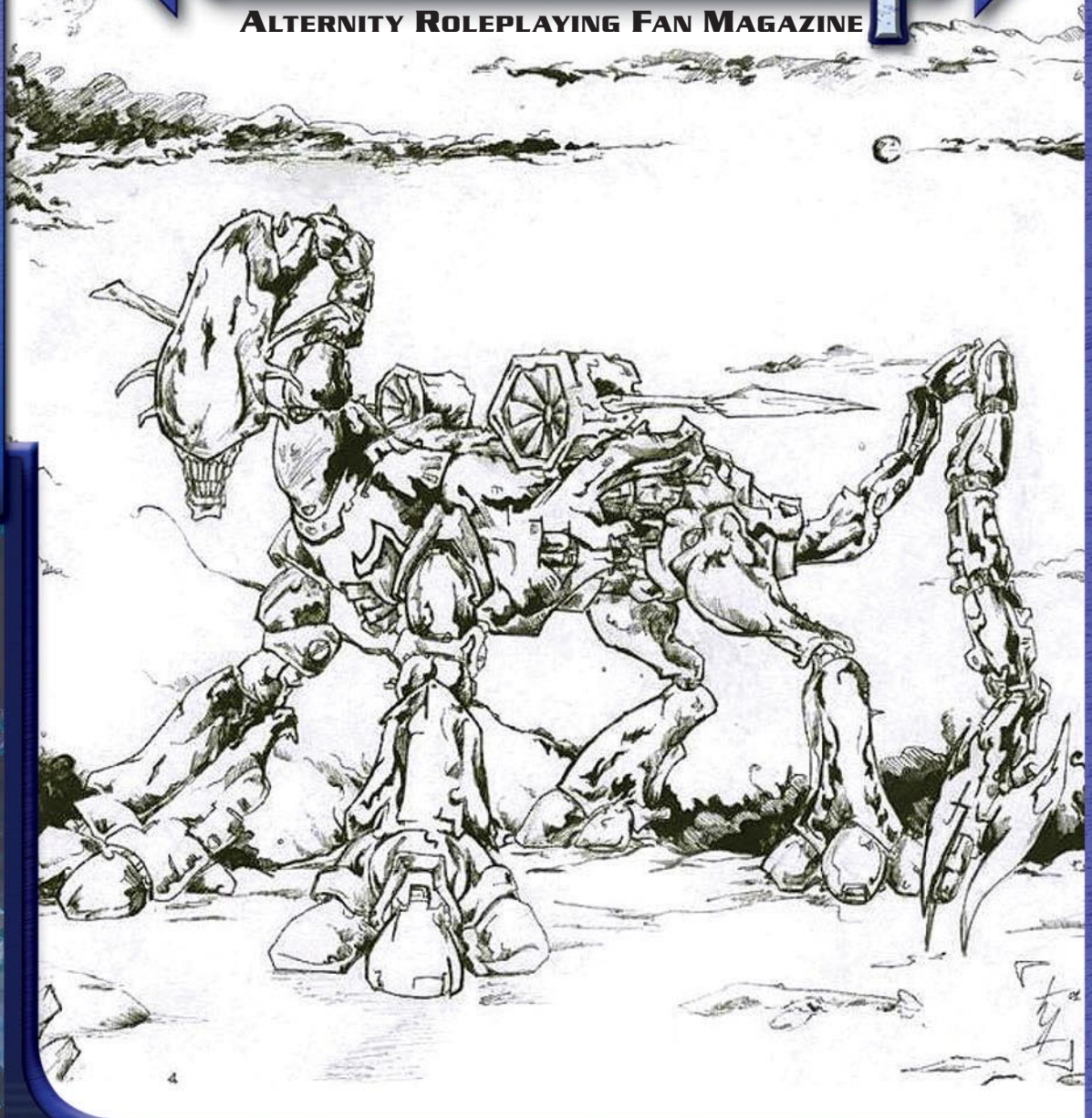


ALTERNITY

ISSUE 1

LAST RESORT

ALTERNITY ROLEPLAYING FAN MAGAZINE



The Last Resort Disclaimers

The *Last Resort* is a electronic magazine dedicated to the Alternity Role-Playing Game.

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The *Last Resort's* color scheme references the major published campaign settings for Alternity.

- General Alternity
- Star Drive
- Dark Matter
- Gamma World

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Editorial: The Big Welcome

Alternity Aficionados,

Welcome to the first issue of the Last Resort, the Alternity fan magazine written by the fans for the fans of one of the best game systems created. The game may not be supported officially but in this small corner of the grid it is fondly held with great respect and a touch of adoration. That is why this magazine like its predecessor, Action Check, exists. The fans of Alternity won't let this gem disappear into the dusty shelves of gaming history. We tinker on new rules. We create new settings or even convert existing settings to the rules. We discuss/argue/yell about the reality and playability of the system. Thanks to the fans the Alternity system lives on at our gaming tables, both real and virtual.

I still remember the first day I encountered the Alternity system. I had just moved to Maryland and was searching for the local comic book/gaming store. After getting directions from a helpful worker at a comic book store, I found the object of my search hidden away in a shopping center. (Note: I was use to comic books and gaming going hand-in-hand at the retail level so I thought it was a little weird that they were segregated in Rockville, MD. I had just looked up the addresses of comic book stores and didn't think to look up "gaming" exclusively.) My original goal was to find Dungeons & Dragons and Storyteller material for the campaigns I planned to run once I found some willing players. As I was glancing over the shelves, the *Alien Compendium* caught my eye. I saw that it was a TSR product and being the D&D lover that I was at the time, I decided to check it out. I looked the aliens over and then grabbed the *Player's Handbook*. I liked what I saw. I hadn't tried my hand at Sci-Fi and decided to give it a shot. I bought the *Player's Handbook* and the *Alien Compendium* and took them home for a thorough reading. I could tell the system had many years of game theory incorporated into its design, taking the best aspects of the systems that came before to create a unique hybrid of realism and cinematic fun. The designers had carefully crafted the game into a flexible entity that could handle a wide variety of genres with ease. I was hooked. Like a junkie with no self-control, I bought every Alternity product released, amassing a complete collection over the years it was in publication. I even bought an extra *Player's Handbook* to get the free *Red Starrise* adventure that I hadn't received the first time I purchased the book. I was in gamer's bliss.

Of course I loved it, but some of the players I had gathered together to play D&D were wary of trying the new system. To ease their transition I created a campaign that incorporated magic, spirits, and demons into a sci-fi world of cyborgs and skytanks. After the first session the system received positive feedback. One player who earlier said that he had never encountered a sci-fi system that properly treated the mechanics of firearms gave a one-word review of Alternity that I still use today. "Elegant." Alternity worked and worked smoothly.

I dedicate this magazine to everyone who has recognized the elegance of the Alternity system and continue to create new worlds within the flexible framework of the [clears throat to prepare for imitation of the Comic Book Guy from the Simpsons] "best game system ever."

My gushing love letter to Alternity is through. Thanks for reading and enjoy the articles.

Daryl Blasi, Executive Editor

Submissions

The Last Resort is accepting any Alternity-related articles for publication. We will also accept general roleplaying articles that can be used for the Alternity game.

Authors may wish to submit applicable articles to regular or semi-regular columns. The following is a list of the current columns:

Action Emporium: arms, armor and equipment

Bestiary Bizarre: creatures for Gamma World setting

Cyber Shop: robotics and cybernetics

Domain Virtua: detailed grid site

Foes Fantastic: creatures for arcane Alternity

Grid Run: computers and gridrunning

Home Rule Advantage: home rules for Alternity

Legion: heroes, villains, and SCMs

Mind's Eye: psionics

Special FX: super powers and magic

Species Catalogue: alien species for Alternity

Sword and Staff: arcane Alternity

Tavern Tales: game fiction

Tangents: alternate worlds

Veritas Omnes Liberant: conspiracies for Dark Matter setting

Xenohunter's Field Guide: xenofoms for Dark Matter setting

Note: Cook's Guide is written every issue by Matthew R. Esch under the pseudonym of Montgomery Cook IX. We will accept other correspondents who want to cover the Star Drive universe and either incorporate the article into Cook's Guide or format it as a stand alone article, whatever the author's preference.

If you have an idea for a new regular column feel free to email us at lastresortmail@yahoo.com

Article Guidelines

1. Word or text is the preferred format for submission of articles. Other formats will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
2. Excel files can be submitted for tables used in the article.
3. Indicate within the text what sections need to be sidebars and where pictures (if applicable) need to be placed in relation to the text. Requests for pictures from staff artists may also be made if you do not provide your own.
4. Do not place pictures in article file. Send them as separate files.
5. The title and author's name must be placed on the first line of the article to insure proper credit is given.
6. Email Word/text file to lastresortmail@yahoo.com

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1. Art must be submitted as jpeg files. At a minimum, the art must be the size it will be placed in the magazine at 150 dpi. It is better to go bigger than smaller.
2. Send title and/or captions (if applicable) for the piece, as well as artist name to insure proper credit.
3. For files larger than 500K, email your intention to submit picture to lastresortmail@yahoo.com. We will set you up as Last Resort staff so you may upload picture directly to the group site.

Britannica XII

by Odysseas Dallas • illustrations by Chris Campbell

"Alright people. Buckle up and better get going. If you packed up and forgot you toothbrush, you'd better not come crying. Keep your belts up, people. This time we're up for a trip to the Historical Division, in the "Medieval" cluster as it's been named, at +7,434, -4,523; hold your horses though. These guys have tons of technology, but still you'd better not insult them because honor is pretty important over there. We're just there to glance at them and how they were doing. So on to the world of the NeoKnights. And watch out if they point any blades at ya."

Robert Garrett, Superspace Watchers Delta Team Leader.

Introduction

Located a bit far from our own tangent, the "Medieval" Cluster contains worlds that are obviously influenced by our own Middle Ages society. Even though most are around that progress level as well, it had been theorized that some of these tangents might have technologies surpassing our own in some aspects, while maintaining the same frame of medieval society. The recently discovered Britannica XII proved that theory.

Long story short, the people of Britannica XII have developed some superior technology, though they lack true modern ranged weapons. At first glance it would appear they had never discovered gunpowder. They actually did, but as you will see, its discovery in the distant past was a source of major trouble whose impact is still felt today...

History

Generally speaking, Britannica XII's history was much like our own baseline tangent up to the Middle Ages, when the Splinter Wars began. Two rather large differences were apparent, however: The existence of psychic abilities in portions of the populace, then and still thought of as magic, and above all, the ideals of personal honor. For some rather weird reason, individuals of this tangent were much closer to the heroes portrayed in our books than we were. Even though corruption was not unknown, it was much more limited. As a matter of fact, Britannica XII during its own Middle Ages reminds a person of a novel straight from a writer of heroic fiction.

However, life wasn't always golden. Somewhere near the end of that period, gunpowder was invented, threatening the idyllic society with unwanted change. All kings were assaulted by prophetic visions of a future where knights existed no



more, and the world was ruled simply by money and merchants; no place for kings and knights, or feudalism, or honor... and all because of "gunpowder", some silly invention. Needless to say, most were shook to the core and the kings launched a genocidal campaign against those scientists that were manufacturing it. The scientists and their supporters fought back and a full-scale war was started, beginning what was called the Splinter Wars.

As the tradition taught by the priesthood states, war raged on for a hundred years with a heavy toll on lives for both sides. Even though the rebels had the armament advantage with gunpowder weapons, the Britannicans leveled the playing field with a powerful weapon: Magic, which we knew to be psychic abilities but this world's residents believed was supernatural forces. Nearly all this tangent's Mindwalkers shunned gunpowder and joined the Britannicans, favoring a more natural way of life. Some say the original visions of the kings were a scheme of these "magic" wielders. By the end, they had

managed to drive the gunpowder-using enemies nearly to extinction. The remnants fled into the natural caves and tunnels deep underground, where they would eventually become the Splinter race of the Vrisk. The warriors celebrated, and took the name of NeoKnights to signify the change. They went on with their lives, evolving and progressing, but kept an eye on the growing Vrisk.

Life continued for a thousand years after the Splinter Wars, with occasional wars and more often raids from the Vrisk. Theoretically the Vrisk should have progressed more in their scientific development given the significant amount of time. The fact that they were devastated by the war, with a few hundred survivors at best scattered around, and the lack of resources in the underground, impeded this technical development. They have now evolved into a race of their own and they resent their situation.

On the surface the NeoKnights eventually joined together in the Kingdom of Britannica, which spans most of their globe. They have used their resources to good effect, though the shunning of gunpowder and the astute lack of scientists was a hard hit to progress they are just beginning to recover from.

Now, it's the year 1001 after the Splinter Wars ended. What will happen to the Kingdom of Britannica XII, no one knows for sure. And if the internal warring wasn't enough, rumors of extraterrestrial visitors abound.

Geography

Since this tangent world is in the historical division, very little has changed in the way of geography. The differences that exist are due to the alternate course of history. Britannica XII, the planet upon which you stand, has nearly the same landmasses as our baseline Earth, which explains why you confused their map for ours. However, even if the earth is the same, the lay of the land isn't.

First of all, it should have probably struck you by now. That's right. It's the trees. They're everywhere; or, rather, they're everywhere the way it would be in a medieval society. For all their tech-

nology, thank God the Britannicans managed to keep an ecological common sense, unlike us. There are many forests, despite the need for housing, and they are well kept. Not a single sign of pollution is evident, unless you end up in the backwater area of a petty baron who'd think otherwise.

The population seems to be about 2 billion, evenly spaced throughout the planet because of planning. There has been a minor form of birth control to make sure the population doesn't swell, Warring with the Vrisk and peasant superstition have kept population growth down as well, despite access to advanced medical technology. Also to be considered is the prerequisites for population booms such as an Industrial Revolution similar to that of our own world's history. The Britannicans never experienced such an Industrial Age (or so the signs indicate; there's no reference to a similar period in Britannica's history. Accurate history was never the Britannican scholars' area of expertise) and they continue to moderate their population growth while maintaining a pristine environment. Order at it's finest. The capital of the Kingdom (and the whole planet, on the surface at least) is Tillan, a huge metropolis located on a whole island, but unlike any metropolis you have ever seen.

Mountain ranges are the same as in our world, with very few differences in height. The only difference is that they are inhabited as well, and due to superior technology they are protected from the elements. Even though the Britannicans lack true weather control, they can exhibit a limited form in their largest cities.

What is most magnificent about Britannica however is the extended physical underground network under the landmasses. It is because of the underground passages that the rebels survived during the Splinter Wars, as they sought refuge within the dark caverns. Since that time it has been the home of the Vrisk splinter race. Even though they have been mapped to a limited extent by the surface Britannicans, survey teams meet their demise in the dark underground at the hands of fierce

Vrisky. It is known that extensive systems exist under the landmasses, often improved by their residents, but very few passages pass through seas and none through oceans. The West Baronies are separated from the East Baronies. It is rumored, however, that the Vrisk have found or dug themselves such a tunnel passing through the Sea of Storms (Our Atlantic Ocean). Collectively, the whole network of tunnels is known as the Underground.

On the Origin of Species

As it was stated earlier in the History of Britannica, during the Splinter Wars the scientists who favored gunpowder and their advocates were exiled, whereas the rest of the Britannicans stayed at the surface and expanded. The two races, once one but now divided, went on, warring with each other but at no grand scale since the Britannicans had no knowledge of the tunnels and were at a distinct disadvantage, whereas Vrisk had too little resources and manpower to launch a large scale offensive, and instead concentrated on raids where they could steal and loot what they needed to make do in their dreary existence.

The Britannicans range in appearance as humans do since they are, after all, human. Physiological changes depend on the area they belong to. Since all are citizens of the Kingdom, there is nothing in the way of racial differences. There is of course some rivalry between the different Baronies, and one could say a mild animosity sometimes, but civil war in the land of Britannica has never happened again since the Splinter Wars. The constant threat of the Vrisk kept such thoughts at bay. In general, they are your average humans.

The Vrisk however, since they have dwelled for a millennium underground, have evolved into a different-looking race, still close to humans but with distinct traits. They have adapted to their surroundings; the damp, dark underground of constant dangers. Vrisky are tough as individuals, and their physiology reflects it. In the Underground, only the strongest survives. Vrisky are known to



Vrisk Special Abilities

Vrisk, due to their different evolution in the last millennia, and sometimes intentional genetic tampering, show these traits as a race:

Ability Score Range: Their ability scores are STR 4-13, DEX 6-15, CON 7-14, INT 4-14, WIL 4-14, PER 4-12.

Night Vision: Vrisk eyes are tuned to the Underground. A Vrisk may reduce darkness penalties by 2 steps, but it has no effect in total darkness, and Vrisk have yet to evolve a Thermal Vision, which is why they are nearly always equipped with Thermal Vision goggles.

Improved Senses: Vrisk's senses are superior; they receive a -1 bonus to **Awareness-perception** or **Investigate** skill checks involving any of the five senses.

Psi Sensitivity: Due to an evolutionary quirk, Vrisk may identify psionic activity as per the Psionic Sensitivity mutation as exhibited in the Alternity Player's Handbook. Note however that Vrisk cannot be Mindwalkers or even talents.

have better eyesight in the dark, and they fare poorly in the sun. Thus all their raids are normally committed during the dead of the night. They have improved senses and reflexes, and they are far better immunized than common folk. Perhaps the most peculiar fact about them, however, is that even though all have the ability to identify psychic powers, none so far have showed even a minor talent in the art of Mindwalking. Commoners say this was "the curse of the magicians", though knowledgeable people attribute it to some strange influence of the Underground. A thousand years in the Underground also had an impact on their appearance. They are tall, rangy

and lean folk with wiry muscles and a pale, almost ghoulish appearance, thin features and hair often white or at best light blond due to the lack of melanin. They are not noted for their beauty, but some have been known to exhibit a somewhat exotic and delicate appearance, especially for females.

Society, Economy & Technology

The Britannicans

Britannican society in essence differs very little from feudal Europe in the Middle Ages. At the highest end of the pyramid is the king, the most powerful individual in the whole realm, even though in isolated areas he might be nothing more than a faded whisper. Nevertheless, there's no man with equal

power to the King. Currently, the King of Britannica is William the 34th, an influential and ambitious man in his middle years.

The ranks of nobility, unchanged since their Middle Ages, range all the way down to the lowest peasants and serfs. Slaves don't exist, but serfs do. Merchants and free men are significantly higher in numbers than the baseline medieval feudal society, and most people are self-reliant. Money is widespread, but it is oddly in coin. Trading, like merchants, has increased considerably, but by no means rivals capitalism.

The knight is a premier figure in not only literature but life as well. Even though the culture is starting to evolve

into more “mature” forms, the NeoKnight, as knights are known, are still popular figures. Sons of nobles tend to become NeoKnights. Prospective NeoKnights are sent to one of the many Knightly orders around the Kingdom, to be trained as warriors. Usually training starts at 12 years of age, and at 20 years of age the warrior is knighted. However, there are recorded cases of older persons who have become NeoKnights, but these are exceedingly rare. NeoKnights are required to be noble, and even though exceptions can be made, the steep cost of arms and armor restricts that choice of career to affluent Britannicans.

What is rather bizarre is the Britannican religion. They have a pantheon of gods, and each has its own Order of Priests. The truly odd occurrence is that the Orders of Priests are actually the only scientific organizations, and each one holds sway over a particular area of expertise. It is forbidden for anyone other than the Orders to study science, and even the Orders have limits on what they can research. The largest Order by far belongs to the god of power Heru, who is thought to be the father of all other gods. Priests of Heru are natural leaders, if somewhat autistic. The god of War is Nehte, and his priests are adept at manufacturing weaponry for the NeoKnights and other warriors. They are also trained in the art of war themselves. The Order of Rocco, the god of mercy, compassion, care, and healing, are excellent doctors, medics, and physicians with advanced medical technology and harboring little superstition about their trade. The goddess of love, life, joy and fertility (though the latter part is highly diminished), Alcar, has priests who are artists and entertainers. On the opposite end stands Durhun the death god, who assigns his followers with the task of aiding the passing of the living to the land of the dead. They have sinister, death-dealing weapons and are known to tamper in darker arts. The Order of Durhun is the smallest of the priestly Orders. The Order of Calimal, the god of wisdom, truth, and knowledge, has in its ranks scholars, lore keepers and

Britannican & Vrisk Money

Britannicans favor coins of gold, silver and copper, though since the system is much more regulated, their value rarely deviates from the standard set. Any deviation most often happens in backwater areas, where it is not unknown for Barons to issue their own currency. The official currency unit is the Double-Eagle; compared to our money, it's the equivalent of 10 Euro or dollars. Below the Double Eagle are the more common coins, the Hyperpyron, 6 to a Double Eagle, and farthing, 6 to a Hyperpyron. Above the Double Eagle, used for large-scale transactions, and often just for record keeping, is the Nuducat; twenty-four Double Eagles to one.

Money in the Underground is quite a different matter. Most transactions are done by bartering, and what little money exists is in the form of notes, which are only used in the larger Vrisk settlements. The main type of “currency” used to be gunpowder ounces, though with the advent of firearms using standard ammunition, a new currency was devised: 9mm bullets, the most common around. Usually, three 9mm bullets would exchange for an 11mm bullet for their rifles, four 9mm bullets would exchange for one of their shotgun shells, and seven would exchange for a 13mm bullet for the larger machinegun and sniper rifle. This is “universal currency”; the exchange rates between settlements vary. For a race of survivalists, money matters not.

archivists. Finally, Sentet is the goddess of Chaos and raw energy, and has a rather unstable personality, which is matched by her priests. Priests of Sentet are widely rumored to be mad or lunatics, and there is a hint of truth behind these rumors.

There are a number of “Magic Academies,” as they are known, spread around the globe, with the largest and oldest standing in the heart of Britannica's capital, Tillan. At first, I was led to believe that they actually had magical powers; but as it later proved out, they were Mindwalkers. Talents and true Mindwalkers are trained together in these academies, their talents put to good use. There is no social distinction between them and all Magicians are considered equal, the only true distinction being their extent of power. Powerful magicians are also incorporated into the Order of Justice, with its members known as Grey Knights. They are combat-trained Mindwalkers, and all carry a mystical weapon, the psi-sword, as a badge of office. They are sanctioned by the King, somewhat distrusted by the Priestly Orders, and treated by the public with mixed fear and awe. Magic Academies claim all citizens with psychic talent, but rumors abound of Orders acquiring such talents for their own use.

Technology has taken an interesting curve. The Britannicans have highly advanced technology in weaponry, medicine, construction, and energy, but they suffer a bit in the “luxury” department; don't expect any TVs. Computers exist, known as thinking machines, but they are not in proportion with other technology (somewhere near PL 6). Hacking is nearly unknown, since computer usage is not widespread and there is nothing close to our Internet. The computers are mainly used for archiving and research by Priests. Unfortunately the Britannicans are very limited in space technology, with no known working spaceships, though plans are being worked on by some Priests to change this situation. It is rumored that a number of crude spacefaring vessels exist, but little is verified on this matter. Even though their weaponry is highly advanced, it is very specialized. After banning gunpowder, they have developed no real guns, and the only ranged weapons are either advanced versions of primitive weapons, or the highly advanced Priestly weapons, which are limited to their respective Orders.

The Vrisk

Vrisk have developed a rather peculiar society structure, according to the Britannican point of view. They are militantly organized, but there is no unifying

leadership between settlements. Each settlement has its own leader, or Marshal, as they are known, who meets with other Marshals in a case-by-case basis. They are self-reliant and individualistic, but few would question the order of a superior directly. Rise in ranks isn't hereditary, but by proof of ability. If you aren't capable of surviving on your own, you have no chance in the Underground. That's why their children, when they reach 13, undergo the Rite of Passage where they must survive alone in the Underground for a year. Despite the hazards, many return alive thanks to the harsh training they receive before the Rite. Mortality is pretty high for the Vrisk and despite their lack of warriors, they cannot afford to have weaklings in their ranks.

Economy is non-existent in Vrisk society. What little trade exists is done by barter, and the only form of currency appears in very large Vrisk settlements. For a Vrisk, a clip of ammo is worth much more than some pieces of metal or paper, however valuable others would guarantee they are.

Technology of the Vrisk harbors a paradox. Despite the fact that most initial Vrisk were brilliant scientists, and they have passed on their knowledge and intelligence to their descendants, an acute lack of resources and manpower has slowed down progress considerably. Only in larger settlements is any serious research done, and any important breakthroughs are shared with the rest of the communities. Their life in the Underground has strengthened the bonds of the members, because strength lies in unity. They have fairly advanced medical technology (PL5/6), and their weapons technology is at the same level, though much more emphasis is placed on ranged weapons. Vehicles are unheard of in Vrisk society; in the Underground, the best way to move is on your feet. They have more advanced computers and electronics than surface dwellers, and a crude network to link settlements. What is most strange about their technology, however, is that through arduous experiments in electronics and genetics, with the "ample" support of Britannican

Mindwalkers they managed to capture, they have created specialized equipment which enables them to overcome their "curse" and use psionic powers. These are very rare though and kept only for the most powerful individuals, known as "magicians" as well.

Aftermath

This is truly a strange world. Honor seems to win the day, as valiant Britannicans vanquish the ruthless Vrisk. But the truth is much darker, for not all is as it seems. Many Britannicans will argue this is a utopia, but in truth a utopia is something alien to the human mind, as is perfection. Even though it seems to be locked in eternal stasis, no one knows

what would happen if either side found an advantage and pressed it to eradicate the other; given the hate one has for the other, it's possible (and probable). But what troubles me most is the wild rumors of extraterrestrial visitors... NeoKnights might be brave and chivalrous, but they have no notion of modern warfare. And if they are defeated, the Vrisk are next. Would the two splinter races unite if they had a common enemy, or would hate prevail again?

*Signed,
Robert Garret
Superspace Watchers
Delta Team Leader*

Using Britannica XII in a Campaign

This article details only a little of Britannica XII. It could easily grow to be an important tangent, the focus of the tangent campaign, or a potential source of tangent-spanning characters. Or it could instead be used for a campaign of its own, considering the possibilities.

Possibilities of using this world, either as a tangent or as the actual ground of the campaign, include:

- a) The heroes ally with one side to face the other.
- b) The heroes are thought as enemies by both sides, or even worse, they find out about the heroes tangent hopping and the two races unite against them, possibly searching for the gateway to invade the heroes' tangent (This is only possible in tangents, normally.)
- c) The heroes try to unite the two splinter races.
- d) The heroes are trapped and they must find a way to escape, and the only possible gateway is rumored to be in the Underground. (This is again only possible in a tangents campaign, under normal circumstances)
- e) They are confronted by an alien spacefaring race, which can be friendly or hostile.
- f) They are confronted by a host of alien spacefaring races, which can be either mostly friendly or hostile, or they could even be embroiled in a war.
- g) They are encountered by an alien spacefaring race, and their "patrons" thrust them into intergalactic politics with other alien races (ala Uplift).

And many, many more possibilities. The size of the article barely begins to scratch the possibilities Britannica XII may offer. It is a potentially wealthy setting for ideas and even though it may sound cliché (Sci Fi Knights), it's much more grim once you get down to the real thing. NeoKnights aren't so chivalrous as they seem, nor are the Vrisk evil. Perhaps there's a civil war imminent, or the Barons try to undermine the King, or aliens try to control the world, or Vrisk lead an upcoming revolt... anything can happen. In Britannica XII, anything is possible.

Characters in Britannica XII

Undoubtedly, players may want to create characters from Britannica XII, either in a Tangents or a Britannica-specific campaign, so I have provided with a host of possible careers that deal with specific aspects of that culture. Don't forget other careers can be adapted as well (such as a thief or ruffian). Also note that free skills are different; replace Vehicle Operation by Animal Handling for Britannicans and Acrobatics for Vrisk as a free skill. It is also suggested you use optional rules 2a and 2b (Starting Skill Points $3 \times \text{INT} + 30$ and Max Broad Skills $12 + \text{INT}$ res. mod).

COMBAT SPEC CAREERS

Archer

Even though NeoKnights are forbidden from using Ranged Weapons, commoners are not. Since ranged weapons have always had the advantage of being able to kill from a distance, units of archers still serve in armies and retinues all around the globe. A good archer can handle either the bow or crossbow with ease, and they are also trained in defending themselves in close combat.

Signature Equipment: Reflex Composite Bow or Reflex Crossbow, Rapier or Broadsword or Short Sword or Dagger, Leather Armor or TL Tunic or Kevlar Vest, tabard with noble's colors.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons; Primitive Ranged Weapons-*bow 2, crossbow 2*; Awareness-*perception*. 25 points.

Man-at-Arms

The man-at-arms is in the service of a noble, and he is trained as a warrior to serve in his retinue, and he may be assigned to escort the noble wherever he goes. This can be a great career for a character who serves as a noble's bodyguard. Men-at-arms are also known as footmen or infantry, and they are the most expendable in a fight. During peace, they may serve in any noble's retinue, or as a guardsman in a garrison.

Signature Equipment: Broadsword/Spear/Polearm or Chainsword/Chainaxe, Medium Shield or CeraShield, Chain Mail or Advanced Plate Armor, tabard with noble's colors.

Skill Package: Armor Operation-*combat*; Melee Weapons-*blade* or *bludgeon* or *power*; Stamina-*endurance*; Interaction-*intimidate*. 20 points.

NeoKnight

The most easily identifiable figure of this era is the NeoKnight. Even though the training is arduous and harsh, many noblemen opt to see their male offspring become NeoKnights. A noble does not need to be a NeoKnight, and some courtiers decide not to be trained as warriors. NeoKnights are tough warriors, trained in personal combat and battlefield tactics, but they are forbidden to use ranged weapons.

Signature Equipment:

Monomolecular Edge Sword/Axe or Vibrosword/axe, Chevalier Armor & Shield or Battle Armor & CeraShield, Warhorse, Monomolecular Edge Lance, personal banner with emblem.

Skill Package: Armor Operation-*combat, power*; Melee Weapons-*blade 2, power*; Unarmed Attack; Stamina-*endurance, resist pain*; Knowledge-*heraldry 2*; Tactics; Animal Handling-*riding [horse]*; Resolve-*physical*; Culture-*etiquette [Britannica]*; Leadership. 64 points.

Vrisk Assassin

Vrisk assassins are even more individualist than most Vrisk, and their role in their society is to take out important targets for the safety of all the others. They are grim and determined in their task, and they will go to great lengths to destroy their target.

Signature Equipment: 2 Vrisk Swords, 2 Vrisk Knives, Vrisk Auto, Vrisk Pistol, Kevlar Vest, thermal vision goggles, first aid kit.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons-*blade 2*; Unarmed Attack-*power martial arts*; Acrobatics-*dodge*; Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol, SMG*; Stealth; Knowledge-*first aid*; Awareness-*intuition, perception*; Investigate; Resolve-*physical, mental*. 65 points.

Vrisk Soldier

This Vrisk belongs to a standing military unit and has been trained to oper-

ate in the underground. This type of warrior makes the bulk of Vrisk armies, and they are charged with patrolling the Underground as well as raiding the surface.

Signature Equipment: Vrisk Knife, Vrisk Rifle, Vrisk Pistol, Kevlar Vest, thermal vision goggles, first aid kit.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons-*rifle*; Stamina-*endurance*; Survival-*underground*; Knowledge-*first aid*; Tactics-*infantry*; Awareness-*perception*; 28 points.

DIPLOMAT CAREERS

Noble (Combat Spec)

Some nobles choose not to join the order of the NeoKnights. These nobles are not inhibited by their code of honor, and often take part in court intrigues. Such people do receive combat training, but in no way can it match the sheer strength of a true NeoKnight. These people, however, are well versed in the art of deception and courtly manners, and have much more influence and power in their hands.

Signature Equipment: Rapier, Toughened Leather Tunic.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons-*blade*; Business-*corporate*; Knowledge-*heraldry*; Tactics; Administration-*bureaucracy, management*; Culture-*diplomacy 2, etiquette [Britannican]*; Deception-*bluff, bribe*; Interaction-*charm*. 45 points.

FREE AGENT CAREERS

Constable

Constables are freelance investigators that are often under contract by lords when they must investigate murders or other such criminal activity. It takes a thief to catch a thief, as the saying goes, and a good Constable knows how to prove it true.

Signature Equipment: Short Sword, Toughened Leather Tunic.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons; Law; Security; Awareness-*perception 2*; Investigate-*search*; Interaction-*interview*. 30 points.

TECH OP CAREERS

Priest of Alcar

As a priest of Alcar, this character enjoys life at large, reveling in laughter, joy and happiness. The Order of Alcar contains mostly priestesses, but priests are not uncommon. They learn about life, but are not very good as far as hard science is concerned.

Signature Equipment: Mother's Voice, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-*religion, Lore of Alcar*; Life Science; Entertainment-*sing 2, dance, musical instrument*; Interaction-*seduce*. 30 points.

Priest of Calimal

Wise are the priests of Calimal, for wise is he, the god of truth and wisdom. They are the lore keepers and archivists, and they are the ones that first produced Think Machines to aid them in their quest for knowledge. They are not above using force to eliminate lies and burn false gods, however.

Signature Equipment: Eye of Truth, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons-*rifle*; Computer Science; Knowledge-*computer operation, religion, Lore of Calimal 2, Splinter Wars history, local history 2*; Physical Science-*astronomy, planetology*. 35 points.

Priest of Durhun

The Priests of the Death God are grim and sullen in the performing of their tasks. They are often sent as assassins. They are often engaged in some research involving destructive weaponry, be it conventional or not.

