; he lashes out with renewed vigour. A mother praying at the bedside of her dying son finds herself working through her own thoughts. After confronting her demons, she lapses into a trance. She wakes up two days later next to her fully healed son. An Aware waitress who knows everyone in her part of the city has a fleeting encounter with a strange elf who seems more real than anyone else. She wanders through a hallucinatory labyrinth formed from the city streets. When she understands the pattern and escapes she unlocks her own magical potential.

Although some Manifestations are a rush of power that later subsides, the knowledge and perceptions of the world remain. While some draw parallels between sudden Manifestation and the Buddhist concept of *kensho*, the ongoing effects are much closer to *satori* – not the first faltering steps on the path of enlightenment, but real walking. *Kensho*, being only a starting point, is closer to Awareness.

The journey of a Legend follows the routes magic carved throughout the Spheres, and the paths that lead between the Spheres.

Each trail reveals a new facet of self-awareness; a Legend discovers other aspects of her personality. She has to be careful; there aren't any guardrails, and she might not notice when veers off the edge. Only internal changes reveal what's happening. If she is careful and true – and helped by other Legends – she can reverse her fall towards the Dark.

## The Light

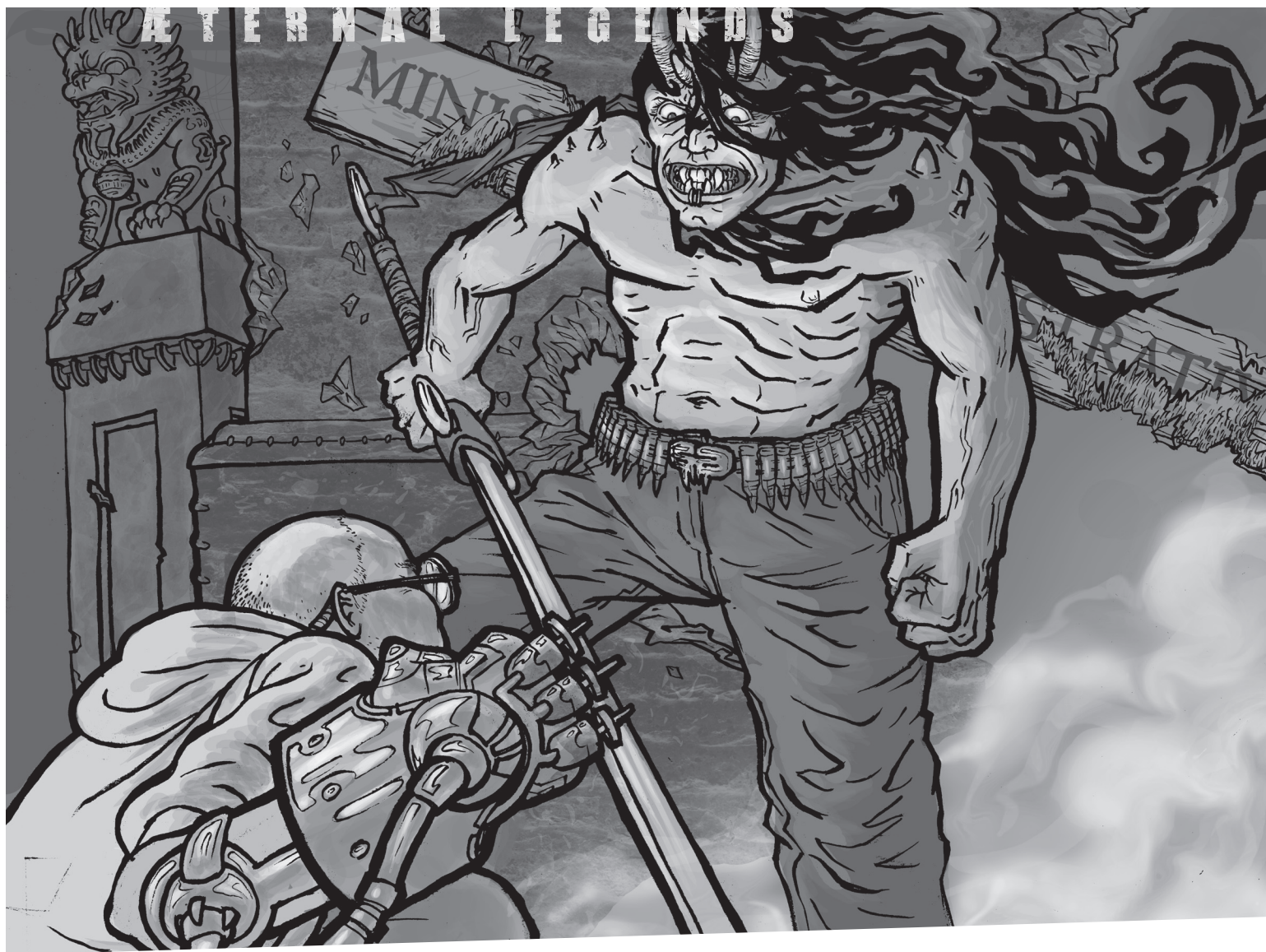
Spheres of the Light are deep and broad: the totality of a concept and all of its creative fruits. The Sphere of Strength puts force in service to a higher goal. The Sphere of Victory unleashes emotions that conquer all other sentiments. Nonhuman Legends of the Light transform into the Bright form of their Clade, no matter what they were before Manifestation. These Legends have to be careful – the path of the Light is both hard and individual. Nobody's giving out any easy answers.

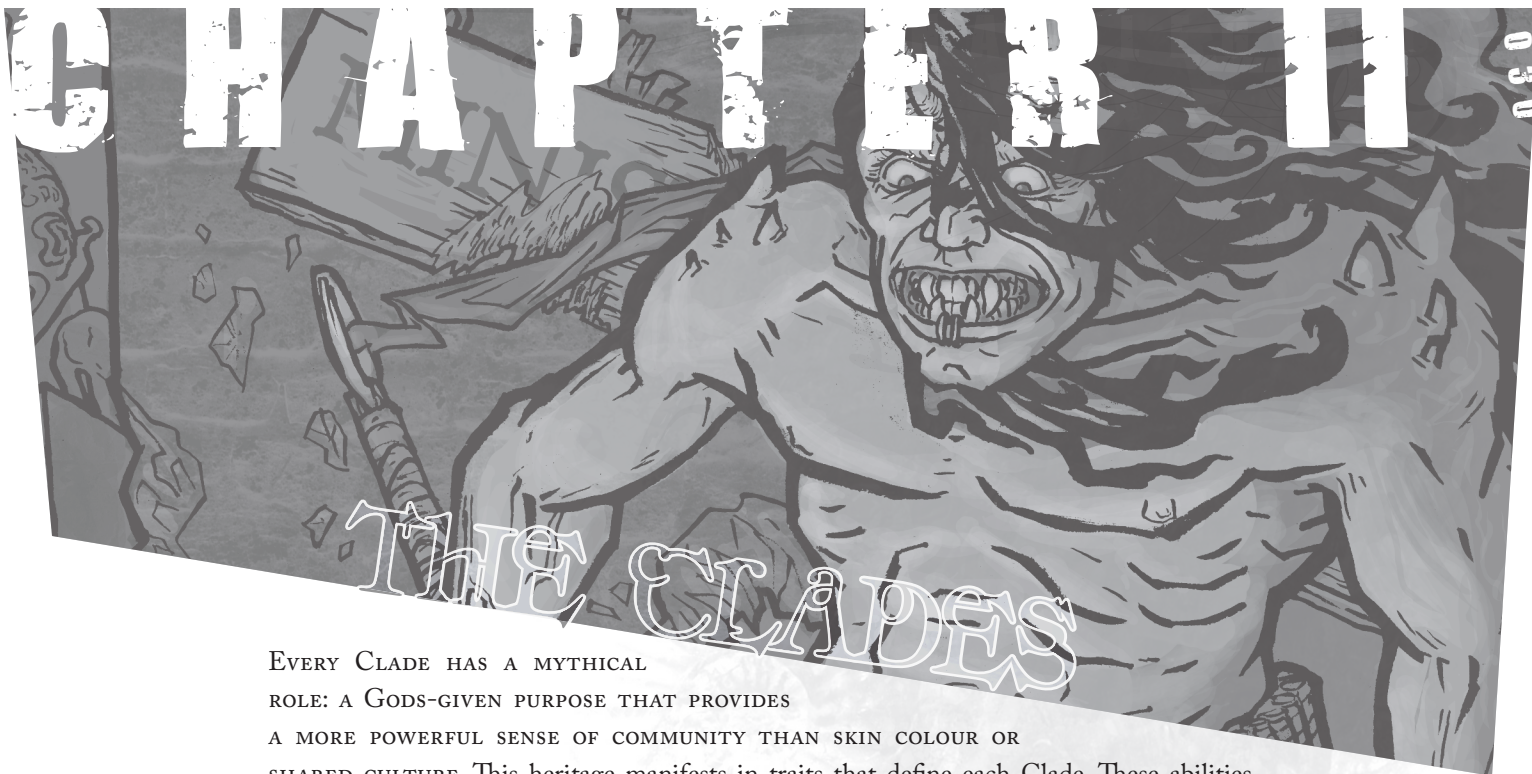
## The Dark

While the Light runs deep, the Dark is shallow. Instead of following his deepest beliefs, a Legend of the Dark gives in to immediate gratification. The Shells of the Dark are arranged like the Light's Spheres, but differ in their execution. The Shell of Strength is the path of bullies and hot-heads, where might makes right. Dark Beauty squeezes toxic applications out of cheap junk. The Shells channel magic by denying the meaning of the Spheres. This enslaves a Dark Legend to a Shell, so that the hero gives up his ideals to it instead of harnessing it to serve them.



# ETERNAL LEGENDS





EVERY CLADE HAS A MYTHICAL

ROLE: A GODS-GIVEN PURPOSE THAT PROVIDES

A MORE POWERFUL SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAN SKIN COLOUR OR

SHARED CULTURE. This heritage manifests in traits that define each Clade. These abilities

are more pronounced in areas of high magic, and in Legends they are something else again. Legends become paragons of their Clades, adding their stories to the mythic corpus.

The following pages detail the four Clades available to starting characters: humans, elves, dwarves, and gnomes. Each section gives a general view of the Clade, followed by more specifics on the Clade's mythic underpinnings, common backgrounds, appearance, and the defining traits of that Clade.

### Beyond the Mundane

All of the Clades except for humans have an inherent Edge and Flaw. See **Chapter Three: Character Creation** for game systems. These cannot be bought off and apply exactly like other Edges and Flaws. A Clade Edge or Flaw stacks with others. For example, a gnome with the Nimble Edge both naturally (for being a gnome) and



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as a bonus characteristic gains 2 dice on dice pools that would benefit from them. They apply when dealing with the Unaware and Aware both. All Clades also have a special ability that only manifests in Pocket Kingdoms.

Legends have two additional traits. One is a passive, adjusted Trait or inherent capability. The other is an active power that costs a single point of Magic to manifest. A character can use one power (Clade or Sphere) per round in addition to a combat action, if the power is action-oriented. This does not count as a partial or full action.





# HUMANS

## LORDS OF BEASTS

### Overview

In the beginning, the Gods created humans and dwarves. Roaming beasts needed wardens. The Gods made humanity for that duty. More adaptable than any beast, humans took to their role with a skill and dignity that surprised their creators. As hunters and farmers, nomads and settlers, humanity swiftly filled every land. Their creativity inspired elves and dwarves to create, and mesmerised the spirits who would become gnomes. This creativity was the downfall of not only humans, but all the Clades.

For some reason, humanity did something that no other Clade had considered: It rejected its true nature. Nobody knows whether humans created the Dark when they did this or if they just recognised something that already existed. What people do know is that humanity ignored their dominion over beasts. They pursued individual passions without heeding their primal purpose. They turned away from the Source and created towns, then cities, drifting further away each time. They even questioned the Gods. Were they moral? Were they what they claimed? Did they even exist apart from human dreams? The Gods called upon the Source to teach and punish humans – and the Source struck the Gods down. The Gods found the world was their prison, too mundane to countenance divine magic.

Being true to oneself is a noble goal, but nobility impedes progress. Progress didn't need nobility, and nobility was the essence of magic itself. Without it, humans were Unaware, trapped in the Gods' jail. Other Clades looked for the humans there and were also ensnared. The newly Unaware took the shapes of the first, human inmates and forgot their Clades' magical natures.



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Aware humans broke out of the Gods' prison, left their creators behind and started on a new path. An Aware human never leaves a problem unsolved. It may take time, but she will always defeat the obstacle. More than the other Clades, humans adapt to every situation. Some harness their natural creativity as artists or writers; others provide a sensitive ear from behind a bar or a pot of coffee. Whenever a community identifies a niche, a human will step up to fill it. Human Legends blaze forwards with new ideas, reconnecting with the Gods' lost magic and giving Aware people everywhere a slim hope for redemption.

### Myth and Magic

Ancient tales feature humans more than any other Clade. Warriors and tricksters, leaders and sages, humans play every role. Humans fascinated the Gods with their versatility: the hallmark of their true dominion. Whatever an animal could do, a human could emulate – maybe not as well as the beast, but often in a surprising way.

This versatility and ultimate freedom reveals why so many old tales say the Gods fell in love with humans before dwarves. The myths portray the Gods as archetypes, forever locked into their character: Chakmal, the Wise Ruler; Jaklasa, Mistress of Storms; Kolat, the Burning Tyrant. Humanity represented something new and exciting. The Gods couldn't resist the temptation of human dynamism. Chakmal ignored his people for his harem of human partners; Kolat's embrace of humanity led to new advances in torture and cruelty.

Human magic is fluid. Human Sphere powers focus on multiplicity, sacrifice, deception, change, and intensity. These arts flow to exploit situation. Human mages often focus on techniques involving animals, treachery, empathy, as well as the elements of Water (Western), Wood and Metal (Eastern).

### Backgrounds

Aware humans find themselves drawn to emotions, either expressing themselves as artists or giving others a shoulder to cry on. Humans aren't physically different from

the Unaware. Other Clades may not look inhuman to the Unaware, but they often look interesting enough to stick in mundane memories. Aware humans have no such disadvantage. Aware and Legendary humans both like to talk through problems. They're excellent negotiators and confidantes.

Of course, some humans aren't any good at talking about themselves; others just buck the trend. From antisocial wanderers with a heart of gold to hard-working blue-collar workers, Aware humans don't always play the pop psychologist. Some extremists even claim that since all Unaware are humans, humans are obviously superior. Fortunately, that's not a popular ideology. Humanity is nothing if not varied.

### Appearance

Aware humans don't look any different to the mundane eye but they can spot each other across a crowded street. People who describe the effect say that Aware humans appear more 'in focus' than the Unaware. Most Aware humans use this ability to their advantage, camouflaging themselves by dressing and acting like the rest of the world. Office workers wear suits and ties at work; artists sport the expected, rebellious style. Awareness doesn't limit itself based on geographical origin, skin tone, hair or eye colour, or anything else. To the Unaware, Aware humans look like other locals – eccentric perhaps, but an accepted part of humanity's incredible diversity.

Perhaps damningly, there is absolutely no change when a human falls to the Dark. In the past, people thought that the colour of a person's hair or skin showed that they were "evil", but that stereotype has no grounding in reality. Unlike the other Clades, appearance doesn't tell you which side a human Legend is on.

### Clade Characteristics

Perhaps the greatest advantage any human has is his adaptability. Humans naturally bridge the gaps between worlds. The Unaware world is theirs, if they can stand it. Humans who retreat to Interstices continue to innovate, filling any niche that shows up in the Interstice's strange environs.

In a Pocket Kingdom, human characters never suffer the -1 die penalty for having no applicable Aptitude.

### Legends

**Soul of the World (Passive):** Human Legends are the closest to the soul of the world. When humans Manifest, their inherent link to the planet allows them to store more magical power. Add 2 to their total Magic (Conviction + Degeneration + 2 as opposed to



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Conviction + Degeneration).

**Animal Dominion (Active):** Harkening back to their original purpose, human Legends can manifest animal traits. The eyes of an eagle, the claws of a tiger and the reflexes of cobra are just some of the abilities available to Legends. Activating this power adds an animal feature for one scene. The feature adds one die to applicable tasks. Natural weapons inflict Wound damage instead. Other features might give a human the ability to breathe water like a fish or grant the eyes and nightvision of a cat. The animal trait is visible to the Aware. A human's player can spend additional Magic to increase the dice bonus of the trait or the Force of a natural weapon on a one point per die/Force rank. Humans can spend as much Magic as their Body (not counting Edges or Flaws) on a single use of this power.



## ELVES

## PRINCES OF THE OTHERWORLD

## Overview

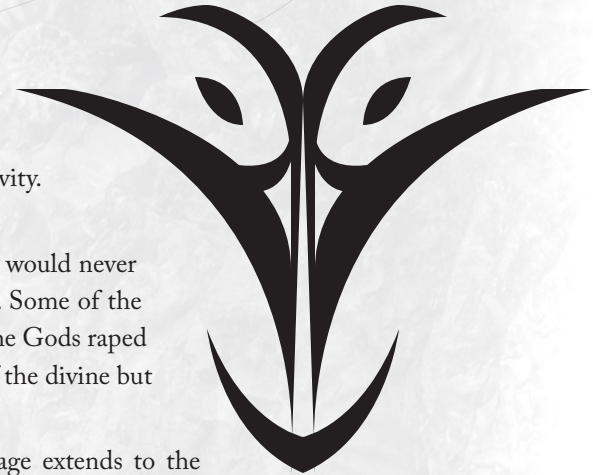
Before matter or thought, the spark of divinity flickered in the Source. It found form and consciousness in the world of ideals. The Gods were born. They made all things to mirror the perfection of the Source, but as finite beings, their creations were imperfect – but imperfection led to more creativity. Matter and magic flowed into new shapes, ever seeking to reflect the Source.

The Gods looked upon their creations and saw a spark of creativity that they would never have. The Gods lusted after that spark, and a few decided to take it by force. Some of the humans and dwarves gave in to the Gods' carnal demands, but many didn't. The Gods raped humans and dwarves, and God and mortal gave birth to a new Clade, born of the divine but clothed in matter. Violation and love created the elves.

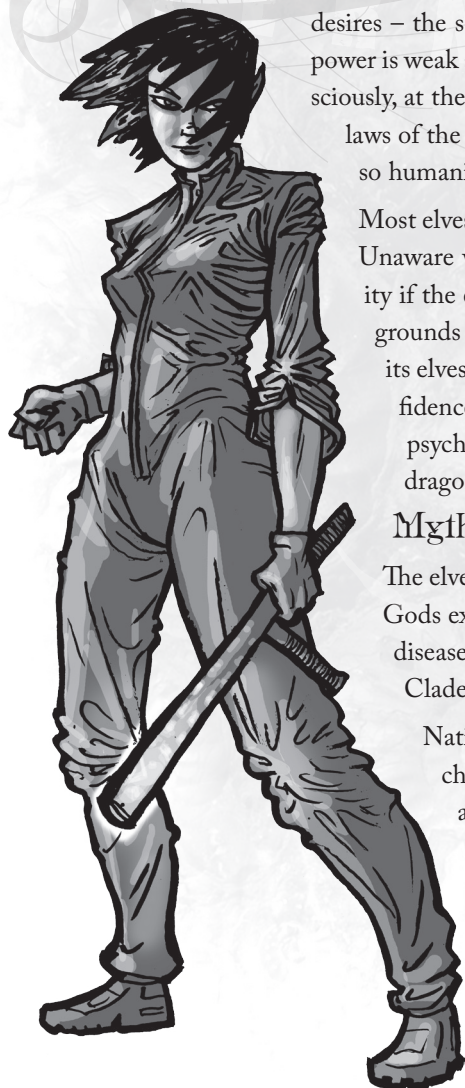
Elven historians cling to their shards of divinity, claiming that their heritage extends to the Source itself, as ideal forms that predate the material world. These elves believe that they're obviously the oldest Clade. Members of the Clades don't often care, but press the argument anyway, as popping a particularly inflated elven ego is a popular pastime. The spark of the Gods shapes elven bodies from below the surface. Only when Manifestation brings a wellspring of magic does the primal force burn forth. Legendary elves have an aura that anyone can detect. Their altered forms become more pronounced.

Local legendry influences an elf's Aware physique. Fantasy fiction also plays a part, especially if it influences a human's reflexive image of an elvish, fey, or semidivine form. A strongly Catholic area produces elves with shining haloes and feathered shoulders – even wings. Elves from an area with a strong Middle-Eastern presence have the bronze skin and crowns of smokeless fire attributed to jinn. Ancient legends have a more powerful influence than modern fantasy, but there are still no shortage of elves with willowy bodies and pointed ears.

What's the link between legends and the elven form? Some say that elves unconsciously wield the divine ability to fulfil human



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desires – the same power that the Gods once used to attract and rule their worshipers. In elves, the power is weak and instinctual; they can only alter their shapes to fulfil human dreams, and only unconsciously, at the moment of Manifestation. Another theory holds that Unaware humans influence the laws of the Gods’ prison. Their legends bind the Gods to the world. Elves have some of that spark, so humanity locks elves away from the Source by confining them to limited, if mythic forms.

Most elves don’t have a superiority complex, but they’re used to people agreeing with them. In the Unaware world, an elf’s natural beauty gives her a legion of yes-men – even a cult of personality if the elf’s social acumen is strong enough to support it. The presence of other Aware usually grounds her in humble, practical issues. Still, when a circle of Legends makes a group decision, its elves are often the last to commit to the consensus. They dislike compromise and exude confidence – and have trouble admitting to errors. Other Aware know that this is part of the elven psyche and appreciate the flipside: An elf can rally heroes behind her and stand tall against dragon fire, if the situation demands it.

### Myth and Magic

The elves are the Clade with the most grounding in mythology. Their very existence proves that Gods exist. Elves are capricious demigods. In some tales they’re harbingers of nightmares and diseases. In others, they’re beautiful, fey creatures who use illusions to cloud the minds of other Clades.

Native beliefs and fancies influence an elf’s final form. This takes place during the elf’s childhood, even if it predates Manifestation, so a German woman who moved to Arizona as a teen Manifests as a Teutonic *aelf*. Originally, people thought of ugly creatures and elves were ugly. Elven Legends also draw upon a second influence: themselves. A Legend takes a shape strongly influenced by the elf’s own ideas about beauty, divinity and otherworldly glory. Modern Legends sometimes Manifest “natural” tribal tattoos. Their hair might spontaneously grow, change colour or reshape itself into spikes or dreadlocks.

Elven magic is ephemeral. It focuses on ideas rather than physical things. A large



part of elven magic involves bringing concepts into the physical world. Elven sorcerers create workings and techniques that deal with ideas, illusions, speed, and the elements of Water (Eastern) and Air (Western).

### Backgrounds

Elves tend to take leadership roles in both mundane and Aware society. Strategy is second nature to an elf's mind, though she can have problems applying her elaborate theories to the real world. Elves often rise like a meteor through the ranks of corporations, but some individuals manipulate companies from behind the scenes instead. Elves excel in any field. The spark of the divine, combined with a beauty that even the Unaware sense, ensures that elves rarely stumble, fumble or play the fool. At worst, elves fail nobly. At their best, they channel the talents of their divine ancestors. There are Gods for any field, and elves to reflect their prowess.

### Appearance

Elves are unique in appearance. Their heritage and belief-shaped forms ensure that no two look the same to Aware eyes. There are some general points that carry over. Elves tend to be taller than humans, with an average height for both men and women of slightly over six feet tall. Most are slender compared to humans, and even the strongest elf looks wiry rather than muscle-bound. Elves who gain weight retain these proportions for as long as possible. They don't suffer from beer guts or cellulite.

An elf's specific features depend on her culture and in the case of Legends, personal visions. An Egyptian elf may have the head of a cobra, hawk, or jackal. An elf raised on psychedelia might channel the "Machine Elf" concept; fractals dance in her eyes and she has rippling outline and mercury skin. It's all up to the beliefs of the elf and those around her. Whatever the specifics, all elves are otherworldly and fascinating. While only Legends can make true use of their divinely-altered forms, an elf is never hindered by her body.

### Clade Characteristics

Elves carry the divine spark within them. Even the least attractive elf inspires awe in those who see her, allowing her to impress (or browbeat) others through force of personality. However, when dealing with both elves and non-elves, most elves will automatically favour their own Clade, brushing off the concerns of non-elves.

All elves possess the Presence Edge: Awe-Inspiring and the Presence Flaw: Aloof

In a Pocket Kingdom, elves reroll one die whenever they get a Number of the Beast. They might fail, but their worst is never as bad as other Clades.

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### Legends

**Altered Form (Passive):** The magic that flows through a Legend's body empowers her. An elf finds that her more unusual features, previously only cosmetic, become useful. Wings carry the elf aloft at her running pace. A glowing halo provides light and a flaming brow can ignite paper or wood. Each elf has one such feature. It works naturally for them from the moment of Manifestation.

**Divine Aura (Active):** In moments of danger, elves draw upon a divine aura, wearing their excellence like armour and scaring those who wish them harm into pulling their blows. This power activates at the start of a round. All opponents who would harm the character must beat her in an opposed Presence roll (the Awe-Inspiring Edge counts for this roll). If the opponent loses, he cannot act except to protect himself for the round. This ability can be used once per scene. Elf players can spend Magic points to either extend the effect for a round or add a die to the roll on a one point per one die or round basis. An elf can expend as much magic on a single use of the power as his Presence Attribute without counting Edges or Flaws.



# DWARVES

## LORDS OF EARTH

### Overview

As long as there has been matter, there have been dwarves. Forged from the rock of the Earth, the Gods gave the dwarven Clade dominion over the material world. Dwarves are the guardians of rock, metal and precious gems. Opinion is divided as to whether their ancient birthright extends to water and plants, though many say not. Other Clades have their duties, whether they remember them or not. Dwarves are the stewards of the planet, responsible for the integrity and health of the Earth. Once, dwarves crafted fabulous items for human and God alike, shaping stone and metal like clay. Once, Low Kings held court in caverns deep within the hearts of mountains. Once, each dwarf was the very embodiment of the world, immune to the concerns of man or God. The world changed, and the Lords of Earth changed with it.

A spark of the Earth's power sings within every dwarven soul. Some dwarves submitted when the Gods invaded their creation. They embraced the divine and sacrificed the magical world. Many more felt the silent scream of a creation brought too close to its makers. They resisted with legendary weapons and masterful traps. Their victory made the world a prison for the wayward Gods. Despite this, dwarves are not gaolers or prison wardens. They remain the Lords of Earth, and understand that a lord must guard his domain. Depending on his heritage and the culture he grows up in, a dwarf may believe himself to be one of thirty-six *tzaddikim* or one of the *shitenno*, who guard true dharma. Every culture tells tales of the world's guardians – tales that dwarves take to heart.

In modern times, dwarves are usually pragmatic, if stubborn people. A dwarf must be able to rely upon herself first and foremost. Some go as far as never admitting injuries or problems. They don't like to share their burdens, but only Legendary dwarves possess physiques that can handle grave injury without a care.





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A dwarf Legend's circle becomes a part of her family. Her enhanced vitality isn't something she wastes; she must use it as befits a custodian of the world. Away from dangerous situations, dwarves test plans for points of failure and work out the consequences of their choices. A dwarf might decide to take on a suicide mission, but only after weighing the gains against the outcomes and confirming that it's the best thing to do.

### Myth and Magic

In the old legends, the dwarves were the first Clade. Before rampant invention, before the lusts of the Gods, and before beasts roamed the land, the dwarven Clade guarded the world. They used the metal and gems of their domain to create intricate, magical artefacts. Some forged wondrous tools and weapons for the incarnate Gods, while others kept certain devices for themselves against the day when the Gods would threaten the world. Dwarves extracted raw materials from the ground without harming the land, opening tunnels with a word and singing the stones aside.

While ancient dwarves were rarely taller than three feet, Clade members' average heights have slowly increased. Their mystical associations include guardianship, wisdom, mining, and crafting, but not invention. Dwarves of old treated the earth like an honoured mother or father.

Dwarven magic is solid. Through the Spheres, it focuses on quality, protection, endurance, and the idea of the form – a thing that is the essence of its kind. They shape gross matter into things that come close to the Source's ideal templates. They preserve natural beauty and unlock the secret potential of objects. Dwarf mages bind their spells to engraved runes, weapons, anvils and tools; workings focus on strength, durability, defence, time and the elements of Earth (Eastern and Western) and Metal (Eastern).

## Backgrounds

Dwarves traditionally work in physical jobs. They get their hands dirty, applying body and mind to the task at hand. A dwarf is usually more comfortable with things he can touch than abstract concepts, though there are plenty of exceptions. Dwarves work with stones and metal in all their forms. In addition to jewellers and smiths, a number of dwarves are auto mechanics and engineers. Some of them love intricate designs that are inspired by circuitry. The minority who work with ideas rather than objects often find that they have a talent for teaching, imparting a sense of wonder and responsibility in others.

## Appearance

Compared to other Clades, dwarves are short. Average height for both genders is around four feet; the tallest recorded dwarf was five feet one inch tall. Despite Unaware assumptions, members of the Clade aren't generally stocky or strong as a result. The Lords of Earth prefer trades that benefit from physical power and develop the physique to match.

Dwarves resemble short humans in almost every way. Their hair grows faster than that of humans, but to the same proportional length. Traditional dwarf fashion includes long hair and full beards on male dwarves, but younger dwarves keep their hair short and shave regularly. Physical workers with long beards often braid them to avoid nasty accidents.

Unlike humans, dwarves always appear to be in the full blush of health. When a dwarf looks slightly pale, she's seriously ill. This goes hand in hand with the laconic attitude that dwarves have about their health. Other Clades sometimes believe that dwarves don't suffer from mundane afflictions like the common cold, though that's not true. They just don't complain about them. Legends reinforce this attitude because they're tougher than other mortals.

## Clade Characteristics

Dwarven minds are best at working through intricate problems. They don't jump to conclusions, but bring together everything they know to work out a solution. Unfortunately, their physical stature is a significant disadvantage in a world made for taller, Unaware humans.

All dwarves have the Mind Edge: Methodical and the Body Flaw: Short.

In a Pocket Kingdom, a dwarf character can move and shape earth and stone up to her own size at once with her bare hands. Many dwarves working together can build large underground complexes in very little time.

## Legends

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**Iron Constitution (Passive):** Legends of dwarven heritage find themselves hearkening back to the first dwarves, the lords of stone. Their innate magic lessens the impact of serious diseases and makes them far more robust than members of other Clades. Dwarf Legends add 2 to their maximum health at character creation (Body + Edge + 6 as opposed to Body + Edge + 4).

