

# BLUE ROSE



THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF ROMANTIC FANTASY



# BLUE ROSE™

## THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF ROMANTIC FANTASY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CREDITS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
---------------------------	----------

What Is Roleplaying? .....	6
What Is Romantic Fantasy? .....	6
The Basics of the Game.....	8
<i>The Core System .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The Narrator .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The Heroes .....</i>	<i>8</i>
Game Play.....	9
<i>Die Rolls .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Checks .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Difficulty.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Trying Again.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Circumstance Modifiers.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Time and Checks .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Tools .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Making Checks Without Rolls .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Aiding Others .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Types of Checks .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Attack Rolls.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Saving Throws .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>The Combat Round .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Conviction.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Important Terms .....	12
Bibliography .....	13

## CHAPTER I:

### THE WORLD OF ALDEA.....16

History.....	16
<i>The Mythic Age .....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>The Old Kingdom .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>The Empire of Thorns .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>The Rebirth of Aldis.....</i>	<i>24</i>
Daily Life in Aldis .....	26
<i>Nonhumans in Aldis .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Government .....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Education .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Marriage and Romance.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Crime and Justice.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>The Arcane Arts in Daily Life .....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Religion .....</i>	<i>34</i>
Alliances and Organizations.....	36
<i>The Sovereign's Finest.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>The Sovereign's Guard .....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>The Knights of the Blue Rose.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Spirit Dancers.....</i>	<i>38</i>
Threats to Aldis .....	38
<i>Unscrupulous Merchants .....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Fallen Nobles.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Bandits and Pirates.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>The Silence .....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Shadow Cults.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Arcane Relics .....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Shadowgates.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Sorcery .....</i>	<i>41</i>
The Geography of Aldis .....	42
Lands Outside Aldis.....	47
<i>The Veran Marsh .....</i>	<i>47</i>

Jarzon .....	48
Kern .....	49
Rezea .....	50
The Roamers .....	51

## CHAPTER II:

### CREATING YOUR HERO.....52

Abilities.....	52
<i>Choosing Ability Scores.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>The Abilities.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Altering Ability Scores.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Nonexistent Ability Scores .....</i>	<i>54</i>
Backgrounds.....	54
<i>Choosing a Background .....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Background Features .....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Humans .....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Night People.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Rhydan .....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Sea-Folk.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Vata .....</i>	<i>60</i>
Roles .....	60
<i>Level-Dependent Benefits .....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Role Descriptions.....</i>	<i>61</i>
Adept .....	62
<i>Game Abilities.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Adept Paths.....</i>	<i>62</i>
Expert.....	64
<i>Game Abilities.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Expert Paths.....</i>	<i>64</i>
Warrior.....	66
<i>Game Abilities.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Warrior Paths .....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Level Advancement.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Mixed-Role Heroes.....</i>	<i>68</i>
Characteristics.....	69
<i>Details .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Calling .....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Alignment and Natures .....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Conviction.....</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>Reputation.....</i>	<i>74</i>

## CHAPTER III: SKILLS.....75

Skill Basics .....	75
<i>Acquiring Skills.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>How Skills Work .....</i>	<i>76</i>
Skill Descriptions .....	77
<i>Skill Name.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Acrobatics .....</i>	<i>77</i>

## CHAPTER IV: FEATS.....90

Acquiring Feats.....	90
Feat Descriptions.....	90

## CHAPTER V: ARCANA.....107

Learning and Using Arcana .....	107
<i>Using Arcana.....</i>	<i>107</i>
<i>Maintaining Arcana .....</i>	<i>109</i>
Arcana Descriptions .....	110
Sorcery: The Shadow Art.....	126
<i>Corruption .....</i>	<i>126</i>

# — TABLE OF CONTENTS —

## CHAPTER VI:

### WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT ..... 128

<b>Wealth</b> .....	128
Wealth Score .....	128
The Wealth Check .....	128
Losing Wealth .....	129
Gaining Wealth.....	129
Selling Things.....	130
<b>Weapons</b> .....	130
Weapon Descriptions .....	132
Masterwork Weapons .....	137
Arcane Weapons .....	137
<b>Armor</b> .....	137
Armor Descriptions .....	137
Masterwork Armor .....	139
<b>Goods and Services</b> .....	139
Adventuring Gear.....	139
Tools and Skill Kits .....	140
Clothing .....	142
Food, Drink, & Lodging.....	142
Mounts & Related Gear.....	143
Transportation .....	144
Services .....	144
<b>Arcane Elixirs and Stones</b> .....	145
Arcane Elixirs .....	145
Arcane Stones .....	146

## CHAPTER VII:

### PLAYING THE GAME ..... 147

<b>Social Actions</b> .....	147
Influencing Attitudes.....	147
Social Interaction .....	148
<b>Physical Actions</b> .....	150
Moving.....	150
Carrying.....	151
Throwing.....	152
Extra Effort .....	152
<b>Fighting</b> .....	152
Combat Sequence .....	152
Combat Statistics .....	152
Initiative.....	154
Actions in Combat .....	155
Damage and Recovery .....	158
Combat Modifiers.....	161
Special Actions.....	163
<b>Hazards and the Environment</b> .....	167

## CHAPTER VIII:

### NARRATING BLUE ROSE..... 170

<b>Running the Game</b> .....	170
Assigning Difficulties .....	170
Secret Checks.....	172
Altering the Outcome of Die Rolls .....	172
Faking It.....	173
Saying Yes to Your Players .....	173
Making Mistakes .....	173
<b>Rewards</b> .....	174
Heroic Advancement.....	174
<b>Setting Considerations</b> .....	174
Emotional Roleplaying.....	174

Reputation Precedes You .....	175
Official Status .....	175
Friend and Foe .....	178
Mercy and the Sword.....	178
Adventures & Arcana.....	179
<b>Roleplaying Romance</b> .....	179
Romance Between Heroes .....	179
Romance Between Heroes and Narrator Characters .....	180
Romance Between Narrator Characters .....	180
<b>Roleplaying Intrigue</b> .....	180
Hatching a Plot.....	180
Tools of the Trade.....	181
Practical Examples.....	182
Intrigue & Arcana .....	182

## CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY ..... 183

<b>Creature Descriptions</b> .....	183
Advancement .....	188
<b>Creatures</b> .....	189
Animals.....	189
Rhydan .....	194
Plants .....	197
Shadowspawn .....	200
Aberrations .....	202
Unliving.....	203
Darkfiends.....	207

## INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE:

### THE CURSE OF HARMONY ..... 210

<b>Adventure Summary</b> .....	210
Adapting the Adventure .....	210
<b>Introduction</b> .....	211
Investigation .....	212
Hauntings .....	213
The Night of Fire.....	213
Verrick's Trail .....	214
Conclusion .....	215
<b>Cast of Characters</b> .....	215

## APPENDIX:

### D20 SYSTEM CONVERSION..... 217

Abilities.....	217
Damage and Injury.....	217
Feat Changes.....	218
Spell Changes.....	219
Converting Creatures .....	219

## INDEX ..... 220

## CHARACTER SHEET ..... 222

## OPEN GAME LICENSE ..... 223







# THE QUEEN'S HART

Jaellin sighed, shifting her shoulders slightly under the starched collar of her robes and smothered a yawn. She had spent the afternoon, along with other nobles of the kingdom, in vigil in the great room where King Halyn lay in state, and the long day was not yet over. Out in the courtyard, nobles were gathering, and she needed to take her place there as well. She went out to stand in the open, among her equals, under a dull pewter sky to await the Choosing.

The white stone courtyard faced the palace's main hall, where an enormous stained glass window glowed with color. Centered among glass roses and the bright colors of the sun and moon was the Golden Hart. It stared above the crowd, nothing more than a picture of glass and lead yet, at the same time, so much more. Around the courtyard, beyond the lapis inlay of blue roses, was a great assembly. Every citizen of the capital city who could find a place was crowded there to witness the Choosing of the next sovereign of Aldis. The assembled nobles glanced at each other, each one wondering, "Are they the one? Am I?"

There was no predicting who the Golden Hart would mark as monarch. It could even scorn all of those assembled in the courtyard and seek someone unknown; that had happened once, in a dark time when the kingdom's nobles had been tainted by Shadow. As the last rays of the sun touched the stained glass, Jaellin stiffened. There was something suddenly *present*—an unheard note, an unseen light. Beside her, one of the nobles breathed a shocked prayer as Jaellin looked up to see the Golden Hart step out from the window crafted in its image.

It leapt to the courtyard with a very material datter of hooves and began to pace towards the wide-eyed nobles. Skirts rustled as people shifted, some stepping away, others forward, in keeping with their ambitions and fears. The Hart walked among them, antlers reaching above their heads and gleaming in the light like gold. It was a massive, beautiful creature, eyes flashing with wisdom and power. Jaellin could not move at all.

Sayvin, the son of King Haylin, stepped forward, arms spread in welcome, bare head bowed in humility. He would be carrying on a noble tradition, following in the footsteps of his father, who ruled Aldis for so long. Without pause and with no more notice than it gave anyone else, the Golden Hart passed him by, moving closer, ever closer, to where Jaellin stood.

It stepped closer, and Jaellin found she still could not move. Closer still, and she could not look away from those dark, wise, sad eyes. When she felt the gentle touch of those horns on her head, hot and cold at once, a shock ran through her, as silent tears rolled down her cheeks. Even then, as the Golden Hart bowed on bended knee before her, Jaellin could not move.

All around her, robes rustled as the assembled nobles knelt on the cool stones of the courtyard. The sound seemed to break the spell of the moment. Jaellin turned and looked out at a sea of bent heads, with the Golden Hart kneeling beside her. A squire scampered to her side and lifted a velvet pillow, and the blue object it bore, toward her.

As if in a trance, Jaellin reached out her hand and lifted the Blue Rose Scepter, symbol of the sovereign, from its resting place. Azure light shimmered around its delicately carved petals, as she raised it to catch the day's last rays of sun. The stained glass window transformed into blazing jewels in the light, but none so bright as the golden halo surrounding the woman standing before them, with the Hart at her side.

A call went up from the crowd. "Hail!" they cried. "Hail Queen Jaellin! All hail the queen!"

The new queen had been chosen.





# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of *Blue Rose*, a fantastic world where brave women and men, gifted with arcane powers, live and work side-by-side with intelligent animal companions. The heroes of the peaceful Kingdom of Aldis strive to uphold the ideals of fairness, justice, and equality, while protecting their homeland against its aggressive neighbors, including the fundamentalist Theocracy of Jarzon and the dark land of Kern and its terrible ruler, the Lich King.

*Blue Rose* is a roleplaying game of romantic fantasy, where you and your friends take on the roles of the main characters in this fantastic world, creating your own stories about the heroes of Aldis, their triumphs and tragedies—like writing your own fantasy novel but where *you* play the heroes! You may have played other roleplaying games, or this may be your introduction to new worlds of adventure. Either way, welcome, friends, to the world of *Blue Rose*.

## WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

If *Blue Rose* is your introduction to the world of fantasy roleplaying games (RPGs for short), then you might be wondering, “What is all this roleplaying stuff about?”

Essentially, in a roleplaying game, you (the player) take on the role of a fictional character in a world of your imagination. One player, the Narrator, acts like the narrator of a story or the director of a play or movie. The Narrator sets the scene and describes what happens in the world around your character. Then the other players decide what their characters do, the Narrator describes the outcome of those actions, and on you go, spinning your own fantasy story.

Roleplaying is much like cooperative fan fiction or simulation gaming, where a group of people work together to build a fun and exciting story. Although it's the Narrator's job to portray the various antagonists in the story, as well as the heroes' allies, the Narrator isn't playing against everyone else. In fact, it's the Narrator's job to help ensure everyone has fun and the group tells an enjoyable story.

Think of a roleplaying game like an extended version of the various games of make believe we all played as children, only with rules to help guide the story and a central Narrator to set the stage and keep things moving along.

## WHAT IS ROMANTIC FANTASY?

*Blue Rose* is a roleplaying game about *romantic fantasy*, but what is romantic fantasy? In the high fantasy quests of authors like J. R. R. Tolkien, or the larger-than-life swords and sorcery of Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, and others, heroic loners or small groups of rebels,

outcasts, or eccentrics perform great deeds and go on quests to obtain power and glory or to protect the world from some threat. In the mid-1980s, a generation of new fantasy authors—Diane Duane, Mercedes Lackey, Tamora Pierce, and many others—wrote fantasy novels different

## — INTRODUCTION —



Eliane Bettocchi 2004

from any that had come before. The main characters in their novels occasionally start out as loners and outcasts, but find a place in society, generally as members of some prominent group or official organization that goes on exciting adventures to protect ordinary people from danger. Developing a sense of belonging and finding comrades are central features of these novels.

Most of these novels are in series, and by the end of the first book, the main character has usually found a community where he or she belongs. Many of the character's adventures involve either becoming a more fully integrated member of this group or protecting the group from harm.

Few of these novels contain elves, dwarves, or similar fantasy races, and many contain no other humanoid species at all. Instead, humans share their world with one or more types of intelligent or semi-intelligent animals, sometimes with a few magical human subspecies as well. Some of the intelligent animals are simply bright psychic pets, while others are free-willed, powerful spirits with animal bodies.

Romantic fantasy novels are normally set in highly egalitarian societies, where people's occupations and aspirations are not limited by fixed gender roles. In these books, cultures and individuals that are sexist or homophobic are either ignorant and see the error of their ways somewhere in the series, or they are enemies who are eventually vanquished.

The heroes of romantic fantasy novels are usually environmentally conscious. Protecting wilderness areas and animals from depredation is a common plot element. In all romantic fantasy worlds, nature is a positive magical force, and anyone who protects it is on the side of good.

Attitudes about magic differ from other fantasy novels. Instead of the scholastic magic of some stories—magic as a rare and powerful discipline involving complex rituals and arcane lore—many characters have innate psychic or mystical powers as natural to them as sight and hearing. Heroic characters can often manipulate the natural elements and use their powers with nothing more than concentration and intent. These powers are seen as both an innate and positive part of someone's nature and are only feared by the ignorant or evil.

More traditional magic occasionally appears in these novels, but it's usually only practiced by villains to bind others to their will or to summon horrific creatures and spirits from other planes of existence. The only motives given for performing such magic are a hunger for power or a desire for revenge. This type of magic is unnatural, dangerous, and often corrupting.

*Blue Rose* takes these elements of romantic fantasy to create a world of adventure, where you can create your own heroes and tell your own stories. With this book, some friends, and your imagination you can create your own tales of romantic fantasy in the world of Aldea.



# THE BASICS OF THE GAME

**B**lue Rose provides a framework for your imagination. It has rules to help you decide what happens in your stories and to resolve conflicts between the heroes and the challenges they face. With it, any romantic fantasy adventure you can imagine is possible.

To play, you need this book; a twenty-sided die, available at game and hobby stores; and a pencil and some paper.

## The Core System

*Blue Rose* uses a core system to resolve actions. Whenever your character attempts an action with a chance of failure, do the following:

1. Roll a twenty-sided die (d20).
2. Add any relevant modifiers (for things like skills and circumstance modifiers).
3. Compare the total to a number called the action's *Difficulty* (set by the Narrator based on the circumstances).

If the result equals or exceeds the Difficulty, the action succeeds. If the result is lower than the Difficulty, the action fails. This simple system is used for nearly everything in *Blue Rose*, with variations based on the modifiers added to a roll, the Difficulty, and the effects of success and failure.

## The Narrator

One of the players in a *Blue Rose* game takes the role of *Narrator*. The Narrator is responsible for running the game and is a combination of writer, director, and referee. The Narrator creates adventures for the heroes, portrays the villains and supporting characters, describes the world,

and decides the outcome of the heroes' actions based on the guidelines given in the rules. It's a big job, but also a rewarding one, since the Narrator gets to create the setting and the various characters in it, as well as inventing fun and exciting plots. If you're going to be a Narrator, you should read through this whole book carefully. You should have a firm grasp of the setting and rules, since you're expected to interpret them for the players.

## The Heroes

The other players in a *Blue Rose* game create heroes—the main characters of their own adventure series, like an ongoing series of short stories or novels. As a player, you create your hero following the guidelines in this book, with the assistance and guidance of your Narrator, building the sort of hero you want to play. There are several components to creating a hero, outlined here and described in detail later in this book.

## Abilities

All heroes have certain basic *abilities* that define what they are capable of doing. These abilities are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. They each have a numeric *ability score*, averaging +0 for a normally capable human. Higher ability scores are bonuses (+1 to +5 or more), while lower ability scores are penalties (as low as -5). As part of creating your hero, you decide how strong, smart, and tough your hero is by choosing the appropriate ability scores. See **Chapter II: Creating Your Hero** for more information.

## Skills

*Skills* represent training in a particular sort of task or knowledge, everything from acrobatic maneuvers to

## WOLF SONG

Kerin was no expert at forest travel, and the deep, green secrets of the Pavin Weald were likely to remain secret from him, though not from his hosts, who lived there and treated the forest as a holy place. His hosts thought him amusing as he stumbled and crunched his way along the trails. He accepted the laughter with good humor. Humor was certainly better than hostility. When the queen sent him into the forests to act as her envoy, hostility from the forest folk had been a real concern.

Now though, they teased him and fussed over his scrapes and bumps. They'd fed him and offered their terrible fermented herb beer, and he ate and drank it all. He was an envoy, after all, and it was his calling to find a place wherever he traveled, whether palace or wattle-and-daub hut.

Now the firelight flickered on the pale faces and golden hair of the suspicious forest folk, and Kerin could see, farther back in the shadows, the silvery gleam of inhuman eyes. The rhy-wolves, come to see the stranger amid their human kinfolk.

"Tell us a story," someone said beyond the light. Other voices took up the request. Kerin could feel the seriousness below the light coaxing. The people here had no written language; they passed on knowledge and wisdom through story and song.

Kerin sat up and set aside his day mug—secretly grateful to be distracted from the greenish, foamy drink—and smiled at his hosts. He scanned the small crowd: elders and little children, men and women, and the great, intelligent rhy-wolves circling in the shadows of the fires.

Though he had not met one, Kerin knew the rhy-wolves were as much a part of the village as the elders who'd come to greet him. As he looked around, he could begin to get a sense of the pattern here, the connections and tensions among the group, a web spun of love, envy, fears, dreams, and hopes. Kerin could feel how this place held together, and what he saw with his empathic talent was that the rhydan were woven into the fabric of this place as tightly as any human.

He had been sent by the queen to strengthen the ties between Aldis and its most secretive citizens. Kerin realized if he was to do his job and fulfill his duties as one of the Sovereign's Finest, he must draw the rhy-wolves in as well. He knew just the story, with a few alterations, of course.

"Once upon a time, long ago, there was a young girl. Beloved of her family and town, she wore a red hood—a gift from her grandmother," Kerin began. "One day, she decided to visit her grandmother, who lived deep in the holy forest. So she set out with a basket of food, with her beloved wolf companion at her side...."

## — INTRODUCTION —

negotiation, riding a horse, and ancient lore. Someone trained in climbing is able to climb faster and with more confidence than someone who isn't, for example. Skills are measured in *ranks*, reflecting how much training a character has in the skill. Skill ranks act as a bonus when a hero attempts an action related to a skill. You choose the skills your hero knows from a list of available skills. See **Chapter III: Skills** for more information.

### Feats

*Feats* are special abilities, representing talents or special training. They allow your hero to do things others can't or give your hero some other advantage. You select your hero's feats based on what you want your hero to be able

to do. Heroes acquire new feats as they improve. See **Chapter IV: Feats** for more information.

### Arcana

Some heroes in *Blue Rose* have special mystical abilities known as *arcana* (singular: *arcanum*). These include the ability to communicate mind-to-mind over great distances, to move objects with nothing more than a thought, to heal with a touch, or to shape the elements of nature. Arcana are capable of a wide range of things, but many of them are taxing, tiring out the wielder over time. Some arcana also represent a dangerous temptation. Arcana are power, and power used unjustly or without restraint can lead to the corruption of *sorcery*. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for more information.

## GAME PLAY

A session of *Blue Rose* resembles one or more chapters from a novel. The Narrator and the players get together and tell a story by playing the game. The length of the game session can vary, from just a couple hours to four hours or more. Some adventures are completed in a single session, while others take multiple sessions. You can choose when to stop playing, and you can start up again anytime later.

Just like a story, a *Blue Rose* adventure consists of a series of scenes or encounters. Some scenes are fairly straightforward, with the heroes interacting with each other and the supporting cast. In these cases the Narrator generally just asks the players to describe what their heroes are doing and in turn describes how the other characters react and what they say and do. When the action starts happening, such as when the heroes are staving off a disaster or fighting villains, time becomes more crucial and is broken down into *rounds*, each six seconds long, and the players generally have to make die rolls to see how well their heroes do.

### Die Rolls

There are a number of different die rolls in *Blue Rose*, although they all follow the core system of a d20 roll plus modifiers versus a Difficulty. The three main die rolls in *Blue Rose* are checks, attack rolls, and saving throws.

### Checks

To make a *check*, roll 1d20 and add your modifier for the appropriate attribute (ability, skill, and so forth). You always want to roll high. Rolling 20 before adding modifiers (called a *natural 20*) is not an automatic success, and rolling 1 before adding modifiers (a *natural 1*) is not an automatic failure (as they are with attack rolls).

**Check = 1d20 + modifier versus Difficulty**

### Difficulty

The Difficulty is a number set by the Narrator that you must equal or exceed with your check to succeed. So, for

a task with a Difficulty of 15 you must have a check total of 15 or better to succeed. In some cases, the consequences of a check vary based on how much higher or lower the result is than the Difficulty.

#### DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Difficulty	Example (Skill Used)
Very easy (0)	Notice something large in plain sight (Notice)
Easy (5)	Climb a knotted rope with a wall to brace against (Climb)
Average (10)	Hear an approaching guard (Notice)
Tough (15)	Rig a wagon wheel to fall off (Disable Device)
Challenging (20)	Swim in stormy water (Swim)
Formidable (25)	Pick an average quality lock (Disable Device)
Heroic (30)	Leap across a 30-foot chasm (Jump)
Superheroic (35)	Convince the guards that even though they've never seen you before, they should let you into the fortress (Bluff)
Nearly impossible (40)	Track an expert hunter through the woods on a moonless night after days of rainfall (Survival)

### Opposed Checks

Some checks are *opposed checks*. They are made against someone else's check. Whoever gets the higher result wins the contest. An example is trying to bluff someone. You make a Bluff check, while the Narrator makes a Sense Motive check for your target. If you beat the target's Sense Motive check result, you succeed.



## — INTRODUCTION —

For ties on opposed checks, the character with the higher modifier wins. If the modifiers are the same, reroll.

### OPPOSED CHECK EXAMPLES

Task	Skill	Opposing Skill
Sneak up on someone	Sneak	Notice
Con someone	Bluff	Sense Motive
Hide from someone	Sneak	Notice
Win a horse race	Ride	Ride
Pretend to be someone else	Disguise	Notice
Steal a key chain	Sleight of Hand	Notice

## Trying Again

In general, you can try a check again if you fail, and keep trying indefinitely. Some tasks, however, have consequences for failure. For example, failing a Climb check might mean you fall, which would make it difficult to try again. Some tasks can't be attempted again once a check has failed. For most tasks, once you've succeeded, additional successes are meaningless. (Once you've discovered a room's only secret door using the Search skill, for instance, there's no further benefit from additional Search checks.)

## Circumstance Modifiers

Some circumstances make a check easier or harder, resulting in a bonus or penalty to the modifier for the check or a change to the check's Difficulty.

The Narrator can alter the odds of success in four ways:

- Grant a +2 bonus to represent circumstances improving performance.
- Grant a -2 penalty to represent circumstances hampering performance.
- Reduce the Difficulty by 2 to represent circumstances making the task easier.
- Increase the Difficulty by 2 to represent circumstances making the task harder.

Bonuses to your check modifier and reduction to the check's Difficulty have the same result: they create a better chance of success. But they represent different circumstances, and sometimes that difference is important.

## Time and Checks

Performing a particular task may take a round, take no time at all, or take several rounds or even longer. Most checks are move actions, standard actions, or full-round actions. Some checks are instant and represent reactions

to an event, or are included as part of another action. Other checks represent part of movement. The distance the character jumps when making a Jump check, for example, is part of the character's move action. Some checks take more than a round to use, and the rules specify how long these tasks require.

## Tools

Some tasks require tools. If tools are needed, the specific items are mentioned in the description of the task or skill. If you don't have the appropriate tools, you can still attempt to use the task, but at a -4 penalty on your check.

A character may be able to put together impromptu tools to make the check. If the Narrator allows this, reduce the penalty to -2 (instead of -4). It usually takes some time (several minutes to an hour or more) to collect or create a set of impromptu tools, and it may require an additional check as well. Characters with the Improvised Tools feat suffer no penalty for not having the proper tools to perform a task.

## Making Checks Without Rolls

A check represents performing a task under a certain amount of pressure. When the situation is less demanding, you can perform with more reliable results. Applying these rules can speed up checks under routine circumstances, cutting down the number of rolls players need to make during play.

### Taking 1

If your total bonus on a check is equal to or greater than the Difficulty, you will succeed regardless of what you roll on the die. In this case, the Narrator might not require you to roll and just assume you succeed, since it's a trivial effort for someone of your skill. If the skill check has varying levels of success, you're assumed to achieve the minimum possible (as if you'd rolled a 1). You can choose to make a roll to achieve a greater level of success, or the Narrator may assume a greater level of success, depending on the circumstances.

### Taking 10

When you are not in a rush and not threatened or distracted, you may choose to take 10. Instead of rolling for the check, calculate your result as if you had rolled a 10. For average (Difficulty 10) tasks, taking 10 allows you to succeed automatically. You cannot take 10 if distracted or under pressure (such as in a combat situation). The Narrator decides when this is the case.

### Taking 20

When you have plenty of time, and when the task carries no penalties for failure, you can take 20. Instead of rolling the check, calculate your result as if you had rolled a 20. Taking 20 means you are trying until you

## WHEN TO ROLL DICE

*Blue Rose* provides systems to handle most situations likely to come up during a game. Ultimately, it's up to the Narrator to decide exactly what happens in any given situation. The Narrator also decides when various checks and other die rolls are necessary to resolve a situation.

Generally speaking, it's possible to handle a lot of challenges and routine issues in the game using the guidelines given in this section, particularly the rules for taking 10, taking 20, and comparison checks. For example, if you know a hero can simply take 10 and succeed at a task under routine circumstances, there's no reason to bother rolling dice; just assume the hero succeeds and move on. This helps to maintain the narrative flow of the game and makes the times when you *do* start rolling dice more dramatic, since all the focus is on the action.

get it right. Taking 20 takes about twenty times as long as making a single check, or about 2 minutes for a task requiring a round or less. If there are potential penalties or negative consequences for failing the check, such as setting off an alarm or slipping and falling, you cannot take 20 on that check.

### Comparison Checks

In cases where a check is a simple test of one character's ability against another, with no luck involved, the one with the higher modifier or score wins. Just as you wouldn't make a height check to see who's taller, you don't need to make a Strength check to see who's stronger. When two characters arm wrestle, for example, the stronger character wins. In the case of identical bonuses or scores, flip a coin to see who wins.

### Aiding Others

Sometimes multiple characters react to the same situation and can work together. In this case, one character (usually the one with the highest bonus) is considered the leader of the effort and makes a check, while each helper makes the same check against Difficulty 10 (and can't take 10 on this check). For each helper who succeeds, the leader gets a +2 bonus for favorable conditions. In many cases, a character's help won't be beneficial, or only a limited number of characters can help at once. The Narrator limits cooperation as appropriate for the given task and conditions.

### Types of Checks

There are two main types of checks used in *Blue Rose*: skill checks and ability checks.

#### Skill Checks

A skill check determines what you can accomplish with a particular skill (sometimes whether you're trained in that skill or not). It is a roll of 1d20 + your rank in the skill and the skill's key ability score against a Difficulty. Skill checks sometimes have gradations of success and failure based on how much your total roll is above or below the Difficulty. For example, if you fail a Climb check, you don't make any progress. If you fail by 5 or more, you fall.

### Ability Checks

An ability check is like a skill check, but measures raw ability, like strength, endurance, or intellect. It is a roll of 1d20 + your ability modifier against a Difficulty. Ability checks tend to be all or nothing (you can either accomplish the task or you can't), although there are sometimes gradations of success or failure. Attempting a skill check without training (in other words, without ranks in the skill) is an ability check.

#### EXAMPLE ABILITY CHECKS

Task	Ability
Forcing open a jammed or locked door	Strength
Tying a rope	Dexterity
Holding your breath	Constitution
Navigating a maze	Intelligence
Recognize a stranger you've seen before	Wisdom
Getting yourself noticed in a crowd	Charisma

### Attack Rolls

An attack roll determines whether or not you hit an opponent in combat. It is a d20 roll + your attack bonus. The Difficulty is your target's Defense, which measures their ability to avoid attacks. If you equal or exceed your target's Defense, your attack hits. Otherwise, you miss.

### Saving Throws

Saving throws are efforts to avoid different forms of danger, ranging from injury to traps, poisons, and various arcana. A saving throw is a d20 roll + the appropriate ability score (Constitution for Toughness and Fortitude saves, Dexterity for Reflex saves, and Wisdom for Will saves) and the appropriate base save bonus, along with any bonuses from feats, special abilities, and the like. The Difficulty is based on the strength of the hazard, such as the power of an attack or the strength of a disease or poison. Like skill checks, there are sometimes gradations to a saving throw's results. For example, a Toughness save may result in no damage at all if you beat the Difficulty, but could result in a glancing blow, a stunning blow, or an immediate knockout if you fail, depending on how much the roll misses the Difficulty.



## The Combat Round

When things really start happening in a *Blue Rose* game, time is broken down into six-second segments called *rounds*, or *combat rounds* since they're most often used in fights. A round isn't very much time, just long enough for a hero to do something. The types of actions your hero can perform during a round are standard actions, move actions, full-round actions, free actions, and reactions. During a round you can do the following:

- Take a standard action and a move action.
- Take a move action and then another move action (in place of your standard action).
- Take a full-round action.

You can perform as many free actions and reactions in a round as you wish, although the Narrator may choose to limit them to a reasonable number to keep the game moving.

### Standard Actions

A *standard action* generally involves acting upon something, whether it's an actual attack or using some skill or arcanum to affect something. You're limited to one standard action in a round.

### Move Actions

A *move action* usually involves moving. You can move your speed in a single move action or twice your speed in a round by taking two move actions. You can take a move action before or after a standard action, so you can attack then move or move then attack. You cannot normally split your move action before and after your standard action. Move actions also include things like drawing weapons, standing up from being knocked down, and picking up objects.

## Full-Round Actions

A *full-round action* occupies all your attention for a round, meaning you can't do anything else that round. Full-round actions including charging an opponent at full speed or moving all out as quickly as you can. Certain maneuvers require a full-round action to perform, as do some skills.

### Free Actions

A *free action* is something so comparatively minor it doesn't take any significant time at all, so you can perform as many free actions in a round as the Narrator considers reasonable. Free actions include things like talking (romantic fantasy heroes and villains always find time to say a lot in the middle of a fight), dropping something, and so forth.

### Reactions

A *reaction* is something you do in response to something else. A reaction doesn't take any time, like a free action. The difference is you might take a reaction when it's not even your turn to act, in response to something else happening during the round.

## Conviction

Heroes in *Blue Rose* have an attribute called *Conviction* representing their inner determination. Players can spend Conviction to improve heroes' abilities in various ways. You can spend Conviction to reroll a bad die roll, bounce back from being hurt, and various other things. See **Conviction**, page 73, for more information. Conviction helps give heroes an edge, but don't get overconfident, because many villains also have their own Conviction to spend!

## IMPORTANT TERMS

**ability.** One of the six basic character attributes—Strength (Str), Dexterity (Dex), Constitution (Con), Intelligence (Int), Wisdom (Wis), and Charisma (Cha).

**ability score.** The numerical rating of an ability, applied as a bonus or penalty.

**action.** A character activity. There are standard actions, move actions, full-round actions, free actions, and reactions.

**adventure.** A story for players to experience.

**arcanum (plural: arcana).** A magical ability or discipline.

**attack bonus.** A modifier used to measure a character's combat skill.

**attack roll.** A roll to determine whether an attack hits. To make an attack roll, roll 1d20 and add the appropriate modifiers for the attack type. An attack hits if the result is equal to or greater than the target's Defense.

**attack.** Any of numerous actions intended to harm, disable, or neutralize an opponent.

**attribute (also trait).** Any of a character's game-defined qualities. Ability scores, skills, and feats are all attributes.

**bonus.** A positive modifier to a die roll.

**character.** A fictional individual in the game. Heroes are controlled by the players, while Narrator characters are controlled by the Narrator.

**check.** A method of deciding the result of a character's action (other than attacking or making a saving throw). Checks are based on a relevant ability, skill, arcanum, or other characteristic. To make a check, roll 1d20 and add any relevant modifiers. If the check result equals or exceeds the Difficulty of a task or the result of an opponent's check, it succeeds.

**Conviction.** A quality of heroic and villainous characters, used to enhance their abilities and actions in various ways.

**critical hit (crit).** An attack inflicting extra damage. To score a critical hit, an attacker must first score a threat (usually a natural 20 on an attack roll, depending on the attack being used), then make a roll equal to the target's normal Defense.

**damage bonus.** A modifier used to determine the damage of an attack.

**damage.** Harm caused to a character by injury, illness, or some other source.

**Defense.** A measure of how difficult a character is to hit in combat. Defense equals 10 + any relevant modifiers.

**Difficulty.** The number a player must meet or beat for a check, attack roll, or saving throw to succeed.

**dodge bonus.** Bonus applied to Defense determine how difficult a character is to hit. Characters lose their dodge bonus when they are flat-footed, stunned, or otherwise incapable of reacting to an attack.

**dying.** Near death and unconscious. A dying character can take no actions.

**flat-footed.** Especially vulnerable to attacks at the beginning of a fight. Characters are flat-footed until their first turn in the initiative cycle. Flat-footed characters do not add their dodge bonus to Defense.

**free action.** A minor activity, requiring very little time and effort.

**full-round action.** An action requiring all your effort in a round. Some skills, feats, and arcana require a full-round action (or longer) to use.

**hero.** A character controlled by a player, one of the protagonists of an adventure or series.

**lethal damage.** Damage that can potentially disable or kill a target.

**melee attack.** A physical attack in close combat.

**melee weapon.** A handheld weapon designed for close combat.

**modifier.** Any bonus or penalty applied to a die roll.

**move action.** An action intended to move a distance or to manipulate or move an object. You can take up to two move actions per round.

**Narrator character.** A character controlled by the Narrator (as opposed to a hero controlled by a player).

**Narrator.** The player who portrays characters not controlled by the other players, makes up the story and setting for the game, and serves as the referee.

**natural.** A natural result on a roll or check is the actual number appearing on the die, not the modified result obtained by adding bonuses or subtracting penalties.

**nonlethal damage.** Damage that can potentially stun or knock out a target, but does no permanent harm.

**penalty.** A negative modifier to a die roll.

**range increment.** Each full range increment of distance between an attacker using a ranged weapon and a target gives the attacker a cumulative -2 penalty to the ranged attack roll. Thrown weapons have a maximum range of five range increments. Other ranged attacks have a maximum range of ten range increments.

**ranged attack.** Any attack made at a distance.

**ranged weapon.** A projectile or thrown weapon designed for attacking at a distance.

## RECOMMENDED READING

The best way to understand romantic fantasy is to read as many stories in the genre as you can. The following list includes some of the most representative romantic fantasy novels. These books should provide plenty of inspiration for your *Blue Rose* series.

### KRISTEN BRITAIN

*Green Rider*

### DIANE DUANE

*The Door into Fire*

*The Door into  
Shadow*

*The Door into Sunset*

### MERCEDES LACKEY

*Arrows of the Queen*

*Arrow's Flight*

*Arrow's Fall*

*Magic's Pawn*

*Magic's Promise*

*Magic's Price*

*Owlflight*

*Owlsight*

*Owlknight*

### ELIZABETH A. LYNN

*Watchtower*

*The Dancers of*

*Arun*

*The Northern Girl*

### ROBIN MCKINLEY

*The Blue Sword*

*The Hero and the*

*Crown*

### TAMORA PIERCE

*Wild Magic*

*Wolf-Speaker*

*Emperor Mage*

*The Realms of the*

*Gods*

**rank.** A measure of a character's level of ability with a skill or effect.

**round.** A six-second unit of game time used to manage actions, usually in combat.

**saving throw (save).** A roll made to avoid or reduce harm. The four types of saving throws are Toughness, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

**series.** A series of linked adventures.

**stack.** Combine for a cumulative effect. In most cases, modifiers to a given check or roll stack. If the modifiers of a particular roll do not stack, only the best bonus or worst penalty applies. Sometimes there is a limit to how high a stacked bonus or penalty can be.

**standard action.** An action intended to do something within about 3 seconds. You can perform a single standard action per round.

**target (also subject).** The intended recipient of an attack, action, or power.

**threat range.** The natural die roll results constituting a critical hit threat when rolled for an attack. For most attacks, the threat range is a roll of 20.


**threat.** A possible critical hit.

**trained.** Having knowledge of, and therefore ranks in, a skill.

**unarmed attack.** A melee attack made with no weapon.

**untrained.** Having no ranks in a skill. Some skills cannot be used untrained.





A call went up from the crowd.  
“Hail!” they cried.  
“Hail Queen Jaellin! All hail the queen!”  
The new queen had been chosen.







# CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA

Stories require a setting, characters, and conflict. This chapter describes the setting of *Blue Rose*, the world of Aldea, from its mythic and troubled past to the present day. It provides an overview of Aldis, the Kingdom of the Blue Rose, and its neighbors, along with its most important characters and conflicts.

## HISTORY

Throughout Aldis and the surrounding lands, the knowledge of the ages is passed from one generation to the next. Even in isolated villages, traveling bards tell stories of the origins of the world and the gods, of the glorious Old Kingdom, of the rise of the Sorcerer Kings, and of the Great Rebellion. Even though the vile Sorcerer Kings were defeated more than three centuries ago, the people of Aldis are determined never to forget the rise of the tyrants or the heroism that finally brought about their fall.

### The Mythic Age

Sages and storytellers have many, sometimes conflicting, accounts of the world's first days. Some give primacy to one god over another. Others say one race is older than the others. The gods have many names, and their passions and genders change from one land and tale to the next. At the core of this diversity, there are common figures and events in most of the world's myths. The mythic history presented here is predominant in Aldis.

### The Creation of Aldea

Before gods and stars, mountains and oceans, there was the Eternal Dance. Within it, the first souls gloried in infinite beauty and love, dancing as one. Outside

the Dance, there was endless twilight and the Sea of Possibility, softly illuminated as if before the dawn. Desiring to share their joy and to know the satisfaction of creation, four souls emerged from the Dance. They were the first, the Primordials, the gods of Twilight and balance. They are known by many names, but four arise most often when the gods are invoked: Selene, Braniel, Maureнна, and Anwaren, creators of the world and patrons of the four seasons.

The Primordials plunged into the Sea of Possibility and drew forth matter, so spirit could take form. They divided matter into four elements, one for each of them: air for Selene, water for Braniel, fire for Maureнна, and earth for Anwaren. Breathing into the elements, they created elementals, creatures of pure matter, to aid them in their great endeavor.

Accompanied by the elemental host, the Primordials crafted *Aldea*, "the whole world," a jewel of spirit and matter. Anwaren pulled and pushed, molding the earth. Selene called forth the wind and tamed the first waters. Braniel poured waters into Anwaren's gorges and raised others above the vault of the sky to fall as rain. Laughing, Braniel spangled the sky with stars and danced upon the earth, seeds and animals springing up in his wake. Maureнна embraced the new world, warming it with her fire, cultivating its seeds, and suckling its beasts. Life

## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

flourished. Selene, seeing their wondrous creation, looked toward the future and knew their happiness would not endure. She whispered forth the moon and there hid the secrets of creation so they could be called upon by adepts in the future, though many would be undone by the depths of those secrets. This is why the moon is associated with both power and madness.

Drawn by the sparkling fruit of the Primordials' labor, other souls emerged from the Dance. They descended into Aldea and cavorted amid its wonders. Still immortal and infinite, the souls took many forms, expressing themselves through matter for the first time. They flowed from form to form, with and without gender, with two legs and four, on land, in the sea, and in the air. They praised their siblings, and Aldea rang with the sound of their mirth. They would become the first mortals, their divinity dimmed by death.

Anwaren, loving the work of his hands and relishing the newfound feeling of praise, grew jealous of the love and attention lavished upon his siblings, desiring it all for himself. Envy festered in his heart and grew into an obsession. He knew he could not wrest dominion from the other Primordials, each as powerful as himself, and the newly arrived souls had no desire to worship him. His gaze pierced beyond Aldea and the Sea of Possibility until it found the Shadow, a darkness beyond joy and life. He gazed long into its nothingness, plumbing it for some power to elevate him above all others. Before he could withdraw, the Shadow snared him, and he was cast into confusion and doubt. The impossibilities of limit and death impregnated him, and in great agony he gave birth to seven beings, the exarchs of Shadow, the lords of cunning and malice. The first, arch and beautiful, named

himself Gravicarius and proceeded to name the other six, subjecting them to his will.

Embodying their creator's lust for power, the exarchs spawned creatures to rule—darkfiends, monsters forever heartless and soulless. Leaving Anwaren behind, stricken with his madness, the exarchs and their servants ascended to Aldea and drew a veil of Shadow over the many-formed paradise. They attacked the cavorting souls and dragged them and the world toward Shadow. In fury, Selene threw herself between Aldea and nothingness. She brandished her shining sword and destroyed darkfiends beyond number, but could not simultaneously defeat the exarchs themselves and prevent the world from slipping into Shadow. At this Maureнна wept seven tears, and as each tear fell, Braniel caught it within the Chalice of Bliss. As he sang the Eternal Song over it, the chalice shone brightly, and from it were born the gods of Light. As each stepped forth, droplets of divine water fell and formed the first unicorns and other creatures of Light.

Firstborn Hiathas, Lord of the Dance, leapt forth and called his brothers and sisters to oppose the growing Shadow. They arose and faced the exarchs, who proved no match for their fervor. Each exarch was cast back into Shadow, save Tyrexus, exarch of wrath, who fought long with Aulora, goddess of justice. As battle raged between the gods of Light and the exarchs of Shadow, Selene, Braniel, and Maureнна realized Aldea and the souls in it had come too close to nothingness and were fading into oblivion. Maureнна and Braniel began weaving bodies for the souls to anchor them in the world. With no memory of their divine origins, the souls awoke as the first humans, vatazin, and sea-folk, the latter retaining a vague memory of having been manifold beings, of the land and the sea,







## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

male and female. The original sea-folk awoke as an androgynous, amphibious people. Other souls slept in animal form, awakened by the first unicorns to become rhydan, called to guard the world against Shadow.

Despite the Primordials' efforts, the world was tainted by Shadow. Refusing to allow it to claim even one soul, Selene crafted the Wheel of Reincarnation and set it spinning. Though creatures would die in Aldea, their souls would be caught up in the wheel and given new forms, forever robbing Shadow of its prize. In each spoke of the wheel, Selene carved an eternal secret so souls might eventually remember their immortality and return to the Eternal Dance. As Selene finished her work, Tyrexus glimpsed its brilliance and, casting Aulora aside, attacked Selene, intending to destroy the wheel. As they fought, Tyrexus slashed the wheel with his great claws, spinning it out of balance. Selene drove him away and tried to rebalance the wheel, but the damage was done. In ages to come, sorcerers would create the unliving through the lingering imbalance between life and death.

Regaining her strength, Aulora chased Tyrexus back to the other exarchs, whom Goia bound in great shackles. There was also Anwaren, nearly lost. Kissing his forehead, Aulora soothed his madness with order, while Goia lifted him into her arms. The two bore him to the other Primordials, turning their backs to the exarchs, who struggled against their bonds and chided Gravicarius, exarch of pride, for not leading them to victory.

With the Rod of Blooms and Chalice of Bliss, Maureнна and Braniel restored the exarchs' maker. Awakening in remorse, Anwaren vowed to partner with Aulora in teaching the first mortals to oppose tyranny. So he could not be tempted again, he also ordained that his would be a short season each year, when he would diminish and then rise again. Seeing the wisdom in this, the other Primordials joined him in establishing the four seasons, and accepted Anwaren back among them.

To commemorate their victory over the exarchs of Shadow and as a sign of hope for the renewed world, Hiathas hung the sun in the sky, and so was born day and night and the beginning of time.

### The Gods of Twilight

As creators of the world, the gods of Twilight are associated with nature, the elements, the seasons, and the fundamentals of existence: life, death, community, and the like. They preceded the conflict between Light and Shadow, and their aspects are more varied than the other gods. For instance, the Twilight gods appear as either gender, or without gender, more often than the gods of Light.

Because of their universal relevance, the Twilight gods are venerated throughout Aldea, but mortals rarely have the same affection for them as they do for the gods of Light. This does not bother the Twilight gods, for their main concern is maintaining the cycle of life and death, hoping all beings will one day reawaken to the Eternal Dance.

**Selene**, god of winter, the moon, death, and secrets, is the Wise Woman, the Winter Witch, and Keeper of Secrets. In her primary male aspects, she is Father Frost and the Winter Wizard. She crafted the Wheel of Reincarnation, so she is often invoked at funerals. Students of the arcane arts look to her and the moon for guidance and power. During harsh winters, people entreat her to be merciful. She is portrayed holding the mighty Blade of Wisdom and is associated with the element of air.

**Braniel**, god of spring, the stars, rain, music, animals, and plants, is the Singer in the Stars and Green Beard. In his primary female aspect, he is the Spring Princess. He is venerated in woodland shrines, on hilltops, and wherever else people are thankful for the bounty and beauty of nature. Rain rituals invoke his name, as do rituals for sexual potency. Musicians turn to him for inspiration, and the wreaths celebrated performers wear are echoes of his leafy crown. He is the lover of Hiathas and a model for passionate romance. He is portrayed holding the Chalice of Bliss and associated with the element of water.

**Maureнна**, god of summer, agriculture, and community, is the Summer Queen and the Architect of Civilization. In her primary male aspect, she is the Grain Lord. She is the mother of the gods of Light. Those who work the land and care for livestock call upon her, and many civic events and family gatherings are opened with her name. In the heat of summer, some people joke, "Maureнна is loving the world too much today." Leonoth is her consort, and together they are the model of marriage. She is portrayed holding the Rod of Blooms and associated with the element of fire.

**Anwaren**, god of autumn, the earth, mountains, strife, and sovereignty, is the Warrior King, the Red Knight, and Lord of Madness. In his primary female aspect, he is Queen of the Harvest. He is the father of the exarchs of Shadow and opposes them whenever he can. It is said Anwaren dies on the last day of autumn, when the spirits of the dead are strongest, and rises again when Braniel pours the waters of life upon him. He is invoked when people are beset by strife or madness and when they seek the riches of the earth. He is considered a model of kingship, having voluntarily diminished his own power to avoid becoming a tyrant. He is portrayed holding the Pentacle of Plenty and associated with the element of earth.

### The Gods of Light

The gods of Light are younger than the world, but no less venerated because of it. While the Twilight gods are associated with natural forces, the gods of Light are associated with the seven virtues, and each is the patron of a core aspect of mortal culture: the hearth, dance, law, travelers, and so forth. The gods of Light, like those of Twilight, have varied aspects, but fewer variations.

Because the gods of Light are the everlasting enemies of the exarchs of Shadow, those faced by vice and darkfiends frequently call on the gods of Light for strength and guidance.

## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —



**Hiathas**, god of the sun, beauty, dance, and hope, is the Dawn Prince and Lord of the Dance. Many stories claim he is more beautiful than anything, save the Eternal Dance itself. Artists seek his beauty, and dancers especially long for his ways. He is the beloved of Braniel, and those who fall in love with someone of the same sex are said to be like the Singer in the Stars, *caria daunen* (lovers of the dawn).

**Leonoth**, god of the hearth, family, and faithfulness, is the Faithful Husband and consort of Maureнна. He is the protector of families, home, and those who do not break faith. People who love someone of the opposite sex are said to guard the hearth fire as he does; they are *cepia luath* (keepers of the flame). In Jarzon, where rebellion against the Sorcerer Kings was exceedingly dangerous, and often deadly, the leaders of the resistance gathered their people beside hearth fires and plotted the downfall of the tyrants. Because of this association and the grievous loss of life in Jarzon, the land has become obsessed with family and procreation. There Leonoth is called the Liberator, Great Lord, and Keeper of the Holy Flame, and is the preeminent god of the Church of the Pure Light.

**Felisar**, god of travelers, people in peril, the poor, the sick, and charity, is the Bringer of Miracles, the help for which the needy dare not hope. According to legend, Felisar wanders the world each winter, when the poor suffer the most and death is particularly hungry. Felisar is Selene's favorite, and he uses his influence to guard the afflicted from her chill. Travelers, the ailing, and the bereft look to him for comfort, and much charity is done in his name.

**Aulora**, god of law, soldiers, and justice, is the Shield Maiden and Wise Judge. She is called on by the creators of laws and those who enforce them. The unjustly

imprisoned look to her for solace, and soldiers beg her for strength when their cause is just. When Anwaren is beset with doubt, she calms him with reason. When he falls each year, she turns to the arms of Goia. The two goddesses are called the builders of civilization, which their mother, Maureнна, designed.

**Goia**, god of artisanship, commerce, and prudence, is the Smith, the Builder, and the Artisan. Merchants pray for a portion of her prudence, while artisans pray for her skill. Smiths, shipwrights, architects, mathematicians, and many others invoke her name. In tales, she loves Aulora and Anwaren in equal measure, forging a sword for one and a crown for the other. When Anwaren falters, Aulora soothes him, but it is Goia who carries him.

**Gaelenir**, god of exploration, learning, the sea, and fortitude, is the Great Sage, Sea Lord, and Teacher. Scholars, navigators, and explorers call on him most, as do the sea-folk, his special children. He dwells by the Well of Knowledge at the bottom of the sea and seeks to know all things. In legend, he withstood the temptations of the seven exarchs of Shadow so he could explore their realm. While Selene keeps secrets, Gaelenir uncovers them. Storms blowing in from the sea are said to be their arguments over how much to reveal to the world. The two gods are rumored to harbor a love that will only be consummated when all souls return to the Eternal Dance.

**Athne**, god of good fortune, plenty, wine, and temperance, is the Mother of Plenty and Lady of the Vine. Those who have plenty, and those who desire it, pray to her, as do vintners and many who make merry. When Gaelenir, seeking to understand each of the gods, asked her for the meaning of temperance, she laughed and said, "Enough,

## LOVERS OF THE DAWN

"Please tell us about the birth of Lord Hiathas," the twin girls implored their mother, Loreena. She shook her head and chuckled, having told them many times how the Dawn Prince came to be. It was their favorite story, not only because it included the first unicorn, but also because they giggled at how their older brother, Phaedryl, blushed at its telling. About to shoo her daughters out into the garden, Loreena spotted why the girls were asking for the tale now; Phaedryl, a willowy and handsome teenager, was on his way up the hill to their open kitchen door. Loreena smiled to herself and asked the twins, "Where should I begin?"

"With the unicorn!"

"Of course," she laughed. "With the unicorn." She sat down and began, "After Lord Braniel caught Lady Maureenna's tears in his chalice, he lovingly sang the Eternal Song over it, and waited for what would happen next. At first there was a great quiet, and the water rippled in the Twilight. But then a light began to emanate from the chalice, and Lord Braniel knew something wondrous was about to take place.

"Soon the light was brighter than anything in the world. Not wishing to confine it to his chalice, Lord Braniel poured the illuminated water out, and wondered and waited. Freed into the open, the light grew brighter still, until not even Lord Braniel could see into it. He could tell there was a figure within, a young man perhaps, but the light would reveal no features. Drops of life-giving water fell from the figure, and as one hit the surface of the pool, there was a neigh, and from the water emerged the first unicorn. Its horn breached the surface first, followed by its serene face and pearly white body. Lord Braniel laughed in joy and welcome, as the unicorn whinnied and shook its luminous mane." Loreena's daughters were so transfixed they didn't notice Phaedryl, until their mother looked up at him. He leaned against the doorjamb, a spring breeze blowing in past him, carrying aromas of honeysuckle and approaching rain. He smiled, somewhat shyly at his mother, waiting for her to continue.

She obliged: "What could be more beautiful than this?" Lord Braniel pondered aloud. In answer, the light grew smaller, but no less bright. It shrank until it was a halo behind the head of the most beautiful youth Lord Braniel had seen. The first unicorn bowed its head before the new god, who gently laid his hand on its mane. Newly born but fully grown, the youth said, "I am Hiathas," and Lord Braniel's heart ached at the loveliness of his voice. They gazed into each other's eyes and knew, with joy and longing, they would be one for all the ages." Loreena watched her son, as his cheeks flushed at the ending. The twins noticed and giggled.

Just then a whistle came from out in the garden, and the tailor's son poked his head through the open window. "Coming, Phaedryl?" he asked with a grin. Phaedryl flushed even more, nodded, and laughed. Looking to his mother for her consent, she said, "Have a wonderful time at the fair." Her eyes followed the boys as they walked down the lane and saw Phaedryl shyly slip his hand into the other boy's. With happiness in her heart, she prayed, "Lord Hiathas, watch over these lovers of the dawn..."

or too much." One of her greatest devotees, Marlicel the Winemaker said, "Lack is the greatest intemperance." Athne, in various aspects, appears in innumerable tales as an occasional lover of most of the other gods.

## The Exarchs of Shadow

The spawn of the madness of Anwaren, the exarchs dwell in the depths of Shadow, plotting the fall of Aldea. They undermine the world in two ways: by sending their darkfiends as physical manifestations of Shadow to sow pain and sorrow, and by tempting mortals toward vice. The exarchs themselves are kept in check by the gods of Light, but their cunning is limitless and their power great.

The exarchs are only worshipped by the malicious and the insane, or in lands such as Kern, where the followers of the Lich King proclaim them the "true gods," older and more powerful than the gods of Light. The exarchs' worshipers give them grand, improbable titles and engage in unspeakable rites.

Little is known about the exarchs in Aldis, beside their names and domains. The first among them is Gravicarius, exarch of pride. He ruled the exarchs in the beginning, but the seven fell into backstabbing and spite after their defeat at the hands of the gods of Light. The others are Tyrexus, exarch of wrath; Ulasta, exarch of envy; In'nassi, exarch of lust; Viasta, exarch of sloth; Yungo, exarch of gluttony; and Mytaxx, exarch of greed.

## The Old Kingdom

Fifteen hundred years ago, after the mythic age gave way to history, the great city of Aldis was founded. It became a center of learning and the arcane arts. Artists, crafters, scholars, diplomats, healers, and adepts of the arcane arts made their way from all across Aldea to learn and teach. Their skill and knowledge allowed the city to thrive.

As its influence spread, Aldis became the capitol of a mighty realm. This epoch is named after it: the Old Kingdom. The kingdom was ruled by the Council of the Wise, made up of the finest practitioners of every art. They sat in judgment and dispensed justice whenever difficulties arose. Under the council's rule, Aldis the Beautiful extended its reach across the known world, even to now-forgotten lands far across the seas.

The emblem of the Old Kingdom was a thornless red rose, with each petal representing a different craft or art treasured and studied in Aldis.

## The Wonders of the Old Kingdom

The adepts of the Old Kingdom worked wonders never surpassed. They were the first to use the properties of the arcana-enhancing shas crystals and developed crystons and other arcane crystals still used today. These examples of their genius are only a sample of the wonders they created. They used their mastery of arcana and crystal to create ships that flew through the air, heal any ailment, and rapidly mine metal and construct vast buildings without the need for manual labor.

The secrets to these miracles were lost during the Shadow Wars. Despite this, Old Kingdom artifacts can be found throughout the world, but wise people avoid them because the artifacts are often dangerous to anyone unfamiliar with their use. In Aldis, citizens are supposed to turn all such artifacts over to the crown so scholars and adepts can study them and destroy those too dangerous to use.

Among the most powerful and perilous of Old Kingdom artifacts are the shadowgates. They are upright rings of an unknown black metal now called shadowsteel. Each gate is approximately fifteen feet across, with a single shas crystal set at the apex. Shadowgates originally formed a





transportation network, allowing for instantaneous travel to the distant reaches of the Old Kingdom. Messengers and supplies could cross the world in the blink of an eye. This capability was one of the keys to the Old Kingdom's vast reach.

Unfortunately, the Shadow-tainted adepts who became the first Sorcerer Kings learned to use the shadowgates as summoning devices, opening gateways into the realm of Shadow, from which they called darkfiends to serve them. During the Shadow Wars, the gates were useless for transportation because the Sorcerer Kings laid traps on their gates, preventing anyone from using them as a way into their domains. Sorcerer Kings who did not control a shadowgate learned to create crude darkgates for summoning, using rings of standing stones or stone archways.

Today, none but the most erudite scholars and adepts know shadowgates had any use other than summoning darkfiends. Everyone else associates them with the evil of the Sorcerer Kings and avoids them like the plague. Many gates are inactive, and have been for centuries, but all it takes is a careless adept to reactivate one. Shifts in the arcane currents in the world can also reactivate a shadowgate, allowing darkfiends to enter the world and corruption to spread over the area. Closing down or destroying an open shadowgate is one of the most important duties of the Sovereign's Finest and the priest-adepts of Jarzon.

## The Fall of the Old Kingdom

As great civilizations often do, the Old Kingdom grew complacent in its peace and prosperity. Justice became lax, and taxes on distant provinces increased as members of the Council of the Wise became more interested in their own pursuits than the welfare of their citizens. Matters worsened when adepts on the council delved deeper into the arcane arts and began to study and experiment with sorcery. These studies, by those who were supposedly the wisest and most powerful, encouraged others to seek similar knowledge. Some adepts were corrupted by their sorcerous experiments. Although many approached their studies with the best intentions, seeking only new ways to solve difficult arcane problems or techniques for aiding their subjects, they fell to Shadow as surely as the more ambitious among them, and were often more cunning in concealing their corruption.

Corruption spread like a cancer through the heart of the Old Kingdom, with backroom deals and alliances escalating to assassinations and draconian policies. Rebellion in the outer provinces was brutally suppressed, and small incidents of dissent were used as an excuse by Shadow-tainted warmongers to build up the kingdom's army and their private militias. During these dark days, the first sorcerers learned the secret of summoning darkfiends and how to draw upon their own corruption to increase their power.

## The Empire of Thorns

In the seventh century of the Old Kingdom, some eight hundred years ago, a cabal of sorcerers led by the infamous Delsha the Dark seized the throne and executed the remaining members of the Council of the Wise. Delsha declared herself Empress Delsha I, the first ruler of the new Empire of Aldis, also known as the Empire of Thorns.

An alliance of rhydan and vatazin attempted to stand against Delsha's empire, but their powers were insufficient and they paid a terrible price. One of Delsha's first decrees placed a bounty on all vatazin and rhydan. Darkfiends hunted them down with the aid of corrupt humans, who were paid for every rhydan pelt and vatazin head they delivered. The vatazin were never numerous, and in less than a generation, they were no more. The only remains of that noble race are the half-breed vata, born to human families with some vatazin ancestry. Thousands of the rhydan were slaughtered and most of the unicorns slain, but the survivors hid in the depths of the wilderness and under the sea.

Delsha ruled the empire with an iron fist. However, even her greatly extended life eventually came to an end (some say through betrayal, others through sorcerous mishap). Ambitious sorcerer lords scrambled to seize power for themselves, splitting the empire and leading to civil war. None of them had either the magical might nor the force of personality to unite or destroy their rivals, so the empire fragmented as each sorcerer lord seized a portion of it and defended it against all challengers. Within a decade after Delsha's death, the empire was a shattered ruin.

Using sorcery to prolong their lives or transform themselves into unliving monsters, the Sorcerer Kings were effectively immortal. They grew contemptuous of the people they ruled, regarding them as little more than useful beasts of burden. They were aware even lesser beings could prove dangerous, however, so they ordered their servants to hunt down adepts of the various arcana and to seize every arcane device.

The lives of the general populace became increasingly brutal and impoverished. Hundreds died of diseases virtually unknown a generation before, and blight and famine stalked the land. Anyone attempting to learn the arcane arts to remedy these problems did so at the risk of their life and the lives of their families. Moreover, the Sorcerer Kings' arcane experiments became reckless, jeopardizing whole communities. Nowhere was this more true than the port city of Falzanth, whose Sorcerer King accidentally triggered an earthquake, causing the entire city and its environs to crumble into the sea. The place is now called the Leviathan's Teeth for the rocky pinnacles that jut from the water.

For the first century after the civil war, the Sorcerer Kings were content securing their realms, subduing minor rebellions, experimenting with ever more powerful and dangerous arcana, and seizing all mystic power in their kingdoms. Eventually their eyes turned toward one another's domains, hungry for new lands to conquer.

## The Shadow Wars

Six hundred years ago, the Shadow Wars began. The Sorcerer Kings warred against one another for more than two hundred and fifty years, each seeking dominance and, eventually, the imperial throne. In their quest for power, they raised armies of the unliving. Using the flesh-shaping arts, they produced aberrations and shadowspawn to fill their ranks: ogres, night people, troglodytes, and nightmare creatures with no names. They invoked the exarchs of Shadow in the open and summoned darkfiends to serve as soldiers, spies, assassins, and counselors. They corrupted promising new adepts, some of whom then overthrew their masters to become new Sorcerer Kings. The sorcerers crafted arcane weapons that could lay waste to entire regions and thousands died in sorcerous plagues. Many people fled to hide in the wilds between the kingdoms.

Over the years, rebel movements slowly gained strength. Most of these started out as tiny freeholds hiding in remote areas. These settlements preserved as many of the old ways as possible, including worship of the Primordials and the gods of Light and study of the arcane arts. They plotted the overthrow of the sorcerers and sent out spies and representatives to rescue and recruit those with arcane talents. Unfortunately, the power of the Sorcerer Kings was greater than most of them understood. In the end only the sorcerers' greed, paranoia, and overconfidence allowed the rebels to defeat them.

As the Shadow Wars continued, the weakest Sorcerer Kings were destroyed. Some of their kingdoms were conquered, others were devastated, remaining blasted wastelands filled with ruins to this day, the Shadow Barrens being the most enduring example. The surviving Sorcerer Kings grew increasingly paranoid and summoned larger hordes of darkfiends to defend them. In the end, their reach exceeded their grasp.

About 350 years ago, a horde of darkfiends turned on their summoner, Rhaz Tethes, lord of what would later be known as the Veran Marsh. They attacked his citadel in the heart of the city of Veran-Tath, and he summoned all his power to defend himself. The resulting cataclysm destroyed both Rhaz Tethes and the darkfiends and transformed the region around his citadel into the vast and deadly swamp that remains today.

Within days, darkfiends serving several of the other Sorcerer Kings rebelled. Some scholars speculate this was a plot by the exarchs of Shadow to gain dominion over Aldea. Others believe the gods of Light undermined the Sorcerer Kings' hold on the darkfiends, giving the creatures impetus to turn on their masters. In the end, two Sorcerer Kings were slain by their own summoned minions, and several others were greatly weakened. The rebels had been waiting for an opportunity, and they seized it, striking at the Sorcerer Kings all across the empire.

## The Great Rebellion

The Great Rebellion began as a series of coordinated attacks by a few heroic rebels, but rapidly became a mass

## THE SOVEREIGNS OF ALDIS

Queen Seltha, founder of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose

Queen Varti, "the Builder"

King Lartik, "the Just"

King Karthakan, "the Bane of Kern"

Queen Allia, founder of the Sovereign's Finest

King Valin, "the Tainted"

King Rikin, "the Peacemaker"

Queen Larai, "the Mad"

Queen Fashi, "the Restorer"

King Rannath, "the Explorer"

King Issik, "the Ghost-Touched"

Queen Hulja, "the Merchant Queen"

King Haylin, "the Fair"

Queen Jaellin, the current sovereign

uprising against the Sorcerer Kings. Slaves rioted and slew their overseers, and a few Sorcerer Kings were slain in their beds by their own previously docile servants.

The rebels were aided by the rhydan, in hiding since the vatazin genocide. Rather than cowering in fear, these proud creatures had been strengthening their numbers and seeking weaknesses in the Sorcerer Kings' defenses. When the moment came, they approached the rebels and joined forces with them. The leaders of the rebellion rode griffons, unicorns, and rhy-horses into battle, followed by packs of rhy-wolves and rhy-cats. Treants stalked from the wild depths of the Pavin Weald to tear down walls and towers.

The rebels were also aided by an unexpected arrival, the mysterious Golden Hart. It appeared suddenly in the city of Aldis and bounded to the rebels' aid. This mystical being was not only immune to sorcery, but could confer its immunity upon anyone within sight of it. Under its golden aegis, the rebels were able to overcome the magic of the Sorcerer Kings, but still had to battle hordes of darkfiends and the unliving. The surviving Sorcerer Kings still refused to unite even for their own protection and in many cases betrayed each other to the rebels, each thinking they could easily defeat the rabble once they had destroyed their rivals.

After almost two decades of war, some of the Sorcerer Kings destroyed themselves and their strongholds, rather than accept defeat, and the rest were slain by the rebels. Only in the northern land of Kern did one of the Sorcerer Kings manage to hold on to power, shielded by the grim Ice-Binder Mountains, which prevented the rebel army from advancing northward to sweep away his dark stronghold. Bands of rebels tried to storm Kern for years, but Jarek the Lich King managed to maintain control over his darkfiends, and his land was rich in shas crystals used to bolster his defenses. After four defeats at the hands of the Lich King's forces, the rebels retreated, leaving Jarek in power. Although it led the rebels during their campaign, the Golden Hart vanished as suddenly as it appeared, shortly after the last assault on Kern. Its disappearance is widely seen as the end of the Great Rebellion and the reign of the Empire of Thorns.

The people then set about the long and difficult task of rebuilding their shattered lives and homelands. Many cities lay in ruins, vast tracks of land were too tainted to farm, and the dead outnumbered the living. Reconstruction occupied most of the next century. Towns and villages slowly grew, and some ruined cities were rebuilt, including the ancient city of Aldis. In this twilight time, long-distance travel was rare, as travelers had to brave gangs of bandits, roaming shadowspawn, and darkfiends who occasionally emerged from the remaining shadowgates. Eventually, states emerged and grew stable enough to secure their roads and borders. There were still some areas ruled by bandit lords, but traders, storytellers, and couriers could travel the world again.

As communities transformed themselves into nations, different ideologies emerged. The inhabitants of the newborn Theocracy of Jarzon remembered how the Old Kingdom had become corrupt and tyrannical. The Jarzoni sought to create a society free from that legacy. Meanwhile, the lands around Aldis were filled with people who preserved stories of the grandeur of the Old Kingdom. Many longed for those wondrous days and came to see themselves as the heirs of the Old Kingdom's traditions of justice and wisdom.

## The Rebirth of Aldis

Several communities in the fertile valleys around ruined Aldis were spared the worst of the devastation in the Shadow Wars. Theirs became one of the most prosperous regions in the post-Rebellion world. Vast numbers of refugees flooded into the region in the last days of the Great Rebellion, so it was faced with the daunting task of assimilating people with different ethnicities. Large numbers of rhydan also came to dwell in the wilderness areas on the edges of the valleys.

Seltha, a charismatic and visionary leader in Aldis, reached out to the rhydan and earned their respect by proposing the creation of a kingdom where they would have full citizenship and their wilderness homes would not be disturbed. In return, the rhydan presented the people of Aldis with the Blue Rose Scepter, a gift of the Golden Hart to them and a symbol of unity. Unicorns and griffons worked rituals to ensure Aldis would always be ruled by a fair and just sovereign. They called the Golden Hart, who appeared again in the center of the fallen city and chose Seltha as the first sovereign of Aldis. This happened on the first full moon after the spring equinox. Ever since, that day is celebrated in Aldis as Hart Day.

To further ensure the fledgling nation remained free from the Shadow of the Old Kingdom's latter days, Queen Seltha ordered anyone who wished to become a noble to pass the test of the Blue Rose Scepter, which would accept only the touch of someone devoted to the Light. She adopted the scepter as her badge of office, and within a decade, Aldis was widely known as the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

Because of the city's central location and the stores of knowledge in its surviving libraries, the inhabitants of Aldis reconstructed it to serve as the new kingdom's



## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

capital. The city was laid out in the pattern of a giant rose blossom, and blue tiles were used extensively in the new palace and the Azure Plaza, the open space where the Golden Hart had appeared. Much of this work was overseen by Varti the Builder, the second queen of Aldis and a devotee of the god Goia.

The kingdom became a haven for peoples and creatures of goodwill faced with hatred and persecution elsewhere. Diversity and acceptance were the founding principles of the land; even the newest immigrant could become a noble if he or she passed the test of the Blue Rose Scepter.

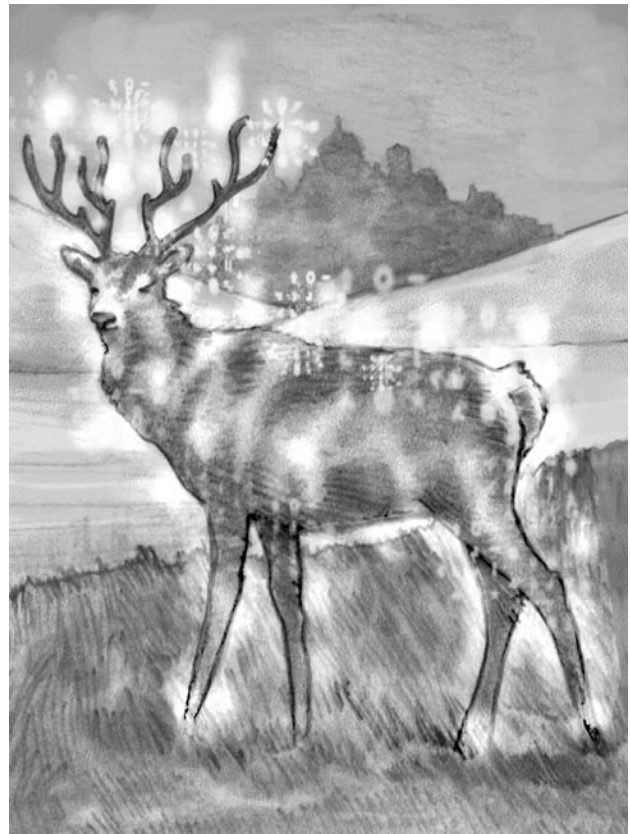
One of the kingdom's first challenges came when people living in the bordering areas asked for aid against the bandit lords. Troops from Aldis, aided by the rhydan, attacked, liberated their neighbors, and drove the bandit lords to the Ice-Binder Mountains. The Bandit Wars were fought over the course of more than a decade and more than doubled the land controlled by Aldis. The wars also depleted the kingdom's resources. As a result, it was ill prepared for the threat it faced shortly after the centennial of its founding.

Covetous of the heart of the Old Kingdom, the Lich King of Kern mounted a long-planned attack upon it. He sent a force of humans, night people, darkfiends, and unliving across the northern border. While the darkfiends and unliving attacked because it was their nature to do so, the humans and night people only fought because they feared the Lich King. Jarek held their loved ones hostage, and anyone who deserted or refused to fight knew their families would be slain and added to the ranks of the unliving.

In addition to sending troops to engage the invaders, King Karthakan, fourth sovereign of Aldis, sent adepts to probe for weaknesses in the Lich King's forces. When they understood the Lich King's hold over his living troops, King Karthakan developed a daring plan. A force of the most skilled scouts and soldiers, carried by griffon allies, flew deep into Kern and freed the hostages in several of the Lich King's labor camps. Because Jarek never imagined his enemies would attempt to aid their enemies, the camps were only lightly guarded.

King Karthakan's adepts then contacted the most charismatic and disaffected members of the enemy forces and placed them in psychic contact with their now-freed loved ones. As news spread through the Lich King's army, many troops deserted and joined the Aldin forces, while others launched surprise attacks against the Shadow-tainted officers commanding them, as well as the foul unliving and darkfiends. Although fighting was hard and most of those who struck back at their overseers died, the desertion of over half of the night people and human troops spelled the end of the invasion. Aldis was weakened in the war, but the loss to Kern was greater; it took the Lich King almost a century to reestablish order and rebuild his forces.

In the end, Aldis gained several thousand exceptionally loyal citizens, including a number of night people. Although many Aldins initially distrusted these creatures shaped by sorcery, their courage and



dedication in the war against the Lich King's forces impressed many others, so the night people's petition to settle in Aldis was granted.

The attack by Kern spurred Aldis to assign more scouts to watch its borders. Eventually the scouts were joined on patrol by adepts, warriors, and others concerned with the kingdom's safety. These sentinels became the model for the Sovereign's Finest, founded by Queen Allia, King Karthakan's successor. This organization grew in prominence and expanded its mandate from watching the borders and outlying settlements to keeping track of all manner of social and supernatural problems in the kingdom. The establishment of the Sovereign's Finest allowed Aldis to rely less on its military, so it was able to maintain a relatively small force of loyal volunteers.

The next major challenge to the kingdom came when Aldin diplomats met representatives from Jarzon. Shortly after the Great Rebellion, the taint of the Veran Marsh rendered it virtually impassible. Eventually, the wild magics subsided somewhat, and exploration by the Sovereign's Finest discovered several safe routes through the marsh. During the initial meeting between Aldis and Jarzon, the Jarzoni were horrified by the widespread and largely unregulated use of arcana in Aldis, while the Aldins were equally disturbed by the repressive nature of the Jarzoni theocracy. Shortly after the two nations came into contact, the Jarzoni attempted several large-scale attacks on Aldis, but most of their forces never made it past the hazards of the marsh. Since then, relations between Jarzon and Aldis have been strained, but the marsh and delicate diplomacy have prevented all-out warfare.

## DAILY LIFE IN ALDIS

The Kingdom of the Blue Rose has existed for some three centuries and continues its traditions of diversity and acceptance. As a result, life within its borders is always colorful. Its adepts excel in the arcane arts, and its traders travel to distant lands, buying and selling wondrous goods and making Aldis the most prosperous nation in the known world.

The kingdom's citizenry grows more diverse by the year. Anyone willing to swear loyalty to the sovereign and abide by the laws of the land is accepted as a citizen. Drawn by the promise of freedom, security, and prosperity, refugees from Kern, heretics and exiles from Jarzon, and a host of rhydan, vata, and others come to be subjects of the Blue Rose. Many immigrants become fully integrated into Aldin culture, but dozens of small, somewhat isolated communities choose not to fully assimilate. Aldis is large enough and broad-minded enough to be home to all these peoples.

### Nonhumans in Aldis

Aldis is one of the few places in the world where many different creatures live together in harmony. Humans, who are the majority, stand side-by-side with rhydan, sea-folk, vata, and night people.

### Rhydan

Because Aldis accords rhydan the same status as humans, the kingdom has powerful allies in times of need. Some foreigners mistake rhydan for animals, but rhydan are Light-aligned beings skilled in the psychic arts. There are many varieties: unicorns, griffons, dolphins, drakes, rhy-cats, rhy-horses, rhy-wolves, and whales. Most are shy, preferring to live alone or in isolated communities of their own kind. Rhy-cats and dolphins are the most likely to reach out to the land's other races. Rhy-cats generally serve as the representatives of their fellow rhydan to the other peoples of the kingdom, and dolphins have close relations with the sea-folk, particularly in the Scatterstar Archipelago. (Rhy-horses often bond with the riders of Rezea.) All rhydan, regardless of how reclusive they might be, aid lost travelers and people in need who stumble into their domains.

According to rhydan lore, broadly adopted in Aldis, unicorns were the first of their kind, awakening with the god Hiathas himself. They then awoke the other rhydan, starting with griffons. Although rhydan do not have monarchs or nobles, all of them bow to the ageless wisdom of the unicorns and the fierce power of the griffons. The most powerful unicorns and griffons can see into a person's soul and are unmatched in their defiance of Shadow. Nonrhydan who have actually befriended a unicorn or griffon sometimes wear unicorn- or griffon-shaped jewelry as a sign of their favor.

Rhydan communities are typically located in remote wilderness areas. Most griffons live high in the Ice-Binder Mountains, while unicorns live in the depths of the Pavin

Weald. Other rhydan tend to live in the environments preferred by the animals they resemble. While land rhydan require no more shelter than an overhang to keep the rain and snow off, they do enjoy reading books and creating beautiful works of art. These they craft with the shaping arts. Dolphins and whales simply swim through the world's seas, pausing sometimes to shape rock and coral into sculptures of exquisite beauty.

In Aldis, rhydan are viewed as incarnations of the power and goodness of nature, so their humanoid bond-companions are considered especially blessed. When a rhydan psychically bonds with a humanoid, the two are said to be *rhy-bonded*. This bond is deep and usually lasts a lifetime. Bond-companions often describe it as sharing a soul, as if the bond chose them. Some storytellers claim that the bond-companions were friends in the days before time began, when souls could take many forms and still knew the Eternal Dance.

### Sea-Folk

Sea-folk are an amphibious people, who can swim with great skill and hold their breath as long as a dolphin. They have green or blue tinted skin and hair of a similar shade. All of them are androgynous and have little body hair. Because they need more water than land-dwellers, sea-folk always live near rivers, streams, lakes, or the sea. Most of the sea-folk in Aldis live on the southern coasts and in the Scatterstar Archipelago, where some form communities with dolphins.

Many sea-folk work as sailors or fishers. Some are divers, scouring the sea floor for valuable shells and lost treasures. A few have become fabulously wealthy upon finding the wreck of a merchant ship lost during the Old Kingdom. Other sea-folk are explorers and navigators and are especially devoted to the god Gaelenir, the Sea Lord. Whatever their occupations, almost all sea-folk love to sing, string together necklaces of shell and stone, and cavort in the waves with dolphins and other sea life.

Sea-folk occasionally marry humans and vata and can have children with humans. The children of these couplings take after one of their parents; half are sea-folk, while the others are human. Because sea-folk do not identify strongly as male or female, they are evenly split between caria daunen and cepia luath (see **Marriage and Romance** later in this chapter).

### Vata

Long ago, before the Sorcerer Kings and their terrible wars, the vatazin walked the land. Called the Children of Selene, they were wise, nearly immortal, and filled with profound knowledge of the natural world. They lived in secluded dells, where they honed their potent arcane arts and gazed into the night sky, seeking to unravel the secrets of the moon.

Occasionally, some of them would grow curious about the outside world and wander. Some of the wanderers never

returned home, finding compelling knowledge, beauty, and even love among the shorter-lived races. The children who were born of unions between vatazin and humans sometimes appeared to be ordinary members of either race, but most were a new people known as the vata, who combined the natures of both races. They had human curiosity mixed with the vatazin affinity for arcana and a fraction of their longevity. These vata—who are now called vata'an, or “true vata”—have ice-white hair and pale blue, green, or amber eyes.

When the Sorcerer Kings, who were all human, spread Shadow over the world, the vatazin emerged from seclusion and mustered their wisdom and arcane might to oppose them. The result was a terrible slaughter; the vatazin were wiped out, as were many vata, but enough of the latter lived among their human kin that they endured. The Sorcerer Kings' minions eventually discovered some of the surviving vata and captured them so that their masters could twist them to their own purposes. The sorcerers succeeded in creating a new type of vata: the vata'sha, or “dark vata,” who have night-black skin and white hair. The Sorcerer Kings' experiments were aimed at making the vata'sha their thralls and at awakening the innate magic of the vatazin within them. These efforts failed, but some of the vata'sha chose to serve the sorcerers anyway, many becoming sorcerers themselves. Other vata'sha became fervent hunters of Shadow.

After the Great Rebellion, vata were able to live in peace in Aldis and Rezea, where the vata'an are viewed as a remnant of the wondrous vatazin, but the vata'sha, despite being accepted, are frequently viewed as reminders of the Sorcerer Kings' wickedness. In Jarzon, vata'an are accepted, but the priests claim that vata'sha are innately tainted by Shadow and apprehend them, when possible. In Kern, the Lich King orders the death of any vata'an in his kingdom, but he counts some vata'sha among his lieutenants.

## Night People

One of many shadowspawn species produced by the Sorcerer Kings' flesh-shaping experiments, night people are the objects of open prejudice and hatred in lands outside of Aldis. Stories of how the Sorcerer Kings created them to help subjugate other races do little to endear night people to others, since the stories are true. In Kern, the Lich King enslaves night people and forces them to serve as overseers for his human slaves. Some relish this vile work, while others hate it. The latter work to undermine the Lich King's rule however they can and are models of how the Sorcerer Kings failed when they sought to make the night people a completely subservient and Shadow-tainted race, for the night people have always retained a glimmer of their ancestors' humanity. The sorcerers' dark arts were more successful when they created ogres and other shadowspawn.

In Aldis, night people have proven they can be both trusted members of society and fierce warriors in service to the kingdom. Despite this, their brutish and hulking appearance frightens some of their compatriots, especially refugees from Kern and Jarzon. Most Aldin night people are exceptionally loyal to the kingdom, for they know no other land would grant them citizenship. In Jarzon, they







are killed; in Kern, they are enslaved; and in Rezea, they are mistrusted and driven away if they dwell too closely to the Rezeans' hunting grounds.

## Government

The sovereign rules Aldis with the aid of the Noble, Merchant, and Rhydan Councils and presides over the most enlightened government anywhere. This fact has arisen from the dual boons of the Golden Hart and the Blue Rose Scepter.

### The Sovereign and the Golden Hart

Just before sunset on the day after the sovereign's death, nobles and members of the royal family gather in the capital's Azure Plaza in front of the royal palace's large stained glass window depicting the Golden Hart. As the sun sets, the Golden Hart emerges from the window and chooses one of the assembled people by touching its horns to the new sovereign's forehead. This touch leaves a pale golden mark in the shape of a crescent. In cases when the sovereign dies suddenly far from home and there is no assembly the day after, the Golden Hart still appears at sunset and goes in search for the new sovereign.