Signature Equipment: Death Scythe, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons-*power*; Knowledge-*Lore of Durhun 2*; Technical Science; Resolve-*mental*; Interaction-*Intimidate*. 30 points

Priest of Heru

A priest of Heru is an individual who can inspire his fellow Britannicans,

and radiates an aura of power.

Priests of Heru are well versed in lore and religion, as well as theoretical sciences, but not many are fond of building machines.

Signature Equipment: Starblade, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Knowledge-*religion, Lore of Heru 2*; Life Science; Physical Science; Teach; Administration-*bureaucracy*; Culture; Leadership-*inspire*. 40 points.

Priest of Nehte

A priest of Nehte is a warrior as much as a priest, and a formidable foe in close combat. They wield powerful weapons, and many of them are versed in their manufacturing secrets, but they concentrate only on war.

Signature Equipment: Biting Blade, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons-*blade*; Unarmed Attack; Modern Ranged Weapons-*rifle*; Knowledge-*Lore of Nehte*; Physical Science or Technical Science. 30 points.

Priest of Rocco

Priests of Rocco are expert healers and doctors, and are known for their studies and breakthroughs in medicine, which have saved many lives. They are not very adept at fighting, but they can use their weapons if need be.

Signature Equipment: Mother's Voice, Priest Robes, Trauma Pack I, Surgery Kit.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-*religion, Lore of Rocco*; Life Science-*biology*; Medical Science-*treatment 2, surgery, medical knowledge*. 35 points.

Priest of Sentet

A priest of Sentet is a brilliant scientist, if a bit lunatic in his brilliance. They are often slightly deranged, but they have learned to hide it well. They are the premier scientists and researchers, especially as far as energy and matter is concerned.

Signature Equipment: Chaos

Wand, Priest Robes.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol*; Knowledge-*Lore of Sentet*; Physical Science-*physics, chemistry*; Technical Science-*repair, juryrig, invention 2, technical knowledge*. 40 points.

Vrisk "Magician"

This special "caste" of the Vrisk have managed to unlock the mysteries of Psionics, using them for their own benefit despite their genetic inability. They have managed to do so using special machinery they build themselves. They are excellent in their area of expertise.

Signature Equipment: Vrisk Pistol, Psi-Gauntlet or Psi-Helmet, 3 psionic minor crystal peripherals or 1 major psionic crystal peripheral.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol*; Knowledge-*Psionics 2*; Physical Science-*physics*; Technical Science-*repair, invention 2, technical knowledge*. 40 points.

MINDWALKER CAREERS

Grey Knight

Grey Knights belong to the Order of Justice, and are elite warriors who utilize their psionic potential to improve their battle prowess. They own special weapons that can be deadly when used properly, but they shun ranged weapons. They strive to improve their physical and mental skills equally well, in a struggle to free the world of evil, or what they perceive as evil...

Signature Equipment: Avenger Blade, Advanced Plate Armor.

Skill Package: Armor Operation-*combat*; Melee Weapons-*Blade 2*; Unarmed Attack-*power martial arts*; Acrobatics-*dodge*; Stamina-*endurance, resist pain*; Awareness-*intuition*; Resolve-*mental, physical*; ESP-*battle mind*; Telekinesis-*psychokinetics*. 75 points.



Odysseas "Grey Knight" can be contacted by email at grey_knight2000@yahoo.gr

WEAPONS OF Britannica XII

by Odysseas Dallas

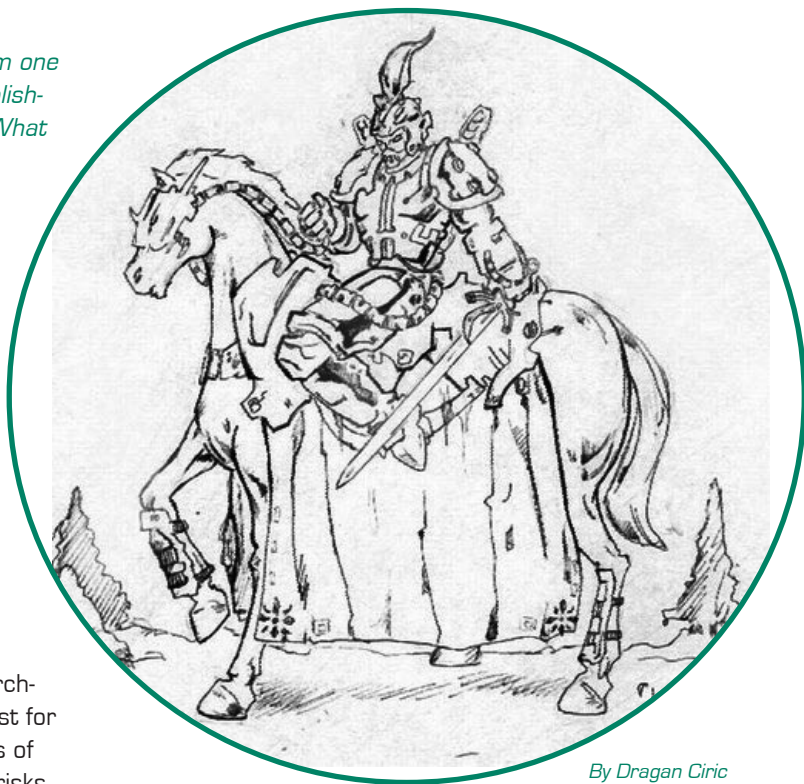
Welcome, traveler, to the Lycaeum of Knowledge. I am one of the many who work in this fine cross-tangent establishment, and guard the knowledge of countless words. What would you like to talk about? Ah, the chivalrous NeoKnights of Britannica XII... a fair people, indeed. Their code of honor and preservation of chivalry despite the advent of technology and the passing of eons are remarkable... They are indeed the "Knights of the Future". I can tell you are anxious to know what the valiant warriors of Britannica XII and their ruthless enemies use to battle each other. Here, I have this just for you it seems; it is a report by an old friend of mine, William of New Bjork, a renowned scholar... who is rather familiar with tangent travel, like a few others, but are loathe to share. This is not our subject, however. Read, seeker of knowledge, to your heart's delight, and may you find what you have been seeking...

HAIL, fair reader. I have written this humble parchment with my meager skills to quench thy thirst for knowledge. I shalt acquaint thee with the arms of the valiant NeoKnights of Britannica XII and the vile Vriska, who fight us from below the earth in dark tunnels, even though they were once of our blood. Behold the magnificence of our warriors; bow down to their might, respect their authority, revel in the destruction of the enemy, for times will soon draw to a close until the final judgement.

General Equipment

This equipment is available to anyone, generally speaking. There are many items available for NeoKnights and commoners alike. One particular item is the Energy Cell. All weapons of the NeoKnights are created so that they are powered by Energy Cells, irrelevant of the type of weapon; how fast the energy is consumed, however, is another matter entirely.

NeoKnights have access to a variety of PL6, PL7 and PL8 equipment; it's up to the GM. Note that they are not very advanced when it comes to space Technology, with an average of PL5 to PL6; whereas in personal items, gravitics etc they can have gadgets as advanced as PL8. Costs should remain more or less the same; on how to convert the normal currency to Britannica XII currency, consult the relevant Britannica XII article.



By Dragan Ciric

NeoKnights Weapons & Armor

Our valiant warriors have access to a variety of deadly weapons with which to bring justice upon our enemies, be they from in or out. A NeoKnight's weapons are master-crafted with painstaking work and cleansed with the rituals of the priests, to create pieces of art and war together. Never underestimate a NeoKnight's weapon, for they are crafted to destroy, not to exhibit.

NeoKnights typically are required to own a suit of Chevalier Armor; this magnificent, head-to-toe, fully enclosing suit utilizes special machinery, called "servos" by the Priests; they enhance a wearer's muscles and give him strength unparalleled. The master crafted suit of armor, manufactured from Cerametal and Neutronite Alloy, also protects the wearer from the ravages of the land, be they of air or fire, cold or earth. The suit contains healing instruments blessed by the priests, aids for the NeoKnight's vision, a small thinking machine that is responsible for fine-tuning the armor, machines aiding communication, and a special contraption that aids the NeoKnight in noticing he's under an imminent attack. They are very expensive and

treasured as family heirlooms; it is not uncommon for a NeoKnight to use an old, lovingly maintained suit of Chevalier Armor which initially belong to his great-great-grandfather.

In game terms, a Chevalier Armor raises the effective strength of the wearer to 15 for purposes of lifting, breaking, and hand-to-hand damage. It protects the same way as a soft e-suit, GRAPH-wise. It also contains a Trauma Pack II, Binoculars and Image Enhancement optics that enhance vision by up to x100 and reduce darkness penalties by 2 steps with integrated protection to filter out blinding lights, an ordinary microcomputer without a 3D slot with the Armor Operation utility, standard Comm Gear and Signal Laser, and a Threat Receiver that gives a -2 bonus to Awareness checks to detect radar and laser emissions impinging on the wearer of the suit.

Often, a NeoKnight carries a special shield, the Chevalier Shield, which is made of the same material as his armor. Blessed by the Priests, these have saved a NeoKnight's life time and time again. It is light and durable, capable of stopping a normal blade with ease. Also, a minuscule force field permeates the front of the shield, enabling it to parry monomolecular weapons as well.

In game terms, the only special rule is that the shield can parry monomolecular weapons the same way as normal weapons.

NeoKnights have access to a variety of deadly weapons; Monomolecular Edge Swords & Axes are expensive but deadly. In essence, the edge of the weapon, through super engineering, has been sharpened to the point it is nearly a single molecule thick; this gives it extreme armor penetration and stopping power. It can only be held in a container whose inner is protected from a strong but tiny energy field, which requires little power; the same applies for the flat of the sword blade, so that it can be used for parrying. The sword can vary in length, but it usually

is about 100-120 cm long, with an elegant blade and a grip that can be used one- or two-handed; it's light and fast. Axes have a shaft about 100-150 cm long, the size of a battleaxe.

Monomolecular weapons are treated just like normal weapons, but they halve armor protection for all physical armors. If the sword is held 2-handed, increase damage by +1.

Monomolecular weapons cannot be safely parried by normal weapons or shields; even though on any success the attack is parried, the parrying implement suffers damage and must roll a durability check, with a +3, +2, +1 or no penalty if it has no, light, medium or heavy armor respectively (if using the sword 2-handed, or the axe, add a further +1 penalty). On an Amazing success, it's not harmed at all; on a Good success, it's slightly to moderately damaged (about 1/3 of the durability); on an Ordinary success, it's moderately to heavily damaged (about 2/3 of the durability). On a Failure, the weapon provides some resistance but breaks; on a Critical Failure, the weapon is cut in half without even hampering the blade at all. The parrying character receives half and full damage for Failure and Critical Failure, respectively.

For the NeoKnight on budget, there are more inexpensive weapons. PowerMaces and PowerMauls utilize gravity technology to deliver a bone-jarring blow with the ease of swinging a willow wand, all thanks to special gravitonic capacitors on the head; the PowerMaul can even throw targets back. Their shaft is about 1 meter and 1.3 meters long, respectively. Vibroswords and Vibroaxes are rather common among those who can't afford monomolecular weapons; in essence, the blade of these weapons is not very firmly mounted and jiggles a bit. When activated though, it vibrates thousands of times in a minute, giving it superior armor penetration and increased damage. They are not suited for parrying though. When active, the weapons produce a humming sound

that can be heard from a distance. The sword is primarily one-handed, about 1 meter long, whereas the axe has a shaft nearly 2 meters long and mimics the great axe in size.

PowerMauls have a special ability; when the wielder strikes an Amazing hit, the target flies back d4-1 meters (minimum of 1) and takes d4s of damage which no armor can prevent, as well as damage per an Extremely Short Fall (which can be blocked by armor). Vibroweapons reduce the armor roll of every physical armor or force field by 1, to simulate their increased armor penetration, but suffer a +1 when parrying. If they are out of power, they inflict 2 less points of damage, lose the AP bonus, and have a +1 accuracy penalty. PowerMaces, PowerMauls can hit 20 or 10 times before exhausting their energy cells respectively, whereas Vibroaxes and Vibroswords can be activated for a total of 5 minutes.

Ah... but what would a fine NeoKnight be without his trusty lance? Generally speaking, NeoKnights have ready access to two types of lances: Monomolecular Edge Lance and Proton Lance. The first one works in the same principles as other monomolecular edge weapons; the head is sharpened to a single molecule, giving it superior armor penetration. However, the Proton Lance is a rather different matter... the head of the lance is covered with Depleted Uranium, enabling it to pass through almost anything. Proton technology was applied to smaller personal weapons, but it was too unstable and was abandoned. Nevertheless, it proved ideal for lances. All lances span about 2 meters long.

Like all monomolecular edge weapons, Monomolecular Edge Lances halve the armor roll of every physical armor they hit; on the other hand, Proton Lances essentially reduce the armor roll to that of the lowest possible result; i.e., if the armor roll is d4+1, it stops a maximum of 2 points of damage.

NeoKnight War Horse

STR 18 (d4+16) INT 4 (Animal 11 or d4+8)
 DEX 11 (d6+6) WIL 11 (d4+9)
 CON 16 (2d4+10) PER 3 (Animal 9 or d4+7)
 Durability: 16/16/8/8 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2
 Move: Sprint 64, Run 38, walk 14 #Actions: 2
 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 0

Attacks

Trample 15/7/3 d0 LI/O Personal d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w

Defenses

+3 res. mod. vs. melee
 +1 res. mod. vs. ranged
 Armor [Natural]: d6-3 (LI), none, d6-3 (En)
 Armor [Lt. Barding]: d6-2 (LI), d4 (HI), d6-2 (En)
 Armor [Md. Barding]: d4+1 (LI), d6 (HI), d4+1 (En)
 Armor [Hv. Barding]: 2d4 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

STR: Armor Op [18]-combat [19]; Unarmed Attack [18]
CON: Movement [16]-race [17]; Stamina [16]-endurance [19]
WIL: Awareness [11]-intuition [13]; Resolve [11]-physical [14], mental [13]

The War Horses of the NeoKnights are a fearsome sight. Standing higher than a man's shoulder, these behemoths can carry a fully armored knight to battle with the slightest itch. Trained to bite, buck and trample as well as hold their ground in combat, their abilities and intelligence have been augmented through selective breeding, careful genetic engineering and perfect training. However, they are only available to NeoKnights; commoners must make do with common horses. The rider has a choice of the barding of the war horse; light barding is preferred for scouting and raiding missions, as it doesn't hamper the horse at all, giving it only a kevlar body armor and a few armor plates for the legs. All in all, it weights only 5-10 kg. Medium barding is more protective, encasing the horse's legs with light but effective armor plating and kevlar, and it only weighs 15-20 kg, with little or no slowing down to the horse's speed. Heavy Barding encloses the horse fully, giving it superior protection and the capability of surviving as if it had a soft e-suit. It weighs in at about 30-40 kg, and is rather uncomfortable for the horse; so it's only used in open combat or combat in hostile territories. All types of barding have special goggles that protect the horse's eyes from bright flashes of light, and give it night-vision, whereas they can also be used as blinders. Special metal pricks are available for the horse's feet, so that their trampling damage is increased to d4w/d4+2w/d6+2w. Finally, many a NeoKnight covers his horse with a layer of thick cloth that carries his blazons; this tough layer of cloth enhances the armor's rating by +1 in all categories (In the case of natural armor, the rating is d6-2/d4-3/d6-2).

Commoner Weapons & Armor

Of course, NeoKnights are but a fraction of the warriors in Britannica XII; the bulk of armies is comprised of commoner Men At Arms. Men At Arms are never equipped with NeoKnight weapons; they are kept for the elite warriors of Britannica XII.

Commoners have access to more mundane weapons. Retinues of elite warriors in the service of some nobles are known to carry PowerMaces, PowerMauls, or even Vibroweapons; arming a whole retinue with monomolecular weapons is rather difficult, due to the actual rarity of these weapons.

And of course the fact that they are restricted to NeoKnights only.

The best weapons available to common Men At Arms are Chainswords and Chainaxes. They offer superior firepower at the expense of weight and speed; they are frowned upon by most NeoKnights because they are slow and cumbersome, though NeoKnights at a budget have been known to carry one.

Chainswords and Chainaxes use energy cells like all powered weapons. When activated, they function for 5 minutes.

There is a variety of armors available for commoners. The most prominent and expensive is Battle Armor, designed by the Priests for the best warriors, and a precursor of Chevalier Armor. NeoKnights who have not the gold required to purchase a Chevalier Armor, and don't have family heirlooms available, often choose it. It contains a Healer's Bag, special enhancements to the warrior's sight, machines enabling communication between warriors hour's travel away, and filters for breathing foul air. Available for commoners also are Advanced Plate Armor, the most common type of armor, Kevlar Vest and Toughened Leather Tunic, which is akin to Priest Robes. As for shields, the premier is the Cerashield, made of the rare cerametal.

Battle Armor is a head-to-toe suit of armor that enables survival in A1-A2, P1-P3, H1-H3 environments, and includes a Trauma Pack I, Image Enhancement which negates the effects of blinding and reduces darkness penalties by 2 steps, standard comm gear, and a respirator mask. Advanced Plate Armor covers the torso, arms and legs of the wearer with flexible panels of cerametal. The Kevlar vest is just that; a vest, usually worn over clothing, with a bulletproof lining. Toughened Leather Tunic is a tunic made of advanced CF weave, and Priest Robes, which are formally worn by Priests, are head-to-toe robes made exclusively of CF. The Cerashield is a common shield made of Cerametal.

Of course, even though NeoKnights are bound by their oaths to shun bows and other such weapons of the craven, they are available to commoners, and have proven quite useful against weak enemies, softening them up before our valiant warriors charge in the fray. The best weapons that have rolled out from the Temples are the Reflex Compound Bow and the Reflex Crossbow. Both are made of the finest materials and have a strong pull with the minimal effort. There are many arrows and quarrels available for both; apart from the standard, there are Monomolecular Edge Arrows/Quarrels, Armor Piercing Arrows/Quarrels, Explosive Arrows/Quarrels, Barbed Arrows/Quarrels, and Incendiary Arrows/Quarrels.

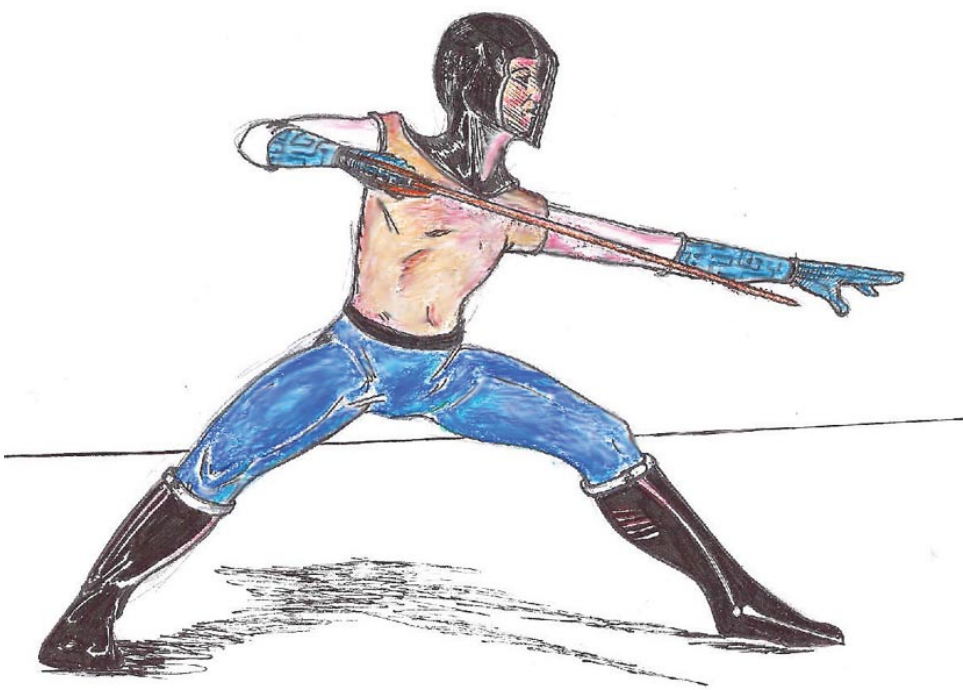
Monomolecular Edge Arrows/Quarrels (30 double eagles) halve armor rolls, whereas AP ones (7 double eagles) reduce them by 2. Explosive ones (12 double eagles) increase damage by 1 and change Type to High Impact, whereas Incendiary arrows/quarrels (3 double eagles) ignite flammable objects and cause an additional d6w (En) due to the fire. Targets hit by Barbed Arrows and Quarrels (4 hyperpyrons) add +1 to their damage roll if armored, but if more than 3 points of wound damage are caused, the missile is embedded deep into flesh and requires a STR feat check to remove, causing d4w if successful and d6s if not.

Of course, our valiant warriors often carry normal weapons because they are plentiful and still effective; it is more common for the bulk of our armies to carry normal iron and steel swords and armor, for they are weapons deadly nonetheless. Often, a noble who cannot spare the gold will arm his retinue with standard weapons.

In other words, PL1-PL2 weapons, armor & equipment are nearly as popular as they used to, especially to those who lack the cash.

Magical Weapons & Armor

These particular instruments of



"Britannican Swordsman" by Sarah Hollman

destruction, protection and more have been shrouded in mystery. Guarded secrets within the Sacred Temples and whispers of their legendary power abound. The weapons of kings and heroes, artifacts of legend and myth, handed down for generations.

The most renowned of all are the Star weapons, which rely on the magnificent and fine control of destructive energies, and in particular the form of energy known as "plasma", as one priest confided in me. The exact workings of these weapons are known only to the High Priests, but this, o curious seeker, have I managed to piece together: a special form of another energy, more easily manipulated, is used create the outline of the blade, while the inside is filled with this strange "plasma" the Priest had mentioned. The most common, if it can be said, among such weapons are the small Starblades, carried by the High Priests. The larger version of the Starblade is the Starsword, which projects a longer blade of energy and is more destructive. Also, a special weapon and much rarer is the Starlance; This weapon mounts an

overcharged Starblade in a lance, replacing the metal head with pure energy; the armor penetration is supreme. However, since the Starlance is so strongly built, exactly to prevent its destruction and the destruction of the valuable energy weapon system, it is suggested that should the user ever come across such a weapon, use it with care; for if the target is too tough, he may find himself unseated. All such weapons should be handled with care, for risk of injury upon the one wielding them is not unknown. Please, weary seeker, forgive me if you now seek to find these weapons, for I am afraid you will not. These weapons are never sold, and no sane person would ever trade in them. They are only given to High Priests, saints, martyrs, and heroes of the Kingdom, and only when in dire trouble.

These weapons are dangerous to untrained and trained users alike. Those without the skill suffer Ordinary damage for a Failure, or Good damage on a critical failure; trained users suffer Ordinary damage when they have rolled a Critical Failure. Due to the

design of the Starlance, it is exempt from this rule, normally. When activated, Starblades can function for 10 minutes, whereas Starlances and Starswords have a duration of 5 minutes.

Equally legendary however are the so called Globes of Power. These bizarre devices often look like heavy bracelets, covering the whole forearm of the wearer with intricate designs, but they can also be other, considerably heavy and bulky, pieces of jewelry. Currently we have knowledge of only the Globe of Protection, the Globe of Deflection and the Globe of Invulnerability. All three create a powerful field of energy, representing either a field that hugs the body close, a small globe with 3-4 meters of diameter, or a large globe of about 10 meters in diameter, but larger forms drain energy quicker. The Globe of Protection serves to absorb the impact of weapons and the Glove of Deflection to avert enemy weapons out of the way of the user, whereas the Glove of Invulnerability absorbs all hits against it until it cannot hold anymore. Globes of Power are rare, but are known to be carried by the High Priests of certain Temples. The field that the Globe projects is spun on all directions, including underground. None may enter or exit a globe field, and the user has his own attacks suffer from the globe's protection as well.

The Globe of Protection acts exactly like armor, whereas the Globe of Deflection incurs a penalty to attacks. The Globe of Invulnerability works like an ablative shield; it provides 50 points, with removing 3, 2, or 1 point for each point of mortal, wound or stun damage inflicted. The other two globes can be maintained in the personal field version for up to 10 minutes of continued use. If operating as globes, duration decreases to 5 and 2 minutes, respectively; whereas the points reduced by damage on the Globe of Invulnerability are multiplied by 2 and 3, respectively.

By far the most common magical weapons are the Staffs and Rods. Carried by priests, each order has its

own signature weapon, each housing a different weapon system inside. The Priests of Heru are fond of no other weapons than the noble Starblades, and the priestly order of Heru has by far the largest concentration of these weapons than all the other orders combined, since only they know the secrets of producing such weapons (rumor has it the Order of Sentet is close to discovering the secrets of Starblade manufacture). Priests of Nehte are fond of special weapons, a three-pronged spear called Biting Blades, but no blade rests on top of the weapon; instead, there is a muzzle there, and the staff can launch loads of razor-sharp needles that can rip any man to shreds. On the other hand, the serene priests of Rocco and those of Alcar prefer a short rod they call Mother's Voice, which launches a blast of air that can stun and knock out enemies. The slightly mad priests of Sentet prefer rods that launch a variety of energy beams, rays and bolts, called Chaos Wands. The wise priests of Calimal prefer a long staff, the Eye of Truth, which can emit high powered beams of light, bringing light to the enemies of truth and knowledge. Finally, the dark-clad priests of Durhun, the death god, prefer a short rod, whose top is actually a free floating module; when extended, a thin strip of a molecule-thick wire is stretched, and is even superior to monomolecular edge weapon. The filament is kept taut at all times, though the priests of Durhun know how to use it almost like a whip, in order to severe head and limb. Quite unsurprisingly, this weapon is called Death scythe.

A Biting Blade acts as a spear in close combat, but it can also fire flechette rounds that cause double damage at short range and half damage at long range; the internal magazine holds up to 10. The Mother's Voice is actually a stutter weapon, and can fire compressed air up to 15 times, whereas the Eye of Truth is a laser carbine with a 15-shot battery built into a staff, which can still be used for its original function. Chaos Wands can have any pistol-sized energy weapon system

built into them; the choices most common are laser and plasma. The Death Scythe is very similar to a monofilament weapon, though superior technology makes it usable as a whip as well, enabling called shots with a +4 penalty to severe extremities. The free-floating module retracts back harmlessly right before power runs out, which happens after 5 minutes of continued use. The wire ignores physical armor, unless it's of Good or better toughness.

Much source of contemplation has come from Priests and Magicians alike concerning the origins of the Avenger Blades, but only Grey Knights know the truth. These magnificent weapons resemble the monomolecular edge swords used by NeoKnights, but they do not use the same technology nor the same material; few know the secrets of their making, and they guard them closely. The blade is light, slender and inscribed with crystalline runes that glow when the sword is powered, for that is the power of the weapon: to channel the Grey Knight's strength of will into physical power. When that happens, the sword glows with an unerring light and may cut through barriers with ease. The more power the Grey Knight assigns, the easier it is for him to channel it through the weapon. Those outside of the order of justice, even if they are Magicians themselves, cannot power them, as each one is ritually bonded to its user, whether he is a Grey Knight or not. Avenger Blades outside the Order of Justice are forbidden though; one must be a member to be allowed to own one.

This weapon enables the user to spend a PEP to enhance the weapons performance. Roll a Resolve-Mental Resolve skill check. Critical Failure: The wielder fails to power the sword, and the bonding between them breaks; it must be cleansed and the psychic bond reformed [See below for psychic bonds]. Failure: The wielder fails to power it up, and he cannot do so for d4+1 rounds. Ordinary: Some of the energies used are channeled by the sword, and it enjoys a -1 accuracy bonus as it

becomes an extension of the character's will. Good: More energies are channeled by the sword; as Ordinary, and the firepower increases to Good as the blade sharpens considerably. Amazing: All of the character's energies are channeled by the sword; as Ordinary and Good, but damage increases to that of a Starsword ($d6+1w/2d6w/d4+3m$). The sword stays powered for 10 rounds, and during that time the player may choose whether the sword will deal LI or En damage for each attack, without spending an action. For each additional PEP spent above the necessary 1, apply -1 bonus to the Mental Resolve skill check; there is no limit to how many PEPs you can apply, but you still have to roll. In order to be able to power the weapon, the wielder must be ritually bonded with it; bonding with the item requires that the prospective wielder succeed in a complex Resolve-Mental Resolve skill check needing 7 successes, and one roll is permitted per day. However, the task is slow and arduous, and thus despite the result of the roll, only one success can be achieved per day; and for each success, 1 PEP is spent which can not be regained until the sword is bonded with the character. On any Failure, the bonding process is halted and it must start anew. Grey Knights receive their Avenger Blades early on they training, so they have a strong bond with them. Like the Monomolecular edge sword, it must be wielded 2-handed or a -1 decrease in damage applies; an Avenger Blade may parry a monomolecular weapon normally, due to its special construction and materials.

Vrisk Weapons & Armor

And now, weary traveler, it is time to piece what knowledge we have of our vile enemies, once of our kin. Know that they are dangerous and powerful, for they have mastered the arts of ranged weapons, as the craven lot they truly are. And even though they lack the true talent of our own Magicians and Sorcerers, they have managed to create devices that duplicate these effects.

Vrisk Psionic Devices

Even though Vrisks are almost incapable of psionic ability, they have succeeded in creating devices that enable them to mimic the effects of true psychic abilities, and they are masters of that art. The psi-machine is often a gauntlet, though helmets have been glimpsed at, and they are more powerful. Usually, the gauntlet can imitate a set psionic broad skill; by connecting special crystalline matrixes, the size of a large gem that can be placed on top of the back of the hand, focusing the power of the device. Without a matrix, the gauntlet-wearer can only use the broad skill the gauntlet provides; when a matrix is used, the wearer can also use the specified skill at rank 1. Helmets are significantly more powerful; it is rumored they can accommodate either up to three such crystalline matrixes, or a single more powerful crystal which has a psionic specialty skill at rank 3. Vrisk psionic devices are limited to their own relevant "magicians".

The most common Vrisk Weapons are their so called Rifles and Pistols. Some also have Automatic weapons, that are somewhere in between but lay a constant stream of fire, much like their Rifles. They also have a heavier version of the aforementioned weapon, which I believe is called Machinegun, and a heavier version of the Rifle called a Sniper. A close-combat version of the rifle is the Shotgun. All Vrisks are armed with at least one of the aforementioned weapons; they seem to dislike close combat, since they know the skills of our warriors are more than a match for theirs.

All such weapons are slightly superior versions to standard PL 5 weapons, but still not true charge weapons. All weapons except the Automatic, Rifle and Machinegun have F mode; those have F/B/A modes. The magazines for each weapons are: Pistol, 10; Rifle, 30; Automatic, 30; Machinegun, 150; Sniper, 10; Shotgun, 4.

Even though Vrisks are known for entering hand-to-hand combat with hesitation, they are nevertheless armed with special Knives of their own design, often jagged, but made of superior alloy and perfectly balanced. Even though stabbing a fully armored knight with a knife isn't going to be very effective, they have been known to use these knives for slaughtering innocents. They are also known to carry similarly made blades, nearly a

hand shorter than most swords, which are jagged as well. They don't seem to have much in mastery of hand-to-hand combat, even though they are quick with a dagger. Some, however, are known to be deadly hand to hand combatants, and these usually wield a weapon in each hand; their own weapons are designed for that. Some Vrisk leaders are also known to make use of captured NeoKnight weaponry, most often Chainswords or Vibroswords; however, one of them wielding a Monomolecular Edge weapon, which is restricted to NeoKnights only, is a disgrace, and they must be put to death at once and recover the weapon.

All Vrisk-made weapons, due to their light weight and specialty design, reduce all penalties for fighting with two such weapons at once by 1 step, as long as both weapons are Vrisk weapons.

Vrisk armor is similar in design to Britannicans; though it is lighter, as Vrisk place emphasis on speed. Up to now, the only armor Vrisk have been known to use are vests that are similar to our own Kevlar Vests; however, it is rumored troops with heavier armor can be found as well, though they have not been confirmed.

The common Vrisk armor available to any Vrisk is the Kevlar Vest that is also available to Britannicans.