**Eternal Guardians (Active):** The Gods made the dwarves to be guardians of the world. A guardian needs to be vigilant. By touching the ground, the dwarf can “see” everything in a radius of a quarter of a mile, and knows if anything in that range needs her attention. The dwarf’s player asks a single question that serves as the basis for her search. The answer can only provide information that might be understood through the five mundane senses at the moment of use. Dwarves cannot penetrate illusions or magical concealment in this fashion. A dwarf’s player can spend additional Magic on this power; one extra point adds an additional question or another quarter-mile to the radius. The dwarf can spend as much Magic on a single use of the power as his Mind Attribute without Edges or Flaws.





# gnomes

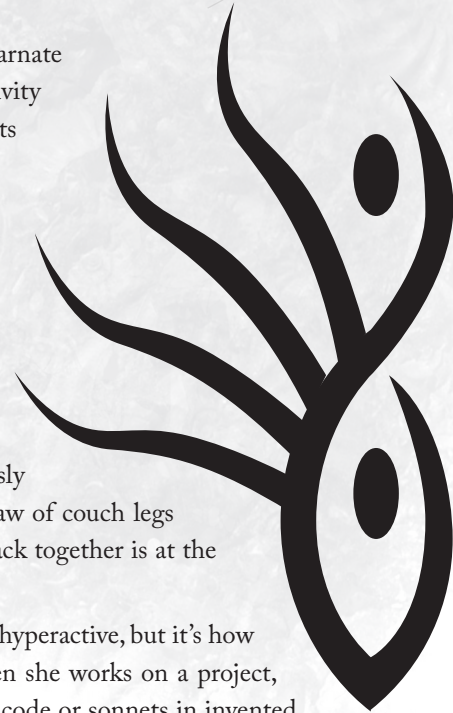
## BORN OF INVENTION

### Overview

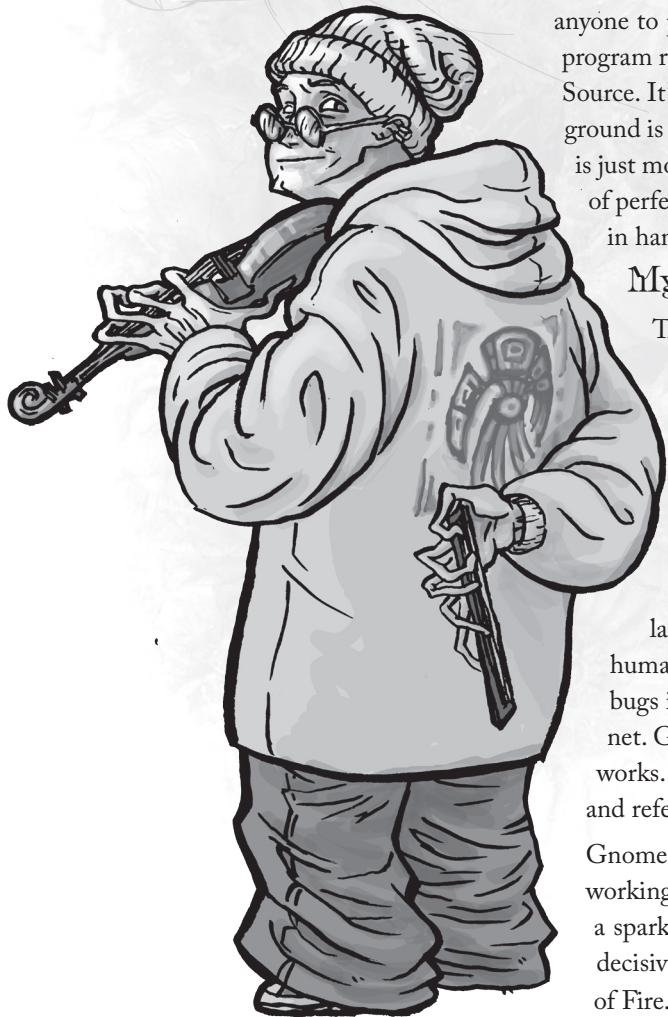
The last Clade created by the Gods before they sank from memory, gnomes are incarnate spirits of invention. Before the Gods took mortal lovers, humanity's erratic creativity attracted (or perhaps spawned) countless spirits of invention. Jealous of their talents and their intimate link to humans, the Gods imprisoned these spirits in flesh. If the Gods hoped to punish them, they failed. Given the chance to interact with the physical world and give their ideas material form, the newborn gnomes never looked back.

Few gnomes are historians. The past is boring, full of antique ideas and half-realized dreams. To a gnome, new creations are important. Inventions are exciting and interesting, virgin ground waiting for someone to experiment and create. If the innovator destroys something on her way to glory, so be it. Nobody really knows how something works until they take it apart. Young gnomes mercilessly deconstruct of musical genres, dismantle phones to "find the voice inside," and saw of couch legs to right the smallest wobble. When she's found what she needs, putting things back together is at the bottom of her agenda.

A gnome constantly bounces from one idea to the next. This can make her appear hyperactive, but it's how she works best. Why work on realising one idea when you can realise ten? When she works on a project, that's her only focus; days pass by without food or sleep while she writes esoteric code or sonnets in invented languages. Inventions build upon all prior efforts using the most available materials. Gnomes believe that their work comes before ephemeral definitions of ownership. They take what they need and return it with credit later, if they remember. Some gnomes cut out the middleman; they invent new forms of burglary or con-artistry. At first, they might do it to support a conventional field of study, but theft is its own obsession, passionately pursued by gnomes who consider it to be an art form.



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A gnome who creates physical devices has a burning need to test her creations, feel them with her own hands and see them with her own eyes. Likewise, a musician never allows anyone to play any of his work before he unveils it. At that burning moment, when a program runs or the notes ring out, the gnome tastes perfection: emanations from the Source. It's one hell of a rush, even addictive, but once it's over, going over the same ground is never as good as moving on. Commenting on code or writing gallery guides is just more pointless make-work getting in the way of the next project, the next hint of perfection. Every gnome has a collection of their past creations. These often come in handy at a gnome's most desperate moments.

### Myth and Magic

The forerunners of the gnomes were sprites that danced in human-made fires. Born of this ancient invention, the spirits embraced the Clades' creative powers. They enhanced them with firelight whispers and suggestive shapes in the flame. After the Gods gave them bodies, gnomes retained the nature of fire: brilliant, erratic and as liable to destroy as create.

In ancient Greece, gnomes were said to be touched by the Muses. Gnomes were nockers in the mines and hobgoblins of the hearth. Subtle and quick, they left behind strange crafts that worked for them, but violated the precise tolerances of Unaware engineering. By the industrial age, humans called the Clade gremlins. In modern times their myth lives on as strange bugs in computer software and rumours of a 'ghost' or emergent AI in the Internet. Gnome tales have always made little distinction between the gnome and his works. Some gnomes believe that their inventions are extensions of their own souls and refer to them the way anyone else would talk about their own hand or eye.

Gnome magic is fickle. The Spheres focus it towards quick effects, sleight of hand, working around problems, and self-preservation. Their magic dances around like a spark, keeping them safe while burning a new path into the world. Mages love decisiveness, chaos, progress, destruction, and the Eastern and Western elements of Fire.

## Backgrounds

The Invention-Born entrench themselves in places they can work without interruptions. Labs, artists' colonies, squats and garages might each have resident gnomes. Many find employment in universities, but are too preoccupied to teach and study subjects too esoteric to get them tenure. Technically-minded gnomes blur the lines between disciplines and mix and match them to suit their needs. Computational physics and forensic entomology are disciplines a gnome would love. Gnomes might explore man-magic prosthetic interfaces, music played on construction equipment and new literary genres, martial arts, or medicines.

Most gnomes are happy to work in fields that apply to their particular craze, as long as their employers pay them to work on new things. A gnome thinks nothing about moving from one job to another as soon as she gets bored, though all too often she has to stick with a job she's outgrown in order to pay her rent. In commercially viable fields, gnomes are perfectly suited to contract work, as it gives them a chance to tear down what came before and create something new, then bounce on to the next project.

## Appearance

Gnomes look like slightly smaller humans. The average height for males and females is five feet and their bodies fit typical human proportions. Their only radical physical difference is in their hands. Their fingers are long and thin, able to bend in odd ways and well-suited to fine manipulation or expressive gestures. Their palms have flexible bones and can collapse to the thickness of their wrists. This makes them hard to shackle and renders them immune to repetitive strain injuries.

Gnomes have a creative look about them: a mark of their environment. It might be the pale skin of a server-room suntan or the paint-spattered fingers of a habitual artist. Many play up their individuality in their personal styles. Patched leather jackets, shirts bearing political or technical slogans, and big, interesting boots are common. Gnomes who join an Unaware subculture accent the expected style with DIY accessories. Gnome hair grows in a wide range of colours, both human-natural and not. Tattoos and facial piercings are commonplace and often homemade.

A few gnomes go in another direction in order to show their dissatisfaction with the mundane world. These gnomes dress in razor-sharp suits and ultraconservative ties, their hair tied back or trimmed to military length. Some Unaware subcultures have adopted this "subversive chic" style as well, but it's a predominantly gnomish phenomenon.



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### Clade Characteristics

Thanks to their unique hands and fine motor skills, gnomes are naturally better at tasks requiring manual dexterity. When they focus on a task, however, they have a hard time relating to anything outside of their current obsession.

All gnomes have the Body Edge: Nimble and the Mind Flaw: Oblivious.

In a Pocket Kingdom, a gnome character can create a common, household appliance or device in a day. These technologies often work using principles drawn from the gnome's current interest instead of Unaware engineering. They write songs that clean dishes and make ovens that turn stones to bread. These devices don't work in the mundane world.

### Legends

**Superlative Ability (Passive):** Legendary gnomes certainly live up to their purpose. Whether their specialty is with computers or cars, sonnets or surgery, the Manifestation ensures that they are one of the best they can be. Choose one Skill that the gnome already possesses. It adds two dice rather than one. This Skill cannot be traded to increase its related Aptitude unless the gnome discards it and chooses a new obsessive Skill. It takes a day to make the switch and the character must already possess the new Skill.

**Touch of the Muse (Active):** Before they took physical form, gnomes had to settle for inspiring others to perform creative feats. With nothing more than a conversation, the gnome inspires someone to do something creative with one of their Aptitudes. This project normally takes about a week, during which the subject doesn't need to sleep or eat. When the subject has completed the project, she rolls Mind + the Aptitude in question. The gnome regains Magic up to the number of points scored on this roll. A gnome can only use this ability on one subject at a time.

## The Others

Humans and the Bright Clades aren't the only ones in the world. While characters start out as Lightsiders, the Dull Clades have come a long way since the Fall. This section describes the three Dull Clades, including enough information to create NPCs or detail what changes when a character falls to the Dark.

Nothing stops you from creating Darksider characters. As opposed to other "antagonist games," Darksiders must actively work against not just the protagonists but themselves. They must deny their own beliefs to grow powerful. Cynicism, submission and self-denial are the tools of the Dark. This book can't go into the detail required to cover such themes without sacrificing information on the focus of the game.

That's not to say that Darksiders are one-dimensional. Legends of the Dull Clades surrender to the Gods' prison-world, waiting for easy answers rather than finding their own unique journeys to enlightenment. Without true beliefs, a Darksider reverses the Light's path to glory. Where the Light demands self-sacrifice, the Dark lures adherents into exploiting others. Where the Light apotheosis urges a Legend to let go of her fears and be reborn, the Dark demands that the world change, falling under its heel to serve the Legend's flaws and fears. Some Darksiders actively work to destroy a defiant world, so that they might free the Gods and win their blessings. The Dark whispers to its servants that they don't need to take responsibility for their actions or explore who they really are. If the world will not serve them, it should die, so that the Gods might go free and satisfy their slaves' base desires.

The Dark does not rule the hearts of every member of the Dull Clades. Some people are born to the orcs and goblins. They have Darksider ancestors but are simply Aware and care little for the Dark or Light. When one of them becomes a Legend of the Light they join the Light version of their Clade, but retain some of their former features. An Aware orc who becomes a Legend of the Light becomes an elf, but retains a few demonic traits. A former troll is a dwarf with stony skin and brilliant, crystalline eyes. Some Legends identify with their new Clade, but others proudly retain their heritage and still call themselves orcs, trolls and goblins.

Characters can only possess the game characteristics of a single Clade at a time; no mixing and matching is allowed. They may retain some of the cosmetic features of their old Clade, but Dull Clade characters who Manifest as Lightsiders always look like their true, Bright Clade more than their Dull ancestry. The same rule applies to Lightsiders who fall to the Dark. An elf who becomes an orc looks more like an orc than an elf, and possesses the game characteristics of the orcish Clade.

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### ORCS



Fallen elves, orcs have long been the champions of the underdog. Most orcs didn't ask to fall, but paid the price for their forefathers' sins. They are still children of the Gods, but reflect their divine ancestors' savage sides. They possess the assurance of a demon lord, but this brings distrust along with fascination. Orcs often fight for the rights of Dull Clade communities to overcome the stigma of their births, but they cannot deny that many of their Legends are newly-Fallen elves – and that these princes of the Dark are incomparable champions of the orcish cause.

#### Appearance

Like elves, each orc differs in appearance depending both on the culture around them and their personal beliefs. Unlike elves, their forms reflect demons and dark Gods. Cloven hooves, horns, bat-wings, crow's feathers, and large teeth are common. Some radiate shadows in defiance of the prevailing light, or their eyes burn with green fire when they're enraged. Whether they take after Christian devils, oni, fomorians or werewolves, an orc looks every inch the scion of dark powers.

A few general traits carry through for all orcs. They stand as tall as humans but are broader and more muscular. They keep this proportion no matter how much muscle they carry and will even grow a few inches to maintain it. The weakest orc doesn't look scrawny – just short. To human eyes, there's always a slight imperfection to indicate her heritage. Eyebrows grow together, middle and ring fingers are the same length and so on.

#### Clade Characteristics

Orcs don't channel their Divine heritage as elves do. They put their Gods-derived power behind words and deeds, whipping up crowds into a frenzy. The mark of the Gods' displeasure at their fallen children is all too obvious to someone who knows what to look for.

All orcs have the Presence Edge: Rousing and the Body Flaw: Distinctive.

In a Pocket Kingdom, orcs reroll one die whenever they get a Number of the Beast. Like elves, orcs at their worst are never as bad as other Clades.



### Legends

**Altered Form (Passive):** The magic that flows through a Legend's body empowers her. An orc finds that her more unusual features, previously only cosmetic, become useful. Wings carry him at a running pace, cloven hooves let him run fast and far and large teeth let him bite through almost anything. Each orc has one such feature that works naturally for them from the moment of Manifestation.

**Profane Aura (Active):** Orcs are surrounded by an aura of divine energy. They can channel this energy to cause fear in the hearts of all who see them. This power activates at the start of a round. All opponents who can see the character must spend a point of Will in order to take any actions that round. If they do not, they either freeze in place or flee as far away from the orc as possible. This ability can be used once per scene. An orc's player can spend additional points of Magic to enhance this power; each point adds one to the Will cost to resist the Profane Aura. The orc can only devote as many Magic points as his Presence (not counting Edges or Flaws) to a single use of the power.

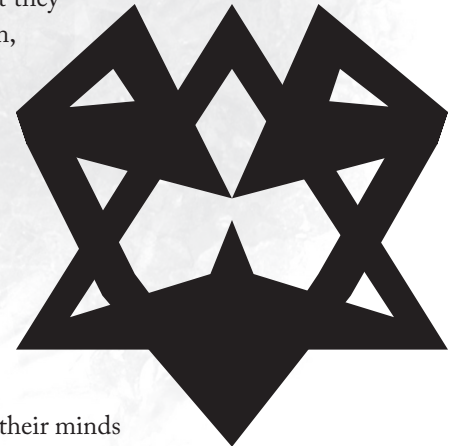
### TROLLS

The earth moves – literally. Trolls are as much stone as they are men, slaves of the rock that they once mastered. While their powerful bodies make them excellent labourers and sportsmen, they think at a more geological pace and fast-talkers find it easy to outsmart them.

#### Appearance

Trolls are of average height for humans, but often stoop over. All trolls develop powerful muscles reinforced by their stony flesh. Their brows and chins protrude forwards, often leading people to assume that they're stupid. In some cases, a troll stoops so low that his knuckles touch the ground when he stands normally. They tend to have short hair or shaven heads and generally avoid tattoos, piercings and other body modifications. Rocky flesh makes them hard to apply or keep.

Aware eyes see that the flesh of trolls is a form of animate stone. Their eyes glitter like gemstones and their teeth look like diamonds. Unfortunately, the earth's influence pervades their minds as well. They think slowly; quick intuition is hard for them. Though by no means stupid, trolls take longer to reach a conclusion from a standing start.



## ii - THE CLADES

### Clade Characteristics

A troll's stony muscles are capable of lifting heavier loads and hitting with a force that no other Clade can muster. When a troll becomes enraged, she strikes with the Earth behind her. Unfortunately, the Earth thinks at the speed of glaciers and eroding shores, and even her most animate children are slow compared to the other Clades.

All trolls have the Body Edge: Strong and the Mind Flaw: Slow.

In a Pocket Kingdom, trolls age at the rate of mountains. Their natural lifespan is measured in millennia, and they do not perish from disease.

### Legends

**Stone Skin (Passive):** Those trolls who have Manifested feel the power of the Earth flowing through them, hardening their already strong frame even further. Their skin grows tougher and harder to break, giving them two points of natural armour that works equally well against firearms and melee weapons.

**Earthwalk (Active):** A troll's kinship with the earth allows her to pass her body through any body of stone or rock. Once per scene, a character can move her body through any contiguous mass of rock (including concrete and asphalt). The meld takes a minute to complete, during which the character can't move. This ability cannot be used in combat unless the troll's player spends an additional point of Magic. This reduces the melding time to a full round, during which the troll can take no other actions. Trolls can spend an indefinite amount of time in a stone, but if they stay longer than a scene they must use the power a second time to leave. Trolls also lose a point of Magic per week in a stone's embrace and do not regain points. Thus, a troll with 0 Magic is trapped.

Fortunately, another troll can use this power to rouse a "slumbering" brother. Stories tell of ancient troll monsters and heroes who sleep in the hearts of mountains, waiting for magic to free them.

## goblins

Fallen gnomes, goblins are creatures of shadow. They don't have the burning need for creation and innovation of gnomes but they do love to destroy. Sabotage is an art form, but death is boring unless it's brought about with a certain degree of finesse. Iconoclasts and rebels, goblins keep to the shadows, using their natural cunning to see them safe. Rather than raging on street-corners, they strike at established ideas from the fringes, making them excellent thieves and spies.

### Appearance

When a goblin stands straight she's as tall as a gnome, but they are more comfortable standing hunched over and coiled to strike. It's rare to find a goblin that isn't rail-thin, and many look emaciated no matter how much they eat. Their ears are larger than human and come to a point, and their eyes are big enough to belong to lemurs instead of people.

Goblins don't look the same the world over. Unlike orcs and elves, goblins look like shadow-dwellers and provocative creatures. European goblins might have the brown skin of a British hobgoblin or the jet-black eyes and catlike mannerisms of a German Kobold. Japanese goblins have feathers, and their faces extend into a beak. Their flexibility is mental as well as physical, lending goblins a degree of cunning not seen in the other Clades. Their general lack of physical stature leads to them looking for exits and planning what to do when things go wrong. Other Clades call this cowardice; goblins call it prudence.

### Clade Characteristics

Goblins have a great degree of mental cunning; they can juggle a dozen thoughts at a time and change their plans instantly. Goblins hate direct confrontation. This is one of the few points on which their minds refuse to bend.

All goblins have the Mind Edge: Cunning and the Presence Flaw: Cowardly

In a Pocket Kingdom, goblins cannot fail rolls relating to stealth and hiding in shadows. They are considered to have scored the maximum result on applicable dice pools.





## ii - THE CLADES

### Legends

**Flexible (Passive):** Legendary goblins are more flexible than human contortionists. They can squeeze through any crack that they can fit their head through and can shrug off handcuffs instantly, if desired. A goblin can move through any space larger than her own head at half normal speed, and can get out of anything less than full-body bindings in a few minutes.

**Shadowcraft (Active):** A goblin's soul casts dark shadows. She can bring these shadows to the material world at will. Legendary goblins can generate and control shadows once per scene. These shadows can move in disturbing ways, distracting an opponent, or they generate a pool of darkness big enough for the character to hide in. While magically created and animated, these shadows are dispelled by bright light and have no physical presence. Goblin shadows add a die to stealth-related tasks, Defence or another action that shadow play might benefit (GM's call) for a turn. A goblin's player can spend additional magic to increase the Defence or die bonus by one per point. A goblin can't spend more Magic on a single use of Shadowcraft than his Mind Attribute, discounting Edges or Flaws.

### Influence

Why do so many elves side with Legends of the Light and so many orcs join the armies of the Dark? Surely trolls with noble goals should side with the Light and gnomes who seek to destroy the modern order should turn to the Dark. Why are affiliations among the Aware drawn along such obvious racial lines? Part of the answer is that Legends who join the Dark become members of the Dull Clades. These new orcs, trolls and goblins constantly poison Dull Clade politics with their Darksider plots. But even that doesn't tell the whole story.

All Legends store magic within themselves. Dedicating themselves to a Sphere channels that power. Nothing happens in a vacuum, however. Every time she channels magic, the Legend reinforces her archetype. This magic creates a subtle aura around her as it bleeds off. This aura works through ancient archetypes, left over from the original Fall. It subtly convinces Clades that are traditionally "on her side" to help her out. This is entirely subconscious. Few of the Aware know anything about the effect. Even if they did, the Dark is not so destructive that the Aware always believe it to be evil, and the Light sometimes inspires incredible destruction. Thus, Aware who know the truth do not necessarily believe it makes a difference in the greater scheme of things.

Humans are immune to the effects of Influence but their Legends still exert it on others. Did they fall farther than the other Clades, beyond Influence's reach, or does their mystic adaptability trump its power? Nobody knows the answer.

Influence lets a Lightsider raise an army by speaking to a crowd. The Bright Clades in the crowd are better disposed to his arguments than they would be if he weren't a Legend, and many more will join his cause. All a Darksider has to do is gather a few of the Dull Clades for a quiet conversation, and she has a conspiracy, no matter their affiliation when they're outside her presence. Influence works its way in through the cracks in the Aware psyche. It begins with a Legend's intervention, but persists for a long as the conspiracy, militia or mob might practically stick together.

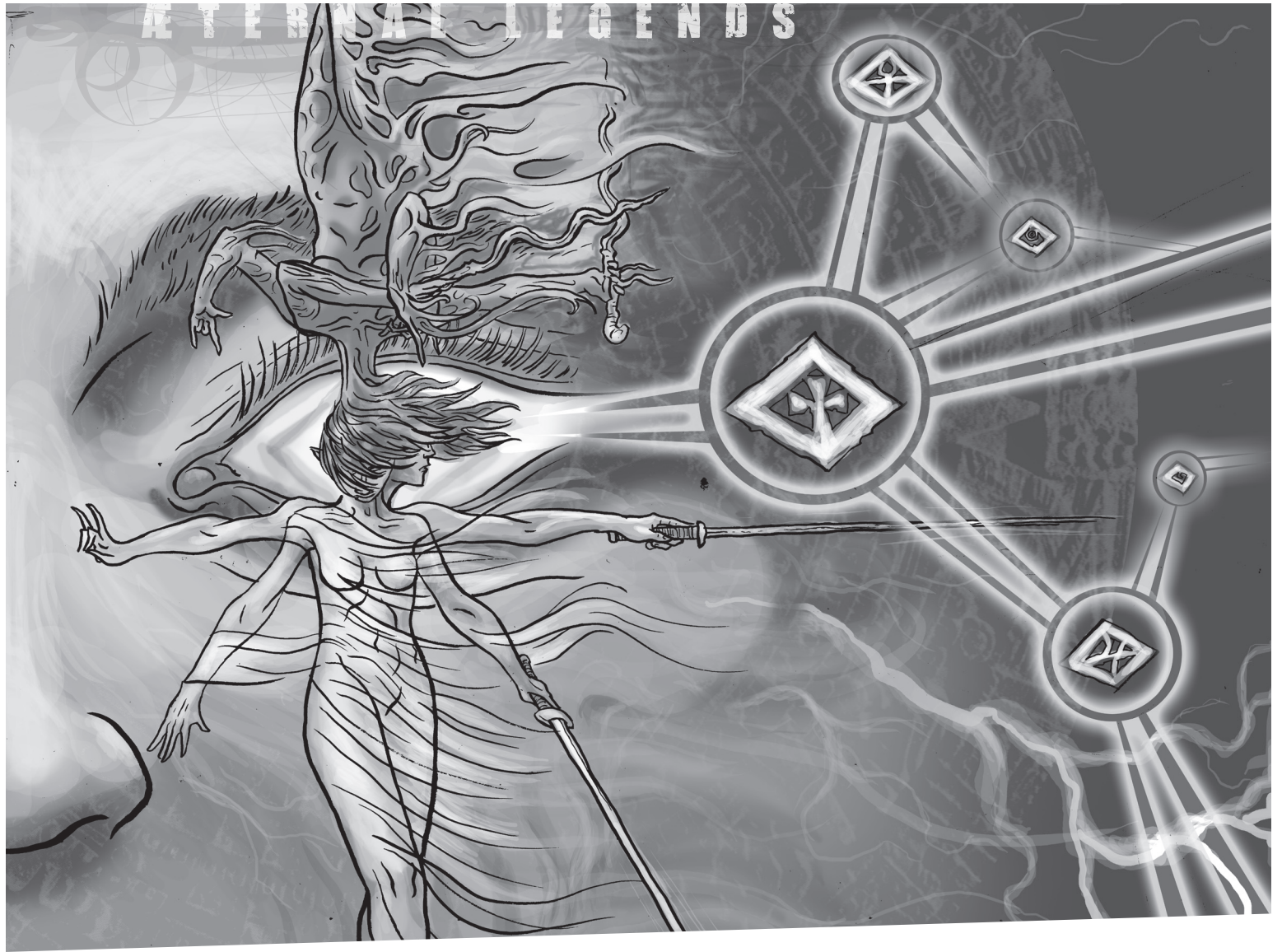
Influence does not enslave its targets either. It will not inspire fanaticism in people who aren't inclined toward it already. Its targets are also free to interpret the message they're given and might even disagree with the inspiring Legend about the best way to implement his plans.

### Influence Systems

Influence isn't suited to one on one conversation. It only affects people when they're in a group. Even then, it only works if the Legend is asking the group to help her in some way that furthers the aims of her faction: forming a secret society or riddling an opponent's network with spies, helping her solve a puzzle or distribute a riddle across many people, or finding weapons and organising a fighting force. Lightsiders Influence Bright Clades; Darksiders, Dull Clades. Influence adds a bonus equal to half of the Legend's best Sphere to these social tasks. Characters resist with an Ethos + applicable social Aptitude roll. Politicians and priests are often fully able to use their Aptitudes against an Influence attempt. Legends are always immune to Influence.



# ETERNAL LEGENDS







## THE POWER OF BELIEF

### Ἔθος

ETHOS IS SELF-BELIEF. SELF-BELIEF IS IGNORING ALL

THOSE LITTLE LIES THAT MAKE MUNDANE SOCIETY WORK IN FAVOUR OF

KNOWING WHAT YOU PERSONALLY WANT. Society says: "Money makes me happy." Society says:

"It was just a one-night stand." Does money really make you happy, or does it just let you buy stuff that you don't really want or need to stop you thinking about how little you do with your life? Was she just a one-night stand because you were drunk and horny, or because you could never love a girl like you loved Jenny, when she was alive?

Self-belief is cutting through the bullshit and excuses and finding out who you are, down at your very core. It's not always pretty, but it frees your brain up for contact with the magical field surrounding the planet. It's the hardest thing anyone can do, but it's also the most rewarding.

### iii - THE POWER OF BELIEF

#### Belief

While it's rated in numbers, the Ethos Attribute (see p. 87) is mostly shorthand for your character's beliefs. There's not much point in having strong beliefs without ever knowing what they are. Ethos is a link between your character's list of Beliefs and mechanical constructs like Conviction and Degeneration.

Every point of Ethos is tied to one of your character's core beliefs, but there's no direct correspondence – if you buy your Ethos up and define another Belief, you don't have to sacrifice that specific Belief if your Ethos drops for whatever reason.

Beliefs are used in the game to help judge your character's actions. Beliefs on the character sheet don't have to colour everything she does, but standing up for a higher goal in the face of adversity is a core conflict in **Æternal Legends**. To that end, Legends can spend Conviction to help them achieve those goals.

Beliefs don't have to be what most people think of as “good” or “noble”. More than one follower of the Sphere of Strength believes that “Might makes right” – but they believe that even when it'd be better for them not to. Therein lies the ultimate dichotomy between the Light and the Dark.

#### The Light

The Light isn't a higher calling – it's all higher callings. Lightsiders live by the rule that conviction is magic, and that denying themselves that conviction in times of stress is “selling out.” Some follow the Light because they can't imagine a better way. Others came dangerously close to slipping to the Dark at some point in their lives and seek redemption with particular zeal.

A Lightsider has to live with the consequences of his convictions, so he doesn't indulge his more unsavoury beliefs too often. He must be true to himself no matter what, because he's forging a personal path to apotheosis from his beliefs. He must be careful to plan his path, directing his immediate urges to a more constructive goal. If he indulges himself all the time, he sacrifices the big picture for short-term satisfaction, but if he ignores what he cares about, he can't take that next step.

This can put a Lightsider in some interesting quandaries. He can't tell the Emerald Queen's daughter that he loves her, because she'd leave with him and her mother would declare war on the community he'd sworn to protect. She can't build her masterwork without strengthening Dark forces who will exploit its innovations.

While he must respect the bigger picture, no Lightsider can go for long without testing his beliefs. If he goes without for too long,

he gets complacent. That stops him traversing the Spheres or advancing in his own Sphere.

## The Dark

Darksiders don't test their beliefs. Self-awareness lets them know when they're putting their own survival (or convenience) above their spiritual needs. Some Legends reach the Dark by a singular personal disaster; others find themselves unable to live up to the requirements of the Light. Either way, the bigger picture fades from view. A Darksider's path comes from surrendering to orthodoxy, convenience or a greater will than his own. He occasionally indulges his beliefs when there's no chance of opposition and no expectation of effort.