Often the new sovereign is one of the previous ruler's children or a close relative, but sometimes the Hart chooses an unrelated noble or even an ordinary citizen. On rare occasions, the Hart does not choose anyone assembled in the Azure Plaza, instead leaving and then returning a day or two later bearing the new sovereign on its back. Rikin the Peacemaker was chosen thus.

The Golden Hart remains by the side of the new ruler until he or she is crowned. Anyone attempting to harm either the Hart or the sovereign falls insensibly to the ground before harming either. The attacker does not awaken until after the coronation and is forever marked on the face with a gray hoof print. Anyone so marked is exiled from Aldis. The coronation takes place in the Azure Plaza, and the Golden Hart leaps back into the stained glass window when it is finished.

In addition to selecting the sovereign, the Golden Hart appears in times of great trouble. It approaches the sovereign, upon whom it bestows a vision providing guidance. Such appearances are rare, and most sovereigns experience them no more than once. The Golden Hart also appears if a sovereign is no longer worthy, being cruel, unjust, or insane. This has happened twice in the kingdom's history. The Hart manifested and kicked the sovereign in the forehead. The kick did no harm but left a permanent gray hoof print, entirely obscuring the golden crescent of sovereignty. The Golden Hart then chose a successor. Valin the Tainted was deposed and then exiled for his cruelty, and Larai the Mad was deposed and then cloistered for her madness.

### The Nobility

There are three varieties of nobles: traveling nobles, regional nobles, and the members of the Noble Council.

## QUEEN JAELLIN

Jaellin, the current sovereign of Aldis, was chosen by the Golden Hart eight years ago, when she was only eighteen. She is tall and slender, with long red-blond hair and green eyes. At her coronation, she was something of an outsider in the royal court, and is still regarded one by some of the older noble families. The last four sovereigns belonged to the prestigious Falish family, who have lived in the city of Aldis since the Great Rebellion. In contrast, Jaellin is from the city of Garnet, near the west coast of the kingdom. She had only been a noble for two years when she suddenly became queen. Further unnerving some of the more conservative members of the court, she has initiated several controversial policies, including increasing the acceptance of the study, but not use, of sorcery. That policy, in particular, has agitated relations with Jarzon.



She is seen as hardworking and serious, sometimes too much so. Many nights, she stays up late negotiating with foreign dignitaries or attempting to settle disputes between rival nobles or merchants. She is ethical and strong willed, sometimes stubborn, but her opinion can be swayed to other ethical options by sound arguments. In her rare quiet hours, she enjoys gardening and traveling into nearby woodlands to collect rare ferns and flowers. She wishes she could make these expeditions alone, but her ministers insist that she always be accompanied by guards.

In the hope of strengthening her political ties in the capital, several of her ministers have recommended she marry into one of the older noble families. She is a romantic, though, and has made it clear she will only marry for love and she will only marry someone who understands that her duties to Aldis come first, for her true love is the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

Most begin their careers as traveling nobles and become regional nobles, with the wisest ending their careers as councilors. The only certainty is that nobles never govern the city or region where they grew up. To prevent favoritism and prejudice and to encourage a nobility familiar with the kingdom at large, the sovereign and the Noble Council assign new nobles to regions far from where they were raised.

### Nobles and the Blue Rose Scepter

Just as the Golden Hart chooses the sovereign, the Blue Rose Scepter confirms the legitimacy of all nobles in Aldis. Nobles can come from any walk of life. To become a noble, one must pass tests in literacy, history, ethics, and law and earn the approval of the Noble Council. Public education and libraries are available throughout the kingdom, so even those who cannot afford tutors have a chance to attain a noble title. The final test of nobility, however, is one for which they cannot study.

To confirm each noble, the sovereign holds forth the Blue Rose Scepter, which glows a soft blue in the rightful ruler's hand. A prospective noble touches the rose's flower. If the scepter continues to glow, indicating the touch of a Light-aligned person who wishes to serve Aldis, the person becomes a noble, upon reciting oaths of service and loyalty. If the scepter's glow dims, the person cannot become a noble, for either their desire to serve is not sincere or they are not aligned with the Light. Only one attempt to pass this test is possible, as the scepter only works once for each person.

This test is held every other year in the capital, as part of the midsummer festival honoring the realm's nobles: the Festival of Service. All nobles are expected to celebrate the festival in the capital, when possible. They consult with the sovereign and their peers, acquaint themselves with the newly confirmed nobles, and together pray to Maurenna and the other gods that they might serve their communities faithfully.

### Traveling and Regional Nobles

Much of the kingdom is sparsely populated, and there are areas too spread out for a single regional noble to administer effectively from an urban seat. Many Aldin border communities are also fiercely independent and far from eager to have a powerful stranger living in their midst. In light of these facts, the Noble Council assigns many younger nobles to specific regions as itinerant ministers of the crown, who report to the nearest regional noble. These traveling nobles go from village to village, staying in one place only long enough to help solve local problems and judge pending court cases. In those villages, traveling nobles may be the only judges, tax collectors, mediators, or law enforcement officials the locals ever see.

In the more settled portions of the kingdom, the Noble Council assigns nobles to govern cities, towns, and the regions around them. These regional nobles make decisions regarding government spending, help resolve disputes, judge cases involving serious crimes, and review appeals. Many nobles begin as traveling nobles and are granted regional seats when the Noble Council deems them ready. Other nobles spend their entire careers traveling, while others become regional nobles immediately after they complete their training.

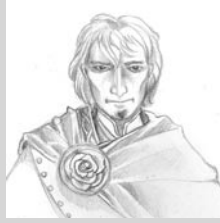
### The Noble Council

From among their number, the nobles of Aldis elect three dozen of the wisest and most respected to live in the capital and serve on the Noble Council. The Noble Council advises the sovereign, votes on policy, and helps appoint new nobles. Each councilor has one vote and a majority must approve every decision. In the case of a tie, the sovereign casts the deciding vote.

Council elections are held every other year at the Festival of Service. Most members of the council are re-elected, unless they wish to step down. During the festival, nobles also elect the president of the council, who moderates

## LORD SAYVIN

Although nobility is not inherited in Aldis, Sayvin was born to it. His father, Haylin, was the previous sovereign, and Sayvin's eventual inheritance of the crown seemed certain, at least to him. It's not that Sayvin specifically desired power, more that he loved and admired his wise father and wanted to serve Aldis in the same way. With this in his heart, Sayvin did all he could to make himself a worthy heir.



He was, therefore, shocked when the Golden Hart chose Jaellin as the new queen. Sayvin accepted the decision with grace and swore fealty to her, but he felt betrayed. All his life, he wanted nothing but to serve Aldis, and what was his reward? To be passed over for an outsider. Although Queen Jaellin makes noises about consulting Sayvin, he knows the she disagrees with him on various matters, and he doesn't want her charity.

Lord Sayvin continues to fulfill his duties as a noble, overseeing his region of the central valleys, but his heart is poisoned with envy. With each passing year of Queen Jaellin's reign, Sayvin imagines what he could do, if only he sat upon the throne, and his mind idly turns over ways that could come to pass. With Lord Sayvin's skills as both a noble and an adept of the arcane arts, woe betide Aldis when his thoughts turn from idle fantasy to action.

the council's debates and is a member of the Sovereign's Council.

## The Merchant Council

The prosperity of Aldis is largely built on commerce. The nation has many merchants, from petty traders, who carry their wares on their backs, to the owners of major trading companies. To better coordinate their efforts and prevent commercial feuds, most Aldin merchant companies join the Merchant Guild. This guild is open to any merchant who has been in business more than two years and whose business employs seven or more people. The guild has gradually become vital to the kingdom's economy.

In recognition of the guild's influence, the sovereign empowers it to appoint three dozen of its members to the Merchant Council, which has a similar advisory role to the Noble Council's. The guild elects new council members every four years. In this election, the guild also selects the director of the council, who serves on the Sovereign's Council.

## The Rhydan Council

Some rhydan choose to involve themselves in the affairs of the kingdom. Rhy-cats and rhy-horses make up the majority of this number. Communicating via mind touch, they discuss issues relating to the kingdom and the roles

rhydan should take. Although humans call this grouping the Rhydan Council, its members are not official and rarely gather physically. Almost none of them even come within a day's journey of the capital, and except for a few rhy-bonded, non-rhydan never meet them or even know who they are. The only way in which the so-called council acts like the Noble or Merchant Councils is by appointing a single rhy-cat representative to the Sovereign's Council.

## The Sovereign's Council

While the sovereign has numerous advisors, none of them have any official power. Only the three members of the Sovereign's Council join the sovereign in making official decisions for the kingdom. Each of them has a single vote, while the sovereign has two. This means the sovereign requires only a single ally to pass a resolution, while all three council representatives must vote together to overrule the sovereign. Because of custom and her desire for harmony, Queen Jaellin attempts to pass all resolutions by consensus, or with no more than one dissenting vote.

## Life in the Royal Court

In addition to members of the Noble and Merchant Councils, a host of bureaucrats, visiting dignitaries, foreign and local spies, couriers awaiting assignments, and advisors live at the royal court. To keep all of these people fed, comfortable, and happy there is a large staff of servants and many of the best entertainers in the nation. Highly trained soldiers and several dozen of the rhy-bonded protect the court. Every day hundreds of people mingle in a bustling, diverse, and often contentious mass.

These numbers increase dramatically every other summer during the month-long Festival of Service. Traveling nobles who are members of the Sovereign's Council generally bring their entire teams with them, since every member must provide reports about activities in wilderness areas and near the borders. During this festival, the population of the court rises to several thousand, and the logistics of caring for this vast influx of people become extremely complex. Songs and tales about court life focus on this dizzying whirl of masquerades, feasts, plays, and speeches and on the elegant and romantic life of the sovereign, nobles, and their retainers.

While many of these tales are true, there is a darker and more mysterious side to court life. Despite the fact that nobles begin their careers Light-aligned and committed to using ethical means to improve the lot of everyone in Aldis, nobles sometimes disagree about the best means to use. Secret deals, unstable alliances, and grudging compromises are as much a part of the court life of Aldis as they are of any other royal court. Also, while few people wish to admit it, nobles occasionally change alignment over time. Since the Blue Rose Scepter only works once on any person, there is no easy way to determine if a noble has turned away from the Light. In addition, members of the Merchant Council, diplomats, visiting dignitaries, and advisors range from good and honest people to scheming manipulators willing to use any means to advance their agendas.



## THE MEMBERS OF THE SOVEREIGN'S COUNCIL

### Lord Jarish Dukay

One of the sea-folk, Jarish is the somewhat gruff, but persuasive, president of the Noble Council. Now middle-aged, he grew up in the Scatterstar Archipelago and became a noble to represent the interests of his beloved islands. His gift for leading people toward common ground led to his being elected to the council eighteen years ago. He's been president for the past twelve.



Jarish is entrenched in the politics of the royal court and has close ties to the prestigious Falish family. He is in the unique position of being both an outsider to the court, like Queen Jaellin, and a close associate of many of the people who consider *her* an outsider. He has advised the queen to work within the existing power structures, and he is hopeful he can persuade her to marry one of the sons or daughters of the Falish family.

Jarish enjoys storytelling, playing music, and listening to other performers. He is a fixture at important court parties.

### Chezia Thalís

Chezia has been the director of the Merchant Council for six years. She is a seventy-nine-year-old vata'an and has been the head of the Thalís-Banik shipping company, the largest and wealthiest in Aldis, for almost forty of those years.



She is brilliant, soft-spoken, circumspect, and highly regarded for her analyses of problems. She is well known as a player of chess and other strategy games. Although she never gambles, others occasionally bet on her matches. When she is not working, at a match, or practicing chess problems, she is often at her town house reading reports about current events, seeking to detect trends in business and politics.

Chezia is an insider in the politics and society of Aldis and believes Queen Jaellin is somewhat naive. Chezia is the member of the Sovereign's Council most likely to vote against the queen, but she is deeply loyal to the kingdom and believes its good is synonymous with the Merchant Guild's.

### Laritha

The rhy-cat on the Sovereign's Council, Laritha sees herself not only as the representative of the rhydan, but also of animals and plants throughout the kingdom. She counts several unicorns as her close friends and shares their protectiveness toward wild places. During her seven years on the council, she has been unwilling to compromise her principles, even if refusing to do so causes problems for some of the inhabitants of Aldis. As a result, she has come into conflict with Jarish and Chezia over issues pertaining to mining and farmlands.



Her twenty-five-year-old human companion, the rhy-bonded Olar Klast, is not technically a member of the council, but by tradition, he sits at her side during council meetings. He provides her with advice when she has difficulty understanding the institutions of the nonrhydan in Aldis. He is deeply compassionate and loves all people, regardless of whether they walk on two legs or four. He was born in the far north, near the Pavin Weald, and although he is still learning his way around the capital's politics, he has learned how to broker compromises between Laritha and the other members of the council.

## The Traveling Court

One of the most tempestuous times at court is when the sovereign decides to move it. Every three years, the sovereign spends two months in one of the other cities of Aldis, to give citizens greater access to their ruler and, more importantly, to insure the sovereign remains aware of the realities of life throughout the land. Additionally, when there is a serious crisis, the court moves near it so that the sovereign can more easily gain information about the problems and rapidly dispatch envoys to help solve them. While the entire court does not go on these journeys, the Sovereign's Council, the head of the Sovereign's Finest, and all the most important royal advisors go along, as do many guards and support staff. In a large caravan, several dozen of the most important people in Aldis travel for several weeks until they reach their destination.

Every large city in Aldis contains a great hall normally used for public meetings and indoor festivals. These halls are sturdy and built with an eye to both elegance and defense. They are also capable of housing large numbers of people. When the court arrives in a city, the resident noble turns the great hall over to the sovereign, who lives there for the next several months with the royal entourage.

Moving the court is both difficult and potentially dangerous. During their travels, these worthies are vulnerable to attack by monsters, bandits, and assassins. As a result, the process of moving the court is complex and lengthy. Before anyone in the court actually sets out on the road, a team of the Sovereign's Finest rides ahead to inspect the court's proposed route. They check for potential ambushes, interview nearby villagers and townspeople about recent troubles, and examine the condition of the roads to be used. When they reach their

## THE CALENDAR OF ALDIS

The historians of Aldis number years from the coronation of Queen Seltha, the kingdom's first sovereign. The current year is 310 BR (Years of the Blue Rose). Historical records stretch back much further, but many details were lost in the Shadow Wars.

The year has 360 days with twelve months of 30 days each. The year begins with the winter solstice. The months are Selenar, Felarion, Gaeleth, Braneth, Hiathon, Atholon, Maurenel, Leonar, Auloreth, Anwanar, Goion, and Gravihain. The first eleven months are named for the gods of Twilight and Light, while the last commemorates the defeat of the exarchs of Shadow: Gravihain (The End of Grief). Disciples of Shadow instead interpret Gravihain as the month of the exarchs and perform many dark rites in its first days.

destination, the team reports back (usually via the psychic arts) and begins organizing locals to help prepare the hall where the court will stay.

A few days after they receive a positive report about the route, the court departs, with another team of the Sovereign's Finest riding several hours ahead to watch for potential dangers. Several times a day, this team reports back to the guards protecting the court. If all goes well, this second team helps with final preparations for the court's arrival in its temporary home.

When the court arrives, there is a large festival where the locals display their finest foods and entertainments. In addition to providing a joyous holiday for everyone and helping build ties between the court and the locals, these festivals are an ideal opportunity for talented and ambitious local crafters, cooks, and entertainers to obtain a noble patron or possibly even gain an appointment to the court.



## Education

The Kingdom of the Blue Rose makes certain all children receive a basic education. Children learn to read, write, and do basic math, as well as the basics of history and geography. This schooling is freely available to the children of anyone living in Aldis, even residents who are not citizens. Primary schooling lasts six years, and most children begin it between the ages of six and ten. To leave time for chores and play, instruction is only for a few hours each day. The children of wealthier families often have private tutors and receive more in-depth instruction.

The best and most ambitious students go on to attend the prestigious Royal College, which lies inside the palace walls in the capital, next to the Aldis Museum and attached to the Royal Library. Anyone can come into the college and read the books in the library, but classes are open only to enrolled students and visiting scholars. Students study history, law, medicine, natural history, and the arcane arts. Many healers, scouts, and others receive their initial arcane training at the college, while prospective and newly appointed nobles study law and history.

## Marriage and Romance

Aldins accept marriages between two or more legal adults, regardless of the sexes involved. Many Aldins expect everyone to marry. Once they figure out the types of people their single friends are attracted to, they become thoughtful, polite, but exceedingly determined matchmakers.

People who tend to fall in love with members of their own sex are known as *caria daunen* or "lovers of the dawn," after the myths of the god Hiathas and his lover Braniel. This term is typically shortened to *caria*. People who mostly fall in love with members of the opposite sex are referred to as *cepia luath*, "keepers of the flame," after the god Leonoth. It is shortened to *cepia* in common usage. If a *caria* person is approached romantically by someone of the opposite sex, a typical response would be good-natured and something like, "Sorry, I'm *caria*." The same would be true for a *cepia* person approached by someone of the same sex.

Throughout the kingdom, there is no cultural prejudice against people who are *caria* or *cepia*. Anyone showing such prejudice is regarded as either ignorant or bigoted. Such prejudices usually only appear among Jarzoni exiles in the east.

The people of the central valleys, coasts, and islands also accept polygamy, where three or more adults form a loving family. Such unions are known as *star marriages*, referring to the multiplicity of stars in the sky. Star marriages are less common in the rest of Aldis, especially in the north and east. Some easterners consider star marriages strange at best, immoral at worst.

## Crime and Justice

Aldis's justice system is primarily concerned with restoring the social harmony a crime disrupts, not punishing the guilty. The first step in any judicial investigation is everyone involved discussing the details of the case with a judge, either the local noble or a noble-appointed magistrate. A noble presides over trials involving murder, treason, or sorcery, while either a noble or a magistrate handles other cases. Anyone who disputes a magistrate's decision can request the local noble retry the case personally.

Upon hearing the details of a case, the judge decides if there is any need for a trial. If there is, the judge makes sure everyone involved has an advocate. During the trial, an adept Truth-Reads people who testify. Because a skilled adept can easily discern lies, trials are usually swift and just. If a person is convicted of a crime, the judge begins the process of determining how the victims should be compensated and how to help the criminal reform.

Almost all criminals undergo counseling with healers who use the psychic arts to uncover mental and behavioral problems. Because psychic adepts can access people's innermost thoughts, the success rate of this counseling is high; however, the psychic arts are only used to assist in understanding the root causes of antisocial behavior and to help criminals reform. Adepts don't brainwash people into becoming good citizens. Both Aldin morals and the healer code of ethics affirm the mental sanctity of every being. Any long-term psychic influence, without a subject's permission, is considered the foulest sorcery. The adept-priests of Jarzon using the psychic arts to forcibly "reform" criminals, heretics, and dissidents is one of many sources of tension between Aldis and Jarzon.

Murderers and other violent criminals are usually confined while they undergo counseling. They are only released when they have subdued their violent urges. If they prove incorrigible, they are fitted with peace torcs, collars imbued with the Calm arcanum, preventing them from performing violent acts.

Many criminals are required to pay fines or make other reparations. Someone who stole food to feed a hungry family receives a lecture on proper behavior and is assisted in finding work so food will no longer be out of reach. Someone who stole a jeweled bracelet would be required to return the bracelet and pay a fine equal to half the item's value. Half of this money goes to the person who was robbed, while the remainder goes to the crown.

Criminals who cannot pay their fines, who are repeat offenders, or who have committed serious crimes are assigned a period of indentured servitude. This lasts for six months to three years, depending on the criminals'

behavior during their service and the severity of their crimes. During this time, the crown takes a third of the criminals' earnings, keeping half of this money and giving the other half to the victims. When the servitude ends, reformed criminals are free to live and work however they wish.

Offenders who consistently refuse reformation are exiled. A cloven hoof is tattooed on their foreheads, and soldiers escort them to the nearest border. The worst offenders wear peace torcs, ensuring they do not leave the kingdom to wreak havoc elsewhere. Except exiles who betrayed Aldis to Jarzon, any exile who enters Jarzon, and is recognized by their hoof tattoo, is immediately executed. Because of this, exiles are advised to avoid Jarzon at all costs, for all life, even that of criminals, is precious in the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

## The Arcane Arts in Daily Life

Aldis is an exceptionally successful nation partly because of its pervasive use of the arcane arts. Healers cure disease and extend life, while psychics relay messages from one town to another, instantly alerting distant soldiers of a raid or calling for aid to prevent famine or plague. Life in Aldis is also enhanced through the use of arcane items preserved from the age of the Shadow Wars. Although the most powerful artifacts, like the Blue Rose Scepter, are irreplaceable, there are numerous lesser items, developed in the Old Kingdom, that are still in use.

The most common of these are arcane crystals. Although no one now alive understands these crystals well enough to invent entirely new ones, skilled crafters can duplicate existing ones. The glow globes in Aldis's cities are made from shas crystals, one kind of arcane crystal. They light streets and provide light and heat inside the homes of all but the very poor. They range from spheres the size of a walnut, used as portable lights by travelers, to the yard-diameter globes used to light and heat the main hall of the royal palace. Other items made from shas crystals pump and purify water, making the cities and towns of Aldis some of the cleanest and healthiest in the known world. Those with arcane talent use crystons, weapons made of shas crystals, to protect the kingdom and enforce the peace. These crystalline weapons give the enemies of Aldis pause when they consider their effectiveness in combat.

## The Psychic Arts

Although there are many arcane arts, most people think of two types before the others: the healing and the psychic arts. Healers are the most respected and beloved adepts. Even in Kern, the Lich King's servants do not harm them, for fear of causing a popular uprising. Only if healers defy the king do his servants apprehend them.

Attitudes toward the psychic arts are more complex. A majority of Aldins see psychic arcana as perfectly natural, used to enhance people's lives. There are some isolated Aldins, however, who fear and mistrust psychics. People



in other countries often fear them, as well. Couriers and others who have studied the psychic arts have learned not to advertise their capabilities when they travel abroad. Although few people assault psychics outright, some are anything but friendly to them. When suspected psychics enter a foreign town, innkeepers might refuse to rent them a room or even serve them food, and the townspeople might look at them askance. This kind of treatment is common in Jarzon, where priests spread rumors of Aldin psychics playing with other people's minds like toys. These tales linger among Jarzoni refugees in Aldis. While most immigrants are happy to have their children study the healing arts, they disapprove of other arcana. Even people whose families have lived in Aldis for two or three generations are sometimes nervous around adepts other than healers.

### Psychic Ethics

The Kingdom of the Blue Rose upholds the rights and privacy of the individual. It is also a nation where approximately one person in ten can psychically sense what someone else is feeling, and a significant portion of the population can actually read minds. Despite the potential for abuse, few Aldin psychics seriously overstep the boundaries of psychic courtesy. In part, this is because psychic etiquette is taught to all Aldins, starting at an early age.

Heart Reading, the ability to sense others' feelings, is considered no different from possessing especially keen hearing or another sharp sense. The only significant consequence is the residents of Aldis are somewhat more honest and willing to share their feelings than people elsewhere.

Arcana delving into or influencing a subject's mind are considered more invasive. These arcana are only acceptable if the psychic has the subject's permission, if the psychic is using the ability to save lives or prevent a serious crime, or if an official decides the arcanum is necessary for the common good. Otherwise, it is a gross invasion of privacy. Using these arcana to gain an advantage over someone, like attempting to convince someone to buy a new saddle through arcane coercion, is a serious crime. The punishment for such offenses are heavy fines and possible exile for repeat offenders.

Fortunately, psychic arcana require a measure of concentration. Also, anyone with some skill with any arcane talent can instantly sense if someone nearby is using psychic arcana. Social pressure is also used to prevent psychics from abusing their gifts. Most people deal with non-criminal abuses of arcana by avoiding the inconsiderate individual and telling everyone about their lack of courtesy.

If people seem overly persuasive, especially known psychics, they are sometimes suspected of abusing psychic abilities. In many isolated villages and small towns, the residents sometimes worry that strangers will use psychic abilities to take advantage of them. The most common result of such worries is people with the Second Sight watching strangers. If the strangers prove trustworthy, these worries soon abate.

### Psychic Intrigue

Most Aldins are content to let the rules of courtesy and the abilities of adepts protect them from illicit psychic influence. Politicians and wealthy merchants, however, often feel the need for greater protection. People with arcane talent in these positions often learn to psychically shield themselves. Others carry shielding stones, which provide a measure of protection. Wealthy people who are especially concerned about the security of their secrets hire psychic adepts to safeguard them. They also use sensing stones, which glow when someone uses arcana in their presence.

Since an adept can use Object Reading to learn a great deal about someone, anyone with a good reason to guard their secrets also guards their possessions and makes certain not to leave personal items lying around. A few paranoid people go as far as burning nail clippings, loose hairs, and other personal traces.

Attempting to use an invasive psychic arcanum on a diplomat or government official without permission is a serious crime, regardless of whether the target is from Aldis or not. The government of Aldis does not want to risk a diplomatic incident because an ambitious junior official tried to snatch a foreign dignitary's secrets from her mind. The Merchant Guild has a similar rule about dealing with foreign traders. Although the guild's members would naturally love to learn the plans of their trading partners, the guild knows that doing so uninvited could result in severely strained relations or even a trade ban.

### Familiars

Many adepts have animal companions known as familiars. Anyone with a modicum of arcane talent can bond with a familiar. The problem is finding a suitable animal. The minds of the adept and the animal must share certain characteristics for a lasting bond to form. Once formed, the adept cannot bond with another familiar unless the first one dies. Thankfully, familiars live at least twice as long as their mundane counterparts.

Familiars are typically as intelligent as young children and communicate with their bonded companion psychically. Most adepts regard familiars as something between a beloved pet and trusted friend. Because they are more intelligent than ordinary animals, injuring or killing a familiar is a serious crime in Aldis. Skilled and compassionate breeders raise various types of familiars, but the law only allows them to sell these creatures to other licensed dealers or to people with the potential to bond with them. Purist priests in Jarzon consider familiars fiendish and suspect, but elsewhere in the world, many envy the close bond between adept and familiar.

### Religion

The people of Aldis are deeply spiritual and honor the Primordials and the gods of Light. Unlike in Jarzon, religion does not rule the kingdom, and Aldis welcomes worshipers of foreign gods, so long as they are not of Shadow. Aldins understand that faith and the gods take many forms.

## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

According to oft-repeated tales, knowledge about the gods is spotty because Gaelenir has only been able to reveal a little of it, the rest being hoarded by Selene. As a result, there are no clear answers to questions of faith; no religious tradition is more obviously correct or incorrect than any other. People either tend to follow the faith they were raised in or find a new one that speaks better to their hearts. A few sages speculate that the gods don't intervene in the lives of mortals, or don't exist at all. Most people, however, believe in the gods and are convinced that divine agency is evident in the world.

The only near-universal religious affirmation in Aldea is a belief in reincarnation. In Aldis, the prevailing hope is that souls will reincarnate until they find their way back to the Eternal Dance and immortality. Jarzon is the only country where reincarnation is not affirmed. The Jarzoni believe perfected souls eventually transcend material existence to join with the gods of Light.

Everyone on Aldea knows that darkfiends come from the depths of Shadow, but almost no one believes the souls of the living are condemned to those depths, for the Primordials and the gods of Light prevent it. This means there is no hell into which souls are cast. In Aldea, hell is being trapped in everlasting unlife, wandering the world as an animated corpse or spirit, unable to move on in the cycle of rebirth. This is one reason why the unliving are viewed as abominations.

### Holy Days

There are four great holy days in Aldis: the winter and summer solstices and the spring and fall equinoxes, each associated with one of the Primordials. Lesser sacred days fall on every full moon, of which there are thirteen each year.

#### Midwinter Night

The year begins on Midwinter Night, the winter solstice, when it seems the sun will never return. On that night,

Aldins traditionally extinguish all fires but for one candle, until the first rays of sun break the horizon. In the royal palace, the candle kept alight is the massive beeswax and gold candle dedicated on Midsummer Day. From the guttering candle, the sovereign lights a taper at dawn,

which is passed through the palace, from the greatest noble to the least kitchen maid, and out into the city. This light symbolizes Selene's gift of life to the world, when she crafted the Wheel of Reincarnation to save souls from everlasting death. This is celebrated with a great feast. Feast tables and images of the gods are adorned with hothouse flowers, and imported fruits are eaten in hope of the coming spring.

#### The Feast of Braniel

Spring and hope are celebrated on the spring equinox, the feast of Braniel. Great dances take place around maypoles and Green Men, arboreal figures representing Braniel as Green Beard. These figures are lovingly shaped by gardeners and shaper adepts. The dancers adorn themselves with flowers, and bards sing tales of the Singer in the Stars and his beloved, Hiathas. The school year and most theater seasons begin on this day, and minstrels depart on their travels, which stretch to the following winter. The day is considered the preeminent day of love, with many romances consummated on it. In the Pavin Weald, some of the day's celebrations are visited by treants, who especially honor Green Beard.

#### Midsummer Day

On this day, the summer equinox, mortals honor Maureнна and her consort, Leonoth, and celebrate some of these gods' gifts: agriculture, marriage, and family. Farmers crown their cows, sheep, and other livestock with garlands and lead them between roaring bonfires. After this, farmers traditionally offer some of their best produce and livestock for a great communal feast. The meat is cooked over the bonfires, around which people sing of Maureнна's children, the gods of Light, and their virtues. Children are given toys and sweets, and the elderly sit at the feast's seats of honor. The day is considered the most auspicious for marriage. Many are wed in the morning, some are betrothed, and others renew their vows.



## The Feast of Anwaren

On the autumn equinox, when the year begins to dip toward winter, Anwaren and the dead are remembered. Most celebrate the feast with their families in the evening, eating the fruits of the harvest and recounting tales of their deceased loved ones. Using stones, corn stalks, pumpkins, and autumn leaves, people fashion figures representing Anwaren and place them at the center of their feast tables. After all have had their fill of the festal meal and the storytelling has ended, the people remove the figures from the table and bury them in a nearby garden. There the final tale of the evening is told, of how Anwaren will perish at the end of autumn but be reborn in the spring.

Over the following weeks, tokens are placed on the spot where the figures were buried, in honor of Anwaren and out of affection for the dead. On the eve of the month of Gravihain, jack-o'-lanterns are set in the garden to scare off ghosts and other creatures of Shadow, for it is believed that the powers of Shadow increase at the beginning of Gravihain, the month of Anwaren's death, and then subside with Midwinter Night.

## Purist Sects

Various sects of Jarzon's Church of Pure Light have taken refuge in Aldis, for they were persecuted as heretics in their homeland. The fact that Aldis protects these sects is constantly insulting to Jarzon's Hierophant and priests. Nobles and the Sovereign's Finest sometimes fear the Purists within their borders might immolate unbelievers and heretics in fires of purification, but the majority of Purists living in Aldis are more moderate in their views than the members of their parent faith.

Aldin Purists do still distrust nonhumans, as well as practitioners of the arcane arts who are not priests, healers, or trusted nobles. Most Purists treat other adepts, including members of the Sovereign's Finest, with suspicion. Tensions are heightened by a few of the less tolerant members of the Sovereign's Guard and the Rose Knights, who see little difference between Jarzoni exiles and the Jarzoni who regularly raid towns near the Veran Marsh. Some of these soldiers have a disapproving view of Purist settlements and worry that the exiles might be harboring spies or raiders. As a result, interactions between Purists and the other inhabitants of Aldis tend to be strained.

# ALLIANCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following are some of the most important organizations in Aldis. Membership in any of them can make an ideal background for heroes in a *Blue Rose* game. The members of the listed groups are loyal to both their organizations and to the kingdom.

## The Sovereign's Finest

Because bandits, ancient arcana, and foreign raiders are frequent threats in Aldis, specially trained and royally approved individuals travel the country, frequently accompanying nobles, to provide defense, advice, and other assistance. They compose the Sovereign's Finest and are usually healers, couriers, scouts, rangers, and, occasionally, adepts and the rhy-bonded. They typically work in teams of three to six and are welcomed in most communities in Aldis. The members of the organization

are formally known as *envoys* and owe their highest allegiance to the sovereign. The organization is often called either the King's or the Queen's Finest, depending on the current sovereign.

In isolated areas, these teams may be the locals' primary access to news, martial aid, and quality medical care. Few remote villagers are able to hunt down bandit gangs, much less bands of shadowspawn or darkfiends. When troubled by such problems, communities welcome aid from the Finest.

The director of the envoys assigns the most skilled teams to patrol dangerous areas like the Veran Marsh, yet even newly trained envoys are considered worthy defenders of the kingdom. In troubled times, the least experienced teams sometimes find themselves patrolling untamed portions of the frontier or searching wilderness areas for bandits and shadowgates.

## SHARIT RANITH

The director of the Sovereign's Finest, the human Sharit Ranith joined the Finest at the age of seventeen. For a decade, he worked with a team of envoys near the Ice-Binder Mountains. He and his team were later transferred to the capital, where they worked as scouts for the traveling court and became personal messengers for the sovereign. In the course of his thirty-five years of service, he has been a member of half a dozen teams. He was always the most well-spoken member and consistently excelled at coordinating his teams' efforts. Sharit is now fifty-four years old. After he served on the staff of the previous director for four years, Queen Jaellin appointed him director.



Sharit lives with his husband Dalt, although some joke he is also married to his duty. Jovial and witty, Sharit always seems relaxed, but if any of his people are in trouble, he is relentless in his efforts to aid them. He is occasionally nostalgic for working in the field, so every few months he accompanies a team on one of their missions, to keep in touch and prevent his skills from getting rusty. This contact with the field operations of the Sovereign's Finest has endeared him to the majority of envoys.



While experienced teams of the Sovereign's Finest possess impressive reputations, merely wearing the uniform and badges is enough to gain an envoy respect from most people. Some jaded urbanites, merchants, and nobles regard newly recruited envoys with disinterest—or even disdain, calling them the sovereign's lap dogs. To most of the kingdom's citizens, envoys are heroes and often the only representatives of the crown they see. Although most envoys are not nobles themselves, isolated villagers make little distinction between an envoy and an actual noble.

The crown pays envoys well. They receive their monthly wages from the director, or the nearest regional noble, if their current mission has taken them afield. In truth, envoys have little need for money; one of the ways that communities pay their taxes is by providing food and lodging to them. If the locals are exceptionally poor or in the midst of recovering from some disaster, however, envoys are expected to pay for themselves.

The Sovereign's Finest is administered from the Hall of Envoys, a building on the grounds of the royal palace. The director lives and works there, along with a staff of four assistants, all of whom are appointed by the sovereign, from among the ranks of active envoys. As well as being skilled administrators, the director and the four assistants are traditionally psychic adepts. The Hall of Envoys contains offices for them, sixty small bedrooms for envoys who are called to court, and large stables, with an adjoining pasture.

Two teams of envoys are permanently attached to the court. They scout the traveling court's routes, accompany traveling dignitaries, and address problems in and around the capital. Other teams visit the court for reviews, additional training, briefings before special missions, and official inquests. Most teams visit the court no more than once a year. Ordinary assignments and briefings are handled via psychic communication with the director's staff. This type of remote direction works because each team of envoys is largely self-directed. Most only receive detailed instructions when there is some form of emergency, such as being sent to aid another team in trouble or to confront some great Shadow threat.

## The Sovereign's Guard

The Sovereign's Guard is the kingdom's standing army. It is small but well trained. Among its soldiers are some rangers and scouts and a few adepts. The army is fully capable of dealing with raiders, bandits, or bands of shadowspawn or the unliving. It is not large enough to protect the kingdom from a full-fledged invasion, however, or a large force of well-organized darkfiends.

To supplement its numbers, the army maintains a number of reserve forces, which are composed of citizens in good health who spend at least one day a month training with weapons and learning woodcraft and other skills. In return for their dedication, they are given a modest reduction in their taxes and the knowledge they are ready to help protect the kingdom in times of need. Using the psychic arts, the army can call up the majority of the reserves in less than two weeks. The priests of Jarzon and the Lich King of Kern scorn these reserves as half-trained farmer-soldiers, but when led by officers, they are a formidable fighting force.

In addition to defending the kingdom, the army is responsible for aiding people during natural disasters and other emergencies.

Soldiers stationed in the kingdom's cities are trained to fight fires. If hurricanes, floods, or other disasters strike, the army mobilizes to rescue people, provide medical care, build shelters, and help rebuild damaged buildings.

## The Knights of the Blue Rose

The Knights of the Blue Rose are the elite division of the Sovereign's Guard. Commonly known as the Rose Knights, they are the military champions of the kingdom, at the forefront of the most dangerous military actions. They lead the rest of the army in charges and are tasked with closing shadowgates and dealing with darkfiend



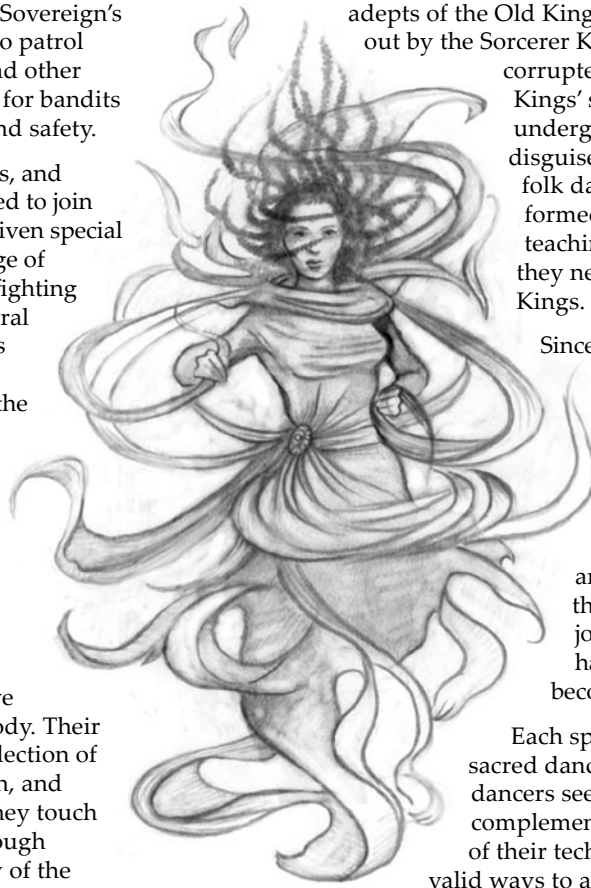
## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

incursions too much for the Sovereign's Finest. The Rose Knights also patrol the Ice-Binder Mountains and other dangerous wilderness areas for bandits and other threats to peace and safety.

Only the most skilled, selfless, and devoted soldiers are permitted to join the Rose Knights. They are given special training, including knowledge of various arcana useful when fighting darkfiends and other unnatural foes. The most heroic knights are permitted the honor of riding griffons into battle in the most dire times of need.

### Spirit Dancers

In the Old Kingdom, spirit dancers were adepts specializing in the meditative arts, masters of mind and body. Their spirit dance is a physical reflection of the Eternal Dance of creation, and the greatest dancers claim they touch the divine as they whirl through the dance's steps. Like many of the



adepts of the Old Kingdom, they were all but wiped out by the Sorcerer Kings, with many of the survivors corrupted and recruited into the Sorcerer Kings' service. The survivors went underground. To pass on their lore, they disguised their disciplines as complex folk dances, often set to music. They formed part of the core of the resistance, teaching new spirit dancers the skills they needed to overthrow the Sorcerer Kings.

Since the Great Rebellion, spirit dancers have strongly supported the Kingdom of the Blue Rose and its sovereign. Most of them live in special academies, where they perfect their arts. Some become wanderers, who freely give their services and teaching to any who are ready to receive them. Several of the most famous spirit dancers have joined the Sovereign's Finest, and have attracted many youths eager to become their apprentices.

Each spirit dancer teacher interprets the sacred dance in his or her own way. Spirit dancers see these different interpretations as complementary. They celebrate the diversity of their techniques and regard them all as valid ways to approach the mysteries of life.

## THREATS TO ALDIS

**T**here are many potential threats to the peace of Aldis. Monsters and bandits live in its wildernesses and lurk on its borders, while darkfiends crawl through arcane gateways in ancient ruins. These same ruins draw power-hungry sorcerers like moths to flame. While they find ancient knowledge to increase their power, they also uncover slumbering evils that taint their souls with Shadow.

Here are some of the more common threats faced by members of the Sovereign's Finest and the Rose Knights.

### Unscrupulous Merchants

While most of the kingdom's merchants are scrupulous, some unscrupulous ones cause great harm in their quest for ever-greater profits. For example, merchants sometimes accidentally poison entire streams and lakes with the wastes released from their mining, smelting, and dye-making operations. Often such problems do not become apparent until people and animals start to die or crops fail. Envoys and independent healers know to watch for this sort of thing. In most cases, the merchants were simply careless and not aware that their business was harming anyone. Because avoiding such problems requires work and money, some merchants are knowingly careless, and once a problem becomes obvious, they refuse to change their practices unless ordered to do so by a noble.

Some merchants are Shadow-aligned and willfully mistreat their employees. The worst go as far as betraying the kingdom. They do anything to advance their positions, including colluding with Kern and Jarzon in return for bribes, trade concessions, and other boons. Some of these merchants use their caravans to smuggle information, dangerous artifacts, and spies back and forth across the kingdom's borders.

Aware that some of the Merchant Council's members are Shadow-aligned traitors, the Noble Council assigns envoys to investigate them. Because false accusations could disrupt the already touchy relations between the two councils, investigators must handle such cases with great discretion. The investigations can be lengthy, difficult, and potentially dangerous, especially when the traitors are cunning and ruthless. If enough proof is gathered, the investigations culminate in tribunals, which often result in the traitors being banished.

### Fallen Nobles

Many people forget that, while all nobles are Light-aligned when they take office, a few stray from the path and become Shadow-aligned. These nobles are often agents of deception, division, and unrest. The sovereign and the Noble Council can strip such nobles of their

titles if there is evidence that they no longer act in the best interests of the kingdom. This is a rare and serious procedure involving a lengthy hearing.

The worst problems come from Shadow-aligned regional nobles. They exploit the labor and goodwill of the people in their regions, but most are subtle about this, avoiding excesses that would reveal their abuses. They gradually twist and corrupt the place they rule, appointing assistants who agree with their views and are able to maintain a facade of honor and compassion.

Some Shadow-aligned nobles seek out sorcerous power, either because of overwhelming ambition or an unbalanced desire to protect Aldis that causes them to use any means available. In some cases, nobles are beguiled into Shadow by a sorcerer or an arcane artifact of evil. Once the corrupting influence is removed, the noble returns to normal.

The stresses of protecting the kingdom from internal and external threats lead some nobles to become Twilight-aligned. These nobles are not fallen, as the Shadow-aligned are. Many have simply given up ideals for expediency, but most remain ethical.

## Bandits and Pirates

Although most teams of the Sovereign's Finest like to talk about sealing shadowgates and overcoming raiders from Kern and Jarzon, their duties often consist of dealing with banditry: brigands attacking caravans, pirates robbing merchant ships, and the like.

Bandits are especially common in the lands near the Ice-Binder Mountains, where gangs lurk in the foothills. In addition to the mountains providing a multitude of hiding places, ancient ruins in the valleys and perched on cliffs offer everything from secret tunnels to powerful, if dangerous, magical artifacts some of the more foolhardy bandits dare to use. Although few are desperate enough to stay there long, there are even bandits who make a temporary home of the Veran Marsh. They know the safe paths there better than anyone else, and once they enter the marsh, they can evade most pursuit.

Regardless of where they are located, most gangs comprise from half a dozen to four dozen well-armed bandits with swift horses. A majority of the bandits are citizens of Aldis who reject the values of their homeland and prey upon the weak and unsuspecting. Some are soldiers, scouts, and refugees from Kern and Jarzon. While there are many grisly tales of bandits slaughtering villagers or selling them into slavery, such practices are fortunately uncommon. Bandits are primarily interested in plundering whatever food, coin, animals, and other valuables they can.

The kingdom has a wealth of seaports, but also an abundance of pirates who prowl along its trade routes. The ports in the Scatterstar Archipelago contend with pirates more than most. Regardless of where they attack, pirates harbor in hidden coves and inlets, where they nurse their wounds, repair their ships (sometimes as many as a dozen), and transfer their booty to small,

## UNIFORMS AND INSIGNIA

Each of the major professions employed by the crown of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose has its own distinctive style of clothing.

### THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST

Regardless of whatever else they wear, the Sovereign's Finest wear small medallions of gold set with a cloisonné blue rose on one side and a golden hart on the other. They wear a small patch, embroidered with a golden hart, over the heart on their official uniform.

### NOBLES AND COURIERS

Nobles and couriers wear thigh-length military jackets while working. They have polished brass buttons, embroidered epaulets, wide cuffs, mandarin collars, and colored piping on the seams. Nobles wear black jackets with royal blue piping, while couriers wear green jackets with black piping. Nobles also wear a small patch embroidered with a blue rose, opposite a golden hart patch.

### SCOUTS, SOLDIERS, AND RANGERS

Scouts, soldiers, and military rangers have similar jackets for formal occasions, all with black piping. Scouts wear dark red, rangers wear brown, and soldiers wear pearl gray.

### HEALERS, ADEPTS, AND SPIRIT DANCERS

While independent healers, adepts, and spirit dancers wear what they please, any trained at the Royal College or employed as envoys wear uniforms. These consist of a pale-colored, close-fitting shirt under a garment halfway between a thigh-length robe and a heavy jacket made without buttons and designed to be worn open. Made without lapels or cuffs, each profession wears a jacket of a different color.

Healers wear white, with a hand-sized red ring embroidered on the upper right side of the jacket. When not attending formal functions, healers rarely wear white, but the red ring worn over the heart always identifies them.

Adepts wear sky blue jackets with a quartered circle—representing the four elements, the Primordials, and the Wheel of Reincarnation—on their right breast.

Spirit dancers wear midnight blue jackets with a white outline of a hand on their breast.

An envoy who does not belong to any of these professions wears a charcoal gray jacket marked only with the golden hart patch.

innocuous-looking merchant vessels. Some pirate hideouts are in coves where the Ice-Binder Mountains meet the sea, between Aldis and Rezea. Others are on small islands to the west and south of the Scatterstar Archipelago. The most daring pirates hide among the



jagged pinnacles and treacherous reefs of the Leviathan's Teeth and spend as much time searching for lost treasure among the ruins of Falzanoth as they do attacking ships.

## The Silence

While bandits are rare in the central valleys of the kingdom, crime is not, thanks in large part to the criminal syndicate called the Silence. The Silence controls all but the pettiest crime in the cities of Aldis, where criminals are expected to pay a portion of their takes to the syndicate. In return, the Silence fences stolen goods, hires out bodyguards and assassins, and provides criminals refuge from the law. All of this is overseen by the mysterious figure referred to as the Prince, whose identity is only known to his (or her) senior lieutenants and the Barons, the leaders of the syndicate's regional cells. Criminals who disobey the Prince's orders are slain by his enforcers. The sigil branded on the victims' faces lets everyone know who was responsible.

The Silence maintains contact with many of the bandits and pirates on the kingdom's fringes. The syndicate fences goods for them and hires them to attack and loot specific caravans. Also, the Silence maintains loose ties with Kern. The syndicate purchases arcane artifacts and even the occasional darkfiend and unliving creature from the Lich King.

Although few of the criminals apprehended in Aldis know anything more than a local representative of the Silence, both local law enforcement and the Sovereign's Finest continually work to capture senior personnel from the syndicate. Sometimes they manage to snare a Baron, but so far they have been unable to acquire any concrete information about the Prince's identity or whereabouts.

## Shadow Cults

Though worship of the exarchs of Shadow is strictly forbidden in Aldis, secret Shadow cults occasionally arise, flourish briefly, and then are discovered by the Sovereign's Finest and disbanded. The cults are characterized by blood sacrifices and the encouragement of the soul's darkest impulses. In Jarzon, the Purist priesthood is on constant lookout for such cults and frequently accuses Aldis of not doing enough to stamp them out. The truth is that the Sovereign's Finest are untiring in their pursuit of Shadow cultists, some of whom have close ties to Kern.

The most fearsome Shadow cults have members with arcane talents. They often turn to sorcery, and some are capable of summoning darkfiends to do their bidding. One of the greatest concerns of the Sovereign's Finest is a Shadow cult with access to a shadowgate and the sorcerous knowledge to use it.

Although it's not widely known in Aldis, the most successful shadow cults have wealthy or even noble sponsors. Some jaded members of Aldis' highest social circles are drawn to the secret and forbidden rites of the Exarchs like moths to a flame. They use their wealth

and influence to sustain and conceal their cult followers, initially for the thrill, later out of fear of discovery.

## Shadow Dancers

These foul adepts are the descendants of the spirit dancers who were corrupted by the Sorcerer Kings to become their personal spies and assassins. Some of the original shadow dancers were wise enough to vanish into the shadows before the fall of their masters. They passed on their arts, creating a secret society of spies and killers for hire. Spirit dancers despise shadow dancers for perverting their traditions and fight them at every opportunity. Some shadow dancers work as cat's-paws for the Lich King of Kern, but most have their own agendas of greed, corruption, and destruction. The worst pass themselves off as spirit dancers and attempt to corrupt both students and teachers at various academies.

## The Unending Circle

Found even in the civilized areas of Aldis, the cultists of the Unending Circle fear the consequences of their ill-spent lives will be visited on their next incarnations when they pass through the Wheel of Reincarnation. Fearing what the next life might bring, unable to loosen their grip on their current incarnation, the followers of the Unending Circle seek to free themselves from the Wheel. Some seek immortality through alchemy or sorcery, while others seek life after death. Most such schemes end in failure, but sometimes, usually through sinister rites, members of the Unending Circle find ways to extend their lives, often with a horrible spiritual cost. Some of the cultists give up and search for fulfillment in unlife, performing the dread rituals for becoming a shadow, vampire, or lich.

## Arcane Relics

Arcane relics of the Shadow Wars and the preceding ages are still found scattered across the land. A necklace a farmer uncovers in her field might be able to twist the will and poison the mind, or perhaps transform the living into zombies. While such objects do not turn up often, most people rightly fear them. Because most arcane relics bear distinguishing marks—esoteric sigils, a refinement of design impossible without arcana, and sometimes a telltale glow—people can often identify them on sight. The items made to look mundane tend to cause the most havoc. People usually rebury the obvious ones or cautiously pick them up with long tongs and store them in a strongbox until the Sovereign's Finest can take charge of them. Examining arcane relics and pronouncing them safe or carrying them to the Royal College in the capital for study and safe disposal is a regular duty for envoys.

Since many arcane relics are made from precious materials, finders are sometimes hesitant to hand them over to the Sovereign's Finest. These selfish individuals sell or wear items they find without first determining if they are safe. The Sovereign's Finest must deal with the results of such behavior. Some finders are simply unaware that they should be cautious around ancient relics. Their

naiveté is occasionally rewarded by finding an amulet that causes crops to flourish or a figurine that repels vermin. Others are not so lucky.

## Shadowgates

Many shadowgates survived the Shadow Wars, when the Sorcerer Kings summoned hordes of darkfiends through them. A few shadowgates have been active since their creation, while others have been dormant for centuries. The most dangerous gates open every few days, allowing darkfiends to pass through. Other gates only open when specific events, like thunderstorms or a new moon, occur. A surge of natural arcana in the land or a person nearby can even reactivate a dormant gate. When darkfiends pass through the gates, they are of various species, although some gates draw only certain kinds of the fiends. Darkfiends often adopt the area around their gate as a lair. When these are discovered, champions are mustered to destroy them.

No one knows where all the gates are located. The Sovereign's Finest are tasked with finding them, and the sovereign offers a substantial reward to anyone else who discovers one and reports it. Finding the gates is easier said than done, however. The Sorcerer Kings cloaked many with illusions, and others are in remote ruins or far underground. Some are also protected by powerful wards. Once a gate is found, the Sovereign's Finest and Rose Knights are sent to destroy it. If a gate is too powerful to be destroyed or sealed, guards and arcane wards are placed around it, and its location is not revealed to the populace, if possible.

Except in Kern, where shadowgates are coveted, attitudes about shadowgates are the same throughout the world, even in nations as different as Aldis and Jarzon. Defeating darkfiends and destroying shadowgates are the kinds of tasks that generate rare cooperation between the Sovereign's Finest and the Purist priests of Jarzon. Some of them have learned mutual respect and even admiration after working together against Shadow.

## Sorcery

Despite its extensive use of the arcane arts, even the Kingdom of the Blue Rose is wary of sorcery. The Shadow Art has the potential to corrupt even the most innocent soul, so every adept must guard against its siren call.

The most conspicuous forms of sorcery pervert the natural order. They include the secrets of summoning darkfiends and creating the unliving. Generally, sorcerers willing to do these things have already gone over to Shadow, although there is the occasional naive adept, trying to explore the bounds of the arcane arts, certain he is the exception. Arcane masters learned long ago that trying to fight the forces of Shadow with their own weapons is a fool's errand.

More dangerous than the overt forms of sorcery are the subtle ways it creeps into the other arcana. The use of the arcane arts to alter or influence others against their will is also sorcery, and many arcana can be used in this way.



Adepts are tempted to misuse their gifts, to try to exert control over the world the way Anwaren did, and they pay the same price in corruption and madness.

Despite the best advice and the wisest teachers in the arcane arts, every once in a while, the call of sorcery lures an adept into experimenting, or an eager student goes further and faster than is wise. There are always those few with arcane talent and a thirst for power or revenge. Although Aldin healers do their best to treat the emotional wounds where the Shadow Art may fester and grow, some manage to slip through the cracks. To the Aldins, sorcerers are to be pitied for their fall from grace, but they are also feared for their power. While envoys prefer to redeem and heal sorcerers when they can, the safety of the kingdom and its people must come first. In Jarzon, the Purist priests strike first to root out corruption, then ask questions about where the sorcerer learned the forbidden art.

Almost a century ago, King Rannath ruled the study of sorcery was no longer a crime in Aldis, saying it is not sorcerous knowledge, but its use, that constitutes a crime. This decision heightened tensions between Aldis and Jarzon, which bans sorcery in any form. This point of Aldin law has allowed some sorcerers to operate in the kingdom's shadows. Some on the Noble Council want Queen Jaellin to reverse Rannath's decision and ban even the study of the Shadow Art, saying it creates a needless danger to Aldis. The queen is reluctant to do so, since she agrees with Rannath's view and fears the consequences of banning knowledge and study of any kind. Once some knowledge is declared forbidden, what would be next? Debate on this issue remains heated. Even among Light-aligned nobles, tempers often flare when the issue of sorcery arises.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF ALDIS

**A**ldis consists of a large peninsula and a small archipelago extending to the west. Aldis has a temperate climate, with dry summers and wet, mild winters. It contains many rivers, and the land is exceptionally rich and fertile. Most of Aldis consists of rolling hills and a mixture of meadows and forests.

### The North

The Pavin Weald, a dense forest of oak and maple, fills the northern reaches of the kingdom. This region is the wildest and least settled portion of Aldis, in large part because north of the forest lies the great Ice-Binder Mountains. This mountain range forms the boundary between Aldis and Kern. No one but griffons, shadowspawn, and bandits call the mountains home, but wealthy merchants maintain seasonal mining camps there because of rich veins of silver, shas crystals, and tin. The Sovereign's Finest frequently ride between these camps to help protect them from the mountains' dangers.

While the mountains never contained any of the great strongholds of the Sorcerer Kings, they hold an unusual number of places of power, where some sorcerers built enchanted towers to conduct secret experiments. Miners occasionally turn up arcane relics when digging in the ruins of those towers. Also, there is at least one working shadowgate in the mountains. Periodically darkfiends come through the gate and attack villages in the Pavin Weald. Fortunately, such attacks are infrequent; the gate rarely opens more than once every few years.

The Pavin Weald extends partway up the sides of the mountains, further increasing the difficulty of living and working in the foothills of these mighty peaks. Visibility is low, and the dense forest significantly reduces the speed of travel. The forest also gives bandits and ogres many places to hide. Further south, where the foothills end, the forest becomes denser. The deepest portions of the forest are largely uninhabited by humans, and the unicorns who guard the forest will not permit anyone to clear it.

There are many small settlements on the outskirts of the Pavin Weald, and some villages are located a short way inside. The unicorns allow these villagers to gather fallen wood, edible acorns, and pine nuts and to hunt reasonable amounts of game. Traveling merchants frequently visit these villages to trade worked goods for the furs, herbs, and wild mushrooms gathered in the forest. Deeper in the forest, a few small communities live in harmony with rhy-wolves and share their huts with them. These people usually distrust visitors and are more comfortable with rhy-wolves than with other humans. Teams of the Sovereign's Finest who visit them must be exceptionally careful and courteous to avoid antagonizing the forest folk and their lupine companions.

Regardless of whether they live inside or just outside the forest, the forest folk share much in common. Descended from refugees from Kern, the folk are generally tall and blond, with pale skin and blue eyes. Vata births are not

uncommon, and the forest folk treat the vata as especially blessed. Their view of the night people is not so favorable. Despite living in Aldis for almost two centuries, the forest folk annually retell stories of sorcerers and night people mistreating their ancestors. While the forest folk obey the laws of Aldis and try not to harm anyone without just cause, they do not allow night people to sleep in their villages and actively drive out any sorcerers. If night people arrive, the locals close their doors against them, and no one talks to them, except for the village elder, who asks their business and urges them to be on their way. If a night person arrives in the company of the Sovereign's Finest or is a traveling noble, the forest folk talk to them and provide lodging on the outskirts of their village, but the visitors receive far less cooperation than they otherwise might.

The villages of the forest folk are usually small, between thirty and three hundred people living in a loose spiral of wooden houses arranged around a central plaza. The elder, the priest, and the healer, if a village is lucky enough to have one, live in houses facing this plaza. The elder is a village's leader, chosen by informal election. Only people who have grown children are considered mature enough to hold this position. The priest is a village's religious leader, practicing the religion Falliaism, after Fallia, the brave woman whose faith and determination led their ancestors out of Kern. Worshipers believe the god Felisar spoke to Fallia in visions and helped her succeed. They also believe Fallia now sits at the god's right hand. Felisar is considered a special patron of the forest folk. In midwinter, children believe Felisar visits each village, bringing small gifts to those who have practiced charity during the year. In the smallest villages, the priest, elder, and healer are often the same person.

The forest folk subsist on the bounty of the Pavin Weald, making certain not to take too much from it. They almost never see the secretive unicorns, but nonetheless revere them as sacred servants of the gods and abide by their wishes for the forest. The villagers eat bread and porridge made from nut flour, a mixture of ground acorns and pine nuts. They vary their diet with fruits, game they hunt in the forest, and the large and abundant trout they catch in cold mountain streams.

The ordinary clothing of the forest folk consists of furs and elaborately tooled leather, usually tanned buckskin. This is combined with woolens woven from the fleece of swift mountain sheep and occasional pieces of heavy cotton clothing, acquired through trade. Heavy-knit sweaters decorated with complex knot patterns, similar to those of their leatherwork, are popular. They wear either high leather boots or soft leather shoes. Buckskin trousers are common among hunters and foresters. Most forest folk wear either laced buckskin shirts or leather vests with shirts of linen or wool they import from the central valleys. When traveling, they wear a calf-length duster. Split up the back for riding, these coats are one of the forest folk's more popular exports.



## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —



### The Central Valleys

The sun-drenched valleys and rolling hills in the center of the Aldin peninsula are the heartland of the kingdom. Numerous villages and towns extend up and down the Rose River and its many tributaries, with the capital standing where the river pours out of the southwestern corner of Lake Vash. The region is the most densely populated and fertile in the kingdom. Its grain, nuts, oil, wine, and cloth are exported widely.

Broad roads, paved with large stones, crisscross the ridges of the region's hills and, combined with river travel, connect the kingdom's communities. Trees in the region mostly grow in carefully cultivated groves on hilltops, often on either side of the roads. Almond, pistachio, and olive groves are especially plentiful. The valleys are devoted to growing grapes, wheat, cotton, and flax. Locals herd goats and reddish pigs along the hillsides, while the kingdom's famous white cattle graze on fallow ground.

Using the white marble found in many low cliffs, the people build gleaming white towns and cities, often painted with elaborate murals of animals, plants, and the ocean. The combination of plentiful marble, strong oxen, and the arcane arts of shaping means dwellings are often large, some as many as five or six stories tall. The houses of more prosperous residents are built around square courtyards filled with fruit trees, fountains, statuary, and simple gardens. The region's villages usually have buildings of whitewashed brick instead, roofed with terra cotta tiles. Whether a village or a city, most communities have grid plans and are near a river.

Most of the people native to the central valleys have pale olive skin, dark hair, and green, hazel, or brown eyes. Immigration into this prosperous region means these people make up about half the area's population. The rest are a diverse mixture of people from all over the world. Substantial communities of blond northerners live alongside night people, white-haired vata, blue- and green-skinned sea-folk, red-haired Jarzoni immigrants, and even a small community of dark-skinned traders from the distant island of Lar'tya. Everyone who lives in the central valleys is used to dealing with people with a wide variety of beliefs, customs, and appearances.

While everyone understands ignoring the differences between people is foolish, anyone who judges someone based upon his or her appearance, customs, gender, or similar factors is considered boorish and uncouth, at best. The people of the central valleys know they live in one of the most diverse kingdoms in the world and take pride in the fact that people can live together without the constant feuding and petty hatreds marking interactions of different groups elsewhere. Most residents consider anyone displaying open bigotry a threat to their diversity and their unique way of life. Wiser and kinder residents explain to newcomers and bigots the value of diversity, while others who are less patient either pointedly ignore such people or openly mock their ignorance. Ironically, this gives Aldins a reputation as haughty and arrogant in lands like Jarzon.

Almost half of the region's residents are descendants of the first Aldins, the original dark-haired inhabitants of the central valleys. Most live in large extended families, which regularly tell stories about deceased relatives to

## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

keep their memories alive. Their houses hold not just parents and their children, but also grandparents and unmarried siblings of the parents. The four sides of a traditional Aldin house, surrounding a central courtyard, are arranged so residents can strike a balance between close family ties and privacy.

When people refer to clothing styles in Aldis, they usually mean the clothing worn in the central valleys. There dress is largely determined by profession and status, and is mostly independent of gender. In daily life, for instance, trousers are the norm for both men and women.

The central valleys are known for numerous festivals and are prosperous enough for most people to own at least one set of fine clothing designed solely for these festivals. Many women and a few men wear elaborate skirts and dresses for special occasions. The most common festival dresses are close fitting through the body with large puffy sleeves, tight cuffs at the wrist, and wide skirts, either pleated or simply full. Most men and some women wear a long belted tunic and either close-fitting trousers or heavy tights. Brocade or embroidered vests, either buttoned or designed to be worn open, are a part of most festival garb, regardless of whether a person is wearing trousers, tights, a skirt, or a dress.

Day-to-day clothing is considerably more practical and less elaborate than festival wear. In hot weather, clothing on the upper body ranges from a simple laced or buttoned vest worn alone or over a short-sleeved shirt. In the

winter, people wear long tunics with slashed sleeves, with strips of brightly colored cloth sewn into the long diamond-shaped slashes, or vests over high-collared, long-sleeved shirts. Urban folk wear low leather shoes or elaborately laced sandals, while nobles and travelers usually wear knee-high leather boots.

### The City of Aldis

Home to the royal court, the city of Aldis is a shining wonder. In keeping with the ideals of the kingdom, the metropolis contains a mixture of architectural styles from the realm's major cultures. While most of the city is built with the whitewashed brick and brightly painted marble used by the farmers of the central valleys, one section is built with the carefully carved wood used by the northern forest folk. In another district, gray stone and lath-and-plaster buildings are home to Jarzoni refugees who've settled in the city and brought their native architecture with them. There is a small district where Roamers have settled, and along Lake Vash and the Rose River, there are buildings with underwater basements for use by the sea-folk.

The city has a radial street plan, with concentric circular roads connecting its wide radial streets, which lead to the royal palace at the center of the city. Narrow gardens on either side of the streets are planted with cedar, olive, and almond trees, large rose bushes, and many flowers. These garden swaths are broken every few dozen feet by a brick path leading into one of the city's many shops or homes.



## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

The palace grounds are surrounded by a marble wall with frescoes of scenes from all over the kingdom. Unlike the well-defended temple-palace of Jarzon or the fortress tower of the Lich King of Kern, the palace grounds are spacious and inviting, and the surrounding wall has large gates typically left open. Guards trained in psychic arcana observe everyone entering the palace grounds and use their abilities to discover if anyone filled with rage or hate is attempting to enter. Instead of turning away such visitors, the guards speak to them, trying to ascertain if they are dangerous or merely upset over some legitimate grievance. In addition to helping identify potential threats, this allows people to have their concerns addressed quickly, since the guards refer people with the most serious grievances to the appropriate authority.

Inside the palace gates, large gardens and domed out-buildings surround the central edifice of the palace, a great marble structure capped by a majestic bronze dome. The smaller buildings contain the sovereign's residence, the Aldin museum and library, a small but well-tended zoo, and an open-air theater where the finest performers in the kingdom display their talents. Except for the sovereign's residence, which is only open to nobles and intimates of the royal court, the rest of the palace is accessible to visitors. Scholars come from days away to study the ancient artifacts in the museum, and foreign dignitaries often say the plays and other performances held in the royal theater are some of the finest anywhere.

The great dome of the palace's central building is three hundred feet in diameter. Beneath it, large meeting halls and judicial chambers fill the back half of the building, while the upper floors are arranged in narrow rings close to the building's circular outer wall. These rooms are normally filled with busy record keepers and bureaucrats. The front half of the building is normally left open to the public. Its walls are covered by murals of the history of Aldis and portraits of its greatest leaders. This space is also used for the large indoor festivals, masquerades, and balls forming an important part of life at the royal court.

### The Southern Coasts and the Scatterstar Archipelago

Toward the southern coasts, the land rises slightly and becomes more arid. The people living along the shore are mostly fisher folk, who also herd sheep, goats, and pigs. Their architecture is similar to that of the central valleys, and the people look much the same, except for being swarthier. Because of the appearance and culture they share with the inhabitants of the Scatterstar Archipelago, coastal folk are, inaccurately, called islanders by people in other parts of the kingdom. Fully a seventh of the inhabitants of the coasts are sea-folk.

Life on the southern coasts is less idyllic than in the central valleys. In the winter, there are harsh storms and the sea is treacherous enough that small fishing boats are periodically lost. In these stormy months, many coastal people stay indoors, weaving and dyeing cloth or carving bones and shells. In response to this life, the fisher folk have evolved a social system known as the hearth. Somewhere between a conventional family and a clan,

a hearth is a polygamous marriage, like star marriages elsewhere, but often considerably larger and with new people marrying into the hearth over time. Each hearth lives in a single rambling house.

The basic plan of these homes is four wings arranged around a central room with a large fireplace and a sturdy dining table. New wings are added when the arrival of new children or spouses requires the hearth to expand. Most hearths have between two and two dozen members. Hearth members often work together; the crews of many fishing boats are members of a single hearth. (Unlike sailors and fishers in some lands, both men and women take to the sea.) Many hearths include both herders and fishers, both to minimize tragedy—a single work accident cannot orphan their children—and so problems with either their herds or fish cannot impoverish the hearth all at once. Members of a hearth are extremely close, and although the oldest and the youngest members of a hearth marriage may be more than thirty years apart in age, the coastal people consider them all one another's spouses. Hearths sometimes include both humans and sea-folk.

These hearth traditions are maintained in the kingdom's Scatterstar Archipelago to the southwest. Named for the shining mica in their sandy beaches, the twenty-two islands range between four and fifty square miles in size and are home to almost fifteen thousand people. The islands are rocky, and their thin soil grows excellent dates, almonds, and pistachios. The smallest islands contain five or six large hearths. A fifth of the inhabitants of the islands are sea-folk.

During the winter, storms batter the islands. Lacking breakwaters or high cliffs, the islanders have no way to retreat from the sea and must continue to brave it to catch food. They have close ties to dolphins, however, and most fishing boats go out with an escort of two or three. Fishers and dolphins split the day's catch. After the dolphins herd a school of fish into waiting nets, the fishers let part of the school escape through a narrow opening. The dolphins lie in wait for the fish to emerge from the net and eat their fill. Between the large numbers of sea-folk in these communities and the aid provided by dolphins, the islanders are quite capable of surviving the trials posed by the open ocean; however, storms and sea monsters, like krakens, are still threats.

Landlubbers who visit the islands must prove themselves worthy of respect because the islanders put more stock in seamanship than almost anything else. If these visitors spend time assisting with a hearth's day-to-day chores or learn how to fish or handle a boat, they have a chance of earning the islanders' respect, if not their loyalty and affection. The Sovereign's Council assigns nobles and envoys to the islands who have some experience with seamanship or who could benefit from a dose of humility from the dour, pragmatic islanders. Those who cannot adapt are reassigned. Those who thrive often end up marrying into a hearth.

On both the islands and the southern coasts, black oilskin cloaks and long coats are the fisher folk's most immediately recognizable items of clothing. Since the weather rarely dips near freezing and swimming in shoes is more difficult,



## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

fisher folk wear sandals. Unlike the sandals worn in the central valleys, fisher folk sandals are low and can be easily kicked off if the wearer needs to swim.

The fisher folk often wrap their linen or wool trousers with narrow leather straps for ease of mobility. These trousers and thigh-length tunics, belted with rope or eel leather, are the common clothes for both men and women. In the winter, they wear long-sleeved woolen tunics or heavy woolen sweaters. In the summer, many men wear belted linen vests, while most women and some men instead wear sleeveless or short-sleeved linen tunics.

Several types of local seashells produce dark blue and bright teal dyes. In addition to selling this dye to traders, fisher folk dye their own clothing with it. Well-off people often wear blue tunics or trousers. For others, colored stripes around the collar and hem of their tunic must suffice.

### The East

The kingdom's eastern lands are some of its harshest. Monsters emerge from the Veran Marsh from time to time, and the land is rocky, the soil thin, and the climate foggy and frequently overcast. The inhabitants of the eastern plains farm hearty crops like oats and barley and raise tough, lean cattle. Few people, except soldiers assigned to patrol the border, willingly live here. To Jarzoni refugees, however, the land is much like Jarzon, so they have adopted it as their new homeland.

The eastern border of Aldis is the Veran Marsh. Beyond this magic-twisted land lies the Theocracy of Jarzon, where religious diversity is not tolerated. When new doctrines arise not approved by the Hierophant and his priests, those who believe the doctrines are proclaimed heretics and are forced to recant, or they are immolated. Most of the heretics who refuse to accept these fates escape across the Veran Marsh into Aldis. Over the past two centuries, several communities of Jarzoni refugees have established themselves in eastern Aldis. The oldest have largely assimilated into the local culture. Their communities and religion are now part of the complex tapestry of customs and beliefs in the kingdom, aided by intermarriage between the immigrants and natives.

Two recent groups of Jarzoni refugees have not yet completely assimilated. The most recent arrived fifteen years ago and is still in the process of adjusting to their new home. They live in a series of villages now known as Ata-San, meaning "sacred to Ata." *Ata* is their name for Aulora, the god of law. The other immigrants fled Jarzon some forty years ago. They founded the town Relgis, named for their prophet, who was slain by Jarzon's priests. Relgis taught them that the gods of Light speak to all people, not merely to the Hierophant and his priests. The Relgans consequently have no priests; any member of their faith can lead religious services and read from their sacred texts.

Visiting either of these refugee communities can be touchy. The immigrants are grateful to live in Aldis, but some Jarzoni traditions are difficult for the immigrants to relinquish, like women being second-class citizens, same-sex couplings being considered perverse, and the practice of arcana being forbidden to all except priests. In Ata-San

and Relgis, people also still have unwelcome memories of priests using the psychic arts to uncover heretics and dissidents. Healers are therefore the only adepts the immigrants trust, and even healers must tread carefully.

For the first decade after each community arrived, the sovereign requested soldiers and the Sovereign's Finest to give the residents time to adapt. Even now, visiting nobles and envoys avoid using arcana in these communities, except when necessary. Queen Jaellin has grown impatient with this situation, believing the two communities should adapt faster to the kingdom's ways. She has at least been encouraged by some of the changes among the Relgans. They have slowly become less fearful of the arcane arts, and while their customs do not permit their women to pursue martial or political careers, they accept women from other cultures who are soldiers or nobles.

Ata-San is another matter. There people still fear all but healing arcana, and while they have grown used to the "brazen ways" of women in Aldis and "immoral" marriages between people of the same sex, they only respect male nobles and envoys. The Sovereign's Council recently started sending more female envoys to Ata-San, in an effort to get the immigrants accustomed to dealing with women in positions of authority.

Because of their Jarzoni heritage, men and women in the region dress quite differently. Women wear long skirts or loose-flowing trousers, and most wear long dresses on formal occasions. Men wear close-fitting trousers, and most wear tights or skin-tight trousers on formal occasions. All of the clothing is tan, brown, or gray, but touches of color are incorporated into fancier outfits. Among the well-off, small ribbons, velvet, and narrow strips of brightly colored silk are sewn on clothing and accessories. Embroidery is used to liven up more modest garments.

Faced with shadowspawn, bandits, and dangerous beasts troubling their lands, most villages and towns in this region are walled. By Aldin standards, the houses of the Jarzoni exiles are dark and uninviting, built with the dark gray stone common in the area. Most buildings are almost never more than two stories tall and have thick walls and small windows to protect against cold, damp days in fall and winter, as well as possible attacks. The second story of most buildings is half-timbered lath and plaster construction, the white plaster held in place with pitch-treated wood.

All able-bodied men in the region are trained to wield arms in defense of their communities, and at least two armed men guard the wooden gateway into each village. Despite the forbidding nature of their towns and dwellings, these people know life in Aldis is better than anything they could expect back in Jarzon. When Jarzoni raiders sneak into Aldis, the residents of these towns are especially enthusiastic about taking up arms.

The most influential figure in a Purist village is usually its Keeper, or priest, nearly always a mature family man who acts as fatherly guide to his people. While they are far more open to new ideas than orthodox Purist priests, village Keepers tend to be fairly conservative by Aldin standards. Envoys are well-advised to win over the Keeper of any Purist community if they wish to establish cordial relations.

## LANDS OUTSIDE ALDIS

**A**ldis has hostile kingdoms located to the north and east but a close ally to the west. The ancient sorcerer kingdom of Kern is a threat to all free peoples, and Jarzon's self-righteous Hierophant covets Aldis's rich lands, while seeking to "purify" the souls of its people. In contrast, the Khanate of Rezea frequently works with Aldis to help repel mutual threats.

### The Veran Marsh

Aldis is a far more lush land than Jarzon, a fact that constantly sparks plots of conquest in the mind of Jarzon's Hierophant. Moreover, Purist priests consider Aldis an abomination, both because the inhabitants use arcana so freely and because Aldins permit creatures most Jarzoni call monsters to walk the streets. Because so many Jarzoni are ignorant of the realities of life in Aldis and know only horrific tales of baby-eating rhy-cats and mad adepts who feed on the souls and memories of others, most inhabitants of Jarzon would happily invade their wealthy neighbor. The primary reason no full-scale war has occurred is the Veran Marsh, which divides the two nations.

Before the Shadow Wars, this dismal fen was the heart of Veran-Tath, one of the greatest strongholds of the Sorcerer Kings. When a horde of darkfiends attacked, Veran-Tath was destroyed, and the land around brutally torn. The city's Sorcerer King used his power to divert the mighty Tath River from its banks, and after a series of terrible earthquakes, the entire city-state settled several yards downward. In the aftermath of the devastation, the Tath River spread out over the entire landscape, forming the Veran Marsh. Today this marsh is between seventy and one hundred miles wide and stretches from Basketh Bay in the south to the Ice-Binder Mountains in the north.

In addition to containing many ruins, the marsh is a shifting mass of quicksand, mud, poisonous plants, and deadly animal life. There are only four known paths through it. Three are narrow, difficult, and more suitable for small groups of brave and clever travelers than caravans or armies. The only large path through the marsh is the Great Westerly Road. Merchant caravans, refugees fleeing Jarzon, diplomats, and spies from both sides all regularly use this road. It is far too well guarded at both ends for either side to have any chance of sending an army across without the other side noticing and setting an ambush for the invaders. The marsh on either side of the road is an impassible expanse of mud and quicksand. Because of this, a small force can easily hold the road against a vast number of invaders, especially since the invaders would find neither food nor safe water in the marsh.

With the marsh between them, there is no practical way for Jarzon to invade Aldis, and Aldis has no desire to invade its resource-poor neighbor. Jarzon has a rocky and ruined coast and therefore has few ports and sailors.

As a result, Jarzon's navy is small and purely defensive. For more than a century, there has been an uneasy truce between the two nations, partly because Jarzon has few other choices. The Hierophant does send raiders and spies into Aldis and hopes that another route through the marsh will someday be discovered.

More than a century ago, an Aldin border scout did discover another large path through the marsh. Fortunately for Aldis, she found it before anyone in Jarzon. When she told Queen Fashi, the queen ordered a group of adepts to go into the marsh to remove the path. The adepts managed this, but at the cost of two of their lives. One result of the powerful sorcery that created the marsh is that the very land there reacts to the shaping arts. Although other arcana are reasonably safe, shaping causes the marshland to animate and attack the shaping adept. When Queen Fashi's adepts destroyed the path, the earth writhed like a living thing and sank deep into the marsh. Then the water rose up and attacked them.

### ARCANA IN THE VERAN MARSH

Using shaping arcana to directly affect the water, earth, plants, and even air of the Veran Marsh triggers a side effect. Roll 1d20 + the level of the adept. Consult the table for side effects. Each previous shaping arcana use in the same hour adds +2 to the roll.

If the Narrator permits, adepts can choose to limit their effective adept level when using a shaping arcanum in the marsh. This reduces the chance for side effects, but also reduces the adept's effective rank with the arcanum to the newly chosen level +3. So a 10th-level adept can choose to use shaping arcana as a 3rd-level adept to try to limit side effects.

#### ARCANA IN THE VERAN MARSH

Result	Effect
5 or less	The arcanum works normally, but the earth and water tremble slightly.
10	The arcanum works normally, but the earth and water tremble. Everyone within level x 10 feet of the adept must make a Difficulty 15 Reflex save to avoid falling prone.
15	The arcanum fails and the area within level x 10 feet of the adept is struck by an earthquake (see <b>Earth Shaping</b> ).
20	The arcanum fails and the area within level x 20 feet of the adept is struck by an earthquake.
25	The arcanum fails and the area within level x 30 feet of the adept is struck by an earthquake. The quake may seriously rearrange the terrain in the affected area.



Since that time, Aldin adepts have avoided using the shaping arts in the marsh. Several groups of priest-adepts from Jarzon, however, have attempted to create a new path through the marsh, and most have died horribly. Their arcana have only served to create more pools of quicksand, some of which can extend sandy tendrils to pull in prey.

## Jarzon

The Theocracy of Jarzon suffered more during the Shadow Wars and the Great Rebellion than Aldis. Much of the land is now barren, growing only scrub and a few hearty weeds, useless to any large animal except tough goats. Also, Jarzon contains more dangerous magical ruins than Aldis, and the theocracy is bordered on the south by the dread Shadow Barrens. As a result, this bleak land has bred a harsh and hardy people.

Because of the prevalence of darkfiends and aberrations in their land, particularly near the Shadow Barrens, the inhabitants of Jarzon dislike any creature that even vaguely resembles such monsters. To the Jarzoni imagination, rhydan, vata'sha, and the night people have such a resemblance, so they often attack them on sight, trying to capture them so that they can be handed over to Jarzon's priests, who cast them into temple fires. Even sea-folk are not entirely trusted in Jarzon, where only humans and vata'an are fully accepted.

Jarzon owes much of its survival to its religion, known as the Church of the Pure Light, or the Purist faith. This religion was born in the oppression of the Shadow Wars, nurtured by believers in secret prayer gatherings around fires in caves and basements. Martyrs of the faith died at the hands of the Sorcerer Kings' minions, while heroes of the faith led the charge to overthrow them. The church grew vastly in power and influence after the Great Rebellion and retained a mistrust, which has grown into paranoia, of anything having to do with sorcery and Shadow.

The central god of the Purist faith is Leonoth. He embodies Jarzoni ideals of hard work, perseverance, faith, and family. Maureнна, the Summer Queen, is relegated to a secondary role as Leonoth's consort, and generally the Twilight gods are considered figures of a mythic past, rather than the present. The gods of Light are their rightful successors. (Like Maureнна, women have a supporting role in Jarzoni culture, which is thoroughly patriarchal.)

The Purist temples dedicated to Leonoth are built of rough-hewn stone and have many gargoyle-strewn spires and chimneys. Inside, the temples are cavernous, often windowless, and have great roaring fires. The temples are meant to recall the church's first days, when the faithful gathered in secret and their hearth fires burned in the darkness.

The religion is deeply divided in many ways: militaristic but valuing peace, preaching love but often practicing hate. Its priests and the faithful run the gamut, from Light- to Shadow-aligned. The upper levels of the church are riddled with hypocrisy and corruption, but also have some truly good men trying to do what they fervently believe is right, although often based on ignorant views of the world beyond Jarzon's borders.



## KEY TO THE KINGDOM

Tallow smoke hung low in the small room, hazing the air. The Lich King, Jarek, leaned on the edge of the map table, ignoring the smoke and the uneasy shifting of his generals. Jarek no longer breathed, nor cared about the feelings of the living. They would do as he wished and *that* was what mattered.

"There." He pointed, black painted nail sharpened to a deadly point and dipped in venom. "Our victory. There."