Compiled Armor and Weapons

ARMOR

Armor	Skill	AP	Type	LI/HI/En	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Adv. Plate Armor	Combat	+2	O	d6/d8/d6	—	8	Con	120
Battle Armor	Combat	+2	O	d6+1/d6+2/d6	—	18	Con	300
CeraShield	Combat	+2	O	+2/+2/+2	—	1,5	Com	50
Chevalier Armor	Powered	+2	G	2d4/d8/d6+1	—	25	Mil	5.000
Chevalier Shield	Combat	+2	O	+3/+2/+2	—	3	Mil	200
Globe/Deflection	Powered	+1	O	+3/+3/+2	+1	1	Res	—
Globe/Invulnerability	Powered	+1	O	See description	+1	5	Res	—
Globe/Protection	Powered	+1	O	d6/d6+1/d8	+1	5	Res	—
Kevlar Vest	—	0	O	d6-1/d6/d6-2	+3	2	Com	10
Priest Robes	—	0	O	d6/d6/d6	—	3	Res	100
TL Tunic	—	0	O	d4+1/d4/d4	+1	1	Com	20

WEAPONS

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)	Actions	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Avenger Bl.	Blade	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+3w/d4+2m	3	—	—	—	2	Res	N/A
Biting Blades	Rifle	+1	10/20/40	LI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m	1	10	N/A	—	4	Res	N/A
Chainaxe	Power	+1	Personal	LI/O	d8+2w/2d4+2w/d6m	2	—	5	—	8	Con	100
Chainsword	Power	+1	Personal	LI/O	d8+1w/d8+2w/d4+1m	2	—	5	—	5	Con	125
C. Wand, Las	Pistol	+1	20/40/100	En/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	2	20	5	+1	2	Res	N/A
C. Wand, Pla	Pistol	+1	4/10/24	En/G	2d4w/2d4+1w/d6m	2	6	5	+1	4	Res	N/A
Death Scythe	Power	+1	Personal	LI/O	d8-1w/d8w/d12-1w	2	—	5	+1	2	Res	N/A
Eye of Truth	Rifle	0	80/300/800	En/O	d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m	1	15	5	—	3	Res	N/A
ME Axe	Blade	0	Personal	LI/G	d4+4w/d6+3w/d4+1m	2	—	—	—	2,5	Mil	500
ME Lance	Joust	0	Personal	LI/G	d4+3w/d6+3w/d6+1m	2	—	—	—	5	Mil	300
ME Sword	Blade	-1	Personal	LI/G	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4+1m	3	—	—	—	1,5	Mil	700
MotherVoice	Pistol	+1	8/16/40	LI/O	d6+3s/d8+3s/d12+3s	2	15	N/A	+1	2	Res	N/A
PowerMace	Power	0	Personal	LI/O	d8+2s/d6+2w/d8+2w	3	—	5	+1	3	Con	75
PowerMaul	Power	+1	Personal	LI/O	d6+4s/d6+3w/d8+3w	2	—	5	—	6	Con	100
Proton Lance	Joust	0	Personal	En/G	d4+2w/d4+4w/d6m	1	—	—	—	8	Res	1000
RC Bow	Bow	0	50/100/250	LI/O	d6+1w/d8+1w/d4+1m	2	—	—	—	1	Con	40
R Crossbow	Xbow	0	60/120/300	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m	1	—	—	—	2	Con	50
Starblade	Power	-1	Personal	En/G	d4+1w/2d4w/d4+1m	3	—	5	+3	1	Res	N/A
Starlance	Power	-1	Personal	En/G	d8+1w/3d4w/d6+2m	1	—	5	—	3	Res	N/A
Starsword	Power	-1	Personal	En/G	d6+1w/2d6w/d4+3m	3	—	5	+2	2	Res	N/A
Vibroaxe	Power	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+3w/d4+5w/d4+1m	2	—	5	—	4	Con	200
Vibrosword	Power	-1	Personal	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+3w/d4+1m	2	—	5	—	2,5	Con	250
Vr Auto	SMG	+1	10/20/80	HI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m	4	30	30	+1	3	—	1200
Vr Knife	Blade	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w	4	—	—	+3	1	—	50
Vr MachineGun	Direct	0	80/400/900	HI/G	d6+1w/2d4+2w/d8m	4	150	1050	—	12	—	11000
Vr Pistol	Pistol	0	8/16/60	HI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4m	4	10	10	+3	1	—	200
Vr Rifle	Rifle	0	70/140/350	HI/O	d4+2w/d6+3w/d4+1m	4	30	90	—	4	—	2000
Vr Shotgun	Rifle	0	6/12/30	HI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m	2	4	16	—	4	—	500
Vr Sniper	Rifle	-1	80/160/400	HI/O	d6+1w/2d4+1w/d6m	3	10	70	—	4	—	7000
Vr Sword	Blade	0	Personal	LI/O	d6w/d6+1w/2d4+1w	3	—	—	—	2	—	150

Note: Costs for Britannican items are in Double-Eagles. Costs for Vrisk weapons are in 9mm bullets; see the description in "Britannica XII" article.

The Institute of Mental Phenomenon

by Matthew R. Esch • illustrations by Chris Campbell

THE Institute of Mental Phenomenon has established itself as a forerunner in its exclusive commitment to preparing students in the unseen science for their new lives. IMP is well recognized amongst its peers as an institution with high standards for excellence and commitment to the education, training and preparation of psions and talents. Faculty of IMP are committed to a member to have each and every student achieve their fullest potential, and only the most gifted and dedicated are awarded their very own IMP signet ring, recognized far and wide.

IMP course procedure and curriculum is a competitive and distinguished credential that has



opened the doors of opportunity to such varied and challenging careers as mind knighthood, ESPion, and psi-guard. With IMP certification, a graduate will not only be able to unlock their potential, but also be empowered to use their gifts to benefit all of humanity.

The course offerings are as follows; with the course codes denoted with an asterisk mandatory for graduation. A total of 3 "Introduction" and 2 "Advanced" courses beyond the core classes are what is needed to be certified to take the Exit Exam. The Introduction to Psionic Artifice course, Advanced Techniques of Psionic Combat course, and the Advanced Techniques of Psionic Artifice course are only offered on a rotating basis and are electives, not required for certification.

Course Listings

CODE	NAME	SKILL GRANTED
PSI500*	Psionics: History, Theory & Professional Identity	Knowledge-psionics
PSI510*	Psionic Development: Origins & Evolution	Life Science-psionics
PSI515*	Counseling: Psionics & the Law	Law-psionic law
PSI520	Introduction to Biokinesis	Biokinesis broad skill, + 1 rank any new or pre-existing untrained skill
PSI525	Introduction to ESP	ESP broad skill, + 1 rank any new or pre-existing untrained skill
PSI530	Introduction to Psychoportation	Psychoportation broad skill, + 1 rank any new or pre-existing untrained skill
PSI540	Introduction to Telekinesis	Telekinesis broad skill, + 1 rank any new or pre-existing untrained skill
PSI545	Introduction to Telepathy	Telepathy broad skill, + 1 rank any new or pre-existing untrained skill
PSI550*	Multicultural Views to Psionic Systems	See description
PSI551*	Introduction to Psionic Combat	See description
PSI552	Introduction to Psionic Artifice	See description
PSI565	Advanced Techniques of Biokinesis	+2 ranks in untrained skill/+1 rank in trained skill, new or pre-existing
PSI570	Advanced Techniques of ESP	+2 ranks in untrained skill/+1 rank in trained skill, new or pre-existing
PSI590	Advanced Techniques of Psychoportation	+2 ranks in untrained skill/+1 rank in trained skill, new or pre-existing
PSI595	Advanced Techniques of Telekinesis	+2 ranks in untrained skill/+1 rank in trained skill, new or pre-existing
PSI600	Advanced Techniques of Telepathy	+2 ranks in untrained skill/+1 rank in trained skill, new or pre-existing
PSI610*	Psiology: Study of Psionic Phenomenon	See description
PSI620	Advanced Techniques of Psionic Combat	See description
PSI900	Advanced Techniques of Psionic Artifice	See description
PSI915*	Advanced Seminar	See description

*Mandatory for graduation.

Note: Untrained=Specialty skill that can be used untrained with the broad skill.

Trained=Specialty skill that can only be used trained.

Course Descriptions

PSI500* Psionics: History, Theory & Professional Identity:

This course will explore the history and advancements of the phenomenon of psionics and mindwalking. The purpose is to ground the student in the background of mindwalking, as well as the roles that psions play in our society.

PSI510* Psionic Development: Origins & Evolution:

In Psionic Development, the student will become familiar with current theories and biological underpinnings that allow for psionics to work. A survey of all known life forms that possess psionics will be completed. Students will have to register concurrently for a laboratory class.

PSI515* Counseling: Psionics & the Law:

Legal issues are a concern to the psion as any other member of the community. In this class, such topics as a psion's responsibility to the community and rights and obligations will be explored. Emphasis will be placed on current legal limitations and possible sanctions for violation, to best prepare the student psion for their role outside of the protected campus of IMP.

PSI520 Introduction to Biokinesis: Powers taught will include *-bio-armor*, *-bioweapon*, *-control metabolism*, *-rejuvenate*, and *-transfer damage*. Other Biokinesis skills that can be used untrained will also be taught here. No skills that cannot be used untrained are taught at the Introductory level.

PSI525 Introduction to ESP: Powers taught will include *-clairaudience*, *-clairvoyance*, *-empathy*, *-mind reading*, *-postcognition*, *-psychometry*, and *-sensitivity*. Other ESP skills that can be used untrained will also be taught here. No skills that cannot be used untrained are taught at the Introductory level.

PSI530 Introduction to Psychoportation:

Powers taught will include *-alter speed*. Other Psychoportation skills that can be used untrained will also be taught here. No skills that cannot be used untrained are taught at the Introductory level. *Note: This course may not be available at the GM's option, especially if the GM does not have access to Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics [TSR11384].*

PSI540 Introduction to Telekinesis: Powers taught will include *-levitation*, *-photokinetics*, and *-psychokinetics*. Other Telekinesis skills that can be used untrained will also be taught here. No skills that cannot be used untrained are taught at the Introductory level.

PSI545 Introduction to Telepathy: Powers taught will include *-empathic projection*, *-illusion*, *-mind shield*, *-psychic armor*, *-psychic projection*, *-suggest*, and *-tire*. Other Telepathy skills that can be used untrained will also be taught here. No skills that cannot be used untrained are taught at the Introductory level.

PSI550* Multicultural Views to Psionic Systems:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student psion will learn how cultures other than our own have addressed the phenomenon of mindwalking and psionics throughout

known history. This will further enable psions to become more competent when dealing with not only psions from other backgrounds and cultures, but to effectively deal with and interact with the indigenous non-psionic population as well. *In game terms, +1 rank in Knowledge-psionics or +1 rank in Law-psionic law. Taking the course a second time will allow for the addition of the other skill bonus in rank, but not an additional +1 in a skill already selected for this benefit. The 3rd time taking the class will yield no additional benefit.*

PSI551* Introduction to Psionic Combat:

Prerequisite for this course is PSI545 or PSI520. Here the nuances and subtleties of mind-to-mind combat and psionic physical combat techniques will be explored in a safe, supportive environment. Honing one's defenses will be the first and foremost step. Any student that fails to meet the instructor's expectations at this point will be dismissed from the course. *Game benefit: +1 rank in Resolve-mental; +1 rank in 1 Telepathy or Biokinesis specialty skill.*

PSI552 Introduction to Psionic Artifice:

Exploration and study of known psionic artifacts is the crux of this class. Experimentation with and study of psionic artifacts retrieved by students enrolled in the Advanced level in a controlled environment is expected of students enrolled in this course. Alternatively, the design and construction of psionic devices or discovery and refinement of new powers may be featured in this course in lieu of artifacts. *Gain Technical Science broad skill or add +1 rank in a unique psionic specialty skill (for examples, see "Alien Psionic Skills, p. 35-38, or additionally "Designing New Psionic Skills, p.39, Mindwalking). The level of detail will vary according to the GM's desired level of psionic campaign tone. Artifacts to be studied on the Introductory level will add an additional +1 rank to Knowledge-psionics. Any appropriate artifact found in Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics [TSR11384] would be suitable, as would any of the GM's devising, per Alien Artifact rules in the GMG.*

PSI565 Advanced Techniques of Biokinesis:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI520. Powers taught will include *-heal*, *-intangibility*, and *-morph*. Refinement and additional training in other Biokinesis skills that can only be used trained will also be taught here.

PSI570 Advanced Techniques of ESP:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI525. Powers taught will include *-battle mind*, *-navcognition*, and *-precognition*. Refinement and additional training in other ESP skills that can only be used trained will also be taught here.

PSI590 Advanced Techniques of Psychoportation:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI530. Powers taught will include *-apportation*, *-duplicate*, *-teleportation*, and *-timeslip*. Refinement and additional training in other Psychoportation skills that can only be used trained will also be taught here. *Note: This course can be not available at the GM's option, especially if the GM does not have access to*

Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics [TSR11384].

PSI595 Advanced Techniques of Telekinesis:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI540. Powers taught will include *-cryokinetics*, *-electrokinetics*, *-kinetic blow*, *-kinetic shield*, and *-pyrokinetics*. Refinement and additional training in other Telekinesis skills that can only be used trained will also be taught here.

PSI600 Advanced Techniques of Telepathy:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI545. Powers taught will include *-datalink*, *-drain*, *-mind blast*, and *-mind wipe*. Refinement and additional training in other Telepathy skills that can only be used trained will also be taught here.

PSI610* Psiology: Study of Psionic Phenomenon:

The varieties of non-sentient and non-human psion and phenomenon that affect or can be detected by mindwalkers will be discussed and studied here. *Gain +2 ranks in either Knowledge-psionics or Life Science-psionics.*

PSI620 Advanced Techniques of Psionic Combat:

Prerequisites for this course is PSI545 and PSI551. Here the nuances and subtleties of mind-to-mind combat techniques will be explored in a safe, supportive environment. Honing one's defenses will be the first and foremost step. Any student that fails to meet the instructor's expectations at this point will be dismissed from the course. *Game benefit: +1 rank in Resolve-mental; +1 rank in 1 Telepathy specialty skill that is useable untrained.*

PSI900 Advanced Techniques of Psionic Artifice:

Prerequisite for the course is PSI552. Further exploration and study of known psionic artifacts is the crux of this class. Some field work in retrieval and extraction of rumored psionic artifacts may be required. Alternatively, the design and construction of psionic devices or discovery and refinement of new powers may be featured in this course in lieu of artifacts. *Gain Technical Science-invention, -technical knowledge (psionic devices or artifacts), or -repair. Alternatively, add +1 rank in a unique psionic specialty skill (for examples, see "Alien Psionic Skills, p. 35-38, or additionally "Designing New Psionic Skills, p.39, Mindwalking). The level of detail will vary according to the GM's desired level of psionic campaign tone. Artifacts to be studied on the Advanced level will add an additional +1 rank to Knowledge-psionics, cumulative with PSI552. Any appropriate artifact found in Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics [TSR11384] would be suitable, as would any of the GM's devising, per Alien Artifact rules in the GMG.*

PSI915* Advanced Seminar: In Advanced Seminar, the student psion continues his/her work in mindwalking, integrating what had been learned in each prior class with their chosen professions. Featured in this class is an internship with organizations that will accept student psions as interns, and will meet regularly to discuss with one another their findings and encounters in the work environment.

Student gains 1 to 3 ranks in skills related to chosen profession and internship.

Points: Each student is awarded points for completion of coursework, general conduct, and certain competitions, announced and unannounced. Faculty of IMP will award points at their discretion. Faculty of IMP are also empowered to “dock” points, and require service of any IMP student. No service will be requested of an IMP student that can be considered to violate their basic rights and dignity. [See Code of Conduct.]

Code of Conduct: IMP students will conform to the station and expectation of IMP. The Code of Conduct is absolute, and will be enforced by the Faculty. The Code is stored in the IMP Library, in the “*Codas Maximus Psionicus*” Room. This twelve-volume set, translated into every known written tongue, encompasses every sanctioned behavior, regulated activity, as well as mode of operations for the Institute. Any student, Faculty, or Trustee may view or pursue the Code at their request, though students and Faculty are limited to the Library’s posted hours of operation. The Code may be amended or expanded upon by a majority of quorum of the Board.

Levels of Certification: A student of IMP can opt for the standard 4-year course sequence, meeting the required criteria, and taking the Exit Exam to qualify for *Psi Cum Laude* certificate. [In game terms, rank 3 in at least two specialty skills in the primary broad skill, and rank 2 in at least one specialty skill in a second broad skill.] Additional certification and training may be rendered to any IMP *Psi Cum Laude* certificate holder in seeking the advanced levels of either Psi Summa Cum Laude or Psi Magna Cum Laude. For Psi Summa Cum Laude, an additional 4-year course is required, repeating the Advanced Techniques-level courses for additional skill training, and the learning of new skills. Any Introduction-level courses not already taken must be taken at this point, as well as one of the three electives. A practicum is mandatory for all Psi Summa Cum Laude students, which they must undertake field experience

under a licensed psion of their profession for a duration of no less than 6 months. [In game terms, rank 5 in at least three specialty skills in the primary broad skill, rank 3 in two specialty skills in the second broad skill, and at least rank 1 in one specialty skill of a third broad skill.]

Certification as Psi Magna Cum Laude requires an additional 4 years of training, taking any Advanced Techniques-level courses not yet taken, and both remaining elective courses. Psi Magna Cum Laude students will be required to either teach an Introduction-level course, or take an 18-month internship with a licensed psion of their chosen profession, at the discretion of the Board of Trustees. There is no appeal to the Board’s decision, and the decision in this regard is final. [In game terms, rank 7 in at least three specialty skills in the primary broad skill, rank 5 in two specialty skills in the second broad skill, and at least rank 2 in two specialty skill of a third broad skill]

The Exit Exam: The Exit Exam is required of all IMP graduates. It is only administered by the Board of Trustees and only to the students in the top 25th

percentile, based on total points accumulated over their IMP careers. All other students who have taken the requisite courses in preparation for the Exit Exam but fail to meet the criteria of the top 25th percentile may reapply next academic year, but their point total will be weighed with

the additional year in study. Should a student fail a second time to qualify for the Exit Exam, that student will be dismissed without certification. Any student finishing in the bottom 25th percentile in their first year of eligibility shall lose all points accumulated thus far and must repeat the entire course work. Should a student again fall into the bottom 25th percentile for a second

time, or those who fail the Exit Exam, for the safety and security of themselves and others, they will be artificially inhibited. Those students who pass their Exit Exam shall graduate and be eligible for licensure. [Game mechanics: Pass the Exit Exam, gain either Psion’s License or Sanctuary-Taught Perks for free (GM’s choice). Failure of Exit Exam or failing to qualify twice gain Hobbled, Painful Psi, Mental Block, or Reduced Energy Flaw (GM’s choice of up to two).]

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Fraternities/Sororities

All students of IMP are organized according to disposition and aptitude into fraternities or sororities, as per their gender. At present there are three of each, and they are paired up as follows:

Fraternity (Males)	Sorority (Females)
Hall ΨΘΩ (Psi-Theta-Omega)	House ΨΖΒΓ (Psi-Zeta-Beta-Gamma)
Hall ΨΧΣ (Psi-Chi-Sigma)	House ΨΩΩΩ (Psi-Tri-Omega)
Hall ΨΞΛ (Psi-Xi-Lambda)	House ΨΜΚ (Psi-Mu-Kappa)

It is customary within the campus of IMP, amongst the students to omit the preceding Ψ (Psi) from reference to one’s Hall/House. Individual points reflect well on one’s Hall/House, and Hall/House points are allocated for the betterment of each. At the close of each academic year, the Hall and House with the highest total points collectively earns time off to return to their lives outside of IMP.

The Temple of Inner Enlightenment

by Kevin Loughran • cartography by Kevin Loughran

AMONG the many special traits possessed by sentient beings, Mindwalking is one of the strangest and most puzzling. The ability to alter the very fabric of the universe, to communicate instantaneously over vast distances and heal or harm others by the power of one's mind alone is a gift [or curse] fraught with special blessings and hazards.

Though some psions may, through trial and error, come to understand and control the power at their command, most must receive some formal instruction in order to gain the greatest benefit from their ability. Some are fortunate enough to gain a personal mentor who recognizes their potential and others, who live in a society which doesn't fear such gifts, are identified early and receive special instruction at government facilities with an established curriculum.

For some contemplative fraal, the preferred method is academic exploration and instruction in a monastic setting of simple living in a calm and peaceful environment. Even in the frontier of the Verge, fraal have established tranquil colleges of psionic learning. The Temple of Inner Enlightenment on the planet Bluefall is one such place where Mindwalkers share their knowledge with all that have the desire and ability.

The Temple is based on a small island off the coast of Marie Island (*System Guide to Aegis*, N19). The island has a collapsed volcanic cone on the south coast and a central highland dividing the island into three areas. To the west is a marshy lowland with a small village of rice farmers and fisherman and to the north is a long rocky coast with a Hatire colony. The sandy southern coast has a large lagoon enclosed by the remains of the collapsed cone, which is not accessible during low tides as the rocky reef is exposed. A Buddhist community had established a temple inside the collapsed cone, but by the time the Hale Armada arrived in 2464, they had disappeared in what became referred to as the 'Vanishing'.

Returning colonists with the Hale Armada in 2464 included fraal who accompanied them from the Stellar Ring. Some of



the fraal, sensing the immense psionic echo from the Vanishing began exploring Bluefall in order to discover just what had occurred and found the island and its abandoned temples. With Hale's blessing, the fraal settled here and devoted themselves to restoring the area to its former beauty and vitality.

As Bluefall began regenerating its commerce and industry, Verger fraal began to visit and the need for a dedicated Temple became apparent. Over time the community established itself as a center of learning; a depository for fraal history in the Verge and an 'embassy' of sorts for displaced fraal who might need assistance of one form or another. The community began to teach actively and they formalized into five "colleges" each devoted to one of the main Broad skills: ESP, Telepathy, Biokinesis, Telekinesis and Psychoportation.

A high level Mindwalker instructor and two to four mid-level interns lead each college. Instructors are referred to as Master, as a token of respect for their achievements and Interns are usually graduate students ready to undergo their final examination (This examination is determined by mutual agreement between the Elevated Master of the Temple, the Master of the discipline the students are studying and the stu-

dents themselves and may include anything from written and oral examination, community service or even a long term mission tailored to that individual student).

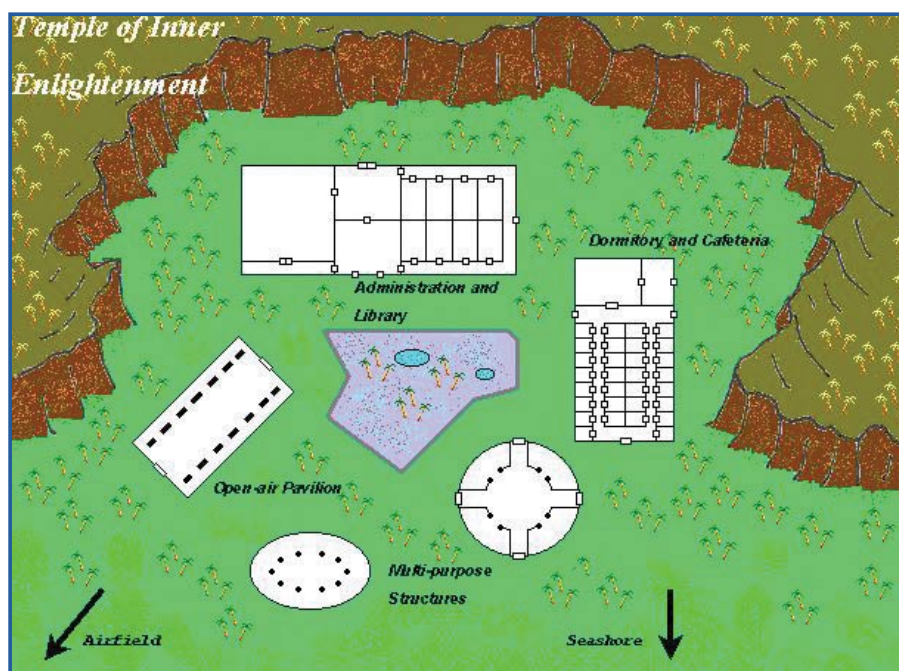
While potential students may apply for testing and admission regardless of race or background, most students are 'invited' by fraal who have encountered them and sensed their psionic potential. The testing usually consists of their being given or encountering a Psi puzzle (*Mindwalking*, ch.4, pg 69) and successfully solving it. This generates a psionic signal which fraal attuned to may detect and then proffer to the prospective student an invitation to the Temple.

Students at the school must perform mundane chores such as fishing, gardening, cleaning, cooking and so forth in a regular schedule to pay for their schooling. Money, credits, etc... are not accepted as payment. All students must undertake these tasks as it is indicative of the students dedication to learning (indeed, it is part of the education in order to teach the students humility in light of their special gifts). The school pays for its upkeep and community service (*System Guide to Aegis*, ch.6) by assisting the Regency with training prospective members of the 118th Psy-Ops Battalion.

The school itself is Athenean; teachers and students can be found wandering the grounds, sitting under the trees or utilizing the environment in various creative ways to test and expand their ability. Sick or infirm persons from the area or surrounding islands may come here for treatment and these patients are utilized by the students, under strict supervision, for developing their heal and rejuvenate skills. Formal training of combat-type skills is done in controlled settings within the Temple proper or on expeditions to encounter Sunsoarers which inhabit the central highland. No slaying of native creatures is permitted and is considered a serious breach of training even if accidental.

A typical day in the life of an Aspirant begins at dawn, with maintenance of their living quarters and personal hygiene. After a brief meal, students spend the morning working in the Temple gardens, maintaining Temple facilities, fishing (for food, not enjoyment) or assisting in the cafeteria. After a break at noon for dinner and rest, the afternoons are devoted to instruction by their Master. Instruction includes, but is not limited to, classroom activities, physical exercise and most importantly, the practice and use of their mindwalking abilities. After the evening meal at sunset, students are permitted free time, which may be devoted to relaxation, personal study and meditation or specialized one on one instruction with their Master. Students are required to retire to their rooms no later than three hours after sunset.

The Temple consists of five buildings situated at the base of the cliffs on the north side of the collapsed cone. These include



a large sanctuary, which has been converted to the administration building and library, a dormitory now used by the students and faculty for rest and dining, an open-air pavilion used for training during inclement weather and two smaller sanctuaries used for a variety of purposes. There is a small landing field just west of the Temple, which can accommodate light aircraft and hovercraft. Ocean access is limited to small boats and grav-cruisers due to the shallowness of the lagoon.

Current Temple staff includes:

- Exalted Master Ca'alón Resec Eolayn (Fm/Regency/DMW-20), the Headmaster and Administrator
- Tristec Mahandola'an (Ff/Regency/MW-15) the Master of Biokinesis
- Jii Quanoc Aesendo (Fm/Regency/MW-12) the Master of ESP
- Taliq Nuoro Ca'alón (Ff/Regency/MW-13) the Master of Telepathy
- Pla'on Ti Nuorola'an (Ff/Regency/MW-15) the Master of Psychoportation
- Mandy Lehmann (Hf/Regency/Mw10) the Master of Telekinesis

There are currently 12 Devoted Seekers (graduate students assisting with administration and training of new students) and 37 Aspirants; new students in their first or second year of training. Depending on personal ability,

students will spend a full semester on achieving a broad skill and another semester in perfecting a specialty. Semesters are 20 standard weeks long and instruction is conducted five standard days a week. Between semesters is a five-week vacation period for students and faculty to conduct sabbaticals or visit their homes and families.

Visitors are welcome and prospective students may apply in person at the Temple or at the Recruitment Center, 118th Psy-Ops battalion, Sigma One, Regency Island, Bluefall, Aegis. 

Ca'alon Resec Eolayn - Elevated Master

Level 20 fraal Diplomat (Mindwalker)

STR 5 (-1) INT 12 (+1)
DEX 6 (-1) WIL 16 (+3)
CON 8 PER 14

Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2
Movement: sprint 12, run 8, walk 2 # Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Good/3 Last Resorts: 3
Psionic Energy Points: 24

Attacks

Unarmed 5/2/1 +d4 LI/O Personal d4-2s/d4-1s/d4s

Defenses

-1 resistance modifier vs melee attacks
-1 resistance modifier vs ranged attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs INT encounter skills
+5 resistance modifier vs WIL encounter skills

Skills

DEX: Vehicle Operation [6]

INT: Knowledge [12]-*computer ops* [16]

WIL: Administration [16]-*management* [18]; Awareness [16]-*intuition* [19]; Resolve [16]-*mental* [24]; Teach [16]-*mindwalking* [22]

PER: Interaction [14]-*interview* [16]

PSIONIC: Biokinesis [8]-*control metabolism* [18], *heal* [20], *rejuvenate* [18], *transfer damage* [15]; ESP [12]-*empathy* [16], *mind reading* [21], *psychometry* [19], *sensitivity* [15]; Telekinesis [16]-*levitation* [20]; Telepathy [14]-*illusion* [20], *mind blast* [15], *mind shield* [20], *suggest* [18]

Rank Benefits

control metabolism-endorphin release; *heal*-treating poison, healing mortal wounds, laying on hands; *rejuvenate*-improved effect, laying on hands; *transfer damage*-displace damage; *empathy*-relationship; *mind reading*-extra time, probe; *sensitivity*-automatic trigger; *mental resolve*-resistance modifier; *levitation*-no concentration; *illusion*-vanish; *mind shield*-parry.

Ca'alon is the fraal who first found the island and requested permission to settle there. He is tall for a fraal, about 1.7 meters, and displays a calm and wise demeanor. No one knows his true age and he meets any inquiries with the suggestion that such things are unimportant. In his work about the Temple, he is always ready to assist the teachers and students in any way he can, often stopping by during lessons to observe and advise.

Though his work as Headmaster and Administrator take up most of his time, he devotes the rest to studying the Deepfallen and the Vanishing, in the hopes of preventing any future occurrences and promoting understanding between the species. He visits Depth Epsilon when time permits him to take a sabbatical and has good relationships among the scientists and diplomats working there.

Ca'alon also interviews all prospective students, using his skills to determine their suitability for training and probing their minds to ensure that their intentions are well meant. Students deemed capable of accepting instruction are then placed in the appropriate discipline for their skills.

He has great hopes for the coming renewal of ties between the Stellar Ring and the Verge and stands ready to assist the Regency in any way he can.

Mandy Lehman - Master of Telekinesis

Level 10 human Mindwalker

STR 9 INT 9
DEX 10 WIL 12 (+1)
CON 9 PER 11

Durability: 9/9/4/4 Action Check: 11+/10/5/2
Movement: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2
Psionic Energy Points: 18

Attacks

Unarmed 9/4/2 +d4 LI/O Personal d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier to WIL encounter skills

Skills

STR: Athletics [9]; Unarmed Combat [9]

CON: Stamina [10]; Survival [10]-*survival training* [12]

DEX: Vehicle Operation [10]

INT: Knowledge [9]-*first aid* [12]

WIL: Awareness [12]; Teach [12]-*mindwalking* [18]

PER: Interaction [11];

PSIONIC: Telekinesis [12]-*electrokinetics* [18], *kinetic shield* [14], *psychokinetics* [20], *pyrokinetics* [16]; Telepathy [11]-*mind blast* [12], *mind shield* [16], *suggest* [15]

Rank Benefits

psychokinetics-manipulate, batter, puppeteering; *electrokinetics*-increased damage, datawipe, tamper.

Mandy Lehmann is the first non-fraal to achieve the rank of Master at the Temple and is very proud of the distinction. While shy and unassuming in most social situations, Mandy is a dedicated teacher and hard taskmaster, brooking no nonsense among the Seekers and Aspirants in her charge. She can often be found along the shore or up in the highlands urging her students to engage their skills in the natural environment. She will also spend her personal time working with students she feels are not learning to their best ability.

Originally, Mandy was recruited for the 118th Psy-Ops battalion by one of her relatives, a high-ranking officer, but her natural inclinations led her to focus on teaching as her best way of serving the Regency. While this was a disappointment to her family, they are still proud of her achievements. Possibly in light of her refusing to join the 118th, she feels compelled to work with students intended for the battalion extra hard and she will only pass those students she feels have reached the highest level of capability.

Mind Knight SCM Template by Matthew R. Esch and Daryl Blasi

The mind knight is a Mindwalker warrior who almost exclusively uses mental abilities to provide his offense and defense. Like the telepath, the mind knight starts with the Telepathy broad skill and disdains mundane physical skills. In fact, many mind knights refuse to take any Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution skills beyond those that they receive for free. Instead, the mind knight quickly adds other psionic broad skills to his/her repertoire, starting with Telekinesis, then ESP, and finally Biokinesis.

Human Mind Knight

	M	O	G	A
STR	8	9	10	11
DEX	8	9	10	11
CON	9	10	11	11
INT	9	10	11	12
WIL	10	11	12	13
PER	10	11	12	14
Action Check	9/4/2	9/4/2	11/5/2	12/6/3
# of Actions	2	2	2	3
Psionic Energy Points	10	11	12	13

Marginal Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Knowledge; Awareness; *Resolve-mental*; Interaction; *Telekinesis-psychokinetics*; *Telepathy-contact*, *mind blast*, *mind shield*.

Ordinary Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Knowledge-*psionics*; Awareness-*intuition*, *perception*; *Resolve-mental 2*; Interaction; ESP; *Telekinesis-pyrokinesis*, *psychokinetics 2*; *Telepathy-contact 2*, *mind blast 2*, *mind shield 2*, *psychic armor*.

Good Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-*psionics 3*; Awareness-*intuition 2*; *Resolve-mental 4*; Interaction-*intimidate*; Interaction; Biokinesis; ESP-*battlemind*, *mind reading* *Telekinesis-levitation*, *psychokinetics 3*, *pyrokinesis 2*; *photokinetics*; *Telepathy-contact 3*, *mind blast 5*, *suggest*, *psychic armor 2*, *tire*

Amazing Skills: Athletics; Vehicle Operation; Stamina-*endurance*; Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol*; Knowledge-*psionics 6*; Awareness-*intuition 4*, *perception 2*; *Resolve-mental 6*; Interaction-*intimidate 3*; Biokinesis-*bio-armor*, *heal*; ESP-*precognition*, *battlemind 2*, *mind reading 2*; *Telekinesis-psychokinetics 5*, *pyrokinesis 4*; *Telepathy-contact 4*, *mind blast 7*, *mind shield 4*, *suggest 2*, *psychic armor 4*, *tire 3*

Equipment: CF long coat, 2 psi-puzzles, 9mm pistol, psi-granting drugs [2 doses, quality is GM's option].