Darksiders walk the Shells: the empty mockeries of the Spheres of Light. They advance by obliterating their beliefs. They surrender hope for the sake of quick power. Eventually, they become as hollow as the Shells themselves and give up their free will for the hope of becoming favoured slaves. They give up the Source within them and give the imprisoned Gods more power – power that they might use to escape their prison. And beyond even the Gods, the Dark Lord Da'ath provides the template for all Darksiders, who transform themselves into his avatars when they reach the pinnacle of power.

## The Aware

Save for Legends, all Aware – even those of the Dull Clades – are followers of the Light on some level. If they were not, they would either cease to exist or would never reach Awareness. Legends gain power through idealism and cynicism alike, but a life among the Unaware is the only thing awaiting those Aware who deny their inner calling.

Some of the Aware choose one side or another because their beliefs fit the vision of the faction provided by a charismatic Legend. A larger number don't consciously care about the Light or Dark. They believe in nothing other than the heroism of a particular Legend, if that. Gangs of dwarves, gnome artists, and goblin sneak-thieves depend on their beliefs to remain Aware, but do so without any pretence of a particular alignment. And even if they follow the Dark, they don't commit so strongly that it would compromise Awareness itself.



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#### Conviction

##### The Aware and Conviction

Conviction measures the strength of an Aware character's self-belief. Every time an Aware character transgresses against one of her beliefs, she loses a point of Conviction. If she loses all her Conviction, she reverts to being Unaware – a mundane human. The only way to avoid that fate is to do something to reaffirm the character's beliefs.

An Aware character gains a point of Conviction for every action that she takes that directly affirms one of her Beliefs in the face of adversity. The action must clearly be against the character's best interests.

An Aware character loses a point of Conviction for every action that she takes that goes against one of her Beliefs. If the transgression was thoughtless – there was no benefit to ignoring her Belief – she loses an extra point.

If a character has conflicting beliefs, where following one would cause her to go against another, she must decide which to follow. If she follows whichever would be against her best interests in the situation, she gains a point of Conviction. If she follows the other, she loses a point of Conviction.

If an Aware character is reduced to 0 points of Conviction, she becomes Unaware the next time she sleeps for more than an hour. Her knowledge of the Aware fades to nothing more than a particularly convincing dream. If the character's in an Interstice, she's transported to the nearest mundane anchor. She can regain her Conviction after a difficult quest if she undertakes it within a year and a day from her loss. After that, all Aware characteristics vanish permanently; she's mundane forever.

##### Legends and Conviction

Legends don't use Conviction to just stave off the pressing mundanity of the world. A Legend – whether a follower of the Light or the Dark – can channel her self-confidence to greater ends, allowing her to perform feats of heroism unmatched by all but the greatest humans. As long as the character puts her Beliefs ahead of self-preservation, she can spend Conviction to help her succeed.

A Legend may spend one Conviction to gain a die on any roll when she is following her Beliefs. She may spend up to half her Ethos to affect any one action.

A Legend may spend one Conviction to remove one point of Degeneration.

A Legend may spend one Conviction when she gains it to clear a mark against one of her Beliefs.

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Spending Conviction on an action prevents a character from gaining Conviction from that action.

**Example:** *Katy is trying to hold her ground in the face of a powerful Darksider who threatens her part of town. She knows that his horde of orcs and trolls outnumbers her and that the Dark Lord could crush her like a bug. One of Katy's beliefs is "Fear is the ultimate weakness", and so she can spend Conviction to gain a die on actions relating to standing her ground or otherwise not being cowed.*

#### Degeneration

Legends don't lose Conviction in the same way as the Aware. Instead, the road of self-denial and convenience grants them Degeneration.

In situations when an Aware character would lose Conviction, a Legend instead gains a point of Degeneration.

Put a mark against the Belief that caused the character to gain Degeneration. When all of her Beliefs are marked, she has begun the process of falling to the Dark.

A character adds one to both her current and maximum Degeneration, unless her maximum Degeneration is equal to her Ethos + 4. If so, she only regains a point of Degeneration if she is below her maximum.

Legends don't just fall to the Dark through convenience. A character's Magic is equal to her Conviction plus Degeneration, and Degeneration is easy to gain – thus, the road to the Dark is the faster road to magical power. Degeneration also works akin to Conviction, giving a Legend a pool of points that can make some actions easier. While spending Conviction represents a character's conscious decision to keep going in the face of adversity, spending Degeneration on a roll is subconscious, giving in to the deep-down need for an easy life.

A Legend may spend one Degeneration to gain a die on any roll where she actively denies her Beliefs. She may spend up to her Ethos in Degeneration to affect any one action.

Spending Degeneration on an action prevents a character gaining Degeneration from that action.

**Example:** *Alan is a member of the Splendour, and one of his core Beliefs is "The Truth Shall Set You Free" – a wonderful ideal, but he doesn't have time to instruct a new Legend in the finer arts of magecraft. He fobs her off with some made-up rituals from a pop-magic paperback, knowing that they won't work and that by the time she realises, he'll have more time to teach her. His maximum Degeneration before doing this is 3, and he's spent one point so far. Lying to his student gives him a point of Degeneration and increases his maximum by one (if his degeneration were 8 – Alan's Ethos + 4 – he'd only gain the temporary point). As his maximum Degeneration has increased, Alan's total (but not current) Magic also increases by a point.*

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#### Changing Sides

If a Legend has all of her Beliefs marked as compromised and has more points of Degeneration than Conviction, she is in serious danger of falling to the Dark. The fall traditionally starts at the end of a story, though the GM can decide that a character who has spent more than one day in her state of imbalance is starting to fall.

A character who has started to fall won't complete her slide to the Dark until the end of the next story. She doesn't realise what's going on, but the Dark begins to colour her thoughts and actions. If her companions notice her changing, they can help her by putting her in a position where she can gain Conviction. If she does do something that reaffirms her beliefs, she can choose to clear a mark from one Belief. She doesn't gain the Conviction reward of her action and must spend a point of Conviction to make the affirmation stick. It's harder to pull away once the Dark has found a place to hold on.

If a character does Fall – going for the entire transitional period without clearing one of her Beliefs – she becomes a Darksider. Members of the Bright Clades gradually twist into their Dull counterparts, but the transformation only completes after a year and a day. Once that time passes, an elf truly becomes an orc, a dwarf becomes a troll and a gnome becomes a goblin. Alter all Clade-granted characteristics accordingly.

Her companions can attempt to redeem her by confronting her with the reality of her Fall. There's no system for this. Pure role-playing determines whether a Darksider's friends can convince her to return to the Light. The Darksider has no inherent desire to return to her former idealism – she must be convinced to try.

A Darksider wanting to come back to the Light must make a truly impressive affirmation of one of her Beliefs and spend two points of Conviction. This clears the mark against that Belief and puts her into a transitional period. As long as she doesn't do anything to mark her initial Belief, she can redeem her other Beliefs in the same way as a character close to Falling. Only once she has cleared all of her Beliefs does the character become a Lightsider again.

Many Legends have a real problem killing Darksiders when they can bring them to the Light. Others have had Darksiders attack and kill one too many of their friends to consider redemption a possibility. It's an ongoing debate between Legends of the Light with no easy answer.

#### Magic

A Legend's magical reserves, measured by the Magic trait, are equal to her Conviction + Degeneration. Aware characters' Magic is always equal to their maximum Conviction.



### iii - THE POWER OF BELIEF

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Always use the maximum value of the linked Traits. A character's maximum Conviction is always her Ethos + 4, whereas a Legend's maximum Degeneration increases by one every time he violates his beliefs, up to a limit of his Ethos + 4. Human Legends have two more points of Magic than other Legends. A character's maximum Magic changes whenever her linked Traits change, but she must regain any points of magic normally.

A character regains points of Magic equal to her Ethos by:

- Spending 24 hours away from the Unaware

- Spending 12 hours in an Interstice

- Gaining Conviction

- Losing Conviction (Legends only).

- Performing a ritual act that has some significance to her while spending a point of Will.

## The Spheres

The Spheres are primal archetypes, roles that channel the magic inherent in a Lightsider's being. Though their specific roles make them appear slightly artificial, no Legend can live without attaching himself to one – and no new archetypes have been discovered since the Fall.

Spheres give a character a goal and a role to fulfil. Every Legend joins a Sphere that matters to her in some way; her beliefs decide which Sphere she should follow. The Sphere helps her live up to what she should be, channelling her magic towards a higher purpose. Darksider Shells are twisted reflections of the Spheres. They resemble the Spheres of the Light on the surface, but have no deeper meaning. While Knights are warriors in constant service to a nobler goal, Dark Knights are forces of destruction without honour, exalting raw strength without conscience.

The following pages detail the Spheres that Lightsiders adhere to. Each describes the general archetype that the Sphere fulfils, followed by the types of characters who might join, the Aptitude that the Sphere grants, and the magical abilities that each Clade can use. Aware characters occasionally follow the Spheres, though they gain no benefit. A few feel a distinct connection to the archetype. Others want to prime themselves should they Manifest.

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#### Darksiders

The Dark Shells mirror the Spheres in many ways. Each Sphere description below includes notes on the Dark equivalent, including specific twists on the Sphere Aptitude for Darksiders. Assume that Darksiders receive the same powers from their Shells as Lightsiders gain from the Spheres.



#### sphere guilds

Though a Legend's journey is personal, she doesn't normally work alone. In addition to her Circle, others on a similar path offer inspiration. In Pocket Kingdoms and populous areas, Legends of the same Sphere often work together. These guilds give a Legend a chance to compare notes and keep up with the world away from her Circle. There's no guarantee that the Foundation Guild in New York City is on speaking terms with the Foundation Guild in Chicago, or even the Guild in any Pocket Kingdom linked to NYC. Most guilds are informal affairs, without leaders or hierarchy. Legends defer to those with more experience on their path – Scions most of all – but anyone with dedication and understanding can make himself heard.



#### Sphere Benefits

Each Sphere has a linked Aptitude. This Aptitude begins at 1 rank for all starting characters and can never be raised higher than the character's Ethos. If a character's Ethos drops for whatever reason, any Sphere Aptitudes over her new Ethos also drop.

This Aptitude covers everything that falls under the purview of the Sphere, making a Legend omni-competent in her archetype. A Knight of Strength can use the Aptitude whenever she can visualise the situation as a direct conflict, be that a battlefield or a boardroom. A member of the Foundation can use her Aptitude whenever the situation involves networking or making contacts – not obviously useful in a fight, but perfect for tactical co-ordination.

The Sphere Aptitude is also meta-synergistic; its synergy bonus stacks with those of standard Aptitudes, but not other Spheres, allowing for a +2 dice bonus when the Sphere and another Aptitude apply to the base Aptitude. If the Sphere is the base Aptitude, it can likewise accept synergy from two Aptitudes instead of one.

**Example:** *Lydia has one rank in the Strength Sphere and the Aptitudes of Knight 3 and Hunter 4. She wants to spear the Dark Boar. She uses Hunter as her base Aptitude, then adds synergy from Knight and Strength. Added to her 3 Body, she gains a total dice pool of 9 before including her spear's Force: 3 (Body) + 4 (Hunter) + 1 (Knight synergy) + 1 (Strength synergy).*

Each write-up includes three sample Roles: examples of the Sphere in action. Create or select a Role within the Sphere. This Role helps you delineate what facets of the Sphere you are best with. You can activate this Role with one point of Magic to make it your Expertise for a scene. Each Role lists the dice pool your Role's Expertise benefit applies to.

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Note that when players create a Role, their characters are actually adopting an archetype that already exists in the game world. Characters invent Roles by questing for them as Sphere Scions (see p. 79), but players invent them for new characters by fleshing out what already exists in the world.

Spheres also provide a Major and Minor power. Characters can use the Minor power automatically by spending one point of Magic. Activating a Major power costs 3 Magic. A character can use one power per round in addition to a combat action, if the power is action-oriented. Powers that provide dice bonuses or point bonuses can be “supercharged” by spending double the Magic for double the effect. Most powers do not allow targets to resist unless they influence the target’s perceptions, thoughts or emotions. In such cases, targets may resist by spending a point of Will or Magic and rolling Presence + Sphere (no standard Aptitudes are permitted). All Spheres other than the source of the opposing power are considered partially applicable to the task. The defiant character’s player must meet a Threshold equal to the Legend’s Ethos + Sphere rank to break away from its effects.

## FOUNDATION

### WALKERS IN TWO WORLDS

#### Overview

Only humans can follow the path of Foundation. Only humans truly understand the Unaware, even those who have never been Unaware themselves. An elf, dwarf or gnome doesn’t have the same instinctive rapport with mundane people.

The restriction is magical as well as practical; no matter how much one of the other Clades tries to exemplify the attitudes and behaviours, something in the Sphere itself resists them. There are numerous theories why and when this became so, but nobody knows if it will ever end. Possibly only when the mundane world becomes Aware will other Clades be able to attain the Sphere of Foundation, but in that case, there wouldn’t be the same need for the Sphere.

Members of the Foundation join for the sense of community. They can reach out into the Unaware world to protect the Aware society, or protect a slice of the Unaware world from dangers they would never normally see. Being the closest to the mundane world, Legends of the Foundation are no strangers to responsibility. They must keep the Aware and Unaware worlds in balance,





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making sure that neither has too drastic an impact on the other. Normally they work through networks of people, but sometimes an agitator will only understand direct force.

In groups of Legends, a so-called Emissary is often her circle's "face". She knows all of the Aware in the area, so they've got a good idea of who is best placed to deal with a given problem. They're also excellent at keeping the Unaware out of Aware business – their Major boon can get the circle to and from areas of trouble, and their Minor allows them to give the authorities the slip without endangering themselves. Unfortunately, their affinity for crowds of people does put them at a disadvantage within sparsely populated Interstices and other places that are cut off from a wider community. Legends of the Foundation who seek adventure never do so unprepared and usually bring more than their social skills to a circle. Others avoid circles; they solve problems

for their community or freelance for the Ministry.

#### Backgrounds

The Foundation draws Legends who possess a strong sense of community. Some of them already have strong ties to an arts scene, an ethnic enclave or a religious congregation. Others come to the Foundation from situations where they didn't have a community. They were old-money bachelors who stayed at home, military brats or members of families who lived in an RV, moving from trailer park to trailer park. As a part of the Foundation, the bachelor secretly funds the counter-culture area where the city's Aware hang out, keeping libraries and galleries alive. The daughter of the RV family is the contact point for the few Aware in the places she drives through, sorting out immediate problems before moving on.

The Foundation requires beliefs with social import. Most Emissaries believe in protecting communities and helping them reach out but some who subscribe to the Sphere take on an almost xenophobic approach. They try to keep the Aware and Unaware as separate as much as possible.

#### Aptitude

The Foundation Aptitude is primarily a Network (see p. 92). This Network is automatic and covers all the Aware in a Secret County or equivalent. If the Legend moves to a different area, the Network automatically updates itself to cover that area. This Network doesn't cover Darksiders, nor does it cover Aware under a Darksider's Influence. The Aptitude also applies



#### gamaliel

Darksiders following the Shell of Foundation are in command. Each has a web of contacts held together through bribery and lies, but more importantly they are never found alone. They use their Aptitude's Network to recruit followers – low-level Darksiders surround themselves with gangs, while those who understand their Shell have hordes of followers at their beck and call. Using their Network along with Influence allows any Darksider to raise armies in hours rather than months. Aside from its Network, the Shell Aptitude is better suited towards finding a person's vices and dark secrets, and increasing tension between groups.



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to knowing local history, basic psychology, and area knowledge.

#### Roles

Sometimes, people just need someone to talk to. The **Confessor (Presence + Foundation)** runs a bar or a coffee shop, somewhere that the Aware know they can take their problems. She gives a sympathetic ear and as much advice as she can, but occasionally things go beyond that and she lends her money and time to a customer's cause. As a welcome face, she hears more than she should, and the desire to do something about it – either by talking to mundane authorities or enforcing the law among the Aware – can be overwhelming.

The **Pillar of the Community (Presence + Foundation)** is a part of residents' associations, local councils, and other community organisations. She uses her links with the mundane community to support the Aware in her city where she can, but when she can't pull strings to help she's not averse to getting her hands dirty.

The **Watchman (Mind + Foundation)** doesn't hold with politics. He'd prefer the Unaware leave the Aware alone and vice versa, but peaceful coexistence is good enough for him. To that end, he deals with problems that threaten the delicate balance between communities. He spends his days solving crimes, breaking into offices, hacking computers, and generally going beyond mundane laws in order to keep the peace between Aware and Unaware.

#### Powers

**Human:** Automatically hide in any reasonably crowded area, defeating pursuit or surveillance for a round (Minor); Cause any Aware observer to perceive you and up to five Aware companions as if Unaware for a round (Major).

**SPLENDOUR**

SEEKERS OF ULTIMATE TRUTH

#### Overview

Legends of the Splendour have one goal in life: knowledge. Some seek the truth behind magic and the Gods, others desire mystical power, and a few want to unlock the secret power of the subconscious mind. All have a thirst for enlightenment that they will never slake. Whatever goal brought them to the Splendour, many will remain there for a long time, seeking more information on the Aware world.



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Others will discover all that they can, only to find that despite all their knowledge they are still no closer to their ultimate truth, and must move on. In this way, many who walk the path to the Source take their first steps with the Splendour.

Many sorcerers devote their lives to the secrets of magic. When one Manifests, she is drawn to the Splendour. Not content with what is known, a mage can dedicate his life to finding new or lost Grimoires, as well as using his power to study the strange laws that govern magic. Some Legends come to the Splendour from a background in Unaware magical traditions. Using a synthesis of old and new ideas, they explore the limits of knowledge and human cognition. Following in the footsteps of such thinkers as Robert Anton Wilson, Aleister Crowley, and Hermes Trismegistus, they use the 'magic' of Unaware traditions to transcend normal life, even if they never learn Magecraft.

Others begin their study with Aware forms of magic, ignoring the trappings of Mundane traditions. They search for truth among the Aware, hoarding copies of ancient texts and using fragments of rituals said to have been written by the Gods. Their practices and rituals tend to be showy and still influenced by Mundane traditions whether they recognise it or not.

Those who come to the Splendour as part of a mystic journey often move on towards becoming a Source of magic. Others turn their hand to blending the mythic history of the Aware with symbols of Unaware pop-culture, slowly propagating new memes to increase the number of people who become Aware.

#### Backgrounds

A thirst for knowledge leads many Legends to the Splendour. Whether they're lifelong academics who devote themselves to learning, or are ostracised, obsessive loners, the Sphere offers a chance to pull back the veil of history and uncover the truths hidden beneath.

Called Magisters, Sphere adherents were often wizards before their Manifestation. Faced with a sudden increase in their magical capabilities, the Splendour is the logical path to finding out more. No two members focus on the same areas in their research; New Age crystal-wavers stand side by side with wannabe Crowleys and hallucinogen inspired pop-magicians. Legends embrace the Sphere in order to focus on the quest for knowledge and the joy of uncovering what was once hidden.

Legends who join the Splendour have a burning desire to know all that there is, or they are certain that being smart is all that matters. Less common are those who have truly strange beliefs and know that the Splendour is the one place that they can continue their research in peace. Finally, there are Legends who want to walk the paths between the Spheres to the Source. The Splendour is the most common starting point for a journey to enlightenment.



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#### Aptitude

Splendour is only partially applicable to spellcasting, but is synergistic with all forms of Magecraft, providing a significant power boost for would-be wizards. Instead, it covers the knowledge and practice of a wide range of occult and esoteric knowledge. The magical practices of the Golden Dawn, the names and functions of major demons throughout history, and lore relating to the imprisoned Gods all fall under this Aptitude. It covers the history and mythology of the Aware, focusing on the character's home city/area. This includes the known (and some forgotten) Interstices and the most likely locations to find magical creatures – though legends pertaining to defeating such beasts are often much harder to unearth. The Splendour Aptitude is the ability to find esoteric knowledge and hidden facts, and put them to good use. Magisters can even divine information from the environment itself by reading omens and sensing the flow of magic around them, though this only provides information about magical forces in the immediate area.

Splendour is only applicable to spellcasting, but is synergistic with all forms of Magecraft, providing a significant power boost for would-be wizards. Splendour also provides spell knowledge. Each rank of Splendour grants its possessor the ability to use a single spell. This can belong to any magical domain.

#### Roles

If there's a problem, the **Academic (Mind + Splendour)** has a solution stored somewhere. In addition to a large library of ancient books, he's got a wide range of other media, including electronic texts, cross-linked online knowledge bases, and DVDs holding the accumulated wisdom of ages. He's far from a recluse, though. In addition to teaching at the local college, he's part of a group of Aware who are trying to piece together the true events that lead to the Fall.

The **Mystery Archaeologist (Mind + Splendour)** can't learn from second hand sources. She won't stand idly by, reading that there's a dragon in the Blue Lake. She has to go find some evidence so that she can be sure. High weirdness is her stock in trade and she wants to see it up close. She knows a lot about the local magical geography and may well be a powerful mage, but she always insists on going out and finding new things.



#### samael

For a Darksider following the Shell of Splendour, hidden knowledge is its own reward, as long as it stays hidden. She's as likely to burn a library as save one, making sure that nobody else can get hold of the secrets in her possession. Darksiders use their Shell Aptitude to find hidden knowledge just as Lightsiders do, but they use it to keep information to themselves. Legends of Samael often possess large libraries and collections of lore, but don't have the ability or intention to ever apply it. Others can't be trusted; they're looking for demons' names and apocalyptic rites. They commonly invoke the synergistic effects of their Aptitude with blood sacrifices and other unsavoury practices.



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Some Legends think that all of the Splendid are like the **Urban Occultist (Presence + Splendour)**. Tall, dark, and imposing; her mastery of magic is obvious to anyone who knows how to look. It's not enough that she can call storms or summon knowledge with a gesture. She needs to know both how the magic works and how it interacts with her environment. To that end, she uses tools from her area and tries to bond with her community, studying magical effects in situ.

#### Powers

**Human:** Make one human perceive as if Aware for a scene (Minor); "Jump" a spell's target from someone else – including the caster – to yourself (Major).

**Elf:** Sense the traces of magic use in the area, up to an hour before. (Minor); Copy (once per use) one other Elven Sphere ability you have seen in the past day (Major).

**Dwarf:** Transfer up to half your total Magic to another person with a touch – the points are lost after the cost for activating this effect (Minor); Double the cost of any magic that targets you for one scene (Major).

**Gnome:** Dodge out of the area of effect of a spell that targets the immediate area or someone else therein (Minor); "Jump" a spell's target from yourself to someone else – including the caster (Major).

## VICTORY

### THE VOICE OF EMOTION

#### Overview

Skalds of Victory seek no less a goal than self-mastery. To reach that lofty goal, they must unfetter their emotions. Everyone holds themselves in check. Whether they rein in a flash of rage or never admit their love for a childhood friend, people hamstringing themselves by refusing to realise the power that they hold within. Everyone can master their own minds if they realise that they must release their emotions in honed, purposeful bursts of energy.

Of course, realising that is only the first step on the journey to Victory. It takes a lot of work for a Legend to recognise and define her emotions, and from there she must express them. If she were to give in to her every



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whim, indulging her lusts as much as her selfless urges, she would fall to the Shell. Instead, Legends of the Victory learn how to express themselves through art. Members learn something about all forms of artistic expression, though each Legend has a preferred style. Some indulge their passions through sculpture or painting. Other Skalds turn to written prose or poetry, or learn to dance. A few seek out esoteric art-forms, including one who has mastered the art of extreme knitting.

Expression is only another step along the path. A Legend who is comfortable with her emotions must then use them as tools to conquer her own mind – and her own destiny. This stage never ends, but Legends who have dedicated their life to the Victory are often the most powerful in any given area.

#### Backgrounds

Legends who walk the path of Victory do so out of a desire to express themselves. They have a message, a feeling, a moment, or an idea that they want to get across to the world. It burns within them; the Victory can kindle that fire. Many were artists of one stripe or another beforehand. Others were art critics, stymied for whatever reason and forced to express their emotions by commenting on the works of others. The Victory gives them a chance to change that.

Some Legends come to the Sphere from a troubled past. Skalds conquer their emotions through self-expression, plotting a better direction for their lives. Awareness and Manifestation unearths a lot of things that people would otherwise keep to themselves and the range of their emotions can unsettle some people. The Sphere allows them to express themselves in ways that they didn't think possible.

Legends of the Victory believe in perfection. They have to master themselves through creative forms that encapsulate the essence of an emotion. Whatever the rationale, these beliefs allow them to master their own minds. They accept who they are and move on to new vistas of self-discovery.

#### Aptitude

The Aptitude of the Victory covers artistic expression. It doesn't cover the theory behind any specific form of art – such is the provenance of critics, not creators. Instead, it gives a powerful understanding of the techniques behind most art-forms, from poetry and journalism to



#### harab serapel

The Shell of Victory is a place of limitless passion and despair. The Darksiders who follow Harab Serapel let their emotions loose with no further goal. They indulge their whims with no thought for consequences. Though they are artists like their Lightsider counterparts, these Darksiders don't channel personal emotions. Their art either provokes others to indulge their emotions, or is obviously hollow. Famous artists who fall victim to the Shell use their Aptitude to produce work without message or meaning, relying on their name to make the piece valuable. Those who had little talent before following the path of the Shell become technically brilliant, but never put the spark of emotion into their works.





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kinetic sculpture and interpretive dance. While any artist is most comfortable with their own form, the Aptitude grants her the ability to read the subtext in any work of art. She can both infer the emotional state of a work's creator, and tweak the emotions of anyone she meets through ad-hoc art. The Legend can Influence (see page 53) others through her art, even when she is not physically present.

#### Roles

The **Famed Painter (Presence + Victory)** finds her best expression through other people. She spent plenty of time putting her emotions onto canvas when she was younger. Not only did she avoid burning out, she sold a piece. Then another. And another. Her Manifestation came later in life, as she questioned what she gained from her work. Her brush and canvas still see a lot of her emotions spill out, but it's almost a means to an end – listening to all the art-world gossip she can get her hands on.

Some people wouldn't know the Truth if it bit them hard on the ass, and it's up to the **Journalist (Presence + Victory)** to do the biting. Far from the burned-out stereotype, she works a local beat; her words appear in any newspapers, magazines, and blogs that will take them. She's all for inspiring people, bringing forth the emotions – positive and negative – that they normally hide. She spends most of her days documenting facts and obsessively checking the wire services, not wrecked on booze or abused by the authorities – those are distractions, and she is the messenger of truth.

The **Tortured Artist (Mind + Victory)** lives for his art and his art lives through him. He doesn't care if he sells his work or not. He remembers the moment of Manifestation all too well and wants to capture that, pinning the moment with words and paint like a collector would pin a butterfly to a board. While he creates a lot of excellent work, he is his own harshest critic. His "castoffs", given free to anyone who wants one, serve to inspire the Aware community. They'd gladly help him recapture the passion he's looking for.

#### Powers

**Human:** Store as many Magic points as your Sphere rank into a piece of art. Any Aware character can draw this Magic out to refresh their own reserves (Minor); Cause everyone who perceives a work to experience a strong emotion for a day (Major).

**Elf:** Animate a painting, or cause prose or poetry to live through illusions (Minor); Capture a prophetic image in a work of art (Major).

**Dwarf:** Go without food or sleep for a day as long as you spend six hours engaged in your art form of choice (Minor); Refer to a piece of art (present at the time) to sway your audience when engaged in a social situation, increasing your effective Presence by 2 (Major).

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**Gnome:** Find or improvise artistic materials anywhere, good enough for a scene's use (Minor); Create a piece of art that inspires one other person's mental acuity, increasing their effective Mind by 1 for the scene immediately after that person spends a scene enjoying it (Major).

## BEAUTY

### ARCHITECTS OF DREAMS

#### Overview

The Beauty's Smiths share a connection to a realm beyond perception where the ideal form is king. The eternal wonder of that realm leads them to attempt to recreate its forms in the material world. They are artisans and engineers, their creations not mere objects d'art but things with function, from swords of every type to classic cars and elegant computer programs that never crash. No member of the Beauty has ever quite managed to capture the glory of the forms in one of their inventions, but that doesn't stop any of them from trying.

An interesting side effect of their near-constant creativity is that Beauty's Legends are the world's best enchanters. Smiths (a title used regardless of the craft) can forge effects into their creations that other Enchanters only dream of. These enchantments often require rare components and esoteric lore to complete. Without that impetus, some Legends would never leave their workshops.

In their quest to capture that one perfect moment, a Legend of the Beauty learns how to make things. From carving wood and shaping metal to circuit design and the latest programming languages, the Unaware and Aware both turn to a Legend of the Beauty when they need someone they know can make things work. Rather than growing angry at having their work disrupted, many welcome both the change in pace and a chance to help others.

#### Backgrounds

Legends who walk the path of Beauty want to live on through their creations. Many were mechanics, working with their hands before computers made everything harder to fix and automation slashed jobs in factories. These Legends have an innate need to see a job done right. Everything they do is an extension of that desire, and that goes double for making things. With the right care and attention, their creations will outlive them by many years – or give them a way to live forever.



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Others don't initially have the hands-on skill, but they have designs and ideas for insane devices that could never have flourished in the mundane world. Through craft skills, the Beauty gives them the means to make their inventions. Through enchantment, the Sphere gives them a chance to see their creations work, free of the physical laws that restrict Unaware inventors. Legends of the Beauty are often masters of modern technology who want the world to recognise the elegance in their designs much as it does the car engine and the sword.

Common beliefs in the Beauty revolve around finding purpose in things, not perishable personal relationships. Some believe that what they make is more important than who they are, while others believe in the speed and elegance of their code. All of them relate better to external creations than they do to their internal concepts – an attitude that's often seen as inimical to the Source.

But true understanding appreciates the value of the object apart from the person.



#### Togaririm

Followers of the Shell of Beauty glimpse the same realm of forms as their Lightsider counterparts. Unlike them, Legends of Togaririm come away with the understanding that the world is fundamentally flawed. Physical objects can never match up to pure concepts, no matter how hard anyone tries. Many simply don't see the point in striving for perfection, but some actively give up material possessions, discarding their flawed goods to move closer to spiritual perfection. All followers of Togaririm use their Shell Aptitude to perceive the flaws in a created item and learning how best to exploit what they have found.



#### Aptitude

The Beauty Aptitude covers the creation of physical objects. In addition to the skills of every craft, from woodworking to metallurgy to circuit design, it gives an understanding of how to shape magic as part of the act of creation. A Legend of the Beauty can thus enchant things, and are not restricted to just simple items (see 7). The Aptitude itself is only partially applicable to enchantment, but is always synergistic for Enchantment Aptitude rolls.