Jarek's fingernail traced a path from the guardian Ice-Binder Mountains, through a narrow pass, into the Pavin Weald—and on into the heart of accursed Aldis. There was a long, shallow valley running towards the heart of the kingdom. The trees of the Weald were thinnest there, and the mountains dipped low.

Aldis was a fertile and gentle land, of gentle, weak people. The winters were soft there, the farmlands generous with their bounty, the forests full of hardwoods and rare herbs. The west opened onto the sea, giving Aldis access to lands beyond the waters, a strength they ref

defy the strength and uncanny power of the Kingdom of Kern.

They had warred with Aldis before, throwing the strength of ancient sorcery against the weak powers of the arcane arts. Jarek scowled at the memories. He had lost more than one army in battle with the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. At first, young and foolish, he had been certain pure might would overcome their enemy. Now, older and wiser, Jarek knew that guile was also a strategy of war. With a new queen on the throne of Aldis, treachery and deception might win him what brute force could not.

"My lord . . .," Jarek's favored general—the only one who dared to question him—spoke up uncertainly. The long valley had been tried before, and their enemy guarded that weakness well. Jarek could see the thoughts pass in her mind and smiled. Here was one who could be nurtured, a general who could be trained in guile and, properly managed, taught loyalty.

"Indeed. Obvious, is it not? Oft tried and oft failed." Jarek's burning red gaze shifted to the silent guest at the other end of the map table. The stranger stood, throwing back his hood to reveal the dark, elegant looks of the western seafarers. A long scar traveled across his face, the mark of a traitor. He also wore a nose ring signifying his membership in the pilot's guild. Hatred burned in his black eyes and shadowed his face.

The generals stirred, faces lit with sudden excitement. The sea passages to Aldis were protected by nature in the form of deadly shoals and treacherous currents; only trained pilots knew the secrets of passage. And here, for the first time in the history of landlocked Kern, a pilot stood in the council chambers of the last of the Sorcerer Kings.

"And here is our key to the kingdom," Jarek said softly with a dry chuckle.

The theocracy is ruled by the Hierophant. His subjects consider him holy, the anointed servant of the gods of Light and the chosen of Leonoth. The Hierophant's holiness is believed to trickle down to the priests, the only people in Jarzon permitted to study the arcane arts. The use of these arts by anyone else is considered blasphemy. Sorcery is anathema, and studying it carries the penalty of death by burning. The same fate awaits any nonpriest caught studying and using arcana. The only exceptions are foreign healers, who are tolerated so long as they do not violate any other Jarzoni laws. Within Jarzon, healing, like other arcana, is solely the province of the church.

The priests do not merely study lore, ritual, theology, and the arcane arts. Many also receive training as warriors, fighting with sword, shield, and arcana. These warrior-priests are members of the Knights of the Pure Light, the Jarzoni equivalent of the Rose Knights. Also called the Knights of Purity, the knights lead the theocracy's soldiers into battle. In addition to its military, Jarzon has an extensive network of spies and assassins, the top agents of which are priests trained to serve the Hierophant as his hidden blades and secret eyes. Many of these spies travel abroad, but most work in Jarzon as a secret police force, answerable only to the Hierophant. They watch for any hint of subversion, using their mundane and arcane arts. Traitors are considered no different from heretics and suffer the same fate. The citizens of Jarzon are ignorant of the arcane arts, regard their priests with fearful awe, and do their best *never* to attract a priest's attention.

## Kern

Northeast of Aldis, across the Ice-Binder Mountains, Kern remains the last of the ancient sorcerer kingdoms, ruled by the unliving Lich King, Jarek. Kern is a cold, inhospitable land ringed by jagged mountains, which are haunted by

shadowspawn and darkfiends. An invading force would face great peril simply trying to breach the kingdom's borders. If they managed to get in, they would find a ruin of a land inhabited by darkfiends and brutalized slaves. The Lich King, who calls himself the Grand Thaumocrat and other lofty titles, uses his sorcery to spy on the populace and sends fiendish creatures to enforce his decrees and murder any who attempt to foster dissent.

Humans work during the day, while night people work as overseers and laborers during the night. This ceaseless labor is concentrated in the huge pits of the shas crystal mines. In other lands, people use these crystals to create a host of useful devices. The Lich King uses them to power his sorcerous defenses and his many arcane experiments.

## RAIDS UPON KERN

Although Aldis has more places of power than Kern, Kern has considerably larger supplies of shas crystals than any surrounding nation. As a result, the Sovereign's Finest, Rezean horsemen, and Jarzoni priests periodically mount raids on Kernish crystal shipments, securing the valuable crystals for their own nations while denying the Lich King an important resource. During these raids, envoys also free slaves transporting the crystals. Griffons and other rhydan often help Aldin raiding parties.

On rare occasions, parties of Jarzoni priests and Aldin envoys work together on these raids. However, such cooperation is usually short lived, only arising because the power of the Lich King poses a threat to both nations. Envoys have, on occasion, been betrayed by their allies from Jarzon, once the forces of the Lich King were slain and the treasure captured.

## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

To protect himself from outsiders who would attempt to depose him and free Kern, he must have a continual supply of the crystals. As a result, much of the population of Kern toils to fulfill this need. Although the Lich King uses his hordes of zombies and skeletons to carry away rock, the crystals are too fragile to survive the clumsy efforts of these mindless beings, so humans and night people do all of the actual mining.

Jarek was one of the least of the Sorcerer Kings during the Empire of Thorns, protected from the fate of his fellows only by Kern's remote location and the natural barrier provided by the mountains. Today, he is not content to rule only his small kingdom and always seeks ways to increase his power. He therefore funds expeditions to steal valuable arcane artifacts and ancient books from other lands, as well as employing bandits and pirates. To fund these endeavors, he requires gold and gemstones, which his brutalized slaves ceaselessly rip from the earth.

Even death does not release his people from service; Jarek uses sorcery to transform the dead of Kern into unliving servants. Some scholars speculate the only reason he does not kill off his entire population and have all work done by the unliving is that controlling all of them would expend too much power and the unliving are too clumsy to perform certain tasks. Humans and night people, in contrast, can be intimidated and enticed and are capable of far greater precision in their work, especially when motivated by threats to their lives and their loved ones. A few of the Lich King's mortal subjects take a twisted delight in serving him. The finest warriors among them

are inducted into the Knights of the Skull, a dread order that leads Jarek's armies.

Although large-scale attacks from Kern are rare, the Lich King continually needs more slaves for his mines, so he regularly sends raiders into Rezea, Aldis, and Jarzon to capture them or he buys them from bandits in the Ice-Binder Mountains. Kernish raiding parties typically consist of an overseer, who is a Shadow-tainted human or night person and often a Knight of the Skull, leading a force of shadowspawn and lesser darkfiends. Several dozen zombies typically accompany this force to do heavy lifting. Raiding parties usually capture between ten and thirty youths and young adults. When slavers attack a village, they kill anyone who resists and leave the rest to mourn their losses.

### Rezea

The Khanate of Rezea lies to the northwest of Aldis. This land consists of a vast prairie, with rivers that are mostly seasonal and with few natural resources. The inhabitants are clans of nomadic herders and hunters, who owe allegiance to the Great Khana, a priestess they revere but who possesses little political power. The Rezeans worship the Primordials, and the Khana is the high priestess of their faith. They consider the "young" gods of Light to be the gods of soft, overcivilized people, and they revile the exarchs of Shadow as enemies of the Primordials. Rezeans honor rhydan, viewing them as the Twilight gods' companions. They respect the arcane arts, particularly



## — CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF ALDEA —

animism and meditation, practiced by the witches of the clans, but forbid sorcery in any form.

The population of Rezea is mostly human, with some vata clan members. Rezeans treat visiting sea-folk with respect, but they are coolly polite to night people from Aldis. They consider all other shadowspawn potential threats and allow none to join their clans.

Each clan has between fifty and five hundred members, who spend much of their lives on horseback. The Rezeans are the greatest riders in the known world. At their yearly gathering at midsummer, the Khana blesses herds of their horses. They train the best for riding and use the others for leather and food. Astride their horses, the Rezeans hunt large herds of elk and bison that roam the great prairie. The Rezeans sell some of their horses to traders from Aldis, in return for fine cloth, medicines, well-made tools, and crystons. Rezean horses are strong and swift, some of the finest mounts in the world, and members of the Sovereign's Finest hope to be lucky enough to earn one as a reward for their service.

Although the horses they breed are amazing creatures, the finest scouts, hunters, and warriors of Rezea ride the rhy-horses who have allied with them. Since rhy-horses are exceptionally long-lived, horse and rider share a bond that lasts a lifetime. Often if either rhy-horse or bond-rider dies, the other soon sickens and dies or leads especially dangerous raids against bandits, shadowspawn, or darkfiends, until death finally comes.

Some Rezean fighters, rangers, and scouts earn extra money for their clans by selling their services as mercenaries. Merchants who wish to set up mines in the Ice-Binder Mountains sometimes hire these Rezeans to protect their camps from ogres and bandits. Other mercenaries guard caravans or work as bodyguards for wealthy travelers. Rezean warriors also occasionally work with the Sovereign's Finest to strike into Kern to free slaves or destroy dangerous artifacts.

### The Roamers

Named for their ceaseless wandering, Roamers are a people with no homeland. They can be found all over Aldis, among the clans of Rezea, and in Jarzon. A few even venture into the outskirts of Kern, but the threat of enslavement is too great for most of them to dare visiting that dread land.

Roamers once had a land of their own, a prosperous nation of mosaic-covered domes, fragrant perfumes, and long nights of dance, storytelling, and prophecy. Faenaria, as it was called then, was more wracked in the Shadow Wars than any other land. Today it is the Shadow Barrens. Roamers are the descendants of the few Faenari who escaped the devastation of their homeland. They are now a nomadic people, living in brightly painted wagons and staying in one place for no more than a week or two, often only for a few days.

Roamers make their living as fortunetellers, entertainers, traders, and tinkers, repairing simple household goods. If a pot or knife is beyond repair, the Roamers are ready to sell a new one. They are renowned for their skill at music; for their Cards of the Royal Road, which they say

they use to read a person's soul and see the future; and for their intricate carvings. Many villagers in Aldis purchase Roamer pendants made of polished bone and wood carved into knot patterns. These "lucky knots" are supposed to protect the wearer from curses and misfortune. Many believe in their properties because the Roamers wear them themselves and seem to have good luck.

Slender and a bit shorter than the peoples of Aldis, Roamers have straight black hair and light brown skin. They are a somewhat secretive people. They have their own language and their own religion and do not share these with non-Roamers, except for those who wish to join their wandering life. Sometimes youths from small villages do just that; there are stories of adolescents running away to join the Roamers and other stories of Roamers kidnapping children to raise as their own. The tales of kidnapping are untrue, but if young people are both sincere in their desire to join the Roamers and willing to help with the hard work of living on the road, they are welcome. The Roamers always return youths who cannot adapt to their way of life to their homes.

Roamers also have a reputation as thieves. In Jarzon, priests harass them, and the more corrupt and greedy priests occasionally accuse them of stealing so they can confiscate their wares. Although stories of their thefts are widespread, Roamers rarely steal, except for the occasional petty theft from people who are deeply inhospitable to them.

Each Roamer family has a large wagon, home to parents and their children. They paint their wagons with colorful scenes, often of places and events from lost Faenaria. At the front of each wagon, the driver sits on a wide bench covered by a wooden awning and directs the two or four horses that pull the wagon. Behind this seat, the wagon is enclosed, with either two or four windows and a door in the side. Roamers consider their wagons' interiors private and only allow friends and relatives inside. The interiors are largely open, with trade goods and other storage near the back and beds in the front. Along the walls hang all manner of necessary items, from cook pots to bows and slings for hunting and fending off bandits.

In every land, Roamers are known for their vivid clothing, which is often colored with a scarlet dye they make themselves and never sell. Anyone who wears Roamer red, as it is called, is therefore either a Roamer or a friend to the Roamer people. Roamers purchase cloth dyed in colors they cannot duplicate, and shrewd traders hold back their brightest cloth to sell to them.

Except for during festivals, when the women go barefoot or wear narrow-strapped sandals, most Roamers wear calf-high leather boots, well suited to their life on the road. Women wear blouses with long puffy sleeves, close-fitting vests of heavily embroidered cloth with long ribbons sewn to the shoulders, and wide skirts printed in bright patterns. They tie their long hair with ribbons and wrap the ribbons on their vests around their sleeves in spiral patterns, tied at the cuffs. Men wear trousers of leather or heavy cloth, normally scarlet or black. In hot weather, a man's only other clothing is a loosely laced vest. In cooler weather, men wear a vest over a shirt with either a solid color or covered in vertical stripes.





# CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO

**B**lue Rose is about heroes, your heroes, the main characters in the stories you tell. This chapter contains everything you need to create heroes for your *Blue Rose* adventures, from basic abilities to a hero's background and role. The chapter concludes with the details of your hero's life, particularly calling, personality, and inner nature, both light and dark, the forces driving heroes to action.

## ABILITIES

**E**veryone has certain basic abilities: how strong, fast, smart, and clever they are. These *ability scores* influence almost everything your character does. Stronger characters can lift greater weights, more dexterous characters have better balance, tougher characters can soak up more damage, and so forth.

Characters have six abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are called *physical abilities*, whereas Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are *mental abilities*. Each above-average ability score provides a bonus on certain die rolls, while below average abilities apply a penalty to some die rolls.

### Choosing Ability Scores

Ability scores have a numerical value, expressed as a penalty or bonus, from -5 (abysmal or disabled) to +5 or more (practically superhuman), with an average of +0. When ability scores are noted in this book, the ability's name is followed by the score. For example, Strength +2, Dexterity -1, and so forth.

You have 6 points to divide among your hero's abilities, which all start at +0. This means you can have +1 in all

six abilities; +3 in one ability, +0 in two others, and +1 in the remaining three; or any combination adding up to 6. The only limitation is you cannot put more than 5 points in a single ability score. (Scores can go higher than +5 as a result of racial modifiers, level advancement, and other factors.)

If you choose to have a *negative* value in an ability, you gain bonus points to assign to your other ability scores. For example, if you give your hero Strength -1, you have 1 bonus point to assign to another ability (such as Intelligence). If your hero has Strength -2, you have 2 bonus points, and so on. Heroes cannot have abilities lower than -5, and abilities lower than -2 aren't recommended unless the hero is seriously deficient in an ability. Even with bonus points, you cannot put more than 5 points in a single score.

Your ability score is added to or subtracted from die rolls when you do something related to that ability. For example, your Strength score affects the amount of melee damage you do, your Intelligence score affects your Knowledge skills, and so forth. Sometimes your score is used to calculate another value, such as when you use your Dexterity score to help determine how good you are at avoiding harm with your reflexes (your Reflex saving throw).

## The Abilities

Given here are descriptions of the six abilities and how they affect your character.

### Strength (Str)

Strength measures sheer muscle power and the ability to apply it. Your Strength score applies to the following:

- Melee attack rolls.
- Damage dealt by melee and thrown weapon attacks.
- Climb, Jump, and Swim checks.
- Strength checks for breaking through doors, smashing things, and other deeds of strength when a specific skill doesn't apply.

Your Strength score also determines how much you can lift and similar physical actions.

### Dexterity (Dex)

Dexterity is a measure of coordination, agility, and manual dexterity. It's particularly useful for heroes relying more on agility than sheer strength and toughness. Your Dexterity score applies to the following:

- Ranged attack rolls.
- Reflex saving throws, for avoiding danger with coordination and quick reflexes.
- Initiative checks.
- Acrobatics, Escape Artist, Ride, Sleight of Hand, and Sneak checks.
- Dexterity checks for tasks requiring agility and coordination when a specific skill doesn't apply.

### Constitution (Con)

Constitution is a measure of endurance, health, and overall physical toughness. Constitution is important because it affects your hero's ability to resist damage. Your Constitution score applies to the following:

- Toughness saving throws, for resisting damage.
- Fortitude saving throws, for resisting disease, poison, fatigue, and other effects involving your hero's health.
- Constitution checks for overcoming the hazardous effects of the environment and recovering from damage.

### Intelligence (Int)

Intelligence is a measure of reasoning ability and learning. Your Intelligence score applies to the following:

- Your number of known skills at 1st level.
- Craft, Disable Device, Knowledge, and Search checks.
- Intelligence-based arcana checks.
- Intelligence checks to solve problems using sheer brainpower when a specific skill doesn't apply.

### Wisdom (Wis)

While Intelligence measures reasoning, Wisdom is a measure of awareness, common sense, intuition, and strength of will. Your Wisdom score applies to the following:

## MENTAL ABILITIES

Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are more difficult to quantify than the physical abilities of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. They also have a more dramatic affect on your character's personality and behavior.

### Intelligence

A character with a high Intelligence score tends to be knowledgeable, clever, and prone to using big words. A character with a high Intelligence but a low Wisdom may be smart but absent-minded or easily distracted. A character with a high Intelligence and low Charisma may be knowledgeable but something of a know-it-all or lacking in social skills. Characters with high Intelligence and low Wisdom and Charisma tend to be social misfits. A character with a low Intelligence may be slow, poorly educated, or just not very cerebral.

### Wisdom

High Wisdom characters are aware, sensible, and confident in themselves and their abilities. High Wisdom, low Intelligence characters are simple-minded but capable of surprising insights. High Wisdom, low Charisma characters are quietly confident and tend to work behind the scenes. Low Wisdom characters are indecisive, absent-minded, impulsive, or just gullible.

### Charisma

Characters with high Charisma are outgoing, forceful, and often attractive. High Charisma, low Intelligence characters either manage to seem to know what they're talking about, or they attract people who find them endearing and want to help them. Characters with high Charisma and low Wisdom aren't very good at choosing their friends wisely. Low Charisma characters may be cold, aloof, rude, awkward, or simply plain and nondescript.

- Will saving throws, for resisting attempts to influence you, whether by mundane or arcane means.
- Concentration, Heal, Notice, Sense Motive, and Survival checks.
- Wisdom-based arcana checks.
- Wisdom checks to resolve matters of intuition when a specific skill doesn't apply.

### Charisma (Cha)

Charisma is a measure of persuasiveness, force of personality, leadership ability, and attractiveness (not necessarily physical). Your Charisma score applies to the following:

- Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Handle Animal, Intimidate, and Perform checks.
- Charisma-based arcana checks.
- Charisma checks to use force of personality when a specific skill doesn't apply.

## Altering Ability Scores

Over the course of play, your hero's ability scores may change for the following reasons:

- Some effects—including disease, poison, and arcana—temporarily raise or lower ability scores.
- Characters improve their ability scores permanently as they increase in level.

Whenever an ability score changes, all attributes associated with the ability change as well. For example, if you increase your Dexterity, your Dexterity-based skills and Reflex saving throw modifier also increase. Likewise, if your Dexterity bonus decreases, your Dexterity-based skills and Reflex saving throws suffer.

There is no limit to how high an ability score can be raised, but there is a limit on how low it can drop. If one of your hero's ability scores drops below -5 for any reason, the score is said to be *debilitated*. Mark this on your character sheet, rather than recording a score lower than -5; your hero effectively has no score in the debilitated ability. Also, your hero suffers serious effects, depending on the ability. Debilitated Strength or Dexterity means the hero is helpless and unable to move. Debilitated Constitution means the hero is dying (and suffers a -5 on checks to avoid death). Debilitated Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma means the hero is unconscious and incapable of waking until the score is restored to at least -5.

## Nonexistent Ability Scores

Some creatures in *Blue Rose* actually *lack* a basic ability (having no score in it at all, which is not the same as having a debilitated ability). The effect of lacking an ability is as follows:

- **Strength:** Any creature capable of physically manipulating other objects has a Strength score. A creature with no Strength score is incapable of exerting any physical force, either because it has no physical form (like an incorporeal ghost) or simply

can't move (like a tree). The creature automatically fails Strength-based checks.

- **Dexterity:** Any creature capable of movement has a Dexterity score. A creature with no Dexterity cannot move (like most plants) or take physical actions and automatically fails Dexterity-based checks.
- **Constitution:** Any living creature has a Constitution score. A creature with no Constitution has no physical body (like a ghost) or no living metabolism (like an animated statue or other construct). It is immune to effects requiring Fortitude saving throws unless they work on inanimate objects. The creature always fails Constitution-based checks. Creatures with no Constitution do not recover from damage (since they can't make recovery checks). They must be repaired in some fashion. The same is true of objects.
- **Intelligence:** Any creature that can think, learn, or remember has an Intelligence score. A creature with no Intelligence is an automaton, operating on instinct or programmed instructions. It is immune to all mental effects and automatically fails Intelligence-based checks. Note that animals usually have Intelligence scores below 0, but they *do* have an Intelligence score.
- **Wisdom:** Any creature aware of its environment has a Wisdom score. Anything with no Wisdom also has no Charisma. It is an inanimate object, not a creature. Objects are immune to mind-influencing effects and automatically fail Wisdom-based checks.
- **Charisma:** Any creature capable of interacting with others has a Charisma score. Creatures without Charisma cannot interact, are immune to interaction checks, and automatically fail Charisma-based checks.

Inanimate objects have no abilities other than their *hardness* (see **Sunder**, page 166). Animate but nonliving beings, such as the unliving, have Strength and Dexterity. They might have Wisdom and Charisma, if they are aware of their environment and capable of interaction. They might have Intelligence, if they are capable of thought, but they never have Constitution, since they are not alive. (See **Chapter IX: Bestiary** for more information.)

## BACKGROUNDS

In the Kingdom of the Blue Rose, folk of many different backgrounds meet and mingle. Aldins born and raised there share their nation with immigrants seeking the same peace and prosperity. On the far side of the Veran Marsh lies the severe Theocracy of Jarzon. Along the southern coasts and among the islands of the Scatterstar Archipelago live hearty islanders, allies and kin of the sea-folk. On the wild plains of Rezea live the horse clans, while in the depths of the Pavin Weald dwell the forest folk. Across the Ice-Binder Mountains, the people of Kern live in bondage to the Lich King, while everywhere across the land Roamers go where they will in their bright wagons, gossip and mischief following in their wake. All of these and more make up the peoples of Aldea, and you choose which of them your hero calls kin.

## Choosing a Background

After choosing your hero's abilities, you need to select a background. This choice determines where your hero comes from and, perhaps, whether your hero is even human at all!

- **Aldins:** The people of the central valleys of Aldis are the most diverse, accepting, and well-educated in all the known lands.
- **Forest Folk:** The rough forest folk live on the borders of the great Pavin Weald and in the shadows of the Ice-Binder Mountains, often in with packs of wolf companions.



## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

- **Islanders:** Inhabitants of the Scatterstar Archipelago and the southern coasts, islanders earn their livelihood from the sea.
- **Jarzoni:** Ruled by a strict theocracy, the Jarzoni are a dour and law-abiding people, with a mistrust of the arcane and a knack for hard work.
- **Kerns:** The last of the sorcerer kingdoms, Kern and its people are ruled by the Lich King. The Kern are used to life alongside the unliving.
- **Rezeans:** Rezeans are the greatest riders and horse breeders in the world.
- **Roamers:** Wandering in their brightly painted wagons, Roamers are a rootless, free-spirited folk, known for their love of life, dance, and sometimes mischief.

In addition to diverse human cultures, Aldea is home to other children of the land.

- **Night People:** The night people are creations of the Sorcerer Kings. Unlike other shadowspawn, some night people have come to live peacefully in Aldis; although, there are still non-night people who do not trust them. Night people are brutish in strength and appearance, but many are actually gentle souls.
- **Rhydan:** Several breeds of intelligent animals live in Aldea, possessed of arcane gifts. Players may play dolphins, rhy-cats, rhy-horses, and rhy-wolves.
- **Sea-Folk:** The androgynous sea-folk are born to two worlds: land and water, allies of human islanders and friends of dolphins. Their true home is among the waves, but they can spend extended periods of time on land.
- **Vata:** The vata have an arcane heritage dating back to the mythic age. The vata'an are pale and fey, while the vata'sha are dark-skinned and light-haired, often associated with the reign of the Sorcerer Kings, when they first appeared. Both sorts of vata have arcane talents, making them alternately respected and feared in different lands.

## Background Features

Each background comes with certain features reflecting the hero's early experiences, upbringing, and innate abilities.

- **Traits:** Backgrounds provide certain traits. This is particularly true for nonhumans, who often have abilities quite different from humans. Most background traits are advantages, although some are restrictions and others are neither advantageous nor restrictive, simply a part of the background. When your hero's background traits include ability modifiers, the modifiers are in addition to the 6 points you spent on your hero's ability scores. If one of these ability modifiers results in a negative ability score, you do not gain bonus points as a result. Ability modifiers from backgrounds can raise an ability score above +5, but cannot lower it below -5.

One trait every background has is size. There are nine size categories, from smallest to largest: Fine, Diminutive, Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Huge, Gargantuan, and Colossal. Most heroes are Medium. Size affects some checks (see **Chapter III: Skills** and **Chapter VII: Playing the Game**).

- **Favored Skills:** Some backgrounds provide favored skills. These are always considered favored skills for characters of that background. Your hero is not required to be trained in any of these skills, but if you choose them as known skills, you gain them at the favored skill rank, regardless of your role. (See **Chapter III: Skills** for more information.)
- **Favored Feats:** Some backgrounds provide favored feats. Characters from that background have access to these feats as favored feats regardless of role and may choose them as normal, so long as they meet the feats' prerequisites. (See **Chapter IV: Feats** for more information.)

## Humans

A human hero belongs to one of several diverse cultures. Favored skills and feats are associated with each culture.

**Traits:** All humans have the following traits, regardless of their specific backgrounds:

- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 30 ft.
- *Bonus skill:* One bonus known skill at 1st level (this does not have to be a favored skill).
- *Bonus feat:* One bonus feat at 1st level (chosen from any of the hero's favored feats).

## Aldins

The people of Aldis's central valleys are exceptionally cosmopolitan in worldview. They tend to have dark, often wavy or curly, hair and brown eyes. Hazel, green, gray, and golden eyes are common among those with innate arcane talent. These are generalizations, since the population of the Aldin heartland is so diverse that someone born and raised there could have almost any appearance.

**Favored Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility), Language.

**Favored Feats:** Fascinate, Jack of All Trades.

## Forest Folk

The forest folk of northern Aldis learned how to survive in the Pavin Weald, and the surrounding lands, from their allies, the rhy-wolves. The forest folk have keen senses and a way with animals. A talent for animism arcana is also common among them. They tend to have blond or reddish hair and fair complexions. Their men are often heavily bearded and have abundant body hair. Brown, blue, and golden eyes are the most common, with the latter being seen as a sign of "wolf-kin," usually having the Animism Talent.

**Favored Skills:** Handle Animal, Notice, Survival.  
**Favored Feats:** Animism Talent.



## Islanders

Living on the southern shores and islands of Aldis, islanders often learn to swim before they can walk and are adept at avoiding hazards and making do with the resources available to them. They tend to be a bit stockier and darker skinned than other Aldins, tanned and often weathered by a life on the water. Blue, green, or blue-green eyes are common, and some islanders have bluish, greenish, or golden tints to their hair or skin from a trace of sea-folk heritage.

**Favored Skills:** Knowledge (geography), Survival, Swim.  
**Favored Feats:** Evasion, Improvised Tools.

## Jarzoni

Citizens or refugees of a strict theocracy, Jarzoni quickly learn to control their outward emotions, so as not to slight Purist priests, who teach their doctrine to every Jarzoni child. Jarzoni are light skinned and sometimes freckled. Brown, blond, and red hair are common, and red-haired Jarzoni often possess arcane talents (making it a mark of pride or shame, depending on one's perspective). Brown, blue, green, and gray eyes are common.

Albinos are slightly more common in Jarzon than elsewhere, perhaps tied to some distant vata ancestry. Such pure white coloration is considered auspicious by Purist priests. Since albinos usually have arcane talent, they are often inducted into the priesthood.

**Favored Skills:** Bluff, Knowledge (religion), Sense Motive.  
**Favored Feats:** Fascinate, Favored Foe (heretics or shadowspawn).

## Kerns

The humans of Kern quickly learn the necessities for survival under the cruel yoke of the Lich King. They understand the value of subtlety and cooperation, and those who survive past childhood are toughened by their hard life.

Kerns descend from a hardy mountain stock, so they tend to be tough and wiry. Dark hair and eyes are common, as is pale skin, since many Kerns live and work at night and rarely see the sun even during the day, given the almost continuous pall hanging over their homeland.

**Favored Skills:** Bluff, Sneak, Survival.  
**Favored Feats:** Diehard, Surprise Attack.

## Rezeans

The proud people of the plains are born to the saddle and learn to live off the land that is their birthright. Their tempers are as infamous as their skill at arms is famous. Their hawklike profiles add to their fierce reputation. Most Rezeans are deeply bronzed by their outdoor life, and they tend to have straight black hair, worn long and occasionally braided. They typically have dark eyes, although some mixing with other peoples has led to lighter eyes and hair.

**Favored Skills:** Handle Animal, Ride, Survival.  
**Favored Feats:** Rage, Weapon Focus.

## Roamers

Roamers love music, dance, and the open road. They are expert traders and can convince many out of their coin. The gift of visions and second sight is common among them.

Roamers tend to be slighter than Aldins, with similar olive skin but curlier hair. Black or chestnut hair are most common, along with black or brown eyes, although hazel and green eyes are known, particularly among Roamers with the Visionary Talent, or the Sight, as they call it.

**Favored Skills:** Bluff, Perform, Sneak.

**Favored Feats:** Evasion, Surprise Attack, Visionary Talent.

## Night People

Night people are shadowspawn, creations of the Sorcerer Kings. They were made, like all shadowspawn, as a servitor race. Their creators made them brutishly strong, but not overly bright. They worked primarily as laborers and soldiers for their masters, knowing no other life.

During the Great Rebellion, the majority of night people were slain or driven out of newly liberated lands. Since then, night people are found only in Kern, where they are subjects of the Lich King, or less often in Aldis, where some night people sought asylum. Night people are accepted in Aldin society—a test of the kingdom's legendary tolerance. Night people nonetheless suffer some prejudice because of their origins.

The Sorcerer Kings cared little about aesthetics when they made the night people, who are like monsters from a children's tale. They are taller than humans, with stocky, muscular builds; sloped foreheads; and beady, yellow eyes. Their skin is ashen gray, and their hair is black and coarse. Small tusks jut from their lower jaw, and they prefer a diet of meat. (Rumors of them eating the flesh of intelligent creatures are not true. That is a taste night people do not share with other shadowspawn.)

**Traits:** All night people have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* +1 Strength, –1 Intelligence, –1 Charisma. Night people are strong, but the Sorcerer Kings did not breed them for intelligence or personality.
- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 30 ft.
- *Carrying capacity:* Night people are built for heavy lifting. They have double the normal carrying capacity for a creature of their size and Strength.
- *Darkvision:* Night people can see up to 60 feet in absolute darkness, although this vision is only in shades of black and white.
- *Light sensitivity:* Bright light (equal to full daylight) dazes night people for one round when they are first exposed to it (they defend normally, but can take no actions for that round).

**Favored Skills:** Intimidate, Survival.

**Favored Feats:** Cleave, Great Cleave, Rage.

## Rhydan

Rhydan are animals gifted with intelligence and arcane abilities. While intelligent, rhydan are still creatures of the wild rather than civilization. They have little need of cities, wealth, or agriculture, for example. Rhydan are close to nature and its cycles. Some of them are quite fond of humans, others more wary, but in general, rhydan are cautious in their dealings with the “two-legged races” (including vata, although the sea-folk are close allies of dolphins).

**Traits:** All rhydan have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* Rhydan have only 4 points to distribute among their abilities, rather than the 6 of other heroes.
- *Low-light vision:* Rhydan can see twice as far in low-light conditions as humans can.
- *Psychic:* Rhydan are naturally gifted psychics. All rhydan have the Psychic Talent feat for free, regardless of role. Among other things, this means rhydan can use the Mind Touch, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana untrained.
- *Limited manipulation:* Rhydan have no hands or opposable thumbs, so they cannot easily manipulate objects. They are generally limited to the simple manipulations they can perform with their mouths and forelimbs. This means rhydan suffer a –20 on checks involving manual dexterity, such as Craft, Disable Device, and Sleight of Hand. The Narrator may simply rule many tasks involving those skills impossible for rhydan (meaning they automatically fail when attempting them). This penalty does *not* apply to rhydan using the Manipulate Object arcanum.
- *Cannot speak:* Rhydan cannot speak in humanoid tongues, although they are capable of communicating through Mind Touch. Rhydan are limited to the normal vocalizations of their animal type. This may limit their ability to use interaction skills in some situations.
- *No armor or weapon training:* Rhydan are considered trained in their innate attacks, but have no training in the use of weapons or armor of any kind, since such things are not natural for them. Rhydan cannot wield weapons without the use of the Manipulate Object arcanum. They can wear armor, but any armor must be custom-made for them, increasing its cost by +10 (although rhy-horse armor is larger, horse barding is also more common, so the cost modifier is the same). Rhydan without the proper Armor Training feats suffer the armor's check penalty to their attack rolls and all Strength- and Dexterity-based checks. Rhydan cannot acquire feats relating to weapons they cannot use. This includes the Psychic Weapon feat.
- *No wealth:* Rhydan have a starting Wealth score of +0. Rhydan have a limited ability to carry money, and many items made for humanoids are of no use to them. Rhydan operating in human society accumulate Wealth normally from advancing in level.

**Favored Skills:** Notice, Survival.



## Dolphins

Dolphins are sea-dwelling mammals, outwardly similar to fish, but warm-blooded and bearing live young. Dolphins love frolicking and singing. Their natural enemies are sharks, and they often come to the aid of human sailors in need.

Dolphins have a long history of friendship and cooperation with sea-folk and islanders. Both people consider dolphins their peers and allies; harming or killing a dolphin is just as serious a crime as attacking a member of their own communities. Sea-folk in particular often live together with pods of dolphins and have bonded companions among them.

**Traits:** All dolphins have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* +3 Dexterity, +1 Constitution.
- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* Dolphins have a swim speed of 80 ft. They have no land speed (at best they can flop and crawl 5 ft. per round as a full action).
- *Skills:* Dolphins have a +8 bonus on Swim checks and a +4 bonus on Notice checks. Dolphins can always take 10 on a Swim check, even if rushed or threatened.
- *Attacks:* Dolphins attack with a forceful head-butt for +2 nonlethal damage (plus their Strength score).
- *Blindsight:* Dolphins can “see” by emitting high-pitched sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, allowing them to locate things within 120 feet.
- *Hold breath:* Dolphins can hold their breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds times their Constitution score, before they risk drowning.

**Favored Skills:** Perform (dance), Swim.

**Favored Feats:** Favored Foe (sharks), Stunning Attack.

## Rhy-cats

Rhy-cats are the size of leopards, with coloring and temperaments similar to those of Siamese cats. Rhy-cats are the most common rhydan in Aldis, and the most closely associated with humanoids; although, rhy-cats have a reputation as both aloof and dangerous when encountered in the wild. Like all rhydan, rhy-cats sometimes choose humanoids as bonded companions, using the Rhy-bonded feat.

**Traits:** All rhy-cats have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* +1 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +1 Constitution.
- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 40 ft.
- *Skills:* Rhy-cats have a +8 bonus on Climb and Jump checks and a +4 bonus on Sneak checks. Rhy-cats can always take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.
- *Attacks:* Rhy-cats attack with their claws, causing +0 lethal damage (plus their Strength score). They can also bite for +2 lethal damage (plus their Strength score).
- *Improved grab:* If a rhy-cat hits with its bite attack, it can attempt a grapple as a free action. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake with its rear claws for +2 lethal damage (plus Strength) as a free action.
- *Scent:* Rhy-cats have a developed sense of smell, allowing them to detect the approach of enemies,

sniff out hidden foes, and track by scent. They can identify familiar odors like humans do familiar sights. A rhy-cat can detect other creatures within 30 feet by scent with a Notice check (Difficulty 10). Distance is doubled if the rhy-cat is downwind and halved upwind. With a move action, he can determine the direction of the scent. Within 5 feet of the source, he can pinpoint the exact location. Tracking using scent is usually a Difficulty 10 Survival check for a fresh trail, +2 per hour since the trail was made.

**Favored Skills:** Climb, Sneak.

**Favored Feats:** Crippling Strike, Improved Balance, Improved Climb, Rage, Surprise Attack.

## Rhy-horses

Masters of the plains, rhy-horses look much like normal horses and have the same ranges of coloration, although pale and dappled hides and blue eyes are more common for them than mundane horses.

Rhy-horses are fiercely independent; they allow no one except a bonded companion to ride them. On rare occasions they will tolerate a trusted friend who is not their companion as a rider. They consider any other attempt to break them as mounts a form of slavery. Nations like Aldis and Rezea agree, but rhy-horses are sometimes enslaved in Kern. Jarzoni have little respect for the rights of rhy-horses but find breaking them more trouble than it's worth, so they rarely even try.

Rhy-horses are most common on the plains of Rezea. They are long-time allies of the Rezean people, who revere the “lords of the plains” and help protect them from harm. Being chosen as a rhy-horse's bonded companion is considered a great honor among Rezeans, who treat even foreigners with rhy-horse companions like visiting nobles, so long as their companions seem happy and well treated.

**Traits:** All rhy-horses have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* +2 Strength, +1 Dexterity, +2 Constitution.
- *Size:* Large. Rhy-horses have a –1 penalty on their attack rolls and Defense. They also have double the carrying capacity of a Medium creature of their Strength and a –4 penalty on Sneak checks.
- *Speed:* 40 ft.
- *Skills:* Rhy-horses have a +4 bonus on Notice checks.
- *Feats:* Rhy-horses have the Endurance feat for free.
- *Attacks:* Rhy-horses attack with their hooves, causing +1 lethal damage (plus their Strength score).
- *Scent:* Rhy-horses have a developed sense of smell, allowing them to detect the approach of enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by scent. They can identify familiar odors like humans do familiar sights. A rhy-horse can detect other creatures within 30 feet by scent with a Notice check (Difficulty 10). Distance is doubled if the rhy-horse is downwind and halved upwind. With a move action, she can determine the direction of the scent. Within 5 feet of the source, she can pinpoint the exact location. Tracking using scent is usually a Difficulty 10 Survival check for a fresh trail, +2 per hour since the trail was made.

**Favored Feats:** Diehard, Finishing Blow.

## Rhy-wolves

The most reclusive of the rhydan, rhy-wolves are most commonly found in the Pavin Weald. They live in tight-knit packs, and a friend of theirs is a friend for life, so they do not bond easily. They can be found in the company of forest folk, and some packs have adopted whole forest folk communities and live together with them. Rhy-wolves are eminently practical, sometimes ruthless, but also proud and honorable.

**Traits:** All rhy-wolves have the following traits:

- *Abilities:* +1 Strength, +2 Dexterity, +2 Constitution.
- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 50 ft.
- *Skills:* Rhy-wolves have a +4 bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.
- *Feats:* Rhy-wolves have the Track feat for free.
- *Attacks:* Rhy-wolves attack by biting, causing +2 lethal damage (plus their Strength score).
- *Howl:* By letting out a howl as a move action, a rhy-wolf gets a +4 bonus to Intimidate checks that round.
- *Scent:* Rhy-wolves have a developed sense of smell, allowing them to detect the approach of enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by scent. They can identify familiar odors like humans do familiar sights. A rhy-wolf can detect other creatures within 30 feet by scent with a Notice check (Difficulty 10). Distance is doubled if the rhy-wolf is downwind and halved upwind. With a move action, he can determine the direction of the scent. Within 5 feet of the source, he can pinpoint the exact location. Tracking using scent is usually a Difficulty 10 Survival check for a fresh trail, +2 per hour since the trail was made.
- *Trip:* A rhy-wolf who hits with his bite attack can make an immediate attempt to trip his opponent as a free action. The opponent does not get an opportunity to trip the rhy-wolf.

**Favored Feats:** Crippling Strike, Rage, Surprise Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

## Sea-Folk

Sea-folk are at home on land and in the sea. They can interbreed with humans, and their children are either human or sea-folk. Humans with sea-folk ancestry, which describes many islanders, sometimes have sea-folk children.

Looking like androgynous, sleek-bodied humans, sea-folk have a greenish or bluish tint to their skin. Hair color is typically green, blue, golden blond, or occasionally black or silver, while eye color is green, blue, gray, gold, or black.

**Traits:** All sea-folk have the following traits:

- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 30 ft. Sea-folk swim twice as fast as humans (full speed as a full action and half speed as a move action).
- *Skills:* Sea-folk have a +8 bonus on Swim checks. They can always take 10 on Swim checks, even if rushed or threatened.



## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

- *Aquatic empathy:* Sea-folk have the benefits of the Wild Empathy feat (page 106), but only with aquatic creatures.
- *Low-light vision:* Sea-folk can see twice as far in low-light conditions (including underwater) as a human can.
- *Hold breath:* Sea-folk can hold their breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds times their Constitution score, before they risk drowning.
- *Water dependency:* Sea-folk dehydrate more easily than land-dwellers. They must be immersed in water once per day or consume twice as much water as a normal human. A sea-folk with no immersion and limited to normal human water consumption or less suffers from dehydration (see **Starvation and Dehydration**, page 169).

**Favored Skills:** Acrobatics, Survival, Swim.

### Vata

A people touched by the arcane, vata were more common in the days of the Old Kingdom, when their forebears, the vatazin, still lived. Vata were originally the offspring of vatazin and human parents, and they survived the vatazin genocide by hiding among their human kin. Over the centuries, the long-lived vata have become fewer, but traces of their blood are found in all human lands, especially Aldis. Unsuspecting humans sometimes have a vata child. For most communities, this is considered a blessing, but in Jarzon and Kern, vata children are problematic.

The Jarzoni accept vata'an children, but Purist priests often treat them harshly if they use their arcane gifts and are not preparing for the priesthood. Vata'sha are simply abused, if not immolated, for they are considered tainted by Shadow. In Kern, vata'an are killed outright, while vata'sha are taken to be raised in the Lich King's service. Some Kernish parents manage to hide their vata children from the Lich King's servants, but rarely for long. Vata are sometimes smuggled out of Kern, with the help of Aldin envoys, but this is a dangerous and difficult undertaking.

**Traits:** All vata, whether vata'an or vata'sha, have the following traits:

- *Size:* Medium.
- *Speed:* 30 ft.
- *Arcane gifts:* All vata receive one arcane talent feat for free (including use of its unskilled arcana). This means all vata have untrained use of the Psychic Shield and Second Sight arcana.
- *Rapid healing:* Vata have a +2 bonus on all checks to recover from damage.
- *Human background:* Since vata live among humans, choose an appropriate human background and apply its favored skills and feats.

#### Vata'an

Vata'an, or "true vata," have silvery white hair and violet, pale blue, or pale green eyes. They tend to have slim builds and a couple of inches of height over the average human. Vata'an, both male and female, tend to wear their straight hair long, at least down to their shoulders. They typically dress in the styles of their homeland.

**Traits:** All vata'an have the following trait:

- *Low-light vision:* Vata'an can see twice as far in low-light conditions as humans.

#### Vata'sha

Vata'sha, or "dark vata," appeared as a result of the Sorcerer Kings' experiments on vata'an. They look much like vata'an, except their skin is night-black. Some people have taken this as evidence that the vata'sha are tainted by Shadow. Despite their sorcerous origin, there is no innate corruption within them.

**Traits:** All vata'sha have the following traits:

- *Darkvision:* Vata'sha can see up to 60 feet in absolute darkness, although this vision is only in shades of black and white.
- *Light sensitivity:* Bright light (equal to full daylight) dazes vata'sha for one round when they are first exposed to it (they defend normally, but can take no actions for that round).

## ROLES

**H**eroes in the world of *Blue Rose* are of many different types and from many walks of life. Your hero's *role* is the part he or she plays in the game. A role is like a character's part in a story; stories have different sorts of heroes, from brave and skilled warriors to cunning diplomats and nobles to wise wielders of the arcane arts. The role you choose for your hero affects most of the other choices you make, including your hero's skills and feats. Still, roles in *Blue Rose* are broad enough to allow plenty of freedom of choice in creating your own unique hero. There are three roles in *Blue Rose*, in addition to mixed-role heroes:

- **Adept:** Someone with a keen intellect and usually a talent for the arcane arts.
- **Expert:** Someone experienced in a wide range of skills. Experts range from cunning rogues who live

by their wits to shrewd merchants to the nobles who keep the kingdom of Aldis running smoothly.

- **Warrior:** Someone with unmatched skill at arms and training in many forms of combat.
- **Mixed-Role Hero:** Heroes start out with only one role at 1st level; however, as your hero advances in level, you may choose levels in other roles, creating a mixed-role hero. This mixing of roles gives a hero a wider range of abilities at the cost of slowing advancement in any one role. For example, a 1st-level warrior attaining 2nd level might choose to take the 1st level in adept instead of a second level in warrior. The hero is now a 1st-level warrior/1st-level adept. The character's combat abilities are less than those of a 2nd-level warrior, but the character now



has the abilities of a 1st-level adept. Guidelines for creating mixed-role heroes can be found at the end of this chapter.

## Level-Dependent Benefits

Certain benefits are based on a hero's level, regardless of role. The **Level-Dependent Benefits** table summarizes these benefits. See each role description for the benefits specific to each.

- **Favored Skill Rank:** This lists the rank a hero has in any known favored skill. The rank is equal to the hero's level + 3. This is also the hero's rank in any known arcana. See **Chapter III: Skills** and **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.
- **Normal Skill Rank:** This lists the rank the hero has in any known skill that is not a favored skill. The rank is equal to the hero's level + 3 and then divided by 2 (round down). See **Chapter III: Skills** for details.
- **Ability Increase:** Upon gaining any level divisible by six (6th, 12th, and 18th), heroes increase an ability score by 1. You choose which ability you want to improve, and the improvement is permanent. You can increase the same ability more than once or a different one each time. You can increase an ability above +5 in this way.
- **Conviction:** Heroes start out with 3 points of Conviction at 1st level and gain a point of Conviction every two levels thereafter (3rd, 5th, and so on). The number indicated at each level is a hero's maximum number of Conviction points at that level. See **Conviction**, page 73, for details.
- **Feats:** In addition to the benefits in the table, your hero gets a certain number of starting feats at 1st level (determined by role), plus an additional feat for each level beyond 1st. You choose feats from among the favored feats of your hero's role.

## Role Descriptions

The following sections describe the three roles in detail. Each description provides an overall view of the role, the role's abilities in game terms, and examples of different types of heroes who fit that particular role.

The game abilities are organized as follows:

- **Abilities:** What ability scores are most important to the role and why. While you can certainly choose your hero's abilities as you wish, you might want to keep these important abilities in mind, if you want your hero to be most effective in the chosen role.
- **Favored Skills:** The favored skills for heroes of that role. Each role has one or more standard favored skills, in addition to a certain number you get to choose.
- **Known Skills:** The number of known skills you choose for a hero of that role at 1st level. You apply your hero's Intelligence modifier to this number,

### LEVEL-DEPENDENT BENEFITS

Level	Favored Skill Rank	Normal Skill Rank	Ability Increase	Conviction
1st	4	2	—	3
2nd	5	2	—	3
3rd	6	3	—	4
4th	7	3	—	4
5th	8	4	—	5
6th	9	4	1st	5
7th	10	5	—	6
8th	11	5	—	6
9th	12	6	—	7
10th	13	6	—	7
11th	14	7	—	8
12th	15	7	2nd	8
13th	16	8	—	9
14th	17	8	—	9
15th	18	9	—	10
16th	19	9	—	10
17th	20	10	—	11
18th	21	10	3rd	11
19th	22	11	—	12
20th	23	11	—	12

but it cannot be lower than 1, no matter how low a hero's Intelligence score might be.

- **Favored Feats:** The types of feats available to choose from when a hero of that role acquires new feats.
- **Starting Feats:** The feats a hero starts with at 1st level. Each role allows you to choose some or all of these feats. Your choices must be from among the role's favored feats.

Each role has a table that indicates the role's other game abilities, all based on level:

- **Attack Bonus:** A role's base attack bonus measures skill in all forms of combat. It is used as the basis for a hero's attack rolls in fights, with the addition of the appropriate ability score, usually Strength or Dexterity.
- **Defense Bonus:** A role's defense bonus measures the ability to avoid attacks. It is used as the basis for a hero's Defense score, which is the Difficulty to strike that hero in combat. It is usually modified by the hero's Dexterity.
- **Save Bonuses:** Heroes have four save bonuses, measuring the ability to avoid certain kinds of harm when they make saving throws. The saving throw types are Toughness, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.
- **Reputation:** Every hero has a reputation score. See **Reputation**, page 74, for details.

## ADEPT

**I**ntellectual, scholar, mystic, the adept specializes in the sciences and arts of the mind. Adepts are known and respected throughout the world for their knowledge and insight. They're particularly known for their skill in the arcane arts. Just as well known, but discussed only in whispers, are adepts who study the dark art of sorcery and risk losing themselves to Shadow in their quest for power.

Adepts fill many roles in the world of *Blue Rose*. Their arcane powers range from subtle visions and insight into the psyche to overt manipulations of the physical world through the shaping arts. Healers, adepts with the power to cure injuries and disease, are respected nearly everywhere. Healer graduates of Aldis's Royal College are allowed free passage virtually anywhere, so long as they observe the laws of the land.

### Game Abilities

Adepts have the following game abilities:

**Abilities:** Mental abilities are more important to adepts than physical ones. In particular, adepts tend to require strong Wisdom and Charisma scores, since many of the arcane arts depend on will and force of personality. Intelligence is nearly as important, given the adept's emphasis on scholarship. This is particularly true of shapers, whose arts depend on a

keen mind. Adepts also find a healthy Constitution helpful, especially if they plan to exercise their arts in the field rather than in the comfort of a college or hermitage.

**Favored Skills:** Choose any 4, plus Craft (any) and Knowledge (any).

**Known Skills:** Choose 2 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1 known skill).

**Favored Feats:** Arcane, General.

**Starting Feats:** Choose 4.

### Adept Paths

The following sets of starting skills and feats are examples of different types of adepts. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0.)

#### Animist

Animists specialize in the Animism Talent and its arcana. Animists are often drawn to wild places and creatures. They feel a kinship with all living things. Some animists are fierce hunters, while others eat only what is freely given from nature, typically fruits and grains harvested without killing the plants, and no animal flesh.

**Starting Skills:** Handle Animal, Survival.

**Starting Feats:** Animism Talent, Arcane Training (Beast Reading, Enhance Self), Familiar, Wild Empathy.

#### Arcanist

An arcanist is a generalist adept, practicing several arcane arts rather than focusing on just one. Arcanists have a broad range of talents at their command, but tend not to develop them as much as specialists do.

**Starting Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (arcana).

**Starting Feats:** Arcane Training (Mind Touch, Psychic Shield), Arcane Training (Manipulate Object, Move Object), Psychic Talent, Shaping Talent.

#### Contemplative

A contemplative focuses on the meditative arts, looking inward to master mind over body.

Contemplatives often find places among spirit dancers, and some take levels of expert as well as adept. Others live isolated from the outside world as they seek greater understanding from within.

### THE ADEPT

Level	Attack	Defense	Toughness	Fortitude	Reflex	Will	Reputation
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+2	+1
2nd	+1	+3	+1	+0	+0	+3	+1
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+1	+1	+3	+1
4th	+2	+3	+2	+1	+1	+4	+2
5th	+2	+4	+2	+1	+1	+4	+2
6th	+3	+4	+3	+2	+2	+5	+2
7th	+3	+5	+3	+2	+2	+5	+2
8th	+4	+5	+4	+2	+2	+6	+3
9th	+4	+5	+4	+3	+3	+6	+3
10th	+5	+6	+5	+3	+3	+7	+3
11th	+5	+6	+5	+3	+3	+7	+3
12th	+6	+7	+6	+4	+4	+8	+4
13th	+6	+7	+6	+4	+4	+8	+4
14th	+7	+7	+7	+4	+4	+9	+4
15th	+7	+8	+7	+5	+5	+9	+4
16th	+8	+8	+8	+5	+5	+10	+5
17th	+8	+9	+8	+5	+5	+10	+5
18th	+9	+9	+9	+6	+6	+11	+5
19th	+9	+9	+9	+6	+6	+11	+5
20th	+10	+10	+10	+6	+6	+12	+6

## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

*Starting Skills:* Concentration, Heal.

*Starting Feats:* Arcane Training (Body Control, Psychic Shield), Arcane Training (Enhance Self, Enhance Senses), Meditative Talent, Self-Healing.

### Healer

Among the most respected adepts, healers study the secrets of life and how to restore health to the sick and injured. There are few places in Aldea where a healer is not welcome, even among those who normally mistrust the arcane arts. Although it's not often discussed, there is a dark side to the healing arts; some of the most corrupt sorcery involves the power to twist and bend life to suit the sorcerer's will.

*Starting Skills:* Concentration, Heal.

*Starting Feats:* Arcane Training (Body Control, Cure), Arcane Training (Mind Touch, Psychic Shield), Healing Talent, Psychic Talent.

### Psychic

Psychic adepts plumb the depths of the psychic arts, the hidden powers of the mind and soul. Theirs are among the most subtle and complex of arcana, but also some of the most dangerous and tempting. Psychics facilitate communication across Aldis and often serve as envoys of the sovereign, but other nations, particularly Jarzon, mistrust them, never knowing what insights a psychic might have.

*Starting Skills:* Concentration, Sense Motive.

*Starting Feats:* Arcane Training (Mind Touch, Psychic Shield), Arcane Training (Mind Reading, Illusion), Iron Will, Psychic Talent.

### Shaper

Shapers master the arcane arts affecting the physical world, including the primal elements of nature. They are the crafter adepts, the makers and builders. Just as they can create, so too can shapers destroy.

*Starting Skills:* Concentration, Craft (any).

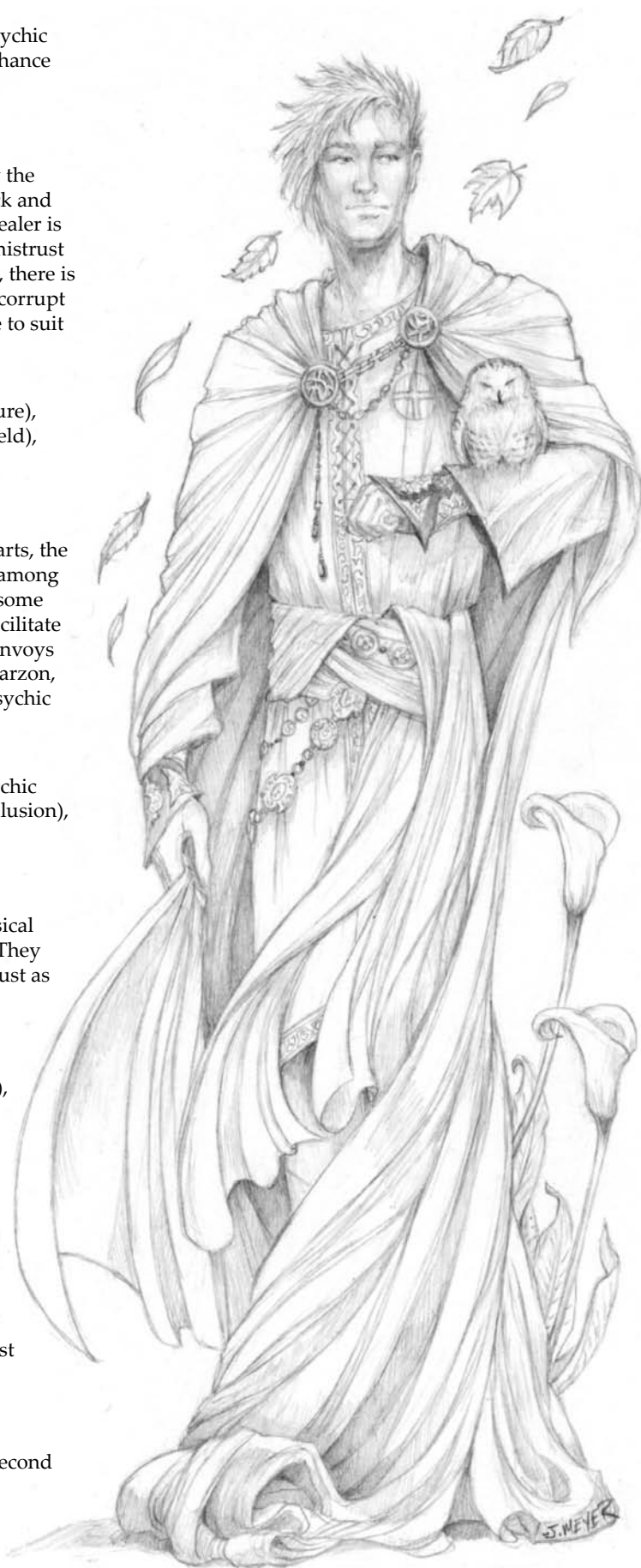
*Starting Feats:* Arcane Focus (shaping), Arcane Training (Manipulate Object, Move Object), Arcane Training (choose two of Earth Shaping, Fire Shaping, Plant Shaping, Water Shaping, or Wind Shaping), Shaping Talent.

### Seer

Adepts specializing in the visionary arts have special insights and greater awareness. From Roamer fortunetellers to the wise seers of Aldis's royal court to the wild-eyed prophets of the Purist faith, seers can shape the future as much as they witness it.

*Starting Skills:* Notice, Sense Motive.

*Starting Feats:* Arcane Training (Psychic Shield, Second Sight), Arcane Training (Scrying, Visions), Fortune's Favor, Visionary Talent.



## EXPERT

The lands of Aldea are bound together by complex social ties. The job of creating, maintaining, and occasionally exploiting these ties belongs to the expert. Experts range from well-schooled nobles and regional administrators to traveling bards and storytellers, from merchants with an eye for profit to cunning thieves with an eye for an easy mark. Some experts choose to focus on the ability to handle any social situation, while others emphasize physical skills allowing them to avoid unwanted entanglements, including with the law. Many of the Sovereign's Finest are experts.

Adventuring experts tend to combine a measure of physical and social skill. They have to be able to endure long journeys yet be ready to negotiate with various parties when they reach the journey's end. Experts essentially handle everything adepts and warriors do not.

### Game Abilities

Experts have the following game abilities:

**Abilities:** Agility is the name of the game for experts, both physical agility (represented by Dexterity) and social agility (represented by Charisma), with a bit of mental agility (represented by Intelligence) thrown in for good measure. Nimble experts are

often trained in skills like Acrobatics and Ride, while the personable and charming ones focus on skills like Bluff and Diplomacy. Wisdom is useful to experts in avoiding danger, from traps to deception, and keen Intelligence can help an expert go far (and pick up a few extra useful skills).

**Saving Throws:** All experts use the Toughness save shown in the table, but they vary in their Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves. Choose two of these three to be good saves and one to be normal, consulting the appropriate column in the table. For example, your expert's Fortitude save might be normal, while her Reflex and Will saves are good. At 1st level, her base Fortitude save would be +0, while her base Reflex and Will saves would be +2. Another option is to choose one good save and two normal saves to get a +1 bonus to Defense.

**Favored Skills:** Choose any 12, plus Craft (any).

**Known Skills:** Choose 6 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1 known skill).

**Favored Feats:** Expert, General.

**Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), and choose 3 others.

### Expert Paths

The following sets of starting skills and feats are examples of different types of experts. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0.)

#### Bard

Bards are keepers of lore through song and story. They work as traveling entertainers, and some rural folk, particularly Rezeans and the forest folk of the Pavin Weald, hold to the Old Kingdom traditions affording bards the right of safe passage and hospitality. It's considered bad luck among them to harm a bard. Bards are typically skilled in navigating social customs, and they often acquire feats to enhance their performance skills.

**Qualities:** Good Saves (Reflex and Will).

**Starting Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (history), Perform (stringed instruments), Sense Motive.

**Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), Fascinate (Perform), Sensitive, Taunt.

#### THE EXPERT

Level	Attack	Defense	Toughness	Good Save	Normal Save	Reputation
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+1
2nd	+1	+2	+1	+3	+0	+1
3rd	+2	+3	+2	+3	+1	+1
4th	+3	+3	+3	+4	+1	+2
5th	+3	+4	+3	+4	+1	+2
6th	+4	+4	+4	+5	+2	+2
7th	+5	+5	+5	+5	+2	+2
8th	+6	+5	+6	+6	+2	+3
9th	+6	+6	+6	+6	+3	+3
10th	+7	+6	+7	+7	+3	+3
11th	+8	+7	+8	+7	+3	+3
12th	+9	+7	+9	+8	+4	+4
13th	+9	+8	+9	+8	+4	+4
14th	+10	+8	+10	+9	+4	+4
15th	+11	+9	+11	+9	+5	+4
16th	+12	+9	+12	+10	+5	+5
17th	+12	+10	+12	+10	+5	+5
18th	+13	+10	+13	+11	+6	+5
19th	+14	+11	+14	+11	+6	+5
20th	+15	+11	+15	+12	+6	+6



## Noble

Nobles range from the chosen nobility administering the provinces of Aldis to the clan chiefs of Rezea to islander hearth-heads to the ecclesiastical lords of Jarzon to the Lich King's loyal governors. Some nobles are worthy of the name, with the best interests of their people at heart. Others are corrupted, either by greed or the touch of Shadow. Nobles navigate the often-dangerous waters of society with greater skill than anyone.

*Qualities:* Good Saves (Reflex and Will).

*Starting Skills:* Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (nobility), Notice, Sense Motive, Ride.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (light), Favors, Inspire (competence), Inspire (courage).

## Scout

Although the scouts of the Sovereign's Finest are the most famed, scouts are found in many lands. They're known for their combination of wilderness lore and social skills, making them excellent emissaries. Scouts also blaze new trails, help establish treaties and alliances, and spy on enemies, gathering valuable information. Aldin scouts often have some talent for psychic arcana, something other nations find disconcerting.

*Qualities:* Good Saves (Fortitude and Reflex).

*Starting Skills:* Notice, Ride, Search, Sense Motive, Sneak, Survival.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (light), Track, Wild Empathy, plus either Arcanum (Mind Touch) or Arcanum (Second Sight).

## Spirit Dancer

Spirit dancers follow an ancient and noble tradition rooted in the meditative arts. In the Old Kingdom, spirit dancers were renowned for their artistry and mastery over the body. Their academies were widespread, and students came from every land to study under their masters. Spirit dancers were persecuted during the rule of the Sorcerer Kings, driving their tradition underground. It survived hidden in folk dances and harvest celebrations and was part of the Great Rebellion. In the time since, the spirit dancer tradition has slowly grown again in Aldis.

*Qualities:* Good Save (Reflex), +1 Defense.

*Starting Skills:* Acrobatics, Concentration, Escape Artist, Jump, Perform (dance), Sneak.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (light), Arcanum (Battle Dance), Arcanum (Body Control), Improved Strike.

## Thief

For as long as there have been things of value, there have been people willing to do anything to acquire them. Petty thieves are found everywhere in the world, more so in the great cities. Those cities are also home to master thieves, who have raised theft to an art form. Some of these daring rogues enjoy secret admiration in some circles, as they evade authorities and carry out their cunning crimes.

*Qualities:* Good Save (Reflex), +1 Defense.

*Starting Skills:* Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Search, Sleight of Hand, Sneak.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (light), Canny Defense, Surprise Attack, Trapfinding.



## WARRIOR

Flashing blades, clashing shields, and the roar of combat are the life of the warrior. Throughout the lands are brave men and women willing to fight, kill, and die in the name of a cause. For some it is the safety of their homeland and their loved ones. For others it is religious zeal, gold, or the simple joy of battle. Warriors include trained and disciplined soldiers, heroic knights, grizzled hunters, savage mercenaries, and daring swashbucklers. Although they don't command the mysterious powers of adepts or the influence of experts, warriors have courage and skill at arms, and for them, it's enough.

Warriors include the Sovereign's Guard and Rose Knights of Aldis, woodsmen who venture into the wilds of the Pavin Weald and the Veran Marsh, the fierce riders of Rezea, and the grim legions of Jarzon.

### Game Abilities

Warriors have the following game abilities:

**Abilities:** Warriors prize physical abilities over mental ones.

Strength is important in skill at arms and striking a powerful blow. Dexterity allows warriors to evade attacks and gives them accuracy with their bows and other ranged weapons. Constitution may be warriors' most important quality, granting them the endurance to sustain long marches and to fight on when others fall due to injury or fatigue.

**Favored Skills:** Choose any 6, plus Craft (any).

**Known Skills:** Choose 2 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1 known skill).

**Favored Feats:** General, Martial.

**Starting Feats:** Armor Training (all), Weapon Training, and choose 2 others.

### Warrior Paths

The following sets of starting skills and feats are examples of different types of warriors. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0.)

#### Clan Warrior

Brave and fierce, most clan warriors come from the plains of Rezea. Although the Old Kingdom coined the term *barbarian* to refer to these and other less civilized peoples, their traditions are ancient and their ways honorable. Other warriors who follow this path are found among islanders, in Kern, and in the Pavin Weald—anywhere on the edges of civilization.

**Starting Skills:** Intimidate, Survival.

**Starting Feats:** Armor Training (all), Great Toughness, Rage, Weapon Training.

#### Crusader

The zeal of the Church of Pure Light has given rise to a new type of warrior, the crusader, devoted to the cause of righteousness and cleansing the world of Shadow. Many young Jarzoni dream of becoming crusaders, and some are true to their oaths and ideals. Other crusaders are narrow-minded zealots, using their faith as an excuse for violence.

**Starting Skills:** Knowledge (religion), Intimidate.

**Starting Feats:** Armor Training (all), Favored Foe (darkfiend, shadowspawn, or unliving), Smite Foe, Weapon Training.



## PLAYING THE GUARD OR ROSE KNIGHTS

A group of *Blue Rose* heroes could make up part of a small company of the Sovereign's Guard. The Narrator can portray the other members of the company, usually between twelve and twenty-five people. For players who want exciting military adventures focused on fighting bandits and monsters and performing critical rescue work, this option is ideal. The only potential difficulty is if the heroes start at 1st level; they will be, at best, junior officers under the company's commander. In this sort of game, players must be willing to accept having a Narrator character as their leader, or the Narrator could start the heroes out at a slightly higher level (say 3rd or 4th).

For players wanting a knightly game, the heroes can be members of the Rose Knights, who are the military champions of Aldis, just as the Sovereign's Finest are the kingdom's diplomats, couriers, and troubleshooters. The Rose Knights provide a heroic knight archetype ideally suited to romantic fantasy. If not all the players in a group want to play knights, the few knights could be on assignment with the Sovereign's Finest, or they could begin as nonknights but aspire to the knighthood, providing a useful character goal.

### Knight

The highest order of warriors in Aldea are knights, heavily armored and usually mounted. They form the elite forces of any army. Knighthood has a long association with nobility, but many famous knights rose from the ranks of the common folk. Some of the famed knightly orders include the Knights of the Blue Rose in Aldis, the Knights of the Pure Light in Jarzon, and the dreaded Knights of the Skull, elite warriors of the Lich King, some of them unliving.

*Starting Skills:* Diplomacy, Ride.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (all), Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (swords), Weapon Training.

### Ranger

Unlike heavily armored knights, rangers travel lightly, favoring stealth and speed. They are skilled in woodcraft and hunting, both for food and in times of war. Many rangers earn their living as guides and hunters, while others are attached to armies as forward observers and elite fighters. More than most warriors, rangers favor archery. A stealthy sniper in the depths of the woods can be a fearsome foe.

*Starting Skills:* Sneak, Survival.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (all), Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Training.

### Soldier

By far the most common warriors are soldiers, from the rank and file to the officers of great armies. Soldiers may be volunteers, conscripts, or even mercenaries with no allegiance to anyone other than their current employer.

*Starting Skills:* Notice, Ride.

*Starting Feats:* Armor Training (all), Weapon Focus (spear or another appropriate weapon), Weapon Specialization (same weapon as Weapon Focus), Weapon Training.

## THE WARRIOR

Level	Attack	Defense	Toughness	Fortitude	Reflex	Will	Reputation
1st	+1	+3	+1	+2	+0	+0	+0
2nd	+2	+3	+2	+3	+0	+0	+0
3rd	+3	+4	+3	+3	+1	+1	+1
4th	+4	+4	+4	+4	+1	+1	+1
5th	+5	+5	+5	+4	+1	+1	+1
6th	+6	+5	+6	+5	+2	+2	+1
7th	+7	+6	+7	+5	+2	+2	+2
8th	+8	+6	+8	+6	+2	+2	+2
9th	+9	+7	+9	+6	+3	+3	+2
10th	+10	+7	+10	+7	+3	+3	+2
11th	+11	+8	+11	+7	+3	+3	+3
12th	+12	+8	+12	+8	+4	+4	+3
13th	+13	+9	+13	+8	+4	+4	+3
14th	+14	+9	+14	+9	+4	+4	+3
15th	+15	+10	+15	+9	+5	+5	+4
16th	+16	+10	+16	+10	+5	+5	+4
17th	+17	+11	+17	+10	+5	+5	+4
18th	+18	+11	+18	+11	+6	+6	+4
19th	+19	+12	+19	+11	+6	+6	+5
20th	+20	+12	+20	+12	+6	+6	+5

## Level Advancement

Heroes improve in experience and power by advancing in levels. This represents the progress of a hero's career during a long series, from novice to seasoned expert. As heroes advance in level, they gain additional bonuses and access to more skills and feats, improving and expanding their abilities. After 1st level, heroes also get the opportunity to begin mixing and matching roles to further expand their options and abilities.

The Narrator will tell you when your hero advances in level. When this happens, you'll do the following:

- Decide whether to add a level to your hero's existing role (or one of your hero's existing roles, for mixed-role heroes) or to add a level in a new role. See the next section, **Mixed-Role Heroes**, for details on this.
- Look at the **Level-Dependent Benefits** table, page 61, and the level table for your hero's role. Note any increases to attack bonus, defense bonus, saving throws, skill ranks, and reputation.
- Pick a new feat for your hero from among the favored feats for his or her role.
- If your hero's new level is divisible by six (6th, 12th, and 18th), increase one of your hero's ability scores by 1.

## Mixed-Role Heroes

Heroes may acquire new roles as they progress in level, thus becoming mixed-role heroes. The abilities from a hero's different roles combine to determine the hero's

overall abilities. A mixed-role hero has versatility at the expense of focus.

As a general rule, the abilities of a mixed-role hero are the sum of the abilities of each of the hero's roles.

## Level

*Total level* is a character's total number of levels in all roles. For example, a hero who is a 2nd-level warrior and 1st-level adept has a total level of 3rd. Total level is used to determine a hero's number of Conviction points and when ability score increases occur.

*Role level* is a hero's level in a particular role. For a hero whose levels are all in the same role, total level and role level are the same thing.

## Attack Bonus

Add the attack bonuses for each role to get the hero's base attack bonus.

## Defense Bonus

The hero's defense bonus equals the defense bonus for the hero's first role plus the defense bonus for each additional role minus 2. For example, a 1st-level adept (Defense +2) who adds a level of warrior (Defense +3) would get an additional +1 to Defense, not +3.

## Saving Throws

Add the save bonuses for each role together.

## Reputation

Add the reputation bonuses for each role together.

### FIRST STEPS

Svel was hungry and that's why he was there, standing in the rain and waiting. This time of year it rained a lot, and he'd been wet a lot. And hungry a lot. He wasn't the only one waiting; there were others, some very young, some older.

Svel's attention snapped back to the wide wooden gate as it creaked open, and silence fell among the little crowd gathered in front of the spirit dancer hall. Stepping out into the mud, an old man smiled beneficently at them and said, "So, the first day of spring has brought you all to dance?"

He looked them over, rich and poor, young and old, and there was something in his gaze that made Svel's nervousness evaporate. Poor and orphaned he might be, but no one in that place would mock him for it.

"Candidates only, if you please," the old man said and dragged the gate wider as they filed in.

This was only a regional hall, small in size and quiet in ambition. Inside was a complex of low buildings, eaves dripping rain, and a shallow porch crowded with students. Svel sighed, flushing. Not only would he have to take some mysterious test, but he'd have to do it under the watchful eyes of the entire hall.

In the courtyard was a collection of stumps set into the ground. Svel stared blankly at them. It wasn't long before the stumps' purpose became clear. The old man hopped nimbly up onto the first stump, smiling cheerfully.

"Here for the dance? Perhaps drawn by fame? Fear? Simple hunger? Perhaps a more complex hunger than you know." The old man seemed to be looking right at Svel. "Well, then dance," the old man said, taking a step to the next stump, a quick spin and a hop to the third and fourth, and then he was dancing, his feet barely touching the stumps. He spun and swayed gracefully despite his age, surefooted despite the rain.

Svel watched as others tried the dance. None made it past the seventh step. He realized, watching, it wasn't the number of steps that mattered; it was how you took them. Some of the candidates who'd made it all the way to the seventh step were turned away, while others who'd not gone as far were accepted. Standing there in the drizzle, Svel didn't know what the dance master was looking for and realized, if he couldn't predict the master's mind, he'd best pay attention to his own steps.

Svel sighed, stepped onto the first stump, and then hopped to the next. He immediately realized there was a rhythm to the steps, and he was out of rhythm. He struggled to find it but was at the wrong angle for the fourth and had to twist mid-air to reach it. He could feel his balance sliding away and desperately leapt for the fifth. He spun again and found the sixth, then kept right on spinning, off the stump

his breath. The spirit dance was there; all he had to do was feel it, and follow it.

He looked up into the old spirit dancer's eyes. They were warm with amusement and welcome and he held out a hand to help Svel up. "You might want to get out of those wet clothes," the old man said, "and get yourself some soup—apprentice."



## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

### Skills

If you add a level in a new role for your hero, you may be able to learn additional skills that role favors.

First, compare your current list of favored skills to the new role's number of favored skills. If the new role's number is greater, you may add one new favored skill to your list. Each time you gain a level in the new role, you can choose another skill favored by the new role and make it into a favored skill, until you reach the new role's total of favored skills. For example, a warrior who acquires a level as an expert gets to add one favored skill (since the expert has twelve and the warrior has six). Each time the hero gains an expert level, the player can add another favored skill, to the expert's total of twelve favored skills.

If you already know a skill and it becomes a favored skill, its rank improves accordingly. So if the previous warrior had Diplomacy as a skill, then made it a favored skill upon becoming an expert, his Diplomacy rank would increase to the favored skill level.

Second, compare your new role's number of known skills at 1st-level to the number of known skills at 1st level from the role or roles you already have.

- If the new role grants the same or fewer starting skills, you can add one skill to your known skills.
- If the new role grants more starting skills than your best previous role, you can add two skills to your list of known skills.

You do this only when you gain your 1st level in a new role.

### Feats

A mixed-role hero gains one feat per level like everyone else. The role acquired with that level determines the feat list the player chooses from. For example, if you add a level of adept to your hero, you choose the hero's feat for that level from the adept's list of favored feats.

### Ability Increases

A mixed-role hero gains ability score increases based on total level, regardless of individual role levels.

### Arcana

Mixed-role heroes use their adept level for arcana effects.

## CHARACTERISTICS

**T**his section helps you round out your hero. Here you'll pick your hero's name, age, and other details and decide whether your hero is aligned with Light, Twilight, or Shadow. You'll choose a calling for your hero, as well as Light and Shadow natures. This section also explains how heroes can go that extra mile when they need to pull out all the stops in order to succeed, using extra effort and the strength of their Conviction.

### Details

A lot of details go into making your hero more than just a collection of numbers, things like name, gender, age, appearance, and so forth help to define who he or she is. Take a moment, if you haven't already, to consider the following things about your character.

#### Name

What is your character's name? You can give your hero any name you like, based on a real-world name, one from fiction, or a name entirely of your own creation. Many people in the world of *Blue Rose* have only one name; surnames are only common among noble families where tracing lineage is important. The various character names in this book provide examples for creating names for your own characters.

#### Gender

Is your hero male or female? Masculine or feminine, or somewhere in between? Vata are a somewhat androgynous race, while sea-folk are so androgynous that their genders are often unclear. There's no requirement to

play a character of the same gender as you. In fact, you may find it interesting to play a hero of a different gender, to experience a little of what life is like from another perspective. Generally speaking, men and women are equals in Aldea. They share the same opportunities and challenges.

Is your hero transgendered? There are transgendered characters of every race. A transgendered hero might seek a means of living as a different gender. The Flesh Shaping arcanum offers one possibility, but it is sorcery. Is that a price your hero is willing to pay?

#### Age

How old is your character? Heroes tend to range from their teens to middle age, but some heroes are older, depending on a hero's background, possibly much older.

Consider the effects of age on the hero. A teenager on her first adventure away from home isn't likely to have the same views as a mature adult entering the queen's service. A hero's age may influence the choice of certain attributes. Older characters are likely to have lower physical ability scores, for example, while younger characters may have fewer Craft and Knowledge skills (having had less time to train in such skills).

#### Appearance

What does your hero look like? Consider things like the character's race, sex, and other factors in appearance. Is the character short or tall? What about hair and eye color? Does the hero have any distinguishing marks or unique features?

## CHARISMA VS. APPEARANCE

Although Charisma can be a measure of attractiveness, it isn't necessarily a reflection of a character's physical appearance. Charisma is much more about personality, affability, and similar traits, rather than looks. A high Charisma hero might be physically attractive, but could also be fairly plain looking, but with a forceful and magnetic personality. Likewise, a low or average Charisma character might be good-looking, even striking, but have a bland or even unpleasant personality. You're free to make up the details as best suits your character in the game, with the Narrator's help and guidance.

Give some thought to your hero's style of dress. Various suggestions can be found in this book about what various people in Aldea wear, ranging from the uniforms of the Sovereign's Finest to the traditional garb of Rezean riders. Consider what is distinctive about your hero's appearance.

## Personality

How would you describe your hero's personality? While heroes tend to share a desire to use their powers for good and uphold the law, they show a diverse range of attitudes. One hero may be dedicated to the ideals of truth, justice, and equality, while another is willing to break the rules in order to ensure things get done. Some heroes are forthright and cheerful while others are grim and unrelenting. Consider your hero's attitudes and personality traits, particularly in light of the hero's Light and Shadow Natures.

## Romance

Just as you're not required to play your own gender in *Blue Rose*, your hero doesn't have to share your sexual orientation,

either. Particularly in Aldis, *caria daunen* (gay) and *cepia luath* (straight) people are considered equal members of society, and many people are bisexual, moving between the two roles. In Jarzon, with the theocracy's focus on procreation, *caria daunen* are considered deviants, excluded from "proper" society. This is a source of tension between the two lands.

How does your hero feel about romantic relationships? Some people long for a deep and meaningful relationship with the right person, while others are only interested in romantic flings with no serious commitment. Some may be open to polygamy, the possibility of multiple committed partners (like hearths among islanders). Those who have suffered the loss or betrayal of a romantic partner in the past tend to be cautious before jumping into another relationship, while true love sometimes strikes when you least expect it. Consider how your hero feels about matters of romance, since it's such an important theme in *Blue Rose*.

## Calling

Everyone has a *calling*, a goal or motivation in life. A calling is more overarching than specific adventure goals. Common adventure goals are vanquishing a foe, discovering a long-lost artifact, finding the perfect gift for one's beloved, safeguarding the queen's entourage, and so forth. A calling has to do with less concrete but larger things, like achieving enlightenment, protecting the innocent, mastering the arts of love, or securing power. Callings drive heroes even when they're striving for their more concrete goals. Sometimes their callings are foremost in their minds. Other times their callings are quiet voices within, reminding them of their ultimate goals. Most heroes take a lifetime to realize their callings, while tragic figures forsake their true callings or achieve them in some twisted way.

There are as many ways to respond to a calling as there are people called to it. For example, two individuals might be called to temporal



## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

power. One might be generous and merciful, seeking to rule for the benefit of others, while the other is cruel and hungry for power. A hero's alignment is a primary indicator of how he approaches his calling. The calling is the goal, while Light and Shadow natures represent two paths toward it, and alignment is the path the individual chooses. Heroes gain Conviction points by pursuing their callings. (See the following sections, **Alignment and Natures** and **Conviction**, for more information.)

Many feel drawn toward their callings by outside forces: loved ones, elders in their communities, the sovereign, a spirit in the woods, the voice of a god. Some, in contrast, call themselves, either through exceptional self-understanding or amazing hubris. Whatever its source, a calling is a primary motivating force.

In the Cards of the Royal Road, the Roamers identify what they consider the twenty-two primary callings in life. Each is associated with one of the Major Arcana. See the **Heroic Callings** table for a list of callings and their associated cards. When making your character, you can choose from the list, draw a card from the Major Arcana and let it determine your character's calling, or come up with a different calling based on your own reading of one of the cards.

In addition to picking your hero's calling, decide if he or she has other important goals in life. One hero may want to find his long-lost family, while another may want to avenge a terrible wrong done to her in the past. A foreign hero may seek acceptance and a new home in Aldis, while a novice hero may want to live up to the legacy of a mentor. Giving your hero a goal beyond simply "doing good" can help give the character more depth and provide opportunities for roleplaying during the game.

## Alignment and Natures

All intelligent creatures make moral choices, to live according to their better nature or to give in to immoral impulses. Many walk a difficult line between the two. A person's attitude toward morality is called *alignment*. There are three alignments in *Blue Rose*: Light, Twilight, and Shadow. Each person has a Light and a Shadow nature, and alignment indicates which, if either, they have chosen.

### The Alignments

Pick one of the following alignments for your hero:

#### Light

Light-aligned individuals follow their Light nature, doing their best to overcome their Shadow nature. Generally, the Light-aligned believe in community and the good of all over mere self-interest. They seek peace, harmonious coexistence, and the general good; although, there is sometimes disagreement as to what exactly is best for everyone.