Fraal Mind Knight

	M	O	G	A
STR	7	7	8	9
DEX	7	7	8	9
CON	7	7	8	8
INT	11	13	14	15
WIL	11	13	14	16
PER	11	13	14	15
Action Check	10/5/2	11/5/2	12/6/3	13/6/3
# of Actions	2	2	2	3
Psionic Energy Points	16	19	21	22

Marginal Skills: Vehicle Operation; Knowledge; Awareness; *Resolve-mental 2*; Interaction; *Telekinesis-psychokinetics*; *Telepathy-contact 2*, *mind blast 2*, *mind shield*.

Ordinary Skills: Vehicle Operation; Knowledge-*psionics*; Awareness-*intuition*, *perception*; *Resolve-mental 3*; Interaction; ESP; *Telekinesis-pyrokinesis*, *psychokinetics 2*; *Telepathy-contact 3*, *mind blast 3*, *mind shield 2*, *psychic armor*.

Good Skills: Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-*psionics 3*; Awareness-*intuition 2*; *Resolve-mental 5*; Interaction-*intimidate*; Interaction; Biokinesis; ESP-*battlemind*, *mind reading* *Telekinesis-levitation*, *psychokinetics 3*, *pyrokinesis 2*; *photokinetics*; *Telepathy-contact 4*, *mind blast 6*, *suggest*, *psychic armor 2*, *tire*

Amazing Skills: Vehicle Operation; Stamina; Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol*; Knowledge-*psionics 6*; Awareness-*intuition 4*, *perception 2*; *Resolve-mental 7*; Interaction-*intimidate 3*; Biokinesis-*bio-armor*, *heal*; ESP-*precognition*, *battlemind 2*, *mind reading 2*; *Telekinesis-psychokinetics 5*, *pyrokinesis 4*; *Telepathy-contact 5*, *mind blast 8*, *mind shield 4*, *suggest 2*, *psychic armor 4*, *tire 3*

Equipment: CF long coat, 2 psi-puzzles, 9mm pistol, psi-granting drugs [2 doses, quality is GM's option].

Alternative Starting Skill Points and Bonus Skill Point Acquisition Based On Intelligence by Daryl Blasi

Welcome to the Alternity Academy of Hero Training!!! We are about to get a glimpse at one of the lucky trainees who is about to qualify for graduation to the illustrious position of Beginning Character.

SCENE 1: Trainee JAK "RAYGUN" ROBERTS runs on a treadmill, reads *Gone With the Weren*, listens to Blackhole Boys on an earset, and eyes the clock as it nears 1:30, the scheduled time for Drivespace Theory class. INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB enters with clipboard, sipping on fermented jaqua juice.

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: Alright Raygun. Pack your bags. We're shipping you out to the Verge. {slurppp}

RAYGUN ROBERTS: Huh?

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: You heard me. You've graduated. According to your Mental Competency Evaluation you are ready to start your career.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: What do you mean!?! I've only got 45 skill points! I was hoping to get another 15 in at least. Take a couple of Fraal Tango classes, read up on Weren grooming practices...

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: That's right. You have 45 skill points. And according to the established criteria, a person of your mental capacity with that number of skill points is considered a beginning character. Therefore you are a graduate of the Academy.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: What about Gravmace Greg? He has 45 skill points. Shouldn't he be kicked out into the wild world of adventuring too?

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: {slurpppp...mmmm} Damn, this stuff is good. Those t'sa sure know their juice.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: What about my question?

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: {slurppppppppp} Oh yeah. According to the files Gravmace Greg has a higher score on his INT, so he will qualify for Beginning Character when he has accumulated 70 skill points worth of training and practice.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: That doesn't sound fair to me.

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: Those are the rules, kid.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: Gravmace Greg is a slacker though. He may be smart but he is lazy and spends all his time playing Hack N Smash RPGs. And I've been working my glutes off to get where I am. Shouldn't that be any consideration?

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: Sorry Raygun. No exceptions.

RAYGUN ROBERTS: Come on!!! I don't want to be a Beginning Character yet. Just let me train and practice until I get 15 more skill points at least.

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: Nope. The Academy has decided that smarter people are required to have more skill points to qualify for Beginning Character. So Gravmace Greg stays until he is up to speed, while you are outta here!!!

RAYGUN ROBERTS: Argghhhh!!! I'm not going!!!! I demand equal Beginning Character assessment!!!

INSTRUCTOR KILLANEWB: {slurppppp}

{RAYGUN is dragged away by security and sent packing to the Verge where he teams up with other recent Beginning Characters grads. All of them have higher INT so they ridicule and taunt him because he hasn't had as much experience as themselves. RAYGUN eventually leaves the group and starts an interstellar protest against unfair Beginning Character assessment.}

AS my heavy-handed attempt at propaganda shows, I have some issues with Intelligence determining the starting skill points of Alternity characters. The original rules had a set amount of skill points for beginning characters based on the Intelligence score of the hero. This ranged in number from 15 for an Intelligence of 4, while an Intelligence of 16 netted a whopping 75 skill points. This was a substantial difference that could be rationalized with Intelligent characters learning faster and applying the knowledge more readily. While generally this basic assumption is true, I believe this shouldn't be applied to the starting character level of a Role Playing Game where skills make the character. By giving the high Intelligence characters more skill points they are essentially higher level starting characters than their average to low intelligence counterparts. I prefer to have a set number of skill points determining who qualifies as a first level character.

For example, let's say 60 skill points is the amount a character must have to qualify for being a 1st level character. As a character is born and grows older they are accumulating experiences that are building up their skills until they reach a point where they have essentially bought 60 skill points worth of broad skills, ranks, and perks (if applicable), making the hero a 1st level character. Two different people of different Intelligence may reach this point at different points in their life but they are both considered 1st level. One may be fifteen years old and the other twenty but this makes no difference. The skill points are what is key as a determiner for level.

With that said I also believe Intelligence does have an impact on skill acquisition. A smarter person is more likely to learn faster and retain skills. Unfortunately as it is written, the Alternity rules indicate this only happens before a character becomes a first level character. After the initial character creation there is no game mechanic to show the advantage of higher intelligence.

With these thoughts and concerns I have come up with the following home rules:

Beginning Skill Points

1st Level Characters begin play with a set number of skill points based on the heroic level set by the Gamemaster. This number is equal to the number used for ability score distribution. In a realistic game where characters begin with 54 ability points to be distributed between 6 scores, characters would begin with 54 skill points to spend on skills and perks. For a heroic game the character would receive 60 skill points, while in a superheroic game the character would receive 72 skill points.

Bonus Skill Points From High Intelligence

When a character advances a level they will receive an extra amount of skill points equal to the characters Intelligence resistance modifier. A character with an intelligence of 14 (+2 resistance modifier) would receive 2 extra skill points with every level gained, while a character with 4 intelligence (-2 resistance modifier) would actually lose 2 skill points with every level.

Planet Bluefall, Aegis System, Verge

by **Montgomery Cooke IX** • illustration by **mig nova**

If there is some sort of Supreme Being, however one chooses to refer to it as, this entity surely must have created Bluefall for humanity and its allies. This oceanic planet with many scattered islands is most assuredly a paradise within this untamed and ill-begotten Verge that I'm cataloging for those space travelers in the Verge and in the Stellar Ring (or Old Space, as they call it out here in this frontier). My transport's final starrise to the Aegis system here in the heart of the Verge was a welcome one, as the journey to the Verge itself was quite onerous. And they call that section "first class"? Indeed!

When the airlock opened on Hughes Island, the smell of the warm salt air reminded me of my grandsire's stories of the Terran South Pacific, with the islands of Fiji, Hawaii, and Samoa, as I had pictured them from the old photographs and videos that they had passed down. The holo recreations couldn't hold a candle to this sight! The sun, Aegis, was nearing its zenith, and the warm, misty breeze welcomed me, the weary traveler, forced to breathe "canned air" and eat prime rib when I specifically asked for filet mignon. I hailed a skycab, checked into my resort, the Jubilee Magnifico, unpacked my bags, and promptly immersed myself into the local culture: the casino.

Gambling is quite legal here on Bluefall, and it is said that they repelled the forces of the Thuldan Empire for fear that the Emperor would shut down the casinos. I am inclined to believe it. The odds weren't the best I have played; though I did come ahead at the roulette table, only to lose that, and half my advance in keno. The keno dealer, Macy Green, was quite candid (and quite attractive, I may add) about the situation here: most casinos are public, though there are a few private, members-only casinos around. A few rumored "basement casinos", or unsanctioned casinos are around (but I did not find any in this basement). It is in these ill-reputed establishments which one could watch that barbaric sport, boxing, which she is quick to note is illegal here. I couldn't agree more, and commended her, on behalf of her people for the sense and civility of the citizens of Bluefall. Oddly, she laughed and said no more.

The next day, after recovering from a nasty hangover from drinking some vile weren concoction that does not taste anywhere near as good coming up as it did going down, I donned my swimwear and hit the beach. I am told I just missed the "Grand Roll", the big wave surfing season here, that boasts waves of 35 feet and up every nine or ten years. The lack of reefs makes for surfing conditions enticing even to a novice, so I decided to give it a try. Though I was completely unable to "hang ten", I did enjoy myself, at my t'sa instructor's expense. It's a good thing those surf instructors know how to swim.

I booked a pleasure cruise with Starreth Cruise Lines, a subsidiary of the Jubilee Consortium, to take a sightseeing trip to Polnesia, Rehja, and back to Hughes. Polnesia is the Solar's attempt to recreate these South Pacific island ecosystems and culture here on Bluefall, even going as far as to transplant swine! Goodness! If I had not seen these foul-smelling, loud, obnoxious beasts with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it. We docked at



Otaheite, the "capital" of Polnesia. I use "capital" loosely here, as it is scarcely more than a small town, and I am told, that the other two settlements, Taparua and Pitcairn aren't much bigger. I suppose with only a limited amount of actual land on which to build that there's not much room for improvement. I am told that there was some sort of Vanishing a few years back, where every living soul simply disappeared. Imagine that! Though evidence (as I am told) does not suggest an assault like that the Silver Bell colony faced during the Long Silence, the thought alone is unsettling, in spite of the luxurious clime. While docked at Otaheite, Polnesia, I signed up for a "treasure hunting" expedition (where I saw the swine), with Marque Charters & Chances (sorry, the "skin diving with Moore's Sharks" is not my cup of tea), another subsidiary of the Jubilee Consortium. I was comforted by the supervised and insured "expedition" and got to partake in the "treasure": rum, distilled in the time-honored methods of the Caribbean. The suckling pig at the luau was very succulent, and the hangover the next morning wasn't nearly as bad as my first day on Hughes.

The next stop on my tour was Rehja, the island controlled by the Guardian clutch of t'sa, docking at the city of Guardshope. Though much more developed in terms of land controlled by sentients, much of it is in the form of homesteads, but the temple of Ch'Nal & K'san Ch'Nak is so massive atop the hill there, that it is the first point visible on the island, by our approach. I was completely awed by the magnificence of the structure from its exterior. It was quite disappointing to not be able to enter the edifice, due to some high holiday or other that the t'sa honor. Alas, my ship was leaving, and I could not stay. My journey back to Hughes Island was peaceful and relaxing, and they even had passable caviar. I was quite saddened to have to leave Bluefall, but this volume wouldn't be as useful as it ought to be if I only stayed here. So, with a few extra towels, I departed the Aegis system, bound for the Lucullus system.

Yours faithfully,

Montgomery V. Cooke IX

All's Well That Ends...

by Ruin • illustration by Sarah Hollman

THE Hoffman institute has noted that, in the past couple months, there has been an unusual increase in the number of cases of spontaneous combustion. There interest is peaked, and they assemble a group of investigators to evaluate the situation. Little do they know that these cases are only the sparks of a conspiracy that may well destroy the Earth.

This conspiracy is composed several entities, The Cult of Unteti, the CIA, and Ki Gronda, a splinter group of greys. The scheme involves a small amount of alien tech, some magic, a Russian nuclear weapon, and a dark matter doorway in Egypt.

The Cult of Unteti

The cult has been around, in small numbers and in secret, since the time of the first Pharaoh, and was founded upon the death of Unteti. [See Unteti sub article below.] Their purpose for the last five thousand years has been to watch over the body of their leader, and be ready to wake him when the time comes. The time decided by Unteti before his death was when the cult was sure they had the means to complete his dream of destroying the earth.

Three months ago, the time came. A Russian arms dealer by the name of Sergi Ivanov contacted the cult with an offer for a weapon he guaranteed was the most powerful on the black market. Ivanov claimed to be a defected Russian officer, and said that he heard that this group was looking for a bomb. The cult found the finds and purchased the weapon. Unteti intends to detonate this bomb in the dark matter doorway at the pyramid of Saqara. If he is successful, the explosion will completely destroy the barrier between the Earth and the Kinori home world, causing the two planets to occupy the same space, and therefore explode.

Currently they are slowly gathering their numbers and installing operatives in key places so that, when the time comes, they can place and detonate the bomb.

If the party confronts the Cult, they will resort to small arms fire immediately.

The CIA

A grey contacted the head of the CIA and promised a particular alien weapons technology in return for eliminating certain individuals in the US and around the world. The CIA, of course, accepted. The grey gave them a list of people to be eliminated.

The CIA also saw this as an opportunity to use their new toy, an orbital assassin laser. This weapon burns a person with a quick pulse of energy, and then leaves the body to burn on its own fuel, which looks remarkably like a case of spontaneous combustion. It also has an x-ray targeting system. It can hit a target under one hundred pounds of hindering medium.



Currently, the CIA is working its way through the list. Most of the names belong to ufologists and other fringe science experts. The rest compose a small group of Egyptologists. They have also positioned agents to watch all of the kill sights.

If the CIA spots the party at any of the kill sights, they will dispatch a small team of assassins to resolve the problem.

Ki Gronda

This group of greys believes that humans are worthless. This infuriates them because the greys stay on Mars only so that they can observe this human civilization, and the Ki Gronda would like to go home.

Their research revealed a small, secretive group of cultists quietly determined to destroy the Earth for some unusually altruistic reasons. Six months ago one of the Ki Gronda stole a significant amount highly volatile material from Grey storage area. Another from this faction purchased a nuclear weapon from the

disintegrating Russian stock. These components have been combined, and offered to a member of the Unteti Cult by a Ki Gronda posing as a Russian arms dealer calling himself Sergi Ivanov.

Currently, the Ki Gronda are trying to keep their actions hidden from their brethren. At the same time, however, they are watching

If the Ki Gronda notices the party's interest in the kill sights or the Cult of Unteti, they will dispatch agents disguised as Men in Black to scrub out the party, but they will not use alien tech for fear of attracting attention.

GM Note

When I originally ran this conspiracy, I estimated that it would take somewhere around 16 sessions to complete. Depending on how quickly the game master wants to drop clues, it could take as little time as 8 sessions. Game masters that slow the flow of information and add side plots [always fun] could turn this into a campaign taking as long as a year.

Now that you have all the information you need, start the spontaneous combustion!



Unteti

Unteti, a priest for the first Pharaoh, came to the conclusion that the kingdom of Ra must be a far better place to exist than the world. He also had this curious belief in reincarnation. The meeting point of these two beliefs created the logic that everyone would be happier if they stayed in the Kingdom of Ra, and that the only way to keep everyone there would be to prevent the soles from having a place to return to. Following this logic, Unteti wanted to destroy the world.

He even knew how to destroy the world. He was aware of the Dark Matter doorways, and the fact that they were basically tears in the scrims separating the worlds. Through his own simple experiments, he has also become aware of the basic physical law that two pieces of matter cannot occupy the same space. He came to the conclusion that if he were to set off an explosion large enough in the tear, that the tear would completely split, merging the two worlds. He wasn't exactly sure what the merging would do, but he was pretty sure that the earth would exist no longer.

Though he knew how to destroy the world, he knew that the explosion he needed could not be made with the technology of the day. He imagined that in a later day the tool he needed might exist. Being a master of Hermeticism, he created a spell capable of making his body dormant until the counter scroll was read.

STR 6 [-1]

DEX 7

CON 8

Durability: 8/8/4/4

Move: sprint 12, run 8, walk 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

FX Points: 5

Perks: Faith

Flaws: Primitive [4]

INT 14 [+2]

WIL 13 [+2]

PER 12

Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

#Actions: 2

Last resorts: 2

Attacks

Ligature 15/7/3 See spell description

Unarmed 3/1/0 +d4 LI/O Personal d4-1/d4/d4+1

Defenses

+2 WIL resistance modifier

+2 INT resistance modifier

Skills

STR: Athletics [6]

DEX: Vehicle Operation [7]; Primitive Ranged Weapons [7]

CON: Stamina [8]

INT: Knowledge [14]-ancient lore [Egyptian] [15], dimensional lore [15];

Life Science [14]; Medical Science [14]-medical knowledge [15];

Physical Science [14]

WIL: Awareness [13]-intuition [16]; Perception [15]; Investigate [13]-research [16]; Resolve [13]-mental [15]

PER: Interaction [12]; Leadership [12]-Command [13], Inspire [13];

FX Skills

Hermeticism [14]-Daedalus improved [15], glamour [17], ligature [15], shapechange [16], sleep of Morpheus [17] transmutation [15], Unteti's slumber [23]

New Hermeticism FX Ability

Unteti's Slumber

Transform Spell: 3 FX points

This skill cannot be used untrained

This spell allows the caster to put a willing recipient, a restrained victim, or him or her self into a slumber of indefinite length. During this sleep, the recipient does not age, does not breathe, and does not need to eat or drink. cursory examinations of the body will reveal it to be dead, but a thorough medical examination will discover it is only in a very deep sleep.

When the spell is performed, the caster creates a scroll.

When this scroll is read aloud or destroyed, the recipient of the spell awakens. They feel that no time has passed.

Performing Unteti's slumber requires a ten-minute long ritual, a blank scroll, and some dust that is sprinkled over the recipient.

> Duration Casting: At rank 6, the alchemist gains greater control over the forces at work within the ritual. Instead of creating a scroll at the time of casting, he or she may instead simply give a duration after which the sleeper will awaken on its own. However, if this option is used, the sleeper cannot be awakened before the time limit runs out.

YARID

by Dwayne Leonard • illustration by Dwayne Leonard

Form and Physiology: The Yarid are bipedal humanoids with some distinctive differences. The first thing that will be easily noticed are the large flexible ear flaps mounted on the sides of their heads. These ear flaps serve two purposes. The first is as extra oxygen collection which is a necessity on their high chlorine home world. The second purpose is to channel vibrations into their auditory nerve allowing them to hear. The Yaridian head is large with oversized nostrils. The large head allows them to have a more complicated brain than would be expected. The oversized nostrils act to channel air into their lungs. Their body is a basic humanoid design with two arms and two legs. Their hands have three fingers and a thumb. They have three fingered feet composed of two long slender toes and a thicker and slightly longer toe in the middle.

History: Earliest histories of the Yarid are retellings of the Clan Wars. This was a period when many of the larger clans vied for dominance and many of the smaller ones just tried to survive. No clan ever managed to gain great control or influence and hold it for very long. In the end many clans were destroyed and others were absorbed either peacefully or forcefully. Often smaller clans joined together for mutual protection. Eventually peace settled in, but there are many clan resentments from this time.

One of the major events of the Clan Wars was the construction techniques that allowed them to build massive tombs in the lower chlorine filled areas of their world. While this technique was later lost with the coming peace many tombs remain exactly as they were during the Clan Wars.

After this a time of peace reigned and much of their progress was lost. Without the constant wars much of the knowledge they had gained served little to no purpose. Without a written history the knowledge was lost as fathers and mothers no longer taught it to their children.

The legends of Baydanog tell us that the Sky Fall happened and a new age of learning was ushered in. As Baydanog spoke it was thus "A great silver white bird fell from the sky. Into the lowlands our people set forth searching for the great animal. When we arrived there were three strange creatures dead and two barely alive. Some of our people hurriedly moved the live ones to our highest town as far from the green lowland air. These two alien people lived and in time learned our language teaching us much about the sciences."

Having relearned much of what was lost after the Clan Wars the Yarid now do everything possible to maintain and improve upon this knowledge. Unlike before some story tellers have also become lore masters of the sciences and written works are kept high upon the mountains in caves and buildings sealed



against the harsh atmosphere.

Culture: Unlike in the period known as the Clan Wars the Yarid now crave knowledge for its own sake rather than how to use it in war. This has made logic a very important part of their life. They tend follow logical disciplines where their superior minds can make the best use of the knowledge that they have gained.

Hospitality is very important to the Yarid way of life. They have traditions and ceremonies for almost any situation. This can create cultural complications when dealing with the Yarid.

The harsh atmosphere and Yarid mind set make artistic endeavors worth little to the Yarid. This leads to having rather plain looking buildings and little adornment on their equipment or persons.

Much of the mountainous regions of the Yarid home world are filled with collections of city states. While each city is technically a state unto itself they are typically allied due to clan kinships across many borders. Also various treaties and an emerging power grid help to cement alliances.

An important cultural note is the Yarid naming convention. People, places, and objects are all named in specific pattern. Each name begins with a consonant and a vowel and ends with a vowel and then a consonant. The amount of other letters or syllables are irrelevant so long as this naming convention is upheld.

Psychology:

First and foremost loyalty is one of the traits valued by the Yarid. As a species they are typically loyal to their own clan and or city

unless it is more beneficial to the species as a whole not to be. What this means is that should a Yarid ever become attached to a party of adventurers loyalty is almost a given. The only conceivable exception is that the party ever directly or indirectly became a threat to the Yarid in general.

Physical art works serve no purpose to the average Yarid. To their way of thinking it may look pretty, but it really serves no purpose.

Playability: The Yarid are an infinitely playable species. They are well suited to any Tech-Op profession. They can also do significantly well as Free Agents. Most soldier and mercenary Yarid are actually Free Agents and not Combat Specialists.

Any PC who wishes to be a Yarid in a star faring campaign should begin with one level of the primitive disadvantage. This is because their technology is so far behind the normal level of a space based campaign that they must work hard to catch up to the technology that they have missed. At level 4 they may buy off this disadvantage allowing them to take full advantage of their vast intellect.

Technology: Late PL 3 and early PL 4 technology dominate the landscape of the Yarid home world of Melsphad. Many areas especially those in the high lands have primitive electrical grids. The electrical system is powered by windmills and water wheels. Bows and crossbows are still the weapon of choice, but not because they couldn't make guns. This is not because they don't understand about explosives its just that they won't work without special shells in the lowlands.

Even though much of their technology is at a lower level materials science has advanced to PL6 on the Yarid home world. There are several reasons for this. One is that normal metals such as steel, iron, and copper corrode easily in the high chlorine atmosphere. Another is that many of the plants are actually organic plastics or plastic analogues.

Ceramics and corrosive resistant composites are some of the chief exports of the high land city states.

Plot Hooks: The PCs ship crashes on Melsphad and needs a new part.

Unfortunately for the PCs the local town-ship knows nothing about such matters and will try to lead them far into the mountains where another clan can make the part the PCs need to get their ship off the planet again. While the part should be substandard it should allow the PCs to get off the planet. While the first clan would help for free because it's the polite thing to do the second clan would expect payment for the services that they've rendered. Feel free to let your imagination run free with what kind of services that the second clan might want or require.

A Yarid ambassador petitioning the Concord is accused of murder and only the PCs can help clear his name. Apparently during a very important ceremony the ambassador served his guest tea made from a plant native to Melsphad. It apparently contained levels of chlorine that were poison to the

guest but not the Yarid. The PCs must locate an expert on Yarid culture to prove that serving of the poison tea was an honest mistake. Unfortunately the expert on Yarid culture is being held by people who wish to see the Yarids petition to the Concord fail.

Yarid Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series III

Environment: Class 2

GRAPH: G2/R1/A4/P1/H2

Biome: Mountains and Forests

Encounter Chance: Common

Group Size: 2-12

Organization: Clans and City States

Intelligence: Sentient

Yarid Game Data

STR 7 {1d8+3} INT 11 {2d6+4}

DEX 9 {2d6+2} WIL 9 {2d6+2}

CON 8 {1d6+1d4+2} PER 8 {2D6+1}

Durability: 8/8/4/4

Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: Run 10, Walk 4, Swim 4

Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Last Resorts: 1

Attacks:

Unarmed 3/2/1 dO LI/O Personal d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Defenses:

+1 resistance modifier vs. INT encounter skills

Advantages:

The Yarid are spectacularly brilliant. This gives them a -1 to all INT based skills.

They also have a -3 bonus to any roll vs. chlorine or fluorine based compounds.

While this makes them extremely resistant to acids that is not the primary purpose. The primary purpose is to allow them to survive the poisonous chlorine gas that dominates the lowlands of their planet.

The Yarid can survive on both Class I and Class II worlds. They do however need to ingest chlorine as it helps them create acid for digestion purposes.

Weaknesses:

In general the Yarid are physically weaker and in general not quite as tough as most other humanoid races.

Because the Yarid ear flaps are actually breathing membranes and causes airborne poisons and viruses to be more effective against them. This is because it is harder for them to hold their breath. They are also more easily drowned than most humanoid races. They receive a +1 penalty in all situations where lack of air or airborne chemicals and viruses are used against them.

Skills:

Athletics [7]; Stamina [8]; Knowledge [11]; Navigation [11]; Resolve [9]; Awareness [9]

Club Icon

VTP://UGS.Tendrill/Alaundril/Virtuality/HotTalk/ClubIcon.dm

by Daryl Blasi • illustration by Dragan Ciric

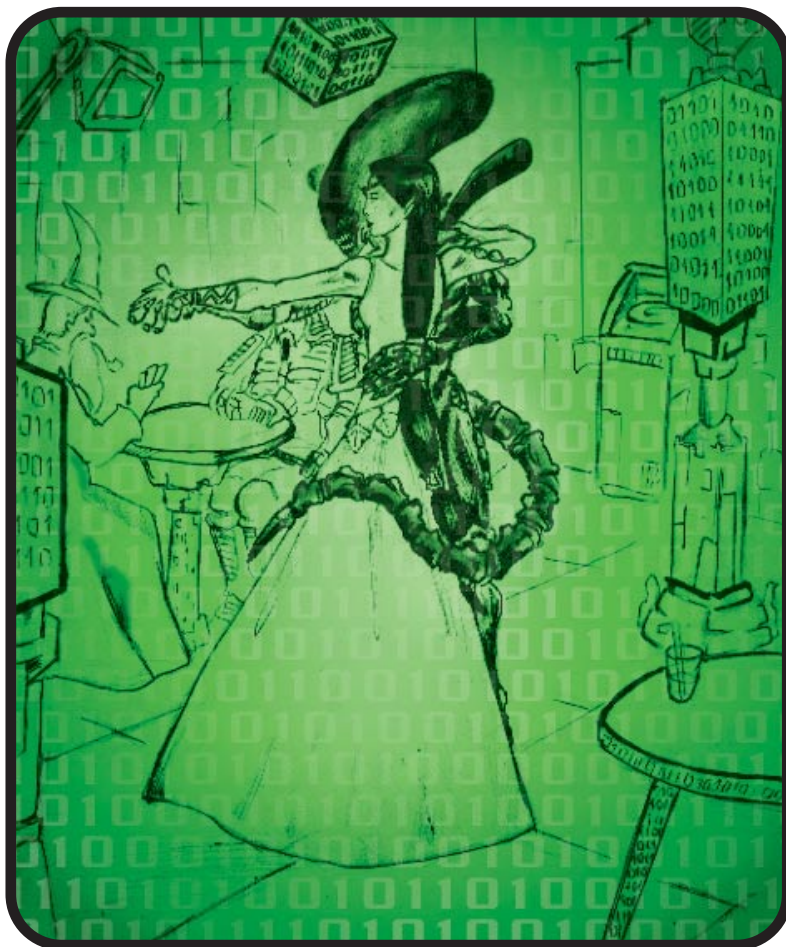
Administrator: Jazz [Real Name: Jazmine Takana] (Hf, Tendril, TO-10)

Brief history of Admin: Born on Alaundril, Jazmine has always had a fascination with celebrity and decided to launch a chat site dedicated to notable people or characters throughout human history. In the real world she is a shy, quiet person who avoids most social contact, but on the Grid she lets loose, taking on personas that are larger than life such as Madonna or 24th century poet/vandal Killdaisy. She works for a small shipping company on the planet of Alaundril as a systems manager.

General Type of Domain: Social chat site open to all. Progress Level 7. Grid shadow interaction allowed.

Exterior Description: Club Icon appears as a large blue translucent head in the likeness of a randomly chosen celebrity with a red carpet leading into its open mouth. The celebrity head changes every hour and visual imagery is constantly playing on its exterior. A bright neon sign with the words "Club Icon" orbits the head constantly.

Entrances: As described above there is one main entrance to Club Icon that appears as the mouth of the chosen celebrity of the day. An automated program that appears as a random well-known supermodel monitors the entrance. (Treat as a Good Guardian program with the entrance equal to a Good Gate program) This hostess welcomes the visitors and directs them to the Club Menu, where they can choose an appearance for their shadow from a large list of



celebrities from pharaohs of ancient earth to the latest holoivid superstar. Even cartoon characters are available. Everyone must take on an identity to enter, but gridpilots using shadow mask programs may alter their appearance once inside the domain.

Interior Description: Club Icon has a hip nightclub atmosphere with dazzling light shows, trendy dance music blaring from every corner, and a multitude of flat screen monitors showing old movies, music videos, and random imagery. Stairs floating in the air take gridpilots to private tables some distance from the main floor. Sound dampeners at the table can be used to provide privacy. There are 4 Good Guardian programs that act as bouncers. They

usually appear as old comic book superheroes such as Superman, the Savage Dragon, or the StarMech favorite, Sunstorm.

Exits: Grid travelers can use the entrance as an exit or they may use a variety of portals leading to celebrity fan sites. These portals appear as neon-lit posters of the celebrity hanging in midair.

Rules: Club Icon maintains the illusion of normal gravity and generally is mundane in its physical interactions.

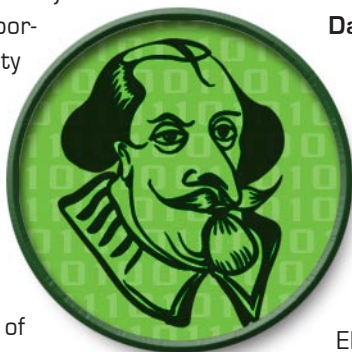
Resources: Club Icon maintains many download links to various entertainment sources, but generally provides little in the way of useful data. Jazz is an excellent programmer of shadow masks though and custom programs up to Amazing quality can be purchased from her.

Regulars: This site generally attracts people looking for some shallow fun, but others have begun to take advantage of the anonymity and chaos to use the site as a meeting place for secret rendezvous. The following regulars frequent the site:

Galaga (Real Name: Cody Powell) (Hm, Tendril, TO-8): Galaga usually appears as an anime character and considers himself the life of the party. Galaga is a thrill seeker and will take on dares involving breaking into private domain sites.

Black Betty (Real Name: Shan Walshek) (Hf, Tendril, TO-6): Black

Betty usually appears as action characters such as Trinity from the classic 20th century movie Matrix. Black Betty considers herself a social rebel and will help anyone who is looking to cause a little trouble for corporations.



Da King (Real Name: Armand Ravier) (Hm, Tendril, D/TO-11): Da King is a flamboyant character who takes on the personas of aristocrats from old Earth such as King Louis XIV and Queen Elizabeth. Da King knows all the regulars at Club Icon and acts as the host when Jazz is not present. Da King makes it a point to introduce himself to any newcomers to the domain

Canary (Real Name: Kasha Anjut) (Hf, Tendril, TO-9): Canary is a fanatic about musical celebrities, in particular divas such as Aretha Franklin, Madonna, and the current hot Tendril singer, Kamma Jayne. She has become a bit of a stalker of the stars on the grid and makes it her business to know the comings and goings of any musician on Tendril.

She is also the resident expert on raves and recreational drugs, knowing where and when the best parties with the highest quality substances will occur in the real world.



Casper the Friendly Shadow (Real Name: Gavin Dasperelli) (Hm, Tendril, TO-14): Casper is a ruthless hacker and data thief who has adopted Club Icon as his meeting place for prospective clients. So far he has avoided suspicion from

the grid cops, but being extremely paranoid he has hacked into the site to create backdoor links for quick get-aways.

Brief History of the Site: Club Icon has been open for a couple of years and over that period of time, has grown to be a popular hang-out for grid surfers. While most of the visitors are harmless fun-seekers, a group of shady gridpilots has begun to use the domain as a meeting place for their activities. These notorious grid criminals are wanted for espionage and data theft, and mostly use Club Icon as a transfer spot. Consequently some insightful grid cops have taken an interest in Club Icon and are monitoring the domain in the hopes of getting a big bust.



Adventure Hook: The grid thief Billy Boy is looking for a patsy to take the fall for him on an upcoming data heist. He has just become aware that some grid cops have been keeping tabs on Club Icon and he worries that they may have inadvertently

recorded some of his interactions with clients. Billy Boy wants to throw them off the scent by pinning his dirty deeds on someone else. He chooses one of the players and plants some illegally accessed data and some plans for busting into a corporate domain site. The plans are vague enough to keep anyone from finding out where the hit will be until details of the actual hack tie the pieces together. Unfortunately for Billy Bob, he messes up the plan by obviously staring at the heroes right before the tipped off grid cops move in to arrest the player. He then disappears through a link but the players are able to get a good description of the shadow he was wearing.



Winter Wolf

by Daryl Blasi • illustration by Daryl Blasi

Zachariah stumbled through the slushy snow, blood dripping from his mangled hand. He gasped for breath and felt his last strength ebbing away. He was cold. Colder than he should be with the sun shining down and the temperature rising steadily. The warming air of the coming spring seemed to have no effect on his icy skin.