#### Roles

Some initially think that the **Artisan (Mind + Beauty)** is a Legend of the Victory. Her work is understated but obviously good, and her skills are exemplary. She doesn't use her talent to express herself; instead, she quests for perfection in simplicity. She saw the Platonic Forms during her Manifestation: ideal concepts that lie behind all physical representations. She tries to bring those forms to Earth in everything she creates. Her crafts often require rare materials, leading her to new Interstices and hidden creatures.

The **Mad Inventor (Mind + Beauty)** just can't help himself. He has to see his ideas made real, but he can't stop at just making a thing. What's the use in coming up with a design if you can't put it to use? He spends his time tinkering with devices of his own creation and testing them out. He prefers ideal function over form. While this does play hell with his neighbours, his circle likes having him around. Every so often they need one of his creations to get out of



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a particularly tight spot.

One feature of every town since before the Fall, the **Handyman (Body + Beauty)** is an integral part of his community. In older times, he'd shoe horses and fix stoves, but these days he's as likely to be the town's go-to guy for technical problems. He fixes toasters and cleans viruses off PCs for anyone. The Aware can rely on him to re-work old enchantments as well. He's got a knack for solving problems and keeps his customers happy enough to call him the next time something breaks.

#### Powers

**Human:** Reduce the Threshold of a roll to create an item with a hidden purpose by 1 (Minor); Craft a concept into physical form, making e.g. a gemstone from a song or a sword from the answers to a riddle. This item can receive a Unique Enchantment without any extra components (Major).

**Elf:** Shape metal without heat or tool (Minor); Link an object to its Platonic Form for a scene, making it impossible to change or destroy with magic (Major).

**Dwarf:** Understand the true purpose of a device, seeing past disguises and illusions – a sword cane is obviously a sword (Minor); Create a copy of anything you know the true purpose of without rolling for success, though it still takes time to create (Major).

**Gnome:** Reduce the Threshold of a roll to create a complex item by 1 (see Chapter 6 for guidelines on items) (Minor); “McGyver” a useful device out of whatever comes to hand in the immediate area in a round or two (Major).

## STRENGTH

### KNIGHTS OF VIRTUE

#### Overview

Though many people aspire to the Sphere of Strength, many don't recognise its true nature. They see Knights fighting for just causes and working to perfect the art of combat, and dream of sallying forth to fight the good fight. They don't see that every Lightsider who follows the Sphere must walk a razor's edge. Knights are consummate warriors, as capable of winning a bar brawl as a war. They fight with any weapon, lead commando



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teams and armies with equal ability, and can turn their talents to anything they can interpret as a combative situation.

Every Knight sometimes dreams of using her abilities for selfish ends, beating up people that annoy her or taking over a community by force. Those who let their power define them find the Dark calling. To maintain their focus, Knights hold to strict codes of honour. Some even revive and modernise the art of chivalry. Ultimately, they put themselves in service to their community, recognising that their journey has brought them far from their roots. The risk of falling to the Dark requires that the Legend surrender his power to others: people he believes will harness his talents for good.

This trade off between power and control can lead to Knights doing things that they would rather not, but as long as it isn't downright wrong the desires of their community come first. This safeguard makes sure that one person, or even a small coalition, can't use the Knight as if he were their personal soldier. The loss of control is a lesson in how a Knight must act – with honour, integrity, and virtue. Strength is a means, never an end.



#### golab

Strength is often the easiest Sphere to fall from, and members of its Shell are more than willing to recruit more Legends. They revel in meaningless violence, starting fights for no good reason and leading others with an iron fist. Dark Knights are not mindless brutes; each of them knows the varied realms of conflict as well as any Lightsider. They are the ones most likely to mount a campaign against a community, attacking through every possible means. Others voluntarily serve other, more powerful, Darksiders. Some hate themselves for turning to the Dark but can't resist the lure of violence. The truly Fallen carry out any order with sadistic glee.



#### Backgrounds

Those who come to the Strength believing that it will make them great and glorious are numerous. Soldiers, martial-artists, and cops gravitate to the path of Strength when they Manifest. They're accustomed to violence and have a burning need to improve themselves. Some have used violence for evil. They must learn humility or miss the true meaning of Strength and fall to Golab. Others lack the confidence to fight for what's right and need the Sphere to teach them a healthy level of pride.

Those who entered the Sphere without knowing how to fight usually spent their lives in service. They've always given their all to a community or ideal. They see the Strength as the best place for them to serve others, training their bodies and minds into the ultimate tool to help keep their oaths. Legends seeking the Source find that the Sphere's lesson lies in perfecting oneself for another, surrendering personal goals to a higher purpose without losing their own moral agency.

Legends of the Strength believe in protection and service. Whether they have to keep their family safe or uphold the law, they want to give of themselves to help others. These beliefs encourage self-mastery through physical prowess instead of occult knowledge or creative expression.

## Aptitude

Strength is a combat Aptitude. Each Legend of the Strength knows how to use everything from an axe to a rifle. She can use anything she can see as an improvised weapon, sometimes including enemy combatants. The best focus their talents through other people to fight a battle on many fronts; Knights of Strength are generals and leaders as well as warriors. The Aptitude covers all forms of war, from chess to boardroom negotiations. If the Legend can conceive of the situation as a battle she can use her knowledge, even if her armour is a Saville Row suit and her weapon's a video presentation. Where people compete, the Legend knows how to win.

## Roles

The **Guardian (Body + Strength)** is a leading figure in her community. She's the one that helps people feel safe at night. In times past she would defend her village with sword and bow. Modern times have seen her breaking the kneecaps of mob toughs to tell the capo that the local Aware are off-limits. These days, she plays it cool. She's got a network of eyes and ears looking for problems, and if she finds any, they get a personal visit. She's perfectly genial and a good host – but if anyone threatens her or her community, she will force them out.

Wandering without a home, the **Soldier of Fortune (Body + Strength)** is a Knight without a community. He'll settle for a while among a group of Aware, but he finds it impossible to stay. One day he'll be gone again, with only what he can carry on his back. He lacks deep attachments to the community, so it's more likely to send him up against a problem that is too dangerous for a local Knight.

The **Master-at-Arms (Presence + Strength)** doesn't fight any more. While she'll happily stand up for her community, she doesn't believe that single champions are the way to go. She trains the community to fight in her stead, both with weapons and without. She brings out the inner strengths of anyone who comes to her, showing them how to use everything from a sword to a sniper rifle. The last time a Dark Knight tried to invade her turf she was in the thick of things – but not fighting directly. Her community is a weapon far greater than any sword.

## Powers

**Human:** Add 2 points of bonus damage to one attack (Minor); Make one standard attack against an opponent who injured you in the same round for no Wits cost as a full action (Major).

**Elf:** Add five to your Initiative (Minor); Make one attack normally, but your target must spend twice as many Wits points as usual



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to defend himself (Major).

**Dwarf:** Reduce the penalty from armour by three – for example -5 becomes -2 (Minor); Make one attack normally, but your target does not apply armour against the damage inflicted (Major).

**Gnome:** Add 2 Force to a wielded weapon (Minor); Make one extra attack that automatically destroys a mundane object that your opponent is carrying or wearing instead of dealing damage. The attack must still hit and the player might roll a penalty for small or hard to reach items (Major).

## MERCY

### HEALERS OF THE WORLD'S SOUL

#### Overview

The Merciful are paragons of responsibility. They wield knowledge and power with a single goal: to heal the world. While the seed of the Dark is endemic to the Aware – some would say to all sentient creatures – Legends of the Mercy help people accept that part of themselves and move on. Some see Darksiders as misguided souls who the Mercy must redeem; others would rather kill anyone who would defile the world in a quest for false enlightenment. Whatever their attitude, the Merciful keep their responsibility towards all Aware at the front of their mind.

Healers don't just mend broken bones and knit together bullet wounds; they keep a close eye on the mental health of their fellows. The Dark is often subtle when it takes root. Knights fight its physical manifestation in the world, but Legends of the Mercy confront it in the hearts and souls of the Aware around them. They become prominent figures in their communities, trading their talents for tangible rewards, or remain on the outskirts, building their reputations by helping people.

Healers must be pragmatic. Some Aware and even some Legends prefer magical healing over mundane doctors. Legends of the Mercy who work among them hide their applications of medical knowledge, psychotherapy, and magic behind inane folk-remedies and pseudo-medicines like homeopathy. That their remedies are more effective than the placebo effect can account for gives their patients more cause to distrust modern medicine.

## Backgrounds

Legends walk the path of Mercy to help others. Many worked in hospitals and pharmacies. Nascent Healers were the people that everyone turned to for advice with their problems. Most of them have always been there for people – but there are exceptions. These people shirked their responsibilities and want to redeem themselves. They see the Mercy as a chance to use their power to help people that they once ignored. All too often they fall prey to “new doctor syndrome”, thinking that they can cure every disease and solve every problem. They must learn that their duty sometimes involves helping people die as much as keeping them alive. Those walking the path to the Source learn that the responsibilities impose unexpected, but unshakable duties.

## Aptitude

The Mercy Aptitude covers all forms of healing. Legends of the Mercy can perform first-aid, diagnose illnesses, and perform invasive surgery – though they don’t have free access to prescription medicines. They know how to dress a wound in the field and how best to use whatever they have to hand in order to treat someone. The Aptitude also covers herbal medicine and psychological counselling. It doesn’t cover “alternative” therapies and techniques that have no appreciable benefit beyond the placebo effect. Miraculous healing requires potent magic, not mundane, wishful thinking.

## Roles

The **Counsellor (Presence + Mercy)** has more clients among the Aware than others may think. Some people have a hard time coming to terms with who they really are. They turn to her for support. Legends and Aware who find themselves shocked beyond their ability to cope with what they have seen come to her as well. She keeps everything she hears in the strictest confidence and will take her friends’ secrets to her grave

The **Priest (Presence + Mercy)** isn’t necessarily a member of the clergy. She swore that she would look after her community, ensuring that the Aware around her were in good health. While that involves healing those who are injured, it often reaches into emotional and philosophical issues as well. She will always try to redeem a Legend who ventures too close to the Dark – but she has killed Unaware gangsters and a Dark Knight’s foot soldiers to keep her community safe. She feels some inner turmoil over the tension between healing and defensive



## gamchicoth

The Shell of Mercy is knowledge without responsibility. Legends of Gamchicoth share their Lightsider brethren’s ability to heal the hearts and minds of all, but they don’t have the same drive to use their abilities. They are doctors who care more about a patient’s insurance than his symptoms and therapists who instil neuroses into otherwise healthy people so they still get paid. Some Dark Healers set themselves up as miracle workers for hire, demanding generous donations before the blind can see. Others prefer to experiment on the living, using their knowledge to torture people or keep them alive throughout body-modifications that would otherwise be fatal.



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violence but takes solace in a higher purpose.

Some Aware don't trust regular doctors. The **Witch (Mind + Mercy)** is a far better choice for them to turn to. Skilled in practical medicine and psychology, he was a pharmacist in his life before Manifestation. That was a long time ago, and he's now a community doctor. He disguises good medical advice in superstitions that even those most distrusting of mundane science can accept. His herbs and potions sometimes do nothing more console patients, while his magical healing abilities do the heavy lifting.

#### Powers

**Human:** Revive and treat another person to the extent of completely healing one Stun injury (Minor); Set bones and knit flesh together, completely healing a Wounding injury in another person (Major).

**Elf:** Alleviate mental illness for a scene (Minor); Take on someone else's psychological problems, curing them but afflicting yourself for a week (Major).

**Dwarf:** Know a person's state of health (Minor); Purge a disease from another person's body (Major).

**Gnome:** Close the wounds on a dead body, including regenerating missing tissue, returning it to how it looked in life (Minor); Create a prosthetic that functions as well as a missing limb (Major).

## Walking the Path

Legends learn new things about themselves and the nature of the world. This transforms them, bringing them closer to the Source. Some of these changes are a natural result of living in a world coloured by magic; others are a direct result of progression within a Sphere. Legends who mature within one Sphere expand their Awareness and understand that there are even more facets to the world to explore. This drives some of them to adopt a new Sphere.

### Scions

A sizeable proportion of Legends have beliefs that are aligned with the Sphere they follow. Their path branches away from the Source, towards a different journey, focused on a single facet of existence. These Scions are necessary parts of the Spheres. Their existence tells the Sphere what it represents. If all the Scions of a Sphere were to change their understanding of it, the Sphere would change in response. While a massive shift doesn't seem likely for the foreseeable future – existing Scions prefer the Spheres



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as they are – this accounts for changes in the Spheres throughout history.

Mechanically, a Legend becomes a Scion when her rating in the Sphere reaches 5. This carries bonuses over and above a large dice pool for the Sphere Aptitude:

At Sphere 5, Major powers cost only 2 Magic to use.

At Sphere 6, Scions pick one new Role. Furthermore, one of the two roles the Scion now possesses can be activated as an Expertise for free.

Only one Scion can possess the 7th rank on a Sphere. This character is the Aeon of that Sphere. The Sphere seems to choose Aeons who will represent the Sphere in a particular, predestined quest. Multiple candidates have improved the Sphere to the 7th rank, but only the Aeon makes use of that final rank and its privileges. The chosen one gains access to an Aeonic Power. Each power is usually unique to the Aeon, though history records Aeons who've exercised similar abilities millennia apart.

If a Scion wants make her mark on her Sphere, she has to embody an archetype of how she views the Sphere – a new Role – and embed that into Aware consciousness. The best way to do that is to take on a legendary quest while embodying that archetype. These deeds cannot be completed alone, and the Legend will need companions to help her succeed. If she lives to tell her tale, the Sphere expands, integrating the new Role.

## Finding the Source

Legends who want to move on to the Higher Spheres or reach the Source have a number of revelations ahead of them. The first step on the path is to move from Sphere to Sphere, understanding each Sphere and absorbing its lessons before departing for the next. This can be very difficult. A Sphere changes the character's fundamental identity, so a new Sphere demands that its adherent thoroughly remake herself. Some Legends take new names and even change circles, but most try to maintain some continuity between identities. A witness might call her by the same name, but when she answers, he usually senses something deeply different in her speech patterns, opinions or gestures.

## Changing Sphere

When a character gains a new Belief, her world view might fit another Sphere better than her current one. She must find a way to learn more about that Sphere, but must attain some knowledge of her current path. She needs at least 2 ranks in her current Sphere to qualify for a new Sphere.

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A Legend out to make the change must take instruction from the new Sphere's Scions or study writings or artefacts created by one. She spends a number of months equal to her current Sphere Aptitude in study. At the end of that time, she can spend 6 Experience Points to adopt the first rank of the Sphere.

Upon joining a new Sphere, the Legend retains the Aptitude of her old Sphere reduced by one. She also loses access to the powers of her old Sphere. She gains the first rank of the Sphere and can access her new Sphere's powers.

A character can never be a member of more Spheres than her Ethos (the Higher Spheres are exempt from this restriction). If her Ethos drops below the number of Sphere Aptitudes that she can use, she is unable to use the Aptitudes of her oldest Spheres until her Ethos recovers.

## The Dark Lord Da'ath

Once a character moves through each of the five (six if human) Spheres, the cosmos takes notice. She becomes be a magnet for minions of the Dark. They try to corrupt or kill her and lay siege to the places she goes – or is destined to go. Darksiders act in concert; a tide of evil threatens the world. Dark Legends command hosts and conspiracies, but claim instruction from the greater Dark Lord: Da'ath, Prince of the Abyss. He appears to them in dreams. In the midst of this campaign, the Prince raises up one of his Legends to serve as an earthly viceroy. Da'ath's Archons have always led the final assault on the mortal world. They often seize and twist a Pocket Kingdom first, and then play out their designs on the Unaware. Each time, Lightsiders have driven them back – barely.

If the sagas are to be believed, only a character who learns every lesser Sphere can defeat an Archon for good. Otherwise, Da'ath simply appoints another. And another. But Legends who learn the six Spheres can bar the Dark Lord from Creation for a time. The Archon's body or holdfast contains the key to the Abyss. A Legend can only use the key once she learns the second rank of her fifth (for humans, sixth) Sphere. It might be a rune, a word, or a doorway. Once she uses it, she vanishes.

The Legend enters the Abyss. Stripped of material possessions, she journeys through places that range from forgotten parts of childhood to twisted tunnels filled with rot and rust. Doppelgangers of allies turn out to be vicious enemies. Only Legends act like the people they appear to be. Consequently, the traveller can recruit her circle's doppelgangers as companions in the quest (and in the game, players can continue to play other characters alongside the questing Legend). She may well need the help, as well, because the Abyss is a spiritually and physically desolate place. Where life appears vibrant, it is actually poisoned. Ruin, distorted dimensions and howling demons confront travellers.



Da'ath, Prince of the Abyss, waits and the end of the quest. He tries to destroy the Legend's mind with terrible knowledge about the truth behind the world. The Dark Lord exposes the Legend's most painful secrets. Old lovers, friends and enemies appear as accusing phantoms. Monsters born from the Legend's nightmares test mind, body and spirit before she confronts the Prince himself.

No living being can comprehend what these unlucky few go through at the hands of the Dark Lord. Those who return never speak of defeating Da'ath, or how they worked their way through the land of terrible knowledge. But if they succeed, the Prince is denied his Archons and the Dark horde scatters.

The Abyss kills no few Legends who journey there. Those who return demonstrate that those who are truly willing can return from that hideous realm. Rumours even tell of those who defeated the Dark Lord but chose to remain, becoming Legends of Understanding that safeguard the material world.

## Higher Spheres

A Legend who survives her encounter with the Dark Lord returns to the physical world shorn of her misconceptions. Cleansed of the baggage of the Unaware world, she can continue her mystical journey. Those who have reached this far speak of the





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Higher Spheres – Wisdom, Understanding, and the Crown. These Spheres break the rules established by the lower Spheres.

The Sphere of Understanding reveals the ultimate potential of ideal forms. This resembles the power of the Beauty, but grants the Legend the ability to create ex nihilo, drawing true forms from the Source to the mortal world. This was once thought of as a “female” Sphere that treated the Source as creation’s womb, but this is considered outmoded according to the modern scheme of things.

The Sphere of Wisdom embodies pure force, action without actor. It combines the healing energy of Mercy with the emotional power of Victory. These energies suffuse the air around a Legend of Wisdom, building as she channels magic and spurring those around to moments of unbridled creation. Wisdom supposedly grants the ability to summon angelic beings from the Source and create life itself. Like Understanding, Wisdom was once thought of as having a gender. It was the Sphere of the Father.

The Sphere of the Crown offers a difficult choice to Legends who approach it. She can stay within the Sphere, a wellspring of magic and a beacon to others, or she can move on, leaving the world behind and passing into the Source. Legends of the Crown spontaneously generate magic around them, colouring it with their perceptions and working it without conscious thought. They are also the least alien, the most in touch with the world, and that’s a natural thing – they understand that the Crown is in the Kingdom.

#### Sphere Aptitudes

There isn’t the space here to detail the powers and Aptitudes available to Legends who have attained one of the Higher Spheres. Use the following rough guidelines:

Each Higher Sphere grants omni-competence in a group of lesser Spheres. This allows the Legend to use that Sphere’s powers and Aptitudes, using the Higher Sphere’s rank. Understanding encompasses the Strength and Splendour Aptitudes; Wisdom includes the Mercy and Victory Aptitudes, and Crown embraces the Beauty and Foundation Aptitudes.

The Higher Sphere is meta-synergistic with its lesser counterparts. It adds a die to rolls made with associated lesser Spheres and an additional die to other Aptitudes.

Legends of the Higher Spheres should be capable of anything the GM deems appropriate for their Sphere Powers. These characters are beyond the ken of normal people, and each should be unique.

Characters must have at least 2 ranks in Wisdom and Understanding before learning the Crown.

#### The Source

Not all Legends who reach the Sphere of Crown come back. Simply attaining the Sphere allows them momentary contact with the Source of all magic – the formless power beyond the prison of the Gods. These Legends press forwards, going beyond Light and Dark, past ontological barriers into the mysteries that no mortal mind could ever comprehend. Those who study Aware mysticism point out that there is a real chance that Legends who have joined the Source occasionally reflect on the world that created them. If one ever wanted, she could free the Gods or change the world in ways beyond comprehension. Many hope that they never live to see such an event – but some people hope that these Legends will make the world a better place.







## ÆTERNAL LEGENDS CHARACTERS

ARE CAPABLE OF BRIDGING THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE SECRET WORLD OF THE AWARE AND EVERYDAY EXISTENCE.

Players usually portray Legends: people who master the heroic urge within them to become the enlightened protagonists of epic tales. While it's entirely possible to play in the world of the game without any formal rules at all, the strictures, challenges and inspirations provided by game systems are useful tools. If you use them, this section tells you how to create a character for the game.

## Step 0: Concept

At any point you might want to define the character based on his or her personal story. What's his family background? What brought her into Awareness? How did he discover his Clade? How did she choose her Sphere? What about nationality? Political beliefs? Sexual and romantic tastes? Hobbies? There are lots of details to set down if you choose.

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If you answer these questions before you go through the rest of the character creation process it will help guide your decisions. Then again, you might want to leave some or all of these for midway through the process. You might even wait until later in the game, though other players will want, at minimum, a name to call you by! In some cases, you can even give the GM permission to define these details for you at any point in the game. That way, your character can discover long lost brothers, secret inheritances and so forth.

## Step I: Attributes

Characters have four Attributes: Body, Ethos, Mind and Presence.

**Body** represents physical health, gross motor coordination and strength.

**Ethos** represents your character's self-knowledge and understanding of what she believes. Unaware characters have an Ethos of 0 and cannot raise it above that without becoming Aware. Ethos is the basis for both Magic and Beliefs. For Aware characters and Legends, Ethos starts at 1 and is bought like any other Attribute.



### attribute ranks

Attribute ranks represent various levels of ability as follows:

Rank	Ability
1	<i>Feeble:</i> Chronic poor health (Body), depressed (Presence)
2	<i>Typical:</i> Average strength (Body) or intelligence (Mind)
3	<i>Able:</i> Weekend athlete (Body), honourable (Ethos)
4	<i>Excellent:</i> Math wiz (Mind), instinctive philosopher (Ethos).
5	<i>Best in the Region:</i> State champion or sage (any).
6	<i>Best on the Continent:</i> Olympian (Body), holy man (Ethos)
7	<i>Best in the World</i>



**Mind** represents your character's raw intelligence, instinctual cunning and perceptual acuity.

**Presence** measures charisma and self-confidence.

These are your character's basic characteristics. Each Attribute starts with 1 point. Because they have four Attributes rather than three, Aware and Legend characters start with 7 points to divide among these Attributes. Add them to a the base of 1 in each Attribute. Unaware characters only have 5 points to add.

Divide these points among your Attributes. No Attribute can start higher than 5 (4 for the Unaware) and only one Attribute can start with a score of 1 (no points added).

## Edges and Flaws

Edges are narrow advantages that are based on your core Attributes. Some characters might have an average Body rating but could be exceptionally Agile. Add an Edge (such as Strong) to one of the Attributes. An Edge adds an Attribute die to all of the rolls it covers. A character with the Strong Body Edge gets the bonus when she tries to lift a rock using Body, but not when she's trying to roll out of the way of an oncoming car.

Characters also have a narrow Flaw that represents deficiency in one narrow aspect of a single Attribute. The Flaw subtracts an Attribute die from associated tasks. A character with the Poor Perception Mind Flaw suffers the Flaw when she's trying to shoot someone, but not when she's cracking a code. Apply a single Flaw to one of the Attributes.

In some cases, an Edge or Flaw may modify a Trait. This is true only if the Edge or Flaw has a strong association with that Trait. For example, Tough or Glass Jaw modify Health. In these cases, list the Edge or Flaw that does so with a cross (+) on your character sheet.

The Ethos Attribute can't have Edges or Flaws.

## Step II: Traits

Unaware characters have three Traits. These are pools that go up and down (though never higher than their permanent scores) over the course of play. Each Attribute determines the value of an associated Trait. Use the listed formula to come up with the final number. If an Edge or Flaw would apply (such as the Tough Edge and Health), add it to the Attribute for the purposes of calculating the Trait.

**Health** (Body+4) measures a character's ability to withstand injury. Each point gives the character one injury column, starting from the right hand side of the injury track on the character sheet. See p. 115 for more details about Health and injuries.

**Wits** (Mind+4) measures a character's ability to improvise and multitask.

**Will** (Presence+4) represents the character's ability to put extra effort into a task or into resisting adversity.

A character who has an Ethos of 1 or more has additional Traits. For all intents and purposes, Unaware characters have all three Traits at 0. Make sure you note the maximum value of these Traits in addition to their current rating.



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**Conviction** (Ethos + 4) measures a character's ability to stand up for what she believes in.

**Degeneration** (Initially 0) measures a Legend's propensity to give in to immediate urges. Only Legends possess this Trait.

**Magic** (Conviction + Degeneration) measures a character's reserves of magical power.

### Initiative

Even though it isn't a true Trait, calculate your Initiative score at this point. This is equal to your Body + Presence. Applicable Edges and Flaws apply to this score.

### Step III: Aptitudes

Choose two Aptitudes. An Aptitude is a broad profession (Assassin, Scientist) or a particular passion (Athletics, Visual Arts). Divide 4 points among the character's two Aptitudes. You must devote at least one point to each.

Balancing Aptitudes is the responsibility of the entire group. Generally, the narrower an Aptitude is, the more it should represent a valuable and uncommon area of expertise. Feel free to adjust character Aptitudes as time goes on to reflect balance between characters, but don't worry about it too much. It's more important for each character to have a distinct role than to have an equal range of ability.

Aptitudes can come from two sources. They can either be a list of options available in the game setting or the player can make them up, subject to GM approval. The following Aptitudes are common in the world of the Aware.

See Chapter 5 for information on full and partial Aptitude applicability.

#### Unaware Aptitudes

Unaware and Aware characters can both learn Unaware Aptitudes. These are jobs and passions that ordinary people possess. The examples below are not exhaustive; we encourage players to make up their own Aptitudes.

**Academic:** An Academic Aptitude is fully applicable within a single specialty, and partially applicable when it comes to all related fields in either the liberal arts or the sciences.

**Artist:** This is fully applicable to creating art and socializing in the arts community and partially applicable to using one's senses to analyze an object from an aesthetic standpoint as well as knowing art history and the science behind artwork.

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**Bartender:** This Aptitude is fully applicable to running a small business and socializing with clientele. It partially applies to being aware of local street life and judging if people are going to cause trouble.

**Cop:** A cop's Aptitude is fully applicable to using a specific service sidearm (if he has one), a standard issue baton and grappling in hand to hand combat. It also applies to intimidating people in uniform, knowing police customs and performing administrative tasks. It's partially applicable to general athletic skills and legal knowledge.

**Engineer:** An engineer's Aptitude fully applies to building & breaking things within a certain specialty, but it's partially applicable outside of that specialty and whenever a trade profession is more applicable.

**Gang Member:** The gang member's abilities fully apply to intimidating others and running a clandestine business selling drugs, stealing cars and performing other low level crimes. It partially applies to using firearms and fighting hand to hand.

**Lawyer:** A lawyer's Aptitude fully applies to socializing in the legal profession, making arguments of all sorts and, of course, knowing the local law. Otherwise, he has partial ability when it comes to other social situations and expressing himself in writing and speech.

**Musician:** A musician is fully able to play instruments (or sing) and socialize within the music industry. She also had partial ability when it comes to influencing others through other means and picking up on the reactions of a group of people.

**Programmer:** A programmer is chiefly able to create and modify software as well as obtain and alter permissions to enter or change computers and networks. He also has the partial ability to solve general logic puzzles.

**Soldier:** A soldier's skills are fully applicable to using standard issue weapons and understanding or giving orders through the chain of command. He also understands other elements of military procedure, including a range of technical skills related to his usual assignment. His Aptitude partially applies to athletic feats and close combat, as well as broad military strategy.

### Aware Aptitudes

These Aptitudes evolved in the Aware community. Aware history tends to heroic deeds, terrible disasters and ripening prophecies, so their professions serve the needs of a world full of high adventure.

You'll note that each Aware Aptitude has a Magical Aptitude listed in brackets. The Aware Aptitude is partially applicable to that Magical Aptitude – but only when it comes to spells and enchantments that relate to the Aware Aptitude. For example, a Cat Burglar can apply her Aptitude to the Shadowstep spell, but not Heart's Shield. A character who isn't a Legend can only apply these as 1 in 6 Aptitudes for the purpose of using magic (though they are standard 2 in 6 characteristics for other purposes), as

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they just don't have the same raw magical power.

**Armourer (Enchantment):** Although partially applicable to feats of strength, an Armourer Aptitude best applies to the ability to construct and repair ancient and modern body armour, including shields. Aware Armourers also know how to identify the properties of magical armour.

**Artisan (Enchantment):** This Aptitude is partially applicable to feats of manual dexterity. It's fully applicable to crafts and machines, including those that only work in the Aware world. These devices are not works of Enchantment; any of the Aware can operate or build them.

**Cat Burglar (Magecraft):** Aware Cat Burglars know how to climb and sneak with full ability, and can bypass locks and electronic security systems. The Aptitude is partially applicable to identifying and defeating magical forms of protection and guard animals.

**Con Artist (Magecraft):** This Aptitude is fully applicable to virtually any form of social interaction. It partially applies to underworld knowledge and all kinds of professional jargon, though the Con Artist only uses them to impersonate true experts.

**Historian of the Aware (Magecraft):** A Historian knows the legends of the Aware, including ancient mystic languages and the activation words for long-lost artefacts. His Aptitude is partially applicable to Unaware history.

**Squire (Magecraft):** Aware Squires are fully able to use virtually any weapon. The Aptitude is partially applicable to etiquette and strategy. Note that among the Aware, a Knight is a devotee of the Sphere of Strength.

**Pop Occultist (Magecraft):** Pop Occultists know about cutting edge magical forms and new enchanted artefacts. The Aptitude is partially applicable to other forms of occult lore.

**Sorcerer (Magecraft):** A Sorcerer is trained in the traditional magical arts: High Hermeticism, divine magic, demonology and so on. The skill is partially applicable to more modern "punk" occult styles.

**Weaponsmith (Enchantment):** A Weaponsmith's talents are partially applicable to armed combat, but fully applicable to building

**Witch (Magecraft):** Witches best know how to heal others and cast vague, poetic (but often accurate-seeming) divinations. Their partially applicable skills lay in offering shrewd guidance to the community.