#### Shadow

Shadow-aligned individuals follow their Shadow nature, ignoring the twinges of conscience from their Light

## THE ROYAL ROAD

Long trusting themselves to the vicissitudes of life on the road, the Roamers are students of fate. They have studied the changes of life, with its happiness and hardship, and recorded their findings in the Royal Road, a deck of seventy-eight cards (nearly identical to the real-world tarot). The Roamers use the deck for fortunetelling and to meditate on the passages of life, and Roamer adepts sometimes use it as a focus for their arcana. Roamer caravans take pride in creating their own versions of the deck, attempting to outdo the artistry of other caravans.

Each card bears an image and its name. The cards are divided into the twenty-two Major Arcana, symbols of the milestones a person passes on the way toward the Eternal Dance, and the fifty-six Minor Arcana, symbols of everyday events, people, and moods. The four suits of the Minor Arcana are associated with the gods of Twilight: swords with Selene, chalices with Braniel, rods with Maurena, and pentacles with Anwaren. The seven gods of Light and seven exarchs of Shadow are said to govern the Light and Shadow aspects of the Minor Arcana, and some of them are depicted directly in the cards. For instance, Athne appears on the Major Arcana card Temperance, Gaelenir appears as the Hermit, Aulora as Justice.

## HEROIC CALLINGS

Card	Calling
The Fool	Adventure and excitement
The Adept	Mastery of the arcane arts
The Priestess	Unity with the gods
The Empress	Protection of nature
The Emperor	Power in the temporal sphere
The Hierophant	Power in the religious sphere
The Lovers	True love
The Chariot	Mastery of the martial arts
Strength	Physical perfection
The Hermit	Transmission of knowledge
The Wheel	Wealth
Justice	Justice
The Hanged Man	Inner peace
Death	Creating change
Temperance	Mediation of extremes
The Exarch	Trickery
The Tower	Lowering the lofty
The Star	Artistic mastery
The Moon	Learning secrets
The Sun	Championing the everyday
Judgment	Atonement for oneself or others
The World	Exploration of the world

## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

### LIGHT AND SHADOW NATURES

Card	Light Nature	Shadow Nature
Ace of Swords	Courageous	Cowardly
Two of Swords	Compromising	Indecisive
Three of Swords	Stalwart	Treacherous
Four of Swords	Calm	Agitated
Five of Swords	Humble	Cruel
Six of Swords	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Seven of Swords	Careful	Careless
Eight of Swords	Free-spirited	Stagnant
Nine of Swords	Compassionate	Despondent
Ten of Swords	Dispassionate	Cold
Page of Swords	Perceptive	Insensitive
Knight of Swords	Bold	Boastful
Queen of Swords	Exacting	Petty
King of Swords	Logical	Arbitrary
Ace of Chalices	Emotional	Hysterical
Two of Chalices	Affable	Standoffish
Three of Chalices	Gregarious	Inhibited
Four of Chalices	Ambitious	Apathetic
Five of Chalices	Hopeful	Remorseful
Six of Chalices	Reflective	Excessively nostalgic
Seven of Chalices	Practical	Deluded
Eight of Chalices	Daring	Stubborn
Nine of Chalices	Carefree	Peevish
Ten of Chalices	Joyful	Depressed
Page of Chalices	Expressive	Deceptive
Knight of Chalices	Charismatic	Manipulative
Queen of Chalices	Devoted	Capricious
King of Chalices	Thoughtful	Reactionary
Ace of Rods	Enthusiastic	Overzealous
Two of Rods	Conciliatory	Pugnacious
Three of Rods	Industrious	Slothful
Four of Rods	Merry	Dour
Five of Rods	Competitive	Complacent
Six of Rods	Confident	Apprehensive
Seven of Rods	Adventurous	Reckless
Eight of Rods	Witty	Sluggish
Nine of Rods	Diplomatic	Domineering
Ten of Rods	Moderate	Obsessive
Page of Rods	Resolute	Idle
Knight of Rods	Hard-working	Cynical
Queen of Rods	Curious	Jaded
King of Rods	Honest	Self-righteous
Ace of Pentacles	Generous	Greedy
Two of Pentacles	Judicious	Narrow-minded
Three of Pentacles	Meticulous	Sloppy
Four of Pentacles	Forward-thinking	Miserly
Five of Pentacles	Hopeful	Hopeless
Six of Pentacles	Magnanimous	Envious
Seven of Pentacles	Patient	Impatient
Eight of Pentacles	Dedicated	Mercenary
Nine of Pentacles	Appreciative	Fearful
Ten of Pentacles	Open-minded	Intolerant
Page of Pentacles	Inquisitive	Wasteful
Knight of Pentacles	Determined	Hasty
Queen of Pentacles	Nurturing	Suspicious
King of Pentacles	Resourceful	Sneaky

nature. The Shadow-aligned are typically selfish and solely interested in satisfying their own desires and goals. Some justify what they want, but many don't bother. The Shadow-aligned are interested in cooperation and community only so far as it benefits them.

### Twilight

Twilight-aligned individuals are balanced between their Light and Shadow natures, shifting between them. Some are torn between the two sides of their character, while others manage a careful balancing act between their own wants and what they feel is right and proper.

### Changing Alignment

Players choose the alignment of their heroes, while the Narrator assigns the alignment of any supporting characters. Alignment is not fixed; people change over time. Nobles who start out Light-aligned with nothing but the good of Aldis at heart can become cynical and jaded, shifting toward Twilight or even Shadow. The Shadow-aligned can find that spark of Light within them and nurture it to change their ways. Twilight-aligned people choose one side or another as their path, and so forth.

Generally, the only thing required to change alignment is a decisive change of heart. When this happens, a hero changes alignment and spends a point of Conviction, reflecting the deep personal decision to change and the will required to make the transition (see **Conviction**, later in this chapter, for more information). This point of Conviction cannot be regained until the hero gains a new level.

For some creatures, alignment is an innate part of their nature. Unicorns are all Light-aligned, for example, and darkfiends are Shadow-aligned by nature. Neither is at all likely to change alignment. In fact, it may be impossible for them to do so. It's up to the Narrator whether or not such strongly aligned creatures can ever change their alignment. Having them do so should be a significant event in the game. For example, the fall of a unicorn to Shadow would rock the foundations of Aldis and require heroes to help redeem the lost soul. Likewise, the conversion of a darkfiend toward the Light could be the subject of an epic quest.

### Natures

A hero's alignment indicates whether she tends, in actions and intentions, toward Light or Shadow, but a mortal is never entirely one or the other. Within each hero of Light, there is the threat of Shadow, and within each person of Shadow, there is the hope of Light.

Beneath her general Light or Shadow tendency, a hero has specific Light and Shadow natures, which characterize her in broad terms. Neither nature encapsulates her entire personality, but they are pivotal forces, two of the primary modes she might assume as she seeks to realize her calling. For example, a hero's Light nature might be Optimistic, while her Shadow nature is Domineering. If her alignment were Light, her optimism would tend to outweigh her pushiness, but not always. Likewise, if her alignment were Shadow, she would be bossy, with rare flashes of optimism.



## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

During character creation, select both a Light and a Shadow nature for your character. The **Light and Shadow Natures** table lists fifty-six possibilities, each associated with one of the Minor Arcana of the Cards of the Royal Road. The Light natures in the list are positive interpretations of the cards, whereas the Shadow natures are negative interpretations. Instead of picking from this list, you might consider drawing a few cards from the deck and letting your interpretations of their images suggest what your character's Light and Shadow natures might be.

### Changing Nature

Generally speaking, a person's natures are fixed. While someone's dominant nature may change, the two natures usually remain the same. They are deep-seated facets of the personality, some might say the true halves of the soul. So changing one's nature is difficult.

If the Narrator allows, a hero may change either Light or Shadow nature at the cost of a point of Conviction, which cannot be regained until the hero gains a new level. You can never *eliminate* either nature, as everyone must have both a Light nature and a Shadow nature, and changing each nature takes Conviction, so changing both requires two Conviction points.

At the Narrator's discretion, certain major events in a character's life can lead to a change in nature (either Light or Shadow), but these events are largely beyond the players' control. The Narrator shouldn't allow changes in nature to happen lightly; they're pivotal events in an individual's life.

### Conviction

Whether it's luck, talent, or sheer determination, heroes have something setting them apart from everyone else, allowing them to perform amazing deeds under the most difficult circumstances. In *Blue Rose* that something is *Conviction*. Spending a Conviction point can make the difference between success and failure. When you're entrusted with the safety of the kingdom, that means a lot!

### Gaining Conviction

Characters have Conviction based on their level (see **Level-Dependent Benefits**, page 61). Characters and creatures lacking levels in heroic roles do not have Conviction points. As heroes improve in level, their maximum Conviction increases.

### Using Conviction

Unless otherwise noted, spending a Conviction point is a reaction, taking no time, and can be done at any time. You may spend only one Conviction point per round. You can spend Conviction for any of the following:

- **Reroll:** One Conviction point allows you to reroll any one die roll you make and take the better of the two results. If both results are below 10, treat your roll as a 10. You must spend the Conviction point and reroll *before* the Narrator announces the result

of your roll. You cannot spend a Conviction point to reroll die rolls made by the Narrator or the other players.

- **Perform feat:** You can spend a Conviction point to gain the benefits of a feat your hero doesn't already have for one round. You must be capable of acquiring the feat normally, meaning it must be a favored feat for your role and you must meet all the prerequisites. For feats that can be acquired multiple times, you gain the benefit of one level of the feat by spending a Conviction point.
- **Dodge bonus:** You can spend a Conviction point whenever you are denied your dodge bonus, but still capable of action (surprised, flat-footed, and so forth). In this case, you retain your dodge bonus until your next action.
- **Surge:** Gain an additional standard or move action, before or after your normal actions for the round (your choice). Using this extra action does not change your place in the initiative order. You can use a standard action gained from extra effort to start or complete a full round action in conjunction with your normal actions for the round.
- **Recover:** You can spend a Conviction point to recover faster (see **Damage and Recovery**, page 158). A Conviction point allows you to immediately shake off a stunned or fatigued condition. If you are exhausted, spending a Conviction point causes you to become fatigued. If you have suffered damage, a Conviction point allows you an immediate recovery check. This check is made normally; the Conviction point just allows you to make it in addition to your normal recovery check. While disabled, you can spend a Conviction point to take a strenuous action for one round without your condition worsening to dying.
- **Escape death:** Spending a Conviction point automatically stabilizes a dying character (you or someone you are assisting); although, this doesn't protect the character from further damage.

### Regaining Conviction

Heroes regain expended Conviction points in a few ways.

First, heroes regain one point of Conviction each day. The player chooses a time appropriate for the hero, such as in the morning, at midday, at sunset, or at midnight. Typically, Light-aligned heroes regain Conviction at sunrise, Twilight-aligned heroes regain it at midday, and Shadow-aligned heroes regain it at sunset or midnight.

Second, heroes can regain Conviction by moving toward their calling according to their Light or Shadow natures. When a hero does something in accordance with one of his natures to further his calling, he regains a point of Conviction. The Narrator decides when an action is appropriate for the hero's natures and calling and awards the Conviction point if the hero is successful.

Note that heroes can follow either of their natures, Light or Shadow, to regain Conviction, and the Narrator may

## — CHAPTER II: CREATING YOUR HERO —

occasionally use this to put temptation in a hero's path. A Light-aligned hero with a Greedy Shadow nature might have the opportunity to further his calling (and regain Conviction) through theft, for example. If the hero steals to further his goal, he gets a point of Conviction, but also has to deal with the consequences of his actions. Likewise, a Shadow-aligned character who shows an unusual kindness or streak of honor may be following her Light nature to regain Conviction. Which nature a Twilight-aligned character chooses to follow most often may indicate a leaning toward one or the other.

Third, the Narrator can choose to award the heroes a point of Conviction for a particularly impressive success or achievement in the adventure that renews their confidence and faith. Overcoming a difficult challenge or solving a complex puzzle might give the heroes a burst of inspiration in the form of renewed Conviction. The Narrator chooses when to do this, but it should only happen once or twice in an adventure, and may not occur at all in some adventures.

### Reputation

Reputation is used to determine whether a Narrator character recognizes a hero. Those who recognize the hero are more likely to help the hero, provided the hero has a positive reputation. A high Reputation bonus also makes it difficult for heroes to hide their identities and remain unnoticed.

Most of the time, the Narrator decides when a hero's reputation is relevant to a scene. The Narrator makes a Reputation check for a Narrator character who might be influenced in some fashion due to the hero's fame or infamy.

### Fame and Infamy

Most characters with a high Reputation bonus (+4 or higher) are considered well known within their profession or social circle. Whether this has a positive or negative connotation depends on the point of view of the person who recognizes the hero.

When a character has a positive opinion of a hero's reputation, the hero is considered to be famous. Fame, when recognized, provides a bonus to certain Charisma-based skill checks.

When a character has a negative opinion of a hero's reputation, the hero is considered to be infamous. Also, at the Narrator's option, a hero might be considered infamous in certain situations due to events that have transpired in the past. Infamy, when recognized, provides a penalty to certain Charisma-based skill checks.

### Using the Reputation Bonus

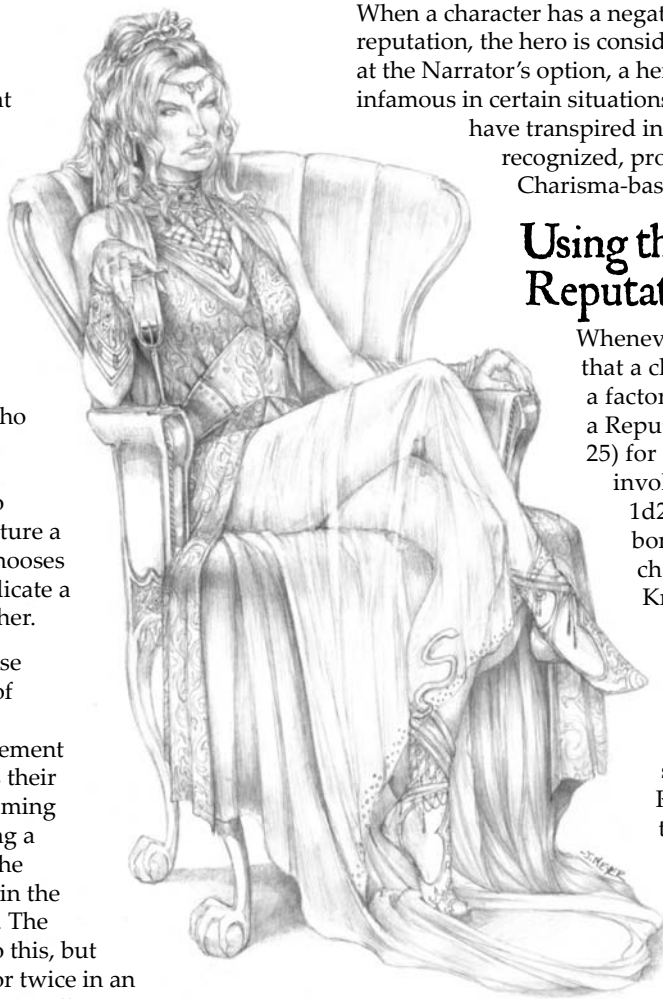
Whenever the Narrator decides that a character's reputation is a factor in an encounter, make a Reputation check (Difficulty 25) for the Narrator character involved. A Reputation check is  $1d20 + \text{the hero's Reputation bonus} + \text{the Narrator character's Intelligence}$ . (Some Knowledge skill modifiers might apply instead of the Intelligence score, if the hero would be well known in the field covered by a Knowledge skill.) Modifiers to the Reputation check depend on the hero and the Narrator character in question, as shown in the table. Note that if the Narrator character has no possible way of recognizing a hero, then the Reputation check automatically fails.

If the Reputation check succeeds, the Narrator character recognizes the hero. This provides a +4 bonus or a -4 penalty on checks involving the following skills for the duration of the encounter: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, and Perform.

#### REPUTATION

Situation	Reputation Check Modifier
The hero is famous, known far and wide with either a positive or negative connotation	+10
Narrator character is part of the hero's professional or social circle	+5
The hero has some small amount of fame or notoriety	+2

The Narrator must decide that a character's fame or infamy can come into play in a given situation to make a Reputation check necessary. A character who doesn't know, or know of, the hero can't be influenced by the hero's reputation.





Heroes in *Blue Rose* slip unseen past the guards of the Lich King. They tame and train the beasts of the wild. They piece together clues to a villain's latest plot to overthrow the sovereign of Aldis. They run along ledges in the dead of night in pursuit of their enemies. They change minds and win hearts wherever they go. They do so through the use of various *skills*, described in this chapter.

## SKILL BASICS

Skills are learned abilities acquired through a combination of training (skill ranks) and natural talent (an ability):

**Skill check = 1d20 + skill rank + ability score + miscellaneous modifiers**

The higher the roll, the better the result. You're usually looking for a total that equals or exceeds a particular Difficulty or another character's check total.

### Skill Rank

Your *rank* in a skill is based on your level, whether or not that skill is a favored skill for you, and whether or not you are trained in the skill. You can use some skills even if you aren't trained in them. This is known as using a skill *untrained*.

### Ability Score

Each skill has a *key ability*, applied to the skill's checks. Each skill's key ability is noted in its description.

### Miscellaneous Modifiers

Miscellaneous modifiers to skill checks include favorable or unfavorable conditions, bonuses from feats, and penalties for not having proper tools, among others.

## Acquiring Skills

Characters gain skills from their role and level. You choose a certain number of skills your character knows at 1st level, based on your role and Intelligence score. For example, a warrior is trained in two skills at 1st level, plus or minus the character's Intelligence score, so a warrior with Intelligence +1 is trained in three skills at 1st level. A 1st-level character is always trained in at least one skill, regardless of Intelligence.

## Favored Skills

Each role has a list of *favored skills*. Your rank in a known favored skill is equal to your level + 3. So a 1st-level character has 4 ranks in all known favored skills. When the character reaches 2nd level, those skills increase to 5 ranks, and so forth.

## Normal Skills

When choosing your hero's known skills, you can choose any skill, regardless of role; however, heroes are less capable with skills their role does not favor. For instance, adepts aren't as good at athletic skills as warriors are, and warriors aren't as effective at scholarly skills as adepts are.

## — CHAPTER III: SKILLS —

Your hero's rank in a normal skill is equal to half the value of a favored skill: level + 3, divided by 2, and rounded down. A 1st-level character would therefore have only 2 ranks in a known skill not favored by her role.

### Untrained Skills

Characters can perform some tasks without any training in a skill, using only their raw talent (defined by their ability scores), but skilled characters tend to be better at such things. If a skill description doesn't include "Trained Only," you can attempt tasks involving that skill even if you have no training in it. Your bonus for the skill check is your key ability score for that skill, with no ranks added in. Untrained characters can still hide or swim, for example; they're just not as good at it as those with training.

Skills that cannot be used untrained are designated as "Trained Only" in their descriptions. Attempts to use these skills untrained automatically fail.

### Adding Skills

You can add skills either by becoming a mixed-role hero or by taking the Skill Training feat. This allows you to

add two more skills to your list of known skills. These skills may be favored skills or normal skills. Alternately, you can choose a single non-favored skill and gain it as a favored skill at your normal favored skill rank (level + 3).

### How Skills Work

When you use a skill, make a skill check to see how well you do. The higher the result, the better the outcome. Based on the circumstances, your check result must equal or beat a particular Difficulty number. The harder the task, the higher the number you need to roll. See **Checks** in the book's introduction for more information.

### Interaction Skills

Certain skills, called *interaction skills*, are aimed at dealing with others through social interaction. Interaction skills allow you to influence attitudes and get others to cooperate with you. Since interaction skills are intended for dealing with others socially, they have certain requirements.

First, you must actually be able to interact with the subject or subjects of the skill. That means the subjects must be

### SKILLS

Skill	Ability	Untrained?	Specialization?	Action	Take 10/20
Acrobatics	Dex	No	No	React or move	10
Bluff	Cha	Yes	No	Standard or full	10
Climb	Str	Yes	No	Move or full	10
Concentration	Wis	Yes	No	React	—
Craft	Int	No	Yes	—	10 (20 on repair)
Diplomacy	Cha	Yes	No	Full	10
Disable Device	Int	No	No	Full	10/20
Disguise	Cha	Yes	No	—	10
Escape Artist	Dex	Yes	No	Full	20
Gather Information	Cha	Yes	No	—	10
Handle Animal	Cha	Yes	No	—	10/20
Heal	Wis	No	No	—	10/20
Intimidate	Cha	Yes	No	Standard or full	10
Jump	Str	Yes	No	Move	10
Knowledge	Int	No	Yes	React or full	10/20
Language	—	No	Yes	—	—
Notice	Wis	Yes	No	React or move	10/20
Perform	Cha	Yes	Yes	—	10
Ride	Dex	No	No	Move	10
Search	Int	Yes	No	Full	10/20
Sense Motive	Wis	Yes	No	React	10
Sleight of Hand	Dex	No	No	Standard	10
Sneak	Dex	Yes	No	Move	10
Survival	Wis	Yes	No	—	10
Swim	Str	Yes	No	Move or full	10

An "—" entry in the **Action** column means the skill takes longer than a full round. See the skill description for details.



aware of you and able to understand you. If you don't speak the same language, or they can't hear you for some reason, that's the same as working without the proper tools, imposing a -4 on your skill check, since you have to convey your meaning through gestures, body language, tone, and so forth.

Interaction skills work best on intelligent subjects, ones with Intelligence -3 or higher. You can use them on creatures with lower Intelligence but with a -8 penalty on your check; they're just too dumb to get the subtleties of your point. You can't use interaction skills at all on subjects lacking a mental ability. (Try convincing a rock to be your friend, or afraid of you, sometime.)

Some interaction skills last a particular amount of time. Using Intimidate to demoralize an opponent, for example, lasts for only a few seconds (one round). In these cases, the time is always measured from the subject's point of view. If you successfully demoralize an opponent, the effect lasts one full round starting on the target's initiative and ending on the target's place in the initiative order on the following round.

You can use interaction skills against groups, but you must be trying to influence the entire group in the same way. You can use Diplomacy, for example, to sway a group of people and improve their attitude toward you, but you must be trying to convince all of them about the same thing. Everyone in the group must be able to hear and understand you. You make one interaction skill check and the Narrator compares it against each person in the group (or against an average value for the group, to speed things up).

## Specialty Skills

Some skills cover a wide range of knowledge or techniques. These skills are actually groups of similar skills, called *specialty skills*. When learning one of these skills, you must choose a specialty or a particular aspect of the skill your character is trained in. For example, you might choose the history specialty of Knowledge or the leatherworking specialty of Craft. Skill ranks in one specialty do not provide training in the skill's other specialties.

## SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

**T**his section describes each skill, including its common uses. You may be able to use skills for tasks other than those given here. The Narrator sets the Difficulty and decides the results in those cases.

The format for skill descriptions is shown below. Items that don't apply to a specific skill are left out of its description.

### Skill Name

*Key Ability, Trained Only, Interaction, Requires Specialization, Requires Tools*

The skill name line and the line below it contain the following information:

- **Skill Name:** What the skill is called.
- **Key Ability:** The ability applied to the skill check.
- **Trained Only:** If "Trained Only" is included, you must be trained in the skill in order to use it. If "Trained Only" is absent, characters may use it untrained.
- **Interaction:** If "Interaction" is included, the skill is an interaction skill.
- **Requires Specialization:** If "Requires Specialization" is included, you must choose a specialty for the skill.
- **Requires Tools:** If "Requires Tools" is included, you need to have the proper tools to use the skill. Not having the proper tools results in a -4 penalty to the skill check.

The skill name line is followed by a brief description of the skill and four other categories:

- **Check:** How to make a check for the skill, what the results of the check are, and the basic Difficulty.
- **Try Again:** Conditions on retrying a check with the skill. If this section is absent, the skill can be retried an unlimited number of times.
- **Action:** The type of action required to use the skill, how long it takes (see **Action Types** in **Chapter VII: Playing the Game**).
- **Special:** Any extra information about the skill.

### Acrobatics

*Dexterity, Trained Only*

You can flip, dive, roll, tumble, and perform other acrobatic maneuvers.

**Check:** You can make an Acrobatics check (Difficulty 5) to lessen the damage from a fall. Subtract the amount your roll exceeds the Difficulty (in feet) from the distance of a fall before determining damage. For example, an Acrobatics check of 20 (15 more than the Difficulty) reduces the effective distance of a fall by 15 feet. A fall reduced to 0 feet does no damage.

You can make an Acrobatics check (Difficulty 25) to move through a space occupied by an opponent or obstacle (moving over, under, or around). A failed roll means you don't get past the obstacle.

- **Balancing:** You can walk on a precarious surface. A successful check lets you move half your speed along the surface as a move action. A failure indicates you spend your move action just keeping your balance and do not move. A failure by 5 or more indicates you fall. The Difficulty is based on the surface.

## BALANCING

Surface	Difficulty
More than 12 inches wide	5
7–12 inches wide	10
2–6 inches wide	15
Less than 2 inches wide	20
Uneven or angled	+5
Slippery	+5

- **Fighting While Balancing:** While balancing, you are flat-footed (losing your dodge bonus to Defense), unless you have 5 or more ranks in Acrobatics. If you take any damage while balancing, you must make an Acrobatics check to avoid falling.
- **Accelerated Movement:** You can try to cross a precarious surface faster than normal. You can move your full speed, but you take a –5 penalty on your Acrobatics check. (Moving twice your speed in a round requires two checks, one for each move action.)
- **Avoiding Being Tripped:** You can make an Acrobatics check in place of the normal Strength or Dexterity check to avoid a trip attack (see **Trip** in **Chapter VII: Playing the Game**). You cannot use Acrobatics to make trip attacks, however.
- **Instant Up:** You can make an Acrobatics check (Difficulty 20) to stand up from a prone position as a free action rather than a move action.
- **Performance:** You can use Acrobatics as if it were the Perform skill to impress an audience.

**Try Again:** No.

**Action:** You can try to reduce damage from a fall as a reaction once per fall. Balancing while moving one-half your speed is a move action. Accelerated movement, allowing you to balance while moving your full speed, is also a move action.

**Special:** The balancing aspects of Acrobatics can be used untrained.

## Bluff

*Charisma, Interaction*

Bluff is the skill of making the outlandish seem credible. It covers acting, fast-talking, trickery, and subterfuge.

**Check:** A Bluff check is opposed by the target's Bluff or Sense Motive check, whichever is higher (it's harder to bluff someone who knows all the tricks). Favorable and unfavorable circumstances weigh heavily on the outcome of a bluff. Two circumstances can work against you: the bluff is hard to believe, or the action the bluff requires goes against the target's self-interest, nature, or orders.

If it's important, the Narrator can distinguish between the two. For instance, if the target gets a +10 bonus because the bluff demands something risky, and the target's Sense Motive check succeeds by 10 or less, then the target didn't

so much see through the bluff as prove reluctant to go along with it. If the target's Sense Motive check succeeds by 11 or more, he sees through the bluff, and would have even if it had not placed any unusual demands on him (that is, even without the +10 bonus).

A successful Bluff check indicates the target reacts as you want, at least for a short time (usually 1 round or less), or the target believes something you want him to believe.

## BLUFF

Example Circumstances	Sense Motive Modifier
The target wants to believe you.	–5
The bluff is believable and doesn't affect the target much one way or the other.	+0
The bluff is a little hard to believe or puts the target at some kind of risk.	+5
The bluff is hard to believe or entails a large risk for the target.	+10
The bluff is way out there; it's almost too incredible to consider.	+20

- **Feint:** You can use Bluff to mislead an opponent in combat. If your Bluff check succeeds, the next attack you make against the target ignores his dodge bonus to Defense.
- **Creating a Diversion to Hide:** You can use Bluff to help you hide. A successful Bluff check gives you the diversion needed to attempt a Sneak check while people are aware of you.
- **Innuendo:** You can use Bluff to send secret messages while talking about other things. The Difficulty for a basic message is 10. Complex messages have Difficulties of 15 or 20. The recipient of the message, and anyone listening in, makes a Bluff or Sense Motive check against the same Difficulty to understand your message. Whether trying to send or understand a message, a failure by 5 or more points means the receiver misinterprets the message in some fashion.
- **Seduction:** You can use Bluff to convince someone else you are a potential romantic partner, provided they could possibly be attracted to you (in the Narrator's judgment). Make a Bluff check against your target's Sense Motive check. Success improves the target's attitude like a use of the Diplomacy skill. Seduction is a one-time modification of the target's attitude, not a long-term change.

**Try Again:** Generally, a failed Bluff check makes the target too suspicious to try again in the same circumstances. For feinting in combat, you may try again freely.

**Action:** A bluff takes at least a full round but can take much longer if you try something elaborate. Using Bluff as a feint in combat is a standard action, as is using Bluff to create a diversion to hide.

## Climb

### Strength

You're skilled in scaling angled and uneven surfaces.

**Check:** With each successful Climb check, you can move up, down, or across a slope, wall, or other steep incline at one-quarter your normal speed. A failed Climb check means you make no progress, and a check that fails by 5 or more means you fall from whatever height you attained (unless you are secured with some kind of harness or other equipment).

The Difficulty of the check depends on the conditions of the climb. If the climb is less than 10 feet, reduce the Difficulty by 5.

### CLIMB

Difficulty	Example Wall or Surface or Task
0	A slope too steep to walk up. A ladder.
5	A knotted rope with a wall to brace against.
10	A rope with a wall to brace against. A knotted rope. A surface with sizable ledges to hold on to and stand on, such as a rugged cliff-face.
15	Any surface with adequate handholds and footholds (natural or artificial), such as a rough natural rock surface or a tree. An unknotted rope. Pulling yourself up when dangling by your hands.
20	An uneven surface with just a few narrow handholds and footholds, such as a coarse masonry wall or a sheer cliff face with a few crevices and small toeholds.
25	A rough surface with no real handholds or footholds, such as a brick wall.
25	Overhang or ceiling with handholds but no footholds.
—	A perfectly smooth, flat, vertical surface can't be climbed.
–10	Climbing inside a chimney, or other location where you can brace against two opposite walls (reduces normal Difficulty by 10).
–5	Climbing a corner where you can brace against perpendicular walls (reduces normal Difficulty by 5).
+5	Surface is slippery (increases normal Difficulty by 5).

- *Fighting While Climbing:* Since you can't easily avoid attacks, you are flat-footed while climbing (losing your dodge bonus to Defense). Any time you take damage while climbing, make a Climb check against the Difficulty of the climb. Failure means you fall.
- *Accelerated Climbing:* You can try to climb faster than normal. You can move half your normal speed,



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rather than one-quarter, but take a –5 penalty on your Climb check.

- *Catching Yourself When Falling:* If you fall, make a Climb check (Difficulty equal to climb's Difficulty + 20). Success means you arrest your fall about halfway and suffer no damage.
- *Catching Someone Else Falling:* It's somewhat easier to catch someone else who falls, assuming they are within arm's reach. Make a Climb check (Difficulty equal to climb's Difficulty +10) to do so. If you fail the check, you do not catch the other person. If you fail by 5 or more, you fall as well.

**Action:** Climbing is a move action.

**Special:** Someone using a rope can haul a character up (or lower a character down) by sheer strength. Use a character's carrying capacity to determine how much weight he can lift in this way (see **Carrying** in **Chapter VII: Playing the Game**).

A climber's kit grants a +2 bonus to Climb checks.

## Concentration

### Wisdom

You can focus your mind and concentrate despite distractions.

**Check:** Make a Concentration check whenever you might be distracted (by damage, harsh weather, and so on). If the check succeeds, you may continue what you are doing.

## — CHAPTER III: SKILLS —



If the check fails, the action you're attempting fails. The check Difficulty depends on the nature of the distraction.

### CONCENTRATION

Distraction	Difficulty
Damaged during the action	10 + damage bonus
Taking continuous damage during the action	10 + half of continuous damage bonus last dealt
Vigorous motion (bouncy vehicle ride, small boat in rough water, belowdecks in a storm-tossed ship, riding a horse)	10
Violent motion (very rough vehicle ride, small boat in rapids, on deck of storm-tossed ship, galloping horse)	15
Extraordinarily violent motion (earthquake)	20
Entangled (such as by a snare)	15
Bound, grappling, or pinned	20
Weather is a high wind carrying blinding rain or sleet	5
Weather is wind-driven hail, dust, or debris	10

**Try Again:** Yes, though a success doesn't cancel the effects of a previous failure, such as the disruption of an action you were concentrating on.

**Action:** Making a Concentration check doesn't require an action; it is either a reaction (when attempted in response to a distraction) or part of another action (when attempted actively).

### Craft

*Intelligence, Trained Only, Requires Specialization, Requires Tools*

Craft is actually a number of separate skills involving arts and crafts. You must choose a specialty, such as elixirs, leatherworking, weaponsmithing, or weaving. Training in one Craft specialty does not provide skill in other specialties.

**Check:** Craft skills are specifically focused on making things. To use a Craft skill effectively, you must have an appropriate set of tools.

- **Making Items:** The Difficulty, time, and resources required to make an item depend on its complexity. Make a Wealth check against the Wealth Difficulty to acquire the necessary raw materials, and then make your Craft check. (Example Difficulties are given in the table.) If your Craft check succeeds, you make the item. If the Craft check fails, you do not produce a usable end result, and any raw materials are wasted.

### MAKING ITEMS

Complexity	Craft Difficulty	Wealth Difficulty	Time	Examples
Simple	15	5	1 hour	garment, household item
Moderate	20	10	12 hours	fine garment, lock, weapon
Complex	25	15	24 hours	plate armor, mechanism
Advanced	30	20	60 hours	building, carriage

- **Masterwork Items:** By increasing Difficulty and cost by +5, you can make a masterwork item. These items are especially well made and provide a +1 bonus when used. For making masterwork weapons and armor, see **Chapter VI: Wealth and Equipment**.
- **Repairing Items:** You can use Craft skills to repair damaged items. In general, simple repairs have a Difficulty of 10 to 15 and require no more than a few minutes to accomplish. More complex repair work has a Difficulty of 20 or higher and can require an hour or more to complete. The repairs have a cost 5 lower than making the item (negligible for simple items).
- **Forgery:** Characters can use Craft to produce forgeries in their areas of specialty. The result of the Craft check becomes the Difficulty for a Notice



## — CHAPTER III: SKILLS —

check to detect the forgery. The Narrator can modify either the Craft or Notice check based on the conditions and the characters' familiarity with the original subject.

**Try Again:** Yes, although in some cases the Narrator may decide a failed attempt to repair an item has negative effects, preventing further attempts.

**Action:** The time to make something varies depending on its complexity, as shown above. The Narrator may increase or decrease the time for a particular Craft project as necessary.

**Special:** Generally, You can take 10 when using a Craft skill, but can't take 20 since doing so represents multiple attempts, and you use up raw materials with each attempt. You can take 10 or take 20 on repair checks.

If you don't have the proper tools, you take a -4 penalty on Craft checks.

### Diplomacy

*Charisma, Interaction*

You're skilled in dealing with people, from proper etiquette and social graces to a way with words and public speaking. Use this skill to make a good impression, negotiate, and win people over.

**Check:** You can change others' attitudes with a successful Diplomacy check. In negotiations, all participants roll opposed Diplomacy checks to see who gets the advantage. Opposed checks also resolve cases where two advocates plead opposing cases before a third party.

Diplomacy can influence a character's attitude. The Narrator chooses the character's initial attitude based on circumstances. Most of the time, people the heroes meet are indifferent toward them, but a specific situation may call for a different initial attitude. The Difficulties given on the **Influence** table, page 148, show what it takes to change someone's attitude with a use of Diplomacy. You don't declare a specific outcome; instead, make the check and compare the result to the table to see what you've accomplished. For more information, see **Social Actions** in **Chapter VII: Playing the Game**.

**Try Again:** Generally, trying again doesn't work. Even if the initial check succeeds, the other character can only be persuaded so far. If the initial check fails, the other character has probably become more firmly committed to his position, and trying again is futile. At the Narrator's discretion, you can try again when the situation changes in some way: you find a new approach to your argument, new evidence appears, and so forth.

**Action:** Diplomacy is at least a full-round action. The Narrator may determine some negotiations require a longer period of time, perhaps much longer.

### Disable Device

*Intelligence, Trained Only, Requires Tools*

You can disarm or sabotage various devices, including locks and traps.

**Check:** The Narrator makes Disable Device checks secretly so you don't necessarily know whether you have succeeded.

- *Open Lock:* You can pick locks. You must have thieves' tools. The Difficulty depends on the quality of the lock.

#### OPEN LOCK

Lock Quality	Difficulty
Simple	20
Average	25
Good	30
Amazing	40

- *Traps and Sabotage:* Disabling a simple mechanical device has a Difficulty of 10. More intricate and complex devices have higher Difficulties. (Disabling complex traps with Difficulties higher than 20 requires the Trapfinding feat.) The Narrator rolls the check. If the check succeeds, you disable the device. If the check fails by 4 or less, you have failed but can try again. If you fail by 5 or more, something goes wrong. If it's a trap, you set it off. If it's some sort of sabotage, you think that the device is disabled, but it's not. You can rig simple devices to work normally for a while and then fail later, if you choose.

**Try Again:** Yes, though you must be aware you have failed in order to try again.

**Action:** Disabling a simple device is a full-round action. Intricate or complex devices require multiple rounds at the Narrator's discretion.

**Special:** You can take 10 when making a Disable Device check. You can take 20 to open a lock or to disable a device, unless trying to prevent your tampering from being noticed, or if there is a consequence for failure (such as setting off a trap).

If you do not have the proper tools, you take a -4 penalty on your check.

### Disguise

*Charisma, Requires Tools*

You can use makeup, costumes, and other props to change your appearance.

**Check:** Your Disguise check determines the effectiveness of your disguise. It is opposed by others' Notice checks. Make one Disguise check even if several people make Notice checks. The Narrator makes the Disguise check secretly so you are not sure exactly how well your disguise will hold up under scrutiny.

If you don't draw any attention to yourself, however, others don't get to make Notice checks. If you come to the attention of people who are suspicious, they get to make a Notice check. (The Narrator can assume suspicious observers take 10 on their Notice checks.)

The effectiveness of your disguise depends in part on how much you attempt to change your appearance.

## DISGUISE MODIFIERS

Disguise	Modifier
Minor details only	+5
Appropriate uniform or costume	+2
Disguised as different sex	-2
Disguised as different age	-2

If you are impersonating a particular individual, those who know the subject automatically get to make Notice checks. Furthermore, they get a bonus on the check.

## RECOGNITION BONUSES

Familiarity	Bonus
Recognizes on sight	+4
Friend or associate	+6
Close friend	+8
Intimate	+10

Usually, an individual makes a Notice check to detect a disguise immediately upon meeting you and each hour thereafter. If you casually meet many different people, each for a short time, the Narrator checks once per day or hour, using an average Notice modifier for the group (assuming they take 10).

**Try Again:** No, though you can assume the same disguise again at a later time. If others saw through the previous disguise, they are automatically treated as suspicious if you assume the same disguise again.

**Action:** A disguise requires at least 10 minutes of preparation. The Narrator makes Notice checks for those who encounter you immediately upon meeting you and again each hour or day thereafter, depending on circumstances.

**Special:** If you don't have any makeup, costumes, or props, you take a -4 penalty on Disguise checks.

## Escape Artist

*Dexterity*

You're trained in escaping from bonds and other restraints.

**Check:** Make a check to escape from restraints or to squeeze through a tight space.

## ESCAPE ARTIST

Restraint	Difficulty
Ropes	Opponent's Dexterity bonus +20
Tight space	30
Grapple	Opponent's grapple check

- Tight Spaces:** For a tight space, a check is only called for if your head fits but your shoulders don't. If the space is longer than your height, such as a chimney,

the Narrator may call for multiple checks. You can't fit through a space your head doesn't fit through. You can also reach through a tight space your hand fits through but your arm normally does not by making an Escape Artist check.

- Escaping Grapples:** You can make an Escape Artist check opposed by an opponent's grapple check to get out of a grapple or out of a pinned condition (so you are just being grappled). Doing so is a standard action, so if you escape the grapple you can move in the same round.

**Try Again:** You can make another check after a failed check if you are squeezing through a tight space. If the situation permits, you can make additional checks as long as you are not being actively opposed.

**Action:** Making a check to escape from being bound by ropes or other restraints requires 1 minute. Escaping a grapple is a standard action. Squeezing or reaching through a tight space takes at least 1 minute, maybe longer, depending on the distance.

## Gather Information

*Charisma, Interaction*

You know how to make contacts, collect gossip and rumors, question informants, and otherwise gather information from people.

**Check:** By succeeding at a skill check (Difficulty 10) you can get a feel for the major news and rumors in an area. This assumes no obvious reasons exist why information would be withheld. The higher the check result, the more complete the information. Information ranges from general to protected, and the Difficulty increases accordingly for the type of information you want to gather, as given in the table below.

## GATHER INFORMATION

Information	Difficulty
General	10
Specific	15
Restricted	20
Protected	25

General information concerns local happenings, rumors, gossip, and the like. Specific information usually relates to a particular question. Restricted information includes facts that aren't generally known and require you to locate someone who has access to such information. Protected information is even harder to come by and might involve some danger, either for the one asking the questions or the one providing the answer. There's a chance someone takes note of anyone asking about restricted or protected information. The Narrator decides when this is the case. In some situations, opposed Gather Information checks are appropriate to see if someone else notices your inquiries (and you notice theirs).

**Try Again:** Yes, but it takes additional time for each check, and you may draw attention to yourself if you repeatedly pursue a certain type of information.

**Action:** A Gather Information check takes at least an hour, possibly several, at the Narrator's discretion.

## Handle Animal

*Charisma*

You know how to handle, care for, and train various types of animals.

**Check:** The time required to get an effect and the Difficulty depend on what you are trying to do.

### HANDLE ANIMAL

Task	Time	Difficulty
Handle an animal	Move action	10
"Push" an animal	Full-round action	25
Teach an animal a trick	1 week	See text
Train an animal for a purpose	4 weeks	See text

- *Handle an Animal:* This means to command an animal to perform a task or trick it knows. If the animal's condition is something other than normal (it's fatigued or injured, for example), the Difficulty increases by +5. If the check is successful, the animal performs the task or trick on its next action.
- *"Push" an Animal:* Pushing an animal means getting it to perform a task or trick it doesn't know but is physically capable of doing. If the check is successful, the animal performs the task or trick on its next action.
- *Teach an Animal a Trick:* You can teach an animal a specific trick, such as "attack" or "stay," with one week of work and a successful Handle Animal check (Difficulty 15 for simple tricks, 20 or more for complex tricks). An animal with an Intelligence of -5 can learn a maximum of three tricks, while an animal with an Intelligence of -4 can learn a maximum of six tricks.
- *Train an Animal:* Rather than teaching an animal individual tricks, you can train an animal for a general

purpose, like combat, guarding, riding, and so forth. This requires a Difficulty 20 skill check. Essentially, an animal's purpose represents a set of tricks fitting a common scheme. An animal can be trained for one purpose only.

**Try Again:** Yes.

**Action:** See above.

**Special:** An untrained character uses Charisma checks to handle and push animals, but can't teach or train animals.

Note rhydan are *not* animals for the purposes of this skill, since they are intelligent beings.

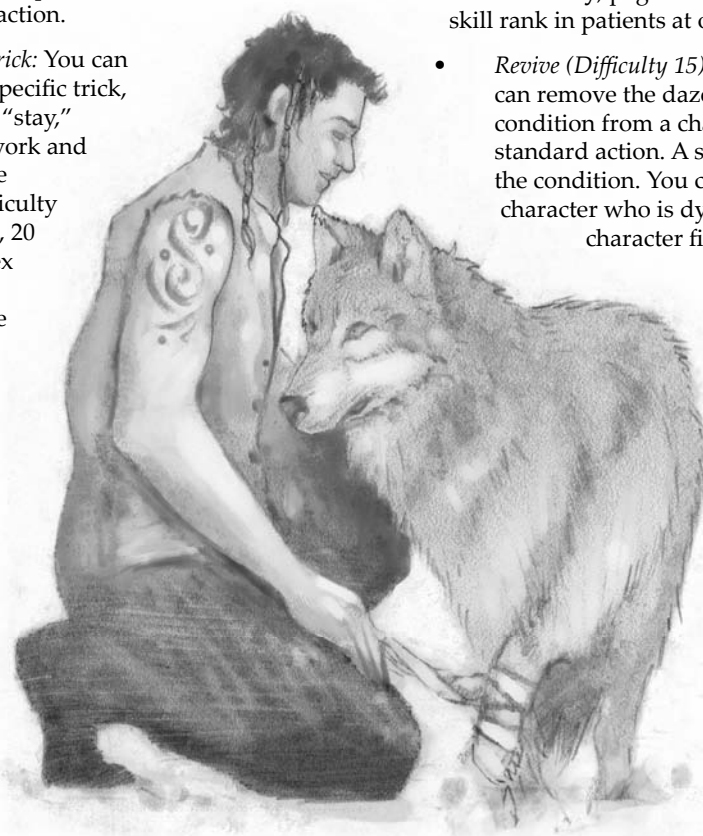
## Heal

*Wisdom, Trained Only, Requires Tools*

You're trained in understanding the body and treating injuries and illness.

**Check:** The Difficulty and effect depend on the task attempted.

- *Diagnosis (Difficulty 10):* You can diagnose injuries and ailments with an eye toward providing treatment. At the Narrator's discretion, a successful diagnosis can provide a +2 bonus on Heal checks for treatment.
- *Provide Care (Difficulty 15):* Providing care means treating a wounded person for a day or more or providing routine medical care, such as assisting in the delivery of a baby. If successful, the patient adds your Heal rank to any recovery rolls (see **Damage and Recovery**, page 158). You can tend up to your skill rank in patients at one time.
- *Revive (Difficulty 15):* With a first aid kit, you can remove the dazed, stunned, or unconscious condition from a character. This check is a standard action. A successful check removes the condition. You can't revive an unconscious character who is dying without stabilizing the character first.
- *Stabilize (Difficulty 15):* With a medical kit, you can tend to a character who is dying. As a standard action, a successful Heal check stabilizes the dying character.
- *Treat Disease (Difficulty 15):* You can tend to a character infected with a treatable disease. Every time the diseased character makes a saving throw against disease effects (after the initial contamination), you can



## — CHAPTER III: SKILLS —

first make a Heal check requiring 10 minutes. If your check succeeds, you provide a bonus on the diseased character's saving throw equal to your Heal rank.

- **Treat Poison (Difficulty 15):** You can tend to a poisoned character. When a poisoned character makes a saving throw against a poison's secondary effect, you first make a Heal check as a standard action. If the check succeeds, you provide a bonus on the poisoned character's saving throw equal to your Heal rank.

**Try Again:** Yes, for reviving dazed, stunned, or unconscious characters, and stabilizing dying characters. No, for all other uses of the skill.

**Action:** Heal checks take different amounts of time based on the task at hand, as described above.

**Special:** You can take 10 when making a Heal check. You can take 20 only when giving long-term care or attempting to revive dazed, stunned, or unconscious characters.

If you do not have the appropriate medical equipment, you take a -4 penalty on your skill check.

You can use the Heal skill on yourself only to diagnose, provide care, or treat disease or poison. You take a -5 penalty on your checks when treating yourself.

### Intimidate

*Charisma, Interaction*

You know how to use threats (real or implied) to get others to cooperate with you.

**Check:** Your Intimidate check is opposed by the target's modified level check (1d20 + target's total level + target's Wisdom score + target's modifiers on saves against fear). If your check succeeds, you may treat the target as friendly for 10 minutes, but only for purposes of actions taken while in your presence. (That is, the target retains his normal attitude, but will talk, advise, offer limited help, or advocate on your behalf while intimidated.) Your target will only cooperate so much and won't necessarily obey your every command or do anything that would directly endanger himself.

If you perform some action that makes you more imposing, you gain a +2 bonus on your Intimidate check. If your target clearly has a superior position, you suffer a -2 penalty on your Intimidate check.

If your Intimidate check fails by 5 or more, the target may actually do the *opposite* of what you wanted.

- **Demoralizing in Combat:** You can use Intimidate in combat to demoralize an opponent, shaking their confidence. Make an Intimidate check as a standard action. If it succeeds, your target is shaken (-2 on all attack rolls, checks, and saving throws, except Toughness saves) for one round.

**Try Again:** No. Even if the initial check succeeds, the other character can only be intimidated so much, and trying again doesn't help. If the initial check fails, the

other character has become more firmly resolved to resist, and trying again is futile. You can make Intimidate checks to demoralize an opponent in combat until you fail, after which the target is no longer intimidated by you.

**Action:** An Intimidate check is a full-round action. Demoralizing in combat is a standard action.

**Special:** You add a +2 bonus to your Intimidate check for every size category you are larger than your target. Conversely, you take a -2 penalty to your check for every size category you are smaller than your target.

### Jump

*Strength*

You can jump further than usual.

**Check:** Distance moved by jumping, which is a move action, is counted against your maximum movement in a round. You can start a jump at the end of one turn and complete the jump at the beginning of your next turn.

- **Long Jump:** This is a horizontal jump. At the midpoint of the jump, you attain a vertical height equal to one-quarter the horizontal distance. The Difficulty of a long jump is 5 plus the distance in feet.
- **High Jump:** This is a vertical leap, made to jump up to grasp something overhead, such as a tree limb or ledge. The Difficulty of a high jump is 10 plus twice the distance in feet.
- **Hop Up:** You can jump up onto an object of half your height or less with a Difficulty 10 Jump check. Doing so counts as 10 feet of movement.

**Try Again:** No.

**Action:** Jump is a move action.

### Knowledge

*Intelligence, Trained Only, Requires Specialization*

This skill encompasses several specialties, each of them treated as a separate skill. These specialties are defined below.

**Check:** Make a Knowledge check to see if you know something. The Difficulty for answering a question is 10 for easy questions, 15 for basic questions, and 20 to 30 for difficult questions. The Narrator sets the difficulty for a particular question.

The Knowledge specialties, and the topics each one encompasses, are as follows:

- **Arcana** (ancient mysteries, arcana, sorcery, shadowgates, darkfiends)
- **Engineering** (buildings, aqueducts, bridges, fortifications)
- **Geography** (lands, terrain, climate, people)
- **History** (wars, colonies, migrations, founding of cities)
- **Local** (legends, personalities, inhabitants, laws, customs)



## — CHAPTER III: SKILLS —

- **Nature** (animals, monsters, plants, seasons and cycles, weather)
- **Nobility** (lineages, heraldry, family trees, mottoes, personalities)
- **Religion** (deities, mythology, religious tradition, holy symbols)

**Try Again:** Usually no. The check represents what a character knows; thinking about a topic a second time doesn't let you know something you didn't know before. The Narrator may allow another Knowledge check if a character gets access to a better source of information. For example, a hero who doesn't know the answer to a particular question off-hand might get another check with access to a library (and could take 20 on that check, depending on the circumstances).

**Action:** A Knowledge check can be a reaction, but otherwise requires a full-round action. Taking 20 on a Knowledge check requires at least an hour, longer if the Narrator decides the information you're looking for is particularly obscure or otherwise restricted.

**Special:** An untrained Knowledge check is simply an Intelligence check. Without actual training, a character can only answer easy or basic questions about a topic.

You can take 10 when making a Knowledge check. You can take 20 only if you have access to the appropriate research materials (such as a library).

### Language

*Trained Only, Requires Specialization*

Languages are unusual skills. They are not based on an ability score and do not require checks. Instead, each time you acquire this skill, you gain two additional languages (one language, if this skill is unfavored), which you can speak, read, and write. Unskilled characters can speak, read, and write their native language, plus one additional language per point of Intelligence bonus (if any).

The most common languages are Aldin, Jarzoni, Kernish, Rezean, and Roamer. Some sorcerers know Demonic, having found its twisting script in tomes from the days of the Empire of Thorns.

- **Literacy:** Characters are assumed to be literate in their native language and in any other language they know. At the Narrator's discretion, characters may have to spend a bonus language to be literate in a language that uses a different alphabet or style of writing from the character's native language.

**Retry:** No, because there are no Language checks. You either know a language, or you don't.

### Notice

*Wisdom*

You use this skill to notice and perceive things.

**Check:** Make a skill check to notice something. Notice checks generally suffer a penalty of -1 per 10 feet between you and the thing you're trying to notice. If

### PLAYER VS. CHARACTER KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge skills measure what your *character* knows about various things, whether you know anything about them or not. It's fairly easy to measure what your character knows by making the appropriate Knowledge skill check.

However, players may know things their characters do not, either because of the player's life experience or knowledge of the game and its rules. In this case the Narrator may prefer players limit themselves to what their characters know via their skills and senses rather than what they may or may not know about a given situation as players of the game. If there's a question as to how to handle an issue of player versus character knowledge in the game, consult your Narrator.

you're distracted, you take a -5 penalty on Notice checks. Making out details—such as clearly hearing conversation or reading text—requires you to beat the Difficulty of the Notice check by 10.

The Narrator might make Notice checks secretly so you don't know whether there was something to notice. The most common sorts of Notice checks are as follows:

- **Listening:** Make a check against a Difficulty based on how loud the noise is or against an opposed Sneak check.

#### LISTENING

Difficulty	Sound
-10	A battle
0	People talking
10	A person walking at a slow pace, trying not to make any noise
30	A bird flying through the air
+5	Through a door
+10	Listener asleep
+15	Through a solid wall

- **Spotting:** Make a check against a Difficulty based on how visible the object is. Spot is often used to notice a person or creature hiding from view. In such cases, your Notice check is opposed by the Sneak check of the character trying not to be seen. Spot is also used to detect someone in disguise (see the Disguise skill) or to notice a concealed weapon on another person.
- **Other Senses:** You can make Notice checks involving smell, taste, and touch, as appropriate. Use the same guidelines as listen and spot checks above. Noticing something obvious is Difficulty 0. Subtle things are around Difficulty 10, hidden things Difficulty 20 or more. Noticing subtle arcane phenomena requires special abilities (see **Chapter V: Arcana** for details).

**Try Again:** You can make a Notice check every time you have the opportunity to notice something new. As a move action, you can attempt to notice something you failed (or believe you failed) to notice previously.

**Action:** A Notice check is either a reaction (if called for by the Narrator) or a move action (if you actively take the time to try to notice something).

**Special:** When several characters are trying to notice the same thing, the Narrator can make a single d20 roll and use it for all the characters' skill checks.

You can take 10 or take 20 when making a Notice check. Taking 20 means you spend 1 minute attempting to notice something that may or may not be there.

## Perform

*Charisma, Interaction, Requires Specialization*

This skill encompasses several types of performance, each treated as a separate skill.

**Check:** You are accomplished in some type of artistic expression and know how to put on a performance. The quality of your performance depends on your check result.

The Perform specialties are as follows:

- **Acting:** You can perform drama, comedy, or pantomime with some level of skill.
- **Comedy:** You are a comedian, capable of buffoonery, limericks, and joke-telling.

- **Dance:** You are a dancer, capable of performing rhythmic and patterned movements to music.
- **Percussion Instruments:** You can play percussion instruments, such as chimes, cymbals, drums, and tambourines.
- **Sing:** You can sing with some level of skill.
- **Stringed Instruments:** You can play stringed instruments, such as fiddles, harps, lutes, and mandolins.
- **Wind Instruments:** You can play wind instruments, such as bagpipes, flutes, panpipes, and shawms.

## PERFORM

Check Result	Performance
10	Amateur performance. Audience may appreciate your performance, but isn't impressed.
15	Routine performance. Audience enjoys your performance, but it isn't exceptional.
20	Great performance. Audience highly impressed.
25	Memorable performance. Audience enthusiastic.
30	Masterful performance. Audience awed.

**Try Again:** Not for the same performance and audience.

**Action:** A Perform check usually requires at least several minutes to an hour or more.

**Special:** If you don't have an appropriate instrument you automatically fail any Perform check requiring it. At the Narrator's discretion, impromptu instruments may be employed, but you take a -4 penalty on the check.

## Ride

*Dexterity, Trained Only, Requires Tools*

Use this skill to ride a mount, such as a horse or even a dolphin or griffon.

**Check:** Routine tasks, such as ordinary movement, don't require a skill check. Make a check only when some unusual circumstance exists (such as inclement weather or an icy surface) or when you are riding in a dramatic situation (being chased or attacked, for example, or trying to reach a destination in a limited amount of time). While riding, you can attempt simple maneuvers or stunts.

Easy riding maneuvers, like staying in the saddle in a fight or guiding a mount with your knees, have a Difficulty of 5. An average maneuver, like a full gallop or dodging around an obstacle, has a Difficulty of 10. Difficult maneuvers, like using your mount as cover, jumping, or suffering no harm in a fall, have a Difficulty of 15. Challenging maneuvers, like a fast mount or dismount (as a free action) or controlling a panicking mount, have a Difficulty of 20.



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**Try Again:** Most Ride checks have consequences for failure that make trying again impossible.

**Action:** A Ride check is a move action.

**Special:** If you lack the appropriate saddle, tack, and harness for your mount, you suffer a -4 penalty on your Ride checks.

## Search

*Intelligence*

You can search an area looking for clues, hidden items, traps, and other such details. The Notice skill allows you to notice things immediately, while Search allows you to pick up on details with some effort.

**Check:** You generally must be within 10 feet of the area to be examined. You can examine up to a 5-foot-by-5-foot area or a volume of goods 5 feet on a side with a single check.

A Search check can turn up individual footprints, but does not allow you to follow tracks or tell you which direction the creature or creatures went or came from (see the Track feat). A Search check can find simple traps with Difficulties of 20 or lower. To find a more complex trap, the Trapfinding feat is required.

### SEARCH

Difficulty	Task
10	Ransack an area to find a certain object.
20	Notice a typical secret compartment, a simple trap, or an obscure clue.
25+	Find a complex or well-hidden secret compartment or trap. Notice an extremely obscure clue.

- **Finding Concealed Objects:** The Difficulty for a Search check to find a deliberately concealed object is usually based on the Sneak or Sleight of Hand check of the character who hid it. The Narrator can assume that characters with the time take 20 on their check to hide the object.

**Action:** A Search check is a full-round action.

## Sense Motive

*Wisdom*

You can tell someone's true intentions by paying attention to body language, inflection, and your intuition.

**Check:** A successful Sense Motive check allows you to avoid the effects of some interaction skills. You can also use the skill to tell when someone is behaving oddly or to assess someone's trustworthiness.

You can use this skill to make an assessment of a social situation. With a successful check (Difficulty 20), you can get the feeling from another's behavior that something is wrong. Also, you can get the feeling someone is trustworthy and honorable (or not).

- **Resist Interaction:** You are often asked to make a Sense Motive check to resist or ignore the effects of

certain interaction checks, such as Bluff checks. If the result of your check exceeds your opponent's, you are not affected.

- **Notice Influence:** You can make a Sense Motive check to notice someone is acting under the influence of arcana. The Difficulty is the same as the effect's Will save Difficulty.
- **Notice Innuendo:** You can use Sense Motive to detect a hidden message transmitted via the Bluff skill (Difficulty equal to the Bluff check result of the sender). If your check result beats the Difficulty, you understand the secret message. If your check fails by 5 or more, you misinterpret the message in some fashion. If you are not the intended recipient of the message, your Difficulty increases by 5.
- **Combat Readiness:** By observing someone outside of combat for at least five rounds (30 seconds), you can make a Sense Motive check against that individual's Bluff check result. If you succeed, you gain a +4 Initiative bonus against the target if combat occurs during that encounter.

**Try Again:** No, though you can make a Sense Motive check for each interaction attempt against you.

**Action:** A Sense Motive check may be made as a reaction to notice or resist something. Using Sense Motive to get a sense of someone's trustworthiness takes at least 1 minute, while using it for combat readiness takes at least 30 seconds.

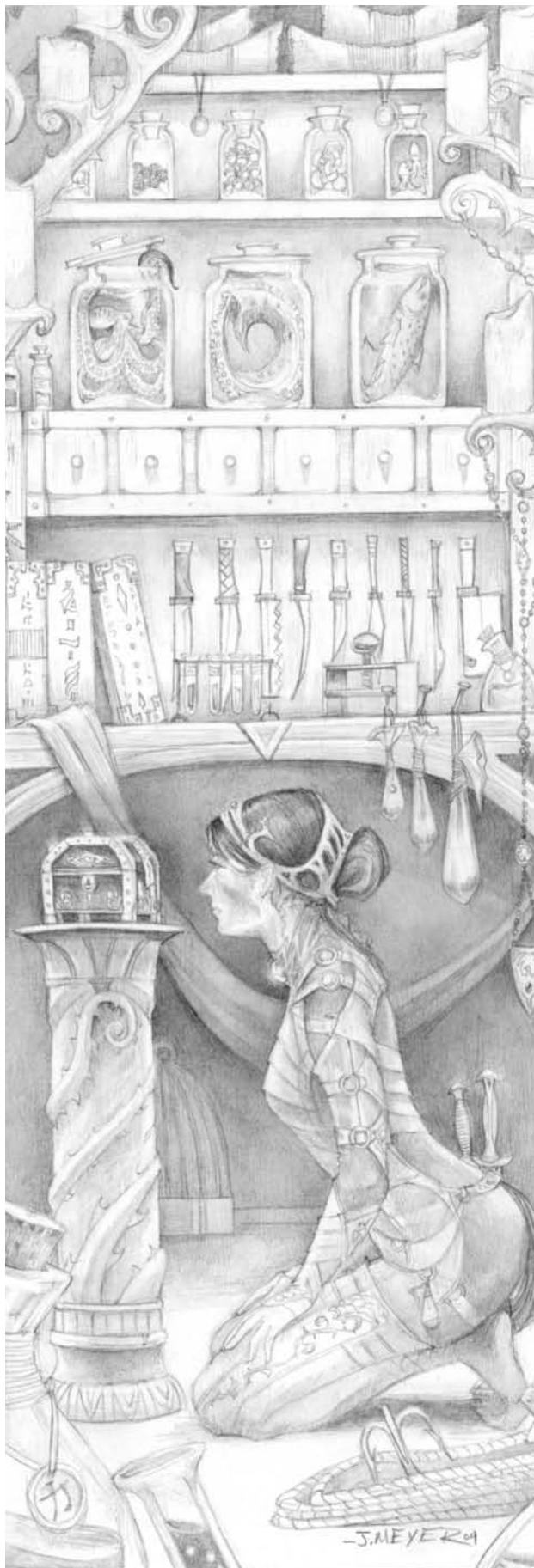
## Sleight of Hand

*Dexterity, Trained Only*

You can perform feats of legerdemain such as picking pockets, palming small objects (making them seem to disappear), and so forth.

**Check:** A check against Difficulty 10 lets you palm a coin-sized, unattended object. When you perform this skill under close observation, your skill check is opposed by the observer's Notice check. The observer's check doesn't prevent you from performing the action, just from doing it unnoticed. If using Sleight of Hand to do tricks to impress an audience, you can treat it as a Perform specialty.

- **Thievery:** When you try to take something from another person, your opponent makes a Notice check to detect the attempt. To obtain the object, you must get a result of 20 or higher, regardless of the opponent's check result. The opponent detects the attempt if his check result beats your character's check result, whether you take the object or not.
- **Planting:** You can make a Sleight of Hand check to plant a small object on a person, slip something into their pocket, drop something into their drink, and so forth. This has the same Difficulty and Notice check as thievery.
- **Concealment:** You can use Sleight of Hand to conceal a small weapon or object on your body,



making your check result the Difficulty of a Search check to find the object.

**Try Again:** A second Sleight of Hand attempt made against the same target, or when being watched by the same observer, has a Difficulty 10 higher than the first check if the first check failed or if the attempt at it was noticed.

**Action:** A Sleight of Hand check is a standard action.

**Special:** You can make an untrained Sleight of Hand check to conceal a weapon or object, but must always take 10 when doing so, so you can't do it while under stress.

## Sneak

### *Dexterity*

You're skilled in the art of moving about unseen and unheard.

**Check:** Your Sneak check is opposed by the Notice check of anyone who might possibly notice you. While using Sneak, you can move up to half your normal speed at no penalty. At more than half and up to your full speed, you take a -5 penalty. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to use Sneak while attacking, moving all out, or charging.

- **Size Modifiers:** Apply the modifier from your size category to your Sneak checks to represent the difficulty and ease of noticing smaller and larger targets, respectively: Fine +16, Diminutive +12, Tiny +8, Small +4, Medium +0, Large -4, Huge -8, Gargantuan -12, Colossal -16.
- **Hiding:** If others have spotted you, you can't use Sneak to remain unseen. You can run around a corner so you are out of sight and then use Sneak to hide, but others then know at least where you went. Note you can't hide if you have no cover or concealment (since that means you're standing out in the open).
- **Creating a Diversion to Hide:** You can make a Bluff check to gain the momentary diversion needed to attempt a Sneak check while people are aware of you. When the others turn their attention from you, you can make a Sneak check if you can get to a hiding place of some kind. (As a general guideline, the hiding place has to be within 1 foot for every rank you have in Sneak.) This check, however, is at a -5 penalty because you have to move fast.
- **Tailing:** You can use Sneak to tail a person in public. Using the skill in this manner assumes there are other people about, among whom you can mingle to remain unnoticed. If the subject is worried about being followed, he can make a Notice check (opposed by your Sneak check) every time he changes course (goes around a street corner, exits a building, and so on). If he is unsuspecting, he generally gets only a Notice check after each hour of tailing.

**Action:** Sneak is a move action.



# SHADOWS AND DUST

Reyna froze, one hand hovering over the small silver and ebony chest. To breach the sorcerer's tower, she'd crept through sewage tunnels and servants' passages and struggled up the narrow chimney that vented heat into the evil mage's private chambers. Now, sticky with sweat and ash, her hands scraped raw from gripping the rough brickwork of the vent, Reyna was within the sorcerer's most hidden, warded chamber.

At her throat, she could feel the peculiar buzz of the ward-stone. It was a device of the Old Kingdom. Though she loathed the dull reddish stone and its price—it must be bathed in a cup of blood every full moon—it enabled her to pass through the wards set to foil thieves like her.

Her blades had been blackened with soot and grease, as had the buckles on her dull gray garb and the grappling hook she'd used to scale the walls of the keep's bailey. Her pale skin was darkened as well, and now a layer of chimney ash left her nothing more than a slender shadow in the darkness.

She was strong and swift and, thanks to the Sovereign's Finest, better trained than she had ever been in her life. All for this one moment, this one task she had willingly taken, knowing the price of failure was a fate worse than death.

Reyna stood still, not touching the small chest for which she'd been sent. Instead she turned her head from side to side, trying to catch the elusive *something* she'd heard a moment ago. Though her dark hair was hidden under a gray cap, her delicate ears were bare, and it was those that gave her warning now. She tipped her head—such a small thing she'd heard, a noise so faint and fragile that she was not sure she had heard it. Still, she listened and did not move.

After a moment, she crouched down, peering at the chest and the ornate pillar upon which it rested. She shifted her weight, and again, there was that sound. A faint scrape where there should be none. The pillar was supposed to be black granite, and the tiny chest atop it filled with such evil it would take great effort to move it, yet the noise was the sound of something light, something far different from what Reyna's eyes told her. It was clear the pillar was rocking, ever so slightly, and that should not be. She remained there for a long moment, searching with her eyes, but could see nothing amiss. Everything appeared as she had been told it would, but her ears told her different.

Finally, Reyna slipped back, away from the pillar and the chest she'd risked so much to steal. She eased the grate open again and began the long climb back down the vent. Whatever her eyes might say, her ears and her instincts were always true. That tempting little chest was nothing more than a trap.

## Survival

*Wisdom*

You use this skill to survive in the wilderness, finding food and shelter and safely guiding others.

**Check:** You can keep yourself and others safe and fed in the wild.

### SURVIVAL

Difficulty	Task
10	Get along in the wild. Move up to half your overland speed while hunting and foraging (no food or water supplies needed). You can provide food and water for one other person for every 2 points your check result exceeds 10.
15	Gain a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves against severe weather while moving up to half your speed, or a +4 bonus if stationary. You may grant the same bonus to one other character for every point your check result exceeds 15.
18	Avoid getting lost and avoid natural hazards, such as quicksand.

**Try Again:** No.

**Action:** Survival checks occur each day in the wilderness or whenever a hazard presents itself.

## Swim

*Strength*

You can swim and maneuver underwater.

**Check:** A successful Swim check allows you to swim one-quarter your speed as a move action or half your speed

as a full-round action. If the check fails, you make no progress through the water. If the check fails by 5 or more, you go underwater.

The Difficulty for the Swim check depends on the condition of the water:

### SWIM

Condition	Difficulty
Calm water	10
Rough water	15
Stormy water	20

If you are underwater, you must hold your breath. You can hold your breath without difficulty for a number of rounds equal to 20 plus four times your Constitution score (this can result in fewer than 10 rounds if you have a negative Constitution score). After that period of time, you must make a Constitution check (Difficulty 10) every round to continue holding your breath. Each round, the Difficulty of the check increases by 1. If you fail the check, you begin to suffocate (see **Suffocation**, page 169). If you take a standard or full-round action, the amount of breath you have remaining is reduced by 1 round. (Effectively, in combat you can hold your breath only half as long as normal.)

Each hour you swim, make a Swim check (Difficulty 20). If the check fails, you suffer fatigue (see **Fatigue**, page 161). Unconscious characters go underwater and immediately begin to drown.

- **Rescuing:** Rescuing another character who cannot swim, for whatever reason, increases the Difficulty of your Swim check by +5.

**Try Again:** A new check is allowed the round after a failed check.

**Action:** A Swim check is either a move action or a full-round action, as described above.



While abilities, backgrounds, roles, and skills define a great deal about heroes, what really makes them heroes are *feats*, special abilities allowing your hero to do things other people can't. Feats often allow heroes to "break the rules" in certain ways or provide them access to certain gifts or talents. Feats allow you to customize your hero's capabilities, focusing on the sorts of things you want.

## ACQUIRING FEATS

Heroes start out with a certain number of feats, based on their role. They then acquire a new feat each time they gain a level (either in that role or in a new role). Each role has access to all general feats, as well as its own list of favored feats. Players choose new feats from these lists.

### Types of Feats

Some feats are *general*, meaning no special rules govern them as a group and they are available to everyone. Other feats are restricted to heroes of particular roles and related to performing those roles. *Arcane* feats are limited to

adepts, *expert* feats are limited to experts, and *martial* feats are limited to warriors. A feat's type is listed after its name in the feat's description.

### Prerequisites

Some feats have prerequisites. Your hero must have the indicated ability score, feat, skill, attack bonus, or other quality in order to acquire or use that feat. A hero can gain a feat and its prerequisites at the same level. If you ever lose a feat's prerequisites for any reason, you also lose the ability to use that feat.

## FEAT DESCRIPTIONS

Each description on the following pages lists the feat's name and its type, followed by any prerequisites needed to acquire or use it. The description goes on to specify the feat's effects.

### Accurate Attack (General)

When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to -5 on your damage bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack bonus. Your damage bonus cannot be reduced below +0. The changes to attack and damage

bonus are declared before you make the attack roll and last until your next action.

### All-out Attack (General)

When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to -5 on your defense bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack bonus. Your defense bonus cannot be reduced below +0. The changes to attack and defense bonus are declared before you make the attack roll and last until your next action.

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### Animism Talent (Arcane)

You can learn animism arcana. You can also use the Beast Reading, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Arcane Balance (General)

**Prerequisites:** Improved Balance, Body Control rank 6 or higher.

By exerting mental control over your body, you can walk across any surface, including water, quicksand, snow, and so forth, without sinking. Arcane Balance requires total concentration (a standard action each round) and lasts only as long as you concentrate. It requires a full-round action to achieve the proper mental state to use Arcane Balance (so you cannot usually use it to react to something like suddenly falling into water, for example).

### Arcane Focus (Arcane)

**Prerequisite:** Any arcane talent feat.

Some of your arcana are more potent than normal. Choose an arcane talent and add +1 to the Difficulty of all saving throws against your arcana of that talent. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a new arcane talent.

### Arcane Speed (General)

**Prerequisite:** Body Control rank 6 or higher.

You can short bursts of great speed. When you use this feat, your movement speed increases to ten times normal for 1 round (6 seconds). This is considered running movement (a full-round action), and it is fatiguing (Difficulty 12). Arcane speed also multiplies your jumping distances by five.

### Arcane Strike (General)

**Prerequisites:** Improved Strike, Body Control rank 8 or higher.

Your unarmed attacks are considered arcane weapons for overcoming the defenses of creatures vulnerable to such weapons.

### Arcane Training (General)

You're trained in certain arcana. Each time you acquire this feat, choose two arcana belonging to the talents you have. You can now use those arcana. The two arcana do not have to belong to the same talent.

### Arcane Weapon (General)

**Prerequisite:** Base attack bonus +6 or higher.

You can imbue any melee weapon you wield with arcane power. The weapon is considered an arcane weapon for overcoming the defenses of creatures vulnerable to such weapons. You must personally wield the weapon for it to gain this benefit.

### Arcanum (General)

You can use one arcanum without any need for the corresponding arcane talent feat or Arcane Training. You select the arcanum when you acquire this feat. Note that since Arcanum is a general feat, any character can acquire it (as opposed to the arcane talent feats, which are arcane feats and therefore available only to adepts).

When using your arcanum, your adept level in the arcanum is equal to your total level, even if you have no adept levels. Your Arcanum fulfills prerequisites requiring a certain rank of training in the arcanum, but *not* prerequisites involving a particular arcane talent. You do not gain the benefits of the arcanum's underlying talent, including untrained use of certain arcana.

You can take this feat more than once. Each time, it grants a different arcanum. Body Control and Psychic Shield in particular are common Arcanum feats in Aldis. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for more information.

### Armor Training (General)

You're trained in the proper way to move and fight while wearing armor. There are three versions of this feat, one for each type of armor: light, medium, and heavy. Each is considered a separate feat, and you must have the lesser versions before acquiring the higher-level ones, so you

## THE SEA'S TITHE

Under the howl of the storm, Chi could hear the bones of his ship breaking, and the tears he shed for it were swept away by the torrent. The storm had risen over them suddenly, tossing the fishing vessel like a child's toy. The Mother Sea was taking her tithe in blood tonight.

There was nothing to do for it. Chi had lashed himself to the rudder, the crew had taken what refuge they could, and little Wif had already been swept under. Barely audible amid the howl of the storm, Chi's wife sang songs to calm it. The storm seemed only to scream louder. They wouldn't last much longer and were too far out to hope for rescue.

"Gods!" Chi chanted and worked with weather-worn hands to undo the ropes binding him to the broken rudder of his ship. "Sweet gods have mercy and take your due from the captain, and be satisfied."

The rope slipped free, and for a moment the weather seemed to hold its breath as Chi stood tall at the stern, face turned to the wind-lashed waves.

"Chi!" his wife's voice rose fearfully above the wail of the wind. And the water came crashing down.

The dark wave hit like a hammer, cold as the grave, and washed him from the deck. He kicked his boots free, striving for the surface but couldn't tell up from down in the wild current. In the gloom of the stinging salt water were the shapes of splintered wood. His breath was knocked from him in a cloud of bubbles as lumber slammed into his side. Choking, Chi kicked weakly, knowing the struggle was useless, but unable to surrender to the sea he'd fought all his life.

Rising from the dark depths like a ghost, a face loomed in his drowning vision. He dived at it with the last of his strength, fearing the spirits of the drowned had come to drag him down. Strong hands gripped his arms and dragged him up instead. They broke the surface, and Chi dragged in a desperate breath, letting it go in a terrified shout. He thrashed in the grip of long hands and blue arms.

"What?" Chi shouted. "What?"

Around him, other faces bobbed to the surface, pale green or sea blue. One of the people cradled Wif's coughing form in her arms.

"Ai!" shouted the blue-skinned man holding Chi, voice thick with a south bay accent. "Settle down, friend. That's no way to treat them what come to rescue you!"

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

must be trained in wearing light armor, for example, before you can acquire training in medium armor. Characters without Armor Training apply their armor's check penalty (see **Armor**, page 137) to all their physical rolls and checks, including attack rolls, while wearing it. Characters with Armor Training only apply the armor's check penalty to Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Sleight of Hand, Sneak, and Swim checks.

### Beloved (General)

You are one of the fortunate few to have found true love. Work with the Narrator to define who this person is. Your beloved may be another hero or a supporting character controlled by the Narrator. In either case, you should properly roleplay your hero's feelings.

You have a +4 on saving throws and checks against effects that would sway you against your beloved in any way. Whenever you spend a Conviction point to reroll a die roll directly concerning your beloved, the roll is treated as a 20 (but not a natural 20). The Narrator decides when this is appropriate. Efforts to find a kidnapped or lost beloved, fighting your way to your beloved's side, or defending your beloved from a threat are all appropriate.

If your relationship with your beloved ends for any reason, you lose the benefits of this feat. You can only regain them by renewing your relationship. You can take this feat more than once, if the Narrator allows. Each time, it applies to a different person. Your relationship with your beloved does not have to be romantic; although, it often is. It could be any close personal relationship: parent and child, mentor and student, siblings, or boon companions, as well as lovers.

### Blind-Fight (General)

In melee combat, you suffer half the usual miss chance due to concealment (see **Concealment**, page 162). If you spend a Conviction point before rolling the miss chance, you *automatically* ignore it for that attack (you gain no other benefit from the Conviction point).

You take only half the usual penalty to speed for being unable to see; darkness and poor visibility reduce your speed to three-quarters rather than half.

### Brew Elixir (Arcane)

You can use the Craft (elixirs) skill to brew various arcane elixirs (see **Arcane Elixirs and Stones**, page 145).

### Canny Defense (General)

When unarmored and unencumbered, you add your Intelligence or Wisdom score, whichever is higher, as a dodge bonus to your Defense. This is in addition to the standard dodge bonus granted by your Dexterity. You lose this bonus while wearing armor or carrying more than a light load.

### Cleave (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Power Attack.

If you knock out, disable, or kill an opponent with a melee attack, you get an immediate extra melee attack

against another opponent within reach. You can't move before making this extra attack. The extra attack is with the same attack and attack bonus as the attack that downed your previous opponent. You can use this feat once per round.

### Comprehend (General)

**Prerequisite:** Mind Touch rank 7 or higher.

You can understand the spoken language of any creature, whether you know it or not. You do not gain the ability to speak the creature's language, only to understand it. This feat does not work with creatures lacking language, such as animals.

### Crippling Strike (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Surprise Attack.

You can surprise attack opponents with such precision that your attacks weaken them. An opponent damaged by one of your surprise attacks also takes 1 point of Strength damage. Lost Strength returns at a rate of 1 point per day.

### Cure Blindness/Deafness (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Healing Talent, trained in Cure.

You can use the Cure arcanum to remove blindness or deafness. This is a Difficulty 15 Cure check and is fatiguing. If a subject is blind and deaf, curing both requires two checks. You get one attempt to cure a subject's blindness or deafness. If it fails, you cannot try again until your Cure rank improves.

### Cure Disease (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Healing Talent, trained in Cure.

You can use the Cure arcanum to cure a subject of disease. The Difficulty of the Cure check is the disease's saving throw Difficulty. Curing disease is fatiguing, and you get only one attempt to cure any given patient of a particular disease. If you fail, you must spend a point of Conviction to try again.

### Cure Poison (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Healing Talent, trained in Cure.

You can use the Cure arcanum to cure a subject of poison. The Difficulty of the Cure check is the poison's saving throw Difficulty. Curing poison is fatiguing, and you get only one attempt to cure any given patient of a particular poison. If you fail, you must spend a point of Conviction to try again.

### Defensive Attack (General)

When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to -5 on your attack bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your dodge bonus. Your attack bonus cannot be reduced below +0. The changes to attack and dodge bonus last until your next action.

### Deflect Arrows (Arcane or Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Visionary Talent (for the arcane version of the feat).



## GENERAL FEATS

General Feat	Summary
Accurate Attack	Reduce your damage bonus to increase your attack bonus.
All-out Attack	Reduce your defense bonus to increase your attack bonus.
Arcane Balance	You can walk across any surface without sinking.
Arcane Speed	You can move with great speed in short bursts.
Arcane Strike	Your unarmed strikes are considered arcane weapons.
Arcane Training	You're trained in two arcana.
Arcane Weapon	Your melee weapons are considered arcane weapons.
Arcanum	You can use one arcanum without an arcane talent feat.
Armor Training	You know how to move and fight while wearing armor.
Beloved	You have found true love.
Blind-Fight	Half miss chance while in melee combat.
Canny Defense	Add your Int or Wis score to your Defense.
Comprehend	You can understand the spoken language of any creature.
Defensive Attack	Reduce your attack bonus to increase your dodge bonus.
Dodge	+1 to your dodge bonus.
Endurance	+4 bonus on stamina-related Con checks and Fort saves.
Exotic Weapon Training	You're trained in a particular exotic weapon.
Far Shot	Increase range increment by one-half (double for thrown weapons).
Favors	You know people who can help you out from time to time.
Fortune's Favor	Add your Cha score to your saving throws.
Great Fortitude	+2 on Fortitude saving throws.
Great Toughness	+1 on Toughness saving throws.
Heirloom	You have some inheritance left to you.
Immunity to Disease	You are immune to all diseases.
Immunity to Poison	You are immune to all poisons.
Improved Balance	No penalty for accelerated movement while balancing.
Improved Climb	No penalty for accelerated movement while climbing.
Improved Critical	Your threat range with a particular attack is doubled.
Improved Demoralize	You can make an Intimidate check as a move action.
Improved Disarm	+2 bonus when attempting to disarm an opponent.
Improved Dodge	+2 dodge bonus when taking the dodge action.
Improved Feint	You can feint as a move action.
Improved Grab	You can follow an unarmed attack with a free grapple.
Improved Initiative	You get a +4 bonus on initiative checks.
Improved Precise Shot	No penalty for less than total cover or concealment.
Improved Ranged Disarm	No penalty when making a ranged disarm attempt.
Improved Speed	+10 feet movement speed.
Improved Strike	You do lethal damage unarmed.
Improved Sunder	+4 to hit when striking held objects.