Zachariah stopped and shivered as the eerie howl of the wolf that stalked him echoed through the woods. It was close. His wagon was just over the hill, along with his extra rifle. If he could just reach it before...

Zachariah caught himself from falling as an Indian stepped out of the bushes in front of him. He had never felt so relieved to see another living being, even if it was a heathen savage.

"Help me...damn wolf near bit my hand off!" he raised his hand towards the Indian showing him the wound. "Help me kill the devil beast." He began wheezing. His lungs hurt from the exertion of talking.

The Indian looked at him without saying a word. He then raised his own hand, palm up. A small wood carving of a skeletal wolf sat in the cup of his palm, as well as a pair of dice Zachariah could have sworn he left in a box on the wagon.

"What the hell!" Zachariah slipped on the snow and this time he fell hard to the ground on his back, knocking the breath out of him.

The Indian walked forward and stood above him, with tears in his eyes.

"My sister," he whispered. "She has thrown herself from the cliff. She was with child."

Zachariah wiggled on the ground trying to get up. He was too weak and the ground was slippery.

"You are her killer," the Indian said as he dropped the dice on to Zachariah's chest. He then turned and walked away.

"No, sir. Please! I don't know your sister!" Zachariah pleaded, but he knew. Memories of that night in Vancouver flew into his mind. The pretty little squaw had been walking alone in the street that night. He had lost all of his money gambling and he couldn't afford the brothel. It was so easy. A bit of rope in her mouth and a dark little corner of the stable. "Please, sir. Help me. You have the wrong fella!"



The Indian disappeared into the trees.

"Damn it, you red sonovabitch! Come back!"

Zachariah screamed hoarsely. He couldn't hear or see any sign of the Indian. He was alone in the woods.

"Your sis was a fine little poke! Squealed real good!" Zachariah spit. He struggled to get up again but his muscles were too weak and too numb. After a while he stopped moving and began to sob.

"Please Lord, save me!"

Zachariah felt icy cold air on his neck and heard a low growl in his ear.

SOME Native American tribes of North America tell legends of wolves who have starved to death during very harsh winters, returning from the other side as malicious wraiths. These dreadful spirits hunt the living, stealing the heat of their bodies to feed the wolves' ravenous hunger. It is whispered by some shamans that these winter wolves can be controlled using special talismans carved from wood or ivory in the likeness of a skinny, starved wolf. These talismans can be used to summon and command a winter wolf to hunt down any living creature the owner desires. All that is needed for this magic to work is the name of the intended target or a personal possession of the target such as clothes, weapons, or even hair.

Description: The winter wolf appears as an emaciated wolf with ribs showing through its skin and patches of hair missing. The teeth of the winter wolf are longer and sharper than an ordinary wolf and its tongue is unnaturally elongated. It radiates cold and anyone within a couple of meters notices a considerable drop in temperature.

Encounter: The winter wolf is most likely encountered when called up with ancient magics to hunt down a particular person or persons. On occasion they may be found haunting the area where they died, looking for hapless travelers and animals to feed its unnatural hunger. The winter wolf has supernatural senses and is immediately aware of any living creature within 100 meters. If called to hunt down a person they can unfailingly track their prey within 100 kilometers of the area they were first summoned from the dead.

A winter wolf attacks with a vicious bite that, besides causing tearing damage, steals heat from the victim's body. This loss of heat causes the victim's body to stiffen with numbness and makes it difficult to perform any actions. The winter wolf may also use just its tongue to steal heat from its intended target. This is usually performed when commanded by its summoner to incapacitate rather than kill. With every successful bite or lick of the tongue a victim must make a stamina-endurance check with the following results: a Critical Failure, the victim loses all fatigue points; a Failure, the victim loses 2 fatigue points; an Ordinary, the victim loses 1 fatigue point; a Good or Amazing, no effect. This stamina-endurance check is made with a step penalty according to the degree of the winter wolf's attack: Ordinary, no penalty; Good, +1 penalty; Amazing, +2 penalty. Once the victim loses all fatigue points, the damage becomes mortal with this special attack.

When in the world of the living, the winter wolf's corporeal body can be damaged through ordinary means

Winter Wolf Summoning Ritual

The summoning of the winter wolf must take place at night in a body of trees or some other natural setting. This ritual can be performed by anyone with the correct summoning words and a special talisman created for this purpose. Only a practitioner of the Shamanism Faith FX can create the talisman though and the ritual will only work with an authentic talisman. The name of the intended target or a personal possession of the target such as clothes, weapons, or a body part such as hair or fingernail is required for the ritual to work properly. If this is not provided the winter wolf will attack the summoner. The summoning ritual is a complex skill check that requires 6 successes on a Personality feat check or **Shamanism-ghost dance** skill check. One check can be made every 10 minutes.

Winter Wolf Talisman (FX Device)

The winter wolf talisman is a wood or ivory carving of an emaciated wolf. A wielder of the **Shamanism-ghost dance** magic can create this FX device. This is a darker variation of the actual *ghost dance* magic and requires special knowledge of the ancient rituals. The only use of this device is to power the winter wolf summoning ritual. It can be used once per night. Cost: 17 skill points (**Shamanism-ghost dance** 1); 2 FX energy points; 54 days.

although it is tougher than a normal wolf, hence the body armor. Although the winter wolf's physical body can be killed, it will return from the dead a week later unless an exorcism is performed in the area it originally died. If summoned, the winter wolf can be banished instantly to its original death haunt by destroying the talisman used in its summoning. The destruction of the talisman also has the effect of releasing the winter wolf from its mission to hunt down a particular target. The summoner must create or find a new talisman and perform another ritual to make the winter wolf do his or her bidding.

Habitat/Society: In death the winter wolf is a solitary creature that no longer follows the pack. It exists solely to hunt the living and steal the heat that gives it temporary comfort from its eternal hunger. It will attack any living thing that comes within its death haunt, which is a 100 meter radius centered on the location of its death. It will only leave its death haunt if summoned as described earlier.

Adventure Hook: The heroes are sent to investigate the mysterious killings of teenage boys in a small city. The teens, all members of a local high

school football team, died from animal attacks while out partying together in the forest preserve near the city. Autopsies revealed that each of the victims suffered from acute hypothermia before their deaths. The heroes also discover that last victim actually survived for one hour after his attack, dying from complications due to hypothermia as he was rushed to the hospital. Unlike the other victims there was no signs of mauling on his body. The paramedics said he whispered a last message before he passed away. "Rabid dog."

During the investigation the heroes find a plastic bag with personal items from each of the victims. The plastic bag is from a local bookstore called the *Readery* and has a week-old receipt in it for an item labeled "NAT AMER LEG." If the heroes investigate the store they find that the owner recalls a teenager named Chandler Drunning looking for books on Native American mysticism and magic. The owner also recalls Chandler holding a small figurine of a dog or wolf in his hands as he compared it to pictures in the Native American Legends book he eventually purchased.

Chandler Drunning received the winter wolf talisman from his termi-

nally ill grandfather who also taught him the summoning ritual. Not fully believing his grandfather's stories, Chandler researched the legends of the winter wolf. Finally he decided to test out its power by summoning the winter wolf to hunt down the bullies who had tormented him at school. When the ritual worked Chandler ordered the wolf to pick off his enemies one by one, with the last victim, the ringleader of the bullies, drained of his heat while Chandler looked on. When another group of teenagers appeared Chandler panicked and dropped the plastic bag as he ran away through the forest.

Chandler's father is a local sheriff who mentioned the heroes' investigation of the deaths to his son. Fearing discovery Chandler managed to find out the heroes names from his father and ran into the forest preserve, waiting for night to come so he could perform the ritual to send the winter wolf after the heroes.



Winter Wolf Game Data

STR 14 [d6+11] INT 4 [Animal 10 or d6+7]
 DEX 13 [d4+11] WIL 14 [d6+11]
 CON 12 [d4+10] PER 4 [Animal 10 or d4+8]
 Durability: 12/12/6/6 Action Check: 16+/15/7/3
 Move: sprint 50, run 34, walk 12 #Actions: 3
 Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 0

Attacks

Bite 17/8/4 d0 LI/O Personal 6+1s/d4+1w/d4+3w
 Claws 16/8/4 d0 LI/O Personal d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s
 Heat Stealing 17/8/4 See description

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 +3 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 Armor (Ordinary): d6+1 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

STR: Athletics [14]-jump [16]; Unarmed attack [14]-bite [17], claw [16]
DEX: Acrobatics [13]-dodge [16]; Stealth [13]-shadow [18]
CON: Movement [12]-race [16]; Stamina [12]-endurance [17]; Survival [12]
WIL: Awareness [14]-intuition [18], perception [19]; Investigate [14]-track [20]; Resolve [14]-physical [18]

SIDEBAR: DARK MATTER GAME PROP

Death Metal Mayhem

A heavy metal/rap band, KoolKill, has put out a new CD and thought it would be cool to put some strange symbols on their cover. They found some runes in a book on mysticism they bought at a used bookstore. Unfortunately the symbol they chose, an ancient marking meaning "shadow whispers", is opening up doorways to the world of the dead. Their fans are starting to be visited by dead people from their past whenever they play the band's CD.

sidebar and art by Daryl Blasi



unkata shev = "shadow whispers"



BLACK STALLIONS

by Ryan Kershner

The drunk looked up at the man sitting in front of him, and in a thick accent asked, "So you wanna know 'bout the Black Stallions?"

The man in front of him looked around, leaned in and asked, "What do you know?"

The drunk smiled briefly, "I know 'most everything, and I know you don' wanna ask questions 'bout the Stallions, 'cuz the answers ain' pretty? So, you gonna buy then?"

The Black Stallions, a brief history

Thomas Markin, a man of great enthusiasm, founded the Black Stallions, on a whim to make money. He collected a few of the outcasts of the galaxy, people that didn't have ties to anyone, planning secretly to get rid of them and take the money, however he was drawn to them, to their personalities, and their individual unique senses of humor. He eventually came to like them all, not wanting anything to happen to them. It would prove to be his doom.

It was a terrible time for the Markin family when their father and mother died in an exploration accident involving a rough storm, a starship crash, and a mass reactor leak. Their deaths left Thomas Markin in charge of his younger brother, Jasen. Thomas, who was 52 at the time, was forced to take an adult roll at a young age, and this would help him become the leader he would turn out to be.

Living on the streets of Earth, in the Sol system, was hazardous to the youngsters health, but through various charities, Thomas expert manipulation over people, and a few tight escapes, they Markin brothers were able to carve a meager living.

However, Thomas's goal was not for Jasen to live on the streets as an urchin, but be a respectable member of society, as his parents were. Knowing it was too late for redemption, Thomas left his brother in the care of a few friends, while he try to make a living as a freelancer.

As he became more well known, and better paid, Thomas was finally able to send money back to his brother. Little did he know, Jasen had become adapt at escaping from tight situations, and the average police officer. With two forms of cash flow, Jasen began to build a small gang of thugs and thieves that would steal from various people, break into houses, and offer their protection services from the other gangs in the cities.

This didn't last long though, as when Jasen was arrested for larceny, his gang abandoned him, leaving a deep hate for his former comrades.

Thomas Markin on the other hand was doing splendid. He had made a few contacts in the Verge and was working for the Borealins in their special services personnel as a mercenary. His talents at shooting, intimidating, and his general strength made him a great asset to them.

However, Thomas was always dreaming of bigger and better

things. He started frequenting various taverns, pubs, and other hangouts of various crime lords.

That is where he met Nuki Fal, a Fraal of strange tastes, a Fraal that enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, and mostly enjoyed the end of smoking gun. In an instant, Thomas was inspired to create a Mercenary unit, however, he need more people.

His bar hopping would lead him to yet another asset to his plan, a female Sesheyan by the name of Sasha'Sheya, or Sasha for short. Sasha first caught his attention when she killed a man by blasting him with fire, and from that point on he was drawn to her in a way he hadn't been drawn to anyone in his life. This of course made Nuki a tad jealous of all the attention that Thomas was giving the Sesheyan, however he would never act on his jealousy.

His dream would lead him to met only few more people, a Weren, a Mechalus, and a T'sa. When asked why he chose the members of the team, Thomas often joked that he enjoyed such a mixed group, because it allowed him to study the various races.

However, he was still thinking of his brother's well-being, so he had secretly planned on betraying them and relieving them of their money and going home to his brother.

Jasen, on the other hand, was just being released from a federal prison after serving four years. He was out for revenge, but knew he wouldn't be able to fulfill his want with only himself, not when he had been cooped up for four years, and his former comrades had been refining their skills in that time.

He had just gone back to Thomas's friend on Earth, when he received word that Thomas was returning home.

After brief introductions, a little arguing, and some agreements, Thomas convinced Jasen to return with him to the Verge, and leave Earth for good. Thomas had made it good in the years he had been away from Jasen, and had bought Jasen his own estate on Aegis.

Little time was taken to welcome Jasen to his new house, when the group, calling themselves the Silver Crusaders, left. It would be three years before Jasen would hear any news about his brother.

Three weeks after leaving Jasen on Aegis, there would be a turn in the Black Stallion's history. While on Nova Station,



by Dragan Ciric

Thomas Markin had become inebriated, and got a tattoo of a black stallion on his shoulder. When he released what had happened the next morning, he had decided to change the mercenary unit's name, from the Silver Crusaders to the Black Stallions.

It was also rumored that Thomas and Sasha, while drunk, had been married, but there are no official records to support the claims.

A year passed when the Stallions were offered their largest job, a job against a Concord military vessel. The hit was to disable the ship, pacify the crew, and retrieve a small amount of data, and return it to their employer.

It was, however, a set up. The Concordian military was prepared for a strike from one vessel. However, the Mechalus pilot working for Thomas was able to outmaneuver their every shot, and managed to complete the objective. Once the ship was disabled, and furious firefight erupted, however while some Stallions were wounded, they sustained no casualties.

After the crew of the Concordian ship was pacified, the data was retrieved and they returned to their employer. The data was taken from them, and they were sent on their way, without their money. Insisting that they receive their money, Thomas shot and killed their employer and took all the money he had in his office, and took the stolen data.

This made enemies of the criminal organization, who leaked the identities of the thieves to the military unit under the command of the Concord Captain Howard G. Hollis. Unfortunately for the organization Hollis thought it prudent to leave no witnesses, and the special forces under the ruthless Captain systematically silenced the members of the organization to the last person.

After the organization was destroyed, Hollis began his pursuit of the Black Stallions. Their chase would trail all over the Verge in only a year and a half time.

However, the Black Stallion's luck would run out over the air of Aegis, while trying to seek help from Jasen. A guided missile destroyed the Stallion's engines, causing them to become derelict.

The Concordian unit, under Captain Hollis command, boarded the derelict vessel, and began their search for the data.

Their approach to the search, however, was not to Thomas's liking, and when he began to argue, Captain Hollis ordered for the prisoners to be exterminated. Nuki didn't take to that kindly and began shooting the boarding marines, which caused gunfire to erupt in the ship's cargo hold.

During the firefight, Thomas took notice of a sniper aiming for his favorite member of the group, Sasha'Sheya, and took the bullet in the chest. The wound was too deep and in a vital spot for Hara'Nar, the T'sa medic, to be of any help.

Another casualty was their Weren Mindwalker, Chez, a recent member to their crew, but his loss was felt. His demise was overshadowed, however, by Thomas's death.

The remaining Stallions blasted their way into the Concordian vessel and hijacked it. Their trip would lead them straight to Jasen Markin.

Soon after their arrival at Jasen's estate, the group mourned him. Jasen Markin, after a life of loss and betrayal, vowed to avenge Thomas's death, and destroy the Concordian Captain, his crew, and his family.

Now lead by Jasen Markin, the Black Stallions have been known to attack Concordian vessels with their vessel, kill the people inside, and leave the derelict ship for pirates to loot.

Adventuring as the Black Stallions

The idea behind the Black Stallions Mercenary unit is not to always be against them, but to also play them. Players should be encouraged to play the characters to the fullest, to really get an understanding for the life of a member of the Verge's underworld.

Their main goal should be after Captain H. G. Hollis, luring him in by committing various crimes in the Verge. However, do not be discouraged to have them find Capt. Hollis, who may have been increased in rank by then, because as mercenaries, the Black Stallions have large number of possibilities open to them.

Captain Hollis

There are a few things of note when talking about Black Stallions. Capt. Hollis has been called ruthless and heartless. He has been passed over for promotions because those in higher command

have seen him as such and had determined that he was unfit for any higher command.

However, more large criminal organizations have been removed from power by his hand alone than all the other Concordian officers in the Verge combined. However, it's considered a death trap to work under Capt. Hollis, and he has lost more troops than all the other Concordian Marine Officers in the Verge, combined. His troops call him "Killer Bee", as he is always looking for somewhere to place his deadly sting.

It is currently unknown how he has taken the hijacking of one of his gunboats, however he has mentioned his disgust in his crew for only killing 2 of the mercenaries, and he loosing 10 of his men.

Dark Collide

The Dark Collide is the Black Stallions current ship, Modified from the Concordian gunboat they stole before. The weapons have been replaced with more, smaller scale weapons, but the total impact packs a more powerful punch. Also, the armor has been replaced with Light Cerametal armor to make room for a Star* Drive.

The accommodations aren't of the best quality, but the crew lives it, they have to get their revenge, or by necessity.

One of their favorite tactics is to record a distress signal after attacking a ship, playing it later and letting the Concord fall into a trap. The crew is usually held captive until more ships arrive, and if Capt. Hollis isn't on board, then they drop into starfall and leave the crew floating in space.

Another tactic that they like to do is to disable a Concordian Vessel and leave it derelict, and send a 'free for all' out in radio waves.

"Thank you for you time." The man leaned back and dropped a few Concordian dollars on the table. "This information will be most helpful to us."

"Hey, I didn't get your name." The drunk protested, but stuffed the money into his pocket.

"Howard, Howard Giles Hollis." The man said as he stood from his chair, looked around, reached into his coat and produced a pistol...

Hara'Nar

Species: T'sa **Gender:** Male

Profession: Tech Op **Career:** Mercenary

Attributes: Helping Others, Honorable, Rash, Illogical

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res Mod
Strength	9	4	0
Dexterity	11	5	+1
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	13	6	+2
Will	9	4	0
Personality	10	5	

ACTION CHECK (die -d4)

Mar 14+ Ord 13 Good 6 Amaz 3

Actions Per Round 2

Last Resorts/Cost 1/3

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint: 20 Run: 12 Walk: 4 Easy Swim: 2

DURABILITY

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	10	□□□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□
Fatigue	4	□□□□

ATTACK	Score	Base Type	Range	Damage
Dait'sya	10/5/2	+d0 LI/O	Personal	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w

DEFENSE

+2 vs. Ranged Weapons (+1 from Reflexes)

+2 vs. INT encounter skills

T'sa Natural armor (Ordinary): d4+1(LI), d4(HI), d4-1(EN)

PERKS: Ambidextrous, Reflexes

FLAWS: Code Of Honor, Powerful Enemy (Concordian Patrols)

SKILLS

STR

Athletics 9/4/2-climb 10/5/2, jump 10/5/2, throw 10/5/2
Melee Weapons 9/4/2-blade 10/5/2

DEX

Manipulation 11/5/2

CON

Stamina 8/4/2-endurance 9/4/2

INT

Knowledge 13/6/3
Medical Science 13/6/3-forensics 14/7/3,
medical knowledge 14/7/3, surgery 14/7/3,
treatment 14/7/3, xenomedicine 14/7/3

WIL

Awareness 9/4/2-intuition 10/5/2, perception 10/5/2
Resolve 9/4/2-mental 10/5/2, physical 10/5/2

PER

Interaction 10/5/2-charm, 11/5/2, interview 11/5/2

NOTES

Tech Op Accelerated Learning: see chart in PH pg 32 when advancing in levels

T'sa Juryrig Bonus: -1 step to Technical Science-juryrig skill check

Background

Hara'Nar was taught as a doctor from the best xeno-medical facility in the T'sa Cluster. While not the top student in his class, he was one of the best in the field.

Denied every job at every institution that he applied for in the T'sa Cluster because of his fanatical want to save every person he came across, he went outside the T'sa Cluster, and had problems finding work, because he was seen as a normal T'sa. So he moved to the Verge, where there was bound to be some help needed.

He had just arrived and had gone to a tavern for an off-ship drink when he met a man named Thomas Markin. He was looking for someone just like Hara, a medic who was good in a firefight, so Hara signed on with him, and the chief, and only, medical advisor.

However not the best job he could have asked for, but the pay was good and he had minimal when he wanted to help someone that a member of the team had shot. His biggest problem was Nuki...but Nuki eventually came to terms with it.

It wasn't until that faithful day when Capt. Hallis boarded their ship, and then Thomas shot, and he was unable to help him, Hara started to hate the Concord.

Physical Description

Looking like any other male T'sa with a Black Stallions tattoo on his left shoulder, and a + on his right shoulder. Hara'Nar is the most normal looking of the entire Black Stallion crew.

Personality

Hara is a firm believer in the Hippocratic Oath, and is usually very rash when it comes to helping people. He'll run in the middle of a firefight to help someone, however, that is why he's glad he's a T'sa.

He is friendly and kind whenever not in combat, then he is more worried about others than himself.

He tries not to hold grudges, but when Thomas was killed, he called for blood, and is still calling for blood. Thomas Markin had shown him that humans can be kind, and then a human killed him because he didn't want his ship searched. Revenge is the second thing on his mind, helping the others get that revenge is first.

Equipment

MCI Life Support Pack, Medcare One First Aid Kit, Surgical Kit, Trauma Pack I, Trauma Pack II, Standard First Aid Kit, Medical Gauntlet, Good. All medical gear goes in a side bag with a red cross on it, it was stolen from someone.



Hara'Nar skills at level 6

STR

Athletics 9/4/2-climb 10/5/2, jump 11/5/2, throw 11/5/2
Melee Weapons-blade 13/6/3

DEX

Manipulation 11/5/2

CON

Stamina 8/4/2-endurance 10/5/2

INT

Medical Knowledge 13/6/3-forensics 14/7/3,
medical knowledge 16/8/4, surgery 15/7/3,
treatment 16/8/4, xenomedicine 17/8/4

WIL

Awareness 9/4/2-intuition 10/5/2, perception 12/6/3
Resolve 9/4/2-mental 12/6/3, physical 10/5/2

PER

Interaction-charm 14/7/3, interview 11/5/2

Jasen Markin

Species: Human **Gender:** Male

Profession: Free Agent **Career:** Infiltrator

Attributes: On A Mission, Worldly, Energetic, Angry

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res Mod
Strength	9	4	+0
Dexterity	12	6	+2
Constitution	9	4	
Intelligence	12	6	+1
Will	10	5	+0
Personality	9	4	

ACTION CHECK (die -d4)

Actions Per Round 2

Mar 15+ Ord 14 Good 7 Amaz 3

Last Resorts/Cost 2/3

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint: 20 Run: 12 Walk: 4 Easy Swim: 2

DURABILITY

Stun	10	□□□□□□□□□□
Wound	9	□□□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□□
Fatigue	5	□□□□□□

ATTACK	Score	Base Type	Range	Damage
Unarmed	9/4/2	+d4 LI/O	Personal	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
Com. knife	10/5/2	+d0 LI/O	9/18/36	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w
Chrg. Pistol	13/6/3	+d0 HI/O	8/16/60	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m

DEFENSE

+2 vs. Ranged Weapons (+1 for Free Agent Bonus)

+1 vs. INT encounter skills

CF Longcoat (Ordinary): d4(LI), d4(HI), d6-2(En)

PERKS: Ambidextrous, Vigor (stun)

FLAWS: Obsessed [Revenge on Concord, 4 pt], Powerful Enemy [Concordian Patrols]

SKILLS

STR

Athletics 9/4/2-*climb* 10/5/2
Melee Weapons 9/4/2-*blade* 10/5/2
Unarmed Attack 9/4/2

DEX

Manipulation 12/6/3-*prestidigitation* 13/6/3,
Modern Ranged Weapons 12/6/3-*pistol* 13/6/3
Stealth 12/6/3
Vehicle Operation 12/6/3-*land vehicle* 13/6/3

CON

Stamina 9/4/2

INT

Knowledge 12/6/3-*first aid* 13/6/3
Security 12/6/3-*security devices* 13/6/3

WIL

Awareness 10/5/2-*intuition* 11/5/2, *perception* 11/5/2

PER

Interaction 9/4/2-*interview* 10/5/2, *intimidate* 10/5/2

NOTES

Borealin Citizen: starts with a moderate (+4) Obsessed flaw
Borealin Citizen: +1 to INT for free
Borealin Citizen: INT max of 15

Background

Jasen Markin was first introduced to the mercenary lifestyle at the early age of 15. His brother, Thomas "Slit" Markin (known for slitting throats), became infamous in the mercenary books. That is how Jasen came to know his crew.

A few years ago, "Slit" was killed in a Concordian raid, and the team, wounded, visited Jasen for help. After receiving medical attention, Jasen vowed to kill the bastards that killed his brother. He now travels with the Black Stallions to achieve his goal.

Physical Description

Jasen Markin is of slight build, and is light on his feet, like his brother, so he was trained in the stealthy arts. He has light brown hair, emerald green eyes, and the look of a man on a mission.

His usual attire includes a pair of black khaki pants, a metallic green muscle shirt, and military grade combat boots. He also sometimes wears a black leather jacket. He keeps his guns in a back holster, his knife in a sheath at his waist and a pair of shades.

He has a tattoo of the Black Stallions on his left shoulder and his brother's name, in Weren, on his right shoulder.

Personality

The younger of the Markin brothers was always a kind kid, and bit hyper. He always liked moving, even when moving wasn't appropriate. His parents always said his mind was moving faster than him. Recently, however, he has become a somewhat colder person. He kills without regret and strives for one goal.

Equipment

Belt with Knife sheath, Shoulder Holsters for his two guns, CF Longcoat, Standard First Aid Kit, Various Survival Gear in a backpack.



Jasen Markin's skills at level 5

STR

Athletics 9/4/2-*climb* 11/5/2
Melee Weapons 9/4/2-*blade* 11/5/2
Unarmed Attack 9/4/2-*power martial arts* 10/5/2

DEX S

Manipulation 12/6/3-*prestidigitation* 14/7/3
Modern Ranged Weapons 12/6/3-*pistol* 14/7/3
Stealth 12/6/3-*sneak* 13/6/3
Vehicle Operation 12/6/3-*land vehicle* 13/6/3

CON

Stamina 9/4/2

INT

Knowledge 12/6/3-*first aid* 14/7/3
Security 12/6/3-*security devices* 15/7/3

WIL

Awareness 10/5/2-*intuition* 11/5/2, *perception* 11/5/2

PER

Interaction 9/4/2-*interview* 10/5/2, *intimidate* 11/5/2

Nuki Fal

Species: Fraal **Gender:** Male

Profession: Combat Spec **Career:** Mercenary

Attributes: Loose End, Apathetic, Rude, Hateful

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res Mod
Strength	11	5	+2
Dexterity	11	5	+1
Constitution	10	5	
Intelligence	11	5	+1
Will	9	4	0
Personality	8	4	

ACTION CHECK (die d0) Actions Per Round 2
 Mar 15+ Ord 14 Good 7 Amaz 3 Last Resorts/Cost 1/3

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint: 24 Run: 14 Walk: 4 Easy Swim: 2

DURABILITY

Stun	10	□□□□□□□□□□
Wound	10	□□□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□
Fatigue	5	□□□□□

Psi Points: 9 □□□□□□□□□□

ATTACK	Score	Base Type	Range	Damage
Com knife	5/2/1	+d4 L/O	11/22/44	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+4w
Sab Cannon	13/6/3	-d4 H/G	100/200/2000	d8w/d4+1m/d6+2m
Gren Launch	13/6/3	-d4 En/G	40/240/480	As Load

DEFENSE

+2 vs. Melee Attacks (+1 from Tough as Nails)
 +1 vs. Ranged Weapons
 +1 vs. INT encounter skills

PERKS: Well Traveled, Tough as Nails

FLAWS: Powerful Enemy (Concordian Patrols) 4, Infamy 6,
 Old Injury 4 (left hip)

SKILLS

STR

Armor Operation 11/5/2
 Athletics 11/5/2-climb 12/6/3, throw 12/6/3
 Heavy Weapons 11/5/3-direct fire 13/6/3

DEX

Vehicle Operation 11/5/3-land vehicle 12/6/3

INT

Knowledge 11/5/2

WIL

Awareness 9/4/2
 Resolve 9/4/2-mental 10/5/2, physical 10/5/2

PER

Interaction 8/4/2-intimidation 9/4/2,
 Telepathy 8/4/2-contact 9/4/2, mind blast 9/4/2,
 mind shield 9/4/2, suggest 9/4/2, tire 9/4/2

NOTES

-1 bonus to Heavy Weapons (Combat Spec bonus)

Background

Not the typical Fraal by any means, Nuki rebelled against the 'fascist' nation of the Fraal and ran away after being a part of a demolitions demonstration resulting in the deaths of nearly all of the demonstrators and a few officials.

Shortly after, Nuki met Thomas Markin and joined him to start a mercenary group. He was one of the first to join, and knew Thomas the longest. Thomas encouraged his militant behavior and boosted his confidence.

However, when Thomas met his end at the hands of the Concordians, Nuki nearly left the group. That is, until he met Thomas's brother, Jasen.

Physical Description

Strong build by Fraal standards, and knows how to carry a gun. He shaves his head, hides his eye color and doesn't take 'No' for an answer.

Proud of his scars and tattoos, Nuki wears a pair of tattered spacer's pants and a bandolier to hold his sabot cannon rounds. His sabot cannon is slung around one shoulder, while the grenade launcher is strapped to his back. He wears colored contacts, or glasses to hide his eye color.

He has the Black Stallion tattoo on his left shoulder, Fraal obscenity tattooed all over his arms, and Fraal holy symbol on his right shoulder. He has multiple scars all over his body. A few that he's proudest of are: the 3 inch explosion scar on his chest and the 1 inch scar over his eye. It missed his eye.

Personality

Unlike most Fraal, Nuki is very rude and always holds a grudge. During shore leave, he is likely to be found at either a bar, or a brothel. Aside from his aggressive behavior, Nuki seems not to have a soft spot, even during his most intimate of intimates.

Recently, he has become more aggressive and agitated because of Thomas Markin's death. He has sworn to get his vengeance along with Thomas's brother.

Equipment

Several different grenades for launcher on a bandoiler that also holds his launcher, back pack with a bedroll, flares and a few glow-sticks.



Nuki Fal's skills at level 8

STR

Armor Operation 11/5/2
 Athletics 11/5/2-climb 12/6/3, throw 12/6/3
 Heavy Weapons 11/5/3-direct fire 20/10/5

DEX

Vehicle Operation 11/5/3-land vehicle 12/6/3

INT

Knowledge 11/5/2

WIL

Awareness
 Resolve 9/4/2-mental 11/5/2, physical 11/5/2

PER

Interaction 8/4/2-intimidation 12/6/3
 Telepathy 8/4/2-contact 11/5/2, mind blast 11/4/2,
 mind shield 9/4/2, suggest 11/5/2, tire 10/5/2

Achievement Bonuses

Action Check Increase 16+/15/7/3, Action Check Bonus -d4

Sashe'Sheya

Species: Sesheyan **Gender:** Female

Profession: Diplomat (CS) **Career:** Mercenary

Attributes: Personal Power, Corrupt, Selfish, Religious

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res Mod
Strength	9	4	0
Dexterity	10	5	0
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	12	6	+1
Will	9	4	0
Personality	12	6	

ACTION CHECK (die d0)

Mar 13+ Ord 12 Good 6 Amaz 3

Actions Per Round 2

Last Resorts/Cost 2/2

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint: 24 Run: 14 Walk: 4 Easy Swim: 2

DURABILITY

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□
Fatigue	4	□□□□

Psi Points: 4 □□□□ **FX Points (opt):** 5 □□□□□

ATTACK	Score	Base Type	Range	Damage
Unarmed	10/5/2	+d0 LI/O	Personal	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
T-Bar Blade	10/5/2	+d0 LI/G	Personal	d6w/d6+1w/d4m

DEFENSE

+2 vs. Melee Attacks (+1 from Tough as Nails)

+1 vs. Ranged Weapons

+1 vs. INT encounter skills

PERKS: Danger Sense, Vigor (Mortal), Contact

FLAWS: Powerful Enemy (Concordian Patrols), Infamy (Being cruel during interrogations, being a mercenary), Obsessed (Getting Rich)

SKILLS

STR

Melee Weapons 9/4/2-blade 10/5/2

Unarmed Attack 9/4/2-brawl 10/5/2

DEX

Acrobatics 10/5/2-flight 11/5/2

Telekinetics* 10/5/2-pyrokinesis 13/6/3

CON

Stamina 8/4/2-endurance 9/4/2

INT

Knowledge 12/6/3

WIL

Awareness 9/4/2-intuition 10/5/2, perception 10/5/2

PER

Deception 12/6/3-bluff 13/6/3, bribe 13/6/3

Interaction 12/6/3-bargain 13/6/3, interview 13/6/3, intimidate 13/6/3

Leadership 12/6/3-command 13/6/3

FX (Optional)

Pyromancy* 9/4/2-fiery bolt 10/5/2, fire wall 10/5/2, incendiary seal 10/5/2

*Sasha is a psionic talent whose primary skill is pyrokinesis. If the GM allows FX in the Star Drive campaign the player may use Pyromancy instead of pyrokinesis. Sasha would have 5 FX points.