## Magical Aptitudes

Magical Aptitudes represent a broad dedication to the magical arts. Only Legend and Aware characters can choose the Magecraft or Enchantment Aptitudes. Characters who are only Aware take these as 1 in 6 Aptitudes.

Magecraft and Enchantment are described in full in Chapter 6.

**Magecraft** is the art of creating effects with magic. Choose the kind of magic that your character uses (for example: Fire, Ice, Storms, Water, Information, Computer, Mind, Fate). If you apply a Skill to this Aptitude, it represents one particular spell.

**Enchantment** is the art of imbuing items with magical effects. If you apply a Skill to this Aptitude, it represents whatever form of item you're best at imbuing.

## Network Aptitudes

A Network is a special type of Aptitude that represents your character's ties to a formal or informal organization. Any character can Purchase a Network like any other Aptitude, including a Skill (if desired). The Network has a descriptor indicating the group it covers, like Freemasons, University Alumni or Cops. Its "Skill" (if any) covers an aspect of the Network that you really know how to use. Naturally, Aware characters can get involved with Networks that are unavailable to their mundane counterparts.

Networks use a scale similar to that of other Attributes and Aptitudes. 5 ranks in a Network indicate that it covers a moderately sized region (like a city). A 6-point Network is national; 7 points denotes a global Network. The nature of your Network may limit your maximum Network score, as (for example) a city bureaucracy doesn't extend outside of its borders.

You can use your Network to do three things:

**Borrowing and Favours:** You can ask your Network's members to lend you resources or perform a task. This is a Presence + Network roll with a Threshold of twice the Revenue level you want to borrow, or is opposed by the relevant dice pool of the NPC performing the service you want to use. Favours take place "behind the scenes." To get on-site assistance from an NPC you must recruit (see below).

Track borrowed Revenue separately from your own – don't stack it. Getting it in the form of a Windfall is difficult; subtract 2 dice from your roll. Otherwise, you keep the Revenue for a number of weeks equal to your success Threshold ranks or as long as the GM feels it is appropriate.

Finally, you are expected to contribute something to your Network in return: a Revenue level or service using a dice pool equal to

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what you asked for, minus your degree of success. The player and GM negotiate the exact terms, which might combine Revenue and service.

**Gather Information:** You can learn about subjects covered by your Network by making a Mind + Network (if using a database or other Network information resource) or Presence + Network (using personal contacts) roll. The GM sets the difficulty.

**Recruit:** You can use your Network to recruit an NPC to act as your temporary ally. Make an opposed roll (using your Presence + Network) against the potential ally's best dice pool + 2. The GM may add other modifiers based on the danger of the task and the NPC's particular inclinations. The NPC is generally inclined to help you, but ultimately behaves according to his own motives.

### Spheres

Spheres are advanced, rated and mostly used as other Aptitudes, except that they never have linked Skills or Expertise. Only Legends can acquire Spheres.

### Skills

Choose one Skill and link it to one of your Aptitudes. A Skill represents special proficiency at a narrow task covered by one of your Aptitudes. For example, the modern Soldier Aptitude includes the Rifles Skill. Like Edges, an applicable Skill adds an extra Aptitude die to applicable rolls.

### Expertise

Define one Attribute + Aptitude pool as your area of Expertise. Give it a name, such as "Kung Fu" or "Biochemist." This name should describe the pool over and above its component Aptitude and Attribute. You should avoid an Expertise that overlaps with another player character's, as one of the purposes of Expertise is to set characters apart from each other.

Expertise is usually the result of dedicated training, but it can also reflect natural talent or even a hardwired form of luck where the character is consistently blessed with favourable circumstances. This is why even characters with low Expertise dice pools are workable within the game. Take a moment to think about what Expertise means to your character.

Expertise gives you three privileges:

**Allies' Deference:** Your allies must defer to your talent when a challenge arises that more than one character could attempt. They

know that you're the best person for the job. You may give them back the chance to try it first if you like. It is the responsibility of the other players to justify deference; this is a rule that comes before their characters' desires and motives. In other words: You don't get to say that your character wouldn't exercise deference to an expert. The GM may waive this in cases where the ally is a relative newcomer or distrusted, but by and large, the rule should stick.

Allies' Deference helps level the playing field between extroverts and introverts in your group. There are often situations where extroverts leap in to participate, but introverts are playing characters that are better suited to the task. This rule helps move the spotlight around.

**First Crack:** You always act before characters who don't have applicable Expertise in a given area. If two characters are exercising Expertise at the same time, they all go before non-experts, but check for Initiative amongst themselves.

**Grace Under Pressure:** Always reduce total penalties by one when using Expertise. This never grants a bonus. In combat, this applies to partial action penalties, giving some experts the chance at an additional action.

## Applying Expertise

Characters gain the benefits of Expertise whenever they're applying the relevant pool or something comes under the purview of its description. A Duelling master gets his Expertise on Duelling's Body + Knight roll, and gets it when he has to use Mind + Knight to study an opponent's moves.

## Step IV: Beliefs

Beliefs don't directly affect how you roll dice; they describe what your character knows about her core identity. While Aptitudes and Edges describe what she can do, Beliefs describe *who she is*.

Note down one Belief per point of Ethos. This is something that your character holds dear, and can be anything you can express in a short sentence. Don't worry about how these statements will interact right now, just select things that describe what your character is like. It helps if you can phrase the Belief as an action, something that your character wants to do, but that isn't practically necessary. In other words, Beliefs inspire actions that the characters usually choose to do, not actions that they usually must do.



### example beliefs

"I have to protect my family", "What I know is all that matters", "Never deal with those damn crackers", "Death before dishonour", "I'm the only real person alive", "Other people are worth ten of me", "Locking things up inside doesn't work", "This is the best of all possible worlds", "We must move on and move up", "Change or die."





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A character is more than the sum of her Beliefs. Those listed on her character sheet only describe the ones that she is fully cognisant of. During play, she will doubtless discover more about herself that she didn't know – that's the fun of an evolving character.

Beliefs are core to the Light/Dark divide, and Legends can only choose to follow a Sphere if they can reconcile that Sphere with at least one of their Beliefs.

### Step V: Clade

Select one of the Clades detailed in Chapter 2. Note that Lightsiders only Manifest as one of the Fair Clades, even if they once belonged to a Dull Clade. Apply bonus traits in addition to the normal Edges and Flaws. A Clade Edge of Flaw stacks with others. For example, a Gnome with the Nimble Edge both naturally and as a bonus trait gains 2 dice on dice pools that would benefit from them.

### Step VI: Sphere

Legend characters choose a Sphere, along with noting which of their Beliefs are appropriate for the Sphere they have chosen. List the Sphere much as you would an Aptitude, starting with 1 rank. This can't be raised higher at character creation. Pick one Sphere Role and list it beside the Sphere. This is a form of Expertise you can activate by spending a Magic point. Spheres also give their members access to certain special abilities by the character's Clade. Note down your character's Minor and Major Sphere abilities.

**Chapter 3** covers the Spheres in detail.

### Step VII: Social Class

Social Class is related to characters' Aptitudes. **Eternal Legends** characters have two Social Classes, representing their standing in the Unaware world and among the Aware. Most characters are assumed to be "working class" or the equivalent: free people who have to work for a living and spend what they earn on the necessities of life. They have no special privileges within their society and have a Social Class of 0.

Social Class is a number rated from 0 to 7, but starting characters may not begin with a rating higher than 4. A particular campaign may mandate a given Social Class that supersedes the guidelines below.

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To determine Social Class, begin with a rating of 0 and add one point in each of the following situations:

- One of the character's Aptitudes requires expensive training or materials (Physicist, Sage).
- The character has an Aptitude that is associated with the game world's noble or executive class (Squire, Landlord).
- The character has an Aptitude rating of 3 or higher.
- The character has an Aptitude that helps him or her lead others (Officer, Priest).
- The GM determines that your character concept is associated with lawful power and influence within her society (Cop, Warden).
- The character is a Legend (Aware only).
- The character knows Magecraft, Enchantment, or both (Aware only).
- The character is an elf in a leading or executive position (Unaware only).
- The character is an orc in a position of authority within her community (Aware only).
- The character is a member of one of the Higher Spheres (Aware only, permanent).

Then, subtract one point in each of the following situations:

- One of the character's Aptitudes implies criminal activity (Thief, Gang Member).
- The character has an Aptitude associated with the poor or oppressed in a region (Peasant, Drug Dealer).
- The character has no Aptitude higher than one.
- The character has an Aptitude that requires him to be isolated from society (Ascetic, Wandering Bard).
- The GM determines that your character has a "peasant" or "poor" background.
- The character falls to the Dark (Aware only)
- <sup>a</sup>The character changes Clade at Manifestation (Aware only, not Human)
- <sup>a</sup>The character belongs to the Dull Clades in an area primarily inhabited by Bright Clades or vice versa (Aware only).



### social class ratings

Here's what Social Class ratings mean:

Rating	Description
1	<i>Lower Middle Class:</i> Journeyman, Wealthy Farmer, Middle Manager.
2	<i>Middle Class:</i> Manager, Steward, Merchant, Successful Business Owner.
3	<i>Upper Middle Class:</i> Sentinel, Guild Master, Branch Manager.
4	<i>Lower Upper Class:</i> Provost City Councillor, Senior Lawyer.
5	<i>Upper Class:</i> Warden, Castellan, Regional Corporate Manager.
6	<i>Social Elite:</i> Minister, Board of a Large Corporation.
7	<i>Leader of Society:</i> Pontiff, Head of State, Major CEO.



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If your result is less than 0, raise it to 0 – but count the negative number when you calculate your Revenue.

Social Class fluctuates through events during the game and by investing Revenue windfalls (see below).

### Using Social Class

Add the difference between two characters' Social Class to the higher-class character's rolls where it would apply. This normally includes social situations where the fallout would affect the character's social standing, but not straightforward matters of wit and personal magnetism.

Finally, Social Class determines the character's base Revenue.

### Revenue

Your character's Revenue represents a stream of self-renewing income. This comes from your job, inheritance or other sources that don't "run dry" unless you spend too much.

Calculate your Revenue as if it was a Trait based on your Social Class instead of an Attribute. For standard characters, that's Social Class + 4. If your Social Class is 0 but boosted from a negative number, apply that negative to the base of 4. Your Revenue is never less than 0.

You can always choose to have less Revenue, by either by transferring your Reserve into ready cash and using the remainder to calculate your true Revenue, or by just declaring that you have less for the sake of your character concept.

Calculate Revenue for both Social Classes. When trading with the Aware, always use Aware Revenue. This isn't because the character has two stashes of money available, but the worth of her money changes due to her standing in the Aware community.

You lose Revenue through expenditures – spending your Revenue. These come in four varieties:

**Trivial Expenditures** don't reduce your Revenue at all. You can recoup the cost so easily that it's not worth recording. This means that a Revenue 3 character can make purchases of \$15 or less without tracking them.

**Minor Expenditures** put a dent in your daily Revenue.

**Major Expenditures** affect your weekly Revenue.

**Critical Expenditures** affect your monthly Revenue and can permanently lower it.



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Finally, you have a Reserve, which is how much money you can acquire by reducing your Revenue to 0 and how much wealth is required to get you to the a given Revenue level.

You can always afford food, clothing and housing; don't spend Revenue on it unless special circumstances in the game dictate otherwise.

### Using Revenue

Spend Revenue as follows:

Make as many **Trivial Expenditures** as you like.

Make one **Minor Expenditure** per day.

Make one **Major Expenditure** per week.

Make one **Critical Expenditure** per month.

Treat any extra Expenditures beyond this allotment like an Expenditure of one rank higher.

Reduce your Revenue by one if you make more than one Critical Expenditure (or equivalent) a month. This may happen several times based on the total cost and number of Expenditures.

Minor, Major, and Critical expenditures count for both streams of revenue. You can't make a Critical Expenditure on your Unaware Revenue to buy a car and then go blow another Critical Expenditure on a suit of enchanted armour the next week just because the latter comes from Aware Revenue. Windfalls (see below) are measured in dollars for the Unaware. For Aware uses, find the lowest Revenue with an Expenditure that's closest to the value, then



Here's what different Revenue levels mean:

Level	Max. Triv/Minor/Major/Crit Expenditures (In \$US)	Reserve	revenue
0	Cash and Carry	None	
1	5/10/50/500 (Fixed Income/Poverty)	20000	
2	10/20/100/1000 (Minimum Wage)	40000	
3	15/30/150/1500 (Working Poor; Own Vehicle)	60000	
4	20/40/200/2000 (Home Ownership Likely)	80000	
5	25/50/250/2500	100000	
6	30/60/300/3000	120000	
7	50/100/500/5000 (Possible Net Worth \$1 million)	200000	
8	100/200/1000/10000	2 million	
9	1000/2000/10000/100000	20 million	
10	10000/20000/100000/1 million (Possible Billionaire)	200 mil.+	



## iv - CHARACTER CREATION

increase or decrease appropriately.

***Example:** Jackson the Giant Killer takes a hundred and twenty bucks from the leader of a gang of goblins who tried to kill him. To find out what he can buy in Aware circles with that money, Jackson's player looks on the Revenue table. \$120 is closest to a Major expenditure for Revenue 3 (\$100). His Aware Revenue is two higher than his Unaware, so he looks down two rows to find that his money is worth the equivalent of \$200 – but only if he uses it with others who are Aware.*

### Windfalls

Windfalls are monies and assets that aren't a part of your Revenue. List these in their raw cash (and any other) value. Once you spend it, it's gone. If you have 0 Revenue, this is the only income you receive aside from enough to (barely) feed and house yourself.

### Increasing Revenue

The easiest way to increase Revenue is to add your Windfall to your Revenue's Reserve. You lose the Windfall you invest (unless you want to liquidate the Reserve you boosted). If your Reserve increases to that of another Revenue level, you gain that level.

Other options include a Difficult/Professional Extended task (using an Attribute + Aptitude roll applicable to finance) with an interval of one month and a Threshold of 36. Success increases your Revenue by one. In a rigidly hierarchical society this becomes a Very Difficult/Master task (Threshold 48), but you may add your Social Class to the pool.

Other game events can arbitrarily raise or lower Revenue, either as part of a Social Class adjustment or on its own.

## Step: VIII: Equipment

**Æternal Legends** doesn't have lengthy equipment lists. Look up the prices you need in a real world catalogue or estimate based on the needs of the game. Magical equipment is only bought and sold between the Aware, and prices are adjusted accordingly. Though the actual money changing hands doesn't alter, the perceived social status of the buyer can and does affect prices in an economy dominated by wants, needs, and the time-honoured art of haggling.

Hidden from the Mundane world, the Aware still have a burgeoning trade in what we think of as "archaic" weapons. Partially, this is a matter of style – these weapons existed when the Gods walked the earth, and to discard them would be a form of sacrilege.

There's also a sort of comforting familiarity in the emblem of a hero setting off to slay a fell beast or defeat a Darksider with sword, bow, and plate armour. These days, that armour has a Kevlar lining, the sword is precision engineered carbon steel, and the bow may as well be a shotgun, but it still feels right. When purchasing archaic weapons at character creation, look at the "common" costs for modern weapons with roughly equivalent characteristics – a short sword would cost the same as a light pistol, and a poleaxe would cost as much as a rifle. This isn't particularly accurate, but it gives a feeling for the weight that these items carry in Aware society.

Characters can start with magical and archaic equipment of a value equal to a Critical expenditure of their Aware Revenue. Modern equipment – anything that can be bought on the open or black market without specialist help – can either be bought in the same way (using a Critical expenditure of the character's Unaware Revenue) or be adjudicated by the GM.

Many magical items are vastly more expensive than their mundane counterparts. This covers the extra time and effort put in by the enchanter, as well as the costs of any extra components. There's also a high tax placed by the Ministry of Administrative Affairs, which gives them the funding to keep the rest of the government out of the loop. It also gives them the funds to enforce laws on magical items – anyone building a superweapon had better be willing to give it up to the national interest. Rumour has that the Ministry maintains a warehouse full of such devices, ready in case of a dragon incursion or other doomsday scenario.

## Character Advancement

GMs should give players one to three Experience Points per game session. Experience Points represent a character's growing competence and confidence. It also reflects her growing bond to the world of the Aware.

**Æternal Legends** doesn't provide any special advice when it comes to awarding Experience Points. One of the authors prefers to award the same amount to all players, but only hands them out once or twice per storyline, so that characters always improve in some noticeable way, instead of through the slow grind of traditional RPG advancement systems. Every group has its own preferences; it's not our aim to discourage any of them.

Players spend Experience Points to improve their characters, with three provisos:

**The Variety Rule:** Players can't add more than + 1 to a single game statistic at a time. They can't take the same Edge or Skill twice.

**Edge/Skill Limits:** Players may not purchase more than two Edges or Skills for the same stat.



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**The Edge/Skill Advancement Rule:** Players have a few different options when it comes to advancing Edges, Skills, Attributes and Aptitudes:

Players can subtract the Experience Point cost of an Edge or Skill the character already possesses from the cost of improving a linked Attribute or Aptitude. If they do this, they lose the Edge or skill they applied to the cost; it's subsumed within the greater characteristic.

Players can buy the new Aptitude or Attribute at full price instead. This allows them to keep or change the linked Edges or Skills for free.

### Base Experience Point Costs

**Attributes:** One Attribute point costs 10 Experience Points.

**Edges:** One Edge costs 2 Experience Points.

**Aptitudes:** One Aptitude point costs 6 Experience Points.

**Skills:** Skills cost one Point. You may not purchase Sphere Skills.

**Expertise:** Purchasing a new Expertise is costly; 5 Experience Points multiplied by the number of Expertises the character will end up with after making the purchase. You may have to multiply this yet again if you are using one of the advancement schemes listed below. You may not purchase Sphere Expertises.

**Spells:** A new spell costs 2 Experience Points to learn.

**Spheres:** One Sphere point costs 6 Experience Points.

### Progression Schemes

Basic character advancement has no curve. This supports short storylines or infrequent sessions where players would prefer to be able to improve their characters quickly. If your play group is participating in a regular game, you might prefer to prolong character advancement over a larger number of sessions. Here are two suggested schemes.

**Medium Progression:** Multiply the cost of a new Attribute or Aptitude point by the level you already have. This means the first and second points have the same cost.

For Edges and Skills, add one less than the level of the linked Attribute or Aptitude to the Edge/Skill you want to purchase.

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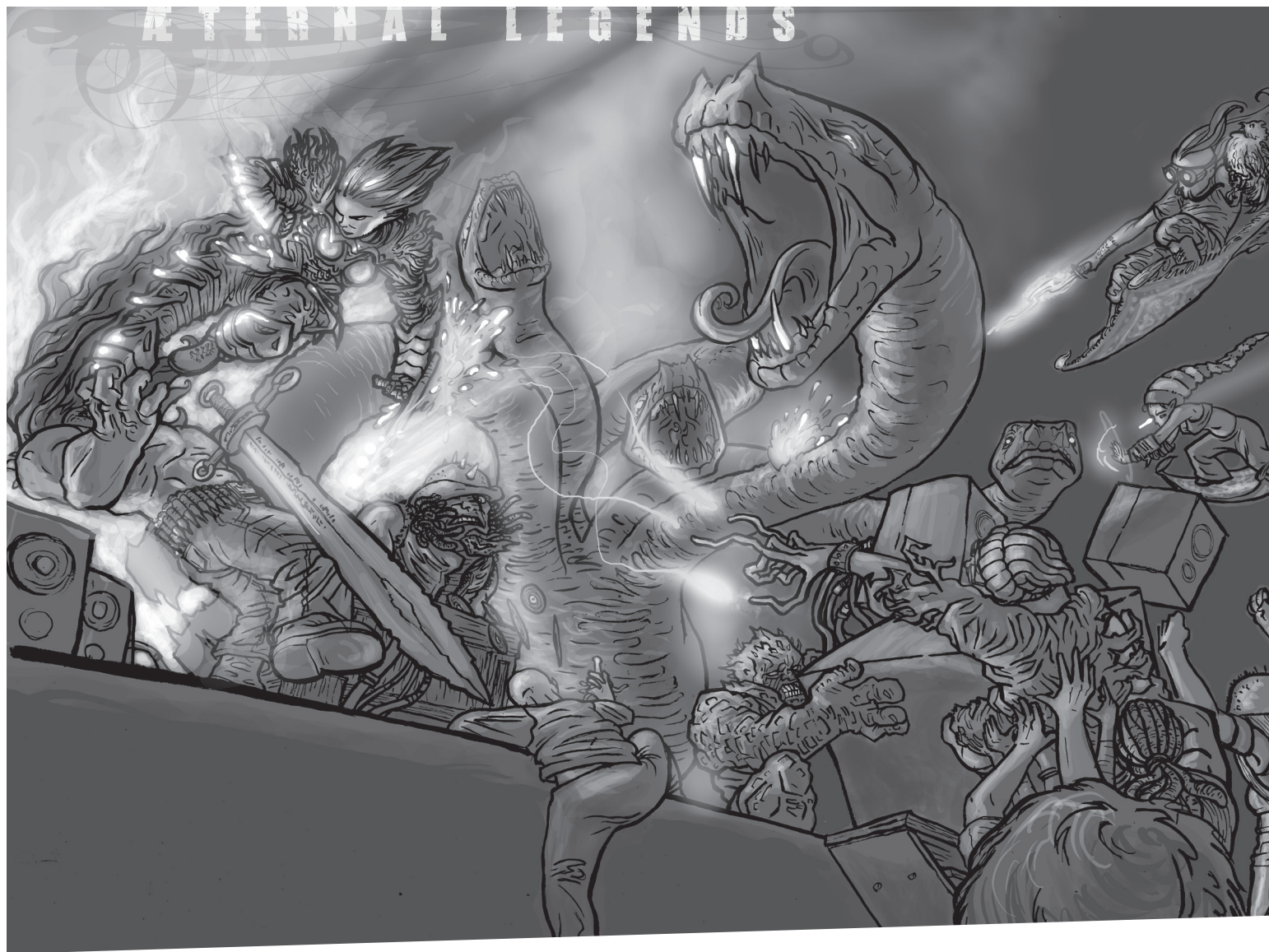
Multiply the cost of new spells by the number of spells the character already knows. Do not include Magecraft and Magecraft Skills that provide spell access in this calculation.

**Slow Progression:** Multiply the cost of a new Attribute or Aptitude point by the new level you want to purchase.

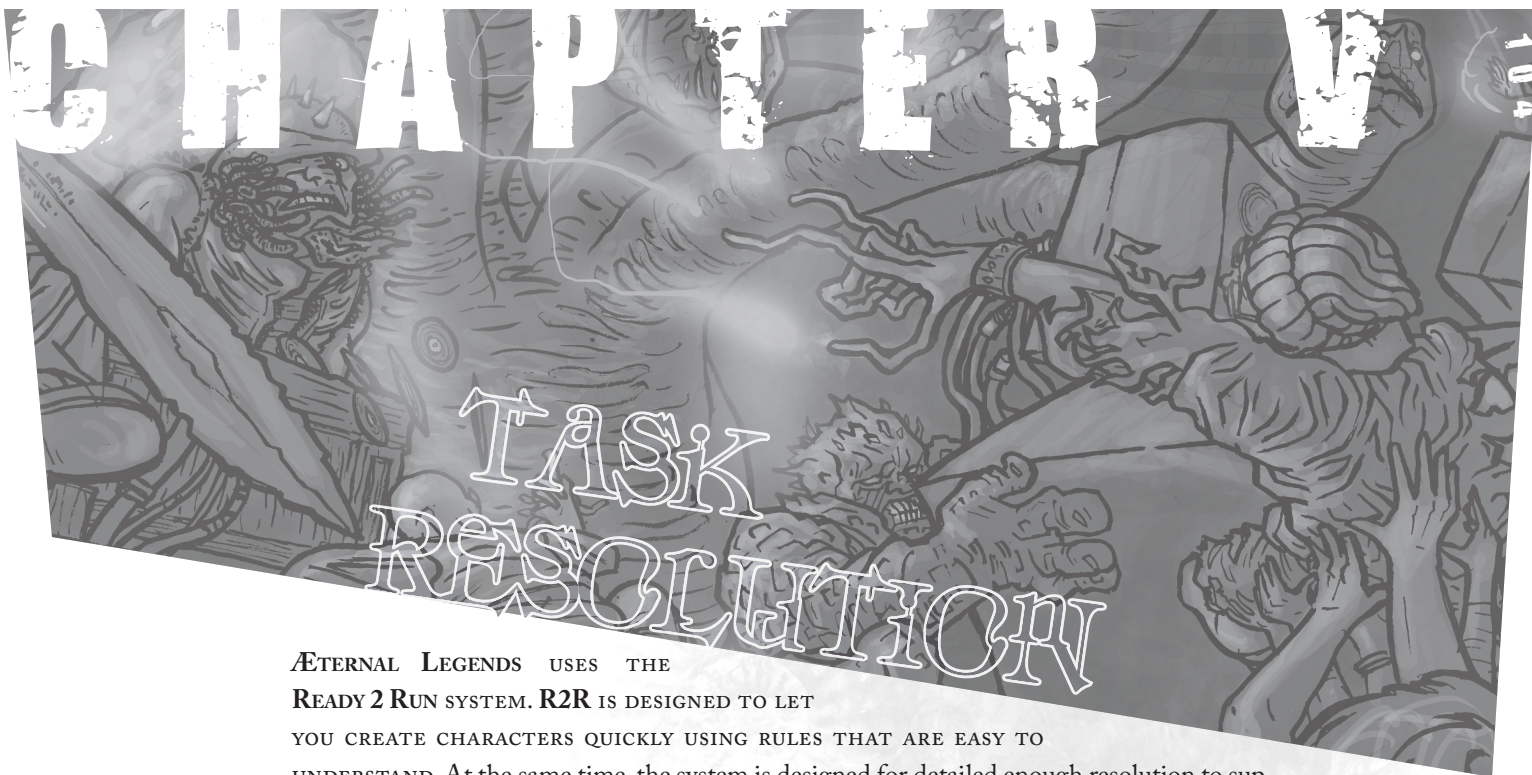
For Edges and Skills, add the level of the linked Attribute or Aptitude to the Edge/Skill you want to purchase.

Multiply the cost of new spells by the total number of spells the character will know after purchase. Do not include Magecraft and Magecraft Skills in this calculation.

# ETERNAL LEGENDS







ÆTERNAL LEGENDS USES THE

READY 2 RUN SYSTEM. **R2R** IS DESIGNED TO LET

YOU CREATE CHARACTERS QUICKLY USING RULES THAT ARE EASY TO

UNDERSTAND. At the same time, the system is designed for detailed enough resolution to support a dramatic sword duel or a complex magical ritual. Here are three elements of the system to remember:

**General Aptitudes:** You don't have a set of clearly marked skills. Instead, you have Aptitudes: broad abilities that represent a profession, personal background or wide field of interest. You're a Soldier or a Scientist, not a guy with a Sword or Chemistry skill. **R2R** assumes a basic level of trust between everyone in the game so that people will balance their Aptitudes and not worry about everything their character can do from the get-go.

**Description is up to you:** The action and combat rules allow for a fair amount of detail in resolution – but only after you have your say about what the numbers really mean. There's no set "Parry" or "Ambush" manoeuvre, but systems exist for you to use a Defence or prep (see Combat) to emulate each move, respectively.

**Everyone works together:** This is not a system designed for competitive players or groups who don't want to

# V - TASK RESOLUTION

compromise or cooperate. If a player isn't sure how her Aptitude fits a task, make suggestions – but don't get bossy! The GM should keep the game moving and the pacing fast, but needs to listen to what players want. The game is designed to be optimal for a group of good friends who like to game together. If you're just getting to know the other players, try to use that spirit. It'll be good for the game and good for your group, too.

## Dice Pools: The Basic Mechanic

To attempt an action, calculate and roll a dice pool.

Dice pools are composed of a number of six-sided dice (d6s) equal to your Attribute + (if applicable) Aptitude. Add Edges, Flaws and Skills where applicable. 1s or 2s on the d6 succeed; ignore other results (except for the “Number of the Beast” rule below). Add the dice numbers on all successful dice (1s and 2s); the result is the number of points scored. These points measure how well the character performed according to the benchmark used for that action (the Task). Note that you add the actual numbers on the dice.

***Example:** Lydia rolls a dice pool of 6. Her dice come up with the following numbers: 5, 4, 2, 1, 1, 3. The 5, 4 and 3 are discounted. She adds 2, 1 and 1 for a total of 4 success points.*

## 1 in 6 and 3 in 6 Stats

Some game statistics will be listed as a “1 in 6” or a “3 in 6” type. A 1 in 6 statistic type only counts 1s rolled on the dice. 2s and high are failures. 3 in 6 types count 1s, 2s and 3s as successful. A die result of 3 adds 3 success points. In a dice pool count dice from 1 in 6 or 3 in 6 game statistics separately. Don't apply their benefits and disadvantages to every die in the pool.

## Applicable Aptitudes

An Aptitude has three levels of applicability based on how well it would help a character perform a task. An Artist won't be good at shooting a gun unless he's also a Cop.

**Not Applicable:** You don't have an Aptitude that can help you. You may only roll your Attribute for the task, and then at a – 1 Aptitude die penalty. You may not even attempt some tasks that require training. Tying a knot is something anybody can try; nuclear physics isn't.

**Partially Applicable:** Your aptitude makes you a bit more familiar with the task even though it isn't the Aptitude's main focus. For instance, a Kung Fu Master has some familiarity with Asian religions, but not as much as a Taoist Priest. Roll your Attribute + Aptitude – 1 die.

**Fully Applicable:** Roll your Attribute + Aptitude at no penalty.

Whenever your character uses an Aptitude you get a better handle on how applicable the Aptitude is. Write down these situations so that your list of precedents – and a better idea of what the Aptitude represents – grows over the course of the game.

## The Rule of Synergy

If you have two or more Aptitudes that are both applicable (partially or fully) to a single given task, the Aptitude with the greater benefit gains a one die bonus. Multiple synergies do not stack unless the character uses Sphere meta-synergy (see Chapter 3).

## Threshold Tasks

A Threshold Task requires a certain number of points to succeed. If your roll's total meets or exceeds this number, your character succeeds at whatever she was trying to accomplish.

## Opposed Tasks

An Opposed Task occurs when something or someone is actively trying to stymie your character's efforts. You and the opposing character both roll applicable dice pools. The higher total succeeds. Ties go to the character with the higher pool. If pools are tied, the play group decides what happens.