General Feat	Summary
Improved Trip	+2 bonus to trip opponents.
Improved Uncanny Dodge	You cannot be flanked.
Iron Will	+2 bonus on Will saving throws.
Lightning Reflexes	+2 bonus on Reflex saving throws.
Low-Light Vision	See twice as far in low-light conditions.
Mounted Archery	Half penalty when using a ranged weapon while mounted.
Mounted Combat	Substitute Ride check for mount's Defense.
On the Run	Move both before and after your standard action.
Point Blank Shot	+1 attack and damage with ranged weapons at 30 ft. range.
Power Attack	Reduce your attack bonus to increase your damage.
Precise Shot	You can make ranged attacks into melee with no penalty.
Pure-Hearted	+4 bonus on saves to resist corruption.
Ranged Pin	You can pin an opponent with a ranged weapon.
Rhy-bonded	You have a psychic bond to a companion.
Ride-By Attack	While mounted you can move before and after a standard action.
Run	You run at five times your normal speed.
Second Chance	You get a second save against a particular hazard.
Self-Healing	You can use Body Control to heal yourself.
Sensitive	+2 bonus on interaction skills with intelligent creatures.
Shield Training	You're trained in the proper use of shields in combat.
Skill Affinity	Add two skills to your list of favored skills.
Skill Focus	+3 bonus with a chosen skill.
Skill Training	Add two skills to your list of known skills.
Snatch Arrows	You can catch ranged weapons.
Spirited Charge	Deal double damage with a melee weapon while charging.
Talented	+2 bonus with two related skills.
Taunt	Make a Bluff check to shake a target's confidence.
Track	You can find and follow tracks.
Trackless Step	You leave no trail in natural surroundings.
Trample	You can overrun very effectively while mounted.
Two-Weapon Defense	Your two-weapon fighting style improves your Defense.
Two-Weapon Fighting	You can skillfully fight with a weapon in each hand.
Uncanny Dodge	You retain your dodge bonus when flat-footed.
Wealthy	+3 Wealth bonus.
Weapon Finesse	Add your Dex score in place of your Str score with a light weapon.
Weapon Training	You're trained in the use of martial weapons.
Wild Empathy	You can use Handle Animal as an interaction skill.
Wild Talent	You have a strong wild talent with a particular type of arcana.
Wildwalk	You can move through natural surroundings freely.

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### ARCANE FEATS

Arcane Feat	Summary	Arcane Feat	Summary
Animism Talent	You can learn animism arcana.	Imbue Unlife	You can create unliving creatures.
Arcane Focus	+1 to the save Difficulty of your arcana of one talent.	Imbue Weapon	You can make masterwork weapons into arcane weapons.
Brew Elixir	You can brew arcane elixirs.	Meditative Talent	You can learn meditative arcana.
Cure Blindness/Deafness	You can cure vision or hearing loss.	Psychic Shield Penetration	+2 bonus to overcome a target's Psychic Shield.
Cure Disease	You can cure diseases.	Psychic Talent	You can learn psychic arcana.
Cure Poison	You can neutralize the effects of poison.	Psychic Weapon	You can create a melee weapon out of psychic energy.
Deflect Arrows	You can deflect one ranged attack against you per round.	Purifying Light	You can wield light as a weapon against Shadow.
Empower Arcana	Increase the effective rank of your arcana.	Quicken Arcana	Reduce the time required to use arcana.
Erase Signature	You can erase arcane signatures.	Shaping Talent	You can learn shaping arcana.
Familiar	You have a psychic bond with a special animal companion.	Subtle Arcana	You can mute the signature of your arcana.
Greater Arcane Focus	Additional +1 Difficulty on the saves of one arcane talent.	Summon Darkfiend	You can summon darkfiends from Shadow.
Healing Talent	You can learn healing arcana.	Summon Elemental	You can summon elementals from nature.
Imbue Life	You can restore life to the dead.	Truth-Reading	You can sense when someone is lying.
Imbue Stone	You can empower arcane stones.	Visionary Talent	You can learn visionary arcana.
		Widen Arcana	Affect an area with arcana.

### EXPERT FEATS

Expert Feat	Summary	Expert Feat	Summary
Crippling Strike	Your surprise attacks inflict 1 point of Str damage.	Jack of All Trades	You can use any skill untrained.
Deflect Arrows	You can deflect one ranged attack against you per round.	Master Plan	Gain a bonus when you have a chance to prepare.
Evasion	No damage from attacks if you make your Reflex save.	Skill Mastery	Choose five skills you can take 10 with even under pressure.
Fascinate	You can capture and hold a person's attention.	Slow Fall	You can slow your fall by 10 ft. per two levels.
Improved Evasion	No damage on a successful Reflex save, half on a failed save.	Stunning Attack	You can make a stunning attack in melee.
Improvised Tools	No penalty for using a skill without the proper tools.	Suggest	You can plant suggestions into the minds of others.
Inspire	You can inspire others with your presence.	Surprise Attack	+2 damage with a surprise attack.
		Trapfinding	You can use Search to find hidden traps.

### MARTIAL FEATS

Martial Feat	Summary	Martial Feat	Summary
Cleave	Get an extra melee attack when you take out an opponent.	Greater Weapon Specialization	+2 bonus on damage with a chosen weapon.
Diehard	You automatically succeed on Con checks to stabilize.	Rage	You can go into a rage in combat.
Favored Foe	+2 bonus against a particular type of foe.	Smite Foe	You can inflict additional damage on your favored foe.
Finishing Blow	You can perform a coup de grace as a standard action.	Stunning Attack	You can make a stunning attack in melee.
Great Cleave	Like Cleave, but usable an unlimited number of times.	Weapon Focus	+1 on attack rolls with a chosen weapon.
Greater Weapon Focus	+1 bonus on attack rolls with a chosen weapon.	Weapon Specialization	+2 damage with a chosen weapon.

You can bat arrows, and similar ranged weapons, out of the air. You must have at least one hand free to use this feat. Once per round, when you would normally be hit with a ranged weapon, you may deflect it so that you take no damage from it. You must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. Attempting to deflect a ranged weapon doesn't count as an action. Unusually massive ranged weapons and ranged attacks generated by arcana can't be deflected.

#### Diehard (Martial)

When your condition is reduced to dying, you automatically succeed on the Constitution check to stabilize on the following round. Further damage can still kill you.

#### Dodge (General)

Each time you acquire this feat, your dodge bonus increases by +1. You can take this feat up to three times

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

(for a +3 dodge bonus). This additional dodge bonus is lost in the same way as your regular dodge bonus, when you are flat-footed and so forth.

### Empower Arcana (Arcane)

You can increase the effective rank of your arcana, putting more of your energy and will behind them. For each effective rank you add to an arcanum, you increase the fatigue Difficulty of using it by +2. You cannot empower an arcanum by more than +5 ranks (for +10 to the fatigue Difficulty).

### Endurance (General)

You gain a +4 bonus on Swim checks to avoid becoming fatigued and on Constitution checks or Fortitude saves to hold your breath, to avoid damage from starvation or thirst, and to avoid damage from hot or cold environments.

### Erase Signature (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Talent, trained in Second Sight.

You can erase arcane signatures, eliminating any evidence of them. You must first be able to sense a signature, then take a full-round action to erase it. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for more information.

### Evasion (Expert)

If you're exposed to an effect that allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, you suffer no damage if you make a successful saving throw.

### Exotic Weapon Training (General)

You're trained in a particular exotic weapon. Each exotic weapon requires a separate feat. For a list of exotic weapons, see **Chapter VI: Wealth and Equipment**.

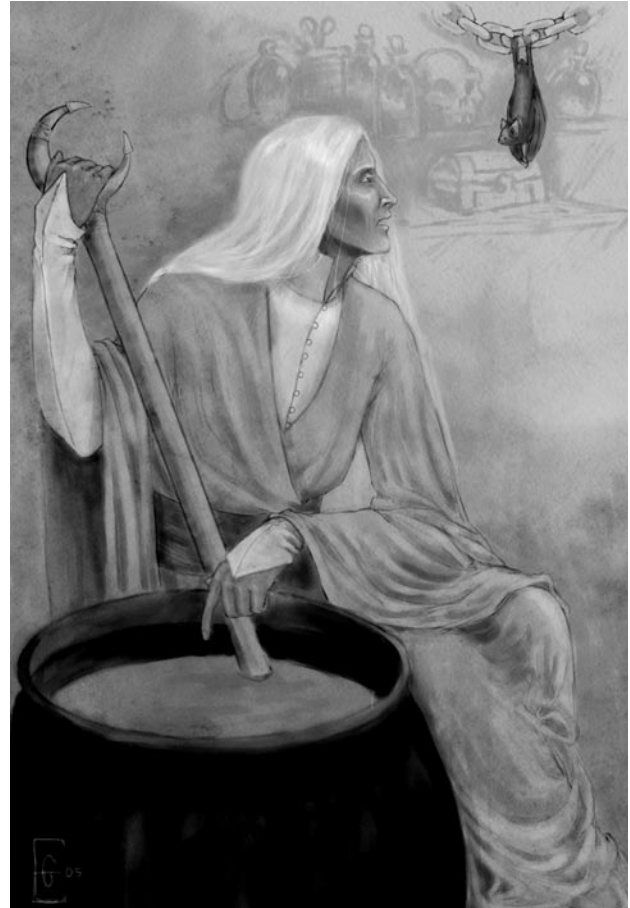
### Familiar (Arcane)

You have a psychic bond with a special animal companion. Choose an animal from the following list: bat, cat, dog, eagle, hawk, horse (light or heavy), owl, pony, rat, raven, snake (small or medium viper), weasel, or wolf. If you spend most of your time in or around the sea, you can also choose a crocodile, octopus, or shark (medium).

The familiar is an enhanced version of a normal animal, referred to as the base animal (see **Chapter IX: Bestiary** for the base animal's statistics). The **Familiar** table indicates how the base animal is enhanced.

- **Level:** This is your total level. The enhancements to the base animal are based on this, as are the familiar's base attack bonus and saving throws. A familiar's base attack bonus is the same as an expert of your level, and a familiar has good Fortitude and Reflex saves like an expert of your level.
- **Toughness:** This is a bonus to the base animal's Toughness saving throws.
- **Defense:** This is a bonus to the base animal's Defense.
- **Abilities:** This is a bonus to the base animal's Strength, Dexterity, and Intelligence scores.

- **Bonus Tricks:** The number in this column is the total number of tricks the familiar knows, in addition to any you might choose to teach it using the Handle Animal skill. These bonus tricks don't require any training time or Handle Animal checks, and they don't count against the normal limit of tricks known by the animal. You select these bonus tricks, and once chosen, they can't be changed.
- **Link:** You have a psychic link with your familiar. The two of you are always in mental contact (like a use of the Mind Touch arcanum). If some outside force, such as the Ward arcanum, interferes, you can make a Mind Touch or Wisdom check to overcome it. If your psychic link is broken, it is automatically reestablished as soon as possible. Because of your link, you can handle your familiar as a free action and push it as a move action, even if you aren't trained in the Handle Animal skill. You get a +4 bonus on interaction checks involving your familiar.
- **Share Arcana:** You can choose to have any arcanum you use on yourself also affect your familiar. This includes arcana like Body Control and Psychic Shield, which normally only affect the user. The familiar must be within 5 feet of you when the arcanum is used to receive its effects. If the arcanum has a duration other than instantaneous, it stops affecting the familiar when the familiar moves farther than 5 feet away from you and does not affect it again, even if it returns while the arcanum is still in effect.



## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### FAMILIAR

Level	Toughness	Defense	Abilities	Tricks	Special
1st-2nd	+0	+0	+0	1	Link, Share Arcana
3rd-5th	+2	+2	+0	2	Evasion
6th-8th	+4	+4	+1	3	Devotion
9th-11th	+6	+6	+1	4	Speak
12th-14th	+8	+8	+2	5	—
15th-17th	+10	+10	+2	6	Improved Evasion
18th-20th	+12	+12	+3	7	—

- *Evasion:* If a familiar is subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, it takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw.
- *Devotion:* A familiar gains a +4 bonus on Will saves against any effect influencing its mind or emotions.
- *Speak:* Your familiar can speak verbally with you as if you shared a common language. Others cannot understand your communication without the use of arcana.
- *Improved Evasion:* When subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a familiar takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and only half damage if the saving throw fails.

### Far Shot (General)

**Prerequisite:** Point Blank Shot.

When you use a projectile weapon, such as a bow, its range increment increases by half (multiply by 1.5). When you use a thrown weapon, its range increment doubles (multiply by 2).

### Fascinate (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in the chosen interaction skill.

One of your interaction skills is so effective you can capture and hold someone's attention with it. Choose Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform. Use a standard action and make a check using the interaction skill against your target's Sense Motive check or Will saving throw result (whichever has the higher bonus). If you succeed, the target pays no attention to anyone other than you. You may maintain the effect by taking a standard action each round, for a number of rounds equal to your skill rank. Any potential threat, such as an ally sneaking up on a fascinated target, grants a new Sense Motive check or Will save. Any obvious threat, such as someone drawing a weapon, automatically breaks the fascination. The fascination ends when you stop maintaining it or the target overcomes it. You may take this feat more than once. Each time, it applies to a different interaction skill.

### Favored Foe (Martial)

You have a particular type of opponent you've studied or are especially effective against. It may be a type of

## FINAL BLOW

The sorcerer's unliving army seemed endless, wearing down the queen's defenders. Jen knew every death was simply fodder for the sorcerer's dark arts. She could almost feel the evil feeding on the pain, death, fear, and rage around her. But to refuse to fight was to bow to the enemy's advances.

Jen had been battling her way through the press most of the day, and there were few who could face her skill with a blade, her training, or Kili, the rhy-cat bonded with her heart. She heard Kili wail behind her and shared his frustration as they were stalled by a wall of shambling corpses. Then the great rhy-cat bounded over Jen's head to fall on them, lashing out with razor-sharp claws to drive the zombies back. Jen pushed through the gap, and the two of them raced up the shallow slope toward the sorcerer's command post.

Arrows rained down on them, but they danced out of the way, steps light despite the wearying battle. Kili and Jen moved as if they were two parts of a single warrior, striking through the scattered enemy. Behind her, Jen heard the shouts of her companions as they saw the brilliant gleam of her sword. Battle noises rose again as the queen's army was encouraged by the rhy-bonded's glorious, and insanely risky, charge.

Risky yes, but not insane. Jen knew if they couldn't find a way to shatter the sorcerer's control over the unliving, the army would fall. Morale was already fraying. Even the bravest warriors tasted terror as they faced their former shieldmates, still bearing their death wounds. Jen prayed for just one chance against the sorcerer who had raised such evil.

The sorcerer clearly placed little trust in the living. Kili made short work of the zombie guards at the command post. Jen drove ahead, quick blows disabling or destroying those who faced her. A black tent stood at the center of the camp and was surrounded by blood-filled runes cut in the ground. The stink, magnified through Kili's senses, made Jen's stomach lurch. Horrified and enraged, she slashed at the tent, slicing a great hole in it.

The only person inside was a withered old woman, rocking back and forth and muttering to herself as if mad. Jen hesitated, and it was only Kili's warning cry, echoing in her mind and ears, that saved her life. The seemingly decrepit crone suddenly lashed out with her staff and hissed curses at Jen, who dodged aside at the last moment. Taking a spinning kick-step, Jen struck the staff away and then gathered her focus, and the white-hot Light burning within her, and struck. The sorcerer shrieked, curses cut off as the blade impaled her, a blow to smite the strongest of shadows. Jen felt the evil in the air instantly dissipate, washed away by the Light she'd called to her aid. There was a great rush of noise, as a thousand spirits were set free, and then a clatter of armor and weapons as the entire army of the unliving slumped to the ground, dead once more.



creature, like animals or the unliving; a profession, like soldiers or thieves; or any other category the Narrator approves. Especially broad categories, like all humanoids or all villains, are not permitted. You get a +2 bonus on Bluff, Intimidate, Notice, Sense Motive, and Survival checks dealing with your favored foe, as well as +2 damage on all attacks against them. You may take this feat multiple times, either choosing a different favored foe or increasing your existing bonus by +2, to a maximum of +6.

### Favors (General)

You know people who can help you out from time to time. You can call in favors from people you know by making a Diplomacy check. It might be advice, information, help with a legal matter, or access to resources. The Narrator sets the Difficulty of the Diplomacy check, based on the aid required. A simple favor is Difficulty 10, ranging up to Difficulty 25 for especially difficult, dangerous, or expensive favors. You can spend a Conviction point to automatically secure the favor. The Narrator has the right to veto any request if it is too involved or likely to spoil the story. Use of this feat requires the time and means to contact your allies and call in the favor.

### Finishing Blow (Martial)

You can perform a coup de grace in combat as a standard, rather than a full-round, action.

### Fortune's Favor (General)

**Prerequisites:** Any arcane talent feat or Arcanum or Wild Talent, Charisma +1 or higher.

Through subliminal arcane influence over the whims of chance, you add your Charisma score as a bonus to all your saving throws.

### Great Cleave (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Cleave.

This feat works like Cleave, except you can use it an unlimited number of times per round, until you miss or there are no more opponents within range of your attack.

### Great Fortitude (General)

You get a +2 bonus on all Fortitude saving throws.

### Great Toughness (General)

Each time you acquire this feat, increase your Toughness by +1. You can take Great Toughness a maximum of five times (for a +5 Toughness bonus).

### Greater Arcane Focus (Arcane)

**Prerequisite:** Arcane Focus with the chosen arcane talent.

This feat works the same as Arcane Focus, and its benefits stack with that feat. Choose an arcane talent for which you have already selected Arcane Focus; the Difficulty of saving throws against your arcana of that talent increase by an additional +1. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different arcane talent.



## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### Greater Weapon Focus (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Weapon Focus with the chosen weapon.

Choose one type of weapon for which you have already selected Weapon Focus. You gain a +1 bonus on all attack rolls with the selected weapon type. This bonus stacks with other bonuses to attack rolls, including the one from Weapon Focus. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time, it applies to a different type of weapon.

### Greater Weapon Specialization (Martial)

**Prerequisites:** Greater Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization with the chosen weapon.

Choose one type of weapon for which you have already selected Greater Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization. You gain a +2 bonus on damage with the selected weapon type. This bonus stacks with other bonuses to damage, including the one from Weapon Specialization. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a different type of weapon.

### Healing Talent (Arcane)

You can learn healing arcana. You can also use the Body Control, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Heirloom (General)

You have some inheritance left to you. Choose an item with a cost no greater than your Wealth bonus + 20 as your inheritance. The Narrator approves your choice of item. Heirlooms include things like homes, ships, jewelry, arcane items, and the like.

### Imbue Life (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Healing Talent, Cure rank 12 or higher.

You can use the Cure arcanum to restore the dead to life! The subject cannot have been dead for longer than your adept level in minutes, and you must make a Difficulty 25 Cure check, taking a minute of intense concentration. If the check succeeds, the subject's condition becomes unconscious and disabled (from which the subject may heal normally). If the check fails, you cannot attempt to revivify that subject again. An Imbue Life attempt is fatiguing, with +10 to the fatigue Difficulty (Difficulty 20 + half your Cure rank).

### Imbue Stone (Arcane)

You can empower arcane stones (see **Arcane Stones**, page 145).

### Imbue Unlife (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Healing Talent, Flesh Shaping rank 6 or higher.

This perversion of the healing gift is considered among the foulest of sorcery. The adept channels arcane power to lend unlife to the dead, creating a mockery of life. Imbue Unlife may create two kinds of unliving: mindless or intelligent.

- *Mindless:* You turn the bones or bodies of dead creatures into unliving skeletons or zombies, which obey your spoken commands. They remain animated until destroyed. (A destroyed unliving creature can't be imbued with unlife again.) Creating an unliving creature requires a minute of total concentration.

A skeleton can be created only from a mostly intact corpse or skeleton. The corpse must have bones. If a skeleton is made from a corpse, the flesh falls from its bones when it is created. A zombie can be created only from a mostly intact corpse. The corpse must be that of a creature with a true anatomy.

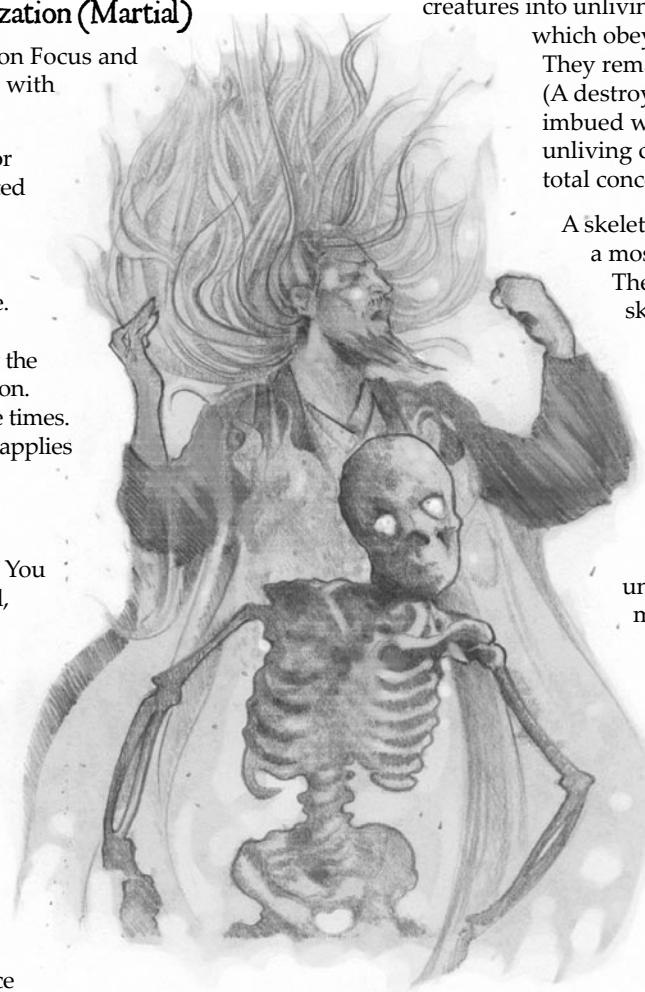
Regardless of the type of unliving you create, you can't make more levels of unliving than twice your adept level with a single use of Imbue Unlife.

The skeletons or zombies you create remain under your control indefinitely. No matter how many times you use this feat, however, you can control only four times your adept level in levels of unliving. If you exceed this, all newly created creatures fall under

your control, and any excess from previous creations become uncontrolled. (You choose which creatures are released from your control.)

- *Intelligent:* You transform a corpse into an intelligent unliving creature. Unlike the mindless unliving, this creature is not under your control; although, you can use other means, including arcana, to command it. You can create a ghost, shadow, spectre, or vampire using this feat.

Imbue Unlife is a fatiguing task, with a fatigue save Difficulty of 10 + the unliving creature's level. Subtract the subject's Corruption score from the fatigue save Difficulty, since turning a corrupt creature into one of the unliving is easier than corrupting a once pure body and spirit. Imbue Unlife is sorcery, so using it calls for a Corruption check.



## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### Imbue Weapon (Arcane)

You can make masterwork weapons into arcane weapons (see **Arcane Weapons**, page 137). Imbuing a weapon takes a week of meditation and ritual.

### Immunity to Disease (General)

**Prerequisite:** Body Control rank 5 or higher.

Your control over your body is such that you are immune to all diseases and automatically succeed on saving throws against them.

### Immunity to Poison (General)

**Prerequisite:** Body Control rank 10 or higher.

Your control over your body is such that you are immune to all poisons and automatically succeed on saving throws against them.

### Improved Balance (General)

You suffer no penalty on Acrobatics checks for using accelerated movement while balancing. Additionally, you are not flat-footed while balancing.

### Improved Climb (General)

You suffer no penalty on Climb checks for using accelerated movement while climbing. Additionally, you are not flat-footed while climbing.

### Improved Critical (General)

Your critical threat range with a particular attack is doubled. An attack that normally threatens a critical on a natural 20 instead threatens a critical on a 19 or 20, an attack that normally threatens a critical on a 19 or 20 instead threatens a critical on 17–20, and so forth. You can take this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different attack.

### Improved Demoralize (General)

You can make an Intimidate check to demoralize an opponent in combat as a move action rather than a standard action.

### Improved Disarm (General)

You have a +2 bonus on attack rolls when attempting to disarm an opponent, who does not get an opportunity to disarm you if you fail (see **Disarm**, page 164).

### Improved Dodge (General)

When you take a dodge action in combat you gain a +6 dodge bonus rather than the usual +4 dodge bonus (see **Standard Actions**, page 157). You can take this feat a second time, giving you a +8 dodge bonus when you take a dodge action.

### Improved Evasion (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Evasion.

If you're exposed to an effect that allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, you suffer no damage if you make a successful saving throw and only half damage if you fail.

### Improved Feint (General)

When making a Bluff check to feint in combat, your feint is a move action rather than a standard action.

### Improved Grab (General)

When you hit with an unarmed attack, you can immediately make a grapple check against that opponent as a free action. Your unarmed attack counts as the initial attack roll required to start grappling. The opponent must be no larger than your size category. See **Grappling**, page 164, for details.

### Improved Initiative (General)

You get a +4 bonus on initiative checks.

### Improved Precise Shot (General)

**Prerequisite:** Precise Shot.

You ignore the Defense bonus provided by anything less than total cover and the miss chance from anything less than total concealment. A target's own Defense still applies.

### Improved Ranged Disarm (General)

You have no penalty to your attack roll when making a ranged disarm attempt (see **Disarm**, page 164).

### Improved Speed (General)

Your speed increases by 10 feet while wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor and not carrying a heavy load. You can take this feat multiple times. Each time it increases your speed by 10 feet, to a maximum increase of 50 feet.

### Improved Strike (General)

You can inflict lethal damage with your unarmed strikes. Normally unarmed attacks only inflict nonlethal damage. Your unarmed attacks are also more effective than normal. Increase your unarmed striking (but not grappling) damage by +1 for every four total levels, rounding up (+1 at levels 1–4, +2 at levels 5–8, and so forth).

### Improved Sunder (General)

You have +4 to hit when you attempt to strike an object held by another character.

### Improved Trip (General)

You have a +2 bonus on Strength and Dexterity checks to trip an opponent, and they do not get an opportunity to trip you if you fail. See **Trip**, page 167, for details.

### Improvised Tools (Expert)

You can make do with whatever tools you have at hand. You ignore the –4 penalty for using a tool-dependent skill without proper tools.

### Improved Uncanny Dodge (General)

**Prerequisite:** Uncanny Dodge.

You can no longer be flanked; you react to opponents on either side of you as easily as you react to a single opponent.

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### Inspire (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Charisma +1 or higher.

You can inspire others with your presence. You can take this feat multiple times. Each time, you acquire a new type of inspiration. Using any Inspire effect requires a standard action and is considered a use of an interaction skill, even though no skill check is required. This means your subjects have to be able to hear and understand you.

You can affect a number of subjects equal to half your level (minimum of one), and the effects last for a number of rounds equal to your level. Unwilling targets make a Will saving throw (Difficulty 10 + half your level + your Charisma). You can use any combination of Inspire effects a total of once per day per two levels (so a 6th-level hero can Inspire three times a day).

Each time you take this feat, choose one of these effects:

- *Awe:* The subjects are overcome with your presence. They are dazed (taking no action, but defending normally) for one round. On each of the following rounds, subjects can make a Will save (with a cumulative +1 bonus for each save) to shake off their awe and act normally.
- *Competence:* Subjects are better able to focus on the task at hand, gaining a +2 bonus on all skill checks.
- *Complacency:* The subjects let down their guard. They suffer a –5 penalty on Notice and Sense Motive checks. This also counts as a distraction sufficient to hide using Sneak.
- *Courage:* The subjects overcome fear and doubt. They gain a +1 bonus on saves against fear and doubt and a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage. This bonus increases to +2 when you are 8th level, +3 at 14th, and +4 at 20th.
- *Fear:* Subjects are overcome with fear and anxiety. They are shaken and suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls, checks, and saving throws (except Toughness saves). If the save fails by 5 or more, they are panicked and flee from you as quickly as possible.
- *Fury:* Subjects gain the benefits of the Rage feat but are also fatigued when the rage wears off for the amount of time they raged.

### Iron Will (General)

You get a +2 bonus on all Will saving throws.

### Jack of All Trades (Expert)

You can use any skill untrained, even skills that normally cannot be used untrained; although, you must still have proper tools if the skill requires them.

### Lightning Reflexes (General)

You get a +2 bonus on all Reflex saving throws.

### Low-Light Vision (General)

You can see twice as far in low-light conditions as a normal human. Your vision is still hindered normally by total darkness.

### Master Plan (Expert)

If you have the opportunity to prepare for an encounter, you can formulate a plan to deal with it. This requires at least a few minutes, longer at the Narrator's discretion. Make an Intelligence check (Difficulty 10). If you are successful at formulating your plan, you and your allies gain a bonus on all skill checks and attack rolls in the encounter depending on the result of your check: +1 for a roll of 10–14, +2 for 15–24, and +3 for 25 or higher. You choose when during the encounter to initiate your master plan. The bonus lasts for 3 rounds, then begins decreasing at a rate of 1 per round until it is gone. You can only use this feat when you have the opportunity to prepare for an encounter in advance, not when dealing with sudden or unexpected encounters.

### Meditative Talent (Arcane)

You can learn meditative arcana. You can also use the Body Control, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Mounted Archery (General)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Combat.

The penalty you take when using a ranged weapon while mounted is halved: –2 instead of –4 if your mount is taking a double move, and –4 instead of –8 if your mount is running.

### Mounted Combat (General)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Ride.

Once per round when your mount is hit in combat, you may attempt a Ride check (as a reaction) to negate the hit. The hit is negated if your Ride check result is greater than the opponent's attack roll. (Essentially, the Ride check result becomes the mount's Defense if it's higher than the mount's regular Defense.)

### On the Run (General)

When taking a standard action you can move both before and after the action, provided your total distance isn't greater than your movement speed.

### Point Blank Shot (General)

You get a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage with ranged weapons at ranges of up to 30 feet.

### Power Attack (General)

When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your attack bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack's damage bonus. Your attack bonus cannot be reduced below +0. The changes to attack and damage bonuses are decided before you make your attack roll and last until your next action.

### Precise Shot (General)

**Prerequisite:** Point Blank Shot.

Your aim is so precise that you can make ranged attacks on an opponent engaged in melee with your allies without the usual –4 penalty.



### Psychic Shield Penetration (Arcane)

You're proficient at overcoming the resistance of Psychic Shields. You get a +2 bonus on checks to overcome a target's Psychic Shield.

### Psychic Talent (Arcane)

You can learn psychic arcana. You can also use the Mind Touch, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Psychic Weapon (Arcane)

You can create a melee weapon out of psychic energy. Take a move action to create the psychic weapon in your hand. The appearance of the weapon is up to you; its effects are the same regardless.

You wield a psychic weapon like a normal melee weapon, except you are automatically considered trained with it, and you wield it as if you had the Weapon Finesse feat (meaning you apply your Dexterity rather than your Strength modifier to attack rolls).

The psychic weapon inflicts damage equal to half your level, rounded up. Add your Wisdom modifier rather than your Strength modifier to the weapon's damage bonus. You can score a critical hit with your Psychic Weapon on a natural roll of 20, with a x2 critical multiplier.

A psychic weapon is immaterial and only affects creatures with an Intelligence score. It has no effect on non-intelligent creatures or objects, meaning it cannot sunder or even block a material weapon. Two psychic weapons affect each other normally. If your psychic weapon is somehow knocked from your grasp or sundered by another psychic weapon, you can recreate it by taking another move action.

Creating a psychic weapon requires a fatigue save with a Difficulty of 10 + the weapon's damage bonus. The psychic weapon lasts for one minute (10 rounds) after you summon it. To maintain it for another minute, make another fatigue save. Your psychic weapon disappears if you are stunned or unconscious.

### Pure-Hearted (General)

You are difficult to corrupt. You get a +4 bonus on saving throws to resist any attempt to corrupt, bribe, or otherwise turn you from the right and proper path. This includes Corruption checks (see **Corruption**, page 126). You do not get this bonus if you voluntarily indulge in corrupt activities without a very good reason. You might be able to use sorcery, for example, for a very good cause, and stave off its corruption, but the Narrator should feel free to tempt you with opportunities to stray off the straight and narrow. Also, if your Shadow nature becomes dominant (see **Natures**, page 72), you lose the benefits of this feat during that time.

### Purifying Light (Arcane)

**Prerequisite:** Light or Twilight alignment.

You can wield the power of pure light as a weapon against the forces of Shadow. This feat allows you to do two things.

First, you can cast an arcane bolt of light as a ranged touch attack. This attack does lethal damage up to half your character level (rounded up) to aberrations, darkfiends, shadowspawn, and the unliving. It does no damage to any other sort of creature.

Second, you can call forth a shining light to fill an area up to 60 feet across. Maintaining the area of pure light requires total concentration. Any aberration, darkfiend, shadowspawn, or unliving must make a Will save (Difficulty 10 + half your level + your Charisma score) in order to enter the area of light, and another Will save each round to remain there. A failed save means the creature cannot enter the area and must leave immediately if it is already inside it.

Both uses of Purifying Light are tiring, requiring a Will save (DC 10 + half your level) to avoid becoming fatigued. You make the fatigue save after each bolt of light and after you stop maintaining an area of light.

**Special:** If you ever change alignment to Shadow, or if you have a Corruption score, you lose the ability to use Purifying Light until your alignment changes back and you shed any Corruption.



### Quicken Arcana (Arcane)

Once per round, you can use an arcanum that normally requires a full-round action as a standard action, or an arcanum that normally requires a standard action as a move action. You can't use arcana more quickly than a move action using this feat. The fatigue Difficulty of the quickened arcanum increases by +8.

### Rage (Martial)

You can fly into a berserk rage as a free action, gaining +2 Strength, +2 to your Fortitude and Will saves, and a -2 penalty to Defense. While raging you can't use skills or powers requiring concentration or patience, and you can't take 10 or take 20 on checks. Your rage lasts five rounds, after which you are fatigued for five rounds (see **Fatigue**, page 161). You can use Rage once per day at 1st level and an additional time per day for every fourth character level (twice at 4th level, three times at 8th level, and so on).

Each additional time you take this feat you gain an additional +1 Strength and +1 Fortitude and Will save bonus to a maximum of +4 Strength and +4 to saves total (the -2 penalty to Defense and other effects remain the same).

Instead of increasing your Rage benefits, taking the Rage feat an additional time can extend the duration of your rage by 5 rounds. This also extends the duration of your post-rage fatigue by 5 rounds.



### Ranged Pin (General)

You can pin an opponent using a ranged weapon to nail a bit of clothing to a nearby surface. The target must be within 5 feet of a wall, tree, or similar surface. Make a normal attack roll against the target. If your attack is successful, the target is pinned. To break free, the victim must take a move action and make a successful Strength or Escape Artist check (Difficulty 15).

### Rhy-bonded (General)

You are rhy-bonded: either a humanoid (human, vata, or sea-folk) bonded to a rhydan or vice versa. This feat assumes your companion (regardless of race) is a Narrator character, but nominally under your control during the game. Two heroes who are rhy-bonded to each other must each take this feat.

You have a psychic link with your companion. The two of you are always in mental contact (like a use of the Mind Touch arcanum). If some outside force, such as the Ward arcanum, interferes, you can make a Mind Touch or Wisdom check to overcome it. If your psychic link is broken, it is automatically reestablished as soon as possible.

If your companion is a Narrator character, he or she has a total level two levels lower than your own (with a minimum of 1st level). Your companion gains levels as you do but is always at least two levels lower than you.

### Ride-By Attack (General)

When you are mounted, you can move both before and after you take a standard action, provided your total distance isn't greater than your mount's movement speed.

### Run (General)

When running, you move five times your normal speed (if wearing medium, light, or no armor and carrying no more than a medium load) or four times your speed (if wearing heavy armor or carrying a heavy load). If you make a jump after a running start, you get a +4 bonus to your Jump check.

### Second Chance (General)

Choose a particular hazard, such as falling, being tripped, triggering traps, being mentally controlled (or affected by another specific arcanum), or a particular skill with consequences for failure. If you fail a saving throw against that hazard or a check with that skill, you can immediately make another roll and use the better of the two results.

Unlike spending a Conviction point, you do not treat rolls below 10 as a result of 10. You only get one second chance against any given save or task, and the Narrator decides if a particular hazard or skill is an appropriate focus for this feat. You can acquire this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different hazard or skill.

### Self-Healing (General)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Body Control.

You can use Body Control like the Cure arcanum but only to affect yourself. You're subject to the normal limitations of using Cure on yourself, and you can acquire other feats

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

with Cure as a prerequisite, but they also only work on yourself.

### Sensitive (General)

You're particularly sensitive to the emotions and attitudes of other creatures. You gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Sense Motive checks when dealing with creatures with Intelligence –3 or higher. You do not gain this bonus against a creature trained in the Psychic Shield arcanum. The bonus stacks with bonuses to interaction skills granted by the use of the Heart Reading arcanum.

### Shaping Talent (Arcane)

You can learn shaping arcanum. You can also use the Move Object, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcanum untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Shield Training (General)

You're trained in the proper use of shields in combat. You can use a shield and take only the standard penalties. Characters lacking Shield Training take their shield's armor check penalty on attack rolls and on all Strength- and Dexterity-based checks.

### Skill Affinity (General)

Choose two skills to add to your list of favored skills. If you already know one or both of these skills, your rank in them increases to your favored skill rank based on your level.

### Skill Focus (General)

Choose a known skill. You get a +3 bonus on all checks involving that skill. You can acquire this feat multiple times. Each time you do, it applies to a different known skill.

### Skill Mastery (Expert)

Choose five of your known skills. When making checks with those skills, you can take 10 even when distracted or under pressure. This feat does not allow you to take 10 with skills that do not normally allow you to do so.

### Skill Training (General)

Each time you take this feat, you gain two additional known skills (favored or not, your choice). If you choose only one non-favored skill, you gain it as a known favored skill.

### Slow Fall (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Jump rank 5 or higher.

You can slow a fall if within arm's reach of a wall or similar structure. Subtract 10 feet from the fall per two total levels before determining damage, with falls of 0 or less doing no damage. At 20th level you can use a nearby wall to slow your descent and fall any distance without harm.

### Smite Foe (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Favored Foe.

You can charge a blow with considerable power. You can use Smite Foe once per day per four total levels, rounded

up. When you strike a favored foe in melee, you can activate your smite: add your Charisma score to your attack roll and half your total level to your damage. If you accidentally smite an opponent who is not actually a favored foe, there is no additional effect, and the smite use is wasted.

### Snatch Arrows (General)

**Prerequisite:** Deflect Arrows.

When using the Deflect Arrows feat, you may catch the weapon instead of just deflecting it. Thrown weapons can immediately be thrown back at the original attacker (even though it isn't your turn) or kept for later use.

### Spirited Charge (General)

**Prerequisite:** Ride-By Attack.

When mounted and using the charge action, you deal double damage with a melee weapon (or triple damage with a lance).

### Stunning Attack (Expert or Martial)

When you make an unarmed attack, you can choose not to inflict normal damage. Instead, the target makes a Fortitude save against a Difficulty of 10 plus your unarmed damage bonus. A successful save results in no effect. A failed save means the target is dazed for one round. Failure by 5 or more means the target is stunned for one round, and failure by 10 or more renders the target unconscious.

### Subtle Arcana (Arcane)

You can use your arcane abilities with less chance of notice. When using arcanum you can mute their signature. Characters using Second Sight cannot detect your skill use nor can its use be detected later using Second Sight. A subtle arcanum increases the fatigue Difficulty by +2.

### Suggest (Expert)

**Prerequisite:** Fascinate (for the same skill).

You can use an interaction skill to plant a suggestion in the mind of a subject you have fascinated using the Fascinate feat. This works like a use of the Suggestion arcanum, except you must interact with the target and mental contact is not required. The Difficulty of the target's Will save is 10 + half your level + your Charisma score.

- *Mass Suggest:* If you take this feat a second time for the same interaction skill, you can make your suggestion simultaneously to any number of subjects you have already fascinated. You must make the same suggestion to everyone.

### Summon Darkfiend (Arcane)

**Prerequisite:** Shaping Talent, 6th-level adept or higher.

You can summon darkfiends, beings from the depths of Shadow, to serve you. This requires a check of 1d20 + adept level + your Charisma score with a Difficulty of 10 + twice the darkfiend's level. Summoning a 5th-level darkfiend is Difficulty 20, for instance. Summon

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

Darkfiend is fatiguing (Difficulty 10 + the darkfiend's level). The summoned creature will do your bidding for a number of days equal to your adept level before returning to Shadow. Summon Darkfiend is sorcery and requires a Corruption check. See **Chapter IX: Bestiary** for more on darkfiends.

### Summon Elemental (Arcane)

**Prerequisite:** Shaping Talent, 6th-level adept or higher, trained in appropriate elemental shaping arcanum.

You can summon an elemental, a spirit which animates a particular element. This requires a check using the appropriate shaping arcanum for that element (Water Shaping for water elementals, Fire Shaping for fire elementals, and so forth) with a Difficulty equal to 10 + twice the elemental's level. Summoning a 5th-level elemental is Difficulty 20, for instance. Summon Elemental is fatiguing (Difficulty 10 + the elemental's level). The summoned elemental will do your bidding for a number of rounds equal to your adept level before disappearing, leaving behind only the now-inert element it used for its body. You must have some amount of the desired element nearby to summon an elemental of that type. See **Chapter IX: Bestiary** for more on elementals.

### Surprise Attack (Expert)

When you make a surprise attack (see **Surprise Attack**, page 166), you do an additional +2 damage. You cannot surprise attack an opponent you cannot perceive (due to concealment or some other effect), and opponents immune to critical hits suffer no additional damage. Opponents who cannot be surprise attacked are also immune. You can take this feat multiple times, increasing your damage bonus by +2 each time, to a maximum of +10.

### Talented (General)

Choose two known and related skills, such as Survival and Sneak or Acrobatics and Climb, or two specialties from a specialty skill, such as Craft or Knowledge. You gain a +2 bonus with both skills. You can take this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to two different skills.

### Taunt (General)

You can shake an opponent's confidence with clever taunts. Use a standard action and make a Bluff check against your target's Sense Motive check or Will saving throw, whichever has the higher bonus. If you succeed, your target is shaken for one round (–2 to attack rolls, checks, and saving throws, but not Toughness saves). If you fail, you may try again on the following round. Targets get a +1 on their resistance roll per Bluff attempt against them in the same encounter (successful or not).

You can take this feat a second time, allowing you to make the Bluff skill check as a move action rather than a standard action.

### Track (General)

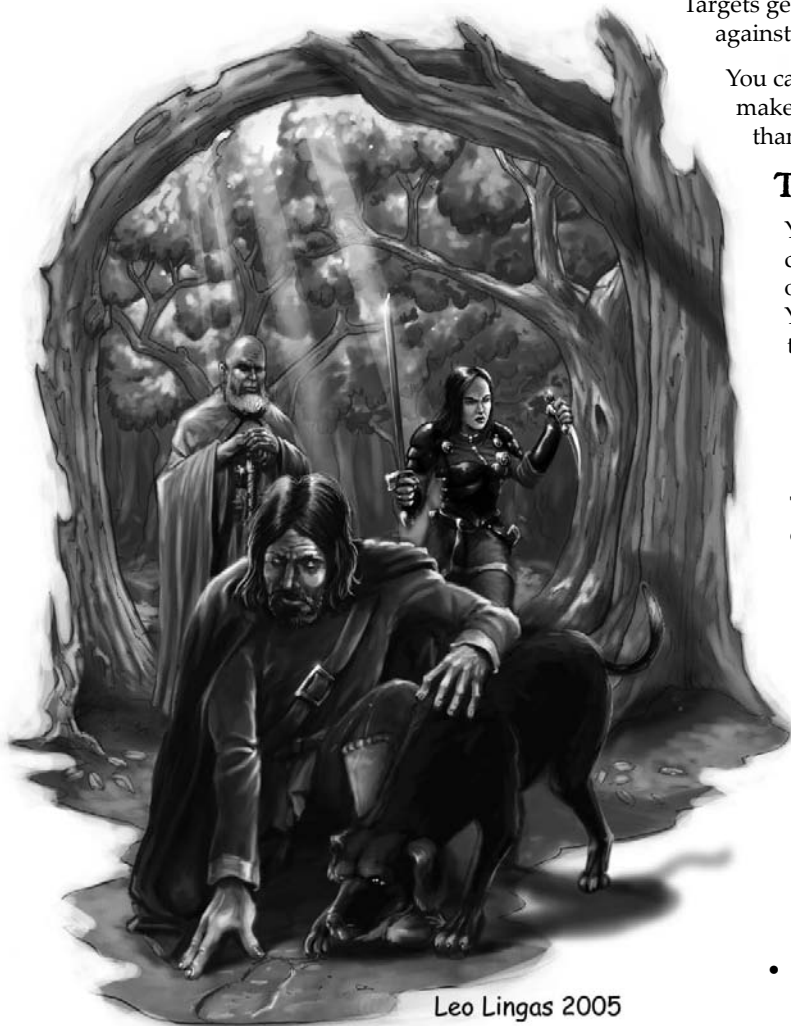
You can find and follow tracks left by other creatures. To find tracks or to follow them for one mile requires a successful Survival check. You must make another Survival check each time the tracks become difficult to follow.

You move at half your normal speed while tracking (or at your normal speed with a –5 penalty on the check, or at up to twice your normal speed with a –20 penalty on the check). The Difficulty depends on the surface, as given on the surface table.

#### TRACKING DIFFICULTY

Surface	Difficulty
Very soft ground	5
Soft ground	10
Firm ground	15
Hard ground	20

- *Very Soft Ground:* Any surface (fresh snow, thick dust, wet mud) that holds deep, clear impressions of footprints.
- *Soft Ground:* Any surface soft enough to yield to pressure, but firmer than wet mud or fresh snow, in which a creature leaves frequent but shallow footprints.



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## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

- **Firm Ground:** Most normal outdoor surfaces (such as lawns, fields, woods, and the like) or exceptionally soft or dirty indoor surfaces (thick rugs and dirty or dusty floors). The creature might leave some traces (broken branches or tufts of hair), but it leaves only occasional or partial footprints.
- **Hard Ground:** Any surface that doesn't hold footprints at all, such as bare rock or an indoor floor. Most streambeds fall into this category, since any footprints left behind are obscured or washed away. The creature leaves only traces (scuff marks or displaced pebbles).

Several modifiers may apply to the Survival check, as given on the condition table.

### TRACKING MODIFIERS

Condition	Difficulty Modifier
Every three creatures in the group being tracked	−1
Size of the largest creature being tracked:	
<i>Fine</i>	+8
<i>Diminutive</i>	+4
<i>Tiny</i>	+2
<i>Small</i>	+1
<i>Medium</i>	+0
<i>Large</i>	−1
<i>Huge</i>	−2
<i>Gargantuan</i>	−4
<i>Colossal</i>	−8
Every 24 hours since the trail was made	+1
Every hour of rain since the trail was made	+1
Fresh snow cover since the trail was made	+10
Poor visibility (apply the largest modifier)	
<i>Overcast or moonless night</i>	+6
<i>Moonlight</i>	+3
<i>Fog or precipitation</i>	+3
Tracked party hides trail and moves at half speed	+5

If you fail a Survival check, you can retry after 1 hour (outdoors) or 10 minutes (indoors) of searching.

Without this feat, you can use Survival to find tracks, but you can follow them only if the Difficulty is 10 or lower. Alternatively, you can use the Search skill to find a footprint or similar sign of a creature's passage using the Difficulties given above, but you can't use Search to follow tracks.

### Trackless Step (General)

**Prerequisite:** Trained in Sneak and Survival.

If you choose, you leave no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked.

### Trample (General)

**Prerequisite:** Mounted Combat.

When you attempt to overrun an opponent while mounted, your target may not choose to avoid you. Your mount may make one hoof attack against any target you knock down, gaining the standard +4 bonus on attack rolls against prone targets.

### Trapfinding (Expert)

You're skilled in finding and dealing with various sorts of traps. You can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a Difficulty higher than 20 (without this feat, you can only find traps with Difficulties lower than 20). Most well-constructed traps have a Difficulty of at least 20. Finding an arcane trap has a Difficulty of 25 or higher.

You can use Disable Device to disarm even arcane traps. This has a Difficulty of 25 or higher. If you beat a trap's Difficulty by 10 or more on a Disable Device check, you can study the trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it without actually disarming it.

### Truth-Reading (Arcane)

**Prerequisites:** Sensitive, ability to use the Heart Reading or Mind Touch arcana.

You can sense when someone is lying to you. When interacting with a creature of Intelligence −3 or higher, you automatically sense when the creature tells you a deliberate lie. You can do this a number of times equal to your Wisdom score in any given conversation.

Detecting further lies in the same conversation is very fatiguing (Difficulty 10, +1 per additional statement you verify). You do not detect half-truths, lies of omission, or things the creature believes are true (even if they are not). Only actual conscious lies are revealed.

### Two-Weapon Defense (General)

**Prerequisite:** Two-Weapon Fighting.

Your two-weapon fighting style improves your Defense. When wielding two weapons (but not while unarmed), you gain a +1 bonus to your Defense. When fighting defensively or using the dodge action, this bonus increases to +2.

### Two-Weapon Fighting (General)

**Prerequisite:** Dexterity +2 or higher.

You can skillfully fight with a weapon in each hand, giving you one extra attack per round. The attack roll with each weapon is at −4. If the off-hand weapon is a light weapon, then the penalty is reduced to −2.

### Uncanny Dodge (General)

You are especially attuned to potential danger, whether through training, experience, or some innate arcane talent. You retain your dodge bonus to Defense when surprised, flat-footed, or surprise attacked, so long as you are able to react (are not helpless, bound, unconscious, and the like).

## — CHAPTER IV: FEATS —

### Visionary Talent (Arcane)

You can learn visionary arcana. You can also use the Psychic Shield, Second Sight, and Visions arcana untrained. See **Chapter V: Arcana** for details.

### Wealthy (General)

Each time you select this feat, increase your Wealth bonus by +3.

### Weapon Finesse (General)

When wielding a light weapon you can add your Dexterity score instead of your Strength score to your attack rolls.

### Weapon Focus (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Weapon Training.

Choose one type of weapon when you choose this feat. You can choose unarmed strike or grapple as your weapon for purposes of this feat in addition to actual physical weapons. You gain a +1 bonus on all attack rolls you make using the selected weapon. You can gain Weapon Focus multiple times. Each time you do, it applies to a new type of weapon.

### Weapon Specialization (Martial)

**Prerequisite:** Weapon Focus with the chosen weapon.

Choose one type of weapon for which you have already selected the Weapon Focus feat. You deal +2 damage

when using this type of weapon. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you do, it applies to a new type of weapon.

### Weapon Training (General)

You are trained in the proper use of martial weapons. Characters lacking Weapon Training suffer a –4 penalty on attack rolls with a martial weapon.

### Widen Arcana (Arcane)

When using arcana that normally affect a single target, you can affect an area with a radius of up to twice your rank in feet. The arcanum affects all targets in the area normally. You must still meet any requirements for range, including mental contact, if the arcanum requires it. Make a single check and compare the results to each target in the area. Targets save individually against the arcanum's effects. The widened arcanum's fatigue Difficulty increases by +6.

### Wild Empathy (General)

You have a special connection with animals. You can use the Handle Animal skill like Diplomacy to change the attitude of an animal by interacting with it. Unlike a normal use of Diplomacy, you do not have to speak a language the animal understands, and Wild Empathy can affect creatures with an Intelligence less than –3. You can also use your Bluff and Gather Information skills normally with animals. You communicate your intent through gestures and body language and learn things by studying animal behavior.

### Wild Talent (General)

You have a strong talent for a particular type of arcana: animism, healing, meditative, psychic, shaping, or visionary. You can use any of your talent's arcana untrained, not just the arcana anyone with the appropriate arcane talent can use untrained. However, you have less control over the arcana of your Wild Talent. Whenever you are under stress, you must make a Will saving throw against a Difficulty of 10 + half your total level. If you fail, you are stunned and one of your arcana (the Narrator's choice) goes off randomly. The arcanum has its normal effect, but the Narrator chooses its target and parameters (if any). You suffer normal fatigue from this wild use of arcana and cannot take any other action on the round it manifests.

If you acquire the arcane talent feat for the same talent as your Wild Talent, you gain control over it. You can still use any arcana of that talent untrained, but you do not have to make Will saves to control your talent under stress.

### Wildwalk (General)

**Prerequisite:** Animism Talent.

You are experienced at traversing the wilder reaches of Aldea, and can move through any sort of natural surroundings at your normal speed, unimpeded by things like undergrowth, difficult terrain, snow, mud, and similar difficulties. You're still affected by wind, rain, and other weather conditions, however.





The world of *Blue Rose* is one of wonder, and part of that wonder are the arts arcane or *arcana*. Arcana are divided into six different arts: animism, healing, meditative, psychic, shaping, and visionary. Within each of these arts, or talents, are various arcana, applications of the arts.

The shadow side of arcana is *sorcery*. Sorcery promises power but at the price of the corruption of Shadow. The use of sorcery led to the rise of the Sorcerer Kings centuries ago, and no one has forgotten their terrible rule.

## LEARNING AND USING ARCANA

Arcana are the province of the adept role. Using various feats, adepts acquire arcane talents and learn different arcana. To learn specific arcana, an adept must have the appropriate arcane talent feat. There are six of these feats: Animism Talent, Healing Talent, Meditative Talent, Psychic Talent, Shaping Talent, and Visionary Talent. The Arcane Training feat grants access to additional arcana.

Non-adepts can use arcana through the Arcanum and Wild Talent feats.

### Using Arcana

Whether an arcana user is an adept or not, the rules for using arcana are the same. In the following sections, *adept* refers to any arcana user, regardless of role.

### Action

Wielding arcana is primarily an act of will. Adepts often gesture or speak when using their arcana, but this is not required. An adept can use arcana with nothing more than intense concentration. Using an arcanum takes a particular amount of time, given in the arcanum's description. Most arcana require a standard or move

action in combat. Others require a full-round action or more. Arcana are subject to the normal rules regarding actions (see **Action Types**, page 154).

### Arcana Rank

Arcana have ranks just like skills. Adepts have a rank of adept level + 3 in all trained arcana. Heroes of other roles have a rank of total level + 3, divided by 2 and rounded down, in all trained arcana. Mixed role heroes use the best of the two arcana ranks available to them. Arcana acquired through the Arcanum feat treat your total level as your adept level. For example, a 5th-level adept with Arcane Training in two arcana has rank 8 (5 + 3) in both of them. A 6th-level expert with Arcane Training in the same arcana would have a rank of 4 (6 + 3 divided by 2, rounded down). Arcana have key abilities, also like skills, which are added to the arcanum's rank when making checks.

### Arcana Checks

Some arcana call for a check using the bonus of the arcanum. This is the same as any other sort of check: a die roll plus the arcanum's bonus (rank + key ability) against a Difficulty. The check result often determines the

effectiveness of the arcanum. Some arcana do not require checks; they operate automatically.

## Attack Rolls

Some arcana require an attack roll to affect a target, particularly in the midst of combat. This is a normal attack roll, except adepts always apply their Dexterity modifier, even for a melee attack roll to touch a target in combat (a successful touch is more a matter of agility and speed than sheer strength). Any ability requiring an attack roll also takes at least a standard action and counts as the adept's attack for that round.

## Saving Throws

Arcana that affect other creatures allow a saving throw. The Difficulty for all arcana saves is 10 + half the adept level (round down) + the arcanum's related ability modifier. For example, the Difficulty for the Will saving throw against the telepathic abilities of a 9th-level adept with Charisma +3 is 17. Adepts can choose to deliberately lower the save Difficulty of an arcanum by reducing their effective level to as low as 1. This generally makes the arcanum less effective, but makes it easier to resist any fatigue it may cause (see **Fatigue** later in this section).

Subjects of arcana can choose not to make a saving throw, accepting the arcanum's effects. This choice is made *before* the subject knows what the effect is! Thus it's wise to be careful about allowing people to use arcana on you, unless you know and trust them.

## Range

Specific limitations on the range of an arcanum are noted in its description.

Some arcana transcend space, and even time: they can affect targets anywhere. However, using arcana against targets out of sight and unfamiliar to the adept is difficult, effectively limiting the range of most arcana to somewhat familiar targets or things in the adept's line of sight. If an arcanum's description doesn't specify a range, assume it is line of sight.

## Familiarity

An important factor for some arcana is how familiar the subject is to the adept. Psychic arcana in particular are generally more effective on subjects well known to the adept. In arcana descriptions that mention a familiarity modifier, determine the relationship between the adept and the target on the **Familiarity** table and apply the appropriate modifier to the Difficulty of the arcanum check. For example, using Mind Touch on a somewhat familiar target increases the Difficulty by +15.

## Mental Contact

Some arcana refer to the adept being in mental contact with the subject. This involves the use of the Mind Touch arcanum, allowing the adept to contact another character's mind. Subjects in mental contact are considered present to the adept in terms of familiarity, regardless of the physical distance between them (no increase in Difficulty).

## FAMILIARITY

Familiarity	Difficulty	Definition
Present	+0	A subject visible to the naked eye or in physical or mental contact with the adept.
Very Familiar	+5	A subject currently seen or sensed through another arcanum, a close friend or relative, an item made by the adept or owned and used for at least a year, a place where the adept spent at least a year's time.
Familiar	+10	A subject the adept has been acquainted with for at least three months, a casual friend.
Somewhat Familiar	+15	A subject the adept has been acquainted with for at least a week, reading someone else's memory of a familiar subject.
Casually Familiar	+20	A subject the adept has been acquainted with only briefly, reading someone else's memory of a somewhat familiar subject.
Slightly Familiar	+25	A subject the adept has only seen briefly or had described in detail.
Unfamiliar	—	A subject totally unfamiliar and unknown to the adept and out of the adept's line of sight or physical contact. Arcana cannot be used on unfamiliar subjects.

Mental contact does not count as line of sight for arcana requiring it. For example, many shaping arcana require line of sight and therefore can't be used through mental contact.

## Multiple Subjects

Although it is easiest to use an arcanum on a single subject at a time, an adept can affect multiple subjects with the same arcanum at once: magically lifting multiple objects, making mental contact with multiple minds, and so forth. This requires time, skill, and effort to achieve.

A character attempting to use an arcanum on more than one subject at once increases the arcanum and fatigue check Difficulties by +2 for every additional target. So affecting three subjects at once is +4 Difficulty and +4 on the fatigue check. If the arcanum does not require a check, then the saving throw Difficulty is reduced by 2 per additional subject. Additionally, the ability requires a full-round action to use. If the arcanum normally requires a full-round action or more, then it requires an additional full-round action.

The various subjects must all be within range. If the ability requires mental contact, then the user must be in mental contact with all subjects. The Narrator has the final say on



whether an arcanum can affect more than one subject at a time and, if so, how many.

## Fatigue

The use of some arcana is fatiguing, putting a strain on the adept's mind and body. When an adept uses a fatiguing arcanum, make a fatigue save. This is a Will saving throw against Difficulty 10 plus half the arcanum's rank (round down).

A successful save results in no ill effect on the adept. A failed save means the adept suffers a level of fatigue (see **Fatigue**, page 161). A few arcana cause more than one level of fatigue on a failed fatigue save.

More rapid use of arcana in a short period of time makes it harder and harder to overcome fatigue. Every time an adept uses a fatiguing arcanum in an hour's time, the Difficulty of any successive fatigue save for using arcana (of any type) increases by 1. For example, an adept uses a fatiguing arcanum, making a fatigue save against the normal Difficulty. A minute later, the adept uses another fatiguing arcanum. This time the Difficulty of the fatigue save is 1 higher. Use of certain arcana in rapid succession can tire out even the most powerful adepts.

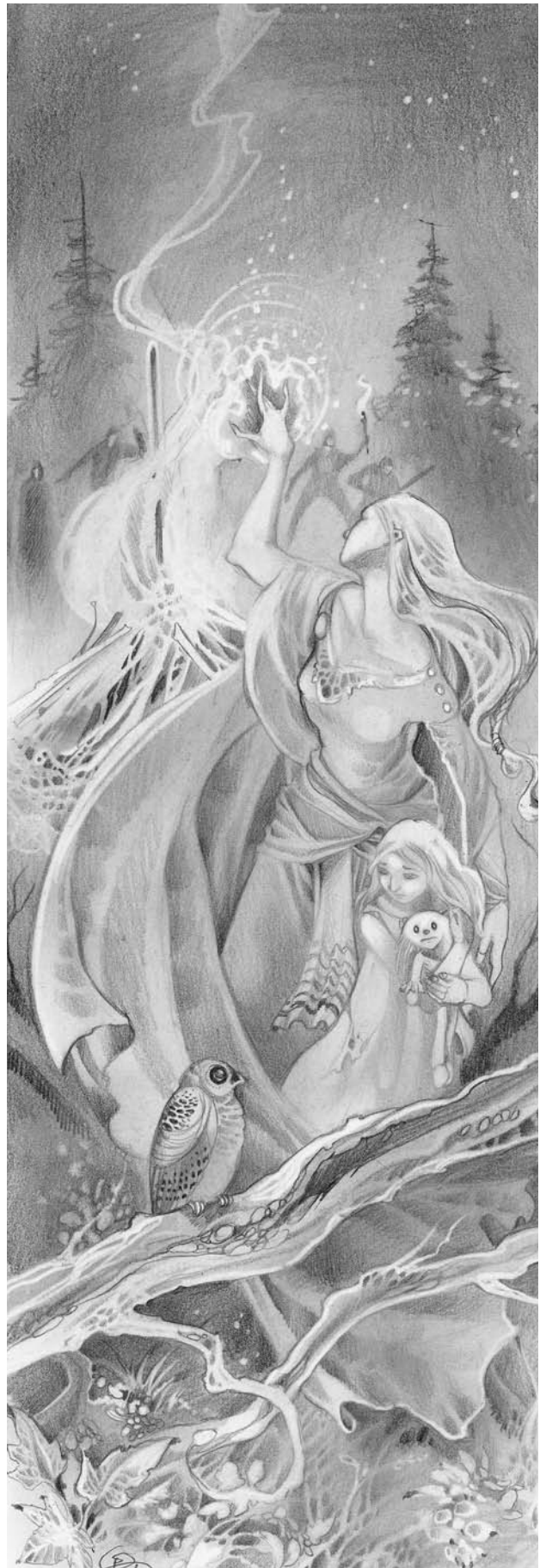
To eliminate the cumulative fatigue save modifier, an adept must refrain from using any fatiguing arcana for at least an hour. The adept doesn't need to physically rest during that time, just avoid any further uses of fatiguing arcana.

## Maintaining Arcana

Some arcana can be maintained; that is, their effects can continue at the same level achieved by the initial use. This requires at least a modicum of concentration on the adept's part. Maintaining an effect is a free action each round.

Using another arcanum (or another application of the same arcanum) while maintaining one or more arcana increases the Difficulty of the arcanum check and the fatigue save by +2 (regardless of the total number of arcana maintained).

- **Concentration:** An adept maintaining one or more arcana who is distracted must make a Concentration check with Difficulty  $10 + 2$  per arcanum the adept is maintaining beyond the first. Additional modifiers may apply for damage and other distracting conditions (see the Concentration skill). A failed Concentration check means the adept stops maintaining all arcana, the effects of which end. Optionally, the Narrator may rule that the adept stops maintaining one arcanum for every two points the Concentration check missed the Difficulty (rounding up). An adept unable to take any actions (due to being stunned, for example) cannot maintain arcana.
- **Total Concentration:** Some arcana require *total concentration* to maintain. The adept must devote a standard action each round to maintain the ability. Concentration checks and Difficulties remain the same.



## ARCANA DESCRIPTIONS

The arcana in this section follow the format for skill descriptions, with a few modifications. On the line below an arcanum's name is the arcane talent required to learn it.

A few arcana may be used untrained, meaning any character with the right arcane talents can use them. This is noted following the required arcane talent. Otherwise, arcana cannot be used untrained, regardless of your arcane talents. If an arcanum causes fatigue, it's listed as fatiguing. If the arcanum is sorcery, this is also listed.

A description of what the arcanum does follows, along with the game rules for the arcanum.

Each description ends with the time it takes to use the ability. In some cases, this varies depending on the conditions when the arcanum is used.

### Battle Dance (Wis)

*Meditative or Visionary, Fatiguing*

You can improve your ability in combat by sensing the flow of events around you. A Battle Dance check grants you a bonus on attack rolls or Defense (see the accompanying table). Each round you can split the bonus between the two as you see fit. You can select a bonus lower than what you get on the table to reduce fatigue, which is Difficulty 10 + the bonus.

#### BATTLE DANCE

Result	Bonus
Up to 4	+1
5–14	+2
15–24	+3
25–34	+4
35+	+5

**Time:** Activating Battle Dance is a move action. The bonus lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute).

### SORCERY

Some arcana draw on emotions like fear, rage, and hate or seek to impose the wielder's will on another. These powers—and the state of mind required to use them—open the adept up to the influence of Shadow.

Any arcanum listed as sorcery in its description requires the user to make a Corruption check (see **Corruption**, page 126) whenever the arcanum is used. Simply knowing sorcery does not cause Corruption, but using it does. Some Light- and Twilight-aligned adepts learn and use sorcery sparingly for what they consider good causes, but they still risk falling into Shadow.

### Beast Link (Wis)

*Animism, Fatiguing*

When invoking this arcana, you forge a temporary psychic connection with an animal, allowing you to perceive whatever it perceives, using its senses. Make a Beast Link check with a Difficulty of 10, modified by familiarity. If successful, you can perceive with the animal's senses and communicate with it psychically. The animal is not under your command; although, you may be able to convince it, using your other skills and arcana, to do certain things for you.

**Time:** Beast Link is a move action. It requires concentration to maintain.

### Beast Messenger (None)

*Animism*

You encourage a Small-sized or smaller animal to go somewhere carrying a message for you. The animal cannot be one tamed or trained by someone else.

Choose an animal in your line of sight. It advances toward you and awaits your bidding. You can mentally impress upon the animal a certain place known to you or an obvious landmark. You can also attach some small item or note to the messenger. The animal messenger then travels to the designated location as quickly as possible under its own power and waits there for up to one day per adept level.

While waiting, the messenger allows others to approach it and remove any scroll or token it carries. The intended recipient gains no special ability to communicate with the animal or read any attached message (if it's written in a language he or she doesn't know, for example).

**Time:** Beast Messenger is a standard action.

### Beast Reading (Wis)

*Animism, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can sense the emotions and moods of beasts. This works like Heart Reading does on people, except it only affects animals.

### Beast Speech (None)

*Animism*

You can communicate psychically with animals. You are able to ask questions of and receive answers from animals; although, the arcanum doesn't make them more friendly or cooperative than normal. Furthermore, wary or cunning animals are likely to be terse or evasive, while the more stupid ones make inane comments. If an animal is friendly toward you, it may do some favor or service that you ask of it.

**Time:** Beast Speech is a free action.

# — CHAPTER V: ARCANA —

## ARCANA

Name	Talent	Ability	Fatigue?	Untrained?	Take 10/20
Battle Dance	Med/Vis	Wis	Yes	No	10
Beast Link	Animism	Wis	Yes	No	10
Beast Messenger	Animism	—	No	No	—
Beast Reading	Animism	Wis	No	Yes	10
Beast Speech	Animism	—	No	No	—
Beast Summoning	Animism	Cha	Yes	No	10
Beast Trance	Animism	Cha	No	No	10
Bliss	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Body Control	Heal/Med	Wis	No	Yes	10
Calm	Psychic	Cha	No	No	—
Cold Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10
Cure	Healing	Wis	Yes	No	10
Dominate*	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Dominate Beast*	Animism	Cha	Yes	No	—
Drain Vitality*	Healing	Wis	No	No	10
Earth Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10
Enhance Other	Healing	Wis	Yes	No	10/20
Enhance Self	Ani/Med	Wis	Yes	No	10/20
Enhance Senses	Ani/Med/Vis	Wis	No	No	10/20
Fire Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10
Flesh Shaping*	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10/20
Gentle Beasts	Animism	Cha	No	No	—
Harm*	Healing	—	Yes	No	—
Heart Reading	Psychic	Wis	No	Yes	10
Heart Shaping	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Illusion	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	10
Light Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10/20
Manipulate Object	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10
Mind Probe*	Psychic	Wis	Yes	No	10
Mind Reading	Psychic	Wis	No	No	10
Mind Shaping*	Psychic	Wis	Yes	No	10/20
Mind Touch	Psychic	Cha	No	Yes	10
Move Object	Shaping	Int	Yes	Yes	10
Nature Reading	Animism	Wis	No	No	10/20
Object Reading	Visionary	Wis	No	No	10
Pain*	Heal/Psy	Cha	Yes	No	—
Plant Shaping	Ani/Sha	Int	Yes	No	10/20
Psychic Blast*	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Psychic Shield	Any	Wis	No	Yes	—
Scrying	Visionary	Wis	Yes	No	10
Second Sight	Any	Wis	No	Yes	10/20
Sense Minds	Psychic	Wis	No	No	10/20
Sleep	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Sorcerer's Grasp*	Shaping	—	Yes	No	—
Suggestion	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	—
Visions	Visionary	Wis	No	Yes	10
Ward	Psychic	Cha	Yes	No	10
Water Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10/20
Wind Shaping	Shaping	Int	Yes	No	10/20

\* This arcanum is sorcery.

## Beast Summoning (Cha)

*Animism, Fatiguing*

You can summon a nearby animal or animals. You can summon up to twice your adept level in animals, with no individual animal having a greater level than your adept level. Make a Beast Summoning check against a Difficulty of 10 + the total level of animals summoned. A successful check means the animals hear your call from up to your adept level in miles away and come to you as quickly as they can under their own power. You can choose to limit your summons to a particular type of animal (only eagles or wolves, for example) or even to a particular animal known to you. In the latter case, the check Difficulty is 10 + a familiarity modifier and the range is unlimited (although it may take the animal some time to arrive).

Summoned beasts are not under your control in any way and can choose to depart, if they wish. You can use other arcana to help convince the animals to aid you or perform certain tasks.

**Time:** Beast Summoning is a standard action. You must concentrate to maintain it until the summoned beasts arrive.

## Beast Trance (Cha)

*Animism*

This arcanum works like the Fascinate feat except you use your arcanum rank in place of an interaction skill, and it only affects animals.

**Time:** Beast Trance is a standard action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Bliss (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing*

While in mental contact with another creature, you can project blissful feelings of pleasure. The creature must make a Will saving throw or be dazed for 1 round, taking no action, but defending normally. Since Mind Touch is a move action, you can make mental contact and use Bliss in the same round.

**Retry:** Yes, but the target gets a cumulative +1 bonus to the Will save for each new attempt in the same encounter.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject.

**Time:** Bliss is a standard action.

## Body Control (Wis)

*Healing or Meditative, Can Be Used Untrained*

You have great mental control over your body. You can make a Body Control check for a number of different tasks.

- **Sleeping:** A successful Body Control check allows you to sleep in difficult conditions, including bad weather, noise, buzzing insects, and so forth.
- **Slow Breathing:** You can deliberately slow your rate of breathing so that you consume less air, vital

## BODY CONTROL

Task	Difficulty
Sleep normally despite distractions	5
Sleep normally despite difficult distractions	10
Slow breathing to half normal rate	10
Ignore pain or injury	Recovery Difficulty
Body awareness	15
Resist fear	15
Speed recovery	15
Slow breathing to one-quarter normal rate	15
Willpower	15
Feign death	20
Overcome disease	Disease's Difficulty
Overcome poison	Poison's Difficulty

in situations where there is a limited amount of breathable air available.

- **Ignore Pain or Injury:** You can ignore the effects of pain or injury while awake or asleep. If you choose, nothing can wake you, as long as you make a successful Body Control check.
- **Body Awareness:** You can become very aware of your body while asleep or concentrating. This allows you to sense if you are touched or moved in any way while using Scrying, for example. If you are damaged, subtract the attack's damage bonus from the Difficulty of the Body Control check.
- **Resist Fear:** You can override your body's natural response to fear. With a successful Body Control check, you gain a new saving throw against any fear effect, with a +4 bonus.
- **Speed Recovery:** You can speed your natural healing process, gaining a recovery check in half the normal time, so long as you spend that time in a deep, healing trance.
- **Willpower:** With a Difficulty 15 Body Control check, you can continue to act while disabled without your condition worsening to dying. You still suffer additional damage normally.
- **Feign Death:** By exerting supreme control over your body, you can enter a deep trance almost indistinguishable from death. A Notice check with a Difficulty equal to your Body Control check is required to determine whether you are still alive. Effects that detect life still work normally on you. While in this state, you also suspend the effects of any disease or poison in your system for as long as you remain in the trance.
- **Overcome Disease or Poison:** By concentrating for a full round, you can substitute your Body Control check for your Fortitude saving throw against a disease or poison in your system. This usually



means you can only use Body Control against the secondary effects of a disease or poison, unless it is slow acting and you are warned soon enough to use Body Control to resist the initial effects (in the Narrator's judgment).

**Time:** Body Control is a full-round action. The effects last as long as you concentrate (requiring only a free action, but possibly a Concentration check, depending on circumstances).

## Calm (Cha)

*Psychic*

You can drain intense emotion, calming those around you. The target creature must make a Will saving throw or be drained of all extremes of emotion. The creature is calm and incapable of taking violent action (although it can defend itself) or doing anything else destructive. Any aggressive action or damage against the subject breaks the effect. A successful Will save means the creature acts normally. This arcanum suppresses (but does not dispel) arcana relying on emotion, such as Heart Shaping. While the Calm effect lasts, the suppressed arcanum has no effect.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the target.

**Time:** Calm is a standard action. It requires concentration to maintain and lasts for 1 round per Calm rank after your concentration ends.

## Cold Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can freeze things with the power of your mind. With a Difficulty 15 Cold Shaping check, you can lower the temperature of an area about a foot across, enough to deal cold damage. A targeted creature suffers cold damage equal to half your Cold Shaping rank (round down). Protective clothing has no effect.

You can freeze roughly a gallon of water into solid ice in a round. For every 2 points that you exceed the Difficulty, you affect an additional cubic foot (or gallon of liquid).

You can also decrease the size and damage potential of a fire by 1 point (and 1 square foot) for every 2 points your Cold Shaping check exceeds Difficulty 10. A fire reduced to a size or damage potential of 0 or less goes out permanently (this requires a Cold Shaping check with Difficulty 12 for a normal square foot flame). Otherwise, the reduction in the fire requires concentration.

**Time:** Cold Shaping is a standard action.

## Cure (Wis)

*Healing, Fatiguing*

You can heal injuries by touch. With a full-round action, you can do any one of the following:

- Grant a subject an immediate recovery check using your Cure check result in place of a Constitution check. If the recovery check fails, you must wait the normal recovery time for that condition or spend a Conviction point before trying again.

- Stabilize a dying character with a Difficulty 10 Cure check.

You can use Cure on yourself. You can't cure your own staggered or unconscious conditions or stabilize yourself while dying, since you have to be conscious and able to take a full-round action to use the ability. You can use Cure to cure your own disabled condition, but doing so is a strenuous action. If your recovery check is successful, you suffer no ill effects. If it is not, however, your condition worsens to dying.

**Retry:** See above. Otherwise you can retry freely.

**Time:** Cure is a full-round action.

## Dominate (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You can mentally control another creature's actions. The target makes a Will saving throw. If the save fails, you control the target's actions. You can force the subject to perform any action you wish, within the limits of his abilities. You're aware of what the subject experiences via your mental link, but you do not receive direct sensory impressions from him. Subjects forced to take actions against their nature receive a new saving throw with a bonus of +1 to +4, depending on the nature of action. A successful save breaks your control.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject.

**Time:** Dominate is a standard action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Dominate Beast (Cha)

*Animism, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

This arcanum works like Dominate, except it only affects animals.

## Drain Vitality (Wis)

*Healing, Sorcery*

You can drain someone's vital energy by touch. Make a Drain Vitality check against the result of the target's Will save. If you win, the target suffers a level of fatigue, while you regain a level of fatigue. You cannot drain targets once they are unconscious.

**Special:** You can only take 10 on a Drain Vitality check if the target is helpless.

**Time:** Drain Vitality is a standard action.

## Earth Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can shape and move earth and stone. An Earth Shaping check can have one of the following effects:

- *Move Earth* (Difficulty 10): You move dirt (soil, clay, loam, sand), possibly collapsing embankments, moving hillocks, shifting sand dunes, and so forth. However, in no event can rock formations be collapsed or moved. The area to be affected determines the time required and the Difficulty. Every 150-foot square (up

## — CHAPTER V: ARCANA —

to 10 feet deep), takes 10 minutes and increases the Difficulty by 5. The maximum area, 900 feet by 900 feet, takes an hour and is Difficulty 40.

Earth Shaping does not violently break the surface of the ground. Instead, it creates wavelike crests and troughs, with the earth reacting with glacierlike fluidity until the desired result is achieved. Trees, structures, rock formations, and such are mostly unaffected except for changes in elevation and topography. This effect cannot be used for tunneling and is too slow to trap or bury creatures unless they are helpless for the entire time the earth is moved.

- *Soften Earth* (Difficulty 10): All natural, undressed earth or stone softens. Wet earth becomes thick mud, dry earth becomes loose sand or dirt, and stone becomes soft clay that is easily molded. You affect a 10-foot square area to a depth of 1 to 4 feet, depending on the toughness or resilience of the ground at that spot. Each +5 increase in Difficulty affects another 10-foot square. Dressed or worked stone cannot be affected. Earth and stone creatures are not affected either.

A creature in mud must succeed on a Reflex save or be caught helpless for one round. A creature that succeeds on its save can move through the mud at half speed. Loose dirt is not as troublesome as mud, but all creatures in the area move at only half their normal speed and can't run or charge. Stone softened into clay does not hinder movement, but it does allow characters to cut, shape, or excavate areas they may not have been able to affect before.

While this arcanum does not affect dressed or worked stone, cavern ceilings or vertical surfaces such as cliff faces can be affected. Usually, this causes a moderate collapse or landslide as the loosened material peels away from the face of the wall or roof and falls.

A moderate amount of damage can be dealt to a structure by softening the ground beneath it, causing it to settle. However, most well-built structures are only damaged by this, not destroyed.

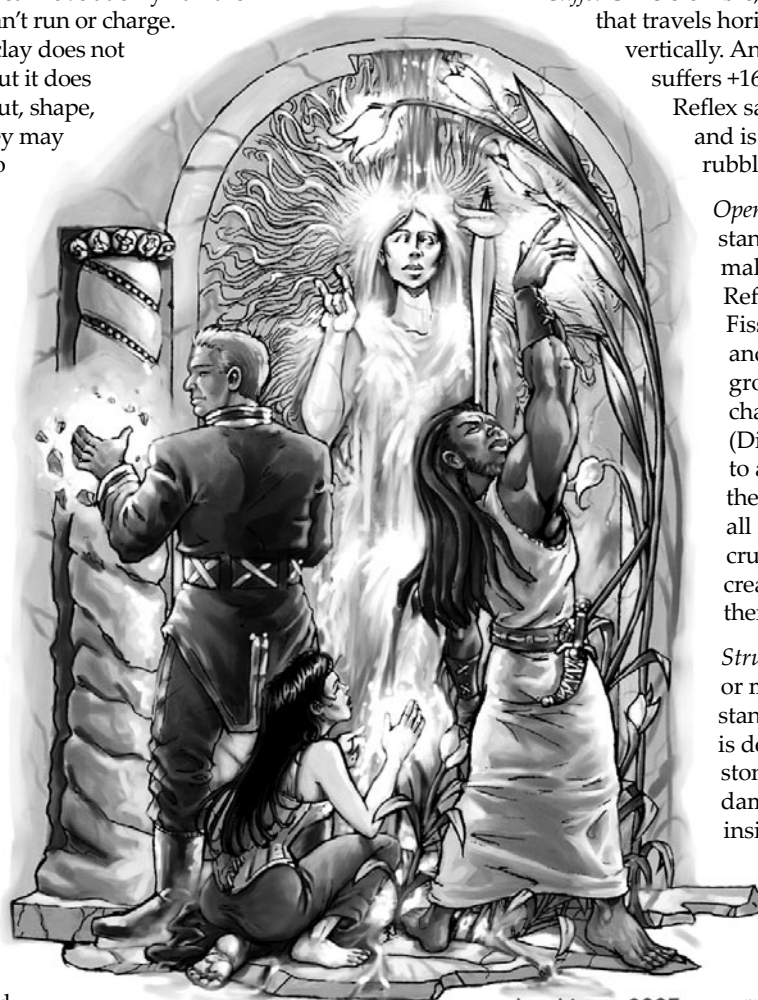
- *Stonecrafting* (Difficulty 10): You can mold stone into any shape you wish. You can affect 10 cubic feet of stone. Each additional cubic foot increases the Difficulty by 1 (so at Difficulty 30 you can affect 30 cubic feet). The Narrator may require a Craft (sculpting or stonecutting) check to achieve precise results. You perform stone crafts in minutes instead of the hours of normal Craft projects. A complex project, which normally takes 24 hours, would therefore take 24 minutes.
- *Earthquake* (Difficulty 30): An intense but highly localized tremor rips the ground. The shock knocks creatures down, collapses structures, opens cracks in the ground, and more. The effect lasts for 1 round, during which time creatures on the ground can't move or attack. An adept must make a Concentration check (Difficulty 20) to use arcana that round. The earthquake affects all terrain, vegetation, structures, and creatures in an area with a radius of adept level times 10 feet. The specific effects depend on the nature of the terrain.