NOTES

Sesheyan Flight Ability, Sesheyan Zero-G Training: equivalent of the Zero-G Training skill at rank 1

Sesheyan Falling: do not suffer impact damage if conscious and can use wings

Sesheyan Night Vision: ignore low illumination penalties



by Chris Campbell

Sesheyan Light Sensitivity:
+1/+2/+3 step penalty for ordinary/good/amazing illumination

Danger Sense: -2 step bonus to Awareness-Intuition checks

Background

Sasha was born on a merchant ship, and then left at the next starport. A member of the 'Holy Church of the Flames' picked her up and raised her. He named her Sashe'Sheya.

However, Sasha didn't care for the strict code of the church

so she left her adoptive father and headed out toward the stars. A few years of failed jobs, near death experiences, and wild parties, Sasha met a man named Thomas Markin, a man of great leadership ability and talent at killing people. It was the talent at killing people that attracted Sasha to Thomas.

They gallivanted around the Verge with a few others, acting like Mercenaries and Assassins with a few others. During their travels, they lost and gained a number of people, and soon started calling themselves the Black Stallions, named after a tattoo that Thomas got while drunk.

His death impacted Sasha as hard as anyone and wants vengeance. However, her greed for money and power still hold precedence.

Physical Description

Unlike most Sesheyan, Sasha likes to keep covered up. Instead of opting for the more comfortable primitive clothing, Sasha can usually be found donning a custom spacer's suit. She wears a knife belt at with a TN Blade at all times and very sturdy boots.

She has two Black Stallion tattoos, one on her right shoulder, and one on her left wing.

Personality

Greedy, as most people would flat out say. Sasha is greedy, she likes money, possessions, and power. It's become an obsession with her, a very hard obsession to break.

As far as the other people in the unit goes, she thinks of them not as friends, but as acquaintances. However, Thomas' brother, Jasen, is turning out to be a lot like his brother, and has a fire in him like his brother, and is finding herself drawn to him like she was with his brother.

Equipment

Belt with Sheath, back pack containing a small security box with lots of spare cash, a small key for security box, and various religious text.

Sasha'Sheya's skills at level 8

STR

Melee Weapons 9/4/2-blade 15/7/3

Unarmed Attack 9/4/2-brawl 12/6/3

DEX

Acrobatics 10/5/2-flight 13/6/3

Telekinetics* 10/5/2-pyrokinesis 13/6/3

CON

Stamina 8/4/2-endurance 10/5/2

INT

Knowledge 12/6/3

WIL

Awareness 9/4/2-intuition 12/6/3, perception 12/6/3

PER

Deception 12/6/3-bluff 18/9/4, bribe 15/7/3

Interaction 12/6/3-bargain 18/9/4, interview 15/7/3, intimidate 20/10/5

Leadership 12/6/3-command 13/6/3

FX (Optional)

Pyromancy* 9/4/2-fiery bolt 10/5/2, fire wall 10/5/2, incendiary seal 10/5/2

DRAGONS

by Dwayne Leonard • illustration by Dwayne Leonard

Dragon Lore

Before mankind existed there were the dragons. This is an excerpt of their legends that tell of Belhemonth their mother and how she sundered Dragon Kind for their petty bickering.

As the great egg hatched Belhemonth was born and with her came the rebirth of the Universe. Her cries of loneliness broke her shell and when it shattered the sky became full of stars. Still she was very lonely and laid many eggs. Some hatched and others did not and thus was born the race of Dragons.

After the skies were full of stars and her children flew amongst them Belhemonth made one of the unborn eggs into a world for her children to land. She cracked the shell and made mountains of it. She plucked forth one of her eyes and cast it into the night sky creating a moon for the world.

Realizing there was nothing for her children to do Belhemonth created all of the species of the world. Dogs, cats, birds, monkeys, snakes, and so on. To her children she decreed that it would be their job to watch over the world and to keep it from becoming overpopulated or corrupted.

In time one of the species of the became convinced that the dragons were gods. With the worship of these people the dragons too began to believe in their own divinity. After all why shouldn't dragons be divine they were created in the image of the Great Mother Belhemonth herself.

For their false belief in their own divinity Belhemonth cast them from the heavens and forever altered them. Some lost the power of flight, others became like giant snakes, some assumed the shape of turtles, and many other variations were inflicted upon them. All of this was their own fault for accepting the praise and worship for a species know as Man!!!



Description: Standard Dragons are large winged reptiles. Some have horns and others do not. From tip to tail they often exceed 10 meters in length. Their wingspan will usually extend almost twice this distance when fully extended.

Encounter: Dragons usually care little for interaction with other intelligent species. Often when dealing with other species they will simply ignore them unless directly threatened. Once threatened however dragons can become ferocious, but will flee rather than face certain death.

When forced to attack dragons will often single out one target for their aggression. They will first strike with both claws and if they succeed with both claws then the target is pinned beneath them. Until they can escape the target will receive an automatic bite attack each round. Dragons may alternately carry off any target that they have capture with their claws. Dragons who have a target pinned will use their breath weapon, bite, and tail to keep other attackers away.

Habitat and Society: The habitat occupied by a dragon depends on its type. Fire breathing dragons tend to live in warmer climates and frost breathing dragons prefer colder ones. When found though dragons will almost always lair in very mountainous regions regardless of their type.

Dragon society is broken down into clans. Clan members are almost always of the same color. Each clan is an extended family that will go out of its way to help and protect each other.

The clan leader is usually an old or ancient dragon who commands absolute authority over all of his or her subordinates. When the clan leader gives commands all of the dragons in that clan are bound by it.

Each clan has a code of ethics or rules that it follows. Depending on the clan this could be very good for the nearby villages and people or very bad. Some clans are very peaceful and will not hurt the locals while other clans view nearby people as just another food source.

Dragon Game Data

Dragons become more powerful as they age. The following stat blocks are average examples of these great beasts at different age levels



Dragon Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series 1

Environment: Class 1

GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P2/H2

Biome: By Dragon Type

Encounter Chance: Rare

Group Size: 1-2 [1d4/2]

Organization: Solitary

Niche: Predator

Intelligence: Sentient

Young

Age: 201-400 Years Old

STR 17 INT 11
DEX 13 WIL 13
CON 15 PER 9

Durability: 22/22/11/7 Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: Sprint 30, Run 20, Walk 8, Fly 80 # Actions: 3

Reaction: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite	19/9/5	d6w/2d4w/d6m	LI/O
Claw(x2)	19/9/5	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4m	LI/O
Tail Lash	17/8/4	d8s/d12s/d6w	LI/O
Breath	19/9/5	Damage is by Dragon Type	

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. WIL encounter skills
+1 resistance modifier vs. INT encounter skills
Armor (Ordinary): d6+3 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Acrobatics [13]-flight [14]; Stealth [13]-hide[14], sneak[14];
Stamina [15]-resist pain [16], endurance [16];
Navigation [11]-surface [13]; Investigate [13]-track [14];
Awareness [13]-perception [14], intuition [14];
Resolve [13]-mental [14], physical [14];
Interaction [9]-intimidate [13]

Hatchling

Age: 1-200 Years Old

STR 16 INT 10
DEX 12 WIL 12
CON 14 PER 8

Durability: 21/21/11/7 Action Check: 12+/11/5/3

Move: sprint 28, run 18, walk 6, Fly 76 #Actions: 3

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite	18/9/4	d6w/2d4w/d6m	LI/O
Claw(x2)	18/9/4	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4m	LI/O
Tail Lash	16/8/4	d8s/d12s/d6w	LI/O
Breath	18/9/4	Damage is by Dragon Type	

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. WIL encounter skills
Armor (Ordinary): d6+3 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Acrobatics [12]-flight [13]; Stealth [12]-hide[13], sneak[13];
Stamina [14]-resist pain [15], endurance [15];
Navigation [10]-surface [12]; Investigate [12]-track [13];
Awareness [12]-perception [13], intuition [13]; Resolve [12];
Interaction [8]-intimidate [12]

Adult

Age: 401-800 Years Old

STR 18 INT 12
DEX 13 WIL 14
CON 16 PER 10

Durability: 24/24/12/8 Action Check: 14+/13/7/4

Move: Sprint 30/ Run 20/ Walk 8/ Fly 84 # Actions: 3

Reaction: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite	20/10/5	d6w/2d4w/d6m	LI/O
Claw(x2)	20/10/5	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4m	LI/O
Tail Lash	18/9/4	d8s/d12s/d6w	LI/O
Breath	20/10/5	Damage is by Dragon Type	

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. WIL encounter skills
+1 resistance modifier vs. INT encounter skills
Armor (Good): d6+3 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Acrobatics [13]-flight [14]; Stealth [13]-hide[14], sneak[14];
Stamina [16]-resist pain [17], endurance [17];
Navigation [12]-surface [14]; Investigate [14]-track [15];
Awareness [14]-perception [15], intuition [15];
Resolve [14]-mental [15], physical [15];
Interaction [10]-intimidate [14]

Old

Age: 801-1600 Years Old

STR 19 INT 13
DEX 14 WIL 15
CON 17 PER 11

Durability: 24/24/12/8 Action Check: 14+/13/7/4
Move: Sprint 30, Run 20, Walk 8, Fly 88 # Actions: 3
Reaction: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite	21/10/5	d6w/2d4w/d6m	L/O
Claw(x2)	21/10/5	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4m	L/O
Tail Lash	18/9/4	d8s/d12s/d6w	L/O
Breath	21/10/5	Damage is by Dragon	

Defenses

+5 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+3 resistance modifier vs. WIL encounter skills
+2 resistance modifier vs. INT encounter skills
Armor [Good]: d6+3 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Acrobatics [14]-*flight* [15]; Stealth [14]-*hide* [15], *sneak* [15];
Stamina [17]-*resist pain* [18], *endurance* [18];
Navigation [13]-*surface* [14]; Investigate [15]-*track* [16];
Awareness [15]-*perception* [16], *intuition* [16];
Resolve [15]-*mental* [16], *physical* [16];
Interaction [11]-*intimidate* [15]

Ancient

Age: 1601 or More Years Old

STR 20 INT 14
DEX 14 WIL 16
CON 18 PER 12

Durability: 24/24/12/8 Action Check: 14+/13/7/4
Move: Sprint 32, Run 22, Walk 10, Fly 80 # Actions: 3
Reaction: Good/3 Last resorts: 1

Attacks

Bite	22/11/5	d6w/2d4w/d6m	L/O
Claw(x2)	22/11/5	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4m	L/O
Tail Lash	20/10/5	d8s/d12s/d6w	L/O
Breath	22/11/5	Damage is by Dragon	

Defenses

+5 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
+3 resistance modifier vs. WIL encounter skills
+2 resistance modifier vs. INT encounter skills
Armor [Amazing]: d6+3 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En)

Skills

Acrobatics [14]-*flight* [15]; Stealth [14]-*hide* [15], *sneak* [15];
Stamina [18]-*resist pain* [19], *endurance* [19];
Navigation [14]-*surface* [15]; Investigate [16]-*track* [17];
Awareness [16]-*perception* [17], *intuition* [17];
Resolve [16]-*mental* [17], *physical* [17];
Interaction [12]-*intimidate* [16]

Dragon Special Abilities

While there are many types of dragons here is a breakdown of the special abilities common to dragons and then extra special abilities of two of the more common dragon types.

Common Dragon Special Abilities

- Keen Eyesight: -2 bonus to vision-based awareness rolls
- Darkvision: No penalties for complete darkness.
- Improved Action Check: -1 Bonus to Action Check for Adult Dragons, -2 for Old and a -3 for Ancient
- Breath Weapon: Determined by Dragon Type.

Red Dragons Special Abilities

- Fire Resistance: Armor provides an additional 2 points defense vs. fire-based damage
- Fire Breath: The breath weapon possessed by a Red Dragon is the ability to shoot fire. Unlike legends however they do not shoot jets of continuous flames. Red Dragons instead shoot balls of super heated plasma that explodes on impact. This ball affects everything within a 5 meter diameter of the targeted area. The range of this attack is 30/60/120 meters.

Once hit or within the area of effect characters Con Feat roll vs. Fire Damage. Damage is determined by Table G16: Fire Damage (GMG page 59). The age of the dragon affects the characters Con Feat Roll: Hatchling -2 Bonus, Young -1 Bonus, Adult no bonus, Old +1 Penalty, Ancient +2 Penalty.

Black Dragons Special Abilities

- Acid Resistance: Black Dragons being acid-based are exceptionally resistant to acid and acid based weapons. Young and Hatchling Black Dragons have a -1 bonus to any rolls involving acid or acid based weapons. Adult and Old dragons are exceptionally more resistant and have a -2 bonus vs. acid or acid based weaponry. Ancient dragons have a -3 bonus vs. acid and acid based weapons.
- Acid Breath: Black Dragons are able to spit acid with extreme accuracy. Normally this attack hits only a single target but everything within a 5 meter diameter of the target will most probably be splashed with acid as well. The range of this attack is 20/40/80 meters.

Damage for this attack is determined by consulting table G14: Acid Damage (GMG page 57). The target must make a Con Feat Roll vs. Immersion while those people around target must make a Con Feat Roll vs. a Splash. The age of the Dragon affects the amount of damage that the dragons acid does. Hatchling and Young dragons do d4 damage, Adult and Old dragons do d6 damage, and Ancient Dragons do d8 damage.

CHAWAS

by Daryl Blasi • illustration by Daryl Blasi

"Fresh meat about a kilometer from here", Presh Swee-Tah mind-spoke to the others. He was chief tracker and hunter of his chawa packclan.

Shugarr jumped excitedly about on all fours and yipped. This was her first hunt and she wanted to do well.

"Hush you damn pup!" Presh Swee-Tah flooded her mind. "You'll give us away. Those damn longears will hear your yapping."

Presh Swee-Tah moved to front of the chawas and signaled for the others to spread out in two hunting packs. There were two hoops cooking a humanoid just beyond the valley, oblivious to the chawas' presence. He was going to hit them quickly and hopefully take them both down with no chawa casualties. He prided himself on his safety record but there was always a first time.

"Pun Kin and Snugg will be throatbiters this time. Follow their lead. Shugarr, stay back until the longears are weakened from the attack. I don't want you getting killed on your first hunt." Presh Swee-Tah knew that in the excitement of the hunt, newbies often broke from the groupmind giving into their natural bloodlust and making themselves vulnerable.

"The hunt is life," Presh Swee-Tah whispered in the chawa tongue.

"Blessed be the hunt," the pack answered.

THESE humanoid mutated chihuahuas have developed into vicious fighters with mental mutations that make them quite dangerous in large numbers. They are quite sensitive about their size and take special pleasure in bringing down bigger creatures in combat.

Description: Chawas stand almost a meter tall and look very much like large Chihuahuas with hands capable of using tools. They have very short fur and their coats vary in hue from tan to reddish brown to dark brown. Most chawas have various piercings in their ears and body, using bone or metal decorations. Some tribes of chawa even use brands to make distinct markings to indicate their status in the tribe. Chawas don't usually wear clothes but they will wear special hide armor equal to a leather coat when hunting or going to battle.

Encounters: Chawas are cunning hunters and will use their stealth and numbers to perform ambush attacks. Before they go in for the kill they will activate their Hyper Metabolism. If there is more than one chawa they can use a special mental power called the Harmony Link that greatly increases the group's effectiveness in a fight. Chawas are fond of using javelins in battle, both as ranged weapons to bring down prey



from a distance and as melee weapons for close-quarters battle. If they have no weapons they will use their sharp teeth to bite.

Habitat/Society: Chawas live in tribes called packclans ruled by warrior priest leaders called presh. Presh are usually the best hunters of the tribe and gain their position by challenging the current leader with a ritual hunting contest that often leads to the death of one of the participants.

Chawas are raised from a young age to believe in hunting as a spiritual experience that brings them closer to the divine. They are taught to believe that spirits of the hunt guide the Chawa hunters to prey and feed on the life force of the hunters' victims. They also believe that the Harmony Link power is a gift from these spirits.

Chawas are nomadic in nature and they prefer to live in warmer climates. Male and female chawas perform the same functions in their culture as hunters and warriors.

Adventure Hooks: While traveling the wildlands the heroes come upon a lone chawa who is severely injured from a spear wound. The chawa pleads for help, asking for food and water. If the heroes help the chawa he will ask to travel with the heroes away from the area. What the heroes don't know is they are being observed by other chawas. The injured chawa was a challenger for the leadership of a chawa tribe

and was bested by the old leader and left to die during a ritual hunt. By interfering with the ritual contest the heroes are now marked for death by the chawa packclan, which gathers hunting parties to bring down the violators of the holy hunt. If the heroes are able to successfully evade the chawas for one day the packclan will let them go. Chawas believe that prey that can avoid their hunt for one day are blessed by the spirits and must be allowed to escape.



Chawa Game Data

STR 9 (d6+5) INT 10 (2d4+5)
 DEX 15 (d4+12) WIL 11 (d6+8)
 CON 8 (d4+5) PER 10 (d8+5)
 Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action Check: 15+/14/7/3
 Move: sprint 44, run 28, walk 8 #Actions: 2
 Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2
 Mutations: Hyper metabolism, Contact, Harmony Link
 Perks: Action Check Bonus, -d4 due to quickness
 Flaws: Blood lust

Attacks

Bite	12/6/3	d0	LI/O	Personal	d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w
Javelin(throw)	12/6/3	d0	LI/O	13/27/54	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w
Javelin(melee)	11/5/2	d0	LI/O	Personal	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w
Dagger	11/5/2	d0	LI/O	Personal	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
 +1 WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills
 Leather Coat: d6-3 (LI), d4-3 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills

STR: Athletics [9]-*jump* [12], *throw* [12]; Melee [9]-*blade* [11]; *Unarmed attack* [9]-*bite* [12], *brawl* [10]
DEX: Acrobatics [15]-*dodge* [17]; Stealth [15]-*hide* [16], *shadow* [16], *sneak* [16]
CON: Stamina [8]-*endurance* [9]; Survival [8]-*training* [10]
INT: Knowledge [10]-*Language* [Chawa] [13]
WIL: Awareness [11]-*intuition* [13], *perception* [15]; Investigate [11]-*track* [14]; Resolve [11]-*mental* [12], *physical* [12]
PER: Interaction [10]

Chawa Names

Chawas have a list of traditional names that they choose from when naming a newborn pup. Rarely does a chawa deviate from this naming system. The following list shows example of these names. All names are gender neutral so there is no difference in Male and Female naming.

Beebo	Nibos	Sheeshee
Choowa	Pakano	Shugarr
Duka	Po Kee	Snugg
Jo Joh	Prin Zahs	Swee Tah
Kyu Tee	Pun Kin	Woogam

Harmony Link

Unique Chawa Mutation

This power increases the chawas' ability to fight other creatures by coordinating attacks and defenses with a special mental link, while preventing their natural Blood Lust from manifesting. Up to six chawas can link in this way. When this power is activated a Personality feat check or Leadership-command skill check is made by the primary attacker, which is called a throatbiter by the chawas. On an Ordinary success all chawa fighters get a -1 bonus, on a Good they receive a -2 bonus, while an Amazing gives a -3 bonus. In addition they increase their resistance modifiers to both melee attacks and ranged attacks according to the same skill check; +1 for Ordinary, +2 for Good, and +3 for Amazing. In the event the throatbiter rolls a Failure, each of the chawas in the Harmony Link must make a Mental-resolve check or their Blood Lust is triggered increasing their attack bonus by -1 but instilling a -3 bonus to any attacker attempting to hit them. Any unaffected chawa may attempt to bring enraged chawas back into the Harmony Link by making a successful skill check, but with a +1 penalty for each enraged chawa. On a Critical Failure all of the chawas automatically give in to their Blood Lust and go into a reckless fury. Once the power is successfully activated the throatbiter must continue to make a skill check at the beginning of each round to maintain the link. This maintenance of the power does not count as an action. The new skill check determines the bonuses for the new combat round.

Blood Lust

Chawa Flaw

The chawas are a highly aggressive species and this flaw is a manifestation of their natural viciousness. The first time a chawa draws blood in a particular fight they must make a Mental-resolve check to avoid going into a reckless fury. This increases their attack bonus by -1 but lowers their resistance modifier versus attacks by -3. This Blood Lust stays until the battle is over. The chawa makes only one check per combat scene.

Plants: magical and mundane

by Derek Holland

Black Maple

Rarity: Rare

Environment: Temperate and Subtropical Forests

Lifespan: Perennial (tree)

Physical Description: Black maples grow to 60 feet tall and have very small, dark blue leaves.

Game Use: Like the flaming pine, the black maple was developed to combat encroaching hordes of humanoids, including humans. The danger of the maple is in its leaves, they cause grasses, including grains, to die on contact. Since the tree loses its leaves two to three weeks before harvest, any nearby stands of black maples can devastate crop land. Also the leaves leave their toxin in the soil, so that only non-grasses can survive on the land for the next year. Most peasants are unaware of why their grains don't grow and either raise vegetables or call the land cursed and abandon it.

Blue Raspberry

Rarity: Rare

Environment: Temperate Forests

Lifespan: Perennial (shrub)

Physical Description: Raspberries have long stems called canes that are covered in long prickles (thorns). The leaves are dark green and the canes dark blue with splotches of light blue due to a white powder the plant produces. The fruit of this raspberry is midnight blue.

Game Use: Blue raspberries, along with green raspberries, were created to deal with the exploding population of humanoids. Any creature of the humanoid type that consume even one berry must make a Con feat check (2 step penalty) or be transformed into a

songbird permanently. For every 3 berries eaten in one mouthful over one, increase the step penalty by one. Druids plant these near large orc and goblin tribes and occasionally near a human city.

Flaming Pine

Rarity: Rare

Environment: Temperate and Subarctic Forests

Lifespan: Perennial (tree)

Physical Description: The flaming pine is a cursed version of the red pine. It grows up to 80 feet, but rarely lives this long. It has dark yellow-green needles that grow in groups of 2. The bark looks like large, red scales.

Game Use: The flaming pine was created by a druid that almost lost her forest to loggers. She was sickened by the whole sale destruction of the forest and thought of ways of driving the loggers out. She came up with a plan to make the trees useless to anyone who wanted to harvest them. Since the red pines were the most common of the surviving trees, she altered them by transforming the sap into a natural napalm- it burns in contact with air. When ever a flaming pine is cut it ignites and destroys itself- anyone within 3 meters takes flame damage (CF-A: 3d6w, 2d6w, d6w, d6s, no damage) and those in the clouds of smoke from the possible forest fire take inhalation damage (CF-A: 2d6s+ on fire next round, 2d6s, d6s, d4s, no damage). The bark is fire-proof and this keeps the forest from burning, but only in pure stands of flaming pine. Some creative people grow these trees as ways of defending communities. The pines grow in fire breaks around the village and when an attacking force appears, arrows are used to damage the pines and start

them burning. Most druids abhor these trees and use spells to kill them when found.

Fireflowers

Rarity: Very Rare

Environment: 90% Urban and 10% Grasslands

Lifespan: Perennial (shrub)

Physical Description: Fireflowers are small sunflowers that grow in clumps of three to five stalks, two to three feet tall. Unlike common sunflowers, fireflowers have very dark green leaves.

Game Use: Fireflowers were developed by an alchemist that wanted to use the ability of plants to collect sunlight. His sense of whimsy was the reason he chose the perennial form of sunflower. The plants are smaller than their unaltered kin because so much energy is collected in the seeds. But this also gives the plant two bonuses: they are evergreen (they don't die to the ground in the winter) and they grow four times as fast. The alchemist wanted a way of quickly starting a fire and got it. The seeds, when broken, explode into a six inch fireball that inflicts d4s. For those who use their teeth to crack the seed, they also lose their sense of taste for a day or two. These days alchemists and herbalists grow fireflowers for personal use and as a cash crop. Each seed can sell for 5 gp and will start a fire in all but the worst conditions.

Green Raspberry

Rarity: Uncommon

Environment: Temperate Forest

Lifespan: Perennial (shrub)

Physical Description: Raspberries have long stems called canes that are covered in long prickles (thorns). The leaves are dark green and the canes dark blue with splotches of light blue due to a white powder the plant produces. The

fruit of this raspberry is greenish blue.

Game Use: Green raspberry juice is a powerful drug. One berry can cause addiction and one mugful causes moderate alcohol poisoning, two and three mugs cause extreme alcohol poisoning and four causes death (as hemotoxin, 4 step penalty). But this drug only affects humanoids.

Greenthorn

Rarity: Common

Environment: Arctic Plains near large bodies of water

Lifespan: Perennial (shrub)

Physical Description: The greenthorn is a plant that has evolved in a location that receives glaze storms every spring. It has multiple stems that grow no more than 2 meters tall. To offset the problem of ice weight, the stems are quite thick, up to 10 cm, and very strong. Instead of normal branches and leaves, the greenthorn has sharp, green thorns up to .5 meters long. These plants are very slow growing and long lived- some reach 6000 years.

Game Use: Greenthorn is extremely dense and almost uncuttable. If a dead, rotting one was found, it could provide fuel for a fire that would last a very long time.

Ground Rose

Rarity: Common

Environment: Plains

Lifespan: Perennial (shrub)

Physical Description: This rose is an underground vine that has only its prickles (thorns), leaves and flowers above ground. They grow in mats five to twenty feet in diameter.

Game Use: This plant was created to stop the activities of ranchers. Though the leaves are tasty to sheep and cattle, the prickles damage the livestock's feet. A person can tell if there is ground roses in the area by watching the local large herbivores, who avoid being hurt by shuffling their feet to break the prickles.

Saltgrass

Rarity: Uncommon

Environment: Plains

Lifespan: Annual (grass)

Physical Description: Saltgrass is indistinguishable from other grasses to all but expert naturalists (Amazing result on botany check).

Game Use: Saltgrass may be the worst plant developed by a peeved druid. It slowly collects salt from the subsoils and concentrates it in the grasses' tissues. This is the only positive many peasants see in it as one ton of grass burned leaves behind 50 pounds of salt. But the negative is grave- as the plants die every year, the salt is added to the topsoil. Only those plants either evolved or altered to survive salty soil can survive along side saltgrass. As it was created thousands of years ago, there are many plants and animals that can tolerate living in salt plains but not many have found use to humanoids. Standard livestock require three times the regular amount of water and crops just don't sprout. Only the intervention of many druids can save a community from an invasion of saltgrass as it resists most efforts to destroy it. And the fact that most peasants can't tell one grass from another does not help the situation nor does the fact that several other grasses have the ability to survive the salt.

Steelwood

Rarity: Rare

Environment: Temperate Forests

Lifespan: Perennial (tree)

Physical Description: Steelwood is an altered form of musclewood. It has blue-grey bark that is smooth and skin like. It grows up to 40 feet.

Game Use: Steelwood was an accident that is both cursed and celebrated today. Many axes have been broken on steelwood and several keeps have been made of it. The wood is as strong as the strongest steel and can only be cut by magic (or diamond tipped saws). Many rulers have decreed that steelwood is protected by law as they have the ability to harvest and use the wood. The problem is that steelwood is an understory tree that is found in woodlands of the type that peasants log for fuel and provide farmland.

Herbalism

New Knowledge skill

Cost: 4

Profession: Tech Op

Herbalism is the ability to use specific plants to heal wounds, cure or mitigate diseases and purge poisons. At first rank the healer can make teas, tinctures, infusions and such (to be called "potions") to act as a prophylactic versus diseases. If the healer knows what disease the hero will encounter and has the right plant materials at hand, the "potion" gives the hero a -1, -2, or -3 step bonus to the specific disease (or related diseases) with an ordinary, good or amazing result.

⊗ **Heal Wounds:** At 2nd rank, the herbalist can revive stunned heroes as per the first aid skill. At 5th rank the herbalist can treat wounds as per the first aid skill.

⊗ **Cure Disease:** At 3rd rank, the herbalist can cure a Marginal disease with the proper materials. At 6th rank, ordinary diseases can be cured. At 9th rank good diseases can be cured. And at 12th rank, amazing diseases can be cured.

⊗ **Purge Poison:** At 4th rank the herbalist can give the poisoned hero a "potion" that gives a -1 step bonus to resisting a poison. The potion must be administered before the poison begins to take effect. At 8th rank the bonus increases to 2 steps and at 12th, 3 steps. At 8th rank, the herbalist can administer a "potion" after the poison take effect that will stop the damage taken, but must make a skill check at +1 for an irritant, +2 for paralytic toxins and caustic agents, +3 for hemotoxins, +4 for neurotoxins and +5 for necrotoxins.

The botany skill helps the herbalist by giving a -1 step bonus to all skill checks at rank 4, -2 steps at rank 8, and -3 steps at rank 12. Any critical failure indicates the herbalist picked a poisonous plant by accident (which the GM must determine its toxicity).

Psychodesign:

an excerpt from the Schismatrix Campaign

by James Nostack (inspired by Anders Sandberg)

IN 2003, psychology is a discipline trying to come to terms with the complexities of the mind, while striving to guide people to a healthier mental state. By the Twenty-Fourth Century the discipline of psychology has evolved to an even higher level. In order to construct artificial intelligences, programmers needed to understand how the human mind works. In order to breed superhumanly intelligent mutants, biologists needed to understand every secret of neurology. Thus, the two most advanced sciences of this setting, cybernetics and genetic engineering, have contributed to the discipline of psychodesign: the study, manipulation, and creation of new modes of thought in a living host.

A licensed psychodesigner, also known as a psychotech, can change your mood, your memories, or your beliefs. It isn't telepathy, but rather brainwashing carried to the next level, and adapted for the commercial marketplace. Don't like how you feel? Change it! Want to have more self-confidence? Buy some! Ever want to try out a whole new you? Visit your nearest psychotech today!

The Basics.

1. In order to perform psychodesign, a character must have the Medical Science-*psychology* 3 skill. Anyone without rank 3 in psychology just doesn't have the technical chops.
2. Psychodesign requires a treatment regimen composed of one or more sessions. Sessions are typically held once per week, but can be daily if the situation is really dire.
3. Psychodesign is a complex skill check; checks are made once per session. The task's complexity and intended duration, along with the patient's Will resistance modifier, imposes modifiers on the skill check.
4. As in any complex skill check, three failures abort the process: the designer simply cannot perform the desired task on this subject until the situation changes.
5. If the psychodesigner triggers a critical failure, the process ends, and the patient gets worse. If the patient had any psychological flaws (Phobia, Clueless, etc.), its severity is increased by one grade. A slight flaw becomes moderate, for example. Like any other mental disorder, these exacerbated flaws may be cured via psychodesign, but if the severity goes beyond extreme (i.e., a 6-point flaw gets worse), the character requires full-time psychiatric attention and must be removed from play.

6. Unwilling patients may resist by "parrying" with a mental resolve skill check. The designer must beat the patient's degree of success, or else this session counts as one failure. For example, if Raven scores an Ordinary result on his mental resolve skill check, the evil Dr. Floon must roll a Good or Amazing result in order to accomplish anything during this particular session.

Psychodesign Game Mechanics.

Any attempt at psychodesign requires a complex psychology skill check, with rolls made once per session. The duration of the changes determines the number of successes required:

Duration	Successes Required
Temporary (1d4 hours)	1
Short term (one day)	3
Medium term (one week)	6
Long term (one month)	9
Semi-permanent (a year or more)	12

Each psychology roll is affected by variables that may change from session to session:

Situation	Modifier
Patient's Will resistance modifier	[varies]
Last session was... yesterday	-1 step
...one week ago	0
...more than a week ago	+1 step per week
Trapdoor has been found	-2 steps
Rushed session (30 minutes minimum)	+1 step
Lack of equipment for major jobs	+1 step to +3 steps
Using brainscan	-1 step to -3 steps

The psychology roll is also affected by what the designer hopes to accomplish. These affect each session throughout the entire treatment regimen:

Goal	Modifier
Change Mood	-2 steps
Change Personality Traits	-1 step
Change Moral Attitude	+1 step
Change Motivation	+3 steps
Change Sexual Preferences	+2 steps
Recover Suppressed Memory	0
Implant False Memory	-1 step to +2 steps
Erase Real or False Memory	-1 step to +2 steps
Total Amnesia	+4 steps
Create/Remove Trapdoor	-1 step
Locate "Foreign" Trapdoor	+2 steps
Post-Hypnotic Suggestion	0
Heal (or Create) Mental Disorder	+1 step
Improve (or Harm) Mental Functioning	+1 step
Create/Remove Daemon	+3 steps
Create/Remove Neural Partition	+4 steps
Build New Person	+5 steps

The Menu.

Here is a list of some feats that psychotechs can perform:

Change Mood: Just like a mood drug, but far more expensive, the psychodesigner can instill a mood in a patient. Thus, he can snap a person out of a depression, or make them doubt themselves. Mood changes cannot last longer than a week.

Change Personality Traits:

Chapter 7 of the Players Handbook lists several personality traits, like “logical” or “flippant.” The psychotech can alter these traits as desired, turning a shy person into a natural leader.

Change Moral Attitude: Chapter 7 of the Players Handbook outlines several moral attitudes, like “Conformist” or “Anti-Authority.” With a bit of practice, a psychotech can shift these beliefs around. A despicable criminal can become a lawful member of society.

Change Motivation: Several motivations are described in Chapter 7 of the Players Handbook, such as “vengeance” or “fun first.” Although it takes a lot of rooting around in the cellars of the mind, a competent psychotech can change these around. These changes won’t “set,” however, unless they are plausibly supported by the hero’s backstory. A person who’s been entirely motivated by greed all his life won’t suddenly become a saintly crusader like Gandhi, unless those inclinations were added via earlier psychodesign.

Change Sexual Preferences: They say that once you go black, you never go back, but obviously they’ve never heard of psychodesign.