## Extended Tasks

An Extended Task requires several rolls. Set a difficulty Threshold for each roll. Each participant must meet this Threshold with every roll. In addition, players must accumulate a total number of points equal to that Threshold multiplied by a number chosen by the GM.

Set the time it would take someone with a given level of ability to perform the task and divide that by



### threshold tasks

Difficulty	Threshold
Simple	1
Standard	3
Difficult	5
Very Difficult	8
Heroic	11

### opposed tasks

Standard Opposed Ability Pools

Opponent	Dice Pool
Basic	2-4
Skilled	5-7
Professional	8-10
Master	11-12
Grandmaster	13+





# V - TASK RESOLUTION

the number of rolls he'd make. This is the interval for each roll. Multiply the number of rolls by the Threshold to determine the required total.

For example, an Extended Task that a master could perform over six rolls would require a character to accrue 24 points. If the task would take three hours to accomplish, roll for every 30 minutes of game time.

If two characters compete, the winner is the character who meets or exceeds this number first. If you do not succeed at any one roll in the series, you fail. You lose all of your accumulated points. If you get to try again you've got to start from scratch.

If you score more points than your Threshold, the difference becomes your degree of success. See Degrees of Success for details.

## Cooperation

Cooperation can take several forms. In some cases, people need to work together if a task has any chance of success at all. In other cases, a partner or three is quite helpful. In cases of mass cooperation, large groups can work together to accomplish the kinds of things that crowds, mobs and armies do best.



### extended tasks

Extended Difficulty Chart

Degree	Threshold/Roll	Total
Simple/Basic	One	one x (expected number of rolls)
Standard/Skilled	2	2 x (expected number of rolls)
Difficult/Professional	3	3 x (expected number of rolls)
Very Difficult/Master	4	4 x (expected number of rolls)
Heroic/Grandmaster	5	5 x (expected number of rolls)



**Standard Cooperation:** To cooperate on a standard task, pick the character with the largest applicable dice pool as the leader. Each assistant subtracts a cumulative 1 die from her pool. The assistants' players roll their modified pool and adds their points to the leader's total.

If characters cooperate on an Extended Task, any player who rolls a failure removes all of the points he added to the leader's total, retroactive to the beginning of the attempt.

**Mass Cooperation:** If a large number of people can cooperate, set the number of people who can cooperate at a -1 die penalty. Double that number may cooperate at a -2 dice penalty, triple that number may cooperate at a

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–3 dice penalty, and so on.

**Minimum Cooperation:** If a task requires a minimum number of people to succeed, these participants never incur penalties for working together. Each one rolls her pool at no penalty, but if any of them fail, they all fail. Furthermore, only count the highest number of points scored by a single participant. After that, use the normal rules for cooperation.

### Degrees of Success

Characters' degrees of success depend on the point difference between the task's difficulty and the character's successful dice roll. The degree of success often has no special effect, but some situations (such as combat) require you to track it carefully.

### Using and Regaining Will

Players can spend Will to add dice to characters' dice pools or Defence. You can spend as many points of Will as your Presence on each roll or instance of Defence. Each point adds one die to your dice pool or point to Defence.

Characters regain 1 Will point per in-game day or game session (GM's choice) and all of their Will at the beginning of a new chapter in the campaign.

## Other Rules for Task Resolution

### Bonus Conventions

There are two kinds of bonuses: dice bonuses and point bonuses.

Roll *dice bonuses* along with the task's pool.

Add *point bonuses* after making a roll and succeeding; don't add them if the base result is 0 or less. Point bonuses affect the degree of success, not the chance of success.



### degrees of success

Extended Difficulty Chart

Degree of Success	Succeeds by:
Marginal	1-2
Competent	3-4
Excellent	5-7
Masterful	8-10
Heroic	11+



# V - TASK RESOLUTION

## Penalty Conventions

There are also two kinds of penalties: dice penalties and point penalties.

Subtract *point penalties* from the results of a dice roll, never to the dice pool itself.

*Penalty dice* do reduce the character's dice pool.

**Narrative Bonus:** One broad favourable condition is the Narrative Bonus. This applies a +1 to +5 dice bonus on actions, at the GM's discretion or group consensus. Award this for cool-sounding actions, but also for acts that reflect a character's nature, desires and personal flaws.

**The 0 Rule:** If your dice pool ever drops to 0 or for some reason, you must try for a Narrative Bonus or use Wits and/or Will points to boost your pool back to one or more. If you can't, you automatically fail.

**The Number of the Beast:** Some tasks are inherently risky. If every die used to attempt these tasks comes up with a 6 (or with a Superior stat, the highest number on the die), the character suffers some sort of misfortune. Details are left to the GM or the group, but never award extra punishment for more sixes. It doesn't make any statistical sense.

## Combat

**Æternal Legends'** combat system is designed to be fast moving but reasonably tactical. It's also supposed to simulate "blow by blow" combat in that if you like, you can determine what each shot or sword blow does in a fight. The main resources you use in combat are Wits (you need to spend Wits to do almost anything of importance in a fight) and Health (because once you suffer enough injury, you die – or other unpleasant things might happen to you).

The system is a bit more abstract in other situations. It doesn't especially emphasize positioning or the exact specifications of individual weapons, tactics and manoeuvres. Many games strive for a sense of verisimilitude by labelling every parry, joint lock or blow, but the important thing is really their game effects. So instead of saying that a "great blow" manoeuvre from a halberd has a certain set of modifiers, the game relies on you to construct an attack and describe it accordingly. Remember that a good description also nets you a Narrative Bonus, so it's in your best interest to be creative!



## Step I: Initiative and Timekeeping

Your Initiative rating is equal to Body + Presence. Add the result of a d6 as a tie-breaker if necessary. Characters act in order from highest to lowest Initiative unless they choose to delay. Rushing can increase Initiative for a round.

### Rushing

Spend Wits to increase your Initiative. Each point adds +2 to your character's Initiative score for that round.

Characters with the highest scores have the option to go first. They can act right away or wait to do the following:

**Interrupt:** If you have a higher Initiative you can interrupt a character with a lower Initiative after her player declares an action but before she rolls.

**Move in Time:** If you have a higher Initiative you can move in time with a slower character to act simultaneously. See **Simultaneous Actions** for details.

Characters can only delay acting until all slower characters act once (if they are able). After that, delayed characters must act in Initiative order or give up their actions.

Defending is not an action for Initiative purposes. You can always defend out of turn during a given phase.

### Time, the Combat Round and Phases

Normal time takes place in days, hours and scenes. The last is an arbitrary length of time where characters are acting without skipping ahead in time. Combat breaks a scene down into individual rounds and phases.

A combat round is an elastic amount of time, but never lasts longer than it takes to unleash a flurry of blows and parries, a big haymaker or anything else that's quick and decisive. Let inspirational media (action movies, comics, adventure novels) and common sense guide you.

Each round has one or more phases. A phase is the amount of time it takes everyone who can or will act to go once. It is impossible to save up actions from one phase to use in the next. Once everyone acts, move to the next phase in the round. The round ends once it reaches a phase where no character can act.

# V - TASK RESOLUTION

## Step II: Attacking, Defending and Moving

### Tracking Wits

*This is an important rule!* Your character's Wits score refreshes before taking Initiative at the start of every round. Every combat action has a Wits cost, so you'll want find an easy way to track it. One thing to do is to gather up a bunch of dice equal to your Wits that look different from the dice you'll be rolling. Move one of these dice from a reserve to a discard area every time you spend a point of Wits.

### Attack Pools

To attack, spend one Wits point.

Roll a dice pool of:

**Close Combat and muscle-powered weapons:** Body + Aptitude (if applicable) + weapon Force. Subtract Defence.

**Firearms and similar ranged weapons:** Mind + Aptitude (if applicable) + weapon Force. Subtract Defence.

### Strong Attacks and Boosts

A *strong attack* is harder to evade and more damaging, but it takes time and effort that could go to movement or Defence. Spend additional Wits on your attack; each extra point adds one die to your dice pool. This takes place before the defender declares what he's doing.

Characters also perform *boosts* by spending extra Wits points. This improves their dice pools just as if they were making a strong attack, except that the task might be a back flip, hastily assembling a bomb and so on. This applies to actions that only take a round to perform.

In both cases, you can't add more Wits points than the Attribute governing the pool you're enhancing.

### Grappling

To grapple, spend one Wits. Your dice pool is Body + Aptitude (if any). You must overcome the opponent's Defence as usual. If your opponent interrupts your grapple with an attack and succeeds, you automatically fail. This counterattack can also be a grapple.

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A successful grapple inflicts no damage. Half of your degree of success (rounded down) becomes a dice penalty to all of the victim's physical actions and movement (in yards). This penalty accumulates with successful grapples over consecutive phases and rounds. If all grapplers in a match accumulate penalties larger than their standard dice pools, the match is inconclusive, and both grapplers automatically break free.

In any group of grapplers, the attacker who inflicts the largest grappling penalty is the dominant grappler. Ties go to the highest dice pool, then the highest roll on a d6. The dominant grappler can do the following on the second or subsequent consecutive phases of a grapple.

**Break Free:** Escape from the grapple.

**Submission:** Inflict a base 0 Force Stun damage with grappling attacks while maintaining your victim's running penalty, but you don't add to it. You inflict damage without breaking the grapple and can continue to penalize your opponent on subsequent phases.

**Strike:** Attack with a one handed weapon or unarmed attack. Reduce the opponent's Defence by his grapple penalty. Your opponent loses his grapple penalty at the end of your action.

**Takedown:** Take your opponent to the ground. You land on top and maintain the grappling penalty on your opponent.

**Throw:** Toss the opponent to the ground hard while you remain standing (you must be standing you use this move). He must use a 1 Wits point movement action to stand again. He also suffers standard unarmed damage (unless he lands on a heap of pillows or a rusty spike). You lose your grip on the opponent; he no longer suffers a grapple penalty.

### Defending

Characters who want to defend against an attack declare this before the attacker rolls but after he declares his intentions. Spend one Wits point to reduce the attack's dice pool by your Body or the applicability bonus of an Aptitude - whichever is better. Spend additional Wits to further reduce the attack pool by 1 die per extra Wits spent, up to a maximum attack penalty equal to your Body + applicable Aptitude. Additionally, you can spend Will over and above this cap to further reduce attack pools on a 1 for 1 basis. Aptitude synergy and Sphere-based meta-synergy bonuses apply to both basic defence ratings and the maximum allowed.

### The Will Third Rule

Combat can turn into a bidding war between attackers and defenders. The player who declares Wits or Will expenditures last has advantage because he knows how difficult his opposition is.



## V - TASK RESOLUTION

The Will Third rule mitigates this situation. In any contest, declare bids and pools in the following order:

Attacker's dice pool, including Wits expenditures for strong attacks.

Defender's Defence.

Attacker's Will expenditures to increase his attack pool or Defence, if any.

### Moving and Running

Spend one Wits point to move your character up to half of his Health (rounded up) in yards or 4 points to move his entire Health in yards.

Some Edges benefit moving characters even if they don't increase Health. Add these to Health for the purpose of moving unless another Edge already boosts your Health.

Injuries affect movement per round. Subtract one yard of movement per round every time damage fills more than half of the spaces in a single injury column. Total such penalties from all injuries. Regardless of these penalties, any conscious character can move one yard per round without spending Wits, and can always touch or attack anything in a one yard radius by lunging, shifting or jostling for position.

Finally, you can run by spending 4 Wits and rolling Body + Aptitude (if any). This is a Threshold Task with a difficulty equal to your own Body (you're trying to exceed your own natural speed). Each point adds a yard of movement.

### Other Actions

All other actions normally cost one point of Wits to perform if they take no longer than a single sword blow or aimed shot to perform, or 4 points if they take significantly longer, but less than a full round.

### Tricks

A trick combines two actions in a single phase. Examples include disarming an opponent and catching his weapon, sliding down a tapestry to kick an enemy in the face and fencing while balanced on a narrow ledge. You can also use a trick to launch two simultaneous attacks if you have two weapons or can otherwise justify a quick "one-two" strike.

To perform a trick, roll for each component as successive partial actions (see below for information about partial actions) at an additional -1 die penalty to each, but apply both results during the same phase.

## Preps

A prep is an action that will benefit a second action. If you succeed, every two points of your degree of success converts into a one die bonus to the pool of the action you've linked it to. You must explain why the prep benefits the subsequent action. You can also convert every two successes into a bonus point of Defence, but you must still spend a point of Wits to defend at all. Your prep action happens in its own time, so in combat, it costs at least one Wits. Preps can boost pools and Defence past their standard caps. For the most part, preps don't benefit partial actions as much as full actions. Examples of common preps include:

**Ambush:** Make a Body or Mind + Aptitude roll to hide. As a result, your first attack has extra punch because you've positioned yourself to strike without warning, where it hurts.

**Overwatch:** Roll Mind + Aptitude to scrutinize an area with a firearm drawn, giving you a bonus to attack the first target to enter it.

## Number of Actions

Characters can act until they run out of Wits points. A character with 0 Wits can move one yard per round, talk and perform other inconsequential actions but can't do anything else.

In addition, characters face penalties if they want to do anything but move or defend after the first phase of a round. They must choose between full and partial actions.

**Full Actions:** Characters who only want to attack (or otherwise act) in the first phase of the round perform a full action. Full actions have no penalty.

**Partial Actions:** Characters who want to attack or act in the first phase and subsequent phases must declare that they are performing partial actions before their first phase actions. Every partial action in the round (one per phase) suffers a cumulative - 2 dice penalty. This penalty starts in the first phase.

If partial action penalties drop a dice pool to 0 or less before adding other bonuses or penalties, the character can't act using that dice pool. Will, Wits and Narrative bonuses can't change this.

**Example:** *Chad has a dice pool of 6. He performs a full action and rolls 6 dice in the first phase. Kearsley has 7 dice and opts for partial actions. He rolls 5 dice in the first phase, 3 dice in the second phase and 1 die in the third phase. He's taken three actions this round. Kearsley can't take a fourth action because the partial action penalty drops his pool to -1.*

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## Simultaneous Actions

Tied Initiative scores and movement in time can cause simultaneous actions. Resolve simultaneous actions in the following order:

- Reveal attack pools simultaneously.

- Reveal Defence simultaneously.

- Roll all actions.

Apply all results. No result interferes with any other simultaneous result. Even if you die, your simultaneous strike can hit.

## Step III: Injuries

Damaged characters suffer injuries. A character's Health determines how severe and how many injuries a character can tolerate. Injuries fill with Stun damage, Wound damage or Mortal damage.

If your character suffers damage, fill in spaces on the leftmost unused injury track (i) among those appropriate to the type of damage. Start from the top space and work your way down. If a given injury track is already filled with any amount of damage at all, move to the right until you find an undamaged column. If any injury track is filled to the last space, the damage upgrades to the next most severe category. If all of the spaces are filled in at least one injury track from each damage category (Stun, Wound and Mortal), the character dies.

**Stun damage** knocks a character out once it fills his last injury space unless the player spends a Will point. This keeps the character conscious for a round. It is normally inflicted by blunt trauma, smoke inhalation and other (mostly) nonlethal sources of injury. Once a character suffers more Stun damage to his last (bottom-most) injury space, the excess and all future Stun injuries become Wound injuries.

Assuming moderate rest, characters heal all of their Stun injuries simultaneously at the rate of one point per hour.

**Wound damage** also renders a character unconscious once it fills his last injury space unless the player spends a Will point each round. It's caused by cuts, stab wounds, burns and other serious injuries. Once a character has suffered Wound damage to his last injury space on any injury the excess and all future Wound injuries become Mortal damage.

Assuming complete rest and medical care, characters heal all of their Wound injuries simultaneously at the rate of one point per



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day.

**Mortal damage** represents an imminent threat to a character's life. A character suffering Mortal injuries must use a point of Will each round to remain conscious. Mortally injured characters also suffer a one point injury every round until they receive basic first aid.

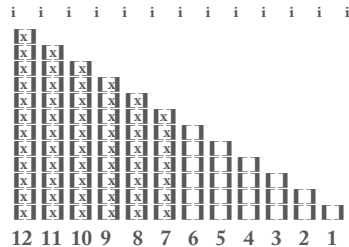
A character who suffers more Mortal damage over and above the last injury space in a column dies. Assuming complete rest and medical care, characters heal all of their Mortal injuries simultaneously at the rate of one point per week.

## Tracking Injuries

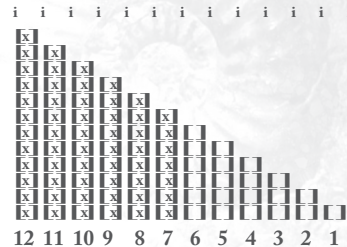
Each injury follows its own track. (I). Your first injury track has a number of spaces equal to your Health (the track below is for a character with 6 Health). Each additional injury follows a track with one space fewer. Thus your Health determines both how severe your injuries can get before you suffer ill effects and how many injuries you can suffer.

### Injury Track for 6 Health

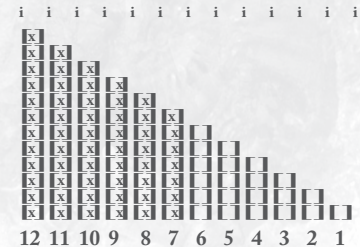
#### STUN



#### WOUND



#### MORTAL



**Example:** Lydia has 6 Health. She's stabbed for 7 points of damage, punched for 3 points of damage and kicked for 8 points of damage. She suffers one Wound injury with the stabbing, but she only has 6 spaces in her first injury track. The remaining point of damage becomes a one point mortal injury. The punch inflicts 3 Stun points, using up three of six spaces on her first Stun track. The kick knocked out all five spaces in her second Stun injury track. The excess 3 points should become a Wound injury. Unfortunately, as Lydia has a Wound injury with the last space filled, it transfers to a Mortal injury. Thus, Lydia sustains a second 3 point Mortal injury.

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## Weapons and Force Ratings

Every weapon has a Force rating that adds to attackers' dice pools. In addition, some weapons inflict bonus damage. Add it after the attacker successfully hits. Modern ranged weapons have a Mag rating listing their ammunition capacity. These don't represent real world values as much as an easy to remember generalization.

### Burst fire

Burst fire allows characters to shoot multiple bullets to inflict more severe injuries, or to "sweep" adjacent areas. It comes in two forms:

**Short Burst:** Uses 3 rounds and add +4 damage points.



### nickels, dimes and the hammer

The injury system is designed to combine two types of injuries: cumulative trauma and major wounds. If your character suffers lots of minor injuries, you will eventually have to fill in that last space. In playtest, we called this being "nickeled and dimed to death." A major blow (the "Hammer") can drop a character by filling an entire injury column.

When you run violent events, keep in mind both options. Minor threats should tend toward "nickel and dime" damage; major hazards can bring the Hammer down in a blow or two.



**Long Burst:** Uses 5-20 rounds (player's choice). Every 5 rounds adds 1 extra Force, and your attack dice may be split and rolled as separate pools to hit different targets as part of a single action. You may devote no more extra dice to a single pool than the weapon's Burst Rating. Furthermore, you always waste 1d6 more bullets than you intended to shoot.

## Close Combat Weapons

**Unarmed:** 0 Force (Stun)

**Club:** 1 Force (Stun)

**Staff/Heavy Bludgeon:** 2 Force (Stun)

**Knife:** 0 Force (Wound)

**Light/Short Sword:** 1 Force (Wound)

**Long/Broad Sword:** 2 Wound

**Axe:** 1 Force (Wound) + 2 damage

**Spear:** 3 Force (Wound)

**Poleaxe:** 2 Force (Wound) + 4 damage

## Ancient Ranged Weapons

**Self Bow:** 1 Force (Wound)

**Compound Bow:** 2 Force (Wound)

**Longbow:** 2 Force (Wound) + 4 damage

## Modern Ranged Weapons

**Light Pistol/SMG:** 1 Force (Wound); Mag 10 (6-8 for revolver) or 20; Burst Rate 0 or 3

**Heavy Pistol:** 2 Force (Wound); Mag 8 (6 for revolver)

**Rifle/Assault Rifle:** 3 Force (Wound); Mag 5 or 30; Burst Rate 0 or 4

**Shotgun/Heavy Rifle/Machinegun:** 3 W Force (Wound) + 4 damage; Mag 8/5/10 rounds of fire; Burst Rate 0 or 5

## Armour

Armour grants an automatic Defence rating; you don't have to spend Wits. If you choose to defend yourself the armour adds to the total Defence rating. Ancient armour offers varying protection against Stun and Wound attacks (listed in [Stun/Wound] format) but no protection against modern firearms attacks. Modern armour is broadly effective – its rating applies to Stun and Wound attacks equally. Armour's disadvantage is that it penalizes Body-based pools for the purpose of attacking, performing athletic actions. It also penalizes your maximum Defence by the same amount. Fortunately, armour's own Defence rating ignores these caps.

## Ancient Armour Types\*

**Padded:** 1/0; no penalty

**Leather:** 1/one; -1 penalty

**Motley Mail:** 1/2; -2 penalty

**Chainmail:** 2/3; -3 penalty

**Plate and Chain:** 3/3; -4 penalty

**Plate Armour:** 3/4; -4 penalty

\* Ancient armour provides no protection against modern firearms.

## Modern Armour Types

**Concealable:** 1; no penalty



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**Light:** 2; -2 penalty

**Heavy:** 4; -4 penalty

**Riot/Battledress:** 6; -6 penalty

## Shields

All shields add a +1 bonus to Defence, but (unlike armour) you must spend at least one Wits on Defence to apply it. This stacks on top of the maximum Defence you can apply against an attack. In addition, a large shield adds an additional, standard armour bonus (it doesn't cost Wits) against hand to hand combat attacks. A tower shield, riot shield or similarly large shield adds a bonus to defend against ranged attacks. Ancient shields do not provide this bonus against firearms attacks.

## Shields\*

**Buckler:** 0; +1 Defence (if spending Wits)

**Large Shield:** 1 (hand to hand); +1 Defence (if spending Wits)

**Tower or Riot Shield:** 1 (hand to hand/ranged); +1 Defence (if spending Wits)

\* Ancient versions provide no protection against modern firearms.

## Vehicles

Vehicles have a safe speed and a top speed, both in miles per hour. No rolls are needed to drive a vehicle at up to its safe speed (assuming the conditions are good). Driving at the top speed requires pushing a vehicle to its limits, and thus the driver must make rolls as often as the GM deems appropriate. The vehicle's Handling is a number of bonus dice added to all rolls to control it, though hazards encountered on the road apply penalties. A vehicle's Structure is a measure of both size and how much damage it can take.

## Sample Vehicles

**Sports Bike:** Speed 90/160; Handling 5; Structure 3

**Hog:** Speed 80/140; Handling 4; Structure 4

**Sports Car:** Speed 110/160; Handling 3; Structure 5

**Compact Car:** Speed 70/130; Handling 2; Structure 5

**Sedan:** Speed 75/140; Handling one; Structure 7

**Minivan:** Speed 70/120; Handling 0; Structure 9

**Pickup/SUV:** Speed 70/110; Handling -one; Structure 10

**Bus:** Speed 60/100; Handling -3; Structure 12

## Car Chases

A car chase is a mad dash through heavy traffic or along twisting roads, one car trying to get the hell out of the way and the other trying to stop it. Instead of detailed rules for acceleration, hazard avoidance, and how much damage a vehicle takes for running through a wooden barrier, these rules give the feel of car chases from movies and action stories.

The lead car has a head start of between three and six car lengths (one length is roughly 4 yards), depending on the circumstances at the start of the chase. If ever there are more than 10 lengths between a lead car and a pursuit vehicle, the lead car loses the pursuer.

Each round, the drivers' players make an opposed driving roll. If the lead car wins, the gap extends by a length; if the pursuer wins, the gap closes by a length. In the madness of the chase, most drivers will only average their vehicle's safe speed. The driver of the faster vehicle gets one bonus die for each full 20mph difference in speeds. This bonus only applies to the initial roll each round, the cars' Handling adds to rolls for hazards and Stunts as well. One or both drivers can try to go at their top speed to change the speed modifier (declare this at the start of the round), but that driver must then face a hazard.

At the GM's discretion, after the first roll either car may have to deal with a hazard. Car chases don't happen in a vacuum, but in busy cities, sleepy suburban towns, in blizzards, when running from an enraged dragon... Whenever the car chase is getting boring, one or the other driver must roll to deal with a hazard, be it a Chicago-style bad driver, a patch of ice, a bridge that's out, crashing a street party, a railroad crossing with a train bearing down, or the cops getting on the scene. The GM should be as creative as she can.

The GM describes the hazard and any negative modifiers to the roll to keep control, normally between -1 and -5. A driver who deals with a hazard must make a second roll to remain in control. Failing means dropping back a length - one closer to the pursuit, or one further away from the quarry, as appropriate. At the GM's discretion, the vehicle may be damaged in the process.

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## Stunts

If you really want to catch the car in front – or get the hell away from the car behind – you need to take risks. Stunts let you cover a lot of distance in a short amount of time, if you feel like doing something that would otherwise be rather dangerous.

If you succeeded at the initial drive roll and don't encounter a hazard, you can try a stunt. You have to describe the sort of thing you want to do, and you can only attempt each stunt once per chase scene. You could nip into the oncoming lane, jump onto the sidewalk, race through a busy intersection, or ride a motorcycle up the lane marker between two trucks. Make another drive roll, with penalties assigned by the GM equivalent to a hazard. If you succeed, you gain a length immediately. If you fail, you lose a length as things go wrong.

If you really need to gain ground (or have magic on your side), you can try for an insane stunt. This is something that's incredibly daring, very impressive, and totally crazy. You could slide your motorcycle under a tanker truck or run through a railroad when the train's bearing down. Your drive roll is at a -6 penalty. If you fail, you total your vehicle – the chase ends immediately and you suffer damage equal to crashing. If you succeed, you instantly gain five lengths.

Fortunately, vivid stunts get easier when they're interesting. Remember to use the Narrative Bonus when a stunt enthrals the group or helps a player better portray his character.

## Ramming

Vehicles can ram if they're 0 lengths apart and the ramming car didn't encounter a hazard or try a Stunt. The driver who is being rammed must make a roll to regain control. This roll is penalised by the difference between your vehicles' Structure scores; an SUV ramming a sports bike sets the bike's rider at a penalty of  $(9 - 2 =) -7$ . Note that for weak vehicles ramming big ones, this modifier will be positive. If the rammed driver fails, his vehicle takes a point of damage and falls back a length – if the other vehicle is a motorcycle, the rider also takes the difference in Structures as a Wound injury.

For the purposes of crashing, car chases are assumed to happen at the vehicle's Safe speed (the difference in speeds is useful for Stunts).