*Cave, Cavern, or Tunnel:* The roof collapses, inflicting +16 damage to any creature caught under the cave-in (Difficulty 15 Reflex save for half damage) and pinning them beneath the rubble.

*Cliffs:* Cliffs crumble, creating a landslide that travels horizontally as far as it fell vertically. Any creature in its path suffers +16 damage (Difficulty 15 Reflex save for half damage) and is pinned beneath the rubble.

*Open Ground:* Each creature standing in the area must make a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or fall down. Fissures open in the earth, and every creature on the ground has a 25 percent chance to fall into one (Difficulty 20 Reflex save to avoid a fissure). On the round after the quake, all fissures grind shut, crushing and killing any creatures trapped within them.

*Structure:* Any wooden or masonry structure standing on open ground is destroyed. Heavier stone buildings are damaged. Anyone caught inside a collapsing structure takes +16 damage (Difficulty 15 Reflex save for half damage) and is pinned beneath the rubble.



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*River, Lake, or Marsh:* Fissures open underneath the water, draining it away from that area and forming muddy ground. Soggy marsh or swampland becomes quicksand for the duration of the spell, sucking down creatures and structures. Anyone in the area must make a Difficulty 15 Reflex save or sink down in the mud and quicksand. At the end of the round, the rest of the body of water rushes in to replace the drained water, possibly drowning those caught in the mud.

*Pinned beneath Rubble:* Any creature pinned beneath rubble takes +2 nonlethal damage per minute. Unconscious characters make a Difficulty 15 Constitution check each minute to avoid +2 lethal damage.

**Time:** See description.

## Enhance Other (Wis)

*Healing, Fatiguing*

This works like Enhance Self, except you can enhance others' abilities by touch, and you cannot enhance your own abilities.

**Special:** The subject of this arcanum must also make a fatigue saving throw (same Difficulty as the adept) when its duration runs out, using Fortitude rather than Will, to represent the strain placed on the subject's body.

## Enhance Self (Wis)

*Animism or Meditative, Fatiguing*

You can improve your Strength or Dexterity for a short time. An Enhance Self check adds a bonus to either your Strength or Dexterity score for 1 minute (10 rounds). The result of the check indicates the amount of the bonus. If desired, you can split the bonus equally between Strength and Dexterity.

ENHANCE SELF	
Difficulty	Bonus
15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5

**Time:** Enhance Self is a standard action. The bonus lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute). If you take 20 when making this check, you spend 2 minutes and suffer a +20 increase in the fatigue Difficulty.

## Enhance Senses (Wis)

*Animism, Meditative, or Visionary*

You can enhance your normal sensory abilities. An Enhance Senses check adds a bonus to your Notice, Search, and Sense Motive checks. It also adds to skill checks made to find or follow tracks. The result of the check indicates the amount of the bonus.

## ENHANCE SENSES

Difficulty	Bonus
10	+2
15	+4
20	+6
25	+8
30	+10
35	+12

**Time:** Enhance Senses is a move action. The bonus lasts for 10 minutes. If you take 20 when making this check, you spend 2 minutes and this arcanum becomes *fatiguing* at a +20 Difficulty.

## Fire Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can mentally start and control fires. You can make a Fire Shaping check to ignite a fire, to increase the size of an existing fire, or to create light but not heat.

- **Ignite Fire:** You can set any flammable object in your line of sight on fire as a standard action with a successful Fire Shaping check (Difficulty 15). Targets must make a Reflex saving throw (Difficulty 15) to avoid taking +2 fire damage. The target must save each round. A successful save means the fire goes out; although, you can reignite it with another standard action and successful Fire Shaping check. A character on fire can automatically extinguish the flames by dousing in water. Spending a full round rolling on the ground grants a +4 bonus on the Reflex saving throw. In addition to using it as an attack, you can use the arcanum to light candles (up to a dozen candles in a 5-foot square with a single skill check), torches, hearth fires, and so forth. At the Narrator's discretion, lighting small fires, like candles, is not fatiguing.
- **Increase Fire:** You can increase the size and intensity of a fire. The Difficulty of the Fire Shaping check is 10 + 1 per square foot of increase. Every two square feet increase the fire's damage potential by +1. The fire maintains its increased size and damage as long as you concentrate, and it can even burn in the absence of fuel; although, smothering still puts it out. While you maintain an increased flame, a victim does not get a Reflex saving throw to put the fire out (although it can still be extinguished by dousing with water), and the fire does additional damage based on your Fire Shaping check. So, an adept who makes a Difficulty 16 Fire Shaping check can spread a fire over an additional 6 square feet and it does +3 damage.
- **Light:** You can create a glowing spot of arcane fire that sheds light but no heat, illuminating a 20-foot radius. This requires a move action and a Difficulty 5 Fire Shaping check. You can increase the radius of the illumination by increasing the Difficulty of the check; each +5 Difficulty increases the radius of the illumination by 10 feet. The point of light moves

where you direct it within your line of sight, as a move action. Creating light is not fatiguing.

**Time:** Igniting fires and increasing flames are standard actions. Creating or moving light is a move action.

## Flesh Shaping (Int)

*Healing, Fatiguing, Sorcery (see below)*

You can shape and mold flesh as if it were clay in your hands. The subject must be either willing or helpless for the entire duration of your work (you can use Flesh Shaping on yourself). You make Flesh Shaping checks to alter a subject's physical features. You cannot change body mass or size, other than a few feet more or less in height by resizing the subject's bones. You can sculpt physical features largely at will. The Difficulty and time required for Flesh Shaping is shown in the table.

### FLESH SHAPING

Difficulty	Time	Task
15	1 minute	Alter facial features or other minor cosmetic features.
20	10 minutes	Alter extensive cosmetic features or overall shape.
30	1 hour	Extensive alterations to shape, duplicating exact appearance.

Treat your Flesh Shaping check result like a Disguise check for purposes of determining if someone notices the change. Among other things, Flesh Shaping can provide alterations in eye, hair, and skin color, even to the point of tattoo-like patterns. It can greatly enhance or diminish physical appearance. Any alterations are permanent, unless reversed through this arcanum or the Cure arcanum, either of which must exceed the original check result.

Flesh Shaping interferes with the natural form of a creature and is a distinctly unnatural process. Using this arcanum, especially on an unwilling subject, is considered sorcery. At the Narrator's discretion, an absolutely selfless and harmless use of Flesh Shaping might provide a bonus on the check to avoid Corruption, or even no check at all, but these instances should be rare.

Adepts believe the Sorcerer Kings used advanced Flesh Shaping arts to create various shadowspawn. Fortunately, these secrets appear to have been lost since the Sorcerer Kings were overthrown.

**Special:** Taking 20 increases the fatigue save Difficulty by +20.

**Time:** See table.

## Gentle Beasts (Cha)

*Animism*

This arcanum works like Calm, except it only affects animals.

## Harm (None)

*Healing, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You can inflict injury with a mere touch, disrupting the body's natural balance. Make a touch attack against the target. Harm does lethal damage equal to half your Harm rank, rounded down, which the subject saves against normally.

**Time:** Harm is a standard action.

## Heart Reading (Wis)

*Psychic, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can sense the emotions of other creatures. A Heart Reading check allows you to determine the subject's emotional state. The target gets a Will save to resist. Whether you succeed or fail, the subject does not know you are reading his emotions.

If the target's save fails, you get a general idea of his emotions and mood. This grants you a bonus on the next interaction skill check you make against the subject within the next 10 rounds (1 minute). The bonus is based on your Heart Reading check result.

### HEART READING

Result	Interaction Bonus
Up to 4	+1
5–14	+2
15–24	+3
25–34	+4
35+	+5

**Retry:** You can only use Heart Reading on a subject once during the same encounter or scene.

**Time:** Heart Reading is a free action. The bonus lasts 10 rounds (1 minute) or until you make an interaction skill check against the target, whichever comes first.

## Heart Shaping (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery (see below)*

You can impose emotions on others. The target makes a Will saving throw. If the save fails, you can impose any one of the following emotional states:

- *Despair:* The target suffers a –2 morale penalty on saving throws, attack rolls, checks, and damage. Despair dispels the effects of hope.
- *Fear:* The target flees from the object of its fear (chosen by you). Fear dispels the effects of rage. It also immediately ends a use of the Rage feat.
- *Friendship:* The target's attitude shifts to the next more positive attitude (hostile to unfriendly, unfriendly to indifferent, and so forth). See **Social Actions**, page 147. Creatures involved in combat continue to fight back normally, however. Friendship dispels the effects of hatred.



- **Hatred:** The target's attitude shifts to the next more negative attitude (indifferent to unfriendly, unfriendly to hostile, and so forth). See **Social Actions**, page 147. Hatred dispels the effects of friendship.
- **Hope:** The target gains a +2 morale bonus on saving throws, attack rolls, checks, and damage. Hope dispels the effects of despair.
- **Rage:** The target gains the effects of the Rage feat. They are compelled to fight, heedless of danger. Rage does not stack with the Rage feat or with itself. Rage dispels the effects of fear.

**Special:** Using Heart Shaping to inspire emotions other than Friendship and Hope is sorcery and requires a Corruption check.

**Time:** Heart Shaping is a standard action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Illusion (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing*

You can fool the senses of others. Make an Illusion check with a Difficulty based on the complexity of the illusion, consulting the table. If successful, the illusion appears to the subject. The illusion exists solely in the subject's mind, so it can be of any size; creating the illusion of something small is just as easy as creating the illusion of something huge.

ILLUSION	
Complexity	Difficulty
Illusion affects a single sense	10
Illusion affects two senses	15
Illusion affects all senses	20
Simple (random noise, static image, and the like)	+0
Complex (coherent sound, moving images, and the like)	+5
Very Complex (multiple overlapping sounds or images)	+10

Since the illusion isn't real, it cannot produce any real effects. It cannot cause damage, support weight, provide nutrition, illuminate darkness, or provide protection from the elements. Thus, characters fall through an illusory bridge or floor if they try to walk on it, and although they can appear to eat, and taste, illusory food, it has no nutritional value.

Characters encountering an illusion do not get a saving throw against it until they study it carefully or interact with it in some fashion. For example, if characters encounter a section of illusory floor, they would receive a saving throw if they stopped and examined the floor, poked at it, and so forth. Likewise, if an illusory monster attacks the characters, they get a saving throw because they are interacting with the illusion.

A successful saving throw against an illusion reveals it to be false, but a translucent after-image remains. For example, a character making a successful saving throw against an illusory section of floor knows the floor isn't real and isn't safe to walk on, and can see what lies below it, but he can still note where the illusion is.

A failed Will saving throw means the character fails to notice anything is amiss. A character faced with incontrovertible proof that an illusion isn't real needs no saving throw. Someone who falls through an illusory floor knows something is amiss. A character who communicates this information to others gives them a +4 bonus on saving throws against the illusion.

**Retry:** No. You can attempt to affect the same character after some time has passed, but not in the same encounter or scene.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with a target to use Illusion.

**Time:** Illusion is a full-round action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Light Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can mentally control light. With a successful check, you can make your outline blurred and indistinct or even become invisible.

You can create realistic three-dimensional images of light occupying up to a 10-foot cube. Each additional 10-foot cube the image occupies increases the Difficulty by 5. Subjects seeing the image get a Will saving throw to realize it is not real if they have any reason to suspect it, such as the fact that the image makes no noise.

You can also create a point of light illuminating a 20-foot radius, which you can move at will anywhere in your line of sight as a move action. For each 10 feet you add to the radius of illumination, the Difficulty increases by 5.

You can create light effects anywhere in your line of sight, and they last as long as you maintain them. Creating multiple effects at once (such as becoming invisible while also creating the illusion you are elsewhere) count as maintaining multiple arcana.

LIGHT SHAPING	
Task	Difficulty
Illuminate	5 (+5 per additional 10-foot radius)
Visual Illusion	10 (+5 per additional 10-foot cube)
Blur (20% miss chance)	15
Blur (50% miss chance)	20
Invisibility	25

**Special:** The basic level of illuminate (Difficulty 5) is not fatiguing.

**Time:** Light Shaping is a standard action.

## Manipulate Object (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can manipulate objects at distance with a pair of invisible, intangible arcane hands. Your arcanum has the same Dexterity as you, while lifting the object has the same Difficulty as Move Object, except you cannot increase the weight lifted by suffering fatigue (Manipulate Object's fatigue comes from the extra precision required).

You can use your normal skills via Manipulate Object, but you are at a –2 penalty for having to operate remotely, and you can't perform tasks at all if you can't see your target.

- **Arcanely Wielding Weapons:** An adept may wield a melee weapon using Manipulate Object. Picking up the weapon is a move action. Attacking with it is a standard action. Concealment is determined by the attacker's and defender's positions, while cover is determined by the weapon's and defender's positions. The attacker makes a normal attack roll, but with a –4 penalty for the difficulty in controlling the weapon from afar, and he adds his Intelligence score to the attack roll, rather than Strength or Dexterity. The weapon deals its normal damage with no modification for Strength. An adept can take the Exotic Weapon Training feat in arcanelly wielded weapons to eliminate the –4 penalty to hit.

An arcanelly wielded weapon can be struck normally by sunder attacks (see **Sunder**, page 166). Attempts to disarm the adept by knocking the weapon out of his arcane grasp are resolved by opposed attack rolls as normal or an opposed attack roll and Manipulate Object check, if the adept's Manipulate Object bonus is greater than his attack bonus.

**Time:** Manipulate Object is a move action. The skill use lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute) and requires concentration to maintain.

## Mind Probe (Wis)

*Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You can mentally probe a subject's mind for information. You must be in mental contact with the subject. Make a Mind Probe check against the result of the target's Will save. If successful, you can ask any one question and receive the answer from the target's mind. If the target doesn't know the answer, then you know that. Especially personal or guarded information grants the target a +1 to +5 bonus on the Will save, while information the subject doesn't consciously know (because it is subconscious or forgotten due to amnesia, for example) grants a +5 to +10 bonus on the Will save.

You can continue to ask questions, one per round, for as long as you maintain your Mind Probe. Each question requires a new skill check, an additional Will save, and another fatigue check.

**Retry:** Yes, but the target gets a cumulative +1 bonus to the Will save for each new attempt in the same encounter.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject.

**Time:** Mind Probe is a standard action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Mind Reading (Wis)

*Psychic*

You can read another creature's thoughts. Make an opposed check against the result of the target's Will save. If successful, you can read the target's surface thoughts (whatever the target is presently thinking). Mind Reading transcends language; you comprehend the target's thoughts whether or not you share a common language. If you fail your Mind Reading check, you cannot read the target's mind.

If you can interact with your subject, a successful Bluff check against the target's Sense Motive check causes the subject to think consciously about a particular piece of information you're looking for, such as a password or name, allowing you to pluck it from the subject's surface thoughts.

**Retry:** Yes, but the target gets a cumulative +1 bonus to the Will save for each new attempt in the same encounter.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject.

**Time:** Mind Reading is a standard action. It requires concentration to maintain.

## Mind Shaping (Wis)

*Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery (see below)*

Mind Shaping allows you to remove psychic influence or to alter memories and behavior. Make a Mind Shaping check, with the Difficulty determined by the task.

- **Alter Psyche:** You can make changes in the subject's mind. The Difficulty is based on the extent of the change you wish to make.

### MIND SHAPING: ALTER PSYCHE

Difficulty	Alteration	Time
15	Alter a single unimportant fact or brief recollection, about 5 minutes worth of memory.	1 full round
20	Alter a single fact or an hour's worth of memory.	1 minute
25	Alter a single significant fact, such as the name of the subject's spouse, or a day's worth of memory.	10 minutes
30	Alter a deeply personal fact, such as the subject's name or alignment, or a week's worth of memory.	1 hour
35	Alter up to a month's worth of memory.	6 hours
40	Alter up to a year's worth of memory. Give the subject an entirely new personality, complete with false memories, or erase the subject's entire memory, causing total amnesia.	10 hours

False or altered memories can cause dissonance within the subject's mind, depending on how well they fit into the subject's other memories. If the subject notices a conflict between the false and true memories (Narrator's discretion), she gets an additional Will save to shake off the effect and regain her true memory. She gains a bonus of +1 to +4 on the save, depending on how strong the dissonance is between the true and false memories.

- *Remove Psychic Influence:* Make a Mind Shaping check with a Difficulty equal to the check result of the psychic arcanum currently affecting the subject. If you succeed, that arcanum no longer affects the subject. Note this only removes the effects of ongoing arcana, not permanent aftereffects. This means you could use Mind Shaping to remove a Dominate or Illusion effect, but not to restore damage caused by a psychic attack (for that, use the Cure arcanum). You can undo the effects of Mind Shaping used to alter the subject's mind by equaling or exceeding the Mind Shaping check used to make the alterations.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject. Taking 20 requires twenty times the usual time. Generally, this means the subject must be cooperative, unconscious, or restrained in some way. Taking 20 increases the fatigue check Difficulty by +20 as well.

Mind Shaping is sorcery when used for personal gain or to cause harm (in the Narrator's estimation). If there is any doubt whatsoever, the Narrator should warn the player when a particular use of the arcanum may cause Corruption.

**Retry:** If you fail a Mind Shaping check, you must wait at least 24 hours before attempting the same task on the same subject.

**Time:** Removing psychic influence is a full-round action. For altering a person's psyche, see the table.

## Mind Touch (Cha)

*Psychic, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can establish contact with another mind. The base Difficulty is 10, modified by familiarity. If the subject has a Psychic Shield, you have to make a separate Mind Touch check to overcome it. An unwilling subject also gets a Will saving throw to avoid contact. If the save is successful, no contact is made.

If you do not want the subject to know you are making mental contact, you can make a separate opposed Mind Touch check against the subject's Wisdom, Second Sight, or Psychic Shield check (whichever has the highest bonus). If you win, the subject is unaware of your attempt. If the subject wins, she is aware of your attempt (whether you succeed or fail in actually establishing contact).

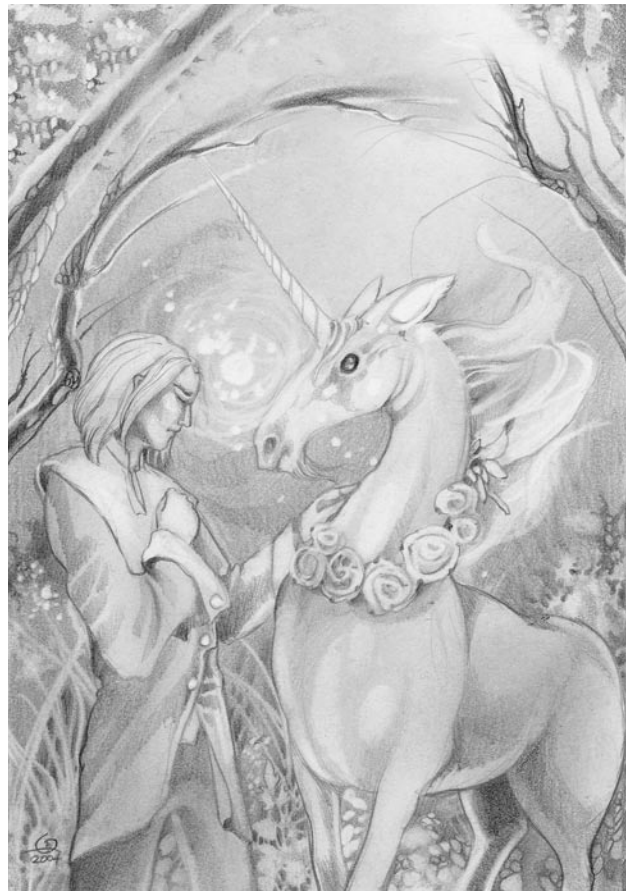
While you are in mental contact with another being, the two of you can communicate at the rate of normal speech, hearing each other's thoughts. You can also send

a single visual image each round instead of speaking. Both you and the subject can choose to lie or omit information; you're speaking to each other mentally, not reading each other's thoughts. Mind Touch is two-way, meaning you are in mental contact with the subject for purposes of her arcana and vice versa.

If a friendly mental contact turns hostile, the subject can make a Will saving throw or Psychic Shield check to break contact. Once the subject has failed an attempt to eject the intruder from her mind, she can't break the contact.

If your Mind Touch is broken, any other arcana you are maintaining requiring mental contact are also broken.

- *Psychically Aiding Others:* While in mental contact with another character, you can use the aid another action (a standard action) to grant that character a +2 bonus on Will saving throws or on any skill check where your skill rank is equal to or greater than the subject's.
- *Rapport:* Two or more characters with the Mind Touch skill can enter a *psychic rapport* with each other, an intense state of mental contact. Each character establishes mental contact with the other, each of whom must be willing. Characters in rapport are like one mind, each instantly aware of everything that the other thinks and experiences and able to share information instantly. Characters in rapport cannot deliberately lie or deceive each other.



- **Deathcry:** If a creature you are in mental contact with dies, you must make a Will saving throw or Psychic Shield check (Difficulty 20) to avoid being dazed for 1 round by the psychic feedback. Since mental contact is two-way, this applies to any creature in mental contact with another. A creature can deliberately avoid letting out a deathcry when it dies by making a Will saving throw (Difficulty 20).

**Time:** Mind Touch is a move action. It requires concentration to maintain.

## Move Object (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can move objects with the power of your thoughts. A Move Object check allows you to move an object in your line of sight. The Difficulty of the Move Object check is based on the mass of the object you want to move and whether or not you choose to risk fatigue. A fatiguing use of Move Object can move ten times the mass listed on the table (so 20 pounds at Difficulty 10, up to 2,000 pounds at Difficulty 40) and doubles the listed damage.

MOVE OBJECT		
Difficulty	Mass	Damage
10	2 lb.	+1
15	5 lb.	+2
20	10 lb.	+3
25	25 lb.	+4
30	50 lb.	+5
35	100 lb.	+6
40	200 lb.	+7

You can move the object a distance of 5 feet times your Move Object rank per move action.

If two adepts vie for control of an object, use opposed Move Object checks. The winner controls the object for that round. If a creature is holding the object, make a Move Object check opposed by the creature's Strength check.

- **Grappling Creatures:** You can use Move Object to grapple a creature (see **Grappling**, page 164). If you successfully pin your target, you can treat them as an ordinary object for purposes of moving them with this ability.
- **Striking with Objects:** You can hurl objects at opponents. This requires a ranged attack roll and the object deals damage based on your Move Object skill check, as shown on the table. Since using Move Object is a move action, you can move an object and strike with it (as a standard action) in the same round.
- **Moving Multiple Objects:** As a full-round action, you can attempt to move multiple objects at once. Use the Difficulty of the heaviest object, then add +2 for each additional object and increase the fatigue check Difficulty by +2 for each additional object. You cannot strike a target with multiple objects as part of the same action.

**Time:** Move Object is a move action. The skill use lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute) and requires concentration to maintain.

## Nature Reading (Wis)

*Animism*

You are attuned to the flows of the natural world, able to read certain signs from it. You can learn the following:

- With a Difficulty 10 check, you can (as a reaction) immediately identify any animal or plant, or tell if water is safe to drink.





- With a minute of observation and a Difficulty 15 check, you can accurately predict the weather for one day for every 5 points you exceed the Difficulty.
- Once per day with 10 minutes of meditation, you can learn any three facts about the following: the ground or terrain, plants, minerals, bodies of water, people, general animal population, presence of animals, presence of powerful unnatural creatures, or the general state of the natural setting. This covers a 1-mile radius for every 5 points your check exceeds Difficulty 10.

**Time:** See the description.

## Object Reading (Wis)

*Visionary*

You can read psychic impressions from places and objects, getting images of their pasts, as if you were actually present at a particular past event.

- *Active Object Reading:* You can attempt to see the past of a particular place or object. You must be able to touch the object. This requires a full-round action and an Object Reading check. Active Object Reading is fatiguing.
- *Spontaneous Visions:* Your ability may also spontaneously activate at the Narrator's discretion when you are in contact with an object with particularly strong psychic impressions. This requires a Object Reading check.

The Narrator should make Object Reading checks secretly so the player doesn't necessarily know if a particular vision was accurate or not. Consult the table below for the results of a vision, based on the Object Reading check.

Impressions read from objects generally count as slightly familiar for the purposes of determining familiarity for other arcana, possibly more if the vision was long or extremely accurate (in the Narrator's opinion). See **Familiarity**, page 108.

OBJECT READING	
Difficulty	Result
10	A vague vision that may not be accurate.
15	A brief and accurate vision of the events.
20	A longer vision of the events, encompassing everything that took place in a particular place and time.
25	The ability to move the vision backward or forward in time to review the event.
30	The ability to track the vision backward through time and space to trace an event to its origin.
35	Near-complete knowledge of a particular past event and everything involving it.

**Time:** Object Reading is a full-round action.

## Pain (Cha)

*Healing or Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You can inflict terrible pain on a target. You must touch or be in mental contact with your target, who makes a Will saving throw. If the save fails, the target is stunned. So long as you maintain total concentration, the effect continues. The victim gets a new Will save each round to overcome the pain. A successful Will save means your Pain arcanum has no further effect on that subject for at least a day.

**Time:** Pain is a standard action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Plant Shaping (Int)

*Animism or Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can shape living plants and, to a degree, dead wood and other plant materials.

- *Plant Healing:* You can heal injured or diseased plants. This requires you to touch the plant and make a Difficulty 15 Plant Shaping check. If you succeed, the plant is restored to complete health. Plants must be living and reasonably intact in order for this arcanum to heal them.
- *Plant Growth:* You can promote rapid growth in plants, causing an area to become filled with thick undergrowth (see **Hampered Movement**, page 150). This affects a radius equal to your adept level times 40 feet. You can also focus the arcanum on a specific area with a 40-foot radius. Plants there become so overgrown they entangle anyone in the area, who must make a Reflex saving throw (Difficulty 10 + half your Plant Shaping rank + Intelligence bonus). A failed save means the target is bound and helpless, needing a Difficulty 20 Strength or Escape Artist check to get free. A successful save means the target isn't trapped, but must still contend with the thick undergrowth created by the tangled plants. Finally, you can use plant growth to enrich an area with a radius equal to your adept level times 400 feet, increasing the yield and growth of crops there by 50 percent for the season.
- *Woodcrafting:* You can use Plant Shaping like a Craft skill to shape objects out of wood. This takes minutes instead of the hours of a normal Craft project. You can therefore complete a simple woodcraft project in a minute and an advanced one in an hour.

**Time:** Plant healing is a full-round action. Plant growth is a standard action. Woodcrafting requires time based on the project.

## Psychic Blast (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You psychically assault a target's mind. You can affect any target in your line of sight or mental contact. The target suffers nonlethal damage equal to half your Psychic

## — CHAPTER V: ARCANA —

Blast rank (rounded down) plus your Charisma score. A successful Will save halves the damage.

**Time:** Psychic Blast is a standard action.

### Psychic Shield (Wis)

*Any Talent, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can shield your mind from psychic influences. When you are the target of any arcana granting a Will saving throw, you can make a Psychic Shield check. The attacker must make an arcanum check using the attacking psychic ability. If your check result is higher, the attack fails. If the attacker's result is higher, the psychic ability affects you normally, but you still get a normal saving throw. You may choose to voluntarily lower your Psychic Shield as a free action, and can raise it again as a free action. Otherwise, your shield is always active, even if you are unconscious or sleeping.

- *Shields and Maintained Arcana:* Once an arcanum has overcome your Psychic Shield, it continues to affect you as long as the other adept maintains it. You're still entitled to your normal saving throws, if any, but your shield no longer protects you from that arcanum. Once the attacker needs to make a new arcanum check, your shield comes into play again and must be overcome again. For arcana requiring mental contact, so long as the other adept remains in mental contact with you (inside your shield), he can use those arcana freely without worrying about your shield.
- *Overcoming Psychic Shields:* An attacker can choose to suffer a fatigue result to automatically overcome your Psychic Shield. This is in addition to any fatigue caused by the arcanum used against you. If you also choose to suffer a fatigue result, then the attacker must still roll normally to overcome your shield. This process takes no actual time; it happens as part of the check to overcome the Psychic Shield. An attacker trying to avoid notice cannot use this option, since it makes it immediately apparent that you are under psychic attack.

**Time:** Psychic Shield use is a free action.

### Scrying (Wis)

*Visionary, Fatiguing*

You can sense distant events as if you were physically present. You can make a Scrying check to sense a particular place, creature, or thing known to you. The base Difficulty is 10, modified by familiarity. If successful, you can observe the subject as if you were present. The vision lasts for as long as you maintain it, but your ordinary senses are overridden, so you are unaware of what is happening near you while you are observing events elsewhere. A subject observed via Scrying is considered present in terms of familiarity, but not in your actual line of sight.

Scrying creates an arcane disturbance, which creatures with Intelligence +0 or better can sense. Any such

creature under observation can make a Wisdom or Second Sight check, opposed by your Scrying check. Creatures with no arcane abilities get the intense feeling of being watched. Adepts and wild talents see a glowing or shadowy image of you, depending on your alignment. You are also considered present for any creature that senses you for the purposes of that creature's arcana.

**Time:** Scrying is a full-round action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

### Second Sight (Wis)

*Any Talent, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can sense the use and lingering effects of arcana. Make a Second Sight check to detect arcana in use in your vicinity, to sense an attempt at mental contact, or to detect and read the signature left behind by arcana.

- *Sense Arcana:* The Narrator makes a Second Sight check for you in secret as a reaction whenever arcana are used in your general area. The base Difficulty is 10 or the user's Psychic Shield check result, whichever is greater, and the Difficulty increases by +1 for every 10 feet between you and the user or subject of the arcanum (whichever is closer). A successful result means you sense an arcanum use and know which arcane talent it falls under, but not necessarily the exact arcanum. You also know the general direction and distance to the source of the effect and its target. If you succeed by 5 or more, you know the exact arcanum used. If you succeed by 10 or more, you recognize the user, if known to you.
- *Sense Mind Touch:* You make a Second Sight check against the other adept's Mind Touch check to know when someone is trying to secretly get into mental contact with you. If you win the check, you sense the attempt, yet you might not be able to avoid it (depending on your Psychic Shield and Will save).
- *Sense Arcane Signature:* If you have the psychic and visionary talents, you can sense old uses of arcana in an area. The base Difficulty is 15 to detect that arcana were used in the area in the past and 20 to determine what talent was used and roughly when. It is Difficulty 25 to know exactly which arcanum was used and what or whom it was used on. Sensing arcane signatures is fatiguing.

**Retry:** No.

**Special:** Taking 10 requires you to concentrate for a minute and not be engaged in other activities. Taking 20 requires you to concentrate for at least 2 minutes. Taking 10 or 20 with Second Sight is fatiguing, regardless of the task, and taking 20 increases the fatigue save Difficulty by +20.

**Time:** Sensing psychic ability use and mental contact are reactions, taking no time. Sensing psychic signatures and psychic tracing require a full-round action.

## Sense Minds (Wis)

*Psychic*

You can determine the presence and location of other minds. You can make a Difficulty 15 Sense Minds check to sense the presence of any creature with an Intelligence score within 30 feet of you. For every factor of 10 you extend your sensing radius, the Difficulty increases by 5.

### SENSE MINDS

Difficulty	Radius
15	30 feet
20	300 feet
25	3,000 feet
30	30,000 feet
35	300,000 feet
40	3,000,000 feet

With a successful check, you sense the presence of other minds, their approximate number, their general type (animal, humanoid, and so forth), and their approximate location. The larger the number of minds, the more general the information tends to be. Psychic Shield opposes Sense Minds. A Psychic Shield check greater than your Sense Minds check allows a creature to go unnoticed.

You can focus your attempt to Sense Minds on a particular place you can see, such as a building or small island within range.

**Time:** Sense Minds is a move action.

## Sleep (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing*

You can psychically put a target into a deep sleep. The target gets a Will saving throw. Success negates the effect. If the Will save fails, the creature falls instantly asleep and remains so for 1 minute per Sleep rank. Sleeping creatures are helpless. Slapping or any damage awakens them, but normal noise does not. Awakening the creature requires a standard action (an application of the aid another action). Creatures that do not sleep are immune to this ability.

**Special:** You must be in mental contact with the subject.

**Time:** Sleep is a standard action. It lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute) per rank.

## Sorcerer's Grasp (None)

*Shaping, Fatiguing, Sorcery*

You can damage other creatures internally with a crushing arcane grip. You can affect any creature in your line of sight or mental contact without any need for an attack roll. Your Sorcerer's Grasp inflicts +1 lethal damage per 5 ranks or portion thereof. The target makes a Will saving throw. Success halves the damage (but cannot reduce it below +1). Sorcerer's Grasp does not affect targets without a Constitution score (such as the unliving).



**Time:** Sorcerer's Grasp is a full-round action.

## Suggestion (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing*

You can implant suggestions into the minds of others. The suggestion must be worded in such a manner as to make the activity sound reasonable. Asking a creature to stab itself, throw itself onto a spear, immolate itself, or do some other obviously harmful act automatically fails. However, a suggestion that a pool of acid is actually pure water and that a quick dip would be refreshing is another matter.

If the target's Will saving throw fails, the suggested course of action is followed for up to 30 minutes per Suggestion rank, or until the course of action is complete, whichever comes first. You can also specify conditions that trigger a particular course of action, in which case the duration is counted from when the triggering event occurs. A very reasonable suggestion may impose a saving throw penalty of -1 or -2, at the Narrator's discretion.

**Retry:** No. You can attempt to affect the same character after some time has passed, but not in the same encounter or scene.

**Special:** Suggestion is sorcery when used to cause deliberate harm.

**Time:** Suggestion is a full-round action. It lasts for 30 minutes per rank.

## Visions (Wis)

*Visionary, Can Be Used Untrained*

You can get visions of the future, as if you were actually present at a particular future event. The visions you receive are by no means assured; the future can be changed by the actions of those in the present.

- *Spontaneous Visions:* At the Narrator's discretion, you may receive a vision of the future when you are in contact with a subject or when there is a momentous event approaching in the future. This vision can occur while you are awake, yet spontaneous visions often take the form of dreams. You know when a dream is actually a vision; although, you may not necessarily know what the vision means.
- *Danger Sense:* Whenever you would normally be surprised in combat, you can make a Visions check (Difficulty 15). If successful, you receive a split-second warning; you are not surprised and can take an action during the surprise round.

The Narrator should make Visions checks secretly so the player doesn't necessarily know if a particular vision is accurate or not. Consult the table for the results of a vision, based on the Visions check, or choose a suitable result, based on the hero's Visions rank and the requirements of the story.

### VISIONS

Difficulty	Result
10	A vague vision of the future that may be accurate.
15	An accurate glimpse of the future.
20	Awareness of how long before a particular event occurs.
25	Awareness of the people involved in a particular future event.
30	Awareness of the time, subjects, and location of a future event.
35	Near-complete knowledge of a particular future event and everything involving it.

Things seen in visions count as slightly familiar in terms of familiarity, possibly more if the vision was long or extremely accurate (in the Narrator's opinion).

**Time:** Visions is a full-round action at least.

## Ward (Cha)

*Psychic, Fatiguing*

You can create interference with other arcana. You can affect an area around you with a radius equal to your adept level times 5 feet. Alternatively, you can choose to focus your Ward against a single creature in your line of sight.

Anyone affected by your Ward must make an opposed check against the result of your Ward check to successfully use any arcana. Arcana with results less than yours fail; although, the users of the failed arcana

still suffer fatigue, if any. Adepts can choose to suffer an automatic fatigue result, in addition to the normal fatigue of the arcanum used, to overcome your Ward. If so, you can choose to suffer a fatigue result to reinforce your ward, forcing the subject to make a normal check to overcome it. This takes no actual time; it happens as part of the check to overcome the Ward.

**Time:** Ward is a move action. It requires total concentration to maintain.

## Water Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can shape and direct the flow of water.

- *Splash:* You can cause as much as 10 gallons of water per Water Shaping rank to leap in an arc up to 10 feet per adept level. Hitting a creature with this watery arc requires a ranged attack roll. The creature must make a Fortitude save or be dazed for one round (taking no actions but defending normally). The splash also douses flames with a damage bonus less than your Water Shaping rank.
- *Shape Flow:* You can direct the flow of currents, increasing or decreasing the speed of water vessels by 20 percent for every 5 points your check exceeds Difficulty 10 (at Difficulty 35 you can stop water vessels entirely or double their speed).
- *Lower Water:* Waters lower by as much as 2 feet for every 2 points your Water Shaping check exceeds Difficulty 10. The water lowers within an area with a 10-foot radius per your adept level (a 5th-level adept can lower an area of water with a 50-foot radius). In extremely large and deep bodies of water, such as a deep ocean, this arcanum creates a whirlpool that sweeps ships and similar craft downward, putting them at risk and making them unable to leave by normal movement for the duration.
- *Raise Water:* Waters rise by as much as 2 feet for every 2 points your Water Shaping check exceeds Difficulty 10. The water rises within an area with a 10-foot radius per your adept level (a 5th-level adept can raise an area of water with a 50-foot radius). Boats raised in this way slide down the sides of the watery hump created. If the area includes riverbanks, a beach, or other nearby land, the water can spill over onto dry land, causing floods.

**Special:** Taking 20 increases the fatigue Difficulty by +20.

**Time:** Water Shaping is a standard action. It requires concentration to maintain.

## Wind Shaping (Int)

*Shaping, Fatiguing*

You can shape and direct the wind. You can make the wind blow in a certain direction and change its speed. The new wind direction and speed last as long as you choose to maintain them. Changing them requires another use of this arcanum. You can affect the winds in a 40-foot radius per adept level. You can create an area of calm air, up to 80 feet in diameter, at the center of the winds, if you



## WHISPERS IN THE WAVES

"Marra!" The voice of an exasperated mother rose over the sound of the waves and the ever-present hiss of the sea wind. "Marra, come home now! It's dinner time. Marra!"

Alyn walked up the sandbar, boots crunching on gravel and worn seashells. Her attention was entirely on the small figure crouched next to a deep tide pool; she paid no mind to the child's mother further up the beach. The child didn't stir, arm sunk elbow-deep into the water. She didn't move until Alyn's shadow fell across the pool, and its resident shrimp and crabs fled under rocks and into crevices. The dark-haired girl looked up with a frown: "You scared the fish."

"They'll manage well enough, child," Alyn smiled, gold pilot's ring glinting in her nose and green eyes bright in her tanned and weathered face. She crouched down beside the girl, worn oilskins rustling against the sand. "What have you found there?"

"She's tickling me," the child giggled. Alyn peered past the reflections dancing across the pool's surface. The waves had whispered to her, speaking of the great whales traveling south for the winter and the storm rising in the west. The whispers drew her here, to this small village on the edge of the kingdom, filling her dreams with images of tangled black hair and — Alyn saw the iridescent gleam of an abalone shell in the water — blue shell. She'd had this dream for years, as she'd searched for her heir.

The girl had her hand under the abalone. No doubt the mollusk was scraping harmlessly at her skin, tasting her. Alyn reached into the pool as well, tickling an anemone. Because of Alyn's skills as an adept, the creature neither stung her nor withdrew but allowed her to stroke it lightly, fronds waving in the gentle current.

"They always curl up when I touch them," the girl said, watching in fascination. "I don't mean to scare them."

"There's a trick to it, Marra. It is Marra, is it not?" Alyn smiled again as the girl nodded, clearly impatient to learn the trick of tickling anemones. Behind Alyn, her small sailboat bobbed on the water. A flag with a quartered circle on it flapped from the top, marking her as an adept offering her services to those in need. "Can you feel the stir of the water?" she asked. "Breathe it in. Let your hand drift like kelp in the current. Then the anemone will not fear you, and neither will the shrimp or the little fishes." She paused, studying the girl's expression.

"Can you understand the voice of the water, Marra?" Alyn asked gently, hope ill hidden in her voice. "Does the wind speak to you?"

Marra lifted her gray eyes to meet Alyn's and nodded solemnly. "The wind told me you would come. I've been waiting for you."

Alyn stood and smiled, her old knees creaking. She held out her hand, and without hesitation, Marra took it, as if grasping the hand of her mother, and stood as well. "And I have been waiting for you, child," Alyn said. "For a very long time."

wish, and you can limit the winds to an area less than the maximum possible for your level.

- **Wind Direction:** You may choose one of four basic wind patterns to function over the area. A downdraft blows in all directions, from the center outward. An updraft blows from all directions, from the outer edges toward the center. A rotation causes winds to circle the center (clockwise or counterclockwise, as you wish). A blast causes the winds to blow in one direction across the entire area, from one side to the other.
- **Wind Speed:** With a Wind Shaping check, you can increase or decrease the wind's speed by one level for every 5 points you exceed Difficulty 10. Each round on your turn, anyone in the area must make a Fortitude save or suffer the effects of the current wind speed. There are seven wind speed levels:

**Light Wind:** A gentle breeze, having no game effect.

**Moderate Wind:** A steady wind with a 50 percent chance of extinguishing small, unprotected flames, such as candles.

**Strong Wind:** Gusts that automatically extinguish unprotected flames (candles, torches, and the like). Such gusts impose a -2 penalty on ranged attack rolls and Notice checks for sounds. Strong winds knock down Tiny and smaller creatures. Flying creatures are blown backwards a short distance. A strong wind can speed or slow sailing vessels by 50 percent.

**Severe Wind:** In addition to automatically extinguishing any unprotected flames, winds of this magnitude cause protected flames (such as in lanterns) to dance wildly and have a 50 percent chance of extinguishing them. Ranged weapon attacks and Notice checks are at a -4 penalty. Severe winds blow Tiny and smaller creatures back a short distance and knock down Small creatures. Medium creatures are unable to move forward against the force of the wind.

**Windstorm:** Powerful enough to bring down branches, if not whole trees, windstorms automatically extinguish unprotected flames and have a 75 percent chance of blowing out protected ones. Ranged weapon attacks are impossible, and even siege weapons have a -4 penalty on attack rolls. Notice checks to listen are at a -8 penalty due to the howling wind. Windstorms blow away Small and smaller creatures, knock down Medium ones, and check the forward movement of Large creatures.

**Hurricane-Force Wind:** All flames are extinguished. Ranged attacks are impossible (except with siege weapons, which have a -8 penalty on attack rolls). Notice checks to listen are impossible; all anyone can hear is the roaring of the wind. Hurricane-force winds often fell trees. These winds blow away Medium and smaller creatures, knock down Large ones, and check Huge creatures.

**Tornado:** All flames are extinguished. All ranged attacks are impossible (even with siege weapons), as are Notice checks to hear anything. Instead of being blown away, Large and smaller creatures who fail their Fortitude saves are sucked toward the tornado. Those who come in contact with the actual funnel cloud are picked up and whirled around for 1-10 rounds, taking +12 damage per round, before being violently expelled (falling damage may also apply). Huge creatures are knocked down, and Gargantuan creatures are checked. While a tornado's rotational speed can be as great as 300 miles per hour, the funnel itself moves forward at an average of 30 miles per hour (roughly 250 feet per round). A tornado uproots trees, destroys buildings, and causes other similar forms of devastation.

**Special:** Taking 20 increases the fatigue Difficulty by +20.

**Time:** Wind Shaping is a full-round action. It requires concentration to maintain.

## SORCERY: THE SHADOW ART

**S**orcery is the arcane art drawing upon the power of Shadow. While all arcane power ultimately comes from within the adept, sorcery taps into the darkest recesses of mind and soul, into fear, hate, ignorance, pride. Sorcery turns these things into tools of power, but at the cost of strengthening them and corrupting the sorcerer. As learned adepts say, “Sorcery is a matter of intent.” It’s the mindset required to perform sorcery that corrupts the sorcerer. This is why sorcery is so dangerous and difficult to root out; only a few arcana can clearly be labeled sorcerous. There are others where it’s not the arcana but how they are used that makes them sorcery.

### Corruption

The danger of sorcery is how it opens the wielder up to Corruption. Other heinous acts can cause Corruption as well, but sorcery is perhaps the easiest, and most seductive, path into Shadow.

### Becoming Corrupt

Characters can become corrupt in two ways: by using sorcery and by performing an act of Shadow nature in a corrupt place or while in contact with a corrupt item.

When these conditions occur, make a Fortitude saving throw for the character. The Difficulty is equal to 10 plus half the rank of the sorcerous arcanum used. For acts of Shadow performed in a corrupt place or in contact with a corrupt item, the Narrator sets the Difficulty based on the act (see the table).

#### CORRUPTION

Difficulty	Act
10	Minor transgression (lying, petty theft)
15	Significant transgression (deliberately hurtful actions)
20	Major transgression (murder, rape)
30	Mortal transgression (complete betrayal of the Light, murdering a unicorn, betraying a bonded companion)

A successful save means there is no effect (except for the consequences of the character’s action). A failed save means the character acquires one point of corruption.

### Corrupt Places

Places can become tainted with Corruption over time. This is particularly true of former strongholds of the Sorcerer Kings, the lairs of Shadow cults, and similar locales. A corrupt place can spread its evil to those who spend time there. Any creature that dies in a corrupt place arises the following night as a zombie or skeleton (see **Chapter IX: Bestiary**) unless the corpse is consumed by fire or some other means.

### Corrupt Items

A corrupt item is much like a corrupt place, except it only affects individuals in contact with the item. Anyone carrying a corrupt item is subject to Corruption checks, and an adept experiences a strengthening of sorcery and a weakening of other arcana unless the adept embraces the item’s Corruption (risking greater personal Corruption in the bargain). A creature that dies while in contact with a corrupt item rises the next night as a zombie, which tries to kill anyone who attempts to take the item from it.

### Effects of Corruption

A character’s Corruption score applies as a penalty to the character’s Constitution and Wisdom scores. This means a character with Constitution +2, Wisdom +1, and two points of Corruption has an effective Constitution +0 and Wisdom –1. These penalties reflect the impact of Corruption on the character’s physical and mental well-being.

Victims of Corruption experience these losses of Constitution and Wisdom as physical and mental symptoms. Physically they suffer fatigue, weakness, nausea, and gnawing hunger. Psychologically they feel growing fear, anger, paranoia, and mistrust. The character begins losing control over her Shadow nature. When presented with an opportunity to regain Conviction by acting in accordance with her Shadow nature, the character must succeed on a Will save (Difficulty 10 + total corruption) to resist. Otherwise, she gives in and follows her Shadow nature for the scene. Light- and Twilight-aligned characters can spend a point of Conviction to automatically overcome this urge. The Shadow-aligned cannot.

A victim of Corruption whose Wisdom is debilitated goes mad in accordance with his Shadow nature, completely

### LIGHT-ALIGNED SORCERERS?

Is there such a thing as a Light-aligned sorcerer? Sure. Trouble is, they don’t usually *stay* Light-aligned for long. Using sorcery is ultimately corrupting, and it poses all sorts of temptations for the unwary. Many Light- and Twilight-aligned adepts learn the sorcerous arts with the best of intentions—of using it for the greater good, as a weapon against the forces of Shadow, and so on—but sooner or later, they fall prey to temptation. They become increasingly corrupt, abandoning their Light nature and embracing their Shadow nature.

consumed by it, rather than falling unconscious. This often results in terrible crimes and further Corruption. A victim of Corruption whose Constitution is debilitated dies. The following night, he becomes an unliving shadow (see **Chapter IX: Bestiary**).

## Embracing Corruption

Eventually, Corruption will destroy even Shadow-aligned characters. In fact, the Shadow-aligned are somewhat more vulnerable, since their Conviction cannot stave off its effects (see the next section, **Redemption**). The victim eventually goes mad, then dies, arising as one of the unliving. There are only two ways of avoiding this fate, either finding a way to eliminate the Corruption or choosing to embrace it.

In the latter case, the character gives himself over to Corruption and the taint of Shadow. This must be a conscious choice; it cannot be forced or coerced. Embracing Corruption has the following effects:

- The character's alignment immediately becomes Shadow, if it was not already. The character's Shadow nature becomes dominant, and the character can no longer gain Conviction from acting in accordance with his Light nature.
- The character no longer suffers any Constitution or Wisdom penalties from accumulated Corruption.
- The character cannot benefit from the Cure arcanum when it is used by a non-corrupt healer. The arcanum simply has no effect. A healer who has embraced Corruption can use Cure on other corrupt characters, including himself.
- A corrupt adept changes the key abilities of all his arcana to his Corruption score. Instead of applying his Intelligence score to Move Object, for example, the adept applies his Corruption score. This means sorcerers who have embraced Corruption wield considerable power.

- A corrupt character cannot be raised from death. Three nights after death, a corrupt character rises as a vampire. A corrupt sorcerer with a Corruption score of 16 or greater rises as a lich instead. Only complete destruction of the corpse prevents this from occurring. Some corrupt characters deliberately cause their own deaths to achieve one of these unliving states. See **Chapter IX: Bestiary**

for more about vampires and liches.

## Redemption

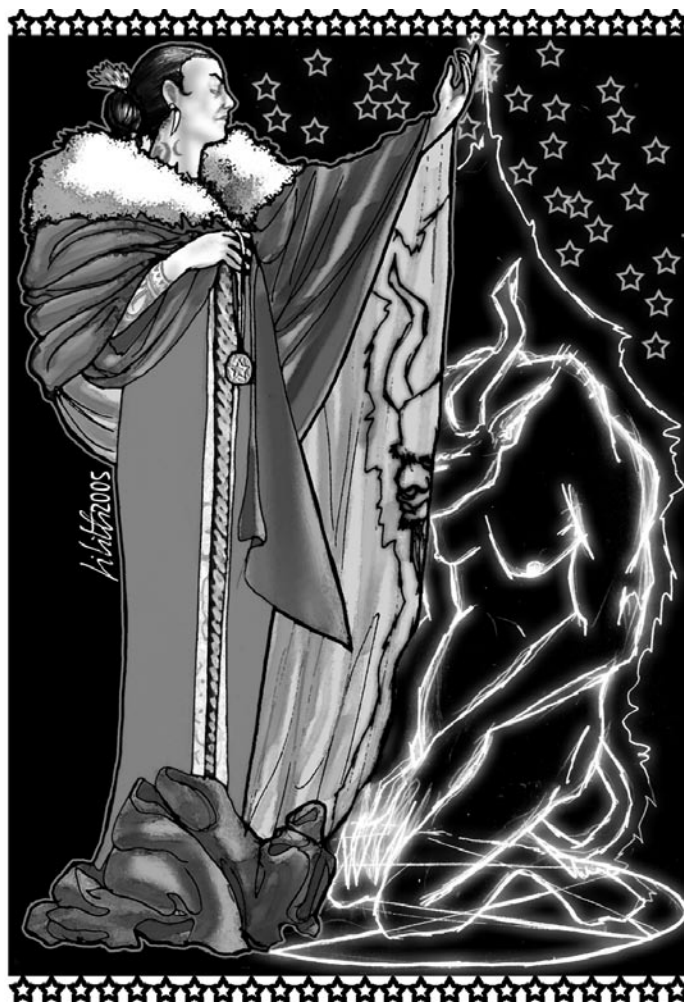
Eliminating the taint of Shadow is a long and difficult road, so it is little wonder that many victims choose to embrace it, or simply struggle feebly until death, and unlife, claims them.

Characters with 1 or more points of Corruption can attempt to eliminate them by acting in accordance with their Light nature. Each time the character performs a Light-nature act that would grant Conviction (see **Regaining Conviction**, page 73), she may choose to forego the Conviction point and apply it toward reducing Corruption instead. For every 10 Conviction points applied in this way, the character sheds 1 point of Corruption.

Note that characters can still gain Corruption

while working toward eliminating it, so it is often a struggle against the character's darker impulses. Characters may also find themselves in need of additional Conviction on occasion, taking an awarded Conviction point rather than applying it toward their redemption. This slows, but does not interrupt, the process.

Those who have embraced Corruption can no longer gain Conviction from their Light nature, so this avenue of redemption is closed to them. It takes a significant act of contrition in accordance with the Corrupt character's Light nature to start them on the road to redemption. The Narrator decides what is required and when the requirement is fulfilled, but it should be a quest of epic proportions to redeem so fallen a character. Even then, redemption is not assured; the character must still go through the process outlined here to eliminate his Corruption score.





# CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT

**A**ldis is a prosperous land, and marketplaces across the kingdom offer a wide variety of goods for sale. This chapter describes the various weapons, armor, tools, and other items heroes use in their adventures and daily lives. It also looks at handling wealth and spending for heroes.

Assume a hero owns at least one outfit of normal clothes, if not several. Pick one of the following outfits: artisan's outfit, entertainer's outfit, explorer's outfit, peasant's outfit, scholar's outfit, or traveler's outfit (see **Clothing**, page 142). Other items and equipment are acquired using the character's Wealth score.

## WEALTH

**H**eroes have a *Wealth score* reflecting their buying power, a composite of available cash, credit, and income. The Wealth score serves as the basis for Wealth checks, used to purchase goods and services.

### Wealth Score

A hero's starting Wealth score is +5 plus the hero's Charisma score. Rhydan start off at Wealth +0. The Wealthy feat gives an additional +3. Over the course of play, the hero's Wealth score may decrease as the hero purchases expensive items and increase as the hero gains levels. A hero's Wealth score can never fall below +0, but there is no limit to how high the Wealth score can increase.

Since Wealth is an abstract concept, it's sometimes difficult to determine how financially well off a character is. To get a general sense of how wealthy a hero is, check the **Wealth** table. Wealth score increases come primarily from a skill designated at the character's professional skill, one used to earn a living, such as Diplomacy for a diplomat, or Sleight of Hand for a thief.

### WEALTH

Wealth Score	Financial Condition
+0	Impoverished or in debt
+1 to +4	Struggling
+5 to +10	Middle class
+11 to +15	Affluent
+16 to +20	Wealthy
+21 to +30	Rich
+31 or higher	Very rich

### The Wealth Check

Wealth checks are used to determine what you can afford and what goods and services you reasonably have access to. Wealth score reflects a hero's buying power. Every item has a purchase Difficulty, called its *cost*. To purchase an item, make a Wealth check against the item's cost.



## CURRENCY IN ALDEA

The major nations of Aldea mint their own coins, yet there is some currency exchange between nations. You don't have to worry about the particulars of how much currency characters have or in what denominations. The information here is presented primarily for flavor.

Aldis mints the silver *sovereign*, with the image of the current ruler on one side and the royal palace on the other. Older sovereigns still in circulation bear the image of previous rulers of Aldis. Gold *harts*, worth ten sovereigns, bear an image of a stag's head, while copper *roses* (also known as petals or simply coppers), worth a tenth of a sovereign, have an open rose blossom.

Jarzon uses the silver *lunar*, the gold *solar*, and the copper *flame*, worth roughly the same as Aldin coinage. Some Jarzoni merchants insist on local currency, but most don't care so long as the coins are good. Most merchants keep scales on hand to weigh coins and make sure they're not debased.

Kern turns out golden *crowns* and silver *thorns*, largely based on Old Kingdom currency, which is still in use in the domain of the Lich King. The rare Kernish merchant uses pure metals, trade goods, and shas crystals abroad, given the mistrust others have of accepting Kernish coins.

Rezeans likewise trade mainly in goods. What money they have comes from other nations. The same is true of Roamers and islanders, who typically use Aldin coins. Sea-folk sometimes have access to Old Kingdom coins from sunken vessels, but likewise trade primarily in Aldin currency.

A Wealth check is a d20 roll plus your current Wealth score. If your check result equals or exceeds the cost of an item, you successfully purchase it. If you fail, you can't afford it at this time.

If your current Wealth score is equal to or greater than an item's cost, you automatically succeed. The cost is negligible for someone of your wealth. If your Wealth score is +0, you don't have the buying power to purchase anything with a cost of 10 or higher, and you can't take 10 or take 20 on Wealth checks.

If you successfully purchase something with a cost greater than your current Wealth score, your Wealth score decreases (see **Losing Wealth** for details).

- **Shopping and Time.** Buying less common objects generally takes a number of hours equal to the cost, reflecting the time needed to locate the desired item and close the deal.
- **Taking 10 and Taking 20.** You can usually take 10 or take 20 when making a Wealth check. Taking 20 requires 20 times as long as normal, meaning you're shopping around for the best deals.
- **Try Again?** You can try again if you fail a Wealth check, but not until you have spent an additional number of hours shopping equal to the cost of the item.
- **Aid Another.** One other character can make an aid another attempt to help someone else buy something. If the attempt is successful, you provide the other person with a +2 bonus on the Wealth check to buy that item. If the item's purchase Difficulty is greater than your Wealth score, reduce your Wealth by 1, as usual.

## Losing Wealth

Any time you purchase something with a cost greater than your current Wealth score or something with a cost of 15 or higher, your Wealth score decreases. How

much the Wealth score is reduced depends on how expensive the item is. Your Wealth score only goes down if you successfully buy something. If you attempt to buy something and fail, your Wealth score is unaffected.

### LOSING WEALTH

Item Cost	Wealth Decrease
15 or higher	1 point
1–10 points higher than current Wealth score	1 point
11–15 points higher than current Wealth score	2 points
16 or more points higher than current Wealth Bonus	3 points

Your Wealth score is always reduced by 1 point when you purchase something with a cost of 15 or higher, regardless of your Wealth score. This decrease is cumulative with any decrease that comes from your Wealth score being lower than an item's cost. For example, if your hero has a Wealth score of +10 and successfully purchases a noble's outfit (cost 16), her Wealth score would be reduced by 1 point for the cost being 15 or higher and by an additional point for the cost being 1–10 points higher than her Wealth score.

## Gaining Wealth

A hero typically gains Wealth when advancing in level, using his professional skill, or as a reward for accomplishing some quest.

### Professional Skills

Characters can use their skills to earn a living. A skill used to earn Wealth is called a *professional skill*. The particular skill depends on the character's trade or profession. For example, a diplomat or courtier uses Diplomacy as a professional skill, while a smith or carpenter uses Craft,



## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Ranks	Wealth Score Increase
1–5	+1
6–10	+2
11–15	+3
16–20	+4
21–23	+5

For example, Lady Aris is a negotiator (and 3rd-level expert) with Wealth +13 and Diplomacy +6 (her professional skill). When she reaches 4th level, her Diplomacy increases to +7, and she makes a Diplomacy check to see if her Wealth improves from all her careful negotiation. The Difficulty is 13, her current Wealth score. On a result of 13 or more, her Wealth increases to +16 (+1 for succeeding on the check, +2 for having 7 ranks in her professional skill). For every 5 points the check exceeds 13 (at 18, 23, and so forth), her Wealth increases an additional +1.

## Wealth Awards

Adventuring may result in characters finding valuable items or receiving financial rewards. In such cases, the benefit translates into a Wealth award determined by the Narrator.

## Selling Things

To sell something, you first need to determine its sale value. Assuming the item is undamaged and in working order, the sale value is equal to the item's purchase cost (as if bought new) minus 3.

Selling something can provide an increase to your Wealth score. The increase is the same amount as the Wealth score loss you would experience if you purchased an object with a cost equal to the sale value.

Regardless of your current Wealth score, your Wealth increases by 1 whenever you sell an object with a sale value of 15 or higher. If you sell something with a sale value less than or equal to your current Wealth score, and the sale value is 14 or lower, you gain nothing (the income from the sale is negligible).

Selling objects illegally usually requires contacts in the black market and reduces the sale value by an additional 3. This takes a number of hours equal to the normal cost of the item.

a con artist uses Bluff, a minstrel uses Perform, and so forth. Discuss with the Narrator what skill would be appropriate for your hero's current profession, which can change, at the Narrator's discretion, as your character moves from one profession to another.

Characters use professional skills to improve their Wealth over time. You make a professional skill check to improve your Wealth score every time you attain a new level. The Difficulty is your current Wealth score. If you succeed, your Wealth score increases by +1. For every 5 points the check result exceeds the Difficulty, your Wealth score increases by an additional +1. You can't take 10 or 20 when making a check to improve your Wealth score.

Your rank in your current professional skill also automatically adds to the Wealth score increase you receive upon gaining a new level. See the accompanying table for details. (This bonus is accounted for in a character's starting Wealth score of +5.)

# WEAPONS

**W**eapons give heroes an edge in combat, and many heroes wield distinctive weapons. Although peace is the ultimate goal of the Sovereign's Finest, they are ready and willing to use all the weapons at their disposal to ensure it.

## Weapon Categories

Weapons are grouped into several categories. These pertain to what training is needed to use the weapon, the weapon's

usefulness either in close combat (melee) or at a distance (ranged, which includes both thrown and projectile weapons), its relative encumbrance (light, one-handed, or two-handed), and its size (small, medium, or large).

## Simple, Martial, and Exotic Weapons

Heroes of all roles are considered trained with simple weapons. Warriors (and others with the Weapon Training feat) are trained with martial weapons as well. The Exotic

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

Weapon Training feat is required for training in an exotic weapon. Anyone using a weapon untrained takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls.

### Melee and Ranged Weapons

Melee weapons are used for making melee attacks, though some of them can be thrown as well. Ranged weapons are thrown weapons or projectile weapons that are not effective in melee.

- *Reach Weapons:* Lances, longspears, and whips are reach weapons. A reach weapon is a melee weapon that allows its wielder to strike targets further away. Most double the wielder's natural reach, meaning a typical Medium wielder can attack an opponent 10 feet away, but not an opponent in an adjacent square, inside the weapon's reach. A typical Large character wielding a reach weapon of the appropriate size can attack an opponent 15 or 20 feet away, but not adjacent creatures or creatures up to 10 feet away.
- *Thrown Weapons:* Daggers, clubs, shortspears, spears, darts, javelins, throwing axes, light hammers, tridents, and nets are thrown weapons. The wielder's Strength score applies to damage dealt by thrown weapons. Throwing a light or one-handed weapon is a standard action, while throwing a two-handed weapon is a full-round action.
- *Projectile Weapons:* Light crossbows, slings, heavy crossbows, shortbows, composite shortbows, longbows, and composite longbows are projectile weapons. Most projectile weapons require two hands to use (see specific weapon descriptions). A character gets no Strength bonus on damage with a projectile weapon, unless it's a specially built composite shortbow or longbow or a sling. If the character has a negative Strength score, apply it to damage when using a bow or a sling but not a crossbow.
- *Ammunition:* Projectile weapons use ammunition: arrows for bows, bolts for crossbows, and sling bullets for slings. When using a bow, a character can draw ammunition as a free action; crossbows and slings require an action for reloading. Generally speaking, ammunition that hits its target is destroyed or rendered useless, while normal ammunition that misses has a 50 percent chance of being destroyed or lost.

### Light, One-Handed, and Two-Handed Melee Weapons

This designation is a measure of how much effort it takes to wield a weapon in combat. It indicates whether a melee weapon, when wielded by a character of the weapon's size category, is considered a light weapon, a one-handed weapon, or a two-handed weapon.

- *Light:* A light weapon is easier to use in one's off hand than a one-handed weapon is, and it can be used while grappling. A light weapon is used in one hand. Add the wielder's Strength score to damage

for melee attacks with a light weapon if it's used in the primary hand, or half the wielder's Strength score (if positive) if it's used in the off hand. An unarmed strike is considered a light weapon.

- *One-Handed:* A one-handed weapon can be used in either the primary hand or the off hand.
- *Two-Handed:* Two hands are required to use a two-handed melee weapon effectively.

### Weapon Size

Every weapon has a size category. This designation indicates the size of the creature for which the weapon was designed.

A weapon's size category isn't the same as its size as an object. Instead, a weapon's size category is keyed to the size of the intended wielder. In general, a light weapon is two size categories smaller than the wielder, a one-handed weapon is one size category smaller than the wielder, and a two-handed weapon is the same size category as the wielder.

### Inappropriately Sized Weapons

A creature can't make optimal use of a weapon that isn't properly sized for it. A cumulative –2 penalty applies on attack rolls for each size category of difference between the size of the weapon's intended wielder and the size of its actual wielder. If the creature isn't trained with the weapon, an additional –4 penalty applies.

The measure of how much effort it takes to use a weapon (whether the weapon is designated as a light, one-handed, or two-handed weapon for a particular wielder) is altered by one step for each size category of difference between the wielder's size and the size of the creature for which the weapon was designed. If a weapon's designation would be changed to something other than light, one-handed, or two-handed by this alteration, the creature can't wield the weapon at all.

### Improvised Weapons

Sometimes objects not intended as weapons see use in combat. Because such objects are not designed for this use, any creature that uses one in combat is considered untrained with it and takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls made with that object. To determine the size category and appropriate damage for an improvised weapon, compare its relative size and damage potential to the weapon list to find a reasonable match. An improvised weapon scores a threat on a natural roll of 20 and deals double damage on a critical hit. An improvised thrown weapon has a range increment of 10 feet.

### Weapon Qualities

Here are the weapon qualities specified in the **Weapons** table.

#### Cost

This is the purchase Difficulty of the weapon. The cost includes miscellaneous gear that goes with the weapon, such as sheaths or scabbards.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### Damage

This is the damage dealt by the weapon on a successful hit.

### Critical

The entry in this column notes how the weapon is used with the rules for critical hits. When your character scores a critical hit, increase the damage two, three, or four times, as indicated by its critical multiplier. Exception: Damage over and above a weapon's normal damage is not multiplied when you score a critical hit. For instance, if your sword has somehow been enchanted to do fire damage, in addition to its regular damage, only its regular damage would be increased on a critical hit.

x2: The weapon deals double damage on a critical hit.

x3: The weapon deals triple damage on a critical hit.

x4: The weapon deals quadruple damage on a critical hit.

19–20/x2: The weapon scores a threat on a natural roll of 19 or 20 (instead of just 20) and deals double damage on a critical hit.

18–20/x2: The weapon scores a threat on a natural roll of 18, 19, or 20 (instead of just 20) and deals double damage on a critical hit.

### Range Increment

Any attack at less than this distance is not penalized for range. However, each full range increment imposes

a cumulative –2 penalty on the attack roll. A thrown weapon has a maximum range of five range increments. A projectile weapon can shoot out to ten range increments.

### Weight

This column gives the weight of a Medium version of the weapon. Halve this number for Small weapons and double it for Large weapons.

### Type

Weapons are classified according to the type of damage they deal: bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing. Some monsters may be resistant or immune to attacks from certain types of weapons.

Some weapons deal damage of multiple types. If a weapon is of two types, the damage it deals is not half one type and half another; all of it is both types. Therefore, a creature would have to be immune to both types of damage to ignore any of the damage from such a weapon.

In other cases, a weapon can deal either of two types of damage. In a situation when the damage type is significant, the wielder can choose which type of damage to deal with such a weapon.

## Weapon Descriptions

### ARROWS

An arrow used as a melee weapon is treated as a light improvised weapon (–4 penalty on attack rolls) and deals damage as a dagger of its size (critical multiplier x2). Arrows come in a leather quiver that holds 20 arrows. An arrow that hits its target is destroyed; one that misses has a 50 percent chance of being destroyed or lost.

### BOLAS

You can use this weapon to make a ranged trip attack against an opponent. You can't be tripped during your own trip attempt when using a set of bolas.

### BOLTS

A crossbow bolt used as a melee weapon is treated as a light improvised weapon (–4 penalty on attack rolls) and deals damage as a dagger of its size (critical multiplier x2). Bolts come in a wooden case that holds 10 bolts. A bolt that hits its target is destroyed; one that misses has a 50 percent chance of being destroyed or lost.

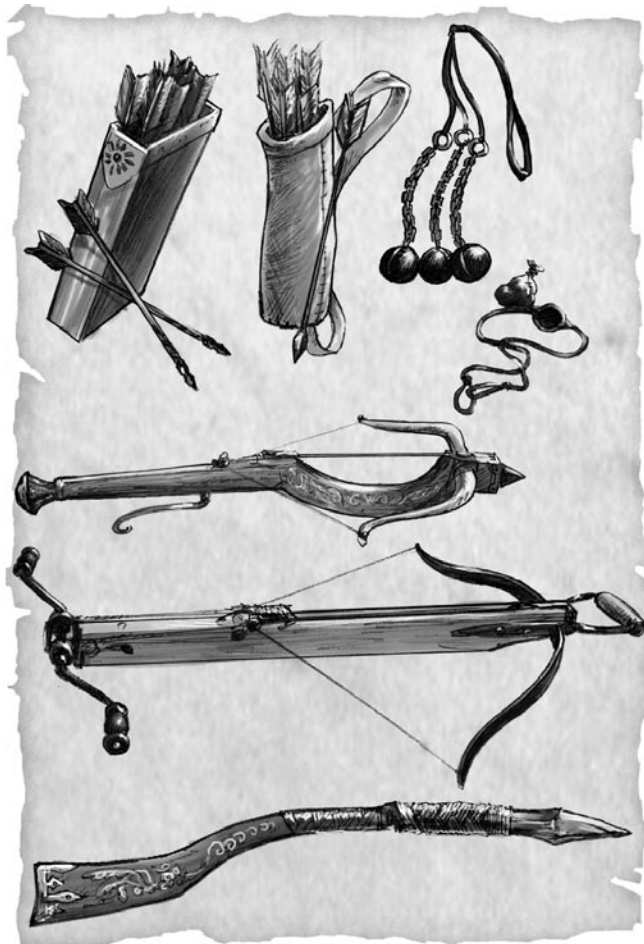
### BULLETS, SLING

Bullets come in a leather pouch that holds 10 bullets. A bullet that hits its target is destroyed; one that misses has a 50 percent chance of being destroyed or lost.

### CROSSBOW, HEAVY

You draw a heavy crossbow back by turning a small winch. Loading a heavy crossbow is a full-round action.

Normally, operating a heavy crossbow requires two hands. However, you can shoot, but not load, a heavy crossbow with one hand at a –4 penalty on attack rolls.





## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### SIMPLE WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
UNARMED ATTACKS						
Gauntlet	4	+0	x2	—	1 lb.	Bludgeoning
Unarmed	—	+0	x2	—	—	Bludgeoning
LIGHT MELEE WEAPONS						
Dagger	4	+1	19–20/x2	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing or slashing
Gauntlet, spiked	7	+1	x2	—	1 lb.	Piercing
Mace, light	7	+2	x2	—	4 lb.	Bludgeoning
Sickle	7	+2	x2	—	2 lb.	Slashing
ONE-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS						
Club	—	+2	x2	10 ft.	3 lb.	Bludgeoning
Mace, heavy	8	+3	x2	—	8 lb.	Bludgeoning
Morningstar	10	+3	x2	—	6 lb.	Bludgeoning and piercing
Shortspear	3	+2	x2	20 ft.	3 lb.	Piercing
TWO-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS						
Longspear	7	+3	x3	—	9 lb.	Piercing
Quarterstaff	—	+2	x2	—	4 lb.	Bludgeoning
Spear	4	+3	x3	20 ft.	6 lb.	Piercing
RANGED WEAPONS						
Crossbow bolts (10)	3	—	—	—	1 lb.	—
Crossbow, heavy	7	+4	19–20/x2	120 ft.	8 lb.	Piercing
Crossbow, light	5	+3	19–20/x2	80 ft.	4 lb.	Piercing
Cryston	10	+0	20/x2	Special	2 lb.	Force
Dart	1	+1	x2	20 ft.	1/2 lb.	Piercing
Javelin	3	+2	x2	30 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Sling	—	+1	x2	50 ft.	0 lb.	Bludgeoning
Sling bullets (10)	1	—	—	—	5 lb.	—

#### CROSSBOW, LIGHT

You draw a light crossbow back by pulling a lever. Loading a light crossbow is a move action.

Normally, operating a light crossbow requires two hands. However, you can shoot, but not load, a light crossbow with one hand at a –2 penalty on attack rolls.

#### CRYSTON

A cryston is an arcane ranged weapon. It is a foot-long wand made from a shas crystal attached to a handle of some organic material (typically wood or bone, sometimes coral or ivory). The crystal is wrapped with copper and gold wire.

Only those with arcane talent (adepts and those with the Arcanum or Wild Talent feats) can wield a cryston. They don't work otherwise. The user takes a move action to ready the cryston with a Concentration check (Difficulty 10). Any time thereafter, the wielder can fire a pulse of arcane force from the wand, up to a distance of 100 feet. Each point of the wielder's Wisdom increases the cryston's range by 100 feet. Crystons do not suffer range penalties; their entire range is considered their first (and only) range increment.

Once a cryston is fired, it must be readied again. A user can keep a cryston in a ready state through minimal concentration (requiring a free action each round) but must be holding the weapon and cannot concentrate on anything else, including arcana.

Cryston wielders add their Wisdom rather than their Dexterity to their attack rolls with the weapon. They likewise apply their Wisdom to the cryston's damage. So, a Wisdom +2 hero using a cryston has a +2 bonus to hit and inflicts +2 damage. Crystons inflict nonlethal damage on living things and lethal damage against darkfiends and the unliving. They have no effect on inanimate objects.

#### DAGGER

You get a +2 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal a dagger on your body.

#### FLAIL OR HEAVY FLAIL

With a flail, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### MARTIAL WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
LIGHT MELEE WEAPONS						
Axe, throwing	8	+2	x2	10 ft.	2 lb.	Slashing
Hammer, light	3	+1	x2	20 ft.	2 lb.	Bludgeoning
Handaxe	7	+2	x3	—	3 lb.	Slashing
Kukri	7	+1	18–20/x2	—	2 lb.	Slashing
Pick, light	6	+1	x4	—	3 lb.	Piercing
Sap	3	+2	x2	—	2 lb.	Bludgeoning
Shield, light	Special	+0	x2	—	Special	Bludgeoning
Sword, short	9	+2	19–20/x2	—	2 lb.	Piercing
ONE-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS						
Battleaxe	9	+3	x3	—	6 lb.	Slashing
Flail	8	+3	x2	—	5 lb.	Bludgeoning
Longsword	11	+3	19–20/x2	—	4 lb.	Slashing
Pick, heavy	8	+2	x4	—	6 lb.	Piercing
Rapier	12	+2	18–20/x2	—	2 lb.	Piercing
Scimitar	11	+2	18–20/x2	—	4 lb.	Slashing
Shield, heavy	Special	+1	x2	—	Special	Bludgeoning
Trident	11	+3	x2	10 ft.	4 lb.	Piercing
Warhammer	10	+3	x3	—	5 lb.	Bludgeoning
TWO-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS						
Greataxe	12	+5	x3	—	12 lb.	Slashing
Greatclub	6	+4	x2	—	8 lb.	Bludgeoning
Flail, heavy	11	+4	19–20/x2	—	10 lb.	Bludgeoning
Greatsword	15	+4	19–20/x2	—	8 lb.	Slashing
Lance	9	+3	x3	—	10 lb.	Piercing
Scythe	11	+2	x4	—	10 lb.	Slashing
RANGED WEAPONS						
Arrows (20)	3	—	—	—	3 lb.	—
Longbow	16	+3	x3	100 ft.	3 lb.	Piercing
Longbow, composite	17	+3	x3	110 ft.	3 lb.	Piercing
Shortbow	13	+2	x3	60 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Shortbow, composite	16	+2	x3	70 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing

You can also use this weapon to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the flail to avoid being tripped.

#### GAUNTLET

This metal glove lets you deal lethal damage rather than nonlethal damage with unarmed strikes. A strike with a gauntlet is otherwise considered an unarmed attack. The cost and weight given are for a single gauntlet. Medium and heavy suits of armor (except breastplates) come with gauntlets.

#### GAUNTLET, SPIKED

Your opponent cannot use a disarm action to disarm you of spiked gauntlets. The cost and weight given are for a single gauntlet.

#### JAVELIN

Since it is not designed for melee, you are treated as nontrained with it and take a –4 penalty on attack rolls if you use a javelin as a melee weapon.

#### LANCE

A lance deals double damage when used from the back of a charging mount. It has reach, so you can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe. While mounted, you can wield a lance with one hand.

#### LONGBOW

You need at least two hands to use a bow, regardless of its size. A longbow is too unwieldy to use while you are mounted. If you have a negative Strength score, apply it to

## EXOTIC WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
ONE-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS						
Sword, bastard	14	+4	19–20/x2	—	6 lb.	Slashing
Whip	3	+0	x2	—	2 lb.	Slashing
RANGED WEAPONS						
Bolas	6	+1	x2	10 ft.	2 lb.	Bludgeoning
Net	12	—	—	10 ft.	6 lb.	—

damage when you use a longbow. If you have a positive Strength score, you can apply it to damage when you use a composite longbow but not a regular longbow.

### Longbow, Composite

You need at least two hands to use a bow, regardless of its size. You can use a composite longbow while mounted. All composite bows are made with a particular strength rating (that is, each requires a minimum Strength score to use). If your Strength score is less than the strength rating of the bow, you can't effectively use it, so you take a –2 penalty on attacks with it. The default composite longbow requires a Strength of +0 or higher. A composite longbow can be made with a high Strength rating to take advantage of an above-average Strength score; this feature allows you to add your Strength bonus to damage, up to the maximum bonus indicated for the bow. Each point of Strength bonus granted by the bow adds +1 to its cost.

For purposes of Weapon Focus and similar feats, a composite longbow is treated as if it were a longbow.

### Longspear

A longspear has reach. You can strike opponents 10 feet away with it, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe. If you use a ready action to set a longspear against a charge, you deal double damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

### Net

A net is used to entangle enemies. When you throw a net, you make a ranged touch attack against your target. A net's maximum range is 10 feet. If you hit, the target is entangled. An entangled creature takes a –2 penalty on attack rolls and a –2 penalty on Dexterity, can move at only half speed, and cannot charge or run. If you control the trailing rope by succeeding on an opposed Strength check while holding it, the entangled creature can move only within the limits the rope allows. If the entangled creature attempts to use arcana, it must make a Difficulty 15 Concentration check to succeed.

An entangled creature can escape with a Difficulty 20 Escape Artist check (a full-round action). The net is hardness 5 and can be burst with a Difficulty 25 Strength check (also a full-round action).

A net is useful only against creatures within one size category of you. A net must be folded to be thrown effectively. The first time you throw your net in a fight, make a normal ranged touch attack roll. After the net is unfolded, you take a –4 penalty on attack rolls with it. It

takes 2 rounds for a trained user to fold a net and twice that long for an untrained one to do so.

### Quarterstaff

A quarterstaff is a hardwood shaft, typically between 5 and 6 feet long. You can wield it one- or two-handed.

### Rapier

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity score instead of your Strength score to attack rolls with a rapier sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon for you.

### Sap

A sap is a bludgeoning weapon, inflicting nonlethal damage.

### Scythe

A scythe can be used to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the scythe to avoid being tripped.

### Shield, Heavy or Light

You can bash with a shield instead of using it for defense. See **Armor**, page 137, for details.

### Shortbow

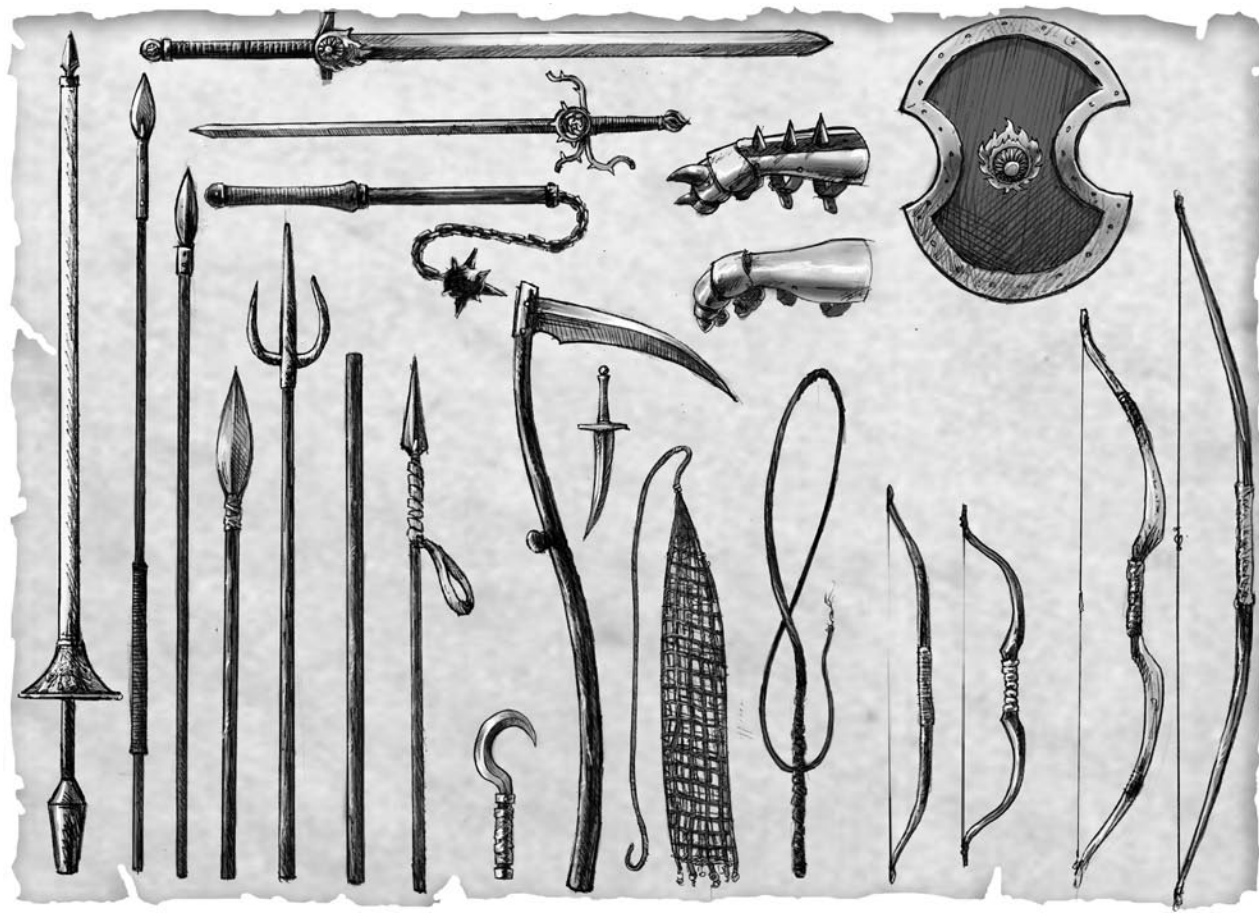
You need at least two hands to use a bow, regardless of its size. You can use a shortbow while mounted. If you have a negative Strength score, apply it to damage when you use a shortbow. If you have a positive Strength score, you can apply it to damage when you use a composite shortbow but not a regular shortbow.