Recover Suppressed Memory:

Ever wonder what happened to you as a child that made you hate dogs? Unlike some other changes here, memory recovery is permanent, no matter how few sessions are required. One session, for example, would be enough.

Implant False Memory: Wouldn’t be great to have a happy childhood? Well, now you can! Sure, it isn’t real...but you’ll never know the difference! Note that certain false memories may flatter the

patient’s self-image, and therefore would be easier to install.

Erase Real or False Memory:

Would you like to forget your first attempt at driving? A good psychotech can give you partial amnesia of any duration. Certain memories may be painful, and the patient may subconsciously cooperate with the designer.

Total Amnesia:

Leave it all behind! Lose all genuine and false memories for the duration.

Create/Remove Trapdoor: In the professional lingo, a “trapdoor” is a code word or unique signal that places the patient in a deep trance. The patient becomes suggestible and easy to mold. Installing a trapdoor makes it much easier to perform further psychodesign. A trapdoor can be installed in a single session (one success required), and lurks in the back of a patient’s mind until removed (also takes one success). Ethical psychotechs always remove any trapdoors they installed once the process is finished.

Locate “Foreign” Trapdoor: Good psychodesigners take notes, and therefore remember what triggers the trapdoor they gave to a particular patient. But sometimes you have to figure out what some unqualified bozo did to your customer before he came to you, and it can take a while to root around and figure out what the trigger is.

Post-Hypnotic Suggestion:

Handled very similarly to the suggest skill in the Players Handbook, which I don’t have with me while typing this, alas.

Heal (or Create) Mental Disorder:

Several flaws in Chapter 5 of the Players Handbook are psychological in nature: Clueless, Obsession, and Phobia are just some examples. A trained psychotech can alter the degree of the disorder by one grade per treatment regimen. Any attempt to cure a flaw requires the patient to spend the necessary skill points (twice the cost of the flaw), but the character need not be at sixth level.

If a patient is perfectly healthy, the psychotech can cause a mental disorder,

although few patients would want this, and do not receive skill points for it. A mental disorder pushed beyond “extreme” makes the character unsuitable for play.

Improve/Harm Mental Functioning:

A few perks in Chapter 5 of the Players Handbook are neurological, and therefore psychodesign can imitate them. Examples include Photo Memory, Concentration, Observant, and Willpower. The character must pay the normal skill point price for these perks, but may do so at any level.

Psychodesigners may remove a perk as well, but few patients choose this. No skill points are regained by getting rid of a perk.

Create/Remove Daemon: In this procedure, a subsystem of the brain called an agent receives a massive augmentation. An agent is part of the brain that specializes in a certain type of task, namely a particular mental broad skill, from Administration to Tactics. The hero can invoke the daemon at any time, and pretty much takes a backseat as the daemon solves a particular problem. When active, a daemon provides a -1 step bonus to all skill checks in that broad skill. The catch is that the hero is no longer completely in control of his or her actions.

Create/Remove Neural Partition:

Chop your brain in two! A hero with a neural partition can multitask effortlessly, thinking two thoughts at the same time. This allows her to engage in two actions at the same time without penalty: one half of her brain could fire a machine gun, while the other half tries to write a love sonnet. These techniques are still somewhat untested, and most patients find them rather exhausting. A neural partition inflicts one point of fatigue damage per ten minutes of use.

Build New Person: The whole enchilada: new memories, new personality, new motivation—the works! Say hello to the new you! Take a new self out for a test drive, and confuse the hell out of everybody you used to know. Try it for a few hours, or a few years!

Non-Trivial Applications

Psychodesign is an extremely powerful ability. Here are some ideas:

Love At First Sight?

The Schismatrix isn't a romantic place. Marriages are usually made for convenience or personal advantage, but this is a very unsatisfying way to live. Using psychodesign, married couples can fall in love with each other for real, and can stay that way with periodic check-ups.

I Had A Lovely Evening...

Since blind dates are so awkward, top of the line dating services offer a few sessions of psychodesign to implant memories of good times together before people meet for the first time.

Master of Disguise

When combined with plastic surgery or the Malleable Face mutation, a hero can look like anyone she pleases, and with psychodesign, she can have the memories to match the face! This makes it easy to impersonate someone.

Ultimate Sleeper

The best secret agent won't even know that he's a secret agent. Through psy-

chodesign, you can give your best assassin a completely new identity. He won't even remember his former self! He can be placed behind enemy lines for months, or even decades. Then, when the psychodesigned alter ego begins to crumble away, his old self emerges from the rubble, ready to wreak havoc on his unsuspecting neighbors.

Just Visiting

Heroes with the Programmable Genotype mutation can try out a new mind and a new body. With temporary personalities, implanted memories and changeable bodies, these people sample an infinite variety of lives, just for the fun of it. Experience the full spectrum of existence!

Who's The Boss?

Certain aspects of psychodesign can be very dangerous. Neural partitions and daemons both create semi-independent minds that may not be loyal to the person who created them. A daemon, for example, might engage in additional psychodesign to wipe out the master personality! Be careful.

Domo Arigato, Mr. Roboto!

Most cyborgs will run into problems with Self-Amplification Syndrome sometime. In its early stages, victims usually are aware that there's a problem, and can ask a psychodesigner for help. Curing SAS is handled just like curing any mental disorder (base +1 penalty), with an additional +1 penalty for each box of SAS that has been filled up. The number of successes required depends on duration, just like anything else.

Go Xox Yourself!

A "xox" is a perfect copy of a person, not just physically, but mentally as well. A physical copy is no problem: just make a clone. Normally, however, a clone has its own identity and personality, but with psychodesign you can program the clone to have your personality, memories, and goals. This could be used to create an entire baseball team of the same person, or might be arranged as a provision in a will to enable one mind to effectively live forever in identical bodies.

Equipment

Brainscan

Cost: Ordinary \$5000, Good \$7500, Amazing \$10000

Brainscanning technology was pioneered by the Nysa wireheads, who defected from the Union of Mechanist Cartels in the 2270's. A brainscan pretty much uploads a living human mind to a data storage medium, so you can carry around a disk with a back-up copy of your brain. A brainscan is not alive; it's the equivalent of a reference book or a mental snapshot. It's a CAT scan carried to the ultimate level, and can help enormously with psychodesign. For example, if you want to have the exact same memories as your neighbor, you can bring a brainscan of your neighbor's mind to your local psychodesigner and say, "I want the memories from last Tuesday, please."

Depending on their quality, a brainscan can provide a -1, -2, or -3 bonus to the *psychology* skill check, assuming that the scan is appropriate to the task at hand. Even the cheapest brainscans are very expensive, however.

Spinal Crab

Cost: \$1500

Intended to be a temporary substitute for a qualified psychodesigner, the spinal crab technology was developed over

a century ago by the Shapers. The spinal crab is a semi-organic device, roughly the size of a loaf of bread, that attaches itself to the spine or the skull, and extrudes filaments to interface with the patient's central nervous system. Each spinal crab is custom-designed to accomplish one, and only one, task of psychodesign. A spinal crab to change one's sexual orientation, for example, cannot be used to trigger total amnesia.

In the campaign setting, spinal crabs were originally used in the violent days prior to the Investors' arrival. Large numbers of Shaper citizens were brainwashed using these devices, since there simply weren't enough psychotechs to give each person the necessary attention. These treatments were not 100% reliable, and often caused intense pain. The program was gradually phased out, but commercial models are still available for travelers who cannot attend a weekly session with their local psychodesigner.

In game terms, a spinal crab can replace a trained psychodesigner. A spinal crab has a *psychology* skill score of 12. All successes are treated as Ordinary. This means that treatment regimens are very long, and there's a much higher chance of disaster. Using a spinal crab is exhausting and debilitating, and inflicts 1d4 fatigue points of damage after each session.

Career: Psychotech

Psychological technicians, or psychotechs, are experts in education, persuasion, and brainwashing. Employed as teachers, marketers, or “reeducation specialists,” psychotechs wrangle memes for a living. While most psychotechs remain out of the public eye, they are often sent on dangerous missions where psychological influence comes into play: encouraging defectors, manipulating public emotions, and so on.

Skills: Medical Science: psychology 3. Investigate: interrogate. Teach.

Signature Equipment: Data slate. Truth serum (lowers Will resistance modifier by 1 step for three hours)

Flaw: Meta-Obsession

Bonus Points 2, 4 or 6, Will.

A meta-obsession is actually just a special case of the standard Obsession flaw, found in Chapter 5 of the Players Handbook. Instead of being obsessed with a person, place, or thing, a hero with this flaw is obsessed by psychodesign. He becomes a hypochondriac about his own mental health. Any number of things might trigger this flaw: getting dumped by a girlfriend, suffering a nasty insult, or causing a disastrous Critical Failure. Whenever this character feels insecure about himself, he falls apart, and suffers a +1, +2, or +3 penalty to all actions until he undergoes psychodesign to correct the problem. In advanced stages, he may even begin to feel ashamed of his continuing need for psychiatric care! Otherwise this flaw functions just like Obsession as described in the Players Handbook.

Psychodesign in Society

Psychodesign has an important place in both Mechanist and Shaper cultures, since immense psychological perils abound in this setting. Modern society views psychotechs as valuable specialists, like lawyers or doctors today.

A typical psychodesign session lasts three hours. Most of this time involves analyzing the patient’s biometrics and assessing his emotional state. Then the equipment is calibrated. A normal session combines elements from traditional psychotherapy, hypnosis, virtual reality roleplaying, hallucinogenic chemicals, mood drugs, and possibly Pavlovian conditioning while under intense psychotropic stimuli.

All respectable psychotechs utilize numerous monitoring devices during a therapy session and share the tape with the patient to prove that nothing shady or legally actionable took place. Most psychotechs permit a close friend or family member to sit in on the session for security, though it’s pretty boring for anyone not directly involved. It is extremely unethical for a psychotech to perform an operation without the patient’s express consent: if caught performing unauthorized psychodesign, the offender always faces jail time, and may end up being psychodesigned as well!

In general the Mechanists prefer to abuse their emotions via mood drugs and other narcotics, but they do employ psychotechs to address more serious problems. Self-Amplification Syndrome, a mental illness that afflicts cyborgs, runs rampant in some Mechanist communities, and hospitals retain psychodesigners to help these people return to normal. Among the

Shapers, psychodesign takes the place of schooling: rather than learning arithmetic and reading in elementary school, children are brainwashed to become loyal citizens.

Naturally there are plenty of psychodesigners in private practice as well. Your emotions are the one part of your life you can’t control, the one aspect of your being that you cannot perfect... unless you undergo psychodesign. Mood drugs are a poor substitute to reconstructing your entire belief system. If you have ever wanted to be a better person, now’s your chance!

GM’s Commentary

First of all: Anders Sandberg thought of it first. I’ve tried to add a lot of meat to the bare bones, but the underlying skeleton is his. The “world” link on the top of the page will take you to the rest of his Altermity site.

<http://www.nada.kth.se/~asa/Game/BigIdeas/psychodesign.html>

The rules for psychodesign are extremely powerful, but that is partly intentional. The tremendous potential is offset by hefty penalties: any long-term changes should be very difficult to achieve. In a “normal” setting like Star*Drive, psychodesign might be more appropriate to rank 6 in psychology instead of rank 3, but I wanted to make it more commonly available just to see where players will take it. The notion of heroes who edit their own personalities into strange, bizarre forms is definitely part of the transhuman vibe.

Remember: you can earn extra achievement points through excellent roleplaying.



SWORDMASTER

by Ranko Trifkovic

"Stand still, left hand at your back, as if trying to hold your own belt. Breathe properly, deep, not too much, we don't want you to pass out, now do we. Now, raise your right arm, wrists relaxed, son. What you're holding is not a walking stick, but a rapier, a true gentleman's weapon. That's better, now turn slowly, spin on your toes, rise, feel yourself featherlight. Dance, ballet and swordplay are very similar, this is an art of elegance, you must dance, my boy."

"Relax the wrist, don't it grip with all your might! No need for a full hand, that hilt guard of yours is not only a piece of jewelry, it helps the hilt from slipping through your hand, you need only two fingers to keep this weapon in play. Add more pressure and pinch your index finger and thumb when you want to attack. That's right, let the moves flow, softly, gently, see the point of the rapier dancing. Smaller cross, make smaller crosses, that's how you will bring your weapon to aim much faster. Not like that, spin it wider. If your movements are too stiff, your enemy will know what you are aiming for. Dance, now its here, now its there, make it unpredictable. Hm...I see your tired already. Come, come, now go stretch and remember to breathe properly, relax and warm up again. As soon as your moves become stiff and uneven, its a clear sign that you are too tense, which means that you got tired too quickly."

Every year, for the last six years I've been listening to this banter of my Master for the last six years. At first I thought that he was testing me, that he wanted to check my resolve to become a swordsman. Doing all the same exercises again and again makes me nervous. I feel that I'm wasting my time, as if Master Nicolo doesn't want to tell me that I am hopelessly without talent, too slow and dumb for this art, and is waiting for the moment when I will get the clue. I finally decided to stop this nonsense and end the mystery - I will confront that pompous old man.

Of course, it has begun anew. His lofty philosophical rhetoric, how its natural when you "practice!, practice!" and feel as if you're not evolving, then suddenly you get better and better, faster and quicker, until in the end you realize that you really didn't go that far and that really hard work is ahead of you. He spoke about honest desire, about humble work, he spoke of resolve, perseverance, tireless work on the path of becoming a Master, who must again and again reach a new starting point, and start from there, relearning the art anew.

I pushed him away, and with a foul curse at my lips, left the courtyard and abandoned the school. I wanted something in return for the years of learning and practicing. I wished for thrill the of the fight, a true real duel at dawn, to see the look of fear in my opponent's eyes, the smell of sweat and blood

soaking the very air you breathe, the life I've been dreaming of since my first lesson in swordplay.

And so it was. My enemies crumbled into dust before my feet. I knew they were just a petty officers and village ruffians, I knew that a real challenge was waiting for me in the City. But I felt the taste of victory, and the excitement of triumph over death, like steam rising from a pool of warm blood slushing from my perished opponents right wrist.

Soon the tide will turn. In a duel, after skillfully placed strike or feint, you always expect a riposte, so I expected that minor change in luck. The next opponent I had the honor, or should I say horror to challenge was Carlo Conti himself. If I listened to my Masters training better, I would have recognized the devil's spawn by his unusually graying eyebrow and birthmark.

What to say? He was so fast, so far ahead of me, and sheer calculated coldness. There was something ritualistic in his measured steps, and the look on his stone face. Someone whispered to him that I was old Nicolo's pupil. With a grin of contempt he announced to me that it was the only reason he will keep me alive. Conti as well knew what means to be Nicolo's student, what it means to learn patience. So I left the duel with nothing more than a large cut across my face, deep and painful. Thanks to it, I realized now what my Master wanted to tell me about becoming the best, I realized how to become a true swordmaster.

SIDEBAR: NEW RANK BENEFIT

Melee Weapons Rank Benefit: Weapon Mastery

► Anyone who reaches rank 4 in Melee weapons-*blade*, *bludgeon*, or *power* is able to pick one specific weapon to be highly proficient in its use. When using that weapon the hero gains a -1 bonus to his skill check. This bonus applies only to that type of weapon, with only slight variation allowed. For example a person who chooses to master the broadsword can expertly use any sword that closely matches its physical characteristics (weight, damage, accuracy). Any other type of sword like a katana, scimitar, or fencing blade would not receive the bonus.

► **Additional Mastery:** At ranks 8 and 12 the hero may master the use of another weapon and gain the -1 bonus, or they can add to the existing bonus with an additional -1 modifier. So it is possible for a hero to receive a -3 bonus to their skill check for a specific weapon at Rank 12.

by Daryl Blasi

SAGA OF BLADES

by Odysseas Dallas

Chapter 1: The Exodus

The young man clutched his cloak tightly, as he braved the late winter's cold. With eyes full of fatigue and worry, he scanned the sparsely wooded area lying at his feet, as he stood perched on a high tree. As he sighed, a strange sound in the night, he thought his nose picked up something. This must be her, the youngster thought. Stroking his bearded chin for a moment, contemplating the possibilities, he quickly clambered down and set off towards the approximate direction of the smell.

He ran through the forest at a set pace, taking care not to exhaust himself even more; he was already stretching his breaking point. Several times he thought he had lost the trail, until signs indicated otherwise. After stopping to catch his wind for a moment, he realized he had finally lost it; no smell could be picked up by his nose. At the realization, he cursed through clenched teeth, but this time, his ears were stimulated, as a cry echoed through the small forest, and with hopes revitalizing he set forward. Soon, he also heard running water, and moments later he was at a clearing, a small figure in the dark crying near the river. A rare smile appeared on his face as he approached quietly and tapped its shoulder. A small face turned to him, human but still not human; pale skin with blonde curls, punctuated by small, recent cuts and bruises, and belonging to a small girl no older than ten years of age. As soon as she saw his hairy face she threw her arms around him and continued crying, but fortunately this time muffled by his coat. "Oh Wolfie!", she exclaimed between sobs. "They... chased him! They... they!" He passed his arms around her in an attempt to sooth the young child, but his mind kept racing through thoughts and possibilities. He managed to utter a, barely, soothing "Don't worry, we'll find... we'll find William."

They stayed there for a moment, the girl sobbing in his arms, when his nose picked up a very unsettling smell this time. Something's burning! raced through his mind as he swiveled his head. Eyes wide with surprise, he let out a loud curse this time as he was taken aback by the sight. An area of the forest was set ablaze, the fires reaching up to

the sky. He quickly put the girl down and muttered a "Stay right here!" to which he added a louder "I'll be right back!" as he was already running towards the forest fire. That stupid lad's done it again. I hope he's alive before those bastards get at him. He reached for his sword by his side and unsheathed it, as he kept running. He was panting but he went on; he knew that if he stopped, William was doomed.

When he finally reached the place, minutes later, the fire had taken epic proportions. He shouted "William!" several times, getting no reply, except for the third time, when he felt something blunt hitting the back of his head. Grunting, he fell down, losing the grip on his sword as he fell. Quickly rolling aside and getting up as he was taught, ignoring the pain as best as he could, he faced a Knight of Genetic Purity with a rifle in hand. Bullets bit deep where he was laying. Instinctively, before the Knight shot again, he was already lunging downwards at the Knight's legs.. As his right shoulder hit his foe's knees, he lost his balance and was down in moments, the rifle flying out of his hands. Quickly, the youngster scurried towards the fallen knight and administered a short, powerful chop at the man's shoulder joint, and the Knight grunted in pain, dazed. Before he could react, the youngster drew a dagger from his left boot and slit his throat, sheathing it quickly again after wiping the blood at the corpses' tunic.

Getting up, he spit on the corpse of the Knight and recovered his own sword. He shouted another "William!", this time wary of being hit from behind though. His ears picked up angry voices farther ahead, and he ran. This time, he saw the back of a Knight, and heard the all too familiar voice of William shouting for help. The Knight was probably deriving a sick, sadistic satisfaction from having the little mutant helpless at his side, as was evident from his words, "Now little bastard you'll pay for all the trouble!". With a howl of rage, the young man jumped into the clearing, a startled racist turning around to face him. "Draw your sword you spineless swine!" he growled, and, surprisingly, the Knight complied, with a sadistic grin. They circled each

other for a moment, and the enraged youngster tried a jab to test the Knight's defenses which his opponent parried deftly, as his own fatigue was lessening his speed. He noticed that his dastardly opponent was a bit slow, though, and his mind, already tired, was trying to find a way to use it in his advantage.. He tried another jab, and the Knight parried again. Fatigue was slowing down the youngster, and he felt like passing out from exertion. Biting back the pain of his protesting muscles, he continued. I need something fast, or I'm dust. This time, the man tried an overhead slash, and the youngster parried with some difficulty, but instinctively made a riposte, slashing the man's forearm. As he drew back to assess the damage, he half grinned. That'll keep him down. A loud curse followed, by the Knight this time.

As they circled each other again, exchanging a couple of blows, the youngster decided to risk a gamble, or else he'd pass out with exhaustion and he wouldn't be of much use. He feinted an attack to the eyes and tried to slash at the Knight sideways, but his blow was parried; and that was exactly his intention. As soon as steel clashed with steel, his left hand launched from the grip of his sword and, clenched into a fist, found the unprotected face of the Knight. Stunned, reeling from the blow, he raised his other arm to cover his face. As the young man backed up slightly though, he delivered a low, strong kick towards the Knight's knee before the other man could react. With an almost animalistic joy, he could hear bone shatter as his foot was driven on the bastard's unprotected leg. As he fell down, he was quickly finished off as the young man slit his throat with his blade. The youngster sheathed his sword and turned toward the terrified little boy who was hiding during the whole fight. "Are you alright?", he shouted over the raging fire, which he had forgotten totally during his fight. The boy nodded, but the young man noticed blood running from his red-stained blouse. Upon a closer but short examination, it proved to be a deep sword wound. Another curse followed as the boy was carefully picked up and the nearly exhausted young man walked outside the fire as fast as he could.

Upon reaching the clearing where the girl was left crying, he put down the nearly unconscious boy and collapsed. He closed his eyes and sank deep into a state of unconsciousness; the ordeal had taken the better of him, and he could think of nothing else. In the meantime, the young girl was trying as best as she could to dress up the wound of her brother, who was unconscious as well, save for the occasional cry of pain due to her inexperience.

He opened his eyes and faced the grey of dawn atop. His back ached as he got up from the ground he slept, and faced two sleeping figures breathing shallowly. Rubbing his eyes, he limped towards the stream and quenched his thirst, half aware of his surroundings. This was real bad. Dumb luck we're alive... if I get those bastards in my hands... As he looked absent-mindedly at the sky, he failed to notice the little boy that was waking up until he yelped. Turning to face him, a soothing half-smile formed on his face. "Good thing you set that tree on fire. I hate to see trees burn, but if you hadn't you'd be dead right now." The boy, grinning weakly, said "Well, I was always smarter than you." The retort came soon enough in the form of a playful messing up of hair. Soon, the little girl also followed suite and was woken up. "What are you two doing? He's hurt!" she exclaimed, thinking they might be in a fight again, no matter how playful. Shaking his head, the young man replied "He'll live".

They stayed like that for a while, until the girl brought up the most important matter. "Now... after this... where are we going? What will we do?". Sighing, the young man ran his hand through his hair. "Well, Fiona, that's a good question, but... don't worry. The Sensei gave me this before he set me off to find you." Pulling out a scroll, he untied it and started reading; It was in the ancient language, but it was a simple message and he could make out what it meant with what little he knew. "Well, it seems we're to go west to Maple Valley. The Sensei believes that an old friend of his, some Frank Tyron, will provide shelter. They're a quiet lot and I think we'll be safe there." The two children nodded. "Let's rest for a while here, and then we're off. Who knows when those bastards will return.", he added. Shortly afterwards, he inquired, "How's your wound?". The boy shook his head. "It's deep, but I can walk.". Sighing again, the young man resumed his thoughts.

After lying down for another long moment, and after the sun was up high in the sky, the young man got up. "Let's start walking. We have a good distance to cover.". "How long will it take?" asked the children in unison. Chuckling lightly, he said. "Several days. So let's get going.". "But what if there are other Knights on the way?", asked the girl expressing her concern. Humor drying up, the young man said to lift up their spirits, "We're not going to run into them.", and added, through clenched teeth this time and in a volume only he could hear, "I hope not, that is..."



The One Clan:

The Children of Kushak

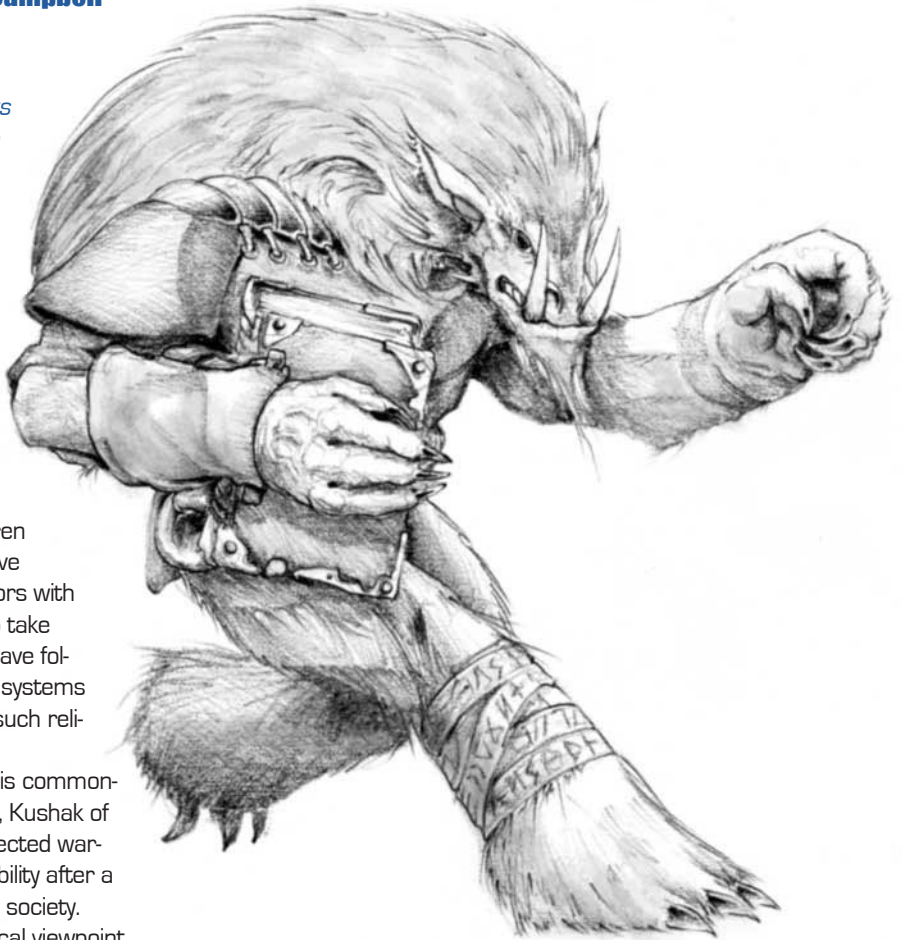
by Daryl Blasi • illustrations by Chris Campbell

"We are all of the same clan. So look to the stars for your blood enemies, the foul servants of Decay. Those who do not embrace the One Clan are Decay's allies. So keep your blade sharp and your eyes ever vigilant."

Kushak, First Brother of the Sun,
Father of the One Clan

THE weren are a highly passionate species, in word and deed. This passion sometimes carries through in their spiritual life, where religion may be practiced with a great fervor few species can match. Even contact with the universe beyond Kurg has not dampened the natural enthusiasm of those weren with religious leanings. Some of these weren have embraced the religion of their Orlamu benefactors with the typical fervor, while many others continue to take comfort in the ancient religions of Kurg. A few have followed different paths and developed theological systems that meld old and new schools of thought. One such religion is the *Norukroth*, the One Clan.

The One Clan, or the Children of Kushak as it is commonly called, was founded by a former Weren noble, Kushak of Clan Samgrel. Kushak was a powerful and respected warrior of his clan who gave up his former life of nobility after a series of events led to his questioning of Weren society. From these ponderings he developed a theological viewpoint of the cosmos that make up the core teachings of the One Clan. These beliefs center around the conflict between the Path of *Darutbru* (True Honor) and the Path of *Ashket* (Decay). According to his doctrine one who follows the Path of True Honor dedicates oneself to protecting all sentients' rights, eliminating the artifice of position and exclusivity that promotes unnecessary conflict. Followers of True Honor disdain the system of Clan honor practiced by the majority on Kurg and consider it a corruption of the true spirit of weren honor. The Children of Kushak believe that one who follows the Path of Decay disrespects life and maintains corrupt social structures that pit sentients against another for unjust reasons. The Children of Kushak consider the nobles of the weren clans to be the primary followers of the Path of Decay. Their goal is to rid Kurg of the clan system as it exists and replace it with the One Clan, where everyone is considered family and an ally in the battle against Decay.



History

Synopsis from *The Rising of Sun and Moon: Kushak's Life and Mission*

The Beginning

Kushak of Clan Samgrel was born on the planet Kurg into a family renown for its mighty warriors even amongst the weren. Kushak rose quickly in standing in his family and just as quickly in the barony his family was aligned. He proved himself in battle and debate, gaining the attention of his clanmates who chose him to join the ranks of nobles when a position opened. Kushak reveled in his newfound status, but always managed to keep his fighting skills at their peak. Only one thing rivaled his dedication to the art of war and that was painting. Kushak often strived to better his watercolor skills and loved to paint the rugged landscapes of his beloved Kurg, but he always felt inadequate to the task. His passion for art led him to a fateful encounter with a

renowned Orlamu painter, Junter Strunk. Junter had arranged with the clan to visit and paint images of everyday weren life. When the artist arrived, Kushak volunteered to be Junter's guide, hoping to gain insight and training to better his own artistic skills. What he gained was more than he anticipated.

Junter would often question Kushak on the ways of the weren, and Kushak would politely answer in a manner he thought easily understood by the Otherworlder. Junter was especially curious about clan relations and a weren's place in the clan dynamic. Kushak proudly explained Kurg's heritage as he contemplated the sadness the Otherworlders must feel at the absence of a clan lifestyle. As their discussions continued and they grew more comfortable with each other's manner, the two turned to more spirited debates of religion, politics, and art. Kushak began to accept Junter as a friend. Normally Kushak relished this time spent talking with Junter, but one day the debate turned towards a sensitive subject for the proud weren; the value of the clan to an individual weren. That is when the trouble began.

It started on a morning where Junter was finishing a portrait of Kushak in full battle regalia. Junter was questioning the value the weren held towards the warrior ideal. Amused Kushak explained once again the importance of fighting for the clan's honor with both word and blade. Junter, frustrated by the weren's casual manner towards killing, blurted out his thoughts on weren butchery, killing each other for nothing more than the clan's hollow prestige. Angered beyond words, Kushak walked up to the painter and snatched his portrait from the painting easel, ripped it in half and laid it at Junter's feet. He then spoke in a whisper "What to you know of honor, weakblood?" Junter calmly answered "I believe in an honor that transcends the labels you place upon yourself. I know honor should represent the duty one has to protect and support others. Not because they have the same family name. Not because they follow the same leader as yourself, but because they simply exist and you enrich your own soul in upholding their lives." Silently Kushak turned from the artist and walked away without looking

back once. Saddened greatly at his parting with Kushak, Junter left Kurg that day, never knowing how close to death he had come. Unbeknown to Junter, the artist had planted a seed of doubt in the proud Kushak's mind. All it would take was the right push to grow into something more.

The Shadow Falls From Kushak's Eyes

In the following year after Junter's departure, Kushak tried to put all thoughts of the artist behind him as he led his clan warriors into battle with raiding bandits from the north. On these excursions he met a great warrior noble from another clan who also fought to expel the bandits from civilized lands. Her name was Lokari and she was everything Kushak could desire in battle partner and friend. They grew closer together with every passing day and shared their most intimate thoughts and beliefs. Soon they became lovers and their bond tightened. One day Kushak declared he held her in value over anything on the face of Kurg. She answered in what would soon become prophetic words "Only my clan I place above you in my heart."

The fateful day came when Kushak and Lokari's clans became the fiercest of enemies over a dispute of mining rights in contested lands. War soon followed and within the first week, Kushak met Lokari in battle. Kushak nearly ran at the sight of her but he knew his duty was clear and he would not dishonor his clan. She came on with a fierce battle cry, looking at him as if he was an enemy since birth. Kushak fought for his life and in the end he impaled his battle claws through Lokari's heart, ending her life and crushing his spirit at the same time. The battle raged around him as he held her bloody body in his arms, wailing in grief. As he returned to his senses the truth came to him in a rush, cutting deeply to the very core of his upbringing. Loyalty to the clan had made him the butcher of his one true love and he had not been strong enough to stay his own hand.

For weeks after Kushak wandered alone, mourning the loss of his beloved Lokari. As he traveled across Kurg, Kushak contemplated the truths of his actions along with the parting words of the otherworlder Junter. A philosophy

began to form in his mind on the place of the weren in society and the cosmos. He thought that all weren were born of the same spirit, making all brothers and sisters in truth. The clans as they existed were a false construct, making enemies of weren in name only. Instead he thought all weren were part of one spiritual clan and should live at peace with each other. Thus the idea of the One Clan was born.

The Spreading of the Word

Kushak returned to his clan filled with exuberance at his spiritual breakthrough and understanding. He called the nobles together and spoke to them of the One Clan pushing them to make peace with their enemies. He called for nothing less than the gathering of all weren into one clan of spiritual unity, discarding the corrupt system as it existed. The nobles stood in outraged silence, staring at one of the greatest of their warriors calmly speaking the gravest heresies against the clan. Finally one noble stepped forward to challenge Kushak to a duel. Kushak sighed and said "I no longer follow the false path. These duels feed Vanity's hunger, leaving nothing for the soul. Go challenge the marrizhe instead. Perhaps they will welcome the false honor of your blade." With that Kushak departed as the nobles stood once again in shock.

Kushak was saddened by the reaction of the clan nobles but he knew the message must be spread. He decided that if the nobles would not accept his word than perhaps the common folk would be more receptive to the truth. Meanwhile the nobles debated fiercely until the dawn of the next day arrived. Although Kushak had been one of their most esteemed warriors he was now deserving of no respect and no mercy. He was a betrayer of the clan and would be hunted down and executed on sight.