## Damaging Vehicles

Vehicles apply their Structure as a Defence bonus against attacks. If the attacker hits, each Wounding injury causes one point of damage to the vehicle. Once a vehicle suffers Wounds equal to its Structure, it's destroyed. Vehicles don't have multiple injury tracks; damage simply reduces the total Structure. If the vehicle's moving, everyone involved takes damage as in a crash. If some-



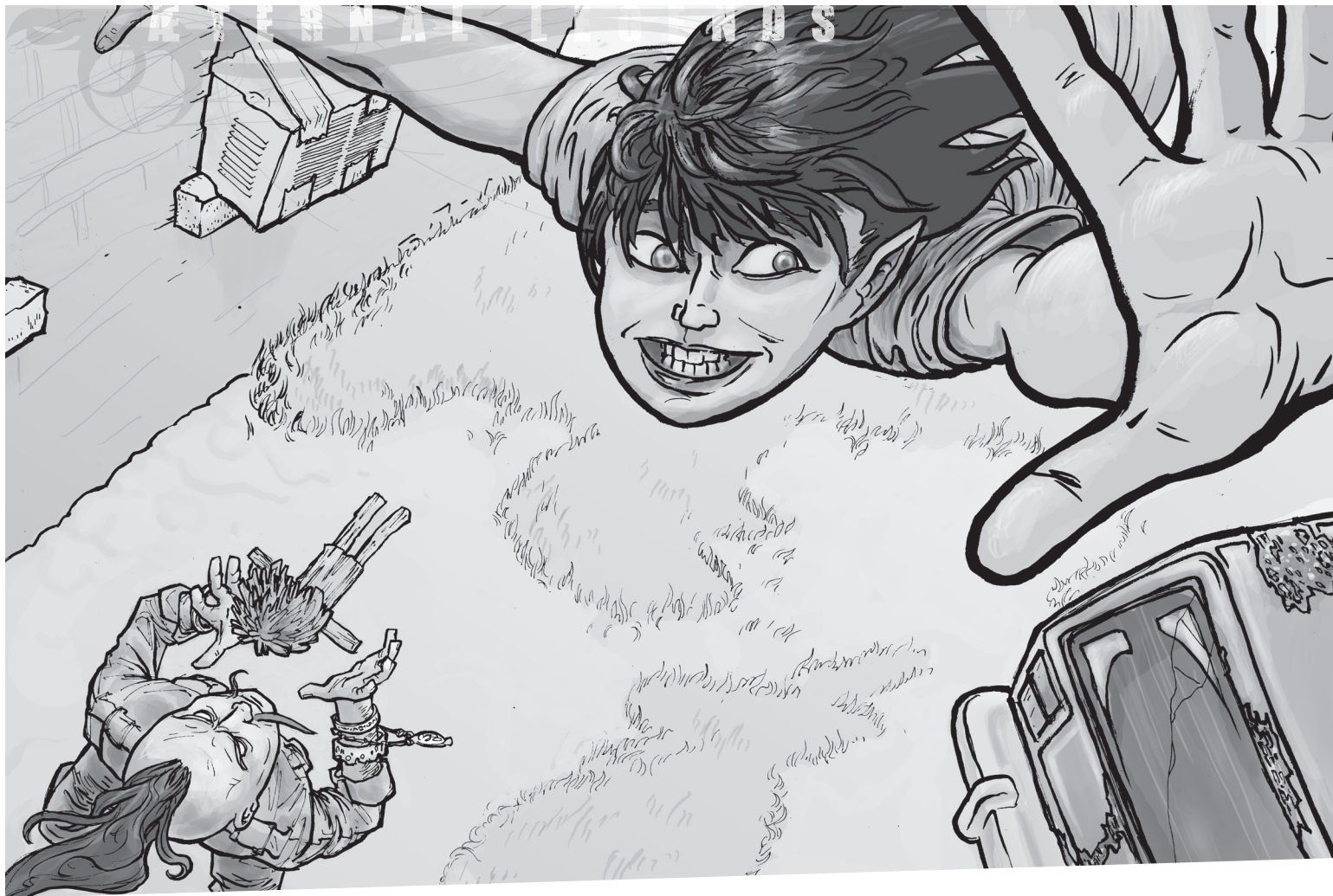
## V - TASK RESOLUTION

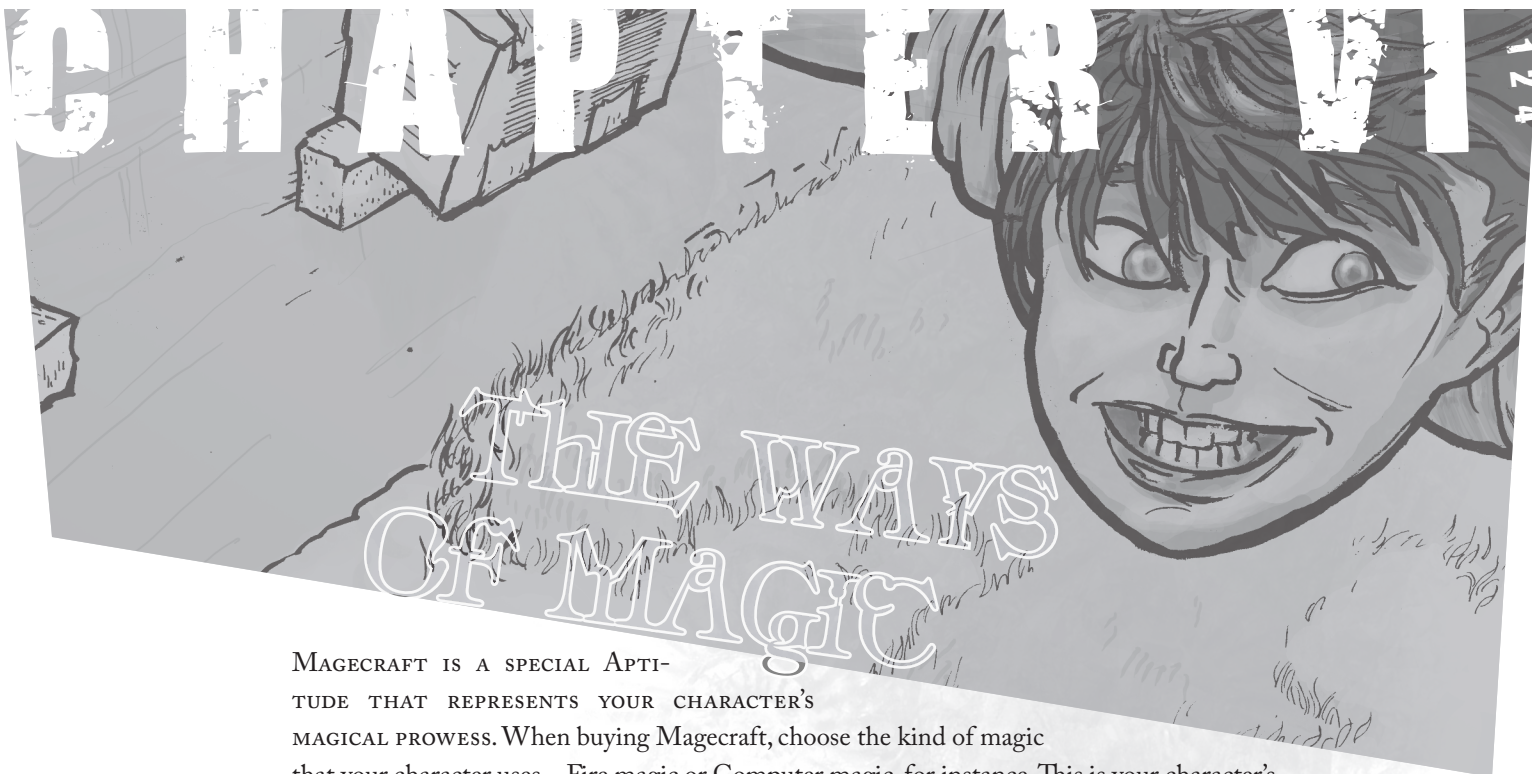
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one tries shooting at the occupants of a car, apply half the vehicle's Structure as a Defence bonus. Motorcycle riders have no such protection.

### Crashing

In a crash, each passenger takes an injury equal to a tenth of the speed that the vehicle was travelling at. Wearing a seatbelt makes this a Stun injury, riding without causes Wound damage. Motorcyclists always suffer Wounds, but reduce the total by one if wearing leathers and two if wearing a full-face helmet (these bonuses stack).





MAGECRAFT IS A SPECIAL APTITUDE THAT REPRESENTS YOUR CHARACTER'S MAGICAL PROWESS. When buying Magecraft, choose the kind of magic that your character uses – Fire magic or Computer magic, for instance. This is your character's Domain.

A character with Magecraft is often called a mage, though “sorcerer,” “wizard,” and “thaumaturgist” are among a host of accepted, alternate titles. Among the Aware, mages are known for their Domains, so a character with Magecraft and the Computer Domain might be known as a “computer mage,” or a “hacker mage.” It's possible to learn multiple forms of Magecraft covering different Domains, but this is rare, as the Magecraft Aptitude applies to all spells.



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### Casting Spells

A spell is a single defined effect created within the rules for Magecraft, below. A character who knows a spell spends the required Magic and rolls Mind + Magecraft. Magecraft is fully applicable to all spells, but a character must learn a spell from another mage if it falls outside of his Domain.

Characters without Magecraft usually suffer the -1 penalty for not having an applicable Aptitude and must learn every spell separately. Characters with Aware Aptitudes may partially apply them to these rolls when it comes to using spells that specifically relate to their fields of expertise. Any Aware character can cast spells she knows, but only Legends cast spells using standard (2 in 6) Aptitudes. Other Aware characters apply relevant Aptitudes as 1 in 6 characteristics.

Casting a spell in combat costs a number of Wits equal to its Magic cost. Characters may spend Wits over successive rounds to cast a spell; it goes off once the mage pays the full price. Characters can't enhance their spells with a Wits boost, but can use Will. A character can cast a spell as a full or partial action. The standard penalties apply.

### Learning Spells

A character does not need to know Magecraft in order to learn spells – but characters with Magecraft are far and away the most proficient users of magic. Such characters know all spells encapsulated by their Domain, or can figure them out after seeing them in action. For instance, a Fire Domain mage can cast any Fire spell or improvise them on the fly. Characters with Magecraft can specialize in up to two spells within their Domains. These are Skills that add a die to the character's roll.

Learning a spell is inexpensive – it only costs 2 Experience Points. The trick is finding a teacher. Anyone can learn a spell by finding a sorcerer who can teach it – in game terms, someone who can cast the spell in question. A mage or character with an occultist Aptitude can also learn spells from Grimoires, including spells outside of her Domain.

### Fire and Will

Magecraft is the act of changing the world outside by affirming the one inside. Some sorcerers use silver pentagrams, odd-coloured candles, and mystical ingredients in their workings. Others rely on mudra-like gestures or words of power in ancient languages. None of these are strictly necessary.

Working magic requires pure concentration: a moment of communion where every thought is focused on moulding magical power. It's not an easy state to maintain, and every mage has some method – a word or action – that works best for him. Many of these focusing actions reflect techniques used in religion or occult traditions, areas of the mundane world where concentration and contemplation are key goals.

A mage can use whatever focus actions she is most comfortable with in order to summon effects from her Domain, but codified spells are different. Each mage who teaches or inscribes a spell encodes it with a form of her own focus, and anyone learning that spell knows what to do in order to trigger it; this focus is specific to the wizard in question, rather than the spell. Magic words that open any lock, the *kata* that allows a man to walk to the bottom of the ocean, and the fresh-cut rune that summons shadows are all examples of spells encoded with a specific focus.

Mages are driven individuals, powerfully idealistic but often unprepared when the world refuses to obey their imaginations. Most Aware carry that over to thinking that wizards have their heads in the clouds or are ivory tower academics. While the Aware in an area are willing to deal with a wizard when they have a need, she must make a good impression and demonstrate that she's properly cognizant of the people around her before they'll actually accept her.

The slight distance most Aware keep from unknown wizards comes from self-preservation – magic is born of harsh cynicism as much as burning idealism, and none of them want to be on the wrong end of a wizard needing power. When a sorcerer needs a quick fix, it's all too easy for her to see the people around her as resources. Many Aware have suffered theft, betrayal and even murder to satisfy a wizard preparing for a grand working.

## Making Magic

A mage creates magical effects through five defined tasks: *Alteration*, *Creation*, *Destruction*, *Divination*, and *Preservation*. Each effect uses one task and her domain in some fashion – making a flame burn cold could be an Alteration of Fire, a Destruction of Heat, a Creation of Cold, or similar. Every effect starts with the task and domain of the mage.

Next, the GM decides how much of a punch the effect has. Effects are *minor*, *significant*, or *major*. This determines the base cost of the effect, and how hard the roll is. Finally, the GM modifies the cost according to the desired outcome. No effect can cost less than one point of Magic.

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### Effects

**Minor** (Base cost: 2 Magic; Threshold 1): Minor effects only affect the mage in question or one other person. They replicate things that someone could do with general off-the-shelf equipment, or impossible things that only affect a single, small instance of the character's Domain.



### 1001 spells

There's no fixed rule about how broad Domains are or precisely how the tasks apply to each one. This freeform style can make magic look a little scary, but as long as you take it easy and trust each other you'll be fine. Whether you're a player or GM, the magic system works for you.

**Players:** Come up with new effects and spells that feel like they fit your character's Domain. Never think "I can't do that" about something in your character's Domain – if all else fails, the Alteration task still might cover it.

**GMs:** Give your players a fair shot. That's not to say that a sorcerer should run roughshod over your game, but there is always more than one way to accomplish an effect. One of them might fall into that character's Domain. Give it a chance.



Divination effects work in an area equivalent to a large office pool around your character, and allow her to see up to twelve hours in the past or future.

Effects that deal damage have a Force of 1 Wound added to the spellcasting pool, as an attack. This effect can occupy a space of 4 square metres instead, but has 0 Force.

Effects that shield a character add one point of Defence for a scene, or half of the successes rolled can be spent as Defence for one round after casting. These effects can increase Defence beyond its normal maximum.

Minor effects that target anyone other than the mage add one Magic to their cost.

**Examples:** Breathe underwater as if using SCUBA gear (Alteration of Water); Create light enough to read by (Creation of Light); Make a candle burn without producing heat or setting things alight (Destruction of Heat); Locate the computer with the Darksider's plans in the office in front of you (Divination of Information); Make paper immune to tearing or water damage (Preservation of Books).

**Significant** (Base cost: 5 Magic; Threshold 3): Significant effects normally affect the mage or one other person, and are what most people think of when they consider "magic" – balls of fire, flight, calling storms, setting up magical barriers and the like.

Divination effects work over the city block your character is in, with a temporal range of a month. Alternately, they will point her to what she seeks as long as she's on the same continent, down to the closest block.

Effects that cause damage have a Force of 3 Wounds added to the spellcasting pool, as an attack. This effect can occupy a space of 4 square metres per point of Force sacrificed.

Effects that shield a character add three points of Defence for a scene, or all successes rolled



can be spent as Defence for one round after casting. These effects can increase Defence beyond its normal maximum.

**Examples:** Turn raindrops from an existing storm into oil (Alteration of Storms); Summon a blast of electricity (Creation of Lightning); Stop a fight immediately, without any chance of it restarting (Destruction of War); Know what happened after dark in this block three weeks ago (Divination of Night); Make a song that nobody can forget (Preservation of Music).

**Major** (Base cost: 10 Magic; Threshold 8): Major effects are the spells of legend, with the power to destroy villages and decimate cities. Many mages never find a situation where the extra mystical punch is worth the cost, but those who need such power don't forget it in a hurry. A character can't learn a Major effect as a spell.

Divination effects work over the entire planet, though not into separate Interstices. Effects can look back or forwards up to ten years.

Effects that do damage have a Force of 5 Wounds added to the spellcasting pool, as an attack. This effect can occupy a space of 4 square metres per point of Force sacrificed.

Effects that shield a character add six points of Defence for a scene or grant immunity to a single attack or continuous source of damage for a round.

**Examples:** Fill the crowd at a large peace demonstration with murderous rage (Alteration of Emotion); Walk from London to New York in an hour (Creation of Roads); Stop the sun from rising for a month (Destruction of Day); Know every Interstice in a country (Divination of Secrets); Stop a failing town from being uninhabited (Preservation of Cities).

Some modifiers apply to the base cost. An attack that adds an extra weapon effect with its own rule – short bursts, full-auto fire and so on – increase the cost of the effect by one point. Attacks that do Stun rather than Wound damage reduce the cost by one point. If, in the GM's opinion, the effect is less powerful than others of the same level, reduce the cost by one. Likewise, if an effect is more powerful than others of the same level, increase the cost by one.

## Witnesses

The Unaware have a hard time accepting the magic that surrounds them. Even hard proof isn't enough to convince them that there are more things in Heaven and Earth than their philosophies account for. Accordingly, Unaware witnesses reflexively smother spells with their own wills. This is impossible for the Aware to do, as they've fully accepted the truth of magic.

If one of the Unaware sees something that's obviously impossible, add one to the effect's cost.

If several Unaware see something out of the ordinary, add two or even three points to the effect's cost.

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The Unaware can't perceive a spell's "special effects." They don't see bolts of flame unless they light something mundane on fire and they can't see spirits or magical creatures. The Unaware will sometimes even misidentify the reason an Aware target is suffering or behaving strangely. A dwarf hit by a bolt of magical fire screams and drops, but his burns might not be visible to mundane observers. On the other hand, when magic strikes the Unaware, they do feel the effects as they actually occur. A mundane human hit by magical fire sees and feels his burns – and his friends see them, too. Needless to say, the Ministry discourages the Aware from casting spells on the Unaware.

None of the above applies to illusions that credibly replicate aspects of the mundane world.

Unaware who witness an effect write it off as a hallucination or wishful thinking as soon as they leave the presence of the wizard who caused the effect. Forensic evidence of an obviously impossible effect, such as a ball of acid or blast of electricity, alters to point towards mundane causes. A ball of acid might be a spill of industrial chemicals, a bolt of lightning nothing more than a badly-wired apartment. This evidence builds up over time, but is enough to give investigators a plausible explanation a scene after the magic is cast.

### Sample Spells

The following spells are available for characters to learn, and to give a starting point for creating effects of their own. Each includes sample task/Domain pairs, game rules, and a breakdown of the cost.

#### Heart's Shield

Cost 3, Threshold 1

**Domains:** Preservation of Life, Creation of Destiny, Destruction of Senses

By any number of means, a mage can extend his magical protection to another. He momentarily hardens his target's skin, make her attackers think she's somewhere else, or bring fate to her assistance.

**System:** Whatever the method employed, all of these effects ultimately protect someone else. For the rest of the scene, the target of this spell adds one Defence on top of any armour she may be wearing.

**Breakdown:** Minor effect (Cost 2/Threshold one); Affects other (+1)

## Static Touch

Cost 3, Threshold 1

**Domains:** Creation of Electricity, Destruction of Calm, Alteration of People

By touching someone, you ground out a charge of static electricity through them – not enough to seriously harm them, but more than enough to throw their concentration for a few vital seconds.

**System:** If you succeed, your target is distracted for a round and doesn't notice you. This effect is useless in ongoing combat but can set up a surprise attack against an unexpected opponent, in which case he cannot act during the first round of combat.

**Breakdown:** Minor effect (Cost 2/Threshold 1); Useless in combat (-1); Surprise (+1); Affects other (+1)

## Wolf's Scent

Cost 2, Threshold 1

**Domains:** Divination of People, Alteration of Senses, Preservation of Trails

This spell allows a sorcerer to follow someone by means appropriate to her Domain. She knows where the person is in real-time, but must keep close to know her target's destination.

**System:** Pick one person within a hundred metres. For the rest of the scene, your character can tell where that person is and which way he's moving – provided she stays within a hundred metres. If the target leaves the area of effect and re-enters within the same scene, the spell still tracks the target.

**Breakdown:** Minor Effect (Cost 2/Threshold 1)

## Breach the Aqueous Depths

Cost 4, Threshold 3

**Domains:** Creation of Air, Alteration of Water, Preservation of Life

This spell allows a sorcerer to survive at any depth. In addition to breathing underwater it also provides immunity to pressure and the ability to move and act underwater as if in the air.

**System:** The character treats submarine environments the same as being on land. She must still swim rather than walking, but has neutral buoyancy. The spell lasts a scene, though paying the Cost at the end of that time extends the spell to the next scene



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(and so on for as long as you remain underwater).

**Breakdown:** Significant effect (Cost 5/Threshold 3); Less powerful – it’s not significantly better than a Minor “breathe underwater” effect (–2); Extendable (+1)

### Shadowstep

Cost 5, Threshold 3

**Domains:** Creation of Roads, Alteration of Location, Destruction of Distance

A character who casts this spell can walk into any shadow that can hold her, and walk out of another within a hundred miles. The wizard simply disappears, and cannot be found until she returns.

**System:** The character can travel over long distances without needing food or water or getting tired. She can choose her destination within a hundred miles of her starting location, and at the end of her journey she steps out of the nearest natural shadow to that point. Journeys take a scene, never lasting less than half an hour.

**Breakdown:** Significant effect (Cost 5/Threshold 3); Requires shadows – cosmetic effect, doesn’t alter effectiveness (0)

### Viral Marketing

Cost 5, Threshold 3

**Domains:** Creation of Ideas, Alteration of Information, Preservation of Memory

A poster, flyer, or billboard enhanced by this spell is literally unforgettable. It keeps springing into the mind of anyone who sees it, simple repetition making a person more likely to act on what she remembers.

**System:** This spell affects one individual poster, flyer, or advertisement per use. Anyone who sees the target of the spell remembers it during idle moments, including full recall of any text/instructions. The spell, and the memories, last for a month after casting. This isn’t actually an enchantment (see below) as the magic is working on the message rather than just the medium.

**Breakdown:** Significant effect (Cost 5/Threshold 3); Tied to single object (–1); Long duration (+1)

## The Grimoire

A Grimoire is, at base, a book of spells. Far from being an aide-memoir for a specific wizard, a Grimoire gives her name a chance to live forever. Each wizard normally only creates one – the effort in keeping multiple copies is often too taxing.

Many wizards use a book for tradition's sake, but any means of storing information can be used for Grimoire. Computer files on CD or DVD are one option, and at least one mage keeps his secrets in a password-protected online journal. There's no specific effort required to prepare a Grimoire, only to scribe spells.

A wizard can only inscribe a spell into his Grimoire if he knows it. He inscribes an effect from his Domain if he's used it more than once, or a spell learned from a teacher. Either way, he has to understand what he's doing. Inscribe a spell requires the wizard to spend half the normal cost and roll as if casting the effect. When a sorcerer uses his own Grimoire to assist in casting a spell contained within, he gets a +2 dice bonus to the roll. Once a Grimoire has at least one spell scribed within it, the author always knows where it is (or what password he needs to access it). Stealing a Grimoire is risky business.

If another sorcerer steals a Grimoire and studies it, he can use the spells within – as long as he keeps the Grimoire at hand (see p. 125 for details on mages using spells). Reading enough of a spell to understand how to cast it takes a day. A mage can't copy a Grimoire that isn't his own if the author is still alive. When a mage is dead, another mage can copy his library as if scribing a Grimoire of his own, though this doesn't give the copying mage any extra bonuses to cast the spells within.

## Enchantment

When dragons wake and orc lords command armies, mundane equipment – even the modern versions of archaic weapons and armour that the Aware produce – just doesn't cut it. Legends go places and see things that no other people ever will, and often need something more than a laser-sharpened sword or a bow with modern sights.

Unsurprisingly, a character with the Enchantment Aptitude is often called an enchanter, but mage-smith, artificer and alchemist are also common terms. Some Aware Aptitudes allow characters to perform a limited amount of enchantment. Such characters can only enchant items relevant to their areas of expertise, and only by using their Aptitudes at partial applicability. Legends use Enchantment as a standard Aptitude, but other Aware aren't as powerful. For them, Enchantment is a 1 in 6 characteristic.

Enchanting items is a specialised art, one that few study seriously and fewer master. It takes more magical power than Magecraft, it takes much longer, and the results are often less obviously powerful. On the other hand, once an item is enchanted its magic endures.

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Making an item isn't easy. The enchanter needs an idea of what he wants the item to do, he needs an item to enchant, and frequently he needs an object with a magical resonance to his final effect. Once he has all of these, he can still waste several days working on the item only to find out that things didn't turn out as he expected.

Enchanters can do one of three things to an item:

- Enhance its mundane function

- Add magical effects that bolster its mundane function

- Add magical effects apart from its mundane function

All three take differing degrees of skill, but the last also requires something imbued with the magical sense of the extra effect. Scales of a dragon, for example, work well for enhancing armour with magic related to that dragon.

Human Legends of the Beauty can forge concepts into physical form. These items are not only good candidates for enchantment, but also have a mythic resonance that obviates the need for extra components.

### Making Plans

The difficulty of the enchantment is determined by the complexity of the base item. Note that Aware enchanters can only work with Simple items. Legends of the Beauty are the only ones who can imbue more complex devices with magic.

All items have an Essence rating, indicating how much Magic the enchanter must spend when creating the item, and a Total, indicating how many points the construction roll must score before the item is complete.

**Simple** (Base Essence 2, Total 6): A simple mechanical object (one that doesn't rely on electrical or chemical energy; a suit of armour, book, or mirror).

**Complex** (Base Essence 5, Total 10): A complex electronic or mechanical object (one which relies on chemical energy or electronics; a car engine, gun, or PDA).

**Major** (Base Essence 10, Total 14): A very complex device that relies on electronic or chemical energy (one which has lots of intricately linked parts that count as Complex; a jet aircraft or laptop computer).

Next, work out what you're doing to it.

**Mundane Enhancement:** The object works better than ordinary items of its type. For an extra point of Essence, the finished item gives its user a +1 die bonus when using one of its ordinary functions (maximum bonus of +5).



**Magical Enhancement:** The object has obvious magical component, but the effect relates to the function of the object (a suit of armour that bursts into flames, a cloak of invisibility). Adding an effect equivalent to a Minor spell of any Domain adds 3 Essence; a Significant spell adds 5.

**Unique Enhancement:** The effect adds 5 Essence, increases the Total by 6, and is equivalent to a Significant spell. The spell does not have to relate to the function of the item. The enchanter must have an item that relates to the spell that he can work into the object.

Mundane enhancements to weapons either add dice to the weapon's Force or extra damage. Note that projectile weapons can't add more than +2 to the damage themselves, as more is the purview of enchanted ammunition.

Mundane enhancements to armour can apply to both the Stun and Wound protection, or to the mobility penalty. The mobility penalty can never be reduced by more than -3. Enchanting archaic armour for protection adds Defence against all damage.

An item can only have multiple Mundane enhancements (though only one per function or characteristic) but only one Magical or Unique enhancement, but no more than that. Multi-function magic items are usually either multiple items that have become inseparable by tradition (such as Excalibur and its scabbard), or possess intelligent inhabitants that actually cast spells for their wielders.

### Limitations

Enchanting something that can only be used a certain number of times reduces the needed Essence by a quarter, rounding up (a total Essence 8 effect would only cost Essence 6). One enchantment produces a logical amount of the item – one clip of bullets, a quiver of arrows, a single dose of a magical potion, and so on. Such limited items also reduce the Total by 4, to a minimum of 2.

If a magical item only works against a certain kind of creature (dragons, elves, the undead) or has another restriction that makes it less useful, reduce the Total by 4 (minimum of 2) and halve the Essence cost.

## Fire, Forge, and Magic

Having designed the item's effects, the enchanter gathers the required materials – at the very least, the item that is being enchanted, some reserves of magic, her tools, and in the case of a Unique enchantment, a trinket that ties the effect to the object.

The process of enchantment is an extended action with a Threshold of 2. The enchanter must accrue success points equal to the item's Total and spend Magic equal to the item's required Essence at the rate of at least 1 point per interval. If the enchanter spends more intervals constructing the item than its Essence, this minimum expenditure increases the Essence cost of the item. If the construction roll fails, the invested magic is lost and the item is ruined. The enchanter must start again from scratch.

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Enchantment intervals are 32 hours long. The enchanter can rest for up to 8 hours during the interval, but can wait an indefinite amount of time between intervals. Accordingly, many enchanters have half finished projects lying around their workshops.

Anything beyond the most basic magical item is a significant investment of time and magic, and enchanter's prices frequently reflect that. Were it not for the Legend who first invented Soul Jars, many enchanters would never have the reserves of magical power that they need to create anything.

The art of enchantment imbues the item created with a little piece of the creator's power and his personality. While many people have attempted to work together, they never manage to complete their enchantments.

### Sample Magical Items

#### Armour

There's a broad range of magical armour available to any Legend who knows an enchanter and is willing to pay her prices. Some examples include:

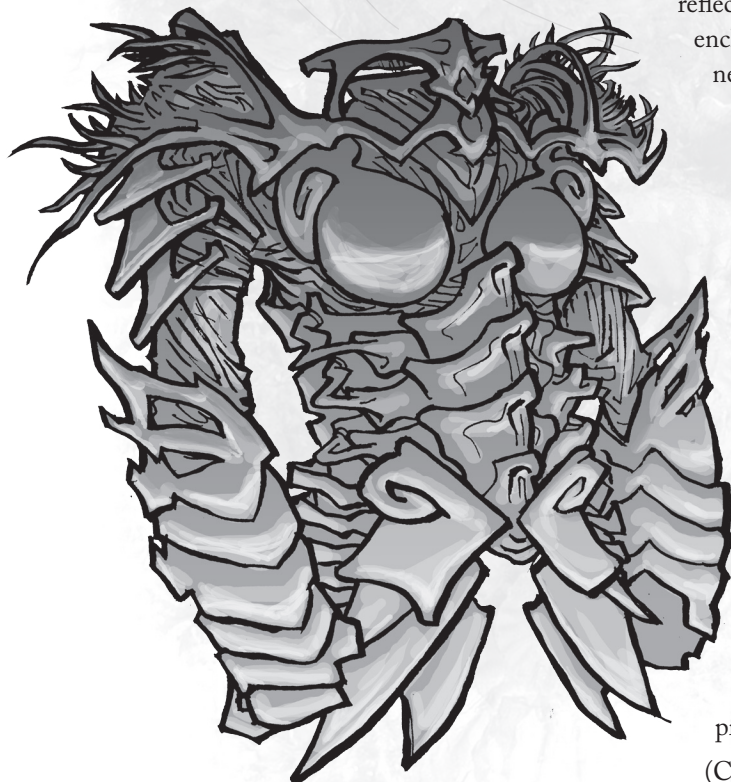
**Memoplate:** A suit of motley mail – a combination of reinforced leather, Kevlar, and scraps of chain and plate that offers protection to vital areas. The enchanter uses the fragmented nature of the armour to its advantage. The armour is normally contained entirely in the torso (which can be hidden under bulky clothing).

Spending a single point of Magic causes the armour to burst free, protecting all of the character.

(Closed) 1/1; no penalty; Simple/Magical; \$3,000

(Open) 2/3 (1 against firearms); -2 penalty

**Shadowback:** A suit of black padded armour, equivalent to a motorcycling suit, but still offering only minimal protection. The enchanter uses this lightness, working in two feathers from a Raven of Odin. These birds are little more than black shadows, all-seeing and incredibly agile in flight. Their resonance gives the wearer an easier time hiding in darkness, but that's not all. If the



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user spends one point of Magic, the armour can fly at the character's running speed. This effect lasts for a scene.

1/1 (1 against firearms); no penalty; +3 to rolls to remain unseen; Simple/Unique; \$5,000

**Shell:** Some tasks demand the ultimate in personal protection. The Shell is a baroque suit of full plate armour, cumbersome enough to be improbable anywhere outside a video game. The suit is surprisingly light for the protection that it offers. When the user spends a point of magic, extra plates extend and lock into place, forming an impervious shell. It's very hard to move the enhanced armour, but it can withstand almost anything.

(Open) 4/5 (3 against firearms); -5 penalty; Simple/Magical; \$50,000

(Closed) 7/9 (7 against firearms); -9 penalty

### Close Combat Weapons

**Thunderstrike:** Most often a paired set of large brass knuckles, similarly-enchanted steel toe boots are also available. Spending a point of magic electrifies the pair of weapons. Any blows from electrified weapons deal their damage twice – as Stun damage for the impact, and Wound damage as electricity grounds through the target's body.

Force 1 (Stun)/+2 Wound damage (counts as unarmed combat); Simple/Magical; \$3,000

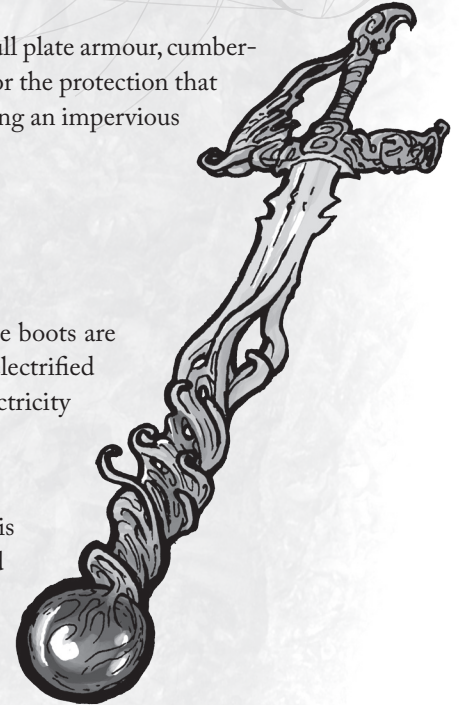
**Dragonbane:** Made of hardened steel and sharpened to the highest quality, this long sword is surprisingly sparse in its decoration. Only the perfect form and a small design on the scabbard indicate the power in the blade. Despite its name, the sword works as well against everything else as it does dragons. An attack using this weapon ignores up to five Defence from armour. The blade passes through the material as if it was water.

Force 2 (Wound); Simple/Magical; \$8,000

**Infinite Sceptre:** This device is an elegantly-carved wooden rod about twelve inches long, tipped with a glittering ruby. When awoken with a point of magic, the Sceptre re-forms in the wielder's hands, twisting into a baroque interpretation of any archaic weapon she desires. Once activated, changing the Sceptre into another weapon is an action that costs one Wits. At the end of the combat, the Sceptre reverts to its base form. All weapons that the Sceptre creates have their normal statistics, but add 2 points of damage on a hit.