### Shortbow, Composite

You need at least two hands to use a bow, regardless of its size. You can use a composite shortbow while mounted. All composite bows are made with a particular Strength rating (that is, each requires a minimum Strength score to use). If your Strength score is less than the Strength rating of the bow, you can't effectively use it, so you take a –2 penalty on attacks with it. The default composite shortbow requires a Strength of +0 or higher. A composite shortbow can be made with a high Strength rating to take advantage of an above-average Strength score; this feature allows you to add your Strength bonus to damage, up to the maximum bonus indicated for the bow. Each point of Strength bonus granted by the bow adds +1 to its cost.

For purposes of Weapon Focus and similar feats, a composite shortbow is treated as if it were a shortbow.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —



### **SHORTSPEAR**

A shortspear is small enough to wield one-handed. It may also be thrown.

### **SICKLE**

A sickle can be used to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the sickle to avoid being tripped.

### **SLING**

Your Strength score applies to damage when you use a sling, just as it does for thrown weapons. You can fire, but not load, a sling with one hand. Loading a sling is a move action requiring two hands. You can hurl ordinary stones with a sling, but stones are not as dense or round as bullets. Thus, such an attack deals -1 damage, and you take a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

### **SPEAR**

A spear can be thrown. If you use a ready action to set a spear against a charge, you deal double damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

### **STRIKE, UNARMED**

A Medium character deals +0 nonlethal damage with an unarmed strike, plus the character's Strength score. Anyone with the Improved Strike feat can deal lethal or nonlethal damage with unarmed strikes.

An unarmed strike is considered a light weapon.

Therefore, you can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier to attack rolls with an unarmed strike.

### **SWORD, BASTARD**

A bastard sword is too large to use in one hand without special training; thus, it is an exotic weapon. You can use a bastard sword two-handed as a martial weapon.

### **TRIDENT**

This weapon can be thrown. If you use a ready action to set a trident against a charge, you deal double damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

### **WHIP**

A whip deals nonlethal damage. It deals no damage to any creature with an armor bonus of +1 or higher or a natural armor bonus of +3 or higher. The whip is treated as a melee weapon with 15-foot reach, though you don't threaten the area into which you can make an attack. In addition, unlike most other weapons with reach, you can use it against foes anywhere within your reach (including adjacent foes).

You can make trip attacks with a whip. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the whip to avoid being tripped.

When using a whip, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep from being disarmed if the attack fails).



You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier to attack rolls with a whip sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon for you.

## Masterwork Weapons

A masterwork weapon is a finely crafted version of a normal weapon. Wielding it provides a +1 bonus on attack rolls.

You can't add the masterwork quality to a weapon after it is created; it must be crafted as a masterwork weapon. The masterwork quality increases the cost of a normal weapon by +5.

Masterwork ammunition is damaged (effectively destroyed) when used. The masterwork bonus of masterwork ammunition does not stack with any bonus of the weapon firing it.

Even though some types of armor and shields can be used as weapons, you can't create a masterwork version of such an item conferring a bonus on attack rolls. Instead, masterwork armor and shields have lessened armor check penalties.

## Arcane Weapons

A masterwork weapon can be imbued with arcane power using the Imbue Weapon feat, making it an arcane weapon. Arcane weapons have the usual properties of masterwork weapons, plus they can overcome the damage reduction of certain creatures. Since arcane trumps all other means of overcoming damage reduction, if a creature's damage reduction can be overcome at all, an arcane weapon will do so.

An arcane weapon increases a weapon's cost by +10. This includes the masterwork quality of the weapon.

# ARMOR

Many adventurers disdain excessive armor; they prefer mobility and speed over the bulk of armor. However, soldiers in particular still wear armor, and its common on battlefields. Heroes expecting heavy combat may choose to wear armor. To wear armor effectively, a character needs the Armor Training feat. Experts are automatically trained in light armor, while warriors are trained in all types of armor. Adepts aren't trained in wearing armor, but can acquire Armor Training like anyone else.

## Armor Qualities

Here are the armor qualities specified in the **Armor and Shields** table.

### Cost

This is the armor's purchase Difficulty.

### Defense Bonus

Each armor or shield grants a bonus to Defense by deflecting attacks. The bonus from a suit of armor doesn't stack with other armor. Similarly, the Defense bonus from a shield doesn't stack with other shields.

### Maximum Dodge Bonus

This is the maximum Dodge bonus to Defense (Dexterity bonus + role bonus) this type of armor allows. Heavier armors limit mobility, reducing the wearer's ability to dodge. This restriction doesn't affect other Dexterity-related abilities.

Even if your dodge bonus drops to 0 because of armor, this situation does not count as losing your dodge bonus to Defense.

Your character's encumbrance may also restrict the maximum Dexterity bonus that can be applied to his or her Defense (see **Carrying**, page 151).

Except for tower shields, shields do not affect a character's maximum Dexterity bonus.

## Armor Check Penalty

Any armor heavier than leather limits your ability to use some skills. An armor check penalty applies to Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Sleight of Hand, Sneak, and Swim checks. Double the normal armor check penalty is applied to Swim checks. Your encumbrance may also apply an armor check penalty (see **Carrying**, page 151). If you are wearing armor and using a shield, both armor check penalties apply.

- *Untrained with Armor Worn:* A hero untrained in wearing armor or using a shield applies the armor check penalty to attack rolls and all Strength-based and Dexterity-based checks. The armor check penalty for armor stacks with the penalty for shields.
- *Sleeping in Armor:* A character who sleeps in medium or heavy armor is fatigued the next day. Sleeping in light armor does not cause fatigue.

## Speed

Medium or heavy armor slows the wearer down. The number on the **Armor and Shields** table is the character's speed while wearing the armor. Shields do not affect a character's speed.

## Weight

This column gives the weight of armor sized for a Medium wearer. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor for Large characters weighs twice as much.

## Armor Descriptions

Any special benefits or accessories to the types of armor found on the **Armor and Shields** table are described here.

### BANDED MAIL

The suit includes gauntlets.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Armor	Cost	Defense Bonus	Max Dodge Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Speed	Weight
LIGHT ARMOR						
Padded	6	+1	+8	0	30 ft.	10 lb.
Leather	9	+2	+6	0	30 ft.	15 lb.
Studded leather	12	+3	+5	-1	30 ft.	20 lb.
Chain shirt	17	+4	+4	-2	30 ft.	25 lb.
MEDIUM ARMOR						
Hide	11	+3	+4	-3	20 ft.	25 lb.
Scale mail	15	+4	+3	-4	20 ft.	30 lb.
Chainmail	19	+5	+2	-5	20 ft.	40 lb.
Breastplate	20	+5	+3	-4	20 ft.	30 lb.
HEAVY ARMOR						
Splint mail	20	+6	+0	-7	20 ft.	45 lb.
Banded mail	21	+6	+1	-6	20 ft.	35 lb.
Half-plate	24	+7	+0	-7	20 ft.	50 lb.
Full plate	27	+8	+1	-6	20 ft.	50 lb.
SHIELDS						
Buckler	11	+1	—	-1	—	5 lb.
Shield, light wooden	5	+1	—	-1	—	5 lb.
Shield, light steel	9	+1	—	-1	—	6 lb.
Shield, heavy wooden	8	+2	—	-2	—	10 lb.
Shield, heavy steel	12	+2	—	-2	—	15 lb.
Shield, tower	13	+4	+2	-10	—	45 lb.

#### BREASTPLATE

It comes with a helmet and greaves.

#### BUCKLER

This small metal shield is worn strapped to your forearm. You can use a bow or crossbow without penalty while carrying it. You can also use your shield arm to wield a weapon (whether you are using an off-hand weapon or using your off hand to help wield a two-handed weapon), but you take a -1 penalty on attack rolls while doing so. This penalty stacks with those that may apply for fighting with your off hand and for fighting with two weapons. In any case, if you use a weapon in your off hand, you don't get the buckler's Defense bonus for the rest of the round. You can't bash someone with a buckler.

#### CHAIN SHIRT

A chain shirt comes with a steel cap.

#### CHAINMAIL

The suit includes gauntlets.

#### FULL PLATE

The suit includes gauntlets, heavy leather boots, a visored helmet, and a thick layer of padding that is worn underneath the armor. Each suit of full plate must be individually fitted to its owner by a smith. A captured suit can be resized to fit a new owner with a purchase Difficulty of 12.

#### HALF-PLATE

The suit includes gauntlets.

#### HIDE

The suit includes gauntlets.

#### SCALE MAIL

The suit includes gauntlets.

#### SHIELD, LIGHT, WOODEN OR STEEL

You strap a shield to your forearm and grip it with your hand. A light shield's weight lets you carry other items in that hand, although you cannot use weapons with it.

- *Wooden or Steel:* Wooden and steel shields offer the same basic protection, though they respond differently to special attacks that affect wood or metal.
- *Shield Bash Attacks:* You can bash an opponent with a light shield, using it as an off-hand weapon. See the **Martial Weapons** table for the damage dealt by a shield bash. Used this way, a light shield is a martial weapon. For the purpose of penalties on attack rolls, treat a light shield as a light weapon. If you use your shield as a weapon, you lose its Defense bonus until your next action (usually until the next round). An enhancement bonus on a shield does not improve the effectiveness of a shield bash made with it, but the shield can be made into an imbued weapon in its own right.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### SHIELD, HEAVY, WOODEN OR STEEL

You strap a shield to your forearm and grip it with your hand. A heavy shield doesn't allow you to use your shield hand for anything else.

- *Wooden or Steel:* Wooden and steel shields offer the same basic protection, but they respond differently to special attacks that affect wood or metal.
- *Shield Bash Attacks:* You can bash an opponent with a heavy shield, using it as an off-hand weapon. See the **Martial Weapons** table for the damage dealt by a shield bash. Used this way, a heavy shield is a martial weapon. For the purpose of penalties on attack rolls, treat a heavy shield as a one-handed weapon. If you use your shield as a weapon, you lose its Defense bonus until your next action (usually until the next round).

### SHIELD, TOWER

This massive wooden shield is nearly as tall as you are. In most situations, it provides the indicated shield bonus to Defense; however, you can instead use it as total cover, though you must give up your attacks to do so. You

cannot bash with a tower shield, nor can you use your shield hand for anything else. When employing a tower shield in combat, you take a –2 penalty on attack rolls because of the shield's encumbrance.

### SPLINT MAIL

The suit includes gauntlets.

## Masterwork Armor

Just as with weapons, you can purchase or craft masterwork versions of armor and shields. Such a well-made item functions like the normal version, except that its armor check penalty is lessened by 1.

A masterwork suit of armor or shield increases the item's cost by +3.

The masterwork quality of a suit of armor or shield never provides a bonus on attack or damage, even if the armor or shield is used as a weapon.

You can't add the masterwork quality to armor or a shield after it is created; it must be made as a masterwork item.

## GOODS AND SERVICES

A wide variety of goods and services can be found in marketplaces all across Aldea. This section provides an overview of the different sorts of things characters might purchase.

## Adventuring Gear

Some of the adventuring gear found on the goods and services table are described below, along with any special benefits they confer on the user.

### CALTROPS

A caltrop is a four-pronged iron spike crafted so one prong faces up no matter how the caltrop comes to rest. You scatter caltrops on the ground so your enemies step on them or are at least forced to slow down to avoid them. One 2-pound bag of caltrops covers an area 5 feet square.

Each time a creature moves into an area covered by caltrops (or spends a round fighting while standing in such an area), it might step on one. The caltrops make an attack roll (base attack bonus +0) against the creature. For this attack, the creature's shield and deflection bonuses do not count. If the target is wearing shoes or other footwear, it gets a +2 bonus to Defense. If the caltrops succeed on the attack, the creature has stepped on one. The caltrop deals –1 damage, but a hurt creature's speed is reduced by one-half. This movement penalty lasts for 24 hours, until the creature is successfully treated with a Difficulty 15 Heal check, or until the injury received from the caltrop is healed. A charging or running creature must immediately stop if it steps on a caltrop. Any creature moving at half speed or slower can pick its way through a bed of caltrops with no trouble.

### CANDLE

A candle dimly illuminates a 5-foot radius and burns for 1 hour.

### CHAIN

Chain has hardness 10. It can be burst with a Difficulty 26 Strength check.

### CROWBAR

If used in combat, treat a crowbar as a one-handed improvised weapon that dealing bludgeoning damage as a club. A crowbar gives a +2 bonus on Strength checks for tasks using it.

### FLINT AND STEEL

Lighting a torch with flint and steel is a full-round action, and lighting any other fire with them takes at least that long.

### GRAPPLING HOOK

Throwing a grappling hook successfully requires a Climb check or ranged attack roll (Difficulty 10, +2 per 10 feet of distance thrown).

### HAMMER

If a hammer is used in combat, treat it as a one-handed improvised weapon that deals bludgeoning damage equal to a spiked gauntlet.

### INK

This is black ink. You can buy ink in other colors, but it costs twice as much.

### JUG, CLAY

This basic ceramic jug is fitted with a stopper and holds 1 gallon of liquid.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### LAMP, COMMON

A lamp clearly illuminates a 15-foot radius, provides shadowy illumination out to a 30-foot radius, and burns for 6 hours on a pint of oil. You can carry a lamp in one hand.

### LANTERN, BULLSEYE

A bullseye lantern provides clear illumination in a 60-foot cone and shadowy illumination in a 120-foot cone. It burns for 6 hours on a pint of oil. You can carry a bullseye lantern in one hand.

### LANTERN, HOODED

A hooded lantern clearly illuminates a 30-foot radius and provides shadowy illumination in a 60-foot radius. It burns for 6 hours on a pint of oil. You can carry a hooded lantern in one hand.

### LOCK

The Difficulty to open a lock with the Open Lock skill depends on the lock's quality

simple (Difficulty 20), average (Difficulty 25), good (Difficulty 30), or amazing (Difficulty 40).

### MANACLES

Manacles can bind a Medium creature. A manacled creature can use the Escape Artist skill to slip free (Difficulty 30, or Difficulty 35 for masterwork manacles). Breaking the manacles requires a Strength check (Difficulty 26, or

Difficulty 28 for masterwork manacles). Manacles have hardness 10. Most manacles have locks; add the cost of the lock you want to the cost of the manacles.

### OIL

A pint of oil burns for 6 hours in a lantern. You can use a flask of oil as a splash weapon. Once it is thrown, there is a 50 percent chance of the flask igniting successfully and setting the target on fire. You can pour a pint of oil on the ground to cover an area 5 feet square, provided the surface is smooth. If lit, the oil burns for 2 rounds and deals +0 fire damage to each creature in the area.

### RAM, PORTABLE

This iron-shod wooden beam gives you a +2 bonus on Strength checks made to break open a door and it allows a second person to help you without having to roll, increasing your bonus by an additional +2.

### ROPE, HEMPEN

This rope has hardness 3 and can be burst with a Difficulty 23 Strength check.

### ROPE, SILK

This rope has hardness 4 and can be burst with a Difficulty 24 Strength check. It is so supple it provides a +2 bonus on checks to use it.

### SPYGLASS

Objects viewed through a spyglass are magnified to twice their size.

### TORCH

A torch burns for 1 hour, clearly illuminating a 20-foot radius and providing shadowy illumination out to a 40-foot radius. If a torch is used in combat, treat it as a one-handed improvised weapon that deals bludgeoning damage equal to a gauntlet, plus -1 fire damage.

### VIAL

A vial holds 1 ounce of liquid. The stoppered container usually is no more than 1 inch wide and 3 inches high.

## Tools and Skill Kits

### ARTISAN'S TOOLS

These tools include the items needed to pursue any craft. Without them, you have to use improvised tools (-2 penalty on Craft checks), if you can do the job at all.

### ARTISAN'S TOOLS, MASTERWORK

These tools serve the same purpose as artisan's tools, but masterwork artisan's tools are the perfect tools for the job, so you get a +2 bonus on Craft checks made with them.

### CLIMBER'S KIT

This kit gives you a +2 bonus on Climb checks.

### DISGUISE KIT

This kit provides a +2 bonus on Disguise checks. A disguise kit is exhausted after ten uses.





## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

ADVENTURING GEAR		
Item	Cost	Weight
Backpack (empty)	4	2 lb.
Barrel (empty)	4	30 lb.
Basket (empty)	2	1 lb.
Bedroll	1	5 lb.
Bell	3	—
Blanket, winter	2	3 lb.
Block and tackle	6	5 lb.
Bottle, wine, glass	4	—
Bucket (empty)	2	2 lb.
Caltrops	3	2 lb.
Candles, dozen	1	—
Canvas (sq. yd.)	1	1 lb.
Case, map or scroll	2	1/2 lb.
Chain (10 ft.)	13	2 lb.
Chalk, dozen pieces	1	—
Chest (empty)	3	25 lb.
Crowbar	3	5 lb.
Firewood (per week)	1	20 lb.
Fishhook	1	—
Fishing net, 25 sq. ft.	6	5 lb.
Flask (empty)	1	1-1/2 lb.
Flint and steel	2	—
Grappling hook	2	4 lb.
Hammer	1	2 lb.
Ink (1 oz. vial)	8	—
Inkpen	1	—
Jug, clay	1	9 lb.
Ladder, 10-foot	1	20 lb.
Lamp, common	1	1 lb.
Lantern, bullseye	10	3 lb.
Lantern, hooded	8	2 lb.
Lock		1 lb.
<i>Very simple</i>	12	1 lb.
<i>Average</i>	14	1 lb.
<i>Good</i>	16	1 lb.
<i>Amazing</i>	20	1 lb.
Manacles	11	2 lb.
Manacles, masterwork	15	2 lb.
Mirror, small steel	9	1/2 lb.
Mug/Tankard, clay	0	1 lb.
Oil (1-pint flask)	1	1 lb.

— No weight, or no weight worth noting.

ADVENTURING GEAR		
Item	Cost	Weight
Paper (sheet)	1	—
Parchment (sheet)	1	—
Pick, miner's	5	10 lb.
Pitcher, clay	0	5 lb.
Piton	1	1/2 lb.
Pole, 10-foot	1	8 lb.
Pot, iron	1	10 lb.
Pouch, belt (empty)	2	1/2 lb.
Ram, portable	9	20 lb.
Rations, trail (per day)	1	1 lb.
Rope, hempen (50 ft.)	2	10 lb.
Rope, silk (50 ft.)	9	5 lb.
Sack (empty)	0	1/2 lb.
Sealing wax	2	1 lb.
Sewing needle	1	—
Signal whistle	1	—
Signet ring	6	—
Sledge	2	10 lb.
Soap (per lb.)	1	1 lb.
Spade or shovel	4	8 lb.
Spyglass	25	1 lb.
Tent	9	20 lb.
Torch	0	1 lb.
Vial, ink or potion	2	1/10 lb.
Waterskin	2	4 lb.
Whetstone	0	1 lb.

TOOLS AND SKILL KITS		
Item	Cost	Weight
Artisan's tools	7	5 lb.
Artisan's tools, masterwork	15	5 lb.
Climber's kit	17	5 lb.
Disguise kit	15	8 lb.
Healer's kit	15	1 lb.
Hourglass	13	1 lb.
Magnifying glass	17	—
Musical instrument, common	7	3 lb.
Musical instrument, masterwork	17	3 lb.
Scale, merchant's	4	1 lb.
Thieves' tools	13	1 lb.
Thieves' tools, masterwork	17	2 lb.
Tool, masterwork	15	1 lb.

### HEALER'S KIT

This kit provides a +2 bonus on Heal checks. A healer's kit is exhausted after ten uses.

### MAGNIFYING GLASS

This simple lens allows a closer look at small objects. It is also useful as a substitute for flint and steel when starting fires. Lighting a fire with a magnifying glass requires light

as bright as sunlight to focus, tinder to ignite, and at least a full-round action. A magnifying glass grants a +2 bonus on checks involving appraising or studying any small or highly detailed item.

### MUSICAL INSTRUMENT, MASTERWORK

A masterwork instrument grants a +2 bonus on Perform checks involving its use.



#### **SCALE, MERCHANT'S**

A scale grants a +2 bonus on checks to appraise items valued by weight, including anything made of precious metals.

#### **THIEVES' TOOLS**

This kit contains the tools you need to use the Disable Device skill. Without these tools, you must improvise tools, and you take a -2 penalty on Disable Device checks.

#### **THIEVES' TOOLS, MASTERWORK**

This kit contains extra tools and tools of better make, which grant a +2 bonus on Disable Device checks.

#### **TOOL, MASTERWORK**

This well-made item is the perfect tool for the job. It grants a +2 bonus on a related skill check (if any). Bonuses provided by multiple masterwork items used toward the same skill check do not stack.

## **Clothing**

#### **ARTISAN'S OUTFIT**

This outfit includes a shirt with buttons, a skirt or pants with a drawstring, shoes, and perhaps a cap or hat. It may also include a belt or a leather or cloth apron for carrying tools.

#### **COLD WEATHER OUTFIT**

A cold weather outfit includes a wool coat, linen shirt, wool cap, heavy cloak, thick pants or skirt, and boots. It grants a +5 bonus on Fortitude saving throws against exposure to cold weather.

#### **COURTIER'S OUTFIT**

This outfit includes fancy tailored clothes in whatever fashion happens to be the current style in the courts of the nobles. Anyone trying to influence nobles or courtiers while wearing street dress will have a hard time of it (-2 penalty on Charisma-based checks to influence such individuals). If you wear this outfit without jewelry (an additional cost of at least 5), you look like an out-of-place commoner.

#### **ENTERTAINER'S OUTFIT**

This set of flashy, perhaps even gaudy, clothes is for entertaining. While the outfit looks whimsical, its practical design lets you tumble, dance, walk a tightrope, or just run (if the audience turns ugly).

#### **EXPLORER'S OUTFIT**

This is a full set of clothes for someone who never knows what to expect. It includes sturdy boots, leather breeches or a skirt, a belt, a shirt (perhaps with a vest or jacket), gloves, and a cloak. Rather than a leather skirt, a leather overtunic may be worn over a cloth skirt. The clothes have plenty of pockets (especially the cloak). The outfit also includes any extra items you might need, such as a scarf or a wide-brimmed hat.

#### **NOBLE'S OUTFIT**

This set of clothes is designed specifically to be expensive and to show it. Precious metals and gems are worked into the clothing.

#### **PEASANT'S OUTFIT**

This set of clothes consists of a loose shirt and baggy breeches, or a loose shirt and skirt or overdress. Cloth wrappings are used for shoes.

#### **PRIEST'S VESTMENTS**

These garments are for performing priestly functions, not for adventuring.

#### **ROYAL OUTFIT**

This is just the clothing, not the royal scepter, crown, ring, and other accoutrements. Royal clothes are ostentatious, with gems, gold, silk, and fur in abundance.

#### **SCHOLAR'S OUTFIT**

Perfect for a scholar, this outfit includes a robe, a belt, a cap, soft shoes, and possibly a cloak.

#### **TRAVELER'S OUTFIT**

This set of clothes consists of boots, a wool skirt or breeches, a sturdy belt, a shirt (perhaps with a vest or jacket), and an ample cloak with a hood.

## **Food, Drink, & Lodging**

#### **INN**

Poor accommodations at an inn amount to a place on the floor near the hearth. Common accommodations consist of a place on a raised, heated floor and the use of a blanket and a pillow. Good accommodations consist of

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

a small, private room with one bed, some amenities, and a covered chamber pot in the corner.

### MEALS

Poor meals might be composed of bread, baked turnips, onions, and water. Common meals might consist of bread, chicken stew, carrots, and watered-down ale or wine. Good meals might be composed of bread and pastries, roasted meats, vegetables, and ale or wine. Banquets are multi-course meals, including appetizers and desserts.

## Mounts & Related Gear

### BARDING, MEDIUM CREATURE AND LARGE CREATURE

Barding is a type of armor covering the head, neck, chest, body, and possibly legs of a horse or other mount. Barding made of medium or heavy armor provides better protection than light barding, but at the expense of speed. Barding can be made of any of the armor types found on the **Armor and Shields** table.

Armor for a horse (a Large non-humanoid creature) has a cost equal to regular armor +10 and weighs twice as much. Medium or heavy barding slows a mount wearing it, as shown on the table below.

### BARDING MOVEMENT

— — — Base Speed — — —

Barding	(40 ft.)	(50 ft.)	(60 ft.)
Medium	30 ft.	35 ft.	40 ft.
Heavy	30 ft.	35 ft.	40 ft.

A mount wearing heavy armor moves at triple its normal speed when running, instead of quadruple.

Flying mounts can't fly in medium or heavy barding. A barded animal cannot carry any load other than a rider and normal saddlebags.

### DONKEY OR MULE

Donkeys and mules are stolid in the face of danger, hardy, surefooted, and capable of carrying heavy loads over vast distances. Unlike a horse, a donkey or a mule is willing (though not eager) to enter dungeons and other strange or threatening places.

### FEED

Horses, donkeys, mules, and ponies can graze to sustain themselves, but providing feed for them is much better.

### HORSE

A horse is suitable as a mount for a Medium rider. Warhorses can be ridden easily into combat. Other horses are hard to control in combat (see **Horse** in **Chapter IX: Bestiary**).

### PONY

A pony is suitable as a mount for a Small rider (generally only a child). They're more commonly used as beasts of burden in mountainous regions.

### CLOTHING

Item	Cost	Weight
Artisan's outfit	2	4 lb.
Cold weather outfit	8	7 lb.
Courtier's outfit	13	6 lb.
Entertainer's outfit	5	4 lb.
Explorer's outfit	9	8 lb.
Noble's outfit	16	10 lb.
Peasant's outfit	1	2 lb.
Priest's vestments	7	6 lb.
Royal outfit	20	15 lb.
Scholar's outfit	7	6 lb.
Traveler's outfit	2	5 lb.

### FOOD, DRINK & LODGING

Item	Cost	Weight
Ale		
Gallon	1	8 lb.
Mug	0	1 lb.
Inn stay (per day)		
Poor	2	—
Common	3	—
Good	5	—
Meals (per day)		
Poor	0	—
Common	1	—
Good	2	—
Banquet (per person)	9	—
Wine		
Common (pitcher)	1	6 lb.
Fine (bottle)	10	1-1/2 lb.

### MOUNTS AND RELATED GEAR

Item	Cost	Weight
Barding		
Medium creature	+2	x1
Large creature	+4	x2
Bit and bridle	4	1 lb.
Dog, guard	13	—
Donkey or mule	9	—
Feed (per day)	0	10 lb.
Horses		
Horse	20	—
Horse, light	16	—
Pony	13	—
Warhorse, heavy	22	—
Warhorse, light	19	—
Saddle		
Military	12	30 lb.
Pack	7	15 lb.
Riding	10	25 lb.
Saddlebags	6	8 lb.
Stabling (per day)	1	—

— No weight, or no weight worth noting.

## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

### SADDLE, MILITARY

A military saddle braces the rider, providing a +2 bonus on Ride checks related to staying in the saddle. If you're knocked unconscious while in a military saddle, you have a 75 percent chance to stay in the saddle (compared to 50 percent for a riding saddle).

### SADDLE, PACK

A pack saddle holds gear and supplies, not a rider. It holds as much gear as the mount can carry.

### SADDLE, RIDING

The standard riding saddle supports a rider.

## Transportation

### CARRIAGE

This four-wheeled vehicle can transport as many as four people within an enclosed cab, plus two drivers. In general, two horses (or other beasts of burden) draw it. A carriage comes with the harness needed to pull it.

### CART

This two-wheeled vehicle can be drawn by a single horse (or other beast of burden). It comes with a harness.

### GALLEY

This three-masted ship has seventy oars on either side and requires a total crew of 200. A galley is 130 feet long and 20 feet wide, carrying 150 tons of cargo or 250 soldiers. This ship cannot make sea voyages and sticks to the coast. It moves about 4 miles per hour when being rowed or under sail.

TRANSPORTATION		
Item	Cost	Weight
Carriage	18	600 lb.
Cart	11	200 lb.
Galley	37	—
Keelboat	29	—
Longship	33	—
Rowboat	15	100 lb.
Oar	4	10 lb.
Sailing ship	34	—
Sled	12	300 lb.
Wagon	14	400 lb.
Warship	36	—
SERVICES		
Service	Cost	Weight
Coach cab	1	—
Hireling		
Trained	3 per day	—
Untrained	1 per day	—
Messenger	1	—
Road or gate toll	0	—
Ship's passage	3	—
— No weight, or no weight worth noting.		

### KEELBOAT

This 50- to 75-foot-long ship is 15 to 20 feet wide and has a few oars to supplement its single mast with a square sail. It has a crew of eight to fifteen and can carry 40 to 50 tons of cargo or 100 soldiers. It can make sea voyages, as well as sail down rivers (thanks to its flat bottom). It moves about 1 mile per hour.

### LONGSHIP

This 75-foot-long ship with forty oars requires a total crew of 50. It has a single mast and a square sail, and it can carry 50 tons of cargo or 120 soldiers. A longship can make sea voyages. It moves about 3 miles per hour when being rowed or under sail.

### ROWBOAT

This 8- to 12-foot-long boat holds two or three Medium passengers. It moves about 1-1/2 miles per hour.

### SAILING SHIP

This larger, seaworthy ship is 75 to 90 feet long and 20 feet wide and has a crew of 20. It can carry 150 tons of cargo. It has square sails on its two masts and can make sea voyages. It moves about 2 miles per hour.

### SLED

This is a wagon on runners for moving through snow and over ice. In general, two horses (or other beasts of burden) draw it. A sled comes with the harness needed to pull it.

### WAGON

This is a four-wheeled, open vehicle for transporting heavy loads. In general, two horses (or other beasts of burden) draw it. A wagon comes with the harness needed to pull it.

### WARSHIP

This 100-foot-long ship has a single mast; although, oars can also propel it. It has a crew of 60 to 80 rowers. This ship can carry 160 soldiers, but not for long distances, since there isn't room for supplies to support that many people. The warship cannot make sea voyages and sticks to the coast. It is not used for cargo. It moves about 2-1/2 miles per hour when being rowed or under sail.

## Services

Sometimes the best solution for a problem is to hire someone else to take care of it.

### COACH CAB

The price given is for a ride in a coach that transports people (and light cargo) between towns. For a ride in a cab that transports passengers within a city, a trip has a negligible cost (purchase Difficulty 0).

### HIRELING, TRAINED

The amount given is the typical daily wage for mercenary warriors, masons, craftsmen, scribes, teamsters, and other trained hirelings. This value



## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

represents a minimum wage; many such hirelings require significantly higher pay.

### HIRELING, UNTRAINED

The amount shown is the typical daily wage for laborers, porters, cooks, maids, and other menial workers.

### MESSENGER

This entry includes horse-riding messengers and runners. Those willing to carry a message to a place they were going anyway may ask for less.

### ROAD OR GATE TOLL

A toll is sometimes charged to cross a well-trodden, well-kept, and well-guarded road to pay for patrols on it and for its upkeep. Occasionally, a large walled city charges a toll to enter or exit (or sometimes just to enter).

### SHIP'S PASSAGE

Most ships do not specialize in passengers, but many have the capability to take a few along when transporting cargo. Increase cost by +2 for creatures larger than Medium or otherwise difficult to bring aboard a ship.

## ARCANE ELIXIRS AND STONES

Although many of the arcane secrets of the Old Kingdom were lost with the Great Rebellion and the fall of the Sorcerer Kings, the crafters of Aldea still know how to make some magical items. The two most common are arcane elixirs and stones, imbued with magical power.

### Arcane Elixirs

Characters with the Brew Elixir feat and the Craft (elixir) skill can create a variety of arcane elixirs from herbs, roots, and other natural materials. Elixirs have various arcane effects. Some elixir ingredients are rare; Narrators may send heroes off into the depths of the Veran Marsh or the Pavin Weald searching for a particular blossom, root, or mushroom needed to brew up a particular elixir, especially if a sudden demand for it uses up the local supply.

#### Enhancing

An enhancing elixir improves the drinker's arcana. For 10 minutes after the sweet-tasting elixir is consumed, the adept gains a bonus on all arcana checks (cumulative +1 per dose of enhancing elixir consumed). After the elixir wears off, the drinker suffers a level of fatigue per dose consumed. If the fatigue renders the character unconscious, any remaining fatigue levels become lethal damage levels. Anyone who takes more than five doses of enhancing elixir within a 24-hour period must also make a Fortitude saving throw (Difficulty 15). A failed save means the character's condition becomes dying. *Cost:* 18 per dose; *Difficulty to make:* 12 per dose.

#### Healing

This sweet-tasting elixir grants the drinker an immediate recovery check, in addition to the drinker's normal checks. Only one draught of healing elixir per day is effective; additional doses on the same day have no effect. *Cost:* 10 per dose; *Difficulty to make:* 12 per dose.

#### Recovery

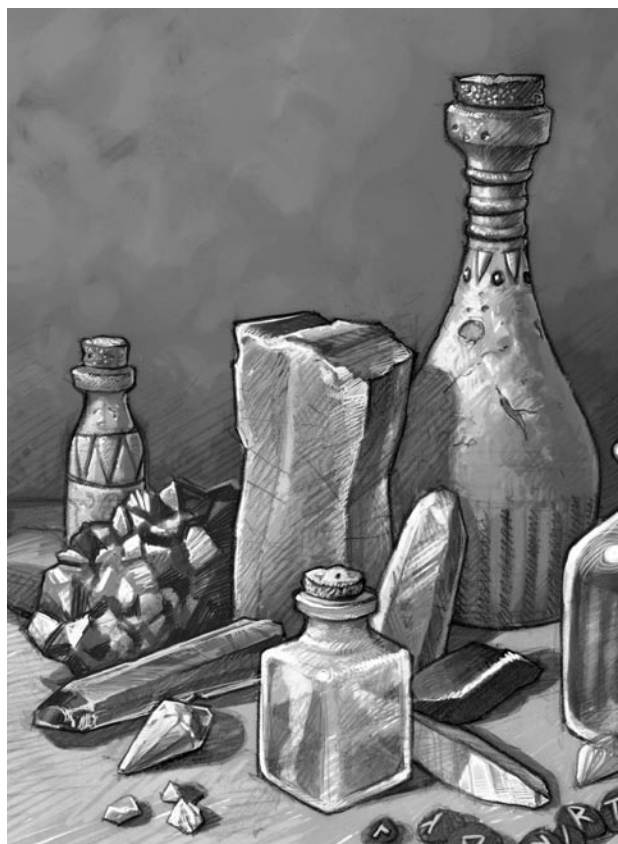
This chalky-tasting elixir speeds the recovery of fatigue. One dose allows the drinker to recover at twice the normal rate (making recovery checks twice as often). A second dose in the same day improves recovery rate by another 50 percent and a third dose has no effect until at least 24 hours have passed. *Cost:* 7 per dose; *Difficulty to make:* 20 per dose.

#### Stamina

For up to 8 hours after drinking this sour elixir, a character can accumulate fatigue from arcana with no ill effects. The fatigue is postponed until the elixir wears off. Then the drinker suffers all the fatigue at once. If the fatigue renders the character unconscious, additional fatigue levels become levels of lethal damage. If the damage level exceeds dying, the character dies immediately. *Cost:* 12 per dose; *Difficulty to make:* 25.

#### Stimulation

This effervescent formula unlocks latent arcane potential. The drinker gains ranks in a particular arcanum (chosen when the elixir is made). The ranks last for 10 minutes before fading. After the elixir wears off, the drinker suffers a level of fatigue. A second dose of stimulation elixir



## — CHAPTER VI: WEALTH AND EQUIPMENT —

within 24 hours has half its normal effect (round down), and a third dose has no effect. *Cost:* 17 + (ranks x 2); *Difficulty to make:* 10 + (ranks x 2).

### Suppression

This bitter-tasting formula suppresses arcane talents. It must be consumed (drunk or mixed with food). The victim makes a Fortitude saving throw (Difficulty 15). A failed save results in the inability to use arcana for 1 hour. Once a dose of suppression elixir has taken effect, the first dose must wear off before another can be applied. *Cost:* 15; *Difficulty to make:* 25.

## Arcane Stones

Certain crystals and stones, like shas and viridian, have the potential to hold and channel arcane energy in various ways. Adepts often set stones into jewelry, particularly diadems, rings, and necklaces, and use them to decorate wands or staves (which are otherwise mundane). Arcane stones must be prepared for use with the Imbue Stone feat. A single stone may have multiple functions; each function is imbued separately. Arcane stones have a negligible weight.

### Beacon

A beacon stone can attune itself to the psychic impressions of its owner (requiring a full-round action of contact and a Difficulty 10 Mind Touch check). Thereafter, the crystal and anything in contact with it is considered intimately familiar to the owner, allowing an adept to more easily use arcana to locate or contact an object or creature in touch with the stone over a distance.. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Mind Touch, Second Sight. *Cost:* 18.

### Meditation

A meditation stone allows an adept to recover faster from the strain of wielding arcana. Meditating with the stone grants a bonus, equal to the stone's rank, on Constitution checks to recover from fatigue. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Meditative Talent, Body Control. The maker sets the stone's rank, which cannot exceed the maker's adept level. *Cost:* 7 + (rank x 2).

### Memory

A memory stone can store information placed into it psychically. Storing information in the stone or retrieving it requires physical contact and a Mind Touch check (Difficulty 10). You can choose to encode information stored in a memory stone, in which case the Difficulty for anyone other than you (or someone you designate) to recover it is equal to your Mind Touch check total when encoding the information. Anyone able to access information from a memory stone can choose to alter or delete it. Discovering such tampering requires a Mind Touch check that equals or exceeds the Mind Touch check when altering or deleting information. A memory stone can store information equal to a large book or about a week's worth of memories. Larger stones can store more. Each doubling in size doubles storage

capacity and increases cost by 3. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Psychic Talent, Mind Touch. *Cost:* 14.

### Pacifying

A pacifying stone, or stone of peace, radiates the effects of the Calm arcanum for any creature in contact with it. The creature gets a normal saving throw, but must save each round while in contact with the stone. Once the calm effect takes hold, it persists until the stone is removed. Pacifying stones are sometimes incorporated into peace torcs in Aldis, neck rings used to help restrain the unusually violent, although only as a last resort, or while they are undergoing treatment from a healer. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Psychic Talent, Calm, Heart Shaping. The maker sets the stone's rank, which cannot exceed the maker's adept level. *Cost:* 10 + (rank x 2).

### Scrying

A scrying stone serves as a focus for visionary arcana, granting a bonus on checks as long as the arcanum requires a full round or more to use. Visionary arcana requiring less time can work in conjunction with a scrying stone only if the adept takes at least a full round to use them. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Visionary Talent, Scrying. *Cost:* 15 + (bonus x 2).

### Sensing

This stone has a crude form of Second Sight, making it sensitive to arcane energy. The stone glows softly whenever arcana are used nearby (up to 10 feet times the rank of the stone). *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Second Sight. The maker sets the stone's rank, which cannot exceed the maker's adept level. *Cost:* 6 + (rank x 2).

### Shielding

This stone protects whoever carries or wears it with the effects of a Psychic Shield at its rank. The bearer of the stone cannot use extra effort to augment the stone's Psychic Shield against a concerted assault, however (see Psychic Shield for details). An attacker willing to use extra effort can overcome a shielding stone's effects. A shielding stone does not stack with the Psychic Shield arcanum; only the stronger shield takes effect, so those with arcane talents rarely need or use them. Shielding stones are relatively common among the nobility of Aldis, as well as the priests of Jarzon who are not adepts. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Psychic Talent, Psychic Shield. The maker sets the stone's rank, which cannot exceed the maker's adept level. *Cost:* 10 + (rank x 2).

### Suppression

A suppression stone places the effects of the Ward arcanum on any creature in contact with it. These stones are usually incorporated into manacles or other restraints for adepts or into headbands or diadems to be placed onto the heads of bound adepts. Any arcana check by an adept in contact with a suppression stone must beat a Difficulty of 10 + the stone's rank to succeed. *Prerequisites:* Imbue Stone, Ward. The maker sets the stone's rank, which cannot exceed the maker's adept level. *Cost:* 10 + (rank x 2).



# CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME

In *Blue Rose*, heroes attempt many deeds, from wooing hearts to felling shadowspawn. This chapter—joined with the chapters on skills, feats, and arcana—gives rules for doing things, whether mundane or heroic, in the game.

The chapter focuses on three action categories: social actions, physical actions, and fighting. The chapter closes with an overview of environmental hazards that sometimes arise in heroes' adventures.

## SOCIAL ACTIONS

There's more to adventures than just fighting and feats of daring. Characters also interact in various ways. Heroes try to negotiate agreements between disputing parties or go on diplomatic missions for the sovereign. Villains taunt and threaten or even try to sway heroes to their side. People get into disagreements or debates. Whole adventures may hinge on convincing the right person at the right time.

generally cannot use interaction skills to change the general attitudes of the heroes. Players choose the attitudes of their heroes and when they change. Only things like arcana can directly influence a hero's overall attitude. Heroes are affected by applications of some interaction checks, such as attempts to deceive them using Bluff or shaking their confidence with Intimidate, but their overall attitudes remain under the control of the players.

## Influencing Attitudes

The Narrator determines the starting attitude of any character the heroes encounter during the game. The heroes can then try to influence the character's attitude using Charisma and various interaction skills, such as Diplomacy and Intimidate. The **Influence** table shows the effects of character attitudes and the Difficulty of attempting to change someone's with a check. Note that a particularly bad influence check can actually make a character's attitude worse. For example, getting less than 5 on a Diplomacy check makes an unfriendly character turn hostile. In general, a hero can attempt to influence another character only once in any given scene.

While heroes can influence the attitudes of Narrator characters, note that heroes and Narrator characters

### ATTITUDE DEFINITIONS

Attitude	Means	Possible Actions
Hostile	Will take risks to oppose you	Attack, interfere, berate, flee
Unfriendly	Wishes you ill	Mislead, gossip, avoid, watch suspiciously, insult
Indifferent	Doesn't care either way	Socially acceptable interaction
Friendly	Wishes you well	Chat, advise, offer limited help, advocate
Helpful	Will take risks to aid you	Protect, back up, heal, aid, support

## INFLUENCE

Starting Attitude	— — — New Attitude Result — — —				
	Hostile	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Friendly	Helpful
Hostile	less than 20	20	25	35	50
Unfriendly	less than 5	5	15	25	40
Indifferent	—	less than 1	1	15	30
Friendly	—	—	less than 1	1	20

## Social Interaction

The various social actions heroes may wish to accomplish are governed by interaction skills. Note that these skills are all usable untrained, so anyone can attempt these actions. Naturally charismatic people tend to be good at them, but those with real talent or training (reflected by ranks in the appropriate interaction skills) are the best.

### Bluff

Bluff is ultimately the skill of getting what you want by misleading or at least exaggerating. Completely honest social interactions should use another skill (usually Diplomacy). Bluff is opposed by itself or Sense Motive; it's difficult to trick an expert liar, and some people just have a sense of when someone is trying to pull the wool over their eyes.

### Fast-Talk

The basic use of Bluff is lying and getting away with it. Make opposed Bluff checks, or Bluff versus Sense Motive, to see if someone gets caught in a lie. If the liar wins, then the story is believable. Heroes or Narrator characters who successfully fast-talk other Narrator characters can convince them to do things based on the success of the Bluff check, and the believability of their story.

### Haggling

Haggling for a price or a similar deal is likewise an opposed check to see who bluffs best. The seller uses Bluff while the buyer uses Bluff or Sense Motive, whichever is better. If the seller wins, the sale is made, with a 25

percent increase in price per 5 points the check exceeds the opposing result. If the buyer wins, then the price doesn't go above market value (the price listed in **Chapter VI: Wealth and Equipment**) and is negotiated down 10 percent per 5 points the check exceeds the opposing result; although, the buyer still has the option to say no if the final price is too much.

### Seduction

The subtle dance of seduction involves using Bluff to get someone to do what you want with promises (implied or explicit) of sexual favors. The seducer makes a Bluff check, while the prey makes a Bluff or Sense Motive check, whichever is better. The seducer's Difficulty increases if his suggestions go against the target's personality in some way. Use the modifiers in the Bluff skill description (see **Chapter III: Skills**) as a guideline.

For example, attempting to seduce someone in a monogamous relationship entails a risk to the target, for a +5 to +10 bonus on the target's check. Trying to seduce a target with a different sexual orientation gives them a +20 bonus on their Bluff or Sense Motive check.

### Diplomacy

Diplomacy is the gentle art of persuasion, debate, discussion, and etiquette. It is the premier interaction skill for those interested in dealing with others in social situations.

### Negotiation

Negotiating an agreement with another party is a Diplomacy check, with the Difficulty based on the other party's attitude. The outcome of the negotiation is based on the other party's final attitude. An indifferent war chief may become a friendly ally, while a potential ally could become unfriendly or even hostile if negotiations don't go well.





### Persuasion

Convincing someone of the rightness of your view is a Diplomacy check. The Narrator evaluates the subject's attitude toward your viewpoint or the subject at hand (rather than you personally), and your check can improve that attitude.

### Making Friends

Make Diplomacy checks to favorably dispose someone toward you. A friendly or helpful result means you have a potential new friend, if you choose to maintain the relationship over time.

### Foreign Customs

When your hero is dealing with unusual or foreign customs, the Narrator may ask for a Diplomacy check for you to avoid making any faux pas. The Difficulty is based on how obscure the custom is: Difficulty 10 for slightly obscure customs, Difficulty 15 for moderately obscure ones, and Difficulty 20 to 30 for very obscure ones. A failed check means a potentially embarrassing social blunder, which may worsen the attitude of your hosts, apply a penalty to further interaction checks, or both.

## Gather Information

Of all the interaction skills, Gather Information deals most with social groups, whether it's finding things out or spreading rumors through certain social circles.

### Assessing Social Situations

You can make a Gather Information check to get a feel for any social situation. It's Difficulty 15 to get a general idea of the mood of a situation, as well as the prevailing attitude (so you have an idea of the Difficulty of using other interaction skills). Picking up on subtle undercurrents may require a higher check result, at the Narrator's discretion.

### Bureaucracy

Gather Information can help cut through red tape and navigate through bureaucracies. The Difficulty of the Gather Information check depends on the challenge, from 10, for navigating simple bureaucratic procedures, to 20 or more, for dealing with particularly complex or hidebound bureaucracies.

### Spreading Rumors

You can also use Gather Information to put information out where others will find or hear of it. The trick is to ensure the rumors are not traced back to you. This is an opposed check of Gather Information. If you win, then you successfully pass on whatever information you want. If you lose, then the other party traces the rumors back to you, and reacts accordingly.

## Intimidate

Although intimidation is not the approach for polite society, sometimes a forceful approach is called for, and the Intimidate skill covers all sorts of forceful social interactions, not just threats.

## Command

Make an Intimidate check when you bark a command or issue an order to someone and want it obeyed *now*. The Narrator can grant bonuses for circumstances; a noble issuing a command to a commoner has a clear advantage, while the sovereign of Aldis has a major one! A check is only necessary in cases where there's some question about whether or not the subject will obey the order. A loyal subject or retainer, for example, will carry out routine orders without need for a check, but a command to leave a comrade behind on the battlefield may require one, for example.

## Interrogation

To get information out of someone by exerting pressure, make an Intimidate check against the result of the subject's Sense Motive check or Will saving throw, whichever has the greater bonus. The Narrator can modify the check using the modifiers for the Bluff skill (see **Chapter III: Skills**), so it's harder to get subjects to give up information that compromises them or their allies. A successful Intimidate check gets the information. Modifiers may apply for the use of interrogation techniques ranging from sleep deprivation to torture, and a successful Intimidate check for interrogation can provide a +2 bonus on a Mind Probe check.

## Perform

Perform is an interaction skill aimed at an audience rather than an individual, but it can still influence the audience's attitude overall, so long as the Narrator feels the performance is appropriate and the performer is trying to shift everyone's attitude in the same way. An envoy might use Perform specialties, like comedy or stringed instruments, to warm up an audience and improve their attitude before attempting skills like Diplomacy and Gather Information. This is one of several reasons why many of the Sovereign's Finest are skilled in the performing arts.

## Sense Motive

Sense Motive is the catch-all skill for resisting social interactions. While each interaction skill typically opposes itself (it's harder to trick someone who's skilled in Bluff, for example), Sense Motive covers a general social shrewdness and awareness of the ins and outs of interaction.

Sense Motive checks are passive, in that they're only made to resist other interactions. At the Narrator's discretion, someone who makes a successful Sense Motive check to avoid a particular interaction can make another check with a Difficulty 10 as an aid another action. The character must be able to communicate with the subjects, and point out the flaws in the interaction to give them the +2 aid another bonus to resist it. This can range from an expert debater poking holes in someone's argument to an impassioned plea to a crowd not to listen to a rabble-rouser. Note this is only to aid others against particular interaction checks. If the character is also trying to sway them to his point of view, then it's more likely an opposed interaction check between the two parties.

## PHYSICAL ACTIONS



Characters' physical capabilities in *Blue Rose* are defined by their ability scores, skills, and feats. These affect their ability to move around, carry loads, and throw things, three topics discussed in this section. Heroes can also push past their limitations by making *extra effort*.

### Moving

Heroes move around a lot, especially when the action gets going. The Narrator moderates the pace of a game session, and so determines when movement is important enough to be worth measuring. During casual scenes, you usually won't have to worry about movement rates. If a character arrives somewhere and takes a stroll around to get a feel for the place, there's no need to know exactly how fast the character goes; it just happens. During action scenes, however, it may be important to have an idea how fast and how far a hero can move.

### Movement Pace

Characters generally move at a normal, accelerated, or all-out pace. Most characters' base speed is 30 feet, meaning a character can walk 30 feet as a move action every round. The following movement paces modify base speed:

- *Normal:* A normal pace represents unhurried but purposeful movement at the character's normal speed, which is usually 30 feet per round (about 3 miles per hour). This is the equivalent of walking for a normal unencumbered human.
- *Accelerated:* An accelerated pace, sometimes called a hustle or double move, is twice the character's normal speed, usually 60 feet per round (about 6 miles per hour). This is the equivalent of jogging for a normal unencumbered human. Taking two move actions in a round is accelerated movement.
- *All Out:* Moving four times your base speed is an all-out pace, the equivalent of running or sprinting, usually 120 feet per round (about 12 miles per hour). All-out movement is a full-round action, and you lose any dodge bonus to Defense, since you're not easily able to avoid attacks.

You can move all out for 10 rounds, plus twice your Constitution score (so 8 rounds for Constitution  $-1$ , 16 rounds for Constitution  $+3$ , and so forth). After that you must succeed at a Constitution check (Difficulty 10) to continue moving at this pace. You must check again each round you continue to move all out, and the Difficulty of this check increases by 1 for each check you have made. When you fail a check, you become fatigued and must drop to an accelerated or normal pace.

### Hampered Movement

Obstructions, bad surface conditions, and poor visibility can hamper movement. The Narrator determines the

## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

category into which a specific condition falls (see the **Hampered Movement** table). When movement is hampered, multiply the standard distance by the movement penalty (a fraction) to determine the distance covered. For example, a character who normally could cover 60 feet with a double move can cover only 30 feet if moving through thick undergrowth.

If more than one condition applies, multiply the normal distance covered by *all* movement penalty fractions that apply. For instance, a character who normally could cover 60 feet with a double move could cover only 15 feet moving through thick undergrowth in heavy fog (one-quarter his double move).

### HAMPERED MOVEMENT

Condition	Examples	Movement Penalty
<b>OBSTRUCTION</b>		
Moderate	Undergrowth	x3/4
Heavy	Thick undergrowth	x1/2
<b>SURFACE</b>		
Bad	Steep slope, mud	x1/2
Very bad	Deep snow, slick ice	x1/4
Poor visibility	Darkness, heavy fog	x1/2

## Carrying

Carrying capacity determines how much weight heroes can lift and how much any additional encumbrance slows them down. See the **Carrying Capacity** table for how much characters can lift based on their Strength

score. (The figures in the **Carrying Capacity** table are for Medium creatures. Larger and smaller creatures can carry more or less depending on their size category. See **Size**, page 183, for details.)

Carrying more than a light load imposes penalties to Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Jump, Sleight of Hand, Sneak, and Swim checks, like an armor check penalty (see **Armor Qualities**, page 137). The penalty is doubled for Swim checks.

- *Light Load:* Characters can lift and carry up to a light load without any penalties or difficulties.
- *Medium Load:* Characters carrying a medium load have a maximum dodge bonus of +3 and a -3 armor check penalty. They move at 2/3 normal speed.
- *Heavy Load:* Characters can lift up to a heavy load overhead. They have a maximum dodge bonus of +1 and a -6 armor check penalty. They move at 2/3 normal speed.
- *Maximum Load:* Characters can lift up to the maximum load off the ground, but can only stagger around with it. While overloaded in this way, characters lose any dodge bonus to Defense and can move only 5 feet per round as a full-round action. You cannot take any other actions while supporting a maximum load.
- *Push/Drag:* Characters can push or drag up to five times their heavy load weight, moving at 1/2 normal speed. Favorable conditions (smooth ground, dragging a slick object) double these numbers, and bad circumstances (broken ground, pushing an object that snags) can reduce them to one-half or less.

### CARRYING CAPACITY

Strength	Light Load	Medium Load	Heavy Load	Maximum Load	Push/Drag
-5	3 lb.	6 lb.	10 lb.	20 lb.	50 lb.
-4	6 lb.	13 lb.	20 lb.	40 lb.	100 lb.
-3	13 lb.	26 lb.	40 lb.	80 lb.	200 lb.
-2	20 lb.	40 lb.	60 lb.	120 lb.	300 lb.
-1	26 lb.	53 lb.	80 lb.	160 lb.	400 lb.
+0	33 lb.	66 lb.	100 lb.	200 lb.	500 lb.
+1	43 lb.	86 lb.	130 lb.	260 lb.	650 lb.
+2	58 lb.	116 lb.	175 lb.	350 lb.	875 lb.
+3	76 lb.	153 lb.	230 lb.	460 lb.	1,150 lb.
+4	100 lb.	200 lb.	300 lb.	600 lb.	1,500 lb.
+5	133 lb.	266 lb.	400 lb.	800 lb.	2,000 lb.
+6	173 lb.	346 lb.	520 lb.	1,040 lb.	2,600 lb.
+7	233 lb.	466 lb.	700 lb.	1,400 lb.	3,500 lb.
+8	306 lb.	613 lb.	920 lb.	1,840 lb.	4,600 lb.
+9	400 lb.	800 lb.	1,200 lb.	2,400 lb.	6,000 lb.
+10	532 lb.	1,064 lb.	1,600 lb.	3,200 lb.	8,000 lb.
+15, +20, etc.	x4	x4	x4	x4	x4

## CARRYING LOADS

Load	Max Dex	Check Penalty	Speed	All-out Move
Light	None	0	Normal	Normal
Medium	+3	-3	2/3	Normal
Heavy	+1	-6	2/3	-1 multiple
Maximum	+0	—	5 ft.	—

## Throwing

Characters can throw any object they can lift, up to a heavy load. (Characters cannot throw their maximum load, only drop it adjacent to themselves.) Picking up an object is a move action, while throwing something is a standard action, so it's possible to pick up and throw an object in one round.

The distance you can throw an object is based on its weight and your Strength. You can throw your heavy load 5 feet. For every 2 points of Strength you have over the minimum required to lift an object as a heavy load, double the distance you can throw it. This means a Strength +5 character has 5 points more Strength than needed to lift 100 pounds as a heavy load and can therefore throw a 100-pound object up to 20 feet (5 feet x 2 x 2).

## Extra Effort

Heroes are often called upon to perform feats beyond their normal limits. This calls for *extra effort*. Players can use extra effort to improve a hero's abilities in exchange for the hero suffering some fatigue from the effort.

Extra effort is a free action and can be performed at any time during a hero's turn, but is limited to once per round. A hero using extra effort can gain one of the following benefits:

- **Check bonus:** +2 bonus on a single check.
- **Increase carrying capacity:** The hero's carrying capacity doubles for one round.
- **Increase movement:** The hero's movement speed doubles for one round (this includes jumping distances).
- **Willpower:** Gain an additional Will saving throw against an ongoing effect that allows for Will saves, such as various arcana.

At the beginning of the round immediately after extra effort, the hero suffers a level of fatigue (see **Fatigue**, page 161). A fatigued hero becomes exhausted and an exhausted hero becomes unconscious, the round after using extra effort. If you spend a Conviction point at the start of the round following extra effort to shake off the fatigue, the hero suffers no adverse effects.

## FIGHTING

Sometimes heroes must fight. This section details the rules for fights, starting with the basics and then looking at some of the more unusual strategies heroes employ.

## Combat Sequence

Combat in *Blue Rose* is cyclical. Everybody acts in turn in a regular cycle called a *round*. Generally, combat runs in the following way:

1. Each combatant starts the battle flat-footed. Once a combatant acts, she is no longer flat-footed.
2. The Narrator determines which characters are aware of their opponents at the start of the battle. If some but not all combatants are aware of their opponents, a surprise round happens before regular rounds begin. The combatants aware of their opponents can act in the surprise round, so they roll for initiative. In initiative order (highest to lowest), combatants who started the battle aware of their opponents each take a standard action or move action—not both—during the surprise round. Unaware combatants do not get to act in the surprise round. If no one or everyone starts the battle aware, there is no surprise round.
3. Any remaining combatants roll initiative. All combatants are now ready to begin their first regular round.

4. Combatants act in initiative order.
5. When everyone has had a turn, the combatant with the highest initiative total acts again, and steps 4 and 5 repeat until combat ends.

## Combat Statistics

Several attributes determine how well you do in combat: your attack bonus, Defense, damage bonus, and saving throws. This section summarizes these attributes and how to use them.

### Attack Bonus

An *attack* represents the attempt to strike a target with an attack. When you make an attack, roll 1d20 and add your attack bonus. If your result equals or exceeds the target's Defense, you hit and may deal damage. Your attack bonus is equal to the following:

**Base attack bonus + ability score + size modifier + miscellaneous modifiers – range penalty**

### Size Modifier

Smaller targets are harder to hit, while larger targets are easier. This is reflected by giving smaller creatures a bonus to their attack rolls and Defense and larger creatures penalties. See the table **Size Modifiers to Attack Bonus and Defense**.



## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

Since the same size modifier applies to two opponents of the same size, they strike each other normally.

### SIZE MODIFIERS TO ATTACK BONUS AND DEFENSE

Size	Modifier
Colossal	-8
Gargantuan	-4
Huge	-2
Large	-1
Medium	0
Small	+1
Tiny	+2
Diminutive	+4
Fine	+8

### Miscellaneous Modifiers

The circumstances of your attack may involve a modifier to your attack bonus. Attacking while prone, for example, imposes a -4 penalty on melee attack rolls. See **Combat Modifiers**, page 161, for other modifiers.

### Range Penalty

The range penalty with a ranged attack depends on the attack you're using and the distance to the target. All ranged attacks have a range increment. Any attack at a distance of less than one range increment carries no penalty for range, so an attack with a range increment of 50 feet can strike at enemies up to 50 feet away with no penalty. However, each full range increment causes a cumulative -2 penalty to the attack roll. For example, a character firing the same attack at a target 120 feet away suffers a -4 attack penalty (because 120 feet is at least two range increments, but not three increments).

Generally, projectile weapons have a maximum range of 10 increments. Thrown weapons have a maximum range of 5 increments.

### Automatic Misses and Hits

A natural 1 (the d20 comes up 1) on the attack roll is *always* a miss. A natural 20 (the d20 comes up 20) is *always* a hit, regardless of the opponent's Defense. A natural 20 is also a *threat*, a possible critical hit (see **Critical Hits**, page 154).

## Defense

Your *Defense* represents how hard it is for opponents to hit you, the Difficulty for an opponent's attack roll. Your Defense is equal to the following:

$$10 + \text{armor bonus} + \text{dodge bonus} + \text{size modifier} + \text{miscellaneous modifiers}$$

### Armor Bonus

Your armor helps deflect attacks, so armor and shields provide a bonus to your Defense.

## Dodge Bonus

Your *dodge bonus* represents your ability to actively avoid attacks. It's equal to your Dexterity score plus your Defense bonus for your role and level. If you can't react to an attack, you can't use your dodge bonus. For example, you lose your dodge bonus if you're bound or when you're caught flat-footed at the beginning of combat. Most situational bonuses to Defense are dodge bonuses.

### Size Modifier

Smaller targets are harder to hit, while larger targets are easier. This is reflected by giving smaller creatures a bonus to their attack rolls and Defense and larger creatures penalties. See the table **Size Modifiers to Attack Bonus and Defense**. Since the same size modifier applies to two opponents of the same size, they strike each other normally.

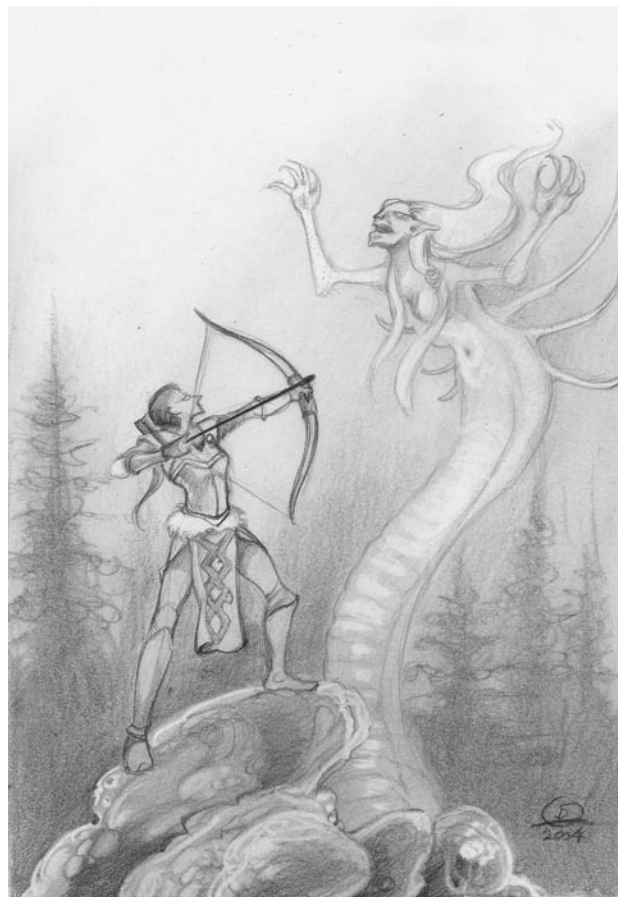
### Miscellaneous Modifiers

The circumstances may also apply miscellaneous modifiers to your dodge bonus or Defense. See **Combat Modifiers**, page 161, for some examples.

## Damage

When you hit with an attack, you may deal damage. Each attack has a *damage bonus*. This is typically a weapon's damage modified by your Strength; although, some attacks have a fixed damage.

$$\text{Damage Bonus} = \text{weapon damage} + \text{Strength score}$$



## Weapon Damage

Weapons have a damage modifier, showing how much damage they inflict. Most projectile weapons inflict a fixed damage bonus. Melee and thrown weapons add the wielder's Strength score to their damage.

## Strength Score

Your Strength measures how hard you can hit, so your Strength score applies when you attack unarmed or with a melee or thrown weapon.

## Lethal and Nonlethal Damage

Damage comes in two types: lethal and nonlethal. Lethal damage does lasting injury and can kill. Nonlethal damage can stun and cause unconsciousness, but causes no serious injury.

## Critical Hits

When you make an attack roll and get a natural 20 (the d20 actually shows 20), you have scored a *threat*. The hit might be a critical hit (sometimes called a crit). To find out whether it's a critical hit, make another attack roll, using the same attack bonus. If this second roll equals or exceeds the target's Defense, the attack is a critical hit. If not, the attack still hits, but as a normal attack, not a critical hit. A critical hit doubles the attack's damage.

## Increased Threat Range

Characters with the Improved Critical feat can score a threat on a natural result less than 20. Any attack roll that doesn't result in a hit is not a threat. Only natural 20s always hit.

## Saving Throws

When you're subjected to a potentially harmful effect, you get a *saving throw* to avoid or reduce it. Like an attack roll or check, a saving throw is a d20 roll plus a bonus based on an ability score and other modifiers. Your saving throw is equal to the following:

$$1d20 + \text{base save bonus} + \text{ability score} + \text{miscellaneous modifiers}$$

The Difficulty for a save is based on the attack itself.

The four different kinds of saving throws are the following:

- **Toughness:** Your ability to resist physical punishment and direct damage. You apply your Constitution score to your Toughness saving throws.
- **Fortitude:** Your ability to resist attacks against your vitality and health, such as poison and disease. You apply your Constitution score to your Fortitude saving throws.
- **Reflex:** Your ability to avoid harm through reaction time and agility, including dodging explosions and crashes. You apply your Dexterity score to Reflex saving throws.
- **Will:** Your resistance to mental influence and domination as well as certain powers. You apply your Wisdom score to your Will saving throws.

## Initiative

Every round, each combatant gets to do something. The combatants' initiative checks determine the order in which they act, from highest to lowest. At the start of a battle, each combatant makes an initiative check. The Narrator rolls for the villains, while the players each roll for their heroes. An initiative check is a Dexterity check.

$$\text{Initiative Check} = 1d20 + \text{Dexterity score} + \text{miscellaneous modifiers}$$

The Narrator finds out in what order heroes act, counting down from highest total to lowest. Each character acts in turn, with the check applying to all rounds of the combat, unless a character takes the delay or ready actions (see **Special Actions**, page 163). Usually, the Narrator writes the names of the characters down in initiative order so she can move quickly from one character to the next each round. If two combatants have the same initiative check result, they act in order of highest Dexterity first. If there is still a tie, roll a die, with the highest roll going first.

## Flat-Footed

At the start of a battle, before you have had a chance to act (specifically, before your first regular turn in the initiative order), you are flat-footed. You can't use your dodge bonus, if any, while flat-footed. The Uncanny Dodge feat allows you to retain your dodge bonus to Defense while flat-footed.

## Opponent Initiative

Typically, the Narrator makes a single initiative check for opponents. That way, each player gets a turn each round and the Narrator also gets one turn. At the Narrator's option, however, he can make separate initiative checks for different groups of opponents or even for individual foes. For instance, the Narrator may make one initiative check for a sorcerer and another check for all of his minions.

## Joining a Fight

If characters enter a fight after it's begun, they roll initiative and act whenever their turn comes up in the existing order.

## Surprise

When a combat starts, if you are not aware of your enemies but they are aware of you, you're surprised. If you know about your opponents but they don't know about you, you surprise them.

## Determining Awareness

Sometimes all combatants on a side are aware of their enemies, sometimes none are, and sometimes only some of them are. Sometimes a few combatants on each side are aware and other combatants on each side are unaware.

The Narrator determines who is aware of whom at the start of a battle. The Narrator may call for Notice checks or other checks to see how aware the characters are of their opponents. Some examples:

## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

- The heroes enter a seedy tavern and immediately spot members of a notorious gang. The gang members notice the heroes at the same time. Both sides are aware; neither is surprised. The heroes and the gang members make initiative checks, and the battle begins.
- The heroes are tracking an assassin who flees down a dark alley. They follow, unaware the assassin is hidden in the shadows. When the assassin springs out to attack, the heroes are surprised and do not get to act in the surprise round.
- The heroes infiltrate a sorcerer's stronghold wearing the uniforms of his guards. When they reveal themselves and attack, they surprise their opponents. The heroes act during the surprise round, but the villains do not.

### The Surprise Round

If some, but not all, of the combatants are aware of their opponents, a surprise round happens before regular rounds begin. The combatants aware of their opponents can act in the surprise round, so they roll for initiative. In initiative order (highest to lowest), combatants who started the battle aware of their opponents each take an attack or move action, not both. If no one or everyone is surprised, a surprise round doesn't occur.

### Unaware Combatants

Combatants unaware at the start of battle do not get to act in the surprise round. Unaware combatants are flat-footed because they have not acted yet. Because of this, they lose any dodge bonus to Defense.

## Actions in Combat

The fundamental combat actions of moving and attacking cover most of what you want to do in a fight. They're

described here. Other, more specialized, options are described elsewhere in this chapter.

## The Combat Round

Each round represents about 6 seconds in the game world. In the real world, a round is an opportunity for each character involved in a combat to take an action. Anything a person could reasonably do in 6 seconds, your hero can do in 1 round.

Each round begins with the character with the highest initiative result and then proceeds, in descending order, from there. Each round uses the same initiative order. When a character's turn comes up in the initiative order, that character performs his entire round's worth of actions.

For almost all purposes, there is no relevance to the end of a round or the beginning of a round. The term *round* works like the word *month*. A month can mean either a calendar month or a span of time from a day in one month to the same day the next month. In the same way, a round can be a segment of game time starting with the first character to act and ending with the last, but it usually means a span of time from one round to the same initiative number, or count, in the next round. Effects lasting a certain number of rounds end just before the same initiative number when they begin.

## Action Types

The five types of actions are standard actions, move actions, full-round actions, free actions, and reactions. In a normal round, you can perform a standard action and a move action (or two move actions; you can always take a move action in place of a standard action), or you can perform a full-round action. You can also perform as many free actions as your Narrator allows.

**One Round = Standard Action + Move Action**

### SURPRISE

Something was wrong. Haril could smell it—literally—and he knew no one else could. For some odd reason, he always caught a whiff of a bad odor whenever there was trouble, and he'd been smelling a stink all day. Sighing, Haril checked the set of his sword and sat a little straighter in the saddle. He couldn't see anything ahead, but he trusted his nose over his eyes.

He didn't have long to wait. He drew his sword a split second before the three mounted bandits thundered down on him, yelling to spook his horse. Of course, his horse was from the royal stables and was neither spooked nor amused. Her ears back, she raised her tail in challenge. That was the bandits' first surprise. When Haril threw back his cloak and his envoy's badge flashed in the sunlight, that was their second.

"Exarchs' blood!" the lead bandit cursed. Then Haril skewered him. That was the last surprise he had for them. In the frantic mess, they took his horse down. Cursing, Haril dodged the hooves of his own beast as she shrieked in agony.

of his sword, and the animal reared, throwing its rider off. None of the bandits were true horsemen. Dodging a deadly blow from the remaining rider, Haril spun, grabbed the man's boot, and dragged him from his horse.

"Now we're all on the same level, boyos," he panted, glaring at his unhorsed opponents. They didn't answer, rushing him in tandem. Haril twisted nimbly out of the way, using a clever little maneuver he'd learned as a child in the Kernish court. Hooking a heel under the first man's boot, he dumped him to the ground, with a kick to his temple put him out, hopefully not permanently.

That left him with the leader, a cunning fighter with burning eyes, speaking of some shadowspawn blood in his veins. The two swordsmen danced back and forth among the fallen bandits and the pooling blood of Haril's horse. The scout found himself at a disadvantage; he was trying to disable, not kill, his opponent, while the other fighter had no such restraint.

Pressed

struggled to kill the bandit now, before it could take effect.

It was more luck than anything, a tiny slip of the bandit's boot, but it was enough. Haril's blade sank home, and he watched as those burning eyes dimmed in death.

"Ah!" Haril sank to his knees, shuddering. He could feel the heat of the poison working its way through his body. He wondered if there'd be any victors in this battle. "And what surprise do you have for me now, eh?"

## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

In some situations (such as in the surprise round), you may be limited to taking only a single standard or move action.

### Standard Action

A standard action allows you to do something. You can make an attack; use a skill, feat, or other ability (unless it requires a full-round action to perform); or perform similar actions. During a combat round, you can take a standard action and a move action. You can take the move action before or after, but not during, the standard action.

### Move Action

A move action allows you to move your speed or perform an action taking a similar amount of time, such as climbing one-quarter of your speed, drawing or stowing a weapon or other object, standing up, or picking up an object.

You can take a move action in place of a standard action. For example, rather than moving your speed and attacking, you can stand up and move your speed (two move actions), draw a weapon and climb one-quarter your speed (two move actions), or pick up an object and stow it in a backpack (two move actions).

If you move no actual distance in a round (usually because you have traded a move action for an equivalent action like standing up), you can take one 5-foot step before, during, or after the action. For example, you can stand up (a move action), take a 5-foot step, and attack (a standard action).

### Full-Round Action

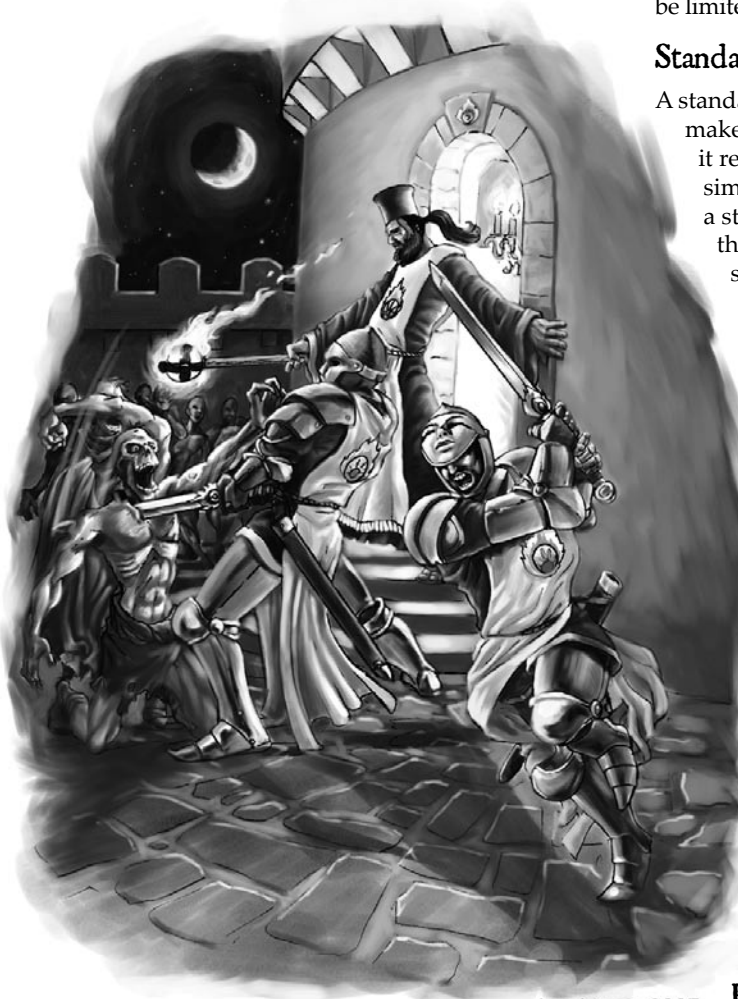
A full-round action requires all your attention during a round. The only movement you can take during a full-round action is a 5-foot step before, during, or after the action. You can also perform free actions as the Narrator allows.

### Free Action

Free actions consume a very small amount of time, and over the span of a round, their impact is so minor they are considered free. You can perform one or more free actions while taking another action normally. However, the Narrator puts reasonable limits on what you can do for free. For instance, dropping an object, dropping to a prone position, speaking a sentence or two, and ceasing to concentrate on maintaining an arcanum are all free actions.

### Reaction

A reaction is something that happens in response to something else, like a reflex. Like free actions, reactions take so little time they're considered free. The difference between the two is a free action is a conscious choice made on the character's turn to act. A reaction is a reflex or automatic response that can occur even when it's not your turn to act. A saving throw is an example of a reaction, something you instinctively do to avoid danger. Some arcana and other attributes are usable as reactions.



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### ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Action	Type
Aim	Full
Attack	Standard
Begin/Complete Full-Round Action	Standard
Dodge	Standard
Total Concentration	Standard
Drop an Item	Free
Drop Prone	Free
Manipulate Object	Move
Move All Out	Full
Move	Move
Recover	Full
Speak	Free
Stand Up	Move
Use Skill	Varies



## Standard Actions

Most common standard actions are described below. More specialized standard actions are covered under **Special Actions**, page 163.

### Attack

With a standard action, you can make an attack against any opponent within the attack's range.

- *Shooting or Throwing into Melee:* If you make a ranged attack against an opponent in melee with an ally, you take a -4 penalty on your attack roll because you have to aim carefully to avoid hitting your ally. Two characters are engaged in melee if they are opponents and adjacent to one another. (An unconscious or otherwise immobilized character is not considered engaged unless actually being attacked.) If the target is two or more size categories larger than your allies, you can ignore the -4 penalty.
- *Aggressive Stance:* You can improve your chances of hitting with an attack by sacrificing defense. Take up to a -4 penalty on your Defense to gain half that amount (up to +2) on your attack rolls for that round.
- *Defensive Stance:* You improve your defense by sacrificing accuracy. Take up to a -4 penalty on your attack rolls to gain half that amount (up to +2) as a dodge bonus for that round.

### Begin/Complete Full-Round Action

This action lets you start a full-round action at the end of your turn or complete a full-round action by using a standard action at the beginning of your turn the round after starting the action. If you start a full-round action at the end of your turn, the next action you take must be to complete it.

### Dodge

Instead of attacking, you can use your standard action to defend. You don't get to attack or perform any other activity, but do get a +4 to your dodge bonus for 1 round. Your increased dodge bonus applies at the start of this action and lasts until the start of your next action.

### Total Concentration

Concentrating intently to maintain a particular arcanum or focusing entirely on a task count as standard actions, meaning you cannot attack while totally concentrating; although, you can still take a move action and free actions. If anything happens that may disrupt your concentration, you have to make a Concentration check to maintain it.

## Move Actions

With the exception of specific movement-related skills, most move actions don't require a check. In some cases, ability checks might be required.

### Move

The simplest move action is moving your speed. Many nonstandard modes of movement are also covered under

this category, including climbing and swimming (up to one-quarter the character's speed), crawling (up to 5 feet), and mounting or dismounting a mount.

### Manipulate Object

In most cases, moving or manipulating an object is a move action. This includes drawing or sheathing a weapon, retrieving or putting away a stored object, picking up an object, moving a heavy object, and opening a door.

### Stand Up

Standing up from a prone position requires a move action.

## Full-Round Actions

A full-round action requires an entire round to complete. If it doesn't involve moving any distance, you can combine it with a 5-foot step.

### Move All Out

You can move all out as a full-round action. When you do so, you move up to four times your speed in a straight line. You lose any dodge bonus to Defense, since you can't avoid attacks. However, you get a +2 dodge bonus against ranged attacks while moving all out.

## SPEEDING UP COMBAT

You can use a number of tricks to make combat run faster.

### Roll Ahead of Time

Once you know who you are attacking and how, make your attack rolls before it is your turn so you have the results ready when your turn comes around. (Get your Narrator's okay before you roll ahead of time. Some Narrators like to see their players' attack rolls.)

### Counters

Use condition counters (like glass beads, poker chips, or playing cards) so players can more easily keep track of their characters' current condition.

### Concealment Rolls

If you know the miss chance related to your target's concealment, roll it along with your attack roll. If the concealment roll indicates a miss, just ignore the attack roll.

### Prep Initiative

Have your Narrator roll the characters' initiative checks ahead of time and prepare the order of battle. That way when a battle starts you can skip the initiative checks and get right to the action.

### Miniatures

Use miniature figures to show the relative positions of the combatants. It's a lot faster to place a miniature where you want your character to be than to explain (and remember) where your character is relative to everyone else.

## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

### Recover

You can spend Conviction and take a full-round action to recover from damage in combat (see **Conviction** on page 73).

### Free Actions

Free actions don't take any time at all; although, the Narrator may limit the number of free actions you can perform during your turn. A good rule of thumb is your Dexterity or Intelligence score +1 in free actions. Some common free actions are described here.

### Drop an Item

Dropping a held item is a free action; although, dropping or throwing an item with the intention of accurately hitting something is a standard action.

### Drop Prone

Dropping to a prone position is a free action, but getting up requires a move action.

### Speak

In general, speaking is a free action. Some Narrators may limit the amount you can say during your turn. Issuing orders to followers or minions in combat is a move action.

### Miscellaneous Actions

For actions not covered here, the Narrator determines how long the action takes.

Certain feats allow you to take special actions in combat. Other feats are not actions in themselves but grant a bonus when attempting something you can already do. Some feats aren't meant to be used within the framework of combat. The individual feat descriptions tell you what you need to know about them.

Most uses of skills in a combat situation are standard actions, but some might be move actions or full-round actions. The description of a skill provides the time required to use it.

## Damage and Recovery

Anyone hit with a damaging attack makes a Toughness saving throw. This is a roll of 1d20 plus Toughness, which measures the ability to avoid or shrug off damage. Resisting damage is tough, so it has a base Difficulty of 15 plus a modifier equal to the attack's damage bonus. For unarmed attacks, this is the attacker's Strength score. For weapons, this is the weapon's damage plus the attacker's Strength score. For example, an attacker with Strength +1, wielding a short sword (damage modifier +2) has a total damage modifier of +3. So, resisting this damage is Difficulty 18 (15 + 3).

**Toughness Saving Throw = 1d20 + Toughness save modifier versus 15 + attack's damage bonus**

If the Toughness saving throw succeeds, the target suffers no significant damage, nothing more than a slight scratch,

bruise, or torn clothing. If the Toughness save fails, the target suffers damage. How much damage depends on the type of attack (lethal or nonlethal) and the amount the Toughness save result is below the Difficulty.

### Nonlethal Damage

Nonlethal damage comes from unarmed attacks (punches and kicks), as well as specific nonlethal weapons, like saps.