Fortunately for Kushak he got word of the nobles' plans and fled his homeland before he could be captured. As he ran from his hunters, Kushak found himself fighting and slaying former battle partners who had the misfortune of catching up with him. It pained him dearly to send his brothers and sisters to the grave and he nearly gave up his crusade in despair. He asked himself how he could slay his fellow weren and still be true to his ideals.

Finally he reconciled his actions with the notion of a force in direct opposition to the collective Spirit of Kurg; the foul winds of Decay that corrupted the normally honorable weren and made them slaves to its evil whims. He now saw the spiritual rot of those who vehemently opposed the Path of True Honor. If they would not turn from Decay's embrace than they would be slain before they could infect others.

As Kushak put a larger distance between himself and his homeland, he found more time to preach his beliefs to the common weren he encountered. He carefully chose those he would speak with, usually young weren who were not as entrenched in tradition as their elders. He slowly gathered followers who became infected with Kushak's zeal and in turn brought more weren into the fold. They took to calling themselves Children of Kushak and began to organize themselves into groups that would travel across Kurg on missions of conversion. Kushak also took it upon himself to train his followers in the arts of combat in order to protect themselves and to destroy servants of Decay too evil to turn back. Soon the Children became formidable warriors in mind and body, all for the holy cause of the One Clan. Kushak named those who took up the blade for the cause TINNALE KRON, Brethren of the Sun.

Satisfied with the progress of his movement, Kushak turned his sight on a bigger goal. He sought the conversion of weren who had left Kurg for the worlds beyond. He knew their number was great and since they were further distanced from the clans of Kurg, perhaps they would be more susceptible to his message. Through the help of friendly Orlamu he arranged to leave Kurg and enter the huge arena of the galaxy.

Dark Days for the Children

When Kushak left Kurg, the Children were saddened by his absence but most continued to follow the Path of True Honor and spread the beliefs of their founder. Some of the Children returned to the old ways, preferring the comfort of the established weren society. Still others followed a darker path, corrupting the teachings of Kushak for their own purposes. One such Child was the warrior known as Kus, who had been an early follower of

Kushak when he first began teaching of the One Clan.

Kus had always been an arrogant weren who considered his nomadic clan superior to all others. In fact he considered the other clans, especially the town clans, as less than true weren, not worthy of life and respect. When he heard Kushak speak of the One Clan he took it to mean his own clan and that they were the spiritual inheritors of Kurg. Taking the teachings further, Kus considered all other clans to be servants of Decay, fit for nothing more than slavery and death. Kushak's presence had always kept Kus in check and he never revealed his true beliefs. With Kushak gone, Kus took it upon himself to gather those of like mind and disposition, organizing a group more to his liking. Kus' followers were trained to be merciless killers and when they gained enough numbers they began to raid and slaughter whole weren communities who were not of Kus' clan. As they became increasingly successful, more of Kus' clanmates joined and were indoctrinated into the zealous belief of their natural superiority. Stories of their atrocities began to multiply. Weren babies impaled on sharp spears as their parents were forced to watch. Old weren skinned alive, their bodies left as carrion for scavengers. Kus had abandoned any sense of compassion and he was doing it all under the banner of the One Clan.

When word of Kus' actions began to spread, the true Children rushed to oppose him. Unfortunately they were few in number when compared to the horde that had gathered under Kus. They were largely ineffectual against his great numbers but they did manage to save many weren by escorting them to safer areas. Finally spurred on by the atrocities, the other clans allied together to put an end to the army of Kus the Destroyer. Unfortunately Kus managed to flee and hide, as his army crumbled around him. He eventually escaping Kurg by disguising himself and gaining passage on a Orlamu ship.

To their horror, the true Children found themselves being hunted down by the other clans who saw Kus' butchers and the Children of Kushak as one and the same. In fact it was Kushak's old clan that pressed the Blood Hunt for these follow-

ers of their great traitor, regardless of the Children's true role in the war. The Children went into hiding with the help of those weren sympathetic to their cause, often finding aid from those who had been saved by the Children during the war. After a time the Blood Hunt for the Children faded and the group resumed their mission, this time using greater secrecy and care.

The Children of Kushak considered Kus' betrayal unforgivable and when word got to Kushak of the horrible events, he managed to set a cadre of off-world Sun Brethren on a hunt for Kus in Orlamu space. After five years searching they found Kus and slew him along with the group of Orlamu criminals who attempted to protect him.

Kushak Finds Further Enlightenment in the Stars

When Kushak entered Orlamu culture, like most weren he was amazed and troubled at the level of technology he encountered. His mission and spirit kept him centered though and he quickly adapted to the situation. With great vigor he began his mission to convert other weren to the One Clan, often aided by humans and their communication technology to reach a greater audience. Not surprisingly Kushak found many converts of the weren who had lost the strong connection to the Homeland clans, but who enjoyed the chance to once again be part of the weren community. Unfortunately the offworld weren were not as strongly dedicated to the cause as Kushak would have liked. Kushak found few who would qualify for the Brethren of the Sun. Kushak didn't want to alienate his new-found converts though and created a new arm of the Children, calling them the Brethren of the Stars. Whereas the Sun members would be the knights of the One Clan, the Star members would be the common body, following the teachings of Kushak but not dedicated to fighting Decay head on with blade and claw.

Kushak traveled from world to world in the Orlamu system and noticed how many worlds had moons unlike his native Kurg. Marveling at the beautiful sight of a full moon on the planet Iola, Kushak noticed how serene the shining sphere seemed in the dark canvas of the sky.

Unlike the fiery waves of the sun that appealed to the fighting spirit of the weren, the moon appeared to calm the heart with its gentle glow. Kushak thought upon this and decided the Children must be more than a strong arm to fight the Clan of Decay. The Children must also be healers of the mind and body to insure Decay didn't take hold of the weren in times of vulnerability. With the help of a female weren named Taru, who had medical training and experience at an Orlamu hospital, Kushak created the Brethren of the Moon, the third and final arm of the Children. This group would be the spiritual heart of the Children and support the Sun Brethren in their constant battle against Decay.

All went well for Kushak and his mission until word reached him of Kus' atrocities. This devastated Kushak as he mourned the loss of weren lives caused by the corruption of his teachings. For many days he kept himself locked away from his followers and they began to fear for his health and life. It was at this time that Junter Strunk once again entered Kushak's life. Junter had been following the news on Kushak's crusade from afar and when he heard about Kus' betrayal he immediately searched out Kushak intending to help his old friend. Reluctant at first to let the human near their leader they finally relented when they saw that Kushak perked up at the mention of Junter's name. After some convincing, Kushak and Junter went together into a private retreat that lasted a week.

When they returned Kushak had renewed his spirit and made a proclamation that would shake the belief of his weren followers. Kushak declared the One Clan was not solely the domain of weren, but other sentients who were the enemies of Decay and Evil were spiritual siblings as well. With that Kushak named Junter a member of the Moon, and the human took his place as second to Taru. This did not sit well with some weren who left the Children all together. Some disgruntled Children even formed splinter groups exclusive to weren, of which the most extreme of these declared all other sentients natural servants of Decay. The core membership remained loyal to Kushak though, and slowly began to accept other beings into the fold.

The Final Journey

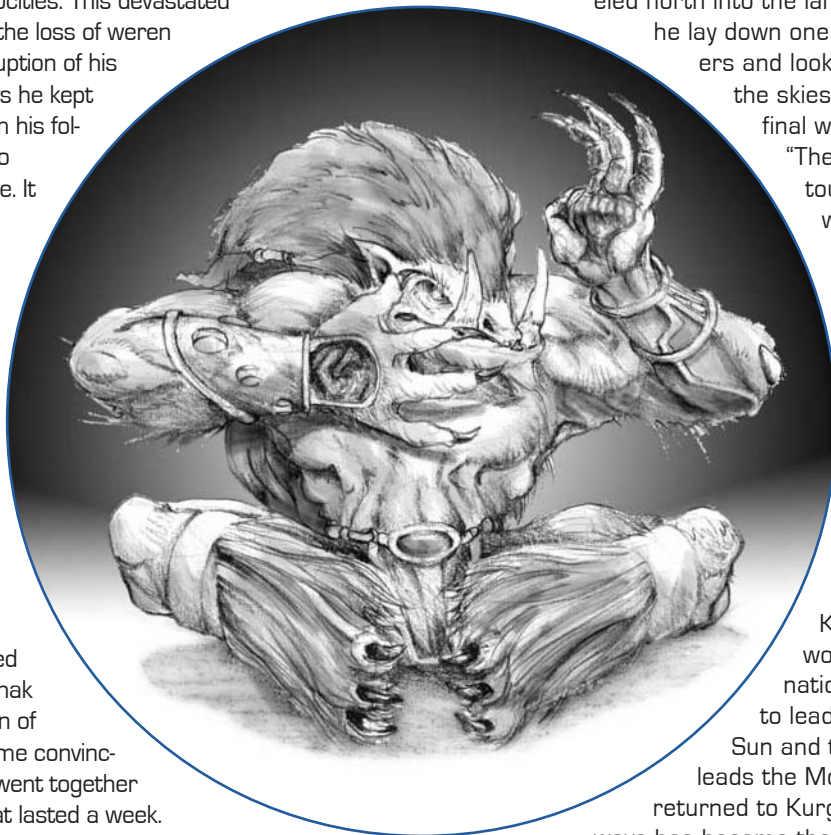
As the years passed and Kushak neared his dying age he decided to write a tome that would contain all his teachings and advice. With the help of Junter and Taru, he put

down his words in the hope that the movement would continue long pass his death. When he was finished with the book of *Darutbru* or "True Honor" he planned one last journey. A trip to Kurg where he would give over the original copy of the *Darutbru* to his Kurg followers and await his death. He said his farewells to Junter and Taru, and named a young weren Jurakhis as his successor to leadership of the Sun Brethren.

Kushak returned to Kurg secretly and was taken in by his dedicated followers who rejoiced at his return to Kurg, just as they mourned his coming death. With their help he traveled through the land of his birth, even speaking to his

brother who had long thought him dead. He then traveled north into the land of the nomads where he lay down one night amidst his followers and looked one last time into the skies of Kurg. It is said the final words he spoke were

"The beauty of the night sky touches my spirit. I do wish I had my paintbrush and canvas with me. Perhaps I would even add a moon or two."



The Present

In the year 2501, 20 years after Kushak's death, the Children of Kushak still remains a viable yet small group on Kurg and in the various worlds of the Orlamu nation. Jurakhis continues to lead the Brethren of the Sun and the ancient Taru still leads the Moon members. Taru has returned to Kurg though, and in some

ways has become the acting parent of Kushak's Children, with Jurakhis abiding by her final word. They remain in constant contact with the help of technology as they steer the Children through the current age, often using the advice of Junter Strunk in encounters with the Orlamu nation. Although their numbers on Kurg remains small and often in hiding, the One Clan continues to grow on the offworlds with members even reaching as far as the Verge.

There is trouble just around the corner for the Children on Kurg. For Kus the Destroyer's right hand weren of old, Vash'rak, or more likely someone claiming to be Vash'rak, is gathering weren together under the banner of the One Clan. This group has even gone so far as to claim Kus and Kushak are the same weren and have rewritten the *Darutbru* to promote Kus' racist rhetoric. This all adds up to trouble for the true Children of Kushak. The weren nobles are more than willing to believe there is but one

group and the Blood Hunt for all Children may be called in the near future.

The Three Arms of the One Clan

The Children of Kushak are currently broken down into three internal groups, the Brethren of the Sun (*Tinnale Kron*), the Brethren of the Moon (*Moon Kron*), and the Brethren of the Stars (*Eshrut Kron*).

The Sun Brethren are the holy warriors of the One Clan and train to fight Decay's servants. They are both strong in body and spirit, and fanatical in their mission. They are skilled hunters, as well as warriors, and their chief prey is often known enemies of the One Clan. The Sun Brethren consider it a great honor to die in battle for the cause and won't back down from a fight unless their adversary repents and gives up the ways of Decay. To help in their crusade, many Sun Brethren are trained as psionic talents, favoring the Biokinesis discipline and the specialty skill of Shatter.

The Brethren of the Moon are the healers and ambassadors of the One Clan. They try to temper the fanaticism of the Sun Brethren with acts of kindness and diplomacy. They are not pacifists though and will defend themselves with claw and weapon if words do not suffice. While they support the Sun Brethren's constant battle against Decay, they focus on helping others in more mundane ways, such as healing and teaching. Many Brethren of the Moon consider themselves the keepers of the word of Kushak with the Sun Brethren as their protectors. They believe that once Decay is defeated, all Brethren will become as the Moon and live in harmony.

The Brethren of the Stars are those Children who do not follow a particular role in the religion but are believers in the doctrine of Kushak. Many of the weren commoners of Kurg fit this description. They make up the majority of the Brethren but follow the religious edicts of the Sun and Moon Brethren. While not trained like the Sun Brethren, some Star Brethren are formidable warriors willing to fight the evil of Decay.

Story Seeds

-The heroes take on a job as couriers for an organization that fronts as a legal export company but is actually a criminal operation that uses ruthless weren as enforcers. The heroes encounter a cadre of Sun Brethren who are tracking down the "evil" weren and mistakenly think the heroes are part of the criminal organization.

-A missionary Sister of the Moon and her Sun Brethren protector need to find passage to another planet and hire the use of the heroes' starship. When the heroes reach the planet the weren missionary is attacked by weren assassins who are part of a fanatical splinter group of the One Clan, who consider all other species to be a part of the Clan of Decay. They are trying to prevent the Sister from spreading her more tolerant teachings on this planet.

More Weren Words

Brethren, Close family	Kron
Clan	Kroth
Decay	Ashket
One	Noru
Stars	Eshrut
Sun	Tinnale
True Honor	Darutbru

Sample Brethren of the Sun

Level 6 Weren Combat Spec

STR 15 (+3) INT 8 (0)
DEX 8 (0) WIL 9 (0)
CON 14 PER 8

Durability: 21/21/11/11 Action check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 #Actions: 3

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Perks: Faith (One Clan), Heightened Ability (Strength)

Flaws: Obsessed (6 pt, Clan of Decay), Code of Honor (Never back down from fight with Clan of Decay)

Species Abilities (Weren): Increased Durability, Camouflage

Species Flaws (Weren): Technology

Achievement: Heightened Ability (Constitution), Extra Action

Attacks

Unarmed-power 18/9/4 -d4 L/O Personal d4+3w/d4+5w/d4+3m

Greatsword* 17/8/4 d0 L/G Personal d4+6w/d6+5w/d4+4m

25mm Shotgun* 11/5/2 d0 H/O 9/15/40 d6w/d8w/d4+1m

*weren weapon found in "Blood Philosophy" article in *Dragon*#257

Defenses

+3 resistance modifier vs melee attacks

Skills

STR: Athletics [15]; Heavy Weapon [15]-direct [16]; Melee

Weapons[15]-blade [17]; Unarmed [15]-power [18]

CON: Stamina [14]-endurance [15], resist pain [15]; Survival [14]-survival training [15]

DEX: Modern Ranged Weapon [8]-rifle [11]; Primitive Ranged Weapon [8]-flintlock [9]

INT: Knowledge [8]-Kurg society [11], Weren language [11], Galactic standard language [9]

WIL: Awareness [9]-perception [11]; Investigate [9]-track [10]; Resolve [9]-physical [10]

PER: Interaction [8]-intimidate [13]

PSIONIC: Biokinesis [14]-bio-armor [15]

Sample Brethren of the Moon

Level 6 Weren Diplomat/Combat Spec

STR 13 (+2) INT 8 (0)
DEX 8 (0) WIL 9 (0)
CON 12 PER 11

Durability: 18/18/9/9 Action check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 #Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Perks: Faith (Clan of True Honor), Heightened Ability (Personality)

Species Abilities (Weren): Increased Durability, Camouflage

Species Flaws (Weren): Primitive

Attacks

Unarmed-power 14/7/3 d0 L/O Personal d4+2w/d4+4w/d4+2m

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs melee attacks

Skills

STR: Athletics [13]; Melee Weapons [13]-blade [14]; Unarmed [13]-power [14]

CON: Stamina [12]-endurance [13]; Survival [12]-survival training [13]

DEX: Modern Ranged Weapon [8]-rifle [9]

INT: Knowledge [8]-first aid [11], Kurg society [11], One Clan lore [12], Weren language [11], Galactic standard language [11]

WIL: Awareness [9]-intuition [11]; Resolve [9]-mental [10]

PER: Culture [11]-diplomacy [13]; Interaction [11]-charm [13], interview [12]

PSIONIC: Biokinesis [12]-heal [14], transfer damage [14]

An Exchange of Weren Philosophy, Society, and Religion

The following transcript is taken from a grid chat set up by cultural anthropologists studying weren society with the help of volunteer weren from various backgrounds.

Anonymous Human: ...and I seriously doubt Humans will ever learn the intricacies of the Blood Philosophy of the Weren. I'm actually quite surprised they didn't attack the first Humans they saw. Perhaps their curiosity is stronger than their lust for combat?

Yurl: I beg your pardon, sir (and I use the term loosely, for you appear to have no credentials), but we Weren do not possess this so called 'lust for combat'. What we have is an overwhelming sense of duty and honor, something you hairless apes seem to have abandoned in your race toward space. The last truly honorable culture your planet had was the feudal daimyo-samurai aristocracy of pre-Tokugawa Japan. We, on the other hand, managed to take what had once been an obscure cultural artifact of a long-dead northern tribe and not only improved upon it, but we (and I'm speaking of the Seven Great Noble Houses of Za'sh Ur), successfully exported it to the other great households of our world. In less than 150 of your Earth years, the entire planet had been blessed with the Wisdom of the Snow Elders and rather than squabbling pettily over the thin red lines that divided us, we turned our conflicts into the highest artform known to humankind - Dueling. Of course, you wouldn't know that we have the souls of poets from looking at, say, Grunff, for example, but even he, as loutish as he is, is not without honor, propriety and courtesy.

Hmmph. Blood lust, indeed.

Grunff: Grunff thank get-lost-on-steppe-city-boy Yurl. Much courtesy from one-who- walks-everywhere Yurl.

Will (human): Honor, courtesy and propriety aside, I just wish we could get the man to use some deodorant or cologne. Something. Flea dip would be nice too.

Yurl: 'Tis true that there is no substitute for good hygiene, but he is after all one of the Nor'thren. Some lenience should be granted for our *ahem* rather rustic brother from the Northern Wastes.

Will: And we tried flea dip, but he licked it off his fur before it could take hold, unfortunately.

Grunff: NOT GRUNFF FAULT! NOT GRUNFF FAULT! Humans keep temperature high much! Grunff not need flea dip. Grunff no have fleas. Grunff just have humans. Besides flea dip take luster out of Grunff hair much. Johnson Baby Shampoo work much. But take whole bottle.

Jurakhis: Yurl, you take up the bloodied blade, dress it with flowery words and call it honor. It still stinks of death laid like a sacrifice on the altar of Vanity. Cleanse your soul, brother, and find peace with the Children of Kushak. There you will find True Honor. Then your blade will have a righteous use. The hairless ones are weak in spirit and body, but we must show them the true spirit of Kurg not this illusion you call honor. Cling not to your Noble Houses, they will not sustain your soul. Instead cling to the purity of self-sacrifice and duty towards all your brothers and sisters. That is sustenance for the soul sweeter than any mead.

Yurl: Ah, yes, we finally hear from the Zealots. Hasn't your long exile tempered the rage that burns within you? The hooded cowl that cover your heads also blind your minds. Your crusades, as timely and predictable as the coming of the So'thren gypsies in spring, do press on the patience of the Noble Houses. There is talk among the To'jhen of increasing the bounty laid upon your hides to 300 Sovereigns, maybe more. Were I you, I'd not journey to the spring Gathering this season. It could be dangerous.

However, never let it be spoken that the seven families are not hospitable. If you surrender your swords to the blademaker, we will welcome you as we welcome all - with open arms and peace in our hearts. The Gathering Truce will not be violated by our hands. But, if you and

the other Children arrive, as last time, with murder in your eyes and steeled death in your hands, then you can be sure that Wa'shlan Bo will have no choice but to turn the tables of your holy war around and exterminate you.

Really, 'tis a shame that your kind foments this rebellion against us among the peasantry. Without the Noble Houses, what would those poor, helpless people do? Who would guide them? Who would protect them? They are like children. Without us, they wouldn't last a single harvest. Surely you, the self-proclaimed 'Shepards of Kurg' can see this, can you not?

Jurakhis: Your words are like rotting flesh given to a starving beggar. At first the beggar is happy to have his belly full and the pangs of hunger stilled. Then the agony sets in as he dies from the rot within. Your words are spiritual rot that corrupts the soul and rots the brains of those you would set yourself above. You make beggars of the People and call it guidance. You feed them decay and call it sustenance.

Yurl: I say, you have been reading the Analects of Tor'ha'lel haven't you? I recall a similar passage from the Song of Hell Ascending, book IV or V wasn't it? Interesting work, but a trifle melodramatic, if you ask me. And Tor'ha'lel is so passe, so gauche. Really, my dear zealot, you should investigate the dramas of Askan Zel. She might actually inspire within you a modicum of civility, if you catch my drift.

There is no honor in backstabbing and murder; simply cowardice. Were you to agree, I would gladly meet you on the Dueling circle floor and resolve our differences like gentlemen. Then you would know honorable combat, perhaps for the first time in your shaggy, deplorable bandit's existence.

If you war with the Seven Great Houses, you will lose. That is not a threat but a promise. Your savage religion might get you through the harsh winters, but it can not protect you from the might of the Noble Houses united. I warn you, Jurakhis, do not press your luck. Our conflict with the Houses of Hatun is nigh ending; when we have the head of Potrell Hatun on a pike, we shall in all likelihood turn our attention to you and your kind. Hatun and his families are paying the price for their lack of civility and honor. Take heed, o' "child" of the sun.

Again, I offer you this - surrender your steel to our blademaker and we will welcome you back into the fold with open arms and absolution of your past transgressions. Persist in spurning our entreaties, however, and we will have no choice but to crush you once and for all.

Jurakhis: I do not burn with rage, I burn with the Spirit of Righteousness and True Honor. I would sooner skin myself than give up my blade to the Tyrants. Perhaps I will place my blade in your heart as I did others of your kind. Then and only then may you lay hands on my blade as you fall into the long sleep of an honorless death.

Our exile has only made us stronger, tempering our steel to a keen sharpness. Soon we will temper the Spirit of Kurg with the fire of our just cause and burn away the impurities such as your falsely-named Noble Houses.

So call on your jidah' for hire. I will welcome them with blade and claw.

Xikspach: What problem was is can be that calls demands requires such anger hate dislike? I realize know comprehend that I was am will be a T'sa but had is shall be this matter only explainable clearifiable reportable to Weren? I wonder puzzle seek an explanation answer result to this question.

Grunff: This only City Weren matter. Not important! Not important! Real Weren live north. Real Weren live south. No real Weren between. Only get-lost-on-steppe-city-boys between! Real Weren mind herds much. Little scale-guy Corporal not worry.

Yurl: Ah, Grunff, to live the life of a noble savage must be grand indeed! How I envy you and your simple, albeit rustic, life. Yet, as much as I

desire it, I can not abandon my responsibilities to my House. The weight of my family's honor rests squarely upon my shoulders and I cannot for a minute blend out and relax. You are lucky to be unhindered but such a cumbersome burden, my dear illiterate student...

Jurakhis: A good question, Xikspach. The answer lies in the life path of Kushak, First Brother of the Sun. Kushak was what was called Noble according to the dictates of the Tyrants. He battled, debated, and drank with them in their world of Decay, always thinking this was the way of all right-thinking weren. He had become friend and later, lover with another great warrior, Lokari, who was born of a different clan. Then the day came when their clans went to war over some dispute and Kushak, whose destiny took him straight as an arrow to Lokari on the battlefield, was forced to slay her as she attacked him with ferocious strength and fanaticism. As he held her bloody body in his arms, the shadow fell from his eyes and he saw a glimmer of the Truth. There must be another way. Another way than killing those who were enemies by name alone.

Thus he renounced his clan and all the Noble houses. For his stand he was chased from the lands of his people who sought to quiet his voice, but he was a great warrior and none could catch him. He escaped and traveled the world of Kurg, preaching to all weren, especially the young, of the One Clan. The Clan of One Spirit. The Clan of True Honor. All weren should be brothers and sisters, regardless of names and clan loyalties.

Then Kushak journeyed to the stars on the great ships of the Otherworlders. Amongst the stars he met many beings, both vile and noble. And then after many years he saw the Truth in all its brilliant entirety. There was but two Clans in the universe. The Clan of Decay and the Clan of True Honor. Even the weakbloods such as the humans could be of the Clan of True Honor, and he welcomed those he found worthy as brothers and sisters. Those who were firmly entrenched in the arms of Decay he considered blood enemies, to be slain before their spiritual rot could infect others.

As Kushak reached the dying age he returned to Kurg for one last journey across the land of his birth. There he brought his wisdom written down in the *Darutbru*, the Book of True Honor. He died peacefully in the arms of his followers who took his body to a hidden place in the north where he was laid to rest, forever looking to the sky of his beloved Kurg.

I hope this has answered some of your questions, T'sa Brother. May you follow the Path of True Honor.

Yurl: Xikspach, it began with the Heresies of Kushak and has since devolved into what you see now. I am ashamed that I have let Jurakhis bring out the worst in me, and for that I offer a humble apology from my family to yours. Think of the exchange between the Zealot and myself as nothing more than internecine family squabbling. In any case, it shall soon be resolved, one way or another, for better or worse.

I do feel compelled, though, to shed a little light on the Heresies in order to further your education of Weren ways. Kushak was in past times known as Kus the Destroyer. Like most meglomaniacs, he believed in racial purity and led many a pogrom against Weren not descended from the tundra clans of Little Sister, the small continent to the northwest of the main one. Eventually, the Noble Houses engaged him on the Weeping Plains of Talon and devastated his armies. Kus escaped, smuggled away from Kurg by sympathetic offworlders.

Many years after he disappeared, it is alleged that he returned to Little Sister to die. His parting gift was a sacred tome of writings that he had compiled during his journeys abroad, but as far as anyone can tell this mythical book doesn't actually exist; the extant writings that have been attributed to him were actually written by his Lieutenant, a psychopath who goes by the name "Vash'rak". He has taken up the cause once again and has been actively recruiting new warriors for the last decade or so. Occasionally, they move against the outer settlements, murdering innocents and drenching our fiefdom flags in their blood. Warriors from the Seven Houses have policed the terrorized regions for years, hoping to weaken the Zealot's resolve and eventually

drive them back into the woodwork. Unfortunately, this has only encouraged them and now I feel that we are moving towards another large-scale confrontation with their so-called armies. If this does happen, I can assure you that they will not survive this time. There have been rumors that offworld sympathizers are supplying the Zealots with alien technology in order to give them a decided advantage in the next battle. We, the Noble Houses, will not stand for this and intend to put an end to it immediately.

Jurakhis: How it saddens me to hear the lies of the Tyrants fall on the ears of others beyond the world of Kurg. It is bad enough the proud weren must endure the foul venom of Decay's servants. Like all Tyrants, Yurl plants two truths together and grows a tree of deceit. Here is the true tale...

There was a foul butcher known as Kus the Destroyer, and his Path was of Destruction and Hatred, scarring the Spirit of Kurg and leaving a legacy of racist poison. It is true he fled Kurg, much to the relief of the One Clan, who opposed him at every turn. But mere exile was not good enough for the Children of Kushak. Kus represented the Clan of Decay in its purest malevolence and it was our duty to erase his foul existence from the universe. A cadre of Sun Brethren hunted Kus down, slaying him and the otherworlders who sought to protect him.

The Tyrants perform their greatest dishonor in fostering the falsehood of Kus being the same being as Kushak, a great warrior whose philosophy opposed everything Kus stood for in his foul life.

Thus the first truth. Kus existed and he fled Kurg, just as Kushak the First Sun Brother did in his path to enlightenment. They are not the same, in spirit and in existence, as the Tyrants would have you believe.

The second truth... Kushak returned to Kurg and he brought with him the Book of True Honor, which does exist and the Tyrants but feverishly wish was a myth.

The Tyrants continue to spread lies of this Vash'rak who has become a krult² to scare their followers and turn their hatred towards the Children of Kushak. If Vash'rak does indeed exist the Children would oppose him as we do the Tyrants and the others entwined in Decay's embrace.

As you see a strong tree of deceit grown from the seeds of truth. The Tyrants continue to water and feed their foul growth, blocking out the Light of Truth until the shadow covers them all. And in that shadow even they do not know the difference between night and day.

Peace to all who follow the Path of True Honor. Death to all who will not turn from the Path of Decay.

¹ Jidah are predator/scavengers with a bad reputation for cowardice on Kurg, much like the hyena of Earth.

² The krult is a weren "boogiemani". In Southern cultures, the krult are said to be massive, insectoid-like beasts that are composed entirely of shadow. In the North, they are supposedly Weren whose souls have been stolen by the Night Witches and who now roam the earth as restless, zombie-like dead, stealing the hearts of children in the night in order to sustain their gruesome existence.

Note: The exchange was originally a series of posts on the Alternity List that was compiled into a coherent format. These in-character postings lead directly to the creation of the "One Clan" article. I owe Chris Jones [Yurl] greatly for the inspiration of this article. The parts were played by the following:

Yurl, To'jhen of the House Do'skar _____ Chris Jones
 Jurakhis, Brother of the Sun, Child of Kushak _____ Daryl Blasi
 Grunff, weren member of the Austrin Rangers _____ Dallas Gomez
 Xispach, t'sa member of the Austrin Rangers _____ Dallas Gomez
 Will, human associate of Grunff _____ W.E. Herrman

Vassilis Stratigakis

Webmaster of tequilastarrise.net, the Official Star*Drive Fansite

When did you start playing RPG's (not necessarily Alernity)?

I started playing RPG's 9 years ago (when I was 15). The first thing I ever played was a D&D adventure set in the Forgotten Realms setting where I roleplayed a Dwarf Fighter (don't ask for a name!!!). I was really hooked.

When did you start playing Alernity?

When Alernity first came out I bought all the core books and started reading. When the Star*Drive setting came out I knew I found my setting. Star*Drive was all I ever wanted in a sci-fi setting! You could stage any number of different flavours in it's vast territories. So, as it happens on those occasions, some friends came over and we started playing...Our campaign still runs!

What are your past contributions to the Alernity community?

As far as contributions go the only really big thing would be the official Star*Drive fansite. I am a member of the Stellar Ring Netbook, but haven't had the time to really add to it. I believe that this summer though I will have a chance. I also have plan to upgrade TS. Net and add more functionality to it.

What Alernity projects are you currently working on?

Currently I am working on an "Externals" campaign for my players. I mostly build on this campaign as we play along and it's coming out nicely. I plan to publish this campaign as soon as it is ready and I feel comfortable with sharing it.

Right now it's mostly a bunch of notes spread in word files all around my hard drive.

What project would you most like to see accomplished for Alernity?

The project that I believe would add to the Alernity community? Ok. I will answer for a Star*Drive specific project. That would be the "Stellar Ring Netbook". I believe it is something that is needed as not a lot of information is found on the core book about these nations and I believe that this Netbook will help to flesh things out.

If there was a campaign that you'd like to run or simply play describe it to us (and indicate which of running/ playing).

The campaign I would like to run/play is the one I am currently running for my players. There's so much thought put into it and there are so many thing going on that you can really feel it breathing. It's basically built around the Ancient adversaries of the I'krl as my players ultimately try to prevent the I'krl from braking free from their astral prison as well as prevent GW3. On their way they discover much more than they had intended and get really close to what many cultures refer to as God, the supreme being! OK I won't give away any more details! One of my players might be reading this!!!

What is the most recent RPG-related book/item that you have acquired?

The latest RPG book I bought was the core rulebook from changeling the Dreaming. I like this dreaming setting and the magic it casts on you. I like the full color hardback book, the awesome artwork and the storytelling writing of the book. Now if I had the time to begin a changeling campaign...

Any good (Alernity or other) websites to recommend (other than TS.net)?

Definitely Alernity.net. Vempire is really a talented coder and has really put a lot of his time on this website. The community there is strong and the forums active. The people are always ready to start a new thread given an intriguing question, so pop up on the forums and ask! Furthermore there are several resources there for you to read, and some of them are exceptionally good (try for instance Neil Spicer's adventure "Just a Few Baubles").

Favorite sci-fi/fantasy book(s) and why?

That would be Stephen King's *Dreamcatcher*. I read it recently and I really like the way the writer creates REAL characters that breath right there in your face. Furthermore it deals with one of my favorite subjects. An alien invasion. The military of course is trying to cover it all up (yep they new about the damn greys!!!) and only four friends that have a special telepathic link with one another can put a stop to this invasion!

Favorite sci-fi/fantasy movie(s) and why?

That would be the *Lord of the Rings*. I believe that Peter Jackson has done a great job in capturing the spirit of J.R.R. Tolkien's writings and the visual result is absolutely stunning. I really like all actors in the movie, except maybe Elrond as I always see an "Agent Smith" in his face. "Going somewhere Mr. Frodo Baggins?"

What sci fi/fantasy character in a book, television show, video game, or movie would you most like to be and why?

I believe that I would like to be Aragorn. I always liked that kind of "destined" characters. He has a legacy to keep up to and all expect from him to behave in a certain fashion and be the king and all and it is something that is eating him on the inside. At the end though all his labours come to fruition!

What profession/career and level are you in Real Life and what is your highest skill rank?

In my real life I am a 3rd level Tech Op/Nurse!!! My highest rank on any skill would be Medical Science - Treatment [9]. I hope to raise that to a higher rank really soon (yep I will go for a master degree!!!)