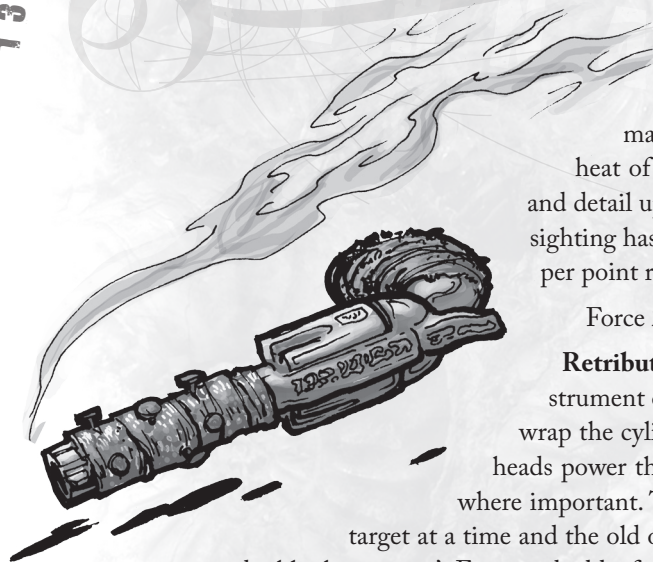
(Base form) Force 1 (Stun) + 2 damage; Simple/Unique; \$60,000

### Ranged Weapons





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**Eaglesight:** Bows retain some advantages over firearms even today. Forensics can't trace an arrow to a specific bow, loosing an arrow leaves no powder residue and bows lack both loud noise and muzzle-flash. This bow makes the most of these attributes. It's an assassin's tool, not a weapon for the heat of battle. By spending a point of magic, the user can see with perfect clarity and detail up to a kilometre in the direction the bow is pointing. Any arrow shot while sighting has a much better chance of hitting its target (Defence costs the target 2 Wits per point rather than one). One round later the arrow dissolves, leaving less evidence.

Force 2 (Wound) +2 damage; Simple/Magical; \$30,000

**Retribution:** Reputedly the tool of a Knight who fell to the Dark, this gun is an instrument of vengeance. Some say it whispers enticements to its wielder. Hydra scales wrap the cylinder; the resonance of poison and the beast's reputation for growing extra heads power the magic. The gun was lost twenty years ago, but it always turns up somewhere important. The gun's powers only work against a named target; it recognises only one target at a time and the old one must die before it will recognise a new one. When firing at that target, double the weapon's Force and add a further 2 points of damage. For a single point of magic, the gun will summon a seventh bullet from nowhere when the cylinder should be empty. This final bullet will only fire against the named target, and once it is fired the weapon must be reloaded.

Force 3 (Wound) +2 damage; Mag 6; Complex/Unique; Unavailable (similar enchantments start around \$100,000)

### Miscellaneous Items

**Free Rider:** Popular among Legends of a certain stripe, a Free Rider is a classic "hog" of a motorcycle that's been enchanted with the spirit of freedom and speed. In addition to its enhanced speeds, the bike adds three to its Handling when performing Stunts (see p. 121) and spending two points of Magic turns a Hazard into a Stunt. In addition, failing an insane Stunt knocks the rider free but does not destroy the bike – it remains ready for a rider who can handle it.

Speed 110/195; Handling 4; Structure 3; Complex/Magical; \$250,000

**Infinite Clip/Quiver:** Unfortunately, the John Woo dream of truly unlimited ammunition is beyond even enchantment. These clips (which can be made to fit most automatic firearms) last for one gunfight only, but for the duration of that fight the weapon uses no ammunition. After the fight, the clip remains at its previous level, but the enchantment is spent. Archers have a similar device in the Infinite Quiver. This holds 100 arrows and regenerates one arrow every six minutes (10 arrows an hour, full capacity

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in 10 hours). Spending a point of Magic instantly fills the quiver with whatever ammunition is within.

Clip: Complex/Magical; \$400 each

Quiver: Simple/Magical; \$700

**Soul Jar:** Soul jars come in many forms, from old clay urns to empty coffee cans, though they always have the lid sealed on. They only have one thing in common: a seal, inscribed with a magical symbol and coloured with the blood of a dragon. The dragon's inherent magic strengthens the enchantment. By holding the jar and spending a point of Magic, the user can place extra points of Magic into the jar, where they rest for all time. Most jars can hold 10 points. Extracting Magic from the jars is an action that takes a minute's concentration. The jars are always sold empty, and nobody can use a jar containing someone else's Magic.

Simple/Unique; \$2,000

**The Uplink:** The Uplink is a network of internet servers, all running a so-called 'blacknet' -- a hidden, separate network in the packet-headers of standard network traffic. In addition to allowing deniable communications between users, the Uplink also stores encrypted files on Aware history and mythology, allowing people to store their research and findings in a secure fashion in case something happens. A recent upgrade provides full VoIP telephony service and selective file sharing between users, via handsets comparable to the latest smartphones. The handsets themselves aren't magical beyond their ability to connect to the network; if one of the Unaware found a handset there would be a major security breach.

(Base unit) Major/Unique; Priceless

(Handset) Complex/Mundane; \$300





# ROYAL ETERNAL LEGENDS







**AETERNAL LEGENDS** UPDATES THE TRADITIONAL FANTASY MILIEU, BRINGING COMMON THEMES INTO A MODERN SETTING. Although you might need to rethink some of the lessons you learned GMing other fantasy games, in most cases you just need to look at existing ideas and tropes through the lens of the game's setting. Give classic ideas new life in this game, and you'll play stories fit for Legends.

The game uses common motifs from contemporary fantasy novels that have been brought to the table by many other roleplaying games. **Aeternal Legends** takes those ideas and remasters them for the modern day. Lost princesses and dangerous magical rings forged by the Gods are staples of this setting. The protagonists are compelled to seek out adventure, casting themselves in the leading roles – even if the lost princess must claim her throne in Brooklyn, and Helm's Deep is in Iraq.

**Aeternal Legends** doesn't just give you a chance to modernise old stories and tell them through a new framework. The setting itself has plenty of avenues to explore in a world where magic comes from meaning and your

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characters are driven heroes.

### Some Core Rules

There are a few things to keep in mind when running **Eternal Legends**. Tales of fantasy heroism and brigandry require a certain attitude. This is enshrined in three simple rules:

Keep an Open Mind

Success Requires Struggle

Don't Be Boring

The easiest way to follow Rule One is to not say “No”. Listen to your players. Never dismiss what they say outright. Often, that’s obvious – “Can I run across the room?” “Yes.” If their suggestions are daring, adventurous or possibly insane but still have a chance, give them that chance, even if you have to say “I’ll get back to you on that.” If an archer wants to be Robin Hood and shoot two arrows at two targets at once, don’t make the penalties impossible. Preparation and the Narrative Bonus should offset penalties whenever a good stunt would entertain the group. It should be hard, and the character may well have to spend Conviction, but the laws of physics should take a back seat to fun.

The second rule is really a limit on the first one. Some GMs give players everything they want right off the bat, based on the idea that “saying no is bad.” That’s a mistake, too. Every player and every character should have a goal that can only be attained through adventuring in a team, and whose fulfilment is never guaranteed. Get your group to discuss what you want out of the game – yourself included. Work together can come up with a range of dramatic options for each character. Think about glorious success and tragic failure.

Don’t show all your cards during these discussions. Keep enough back – and pick up enough hints – to surprise the players. Don’t go too far in the other direction; don’t drag out a character’s quest beyond what’s reasonable. If a player wants his character to become a Scion, he should really work for it, but his character should get there in the end if he’s following a dramatically compelling arc.

The third rule is a principle that underlies the game. Compared to Legends, the Unaware are boring. Hell, compared to them the Aware are boring half the time. Legends meet wizards in bars who send them off on adventures to slay dragons, or get asked to find an ancient artefact while they’re drinking morning coffee – and think nothing of it. Legends are never, ever happy with just meeting their needs and living a quiet lives. The world seems to know this; adventure seeks them out. Even a trip across town to

the pharmacist isn't a quiet affair. If it wouldn't be in the movie of your game, don't waste time on it. Nobody stabs a Legend while he's sitting on the toilet unless there's a tangled web of evil behind the assassin. Lunch is a chance to start an adventure. Otherwise, Legends gorge themselves at feasts or eat tough rations before entering the enemy's labyrinth.

**Æternal Legends** should feel like a movie. Watch epics like *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings* for inspiration. Pacing is important, and it bears repeating: if it's not important, leave it out. One session of **Æternal Legends** should feel like four sessions of another game.

## Walking the Path

There's a reason that the Spheres are likened to paths that their adherents must walk. Each Legend is on a journey of magical development. Some walk the Spheres all the way to the Source, while others quest deeper into their own Sphere, eventually finding the end of the path, but blazing a trail for others to follow.

Each character should have a goal, even if it's something that the character herself isn't conscious of yet. Depending on the character, the goal might be very easy to tie in to a character's journey. If one wants to find the Source, that's her prerogative, but that's not the only outcome for a campaign. Ask your players whether their characters would walk the path or become Scions, but make sure that they understand that they could very well seek political power, initiate a romance or even play through a tragedy filled with corruption. Even if they don't know yet, the question will spark ideas.

Use stated goals to estimate of how far they are along their journey. If the goal's far off in the future, encourage the group to break their story arcs into smaller objectives. These become your road map for designing scenarios.

So your group has characters and a range of goals, but what do you actually do with them? Make sure that each goal clearly defines how the character can succeed or fail. Work out a conflict that stands in the way of the character and his goal and don't make the it something that the character can do by himself. Unlike mythic heroes' quests and spiritual journeys, a Legend's isn't something he can complete single-handedly. His circle stands with him even in the Abyss, and in the physical world they're with him all the time. Going off on your own is usually sure way to fail. One story can and should lead multiple characters to their goals.

Not every conflict has to include a fight. Each should emphasise something about being a Legend and each should be full of magic and emotion, but avoid filler scenes don't really move characters to their goals.

Every Legend is an epic figure, but that doesn't mean that she starts out ready to save the world the second she Manifests. She



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has to make a name in her community first. She might slay a chimera that's been terrorising the local children, find a familiar for a magician or kick the mob out of her community. Once the circle's thoroughly grounded in the community, they start branching out. Neighbouring circles look to them for help and advice. Pocket Kingdoms with nearby doorways demand audience with these new heroes. A new Interstice needs exploring. And of course, Legends have their own plans.

As the characters progress on their journeys, their adventures naturally become grander in scale. Pace the game in multi-session arcs and talk to your players about possible topics for each chapter. Link it all to player story goals and character objectives to give the campaign a natural progression as the circle continues its fight against the Dark.

### Antagonists

Every story needs antagonists, and the right opposition can really cement the theme of the game. This section suggests themes for different antagonists and includes some thoughts on making them memorable.

It's best to focus on one antagonist for each story arc, unless you're demonstrating the similarities (or differences) between two of them or more. Avoid a random mix of foes, but don't limit yourself to the point of stifling the vitality of the game world. Just because your campaign focuses on the clash between the Aware and Unaware in an area doesn't have to get rid of the idea of a rival circle of Legends aiming for the same goal as the player characters. Secondary antagonists just don't have as much screen time and don't influence the overall theme as much, but they provide the feeling of a complex world, filled with turmoil and opportunity.

### Unaware

Stories that feature the Unaware as antagonists all tap in to the ultimate conflict behind the game: the mundane versus the fantastic. The Unaware don't perceive of the world as the Aware do; the powers of magic are closed to them. Some of the Aware believe that the Unaware are too ignorant to harm them. They couldn't be more wrong.

The Unaware don't just have greater numbers. Their nature makes them more likely to turn hostile. To an Unaware police officer a circle of adventurers is a gang of crazy, armed thugs. When things get violent he calls in the SWAT team. The SWAT team can call in even bigger guns if the situation gets worse. Compared to the Aware, Unaware lives are nasty, brutish, and short. Some mundane people know of the Aware – and envy them. They use physical force or governmental machinations to lash out at the Aware. Magic conceals Legends, but only to a point; the shroud of protection is fuzzily defined and doesn't cover up every gunfight.

## Aware

Stories about the Aware focus on the fantastic rather than the mundane, but without the questing nature of Legends. The typical story concerns a group of Aware who can't stand being isolated from the Unaware world. They broadcast their existence to the world, hoping the mundanes understand what they're saying. The characters could help them and possibly make more people Aware in the area, but this is likely to bring about unwanted attention from Unaware authorities and concerned Ministry agents.

The Aware also ground the characters upon their return from strange Interstices and meetings with odd creatures. Extreme solutions to Aware problems aren't the best – if a Legend uses too much Influence, he might segregate the Bright Clades from the Dull. Instead, characters have to work with the Aware. Such deeds bolster the community around them. That's earns them respect faster than a dead dragon.

It's tempting to treat the Aware like nothing more than filler; the Dull Clades no more than cannon fodder and the Fair mere supporters. Avoid that temptation. The Aware are the glue of the magical world, and ignoring them does the setting a disservice.

## Legends

Stories that pit Legend against Legend are true clashes of heroes. Cunning thieves, brave warriors, and wondrous magicians find themselves facing their equals in a contest of talent, power, and cunning. These stories traditionally pit Light against Dark but that isn't always the case. If the characters live in a large metropolitan area, they won't be the only Legends in town. They're going to find friendly – or not so friendly – competition from other circles. Local Legends demonise the players' circle to win the support of the area's Aware, or visiting Legends cop an attitude in the player characters' homeland. It's up to the circle to find out what's going on with the new arrivals and keep the trust of their community.

Clashes of Light and Dark are the mainstay of the game. A Dark Lord's forces include other



## what makes a dark lord

A Dark Lord is a Legend – usually, an old, powerful evil force. They range from the bloody-handed demons who crack the bones of their foes with raw strength to dark wizards who command forces beyond imagining.

In game terms, a Dark Lord is a Legend who has fallen to the Dark, with suitably impressive statistics and powerful but defiled Beliefs. To qualify as a true Dark Lord, the Darksider must either have attained a Higher Sphere or have become a Scion.

Da'ath (p. 81) is a special case. He's as much a manifestation of the Abyss as anything physical, the archetype of the Dark Lord. He is something other again, and the normal rules don't apply. When Da'ath's Archon appears, he is the most powerful Dark Lord in the mortal plane. Lord Da'ath gives his direct servants unique powers and artefacts.



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Legends – and not all of them are Darksiders. Dark Lords are good at twisting the Light against itself. Characters find themselves giving their all and then some, struggling to prove that the Light will be victorious. Pull out all the stops. Let the characters try insane and daring plans, and generally do things that most people wouldn't stand a chance at – these are Legends, chosen by magic itself to be heroes. You might even penalise actions that are too mundane for the story (be fair and consistent if you do), if you require dice at all.

### Creatures

The Clades aren't the only beings who thrive on magic. Many animals that spend time around the Aware change into forgotten forms. Humans still see the base animal beneath in the same way that they perceive elves and trolls as humans. Aware animals were much more common in the past, before first natural philosophy and zoology encouraged the study of beasts. A chimera could live in the forest outside a medieval town with far more acceptance than it could ever find in a zoo. While some of these creatures reverted to the forms of mundane animals, others were so outrageous that their only option was to retreat to an Interstice.

Nobody knows whether the Gods created these mythic beasts when they created the Clades, but many humans believe so. Others point to the mythic symbolism of such creatures and argue that only mortals could have crafted them, drawing from universal dreams and fears

### A Mortal façade

Beasts that can hide in mundane forms share many traits with their host bodies. Some reclusive magicians retain fell-hounds as guard dogs, while others trust in three-headed mastiffs (inevitably named Cerberus). Other Legends have been adopted by animals who can talk. Ravens and cats are often able to speak. There are tales of fantastic beasts in locales where their host forms run wild, including more than one mantichore among Africa's lion prides. One strange thing noted by some Legends of the Splendour is that creatures from local mythology live alongside beasts with roots far away. They theorise that some of these animals migrated with the culture that birthed them.

No matter the animal's capabilities, a mundane human will not register it as being anything other than a normal dog, wolf, lion, lizard, or whatever. Fell-hounds find that breathing fire on Unaware visitors does not burn them. Manticores cannot fly with mundane witnesses. Worse than even witnessed magic, the special abilities of these animals are stripped from them whole-cloth when Unaware humans are present. Even physical changes – a chimera's extra heads or a unicorn's horn – do not have any effect



on the Unaware. Bites from extra heads go unnoticed; a unicorn's horn passes right through them. The only way a magical animal can affect a human is for a Legend of the Splendour to make that human Aware.

Most of the creatures who find host bodies in the Unaware world don't have any form of intelligence that humans would recognise. While these beasts might speak or follow even complex commands, their consciousness is inherently that of the host animal. Highly intelligent creatures slowly revert to an animalistic state of intelligence when they leave an Interstice and bond with a mundane creature. The only exceptions are animals whose only magical ability is their uplifted intelligence and ability to talk. They retain both even away from an Interstice, but only the Aware can hear them speak.

## Beyond the Boundaries

Some magical creatures can only live in the high-magic atmospheres of Interstices. Either their existence requires magic in the very air, or the land around them suits their needs in a way that nowhere in the modern world could. Dragons and hydras, demons and centaurs, and stranger beasts besides reside in the lands of pooled magic. Because of their reliance on magic, Modern Aware researchers call these creatures "Manavores".

Away from the mundane world, these creatures have no limitations. Dragons can fly and hydras grow two heads for every one removed. If a Legend were to bring one into the world, such a creature would retain its abilities even in the face of Unaware witnesses. Given bodies spun of magic and matter in equal quantities, nothing could stop a dragon's fire from scorching a city to ashes or a kraken from dragging an island beneath the waves. Even modern military forces would be powerless. Such is the nightmare of many Legends, who one day may be the only thing between the Unaware humans and total destruction.

Some Legends even believe rampant magic would help make more people Aware, though none would dare ignore a Dark Lord who attempted such a feat. Legends have discovered just a fraction of all Interstices that exist, but they offer as much space between them as the land-area of the planet. What would happen if it all flooded into the mundane world? It truly is a strange world beyond the walls of mundane life – and many Legends are happy to keep it there.

Many of the creatures that live in Interstices have human-equivalent intelligences, or minds powerful enough to simulate the thought processes that we consider consciousness. Centaurs may be more intelligent than the Legends who discover them, and the oldest dragons surely have intellects as far above the Clades as they are above spiny lobsters. These beasts could hold back powers and knowledge that the Clades just aren't ready for.

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### Mechanics

The **Ready 2 Run** system can cope with animals much the same as it handles any character. While most of those animals clothed in mundane forms don't have Aware-compatible cognitive processes, that doesn't mean that they can't be very smart in and of themselves. Many will have one Aptitude for their mundane form, and another for any special characteristics that they possess in the eyes of the Aware. Special powers can be represented with spells (see Chapter 6); the creature's Magic reserve is whatever the GM deems appropriate.

The same system can also cover creatures in Pocket Kingdoms, but if they are capable of human-equivalent thought they should have Ethos and Beliefs the same as any other character. Note that for these creatures the Beliefs are more roleplaying notes for portraying the creature's motivations; as GM you don't have to work out what beliefs and preconceptions would motivate a powerful nonhuman intelligence. Again, spells give mechanics for powers, though often with reduced Magic costs – things intrinsic to the creature should be free. Some of the most powerful may even have a Conviction pool, in the manner of the players' characters.

### Sample Creatures

#### familiar

This creature is a normal animal, often a bird or cat. Its only magical abilities allows it to speak and think with human intelligence. The statistics provided are for a cat, but can easily be changed to reflect any animal.

**Body:** 1

**Mind:** 4

**Presence:** 3

**Ethos:** 3

**Health:** 3

**Wits:** 8

**Will:** 7

**Magic:** 7

**Beliefs:** You are the most important thing in a room. Get something back for everything you give. People keep you safe, so don't piss them off too much

**Aptitudes:** Alley-cat 3, Intelligent Animal (Magical Theory) 2

### Chimera

Chimera weren't born, but created. At first nothing more than normal beasts, magicians changed through interspecies breeding and mystical "gene splicing." In the end, these changes infected the creatures' sense of self. A chimera can breed with any animal, and the offspring picks up traits from both parents. Most are little more than misaligned collections of heads, legs, and wings. Many chimerae are scared of anything normal, but they're so freakish that the Aware can't help but fear them. The average chimera mixes traits from three different animals, including wings, poison, extra limbs or the ability to spin webs.

**Body:** 4

**Mind:** 3

**Presence:** 2

**Health:** 8

**Wits:** 7

**Will:** 6

**Magic:** 6

**Aptitudes:** Choose 5 points of animal Aptitudes, including one Skill.

**Abilities:** Choose 2 of: Acidic Bite (3 Magic) – Deal an additional Force 2 (Wound) damage on a successful bite attack. Extra Limbs – Reduce the penalty for second and subsequent partial actions by 2 dice. Natural Weapons – Claws, oversized teeth, or horns deal Force 1 (Wound) + 2 damage. Regeneration (2 Magic) – Heal one Wound injury. Webbing (2 Magic) – Spin enough tough, sticky webbing in a scene to cover the inside of a room or cocoon something up to human-sized.

### Manticore

Manticores have the body of a lion, the head of a man, and a scorpion's tail. Their grey eyes show little intelligence, but lull people into a false sense of security before their iron-hard teeth slice through flesh and bone alike. Strict carnivores, for some reason manticores prefer the flesh of intelligent beings. Some, though not all, possess wings like a bat that give them a wider range of





tactical choices.

**Body:** 6

**Mind:** 4

**Presence:** 3

**Health:** 10

**Wits:** 8

**Will:** 7

**Magic:** 4

**Aptitudes:** Lion 3, Manticore (Tail-Spines) 4

**Abilities:** Manticores can strike with poisoned spines from their tails at a cost of one Magic. These spines do Force 1 (Wound) damage on a hit, and deal another Wound every round until the character receives first-aid. Winged manticores fly at the same speed they run.

## Hydra

The many-headed serpents of Greek mythology, hydras are venomous Manavores who require a high density of magic to sate their constant regeneration. Naturally aquatic, hydras are solitary creatures with the intelligence of a child. Their great physical power belies their unique nature – while they grow back two heads for each one severed, different hydras are killed by different means. Some are vulnerable in the body, others cannot grow heads if the wound is cauterised by fire, and yet others are vulnerable only to their own poisonous blood. Rumours tell of amphibious hydra with two or four legs,

and even wings, but if they exist, nobody has survived the encounter.

**Body:** 9

**Mind:** 3

**Presence:** 2

**Ethos:** 4

**Health:** 13

**Wits:** 7

**Will:** 6

**Magic:** 8

**Beliefs:** You are the Lord of the Seas. The land-creatures are fine in their place, but not too close. Things that try talking rather than acting are worthless

**Aptitudes:** Hydra (Poisonous Breath) 4, Aquatic Lizard 3

**Abilities:** All hydras are poisonous. Depending on the hydra, victims succumb by breathing its exhalations or being bitten. The poison does Force 2 (Wound) damage every round until the character receives first-aid. In that time, they lose two Wits from strange visions. A hydra can attack as many people in a round as it has heads with a full action.

### Dragon, Lesser

Every culture on Earth has dragons, each based on some creature or other now relegated to an Interstice. The only links between the collected creatures are their serpentine forms, high intelligence and ties to magic. Several appear as winged Western dragons, but current theory holds that dragons can change their shape depending on what observers expect to see – a party expecting an Asian flying serpent will see just that, while one expecting to encounter Azhi Dahaka will do so. All dragons symbolise some aspect of their realm – myths tell of dragons of earth or air while modern sightings include steam and clockwork creatures.

**Body:** 8

**Mind:** 8

**Presence:** 8

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**Ethos:** 5

**Health:** 12

**Wits:** 12

**Will:** 12

**Conviction:** 9

**Magic:** 12

**Beliefs:** Nothing is worth as much as knowledge. Experience is the master of intelligence. The Gods must not get free. Everything relates to your Aspect.

**Aptitudes:** Dragon (Ancient Knowledge) 5, Magecraft (choose one Aspect) 4

**Abilities:** Dragons can fly at twice running speed. Their claws deal Force 2 (Wound) + 3 damage. Dragons that can exhale fire, poison or other hazards inflict Force 3 (Wound) damage to everyone up to 10 yards in front of them. In their own realms, Minor and Significant effects cost half Magic.

### An Æternal Lens

Many fantasy stories pick from a surprisingly small pool of plot structures, preferring to highlight how the characters involved handle the situations in their world. That logic is as true for **Æternal Legends** as any novel trilogy. Hoary old plots take on a new lease of life when seen through the lens of the game, giving your players a chance to apply new solutions to age-old problems. This section outlines three such updated stories. These aren't the only ways to interpret these plots. They do offer a framework to use when you're starting out and work well together as a series of games.

### Rescuing the Prince

One of the pillars of the Aware community has gone missing, and it's up to the characters' circle to find him. A note left in his home demands a ransom in money and magic. The other Aware beg the circle to help – they wouldn't know where to start, but this is as close as it gets to a day job for Legends. If they choose to pay the ransom for his return, they find that there's no way they can gather all the resources in time – without acquiring a significant part of the ransom from some powerful people, of course. If



they decide to rescue him, they have a lot of research to do.

Investigation and magic show where the kidnapper is holding the victim: a modern office complex. Nearby police and security guards mean that characters can't just burst in with guns blazing. Instead, the circle must either sneak or bluff their way to the correct office, possibly through metal detectors and other impediments to bringing weapons. Some groups would prefer a silent rescue, foiling their opponents without ever seeing them. If that's the case, the victim doesn't want to leave – the whole thing was a set-up, designed to lure the characters to the office. If your group is more likely to want to hit something, give them a chance. They start out outnumbered and outgunned by a group of orcs and trolls, but should win through in the end.

The office is currently being rented by a Darksider circle that kidnapped its victim just to meet the new Legends. If the Darksiders get to the characters early enough, they think they can prove that there's not much point to fighting – that when their master makes a move, the Lightsiders will have to submit or perish. Their followers come from the same community as the characters. In effect, this is just a taste of things to come, a sample of the life that the characters lead just by being Legends. But this isn't the last time that the characters will meet this particular circle.

## Slaying the Dragon

The characters learn of a newly-discovered Interstice, deep underneath the nearest big city. The circle that discovered the Interstice went in a month ago. Nobody's heard from them since – not a good sign for a first-contact team. Worse, if the characters are keeping an eye on the Darksiders from the last story, that circle entered the Interstice just recently. Friends of the discoverers beg the characters to find the missing circle and return with them – or their bodies. Spirits are darkening, and it's up to the characters to raise them with old-fashioned heroism.

In the basement of a run-down apartment block, they find a gateway to the hidden world. It's a strange place: a twisting maze of caves and tunnels, pipes and gantries. The whole place has the vibe of *Aliens*; as the characters explore they hear far-off screams and the sounds of combat, but they only ever arrive in time to see the results. Blood and scorch-marks, deep gouges in sheer rock and torn scraps of armour should provide plenty of atmosphere. Worse, the world outside their immediate perceptions starts to shift. Pathways change, closing off whenever nobody's looking at them. The world is reshaping itself to the expectations of the viewers. Fear creates miles of dangerous tunnels, but if they imagine an easier path, they don't have far to go. The characters should finally make it past strange traps and areas of obvious weirdness – places where light has a taste and gravity depends on temperature – to a tall chamber. They arrive just in time to interrupt negotiations between a young dragon and the Darksiders from the last

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adventure!

The arrival of more annoying mammals enrages the dragon. Fire superheats the ceiling as the characters are treated to a display of sound and fury – giving the Darksiders a chance to escape. The dragon is young, and that’s the best edge the circle has if they want to survive. If they do fight and kill the dragon, they will soon have to deal with the other denizens of the Interstice, older and far more powerful, who just want to be left alone. The fate of the explorers is up to you. They might be dead, imprisoned, or transformed into strange, dangerous servants of the realm.

### Dark Lord’s Invasion

Darksiders follow the hollow shells of the Spheres, the form without meaning, but that doesn’t make them stupid. When a powerful Darksider moves in and decides to take over the characters’ community, they won’t notice right away. While every Dark Lord is different, few would consider wading in and killing all present as a useful means of taking over anywhere. Times have changed, and Darksiders have changed with them. Theirs are the tactics of politicians and the CEOs. Taking control of an area is no different than a large corporation swallowing the competition whole.

The first stage is arranging cover. Darksiders and their minions bribe key players in city government, ensuring that their activities have a cover in the Unaware world. From there, the Dark Lord works on what a corporation would call “brand awareness,” while the side effects – cynicism, avarice and social decay – are written off as “network externalities.” Actual Legends might not be the best choice at first, as Influence can bring problems in the early stages, but trusted minions sow seeds of dissent. From there, it only takes a few hidden Darksiders to push the scales and gather more support. Local Legends might not notice the initial mutterings of discord until it’s too late. Only when a legion of local Aware are already on his side does the Dark Lord send in gangs of overt Darksiders – including the circle’s nemeses – to get rid of the heroes.

The Dark has a powerful draw for the Aware. The Dark Lord offers an easy path, bereft of self-discovery but rife with petty pleasures. Most of the Aware don’t even realise what they’re doing; the Unaware world has poisoned them with the idea that convenience trumps deeper joys.

Lightsider heroism counters this by highlighting the fundamental difference between Light and Dark – what the Lightsiders do has meaning. When they beat back the Darksiders who threaten their community they vanquish the immediate threat and serve as an example to the other Aware.

# ÆTERNAL

# Legends

Character Name:

Player:

Campaign:

Clade:

Circle:

Expertise:

BODY

[ ] +4 = Health

ETHICS

[ ] +4 = Conviction

MIND

[ ] +4 = Wits

PRESENCE

[ ] +4 = Will

Aptitudes (+Skills)

Spheres (+Roles)

Edges:

Flaws:

Degeneration:

Magic:

Beliefs

Close Combat Defence Max [ ] + Armour [ ]

Ranged Combat Defence Max [ ] + Armour [ ]

Combat Pools

Weapon

Force/Damage

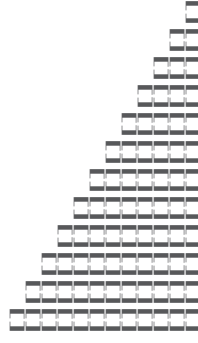
Dice Pool

Spells Known

Stun

Wound

Mortal



12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



# Knights of the Hidden



sorcery  
and  
adventure  
on a  
thousand  
worlds

A Roleplaying  
Game by  
Chris Challice

2008

# SUN