A failed Toughness save against a nonlethal attack means the target is *bruised*. Each bruised result imposes a -1 penalty on further saves against nonlethal damage, but does not affect saves against lethal damage. If the Toughness save fails by 5 or more, the target is *dazed*; mark down a dazed condition on the Damage Track. A dazed condition also imposes a -1 modifier on further saves against nonlethal damage. If the Toughness save fails by 10 or more, the target is *staggered*; check off the staggered box on the Damage Track. If the Toughness save fails by 15 or more, the target is *unconscious*; check off the unconscious box on the Damage Track. If a target suffers a result that is already checked off, check off the next highest result, so if a target is already staggered and suffers another staggered result, check off the unconscious box. If the unconscious box is checked and the character suffers more nonlethal damage, check off the first available lethal box (so go to wounded, disabled, and so forth).

### Lethal Damage

Lethal damage is inflicted by weapons, from cutting and piercing weapons like swords and spears to heavy bludgeoning weapons like hammers and maces.

A failed Toughness save against a lethal attack means the target is *hurt*. Each hurt result imposes a -1 penalty on further Toughness saves. If the Toughness save fails by 5 or more, the target is *wounded*; mark down a wounded condition on the Damage Track. A wounded result also imposes a -1 modifier on further Toughness saves. If the Toughness save fails by 10 or more, the target is *disabled*; check off the disabled box on the Damage Track. If the Toughness save fails by 15 or more, the target is *dying*; check off the dying box on the Damage Track. If a target suffers a result that is already checked off, check off the next highest result, so if a target is already wounded and suffers another wounded result, check off the disabled box. If that's already checked off, check off the dying box.

#### DAMAGE TRACK

0	5+	10+	15+	
Bruised	Dazed	Staggered	Unconscious	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hurt	Wounded	Disabled	Dying	Dead

### Collateral Damage

Lethal damage inflicts nonlethal damage as well. Whenever your hero suffers lethal damage, check off the corresponding nonlethal damage, so a hero who is



wounded is also dazed, a hero who is hurt is also bruised. The effects of the damage conditions are cumulative, except for bruised and hurt conditions, where only the highest value applies.

## Impossible Toughness Saves

If the Difficulty of a Toughness save is so high the hero cannot possibly succeed, even with a 20 on the die roll, the Toughness save is still rolled to determine the effect (the amount by which the character misses the Difficulty). A natural roll of 20 means the character is only bruised or hurt, regardless of the Difficulty. Fate intervenes to spare the character from otherwise certain doom. Narrators interested in realistic consequences for damage should ignore this rule.

## Critical Hits

A critical hit (see **Critical Hits**, page 154) doubles an attack's damage bonus, meaning critical hits can inflict serious damage.

## Damage Conditions

Damaged characters can suffer from any of seven conditions, given on the Damage Track and described here.

- *Dazed* characters lose one full-round action after suffering a dazed result; they can take no actions, but retain their normal Defense. The following round, they can act normally.
- *Staggered* characters lose one full-round action after suffering a staggered result. They can take no actions, lose their dodge bonus to Defense, and have a -2 penalty to Defense. In the following rounds,

staggered characters can only take a standard or a move action, not both.

- *Unconscious* characters pass out and are helpless, unable to do anything until they awaken.
- *Wounded* characters are shaken, suffering a -2 penalty on all checks, including attack rolls and Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saving throws. This persists until all wounded conditions are eliminated. Additionally, a wounded character is stunned for one round after being wounded. They can take no actions, lose their dodge bonus to Defense, and have a -2 penalty to Defense.
- *Disabled* characters are badly injured. If a disabled character takes a standard action, he falls unconscious and begins dying on the following round.
- *Dying* characters have to make a Constitution check (Difficulty 10) at the beginning of each round. On a failed check, the character dies. On a successful check, the character lives for another round (and must make a check the following round). If the check succeeds by 10 or more (Difficulty 20), the character's condition becomes disabled and unconscious.
- *Dead* characters are, well, dead. This usually means the end for the character; although, some powerful healers can restore life to the recently deceased.

## Recovery

Recovering from damage requires a Constitution check (Difficulty 10). A successful check erases the damage condition, while an unsuccessful check means there is no significant improvement for that time period.

## CONDITION SUMMARY

This section describes the different adverse conditions that can affect characters. If multiple conditions apply to a character, apply all of their effects. If effects conflict, apply the most severe.

**Ability Damaged:** The character has temporarily lost 1 or more ability score points. Damaged abilities each recover 1 point per day.

**Blinded:** The character cannot see at all, and thus everything has total concealment from him. He has a 50 percent chance to miss in combat, loses his dodge bonus to Defense, and grants a +2 bonus on attack rolls to enemies, just as if they were invisible. He moves at half speed and suffers a -4 penalty on most Strength- and Dexterity-based checks. He cannot make Notice (spotting) checks and suffers a -4 penalty to Search checks.

**Dazed:** A dazed character can take no actions, but retains his dodge bonus to Defense.

**Dead:** The character is dead, and can take no actions. A dead body generally decays, but effects allowing a character to come back from death restore the body to full health or to its condition immediately prior to death. Either way, characters who have come back from the dead needn't worry about rigor mortis, decomposition, and other similar sorts of unpleasantness.

**Deafened:** A deafened character cannot hear and suffers a -4 penalty to initiative checks. He cannot make Notice (listen) checks.

**Disabled:** A disabled character is conscious and able to act but badly injured. He can take only a single standard or move action each round, and if he performs any strenuous action, his condition changes to dying after completing the act. Strenuous actions include moving all out, attacking, or using any ability requiring physical exertion or mental concentration, including most arcana.

**Dying:** A dying character is unconscious and near death. Upon gaining this condition, the character must make a Difficulty 10 Constitution check at the beginning of each round. On a failed check, the character dies. On a successful check, the character lives for another round (and must make a check the following round). If the check succeeds by 10 or more (Difficulty 20), the character's condition becomes disabled and unconscious. Another character can stabilize a dying character with a successful Heal check (Difficulty 15) or through the Cure arcanum (Difficulty 10).

**Entangled:** An entangled character suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls, a -2 penalty to Defense, and a -2 penalty to effective Dexterity. If the bonds are anchored to an immobile object, the entangled character cannot move. Otherwise, he can move at half speed, but can't move all out or charge. An already entangled character who is entangled again becomes helpless.

**Exhausted:** Exhausted characters are near collapse. They move at half normal speed and suffer a -3 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity. An exhausted character who suffers another fatigue result falls unconscious (and must recover from it normally).

**Fatigued:** Fatigued characters cannot move all out or charge and suffers a -2 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity. A fatigued character who does something else that would normally cause fatigue becomes exhausted.

**Flat-Footed:** A character who has not yet acted during a combat is flat-footed, not yet reacting to the situation. A flat-footed character loses his dodge bonus to Defense.

**Grappled:** Engaged in wrestling or some other form of hand-to-hand (or possibly mental) struggle with one or more attackers. A grappled character cannot move or take any action more complicated than making a barehanded attack, using a small weapon or an effect, or attempting to break free from the grapple. In addition, grappled characters lose any dodge bonus to Defense against opponents they aren't grappling.

**Helpless:** Sleeping, bound, paralyzed, or unconscious characters are helpless. Enemies can make advantageous attacks against helpless characters or even deliver a coup de grace. A melee attack against a helpless character is at a +4 bonus on the attack roll (equivalent to attacking a prone target). A ranged attack gets no special bonus. A helpless character's Defense score is 5, the same as an inanimate object.

**Nauseated:** Nauseated characters can only take a single move action each round, meaning they are unable to attack (or take other standard actions) or move all out (or take other full-round actions).

**Normal:** The character is unharmed and unaffected by other conditions. He acts normally.

**Paralyzed:** A paralyzed character stands rigid and helpless, unable to move or act physically. His Strength and Dexterity scores are effectively debilitated, but he may take purely mental actions (including using effects that do not require a physical action or attack roll). A paralyzed character's Defense score is 5, the same as an inanimate object.

**Pinned:** Held immobile (but not helpless) in a grapple.

**Prone:** The character is lying on the ground. He suffers a -4 penalty on melee attack rolls. Opponents receive a +4 bonus on melee attacks against him but a -4 penalty on ranged attacks. Standing up is a move action.

**Shaken:** A shaken character has a -2 penalty on attack rolls, checks, and saving throws (except Toughness saves).

**Stable:** The character is no longer dying but is still unconscious and disabled and must recover from those conditions normally.

**Staggered:** A staggered character can take only a single move or standard action each round. Any further damage to a staggered character shifts the character's condition to unconscious.

**Stunned:** The character drops anything she is holding, loses any dodge bonus to Defense, takes a -2 penalty to Defense, and can take no actions.

**Unconscious:** Knocked out and helpless.

**Winded:** A winded character suffers a -1 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity and cannot move all out or charge. A winded character who suffers an additional fatigue result becomes fatigued.

You can make a recovery check once per minute for staggered and unconscious, once per hour for wounded, and once per day for disabled. Dying has its own particular check; once you are stable, dying becomes unconscious and disabled, which you recover from normally (one minute for unconscious, one day for disabled).

You can spend a Conviction point to get an immediate recovery check from nonlethal damage, rather than

having to wait a minute. You can also spend Conviction on your recovery check, ensuring success (since Conviction always grants you a roll of 10).

Bruised and dazed conditions fade automatically at a rate of one per minute. Hurt conditions do the same at a rate of one per hour. You can spend a Conviction point to immediately erase all bruised, dazed, and hurt conditions after, not during, a conflict.



## Fatigue

Characters can suffer from *fatigue* as well as damage. This usually results from tasks requiring great effort, such as moving all out, exertion in difficult environments, and using arcana. There are three fatigue levels: winded, fatigued, and exhausted.

- **Winded:** The character suffers a –1 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity and cannot move all out or charge. A winded character who suffers an additional fatigue result becomes fatigued.
- **Fatigued:** The character cannot move all out or charge and suffers a –2 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity. A fatigued character who suffers an additional fatigue result becomes exhausted.
- **Exhausted:** The character is near collapse. Exhausted characters move at half normal speed and suffer a –3 penalty to effective Strength and Dexterity. An exhausted character who suffers an additional fatigue result falls unconscious (and must recover from it normally; see **Damage Conditions**).

## Recovery

Every hour of rest, a hero makes a Constitution check (Difficulty 10) to recover from fatigue. Success reduces the character's fatigue condition by one level (from exhausted to fatigued, from fatigued to winded, winded to normal). A full ten hours of rest allows any character to completely recover from all fatigue conditions.

## Minions

While heroes and important Narrator characters use the damage system described previously, minor characters in the story are less durable. These characters and creatures are known as *minions*, and they follow special rules concerning damage.

A minion makes a Toughness save against damage normally; however, if the save fails, the minion suffers the maximum possible damage result for that attack. Usually this means unconsciousness for a nonlethal attack and death for a lethal attack. If the attacker wishes, the minion can suffer a lesser damage result. This means minions generally have only three damage conditions: normal, unconscious, and dead. This makes it easier for heroes to dispatch with less important opponents and easier for the Narrator to keep track of them in combat.

Additionally, minions *never* have Conviction, even if they have levels in a heroic role. Their part in the story simply isn't important enough.

Note that the Narrator decides which characters and creatures are minions. In some cases, whether or not opponents count as minions may depend on the importance of the scene in the story. Not all followers or cohorts are minions! For example, if the heroes are valiantly fighting their way past the unliving guards of a sorcerer's citadel, then the Narrator may wish to consider those skeletons and zombies minions. On the other hand, when the heroes fight the sorcerer's naga lieutenant, the Narrator chooses not to treat it as a minion, even though it is a follower of another Narrator character.

## Combat Modifiers

Sometimes you just have to go toe-to-toe in a fight, but you usually can gain some advantage by seeking a better position, either offensively or defensively. This section covers the rules for when you can line up a particularly good attack or are forced to make a disadvantageous one.

## Conditions

Generally speaking, any situational modifier created by the attacker's position or tactics applies to the attack roll, while any situational modifier created by the defender's position, state, or tactics applies to the defender's Defense. The Narrator judges what bonuses and penalties apply, using the tables **Attack Roll Modifiers** and **Defense Modifiers** as guides.

### ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

Attacker is...	Melee	Ranged
Entangled	–2	–2
Flanking defender	+2	—
On higher ground	+1	+0
Prone	–4	+0
Shaken	–2	–2

### DEFENSE MODIFIERS

Defender is...	Melee	Ranged	Dodge Bonus?
Behind cover	+4	+4	Yes
Blinded	–2	–2	No
Concealed	Special	Special	Yes
Dodging	+4	+4	Yes
Entangled	–2	–2	No
Flat-footed	+0	+0	No
Grappling	+0	+0	No
Helpless	–4*	+0*	No
Kneeling or sitting	–2	+2	Yes
Pinned	–4*	+0*	No
Prone	–4	+4	Yes
Stunned	–2	–2	No
Surprised	–2	–2	No

\* Treat the defender's Dexterity as –5.

## Cover

Taking cover behind a wall, tree, or other obstacle provides a +4 bonus to Defense. Cover is measured relative to the attacker. For example, hiding behind a low wall provides no cover against an opponent hovering above you, but does provide cover against an opponent on the other side of the wall.

## Cover and Reflex Saves

Cover grants you a +2 bonus on Reflex saves against attacks originating from a point on the other side of the cover from you.

## Cover and Sneak Checks

You can use cover to make a Sneak check to avoid being seen. Without cover, you usually need concealment to make a Sneak check.

## Soft Cover

Creatures, even your enemies, can provide you with cover against melee attacks, giving you a +4 bonus to Defense. However, such soft cover provides no bonus on Reflex saves, nor does soft cover allow you to make a Sneak check.

## Total Cover

If you don't have line of effect to your target, he is considered to have total cover from you. You can't make an attack against a target with total cover.

## Varying Degrees of Cover

In some cases, cover may provide a greater bonus to Defense and Reflex saves. In such situations, the normal cover bonuses to Defense and Reflex saves can be doubled (to +8 and +4, respectively). A creature with this improved cover gains a +10 bonus on Sneak checks.

## Striking Cover

If it ever becomes important to know whether the cover was actually struck by an incoming attack, the Narrator should determine if the attack roll would have hit the protected target without the cover. If the attack roll falls within a range low enough to miss the target with cover but high enough to strike the target if there had been no cover, the object used for cover is hit. This can be particularly important to know in cases when a character uses another character as cover. In such a case, if the cover is struck and the attack roll exceeds the Defense of the covering character, the covering character takes the damage intended for the target.

If the covering character has a dodge bonus to Defense, and this bonus keeps the covering character from being hit, then the original target is hit instead. The covering character dodged out of the way and didn't provide cover after all. A covering character can choose not to apply his or her dodge bonus to Defense.

## Concealment

Concealment includes all circumstances in which nothing physically blocks a blow or shot, but something interferes with an attacker's accuracy. Typically, concealment is provided by things like fog, smoke, shadows, darkness, foliage, and so forth.

## Concealment Miss Chance

Concealment gives the subject of a successful attack a 20 percent chance (a roll of 17 or higher on 1d20) the attacker missed because of the concealment. If the attack

roll hits, the defender makes a miss chance roll to avoid being struck. Multiple concealment conditions do not stack.

## Concealment and Sneak Checks

You can use concealment to make a Sneak check to avoid being seen. Without concealment, you usually need cover to make a Sneak check.

## Total Concealment

A target you can't see at all has total concealment from you. You can't directly attack an opponent with total concealment; though, you can attack into the area you think he occupies. A successful attack into the space occupied by an enemy with total concealment has a 50 percent miss chance (a d20 roll of 11 or higher).

## Ignoring Concealment

Concealment isn't always effective. A shadowy area or darkness doesn't provide any concealment against an opponent with darkvision, for instance. Characters with Low-light Vision can see clearly for a greater distance with the same light source than other characters.

## CONCEALMENT

Concealment	Example	Miss Chance
Partial	Fog; moderate darkness; foliage	17+
Total	Total darkness; invisibility; attacker blind; dense fog	11+ (and must guess target's location)

## Helpless Defenders

A helpless foe—bound, sleeping, unconscious, or otherwise at your mercy—is an easy target. You sometimes can approach a target unawares and treat the opponent as helpless if the Narrator allows.

## Regular Attack

A helpless character has a -4 penalty to Defense against attacks from adjacent opponents, but no penalty to Defense against ranged attacks. A helpless defender can't use any dodge bonus to Defense and is considered to have a Dexterity score of -5.

## Coup de Grace

As a full-round action, you can deliver a *coup de grace* to a helpless opponent adjacent to you. You automatically hit and score a critical hit. If the defender takes damage but is not unconscious or dying, he must succeed at a Fortitude save (Difficulty 10 + damage bonus) or be knocked unconscious (for a nonlethal attack) or begin dying (for a lethal attack). You can't deliver a coup de grace against a target immune to critical hits. You can deliver a coup de grace against a creature with total concealment, but doing this requires two consecutive full-round actions (one to accurately perceive the creature once you've determined where it is, and one to deliver the coup de grace).

## Special Actions

This section covers a number of advanced maneuvers, such as attacking your opponent's weapon, disarming, and grappling. Your Narrator will tell you which of these maneuvers he allows in his game.

### SPECIAL ACTIONS

Action	Description
Aid Another	Grant an ally a +2 bonus on attack or defense.
Charge	Combine movement and attacking at once.
Delay	Hold off on your action to see what happens.
Disarm	Knock an item from your opponent's grasp.
Flanking	+2 bonus when you and an ally are on opposite sides of an opponent.
Grappling	Wrestle with an opponent.
Mounted Combat	Fight while riding a mount.
Overrun	Run into a target to knock him down.
Ready	Prepare to take an action when something happens.
Sunder	Strike an object to damage or destroy it.
Surprise Attack	Hit a target in an unexpected way.
Touch Attack	Make an attack that ignores armor.
Trip	Trip or throw an opponent.
Two-Weapon Fighting	Fight with two melee weapons.

### Aid Another

In combat, you can help an ally attack or defend by distracting or interfering with an opponent. If you are in position to attack an opponent, you can attempt to aid an ally engaged in melee with that opponent as a standard action. Make an attack roll against Defense 10. If you succeed, you don't actually damage the opponent, but your ally gains either a +2 bonus on an attack roll against that opponent or a +2 bonus to Defense against that opponent (your choice) on the ally's next turn. Multiple aid another bonuses stack.

### Charge

Charging allows you to move more than your speed and attack as a full-round action. However, there are restrictions on how and when you can charge. You must move at least 10 feet and may move up to twice your speed. You must stop as soon as you are within striking range of your target (you can't run past the target and attack from another direction).

During the surprise round, you can use the charge action, but you are only allowed to move up to your speed,



instead of up to twice your speed. This is also true in other cases where you are limited to a single attack or move action per round.

After moving, you may make a single melee attack. You get a +2 bonus on the attack roll but take a -2 penalty to your Defense for 1 round (until the beginning of your turn the following round).

### Delay

By choosing to delay, you take no action and then act normally on whatever initiative count you decide to act. When you delay, you voluntarily reduce your own initiative result for the rest of the combat. When your new, lower initiative count comes up later in the same round, you can act normally. You can specify this new initiative result or just wait until some time later in the round and act then, thus fixing your new initiative count at that point.

You never get back the time you spend waiting to see what's going to happen. You can't, however, interrupt anyone else's action (as you can with a readied action).

### Initiative Consequences of Delaying

Your initiative result becomes the count on which you took the delayed action. If you come to your next action and have not yet performed an action, you don't get to take a delayed action (though you can delay again).

If you take a delayed action in the next round, before your regular turn comes up, your initiative count rises to that new point in the order of battle, and you do not get your regular action that round.

## Disarm

As a standard action, you may attempt to knock an item, such as a weapon or device, out of an opponent's hand. You and the defender make opposed attack rolls. If you attempt to disarm with a ranged attack, you are at -4 on your attack roll. If you beat the defender, the defender is disarmed. If you attempted the disarm action as an unarmed attack, you now have the item in hand. Otherwise, it's on the ground at the defender's feet. If you make a disarm attempt with a melee weapon and fail, the defender may immediately make an attempt to disarm you.

## Flanking

If you and an ally are attacking the same opponent and your ally is on the opposite side of your opponent, you and your ally *flank* the opponent. You both gain a +2 bonus on your attack roll. Characters with the Improved Uncanny Dodge feat cannot be flanked.

## Grappling

Grappling means wrestling and struggling hand-to-hand. It's tricky, but it can be useful to pin a foe rather than simply pummeling him unconscious.

### Grapple Checks

Repeatedly in a grapple, you need to make opposed grapple checks against an opponent. A grapple check is like a melee attack roll. Your attack bonus on a grapple check is equal to the following:

**Base attack bonus + Strength score + size modifier**

Your size modifier for a grapple check is +4 for every size category you are above Medium or -4 for every size category you are below Medium. Like all size modifiers, this one cancels out so opponents of the same size grapple each other normally.

### Starting a Grapple

To start a grapple, you first need to grab and hold your target. Attempting to start a grapple is a melee attack.

- **Grab:** Make a melee touch attack to grab the target (see **Touch Attack**, page 167). If you don't hit the target, you fail to start the grapple.
- **Hold:** Once you have grabbed your opponent, make an opposed grapple check. If you succeed, you have started the grapple and deal damage as with an unarmed strike. If you lose, you fail to start the grapple. You automatically lose if the target is two or more size categories larger than you are; they're just too big for you to hold.

### Joining a Grapple

If your target is already grappling someone else, you can use an attack to start a grapple, as above, except your grab automatically succeeds. You still must make a successful opposed grapple check to move in to be part of the grapple and to deal damage.

## If You're Grappling

When you are grappling (regardless of who started the grapple), you can make an opposed grapple check as a standard action each round. If you win, you can do the following:

- **Damage Your Opponent:** You deal damage like an unarmed strike.
- **Pin:** You hold your opponent immobile for 1 round. You can't use a weapon on the pinned character or attempt to damage or pin a second opponent while holding a pin on the first. When an opponent has pinned you, you are held immobile (but not helpless) for 1 round. Opponents other than the one pinning you get a +4 bonus on attack rolls against you. You can make an opposed grapple check as a melee attack. If you win, you escape the pin, but you're still grappling.
- **Break Another's Pin:** You can break the hold an opponent has over an ally.
- **Escape:** You can escape the grapple. You can take whatever movement you get. If more than one opponent is grappling you, your grapple check result has to beat all their check results to escape. (Opponents don't have to try to hold you if they don't want to.) You also can make an Escape Artist check (opposed by your opponent's grapple check) to get out of the grapple or out of being pinned (so you're just being grappled). Doing so counts as a standard action, so if you escape the grapple you can also move in the same round.

## Multiple Grapplers

Several combatants can be in a single grapple. Up to four combatants can grapple a single opponent of the same size in a given round. Opponents one size category smaller than you count for half, opponents that are one size category larger than you count double, and opponents two or more size categories larger count quadruple. For example, if you're Medium, eight Small, four Medium, two Large, or a single Huge opponent could grapple you. In the same way, four Small opponents (counting as two opponents) plus one Large opponent (counting as two opponents) could grapple you. Additional grapplers can aid their allies with the aid another action, granting a +2 bonus to their grapple checks for the round.

## Grappling Consequences

While you're grappling, your ability to attack others and defend yourself is limited:

- Opponents can move past you as if you weren't there.
- You lose your dodge bonus to Defense against opponents you aren't grappling. You can still use it against opponents you are grappling.

## Using Arcana while Grappling

You can use arcana while grappling, subject to the requirements of the grapple. Since the grapple check



## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

is a standard action each round, if you use an arcanum requiring a standard action, you forfeit your grapple check that round (meaning you automatically lose the opposed grapple check). This may be worth it if the arcanum helps you get out of the grapple or otherwise deals with your opponent. To use arcana while grappling, you must make a Difficulty 20 Concentration check. Failure means the arcanum fails.

### Mounted Combat

Your mount acts on your initiative as you direct it. You move at its speed, but the mount uses its action to move. (You can take move actions, like drawing your weapon, normally.) Without you to guide it, your mount avoids combat.

#### Combat while Mounted

With a Difficulty 5 Ride check, you can guide your mount with your knees so as to use both hands to attack or defend yourself. This is a free action. When you attack a creature who is smaller than your mount and is on foot, you get the +1 bonus on melee attacks for being on higher ground.

If your mount moves more than 5 feet, you can only make a single melee attack if you are wielding two weapons (see **Two-Weapon Fighting**, page 167). Essentially, you have to wait until the mount gets to your enemy before attacking, so you can't make an attack requiring a full-round action.

If your mount charges, you also take the -2 Defense penalty associated with a charge. If you make an attack at the end of the charge, you receive the bonus gained from the charge. When charging mounted, you deal double damage with a lance.

You can use ranged weapons while your mount is taking a double move, but at a -4 penalty on the attack roll. You can use ranged weapons while your mount is moving all out as well, but at a -8 penalty. In either case, you make the attack roll when your mount has completed half its movement.

#### Using Arcana while Mounted

You can use arcana normally if your mount moves up to a normal move (its speed) either before or after you use the arcanum. If you have your mount move both before and after you use an

arcanum, then you have to make a Concentration check due to the vigorous motion (Difficulty 10) to successfully use the arcanum. If the mount is moving all out, you can use arcana when the mount has moved up to twice its speed, but your Concentration check is Difficulty 15.

#### If Your Mount Falls in Battle

If your mount falls, you have to succeed on a Difficulty 15 Ride check to make a soft fall and take no damage. If the check fails, you take +2 lethal damage.

#### If You Are Dropped

If you are knocked unconscious, you have a 50 percent chance (a roll of 11 or better) to stay in the saddle (6 or better if you're in a military saddle). Otherwise you fall and take +2 lethal damage.

### Overrun

With an overrun, you plow past or over your opponent (and move through his area) as you move. You can attempt an overrun as a standard action made during your move action or as part of a charge. You can only make one overrun attempt per turn.

First, you must move at least 10 feet in a straight line toward the target. Then the target chooses either to avoid you or block you. If he avoids you, you keep moving. (You can always move through an area occupied by someone who lets you pass.) If he blocks you, make a trip attack against him (see **Trip**, page 167). If you succeed in tripping your opponent, you can continue your movement as normal.

If you fail and are tripped in return, you fall prone at the target's feet. If you fail but are not tripped, you have to move 5 feet back the way you came, ending your movement there. If the space is occupied, you fall prone there.

### Ready

Readying lets you prepare to take an action later, after your turn is over but before your next one has begun. Readying is a standard action, so you can move as well.

#### Readying an Action

You can ready a single attack or move action. To do so, specify the action you will take and the circumstances under which you will take it. Then, any time before your next action, you may take the readied action in response to those



## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

circumstances. The action can come before the action that triggers it. For the rest of the fight, your initiative result is the count on which you took the readied action.

### Initiative Consequences of Readying

Your initiative result becomes the count on which you took the readied action. If you come to your next action and have not yet performed your readied action, you don't get to take the readied action (though you can ready the same action again). If you take your readied action on the next round, before your regular action, your initiative rises to the new point in the order of battle, and you do not get your regular action that round.

### Sunder

Sometimes you need to attack or break an object, such as when you want to strike an opponent's weapon or break down a door.

### Striking an Object

Objects are easier to hit than characters because they usually don't move, but many are tough enough to shrug off damage.

### Object Defense and Bonuses to Attack

Objects are harder or easier to hit depending on several factors.

- *Held Objects:* An object held by a character has a base Defense equal the character's Defense + 5 + the object's size modifier. Objects use the same size modifiers as creatures (see the table **Size Modifiers to Attack Bonus and Defense**, page 153).
- *Carried or Worn Objects:* Objects carried or worn by a character have a base Defense equal to the character's Defense + the object's size modifier.
- *Immobile Objects:* Immobile objects have a Defense of 5 + the object's size modifier. Adjacent attacks get a +4 bonus to hit immobile objects. (If you take a full-round action to aim, you get an automatic hit with an adjacent attack or a +5 bonus with a ranged attack.)

### Ineffective Attacks

The Narrator may determine certain attacks just can't effectively damage certain objects. For example, you will have a hard time breaking open an iron door with a knife or cutting a rope with a club. In these cases, the Narrator may rule that you inflict no damage to the object at all.

### Effective Attacks

The Narrator may rule certain attacks are especially effective against some objects. For example, it's easy to light a curtain on fire or rip a piece of cloth. In these cases, the Narrator may increase your damage bonus against the object (or apply a penalty to its Toughness save) or simply say the object is automatically destroyed by a successful attack.

### Hardness

Each object has a hardness score representing how well it resists damage. An object's hardness works like a

character's Toughness. To determine how much damage an object takes from an attack, roll 1d20 + hardness against a Difficulty of 10 + the attack's damage bonus. The hardness scores given on the **Substance Hardness** table are for approximately 1 inch of the material. Heavier objects increase their hardness by +1 per doubling in thickness, so a foot-thick stone wall has a hardness of 12 (base hardness 8, +4 for approximately four doubling of thickness). Characters can attempt to break through heavier objects a little at a time, rather than all at once, such as chipping away at a stone wall inch by inch.

### Damage to Objects

Objects suffer both nonlethal and lethal damage as lethal, but ignore nonlethal damage with a bonus less than their hardness. A "wounded" object is damaged and suffers a 1 point reduction in hardness. A "disabled" object is badly damaged. Disabled equipment and devices no longer function, while disabled barriers have holes punched through them. A "dying" object is destroyed. Damaged and disabled objects can be repaired. It's up to the Narrator whether or not a destroyed object is repairable; if it is, the Difficulty of the Craft check is the same as for creating an entirely new item.

### SUBSTANCE HARDNESS

Substance	Hardness
Paper	-10
Glass	0
Ice	0
Paper	0
Rope	0
Soil	2
Wood	5
Stone	8
Iron	10
Steel	15

### Breaking Items

In the case of a character trying to break something outright, such as smashing down a door or snapping bonds, make a Strength check with a Difficulty of 20 + the object's hardness. Success destroys the object, while failure does no damage. The only difference between this and attacking an object is the character can't slowly wear down an object's hardness in this way.

### Surprise Attack

An attack may come from an unexpected quarter. An attack that catches a character off guard in some way is called a *surprise attack*. On your turn, you can make a surprise attack against an opponent who has lost his dodge bonus to Defense.

Characters with the Uncanny Dodge feat cannot be surprise attacked so long as they are capable of reacting (not stunned or helpless).

## Touch Attack

The Defense bonus granted by armor is based on the armor's ability to deflect damaging attacks. However, some attacks, particularly uses of arcana, require no more than a touch to take effect. These *touch attacks* ignore Defense bonuses provided by armor, since the attack doesn't need to get through the target's armor. This includes the natural armor bonuses of creatures (see **Chapter IX: Bestiary** for more information).

For example, if a target has Defense 18, with a +2 bonus from her role, a +2 Dexterity bonus, and a +4 armor bonus from a chain shirt, the target's Defense against a touch attack is only 14, counting only the role and Dexterity bonuses and ignoring the armor bonus.

Touch attacks generally do not ignore Defense bonuses from shields, since touching a target's shield doesn't usually suffice, and a shield is more separate from the wielder than worn armor. If a touch attack ignores shield Defense bonuses as well, it is noted in the attack's description.

A touch attack may be made in melee or at range, depending on the type of attack. It's the attack that needs to touch the target, not necessarily the attacker. Touch attacks use the attacker's Dexterity score rather than Strength score as a modifier to the attack roll.

## Trip

You can try to trip an opponent as a melee attack. You can only trip an opponent the same size as you or one size category larger or smaller.

### Making a Trip Attack

Make a melee attack. If the attack succeeds, make a Strength or Dexterity check opposed by the defender's Strength or

Dexterity check (use whichever ability has the higher score in each case). A combatant gets a +4 bonus for each size category by which he exceeds Medium or a -4 penalty for each size category by which he is smaller than Medium (these size modifiers cancel out for opponents of the same size). The defender gets a +4 stability bonus on his check if he has more than two legs or is otherwise more stable than a normal humanoid. If you win, you trip the defender. If you lose, the defender may react immediately by trying to trip you; he makes a Strength or Dexterity check opposed by your Strength or Dexterity check. If you have the Improved Trip feat, the defender doesn't get an opportunity to trip you.

## Being Tripped

A tripped character is prone. A prone character suffers a -4 penalty on melee attack rolls. Adjacent attacks against a prone character get a +4 bonus to hit; a ranged attack against a prone opponent gets a -4 penalty to hit. Standing up from a prone position is a move action. A trip attack may have other effects depending on the situation. For example, tripping an opponent on a narrow ledge or the edge of a cliff may cause the opponent to fall. (The Narrator can allow a Difficulty 15 Reflex save to grab the edge of the precipice at the last moment).

## Two-Weapon Fighting

If you wield a second melee weapon in your off hand, you get one extra attack with that weapon when you take a full-round action to attack. Fighting this way is difficult, however, and you suffer a -6 penalty with your regular attack and a -10 penalty to the attack with your off-hand weapon. If the off-hand weapon is light, reduce the penalty by 2 (to -4 and -8, respectively). If you have the Two-Weapon Fighting feat, reduce the penalty to -4 for each attack (-2 if the off-hand weapon is a light weapon). The same rules apply to throwing a weapon from each hand.

# HAZARDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**H**eroes may encounter any number of dangerous environments and hazards in their travels throughout Aldea. This section looks at these hazards and how to handle them in game terms.

## Acid

Corrosive acids deal +4 damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion (such as into a vat of acid), which deals +20 damage per round. An attack with acid, such as from a hurled vial or a monster's acidic spittle, counts as a round of exposure.

The fumes from most acids are poisonous. Those who come close enough to a large body of acid to dunk a creature in it must make a Difficulty 13 Fortitude save or take 1 point of Constitution damage. All such characters must make a second save 1 minute later or take another 1 point of Constitution damage.

Creatures immune to acid's caustic properties might still drown in it if they are totally immersed and need to breathe (see **Suffocation**).

## Cold

An unprotected character in cold weather must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 15, +1 per previous check) or receive a level of fatigue. Additional failed saves cause further levels of fatigue. Once a character is unconscious, failed saves cause the character to become disabled, then dying.

Characters may make Survival checks to receive a bonus on this saving throw (see the skill's description). Characters in cold weather (below 40° F) make a Fortitude save each hour. In conditions of severe cold or exposure (below 0° F), an unprotected character must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes. Characters in severe cold conditions wearing winter clothing only need check once per hour for cold damage.

Extreme cold (below -20° F) deals +2 lethal damage per minute in addition to requiring a Fortitude save every minute. Winter clothing makes the damage nonlethal and reduces the Fortitude save to every 10 minutes.

## Ice

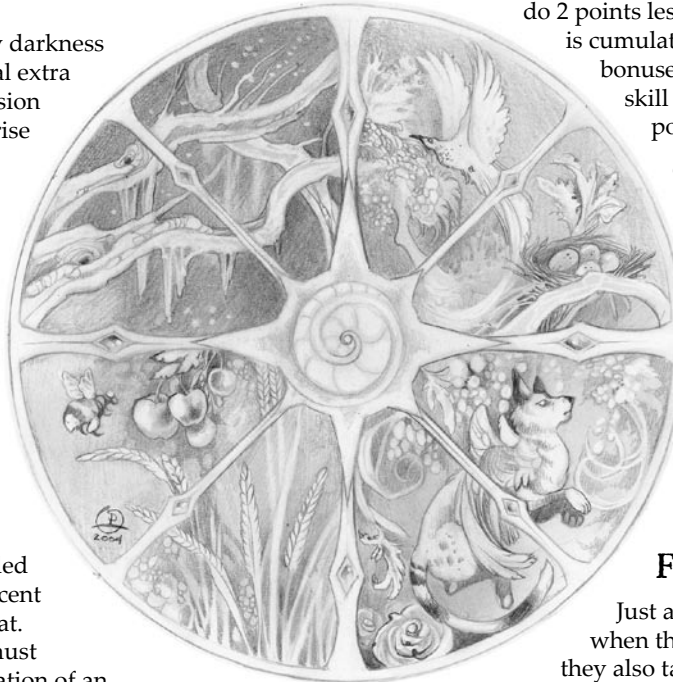
Characters walking on ice move slower (see **Hampered Movement**, page 150), and the Difficulties for Acrobatics and Climb checks increase by +5. Characters in prolonged contact with ice may run the risk of taking damage from the cold.

## Darkness

Characters with normal vision or the Low-Light Vision feat can be rendered completely blind by putting out the lights. Torches or lanterns can be blown out by sudden gusts of wind. Even arcane light sources can be dispelled or countered.

For purposes of the following points, a blinded creature is one who simply can't see through the surrounding darkness.

- Creatures blinded by darkness lose the ability to deal extra damage due to precision (for example, a surprise attack).
- Blinded creatures are hampered in their movement (see **Hampered Movement**, page 150). Blinded creatures can't move all out or charge.
- All opponents have total concealment from a blinded creature, so the blinded creature has a 50 percent miss chance in combat. A blinded creature must first pinpoint the location of an opponent in order to attack the right area; if the blinded creature launches an attack without pinpointing its foe, it attacks a random area within range.
- A blinded creature loses its dodge bonus to Defense and takes a -2 penalty to Defense.
- A blinded creature takes a -4 penalty on Search checks and most Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks, including any with an armor check penalty. A creature blinded by darkness automatically fails any skill check relying on vision.
- A creature blinded by darkness can make a Notice check as a free action each round in order to locate foes by hearing (Difficulty equal to opponents' Sneak checks). A successful check lets a blinded character hear an unseen creature "over there somewhere." It's almost impossible to pinpoint the exact location of an unseen creature. A Notice check that beats the Difficulty by 20 reveals the unseen creature's location (but the creature still has total concealment from the blinded character).



- If a blinded creature is struck by an unseen foe, the blinded character pinpoints the location of the attacker (until the unseen creature moves, of course).
- A creature with the scent ability automatically pinpoints unseen creatures within 5 feet of its location.

## Falling

The basic rule for falling damaging is simple: +2 damage per 10 feet fallen, to a maximum of +40 (at 200 feet).

If a character deliberately jumps instead of merely slipping or falling, the damage is the same but with a +2 bonus on the Toughness save. A Difficulty 15 Acrobatics or Jump check grants an additional +2 bonus.

Falls onto yielding surfaces (soft ground, mud) do 2 points less damage. This reduction is cumulative with Toughness save bonuses from deliberate falls and skill checks. Falls into water do 4 points less damage.

Characters who deliberately dive into water take no damage on a successful Difficulty 15 Acrobatics or Swim check, so long as the water is at least 10 feet deep for every 30 feet fallen. However, the Difficulty of the check increases by 5 for every 50 feet of the dive. A failed check results in normal falling damage.

## Falling Objects

Just as characters take damage when they fall more than 10 feet, they also take damage when hit by falling objects. Objects that fall upon characters deal damage based on their weight and the distance they have fallen.

For each 100 pounds of an object's weight, the object deals +1 damage, provided it falls at least 10 feet. Distance also comes into play, adding an additional +2 damage for every 10-foot increment it falls beyond the first (to a maximum of +40 damage).

Objects smaller than 100 pounds also deal damage when dropped, but they must fall farther to deal the same damage. For every halving of weight, the object must fall for an additional 10 feet to cause +1 damage. So a 25 lb. object must fall 30 feet to inflict damage.

Objects weighing less than 1 pound do not deal damage to those they land upon, no matter how far they have fallen.

## Heat

An unprotected character in hot weather must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 15, +1 per previous check) or receive a level of fatigue. Additional failed saves cause further levels of fatigue. Once a character is unconscious,



## — CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME —

failed saves cause the character to become disabled, then dying. Characters may make Survival checks to receive a bonus on this saving throw (see the skill's description). In very hot conditions (above 90° F), the save is once per hour. In severe heat (above 110° F), a character must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes. Extreme heat (air temperature over 140° F, fire, boiling water, lava) deals lethal damage. Breathing air in these temperatures deals +2 lethal damage per minute. In addition, a character must make a Fortitude save against heat exposure every 5 minutes.

Boiling water deals +2 scalding damage, unless the character is fully immersed, in which case it deals +20 damage per round.

### Catching on Fire

Characters touching a fire source might find their clothes, hair, or equipment on fire. Those at risk of catching fire are allowed a Difficulty 15 Reflex save to avoid this fate. If a character's clothes or hair catch fire, he takes +2 damage immediately. In each subsequent round, the burning character must make another Reflex saving throw. Failure means he takes another +2 damage that round. Success means the fire has gone out.

A character on fire may automatically extinguish the flames by jumping into enough water to douse himself. If no body of water is at hand, rolling on the ground or smothering the fire with cloaks or the like permits the character another save with a +4 bonus.

Those unlucky enough to have their clothes or equipment catch fire must make Difficulty 15 Reflex saves for each item, using the character's Reflex save bonus. Failing the save means the item takes the same amount of damage as the character.

### Smoke

A character who breathes heavy smoke must make a Fortitude save each round (Difficulty 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round choking and coughing. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds is winded. If accumulated fatigue renders the character unconscious, he may suffocate (see **Suffocation**).

Smoke obscures vision, giving concealment (20 percent miss chance) to characters within it.

### Starvation & Dehydration

Characters might find themselves without food or water and with no means to obtain them. In normal climates, Medium characters need at least a gallon of fluids and about a pound of food per day to avoid starvation. (Small characters need half as much.) In very hot climates, characters need two or three times as much water to avoid dehydration.

A character can go without water for 36 hours plus twice his Constitution score. After this time, the character must make a Constitution check each hour (Difficulty 10, +1 for each previous check) or receive a level of fatigue. Once unconscious from fatigue, the character is disabled if he fails another Constitution check, then dying.

A character can go without food for 3 days, in growing discomfort. After this time, the character must make a

Constitution check each day (Difficulty 10, +1 for each previous check) or become fatigued. Once unconscious from fatigue, the character is disabled if he fails another Constitution check, then dying.

Fatigue from thirst or starvation cannot be recovered until the character gets food or water.

### Suffocation

A character who has no air to breathe can hold her breath for 2 minutes (20 rounds), plus or minus a number of rounds equal to her Constitution score times 4. So a Constitution +2 character can hold her breath for 28 rounds, while a Constitution -2 character can only hold her breath for 12 rounds. After this period of time, the character must make a Difficulty 10 Constitution check in order to continue holding her breath. The check must be repeated each round, with the Difficulty increasing by +1 for each previous success.

When the character fails one of these Constitution checks, she begins to suffocate. In the first round, she falls unconscious. In the following round, she is dying. In the third round, she suffocates and dies.

### Slow Suffocation

A Medium character can breathe easily for 6 hours in a sealed chamber measuring 10 feet on a side. After that time, the character suffers a level of fatigue every 15 minutes. Once unconscious, the character suffocates and dies. Each additional Medium character or significant fire source (a torch, for example) proportionally reduces the time the air will last. Small characters consume half as much air as Medium characters. A larger volume of air, of course, lasts for a longer time.

### Water

Any character can wade in relatively calm water that isn't over his head, no check required. Swimming in calm water only requires skill checks with a Difficulty of 10. Trained swimmers can just take 10. (Remember, however, that armor or heavy gear makes any attempt at swimming much more difficult.)

By contrast, fast-moving water is much more dangerous. On a successful Difficulty 15 Swim check, it deals +0 nonlethal damage per round. On a failed check, the character must make another check that round to avoid going under.

Very deep water is not only generally pitch black, posing a navigational hazard, but worse, it deals +2 water pressure damage per minute for every 100 feet the character is below the surface. A successful Fortitude save (Difficulty 15, +1 for each previous check) means the diver takes no damage in that minute. Very cold water deals also deals cold damage (see **Cold**).

### Drowning

Air-breathers under water must hold their breath to avoid suffocation (see **Suffocation**). Some creatures (like dolphins, whales, and sea-folk) can hold their breath under water for an unusually long time.



## CHAPTER VIII: NARRATING BLUE ROSE

**T**he Narrator takes responsibility for running a *Blue Rose* game. The Narrator creates the adventure, runs the players through it, takes on the roles of the various characters the heroes meet, and handles any questions about the rules. While running the game is a big responsibility, it's not as hard as it might seem, and providing a fun and entertaining game for your friends can be quite rewarding.

This chapter looks at some of the main responsibilities of the Narrator: running the game, rewarding the heroes, and portraying a world of romantic fantasy.

### RUNNING THE GAME

**W**hile the players are responsible for keeping track of their own heroes and deciding on their actions, the Narrator is responsible for everything else in the game. A good Narrator tries to make sure that the game runs as smoothly as possible and is enjoyable for all of the players. Many components go into creating a good *Blue Rose* series. The following pages give you the basics, but simple experience is the best tool to help you become a better Narrator.

### Assigning Difficulties

*Blue Rose* adventures can be broken down into a series of tasks heroes must perform, from piecing together clues to navigating the social intricacies of court to dueling a villain atop castle walls. It's up to the Narrator to assign the difficulty of these and numerous other tasks in the game and to determine the outcome of the heroes' efforts. Fighting has detailed rules, while skills, feats, and arcana are covered in their respective chapters. This section offers some general guidelines on assigning the Difficulty of a task, based on the information from those chapters.

### Modifying the Roll or the Difficulty

There are two ways of making a task easier or harder: modify the character's die roll or modify the task's Difficulty. Generally speaking, circumstances affecting a character's performance, like having just the right tools for the job or being forced to improvise, apply a modifier to the die roll. Circumstances making the task easier or harder to accomplish, like a favorable or unfavorable environment or a particularly demanding task, modify the Difficulty. If a condition applies to the character—like knowledge, health, equipment, preparedness, and such—it's usually a roll modifier. It doesn't have to be too fine a line, since modifying the die roll or the Difficulty amounts to the same thing in the end: the task being easier or harder to accomplish.

In either case, you don't need to inform the player. In fact, most of the time you shouldn't, since it keeps the hero's chances of success a secret and makes the task that much more dramatic and interesting. If the player asks, you can offer a general idea of how difficult the task is, based on what the character would know. Usually an answer

like “it’s fairly easy for you” or “you think it will be quite difficult” is sufficient.

## Circumstance Modifiers

A good rule of thumb is favorable circumstances grant a +2 bonus on a check (or a -2 modifier to the Difficulty), while unfavorable circumstances impose a -2 penalty on the check (or a +2 modifier to the Difficulty). This allows you to quickly assess the conditions in an adventure and assign an appropriate modifier to a hero’s check.

## Taking 10 and Taking 20

Keep in mind opportunities for characters to take 10 and take 20 on their checks (see **Checks Without Rolls**, page 10). Characters can take 10 on a roll any time they’re not rushed, threatened, or distracted. Characters can take 20 under the same circumstances so long as there’s no penalty for failing the roll. This means you can dispense with rolls for most routine tasks. If a character wants to disable a device, for example, and his Disable Device bonus + 10 is equal to or greater than the Difficulty, don’t bother having the player roll. The character just succeeds, so long as there’s no great urgency. If the hero is trying to pick a lock as a horde of skeletons bear down on her, the associated stress means the character can’t take 10, however.

When coming up with Difficulties for actions, keep the take 10 and take 20 rules in mind. If the Difficulty is low enough anyone can take 10 and succeed, then it may be too low, or the action may be too trivial to worry about.

## The 50/50 Rule

Another good guideline to keep in mind is that the chance of an average character (with a modifier of +0) succeeding at an average task (Difficulty 10) is 50 percent. Any time you have an average character do something or want to set a Difficulty that you feel is average for a particular character, aim for about a 50 percent chance of success. If you want to know what bonus is required to have a 50 percent chance of succeeding at a particular task, just subtract 10 from the Difficulty. So a Difficulty 25 action (a formidable task) requires a bonus of +15 in order to have a 50 percent chance of success.

Keep in mind that a 50/50 chance on a task may allow a character to take 10 and automatically succeed at that task under routine conditions. This is intentional; the average character only really fails at an average task when the character is hurried or under stress and can’t take 10.

## Using Opposed Checks

Opposed checks offer the Narrator a useful tool for comparing the efforts of two individuals in a quick and easy way. This applies not only to skills, but also to things like arcana. If two or more characters compete at a particular task, you can resolve it with an opposed check. The one with the highest check result wins. Of course, you can play things out if you want, but sometimes it’s good to be able to resolve things with a quick opposed check and move on.



## THE ESSENCE OF *BLUE ROSE*

The essence of the *Blue Rose* roleplaying game is actually quite simple. The vast majority of the rules in this book expand upon the core mechanics of the system, providing special-case rules or situational modifiers. So long as you understand the essentials of the game, you can handle just about any situation.

Those interested in playing in a much more loose and casual style should focus on these fundamentals and not worry about special-case rules or more detailed guidelines. If you come up with an unexpected situation, just choose an appropriate type of check, a Difficulty, and make a roll to see if the character succeeds or not. It's that simple.

### Modifiers

Everything in *Blue Rose*—ability scores, skills, arcana, and so forth—has an associated *modifier*, or score, a value telling you how strong or weak it is. Modifiers run from -5 (very weak) all the way up to +30 (incredibly strong) or more. You can rate virtually any ability by its associated modifier.

### Difficulty

Every task—from making an attack to avoiding harm to figuring out a gadget—has a *Difficulty*, a value that tells you how difficult the task is to perform. Difficulties range from 0 (so easy it's not worth rolling) to 40 (nearly impossible).

### Checks

Actions are resolved through *checks*, a roll of a d20, plus any appropriate modifiers. If the total of the check equals or exceeds the Difficulty, the action is a success. If it doesn't, then it's a failure. The Narrator can easily modify a check by having beneficial conditions apply a +2 bonus on a check and having adverse conditions impose a -2 penalty. This is true whether you're trying to use a skill, make an attack, make a saving throw, or use arcana.

Under routine conditions, you can assume characters get at least a roll of 10 on their check, meaning they automatically succeed at tasks with a Difficulty no more than 10 greater than their modifier. If the task is something you can try over and over until you get it right, you can assume characters eventually get a roll of 20 on the check. Using these guidelines can cut down the number of die rolls players need to make and keep the story flowing smoothly.

### Saves

Trying to avoid an effect is a saving throw. A successful save means you avoid, or diminish, the effect. A failed save means you suffer the results of the effect. It is a d20 roll, plus your saving throw modifier, against a Difficulty determined by the type of danger you need to avoid.

### That's It!

That's the core of *Blue Rose*: roll 1d20 + modifiers versus a Difficulty. If you understand that, you can do pretty much anything in the game. The rest is just details. When in doubt, or whenever you want to speed the game along, just have a player make an appropriate check against a Difficulty based on how difficult the task is, and you really can't go wrong.

As Narrator, if you find yourself without a particular rule to resolve a conflict or contest, the opposed check is your friend. Pick the appropriate skill or ability, make checks for all involved, and compare the results to see how they did.

## Secret Checks

Sometimes it's a good idea to make checks secretly, so the players don't necessarily know the result. This is usually the case for any sort of check where the heroes don't immediately know whether they've succeeded or failed. For example, Notice checks should be made secretly. If the check succeeds, the character notices something. If it fails, then the player doesn't know whether it's because the hero failed to notice something or there wasn't anything there to notice in the first place. The same is true for checks involving arcana, like Mind Reading or Visions, and certain interaction checks, so the player doesn't necessarily know the target's initial attitude or exactly how much it has improved.

## Altering the Outcome of Die Rolls

On occasion the outcome of a particular roll may seriously impact the game. For example, the heroes are walking into a trap and none of them make the necessary check to notice the danger in time. Or a hero gets in a lucky shot and the villain rolls a 1 on his Toughness saving throw, resulting in a quick defeat. What do you do?

In some cases, you can just go with the outcome the dice give you. If none of the heroes spot the trap, have it go off, but give the heroes an opportunity to escape later on. Even if the results of the die roll are unexpected, so long as they don't spoil the fun of the adventure, feel free to go with them. Unexpected twists and turns can be fun, not only for the players, but for you when you run the game.

On the other hand, some die rolls result in anticlimactic or just plain dumb outcomes. In these cases, feel free to change things a little to make the outcome more interesting or more in line with how the game should go. In the above example, you might decide that the villain is only stunned rather than being knocked out, giving the heroes the upper hand, but not ending the climatic encounter prematurely.

Is this cheating? Well, yes, in a manner of speaking it is, but it's "cheating" in order to make the game more interesting and fun for everyone involved. So long as you don't alter the outcome of die rolls unfairly or maliciously and you do it to help ensure the game is fun, interesting, and challenging, you shouldn't have a problem. Besides, the players don't have to know that you change the occasional die roll. That's one of the reasons it's a good idea for Narrators to roll their dice out of sight of the players and then announce the results.



## Faking It

Sometimes circumstances will arise in your series that the rules just don't cover, that you're not sure how to handle, or that would just be a waste of time to make a lot of die rolls for. In these cases, feel free to just fake it and make something up. Come up with a roll or rolls you feel suits the situation and go with it, so you can keep the game moving rather than getting bogged down in page flipping and rules arguments. One of the great things about the *Blue Rose* system is pretty much everything can be resolved with a simple check. So when all else fails, have a player make a check with the most appropriate attribute: an ability score, skill, arcanum, or something else. If the check beats your estimation of the Difficulty, it's a success. Otherwise, it's a failure.

You also can fake it when dealing with certain trivial situations in the game. If there's an important piece of information you want the players to know, don't bother seeing if they succeed at a Search check. You can pretend to make the checks, then just ignore the results and tell the players what their heroes find. Likewise, if a 10th-level hero is going to take out a 1st-level nobody, you don't have to make all the rolls. Just ask the player to describe how the hero defeats her hapless foe.

## Saying Yes to Your Players

Players are a cunning lot, so it's a virtual certainty that, sooner or later, they will come up with something for their heroes to do not covered in these rules. It may be a particularly innovative maneuver, a new use for a skill or arcanum, using the environment to their advantage in some way, or something you never would have considered. When this happens, take a moment and ask yourself, would it be fun if what the player is proposing happened? A good way to think about it is, if something similar happened in a fantasy novel, would it be cool? If the answer is yes, then you probably should let the player try it.

Narrators have three major tools to help them say yes to their players' innovative ideas, while keeping them (somewhat) under control. These are bonuses and penalties, extra effort, and conviction

## Bonuses and Penalties

Remember the Narrator's rule of thumb: if something aids or makes a task easier for a character, it's worth a +2 bonus. If it makes the task harder or hinders the character, it's worth a -2 penalty. This allows you to assign modifiers for almost any situation on the fly, without having to look things up and slow down the game while puzzling out all the pluses and minuses. Just evaluate the overall situation, decide if the conditions are beneficial, neutral, or detrimental, and assign a +2, +0, or -2.

## Extra Effort

When players want their characters to be able to pull off something outlandish, rather than saying no, let them try, but make them pay for it by saying it counts as extra effort



(see **Extra Effort**, page 152). Extra effort already allows heroes to pull off various stunts, so there's no reason you can't expand the list when players come up with other ones.

## Conviction

Like extra effort, Conviction points already allow heroes to pull off amazing stunts. If a player wants to do something outlandish, require a Conviction point to make the attempt. The Conviction doesn't do anything but let the hero try something unusual, and players won't be able to pull off stunts all the time because their heroes have a limited number of Conviction points to spend. Still, it allows for the occasional one-of-a-kind stunts heroes accomplish in fantasy fiction.

## Making Mistakes

Narrators are only human. Sooner or later, you'll make a mistake, whether it's forgetting a particular rule or overlooking something about a character or an element of the story. Don't worry, it happens, and it doesn't mean your game is ruined!

The best way to handle a mistake is to own up to it. Tell your players you made a mistake and need to make a change in order to keep the game balanced, fair, and fun. Be reasonable and straightforward in handling your mistakes and your players are much more likely to be cooperative and understanding in return.

## REWARDS

When an adventure is complete, players naturally expect rewards for their characters. The most obvious reward is advancing in level (see the next section, **Heroic Advancement**). However, this is by no means the only possible reward.

In the world of *Blue Rose*, rewards of wealth are relatively unimportant. For example, the crown pays all members of the Sovereign's Finest well, and envoys cannot simply claim loot they find as their own. They must either return the wealth to its rightful owner (in the case of a bandit's loot) or give it over to the crown (in the case of an ancient stash of gold and jewels they uncover). The same is commonly true of arcane artifacts found in ancient ruins and the like. These things are often dangerous, too dangerous to fall into the wrong hands. They are better left alone or turned over to the crown so they can be properly dealt with.

In keeping with the mood of *Blue Rose*, Narrators should not simply give out random treasure. Choose the occasional material reward to compliment both the powers and the personality of the heroes. A classic element of the genre is to give heroes such rewards as gifts for their deeds.

For example, a hero finds an ancient tomb, and the ghost of the person buried there presents her with a special item because she is especially worthy of it. A hero traveling through the Ice-Binder Mountains in the depths of an especially fierce storm encounters an elemental that gifts him with a flaming sword. Such rewards often replace a prized possession of the hero's, recently lost or destroyed. A hero whose masterwork sword broke in battle or was lost while crossing a raging torrent is an ideal candidate for finding an ancient arcane blade. Narrators interested in fostering the feel of the genre may want to arrange to have mundane items lost or destroyed shortly before the hero receives

a similar magic item. However, if you distribute items to individual heroes, make certain not to give any character more than one such reward before all of the heroes have at least one.

## Heroic Advancement

As heroes go on adventures and overcome challenges they learn from their mistakes and draw confidence from their successes. Over time, they grow and become more capable. They learn new tricks and refine old skills. *Blue Rose* reflects this development through the awarding of levels.

Essentially, after an adventure or two, whenever you feel the heroes have reached a point of development in their story, you can award them an additional level. Generally, heroes should earn one level every one or two adventures, meaning they can go from 1st level to 20th level in twenty to forty adventures total. They only earn a level during a single adventure if it is especially long or harrowing or they achieve a considerable success (in the Narrator's estimation).

Players can choose to apply this new level to one of their hero's existing roles, or they can add a level in a new role (see **Mixed-Role Heroes**, page 68). Increasing in level also improves a hero's abilities: attack bonus, Defense, saving throws, and so forth. Each hero also gains a new feat upon attaining a new level. See **Level-Dependent Benefits**, page 61, for details.

Normally, heroes immediately gain all bonuses from their new level, yet the Narrator can require some training time or preparation before the heroes improve in level. This is particularly true for heroes adding a new role. They may need the assistance of a teacher or mentor to attain their first level in the role.

## SETTING CONSIDERATIONS

The world of Aldea and the Kingdom of Aldis, in particular, are different in some respects from the typical fantasy setting and have some particular qualities. Narrators should consider before running their games.

## Emotional Roleplaying

*Blue Rose* is a game where heroes are both expected and encouraged to have significant emotional attachments. The Narrator should ask players to consider how their heroes feel about various characters and about the situations they encounter. Narrators can encourage this sort of roleplaying by portraying the emotions of other characters in the story. If the Narrator characters have strong and appropriate emotional responses—grief and shock at the death or injury of someone close to them, babbling with joy when the heroes rescue a loved one, or

annoyance or anger if the heroes treat them in a callous or thoughtless manner—most players have their characters express similar responses. When portraying emotions, Narrators may find it helpful to decide in advance how various characters might react to pivotal events in an adventure. Also, for recurring Narrator characters, writing out a paragraph or two on the character's emotional reactions can be useful.

Adding significant emotions to roleplaying can enhance a game and make both the characters and the world seem more real. Heroes do things because they care about some person or cause. However, emotionally focused roleplaying can also potentially upset players. This level of emotional involvement can be both painful and frustrating if the Narrator attempts to heighten emotions by getting the heroes to care about someone then have a villain kill the character off as a way to motivate the

## — CHAPTER VIII: NARRATING BLUE ROSE —

heroes. There is a difference between a Narrator who works with the emotions of the players and the heroes and one who carelessly toys with them.

Before getting into emotion-focused roleplaying, Narrators should talk about the use and inclusion of emotion with their players. Discussing this can help players consider how to best portray their heroes' emotions and what they are most comfortable playing. Also, if several players are dismissive of or strongly resistant to this idea, then it is unlikely to work because the difference between the emotionally involved heroes and the ones who aren't can be both obvious and distracting.

Narrators should also ask if there are any emotions or circumstances uncomfortable for the players. If a player feels strongly about her pets and about animals in general, she might object to the Narrator running situations where villains harm her character's familiar or pets. This is even more important with deeply personal issues like sexuality, religion, and family. Narrators should always respect players' feelings on these topics. Eliminating uncomfortable situations can limit a game, but it is far better than including story elements that will upset a player.

### Reputation Precedes You

In *Blue Rose*, heroes are an integral part of the setting and the kingdom they live in. They are connected to the world and have friends, allies, and rivals. More importantly, they have responsibilities, and both their superiors and their fellow citizens judge and evaluate their actions.

These elements of the setting have several important implications. First, characters develop reputations based upon their actions. Wherever they go, people welcome heroes known to be brave and unselfish. Such heroes have little trouble finding people to help them overcome a foe or provide them with shelter from pursuers. In contrast, cowardly, uncaring, or greedy rogues often find village inns are mysteriously full when they ride into town, and few people offer them aid or shelter when they are in need.

*Blue Rose* focuses on characters' social relationships as much as it does upon their heroism and martial prowess. The Narrator should keep track of how heroes deal with the people they meet and what stories people are likely to tell about them. Heroes who are boastful, foolish, fond of lying, or who care about nothing except wealth and rewards fare poorly in *Blue Rose* because stories of their words and deeds travel widely and they find few people interested in dealing with them.

Because psychic arcana are relatively common, particularly in Aldis, news can travel quickly from place to place. The story about the heroes defeating a horde of

darkfiends to close an ancient shadowgate can easily travel across the known world in weeks. Stories about how the heroes refused to aid a village against a band of ogres can travel just as fast.

The heroes' reputations have a real impact on their lives and their adventures.

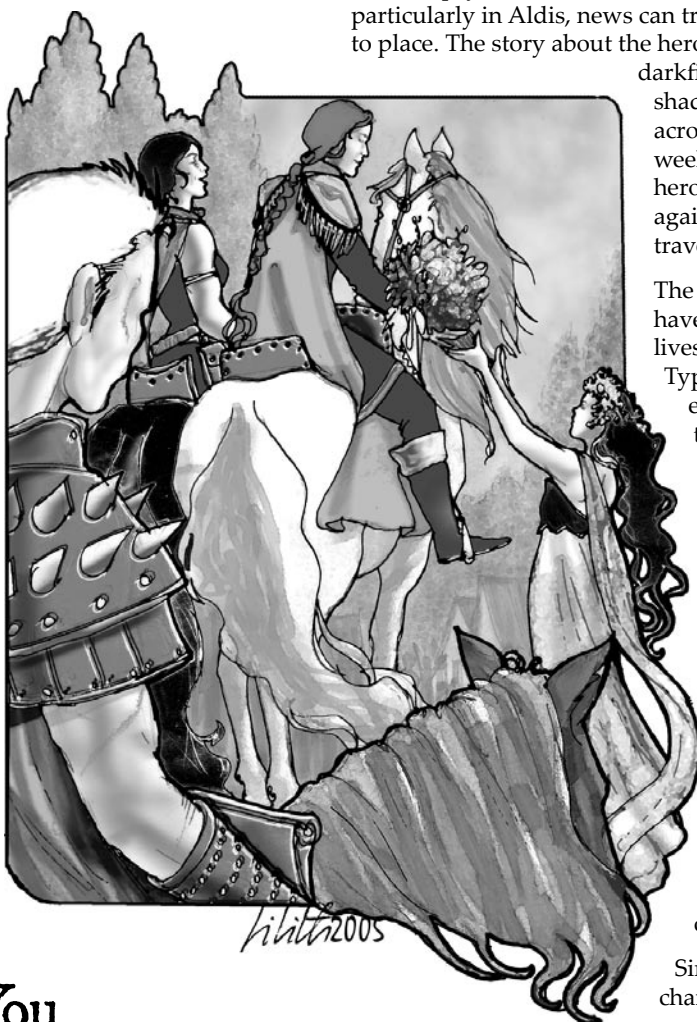
Typically, when heroes encounter a new problem, they attempt to learn more about it. Heroes with good reputations find far more people willing to talk to them. Also, a group of heroic and obviously Light-aligned characters should receive some accolades: a small festival thrown in their honor when they visit a town they aided, children asking them to relate stories of their exploits, and merchants giving them discounts on goods.

Similarly, people greet characters with poor reputations with distaste and suspicion. Innkeepers refuse

to serve them, and they frequently hear people making whispered comments about them. Merchants sometimes sell them the worst goods they have on hand and may even charge them extra or claim not to have the goods they want. Parents might pull back their children to keep them from talking with "undesirables."

### Official Status

Heroes in *Blue Rose* usually have some sort of official status. Heroes are often nobles, members of the Sovereign's Finest, the Knights of the Blue Rose, or a similar group. Their status provides both limitations on their behavior and significant benefits in accomplishing their goals.



## ONE HUNDRED ADVENTURE IDEAS

1. A latent adept with a wild talent is causing havoc and needs guidance.
2. A couple forbidden to be together runs off to a haunted ruin.
3. The heroes must protect a noble from a shadow dancer assassin.
4. A tinkerer is selling dangerous arcane artifacts to unsuspecting buyers.
5. The popular new parties thrown by a noble are a vampire's hunting ground.
6. A Shadow cult is abducting people and selling them as slaves.
7. Strange lights and sounds come from an Old Kingdom ruin.
8. A dying miner claims to have found a mother lode of shas crystals.
9. A cursed item passes from hand to hand, corrupting those it touches.
10. A ghost possesses a living person to fulfill a promise to a loved one.
11. Envoys are assigned to escort visiting ambassadors from other nations.
12. A friend of the heroes asks for help in settling a duel of honor.
13. A respected noble is accused of serious crimes; is it a frame-up?
14. The body of a respected Rezean chief must be escorted home in honor.
15. Intrigue abounds at a seasonal festival or masque.
16. An encounter with an ancient arcane item turns the heroes into animals.
17. The heroes dream about the Old Kingdom. Are they reliving past lives?
18. There are rumors of a Sorcerer Kings still existing as a spectre.
19. A mysterious killer stalks the nighttime streets of the city.
20. Sea-folk and islanders are in a dispute over the ownership of a sunken vessel.
21. The "secret ingredient" of a new fad food comes from the Veran Marsh.
22. A child or family is lost in the wilderness and is in need of rescue.
23. Aldis plans a raid on a valuable shipment of crystals from Kern.
24. Shadowspawn are gathering in the Ice-Binder Mountains. Why?
25. A shadowgate activates and disgorges darkfiends or other creatures.
26. A new prophet arises in Jarzon, sympathetic to Aldis. Does the kingdom aid her?
27. Rhydan call for aid against humans polluting their hunting grounds.
28. Aberrations emerge from the wilderness to attack outlying towns.
29. A young man begs the heroes to help stop a wedding because he is in love with the bride.
30. Thieves steal the Blue Rose Scepter from the palace.
31. Shadowspawn begin organizing into a mercenary company, working for the highest bidder.
32. Pirates attack merchant vessels along the coast.
33. A map to a lost artifact falls into the heroes' hands.
34. Hags dwelling in the Veran Marsh sow dissent and misery using their arcana.
35. A darkfiend preys on dreams, twisting them into nightmares.
36. A lost storehouse of ancient lore is guarded by unliving shadows.
37. A terrible storm wracks the coast and islands.
38. A tribe of corrupt sea-folk, led by a sorcerer, raid coastal settlements.
39. A wronged noble needs a champion to fight in a duel of honor.
40. A child missing for years is seen running through the woods late one night.
41. A quake in the Veran Marsh uncovers ancient ruins of the Sorcerer King's stronghold.
42. Envoys are asked to help smuggle religious dissenters out of Jarzon.
43. The heroes must guard a caravan through dangerous territory.
44. Purist priests threaten to burn a friend at the stake as a heretic.
45. Accusations of corruption mar a deceased noble's memorial service.
46. A plague of fiendish animals strikes, caused by an ancient artifact.
47. A harsh winter leads to conflict between the forest-folk and local rhy-wolves.
48. Everyone in an isolated village has disappeared without a trace.
49. A fallen and dying hero seeks aid in achieving a measure of redemption and peace.
50. A daring thief steals from the wealthiest people in the city.
51. The planned site of a new settlement is plagued by shadowspawn.

Because of their official status, heroes may have access to advice and assistance from more experienced members of the Sovereign's Finest, nobles, and other important and knowledgeable people. This sort of assistance is invaluable if the heroes are facing powerful opponents they cannot overcome alone. Having the heroes uncover a problem and then call in aid to deal with it is better than having the heroes simply hand a problem they uncover over to more experienced characters.

When planning adventures, the Narrator should take advantage of the heroes' social positions, making the adventures more rich in the process. Heroes who are members of the Sovereign's Finest, or who are in any other sort of organization, can interact with the organization in a variety of ways. They can deliver updates of their activities to one or two well-developed Narrator characters in the organization. These characters can be the heroes' allies and mentors, or even rivals. If the players are willing, their heroes may have history with their superiors, who might have been their teachers, foster parents, or former loves. If

the heroes treat a superior with respect and successfully accomplish their duties, the superior might become a friend and advocate, seeking out prestigious or interesting assignments for them and fulfilling any reasonable requests. A friendly superior can also provide both words of encouragement and unasked-for assistance if the heroes need them.

A friendly superior can become a focus for adventures. This character may have difficulties with a hostile rival, for example, and ask the heroes to look into the reasons for the rival's hostility. Alternately, a friendly and supportive superior may suddenly become unfriendly, unreasonable, or demanding. This sort of situation could be the start of an investigation. Perhaps the superior is being blackmailed and is deeply conflicted over what the blackmailers are asking her to do. Alternately, the heroes' superior may be the target of some type of arcane influence, and the characters must seek out and deal with the source of this influence. The more their superior is an individual the heroes know and respect, instead of a



## ONE HUNDRED ADVENTURE IDEAS (CONTINUED)

52. Humans and rhydan dispute the clearing of some forest land.
53. Members of the Merchant Council are targeted for assassination.
54. The queen of Aldis must move the court to a distant city for a time.
55. The heroes are assigned as the escort of a troublesome noble.
56. Miners in the mountains uncover a lost shadowgate.
57. Bandits raid towns and villages, taking people to sell as slaves.
58. A mad adept begins organizing the shadowspawn of the Veran Marsh.
59. A Shadow cult hunts and eats rhydan to gain arcane powers.
60. Rumors arise of a corrupt unicorn dwelling in the forests of Kern.
61. A faction of adepts demand representation on the Sovereign's Council.
62. An exiled Jarzoni priest whips up fervor against the arcane arts.
63. An ancient sorcerous war machine is accidentally awakened.
64. A region of the kingdom is struck by plague. The cure grows only in southern Kern.
65. A young adept is renowned for the accuracy of her prophetic visions.
66. Jarzon discovers a new route through the Veran Marsh and begins planning an invasion.
67. Foreign agents kidnap a noble's child to force cooperation.
68. The perfect peace of an Aldin town is being enforced through sorcery.
69. Conflict is brewing between the clans of Rezea.
70. Religious icons are stolen from a Purist temple and Aldis is blamed.
71. A Roamer sorcerer uses Flesh Shaping to grant unearthly beauty to any willing to pay for it.
72. Griffons are plagued by attacks from horrible aberrations in their nesting grounds.
73. Envoys are sent to help smuggle people out of Kern.
74. The son of a visiting Jarzoni dignitary falls in love with a young knight in Aldis.
75. The heirs of two feuding Rezean clans wish to marry against their families' wishes.
76. A noble is poisoned in an assassination attempt and the heroes must rush to find the cure in time.
77. Envoys must enter a dreamscape via arcane means to overcome a "sleeping curse."
78. A psychic cry for help comes from deep within the Pavin Weald.
79. A town suffering a blight claims they were cursed by Roamers.
80. A fire tears through a woodland inhabited by treants and rhydan.
81. An estranged child runs off to join a Roamer band, but her parents insist she returns.
82. The heroes awaken the morning after a seasonal festival with no memory of the previous three days.
83. A mysterious dancer, the toast of the theater, may be a foreign spy.
84. A rejected squire seeks to prove himself worthy of knighthood.
85. A contact claims to have information on the Prince of the Silence, then turns up dead.
86. The children of a community are abducted and replaced with shadowspawn in their forms.
87. A fiery Aldin noble agitates for a preemptive war against Jarzon to overthrow the Hierophant and liberate its people.
88. A scholar asks for aid in exploring ancient ruins.
89. A noblewoman's tell-all journal falls into the wrong hands.
90. The heroes are asked to help break off an adulterous affair without the wronged spouse finding out.
91. A Purist cult is growing in influence in Aldis, attracting radical elements.
92. Rezean riders attack Aldin settlers who inadvertently trespass on their sacred ground.
93. An emissary from Kern claims the Lich King wants to establish a non-aggression treaty with Aldis. Will the queen agree to negotiations?
94. A noble (Lord Sayvin, perhaps) attempts a coup to become the sovereign of Aldis.
95. A girl in Jarzon can perform miracles without arcana and receives visions from the gods, or so it seems.
96. A group of night people want a settlement solely for their kind.
97. A tribe of troglodytes claim they want to settle peacefully in Aldis.
98. A ghost ship captained by a spectre preys on vessels in Aldin waters.
99. A noble widow receives advice from the ghost of her dead consort. Is it a trick or threat?
100. A radical noble appears to have the blessing of the Golden Hart to replace Queen Jaellin. Is his claim real?

generic voice of authority, the faster heroes notice when something is wrong.

Alternately, someone may try to kidnap or assassinate their superior. In this case, the heroes must either rescue their superior or help keep her safe and track down the assassin. This sort of plot should not be overused or it becomes trite. However, such adventures can be gripping and emotionally charged because the heroes hopefully care about their friend and mentor.

Heroes should be able to ask their superior any reasonable questions and request advice or assistance. They can make these requests at almost any time; heroes with the Mind Touch arcanum can communicate over long distances. If the heroes ask for too much advice or request assistance to handle minor problems, their mentor should explain that

she is too busy, and possibly inform them that Aldis does not possess unlimited resources. She should also reassure them that they are all perfectly capable of handling most problems on their own. If necessary, the mentor should tell overly dependant characters that their lack of initiative could hurt both their reputations and official standing. Also, unless the heroes are facing a serious emergency, their superior may become rather annoyed if they contact her psychically at any time of the day or night. Waking a superior in the wee hours to ask a question about the best way to track lost horses will not win the heroes any points.

In contrast, if heroes are never willing to ask for help or advice, you should occasionally encourage them to do so. If the players are completely stumped and are either unused to or unwilling to ask for aid, the heroes' superior should

## — CHAPTER VIII: NARRATING BLUE ROSE —

contact them and ask for an update on their progress. If necessary, their superior should simply offer them advice. While the heroes should be able to complete many adventures without any assistance or advice, this sort of backup should be an important feature of the game, and the heroes should be able to rely on it when they get into serious trouble. If the heroes can rely upon having a force of the Sovereign's Guard to assist them in battle, they can take upon far larger groups of opponents and be involved in more important events, like large-scale battles, than if they must rely solely upon their own resources.

### Friend and Foe

The longer heroes are in a series, the more social connections they make. Social connections are integral to the romantic fantasy genre. The best way to encourage them is using recurring Narrator characters. Every time the heroes travel through a particular town or village, they could encounter the same characters: an innkeeper, the woodsman whose life they saved, and others. In short order, the heroes will have friendships with characters they swap jokes and stories with or even flirt with.

To help the heroes form close connections, the players can come up with detailed information about their characters' parents, mentors, and anyone else who had a profound influence on them before they started their careers. As Narrator, you can work these background characters into your series, as well as giving the heroes opportunities to encounter interesting characters in their line of work. If the heroes are members of the Sovereign's Finest, for instance, they might meet experienced envoys willing to offer valuable advice, or they might meet envoys who are their equals and wish to share information and stories or join the heroes on some adventure. Later in their careers, experienced heroes may encounter younger and less experienced envoys, looking for advice and a friendly word. These younger envoys might have decided to become part of the Sovereign's Finest because they heard stories of the heroes' exploits!

Interactions with other teams of the Sovereign's Finest can become a source for close and lasting friendships. When the heroes are in trouble and ask for help, the team who comes to assist them could be characters they know. At some point, the other team might get into serious trouble and ask for help from the heroes. In this type of scenario, the Narrator characters can give frequent and harrowing psychic updates about their situation as the heroes rush to their aid, fighting their way through monsters, bandits, or extreme weather conditions. Regardless of the source of the danger, the mixture of the heroes' struggles, psychic reports of the Narrator characters' troubles, and the eventual reunion, where both teams work together vanquishing their common foe, can form a deep bond between the heroes and the other team.

Of course, friends and allies are not the only people the characters might get to know. Negative social interactions can be just as interesting as positive ones. Recurring villains—whether they are Jarzoni priest-adepts, bandit warlords, Barons of the Silence, or Kernish spymasters—can make any scenario more interesting. The heroes could spend many adventures uncovering and foiling a villain's

dastardly plans; however, recurring villains should not be overused. They can easily become inadvertently humorous, instead of a source of dramatic tension, if they are behind every minor problem the heroes encounter. Also, while defeating such a villain may take a dozen or more gaming sessions, he or she should eventually be defeated. Unbeatable villains often frustrate players.

In addition to recurring villains, the heroes might face rivals. If the heroes are envoys, they could have a rivalry with another team of the Sovereign's Finest, who are either jealous of the attention the heroes receive or are more successful than the heroes and are eager to make sure everyone knows it. This rivalry could even be in place before the series begins. Perhaps one or more members of the rival team trained with the heroes and developed a rivalry along the way. An otherwise routine scenario could be made more interesting if the heroes had to work closely with their rivals.

Just as recurring villains are eventually defeated in most series, long-term rivalries tend to ultimately resolve into either friendship or open enmity. Good-natured rivalries can resolve into deep friendship or even love, while especially bitter rivals can reveal themselves as villains in disguise.

### Mercy and the Sword

*Blue Rose* emulates a genre of fantasy where violence is often not the best solution. Darkfiends, shadowspawn, and the unliving are all corrupt monsters the heroes must destroy to protect innocent people; however, many opponents in *Blue Rose* are bandits, traitors, foreign spies, paid assassins, careless or power-mad sorcerers, and other humanoids who might be more effectively neutralized by mercy than by a sword. Instead of killing a careless sorcerer or a cruel bandit, the heroes could capture them and bring them before a judge for fair trial. In some cases, the villain might even have a change of heart and join the heroes' war against Shadow.

You should consider designing adventures that can be resolved without any violence at all. The heroes could face nonviolent problems that have simply gotten out of control or convoluted misunderstandings that look like serious crimes. Rescuing lost travelers, negotiating a peace treaty, settling a feud, or helping a village deal with some problem like a fire, flood, plague, or famine can all be exciting and satisfying without battles. Such adventures need not be dull or slow paced. Rescuing terrified children from a burning palace involves no fighting but can be just as risky and challenging as battling a band of ogres. Protecting travelers in inclement weather may require the heroes to use a wide variety of skills under serious time pressure. Saving someone from a dire fate can involve everything from uncovering that an ambassador is actually an assassin to collecting the evidence needed to prove someone innocent of a crime. Helping a beloved Narrator character resolve long-standing family problems or discovering that two powerful rivals have been manipulated into hating one another may involve no combat and no feats of physical prowess but can be extremely enjoyable.

## Adventures & Arcana

Arcana like Mind Reading, Mind Probe, and Object Reading allow heroes to acquire significant amounts of information with fairly little effort and could potentially remove a great deal of mystery from any situation. To avoid such problems, Narrators should use social, legal, and practical considerations to keep these abilities in check.

Mental contact, especially on the deeper levels of mind reading and mind probing, are profoundly intimate and personal. Even in Aldis they are not abilities to be used casually, and no one thinks it unusual for someone to refuse to undergo a Mind Probe. Indeed, Aldis law forbids things like Mind Probes, unless the subject is willing, and even then the adept conducting the probe is flirting with sorcery.

In Aldis, if heroes resort to psychically interrogating suspects or even breaking into their homes or businesses to

use arcana like Object Reading, they are committing serious crimes and may face consequences as severe as those experienced by the people their evidence convicts. Also, unless the heroes use the psychic evidence they gather to uncover conventional proof of someone's illegal activities, the person they interrogated or spied upon will go free because the psychic evidence is not considered sufficient by itself. The ends do not justify the means in Aldis.

You can provide potential adversaries and suspects in adventures with psychic defenses. The Psychic Shield arcanum is not unusual among people in Aldis, and all rhydan have it as part of their nature. Any adept has untrained use of it, and many are trained in it. A shielding stone (see *Arcane Stones*, page 146) can provide a similar benefit for those lacking the necessary arcane talent. Non-adepts also often have adepts in their employ to provide psychic shielding and warding and to sniff out, via Second Sight, anyone attempting to use arcana covertly.

## ROLEPLAYING ROMANCE

Romance is an important element in *Blue Rose*. While Aldea certainly has its fair share of adventure and excitement, complex interpersonal relationships are a key element. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of romances that may occur in the game: romances between heroes, romances between heroes and Narrator characters, and romances between Narrator characters.

Falling in love can be a tumultuous experience in real life, and it should be the same for the heroes. There are no game rules for romance, and in any case, love is not combat (though it may feel like it at times!); rolling dice to see if a kiss hits is a sure way to spoil the mood. Romance relies on roleplaying and storytelling. How large a role romance plays in a particular series is up to a Narrator and her players.

### Romance Between Heroes

In many ways, romances between heroes are easiest for the Narrator to handle. The Narrator doesn't need to do much to make things happen or convey the illusion of a relationship. It's more or less up to the players to deal with as they see fit. Indeed, a Narrator who meddles too much in the romance between two heroes may end up spoiling it.

It's possible for the players to take up a great deal of play time with their heroes' romance. Depending on your style of play, this may or may not be a problem. If two heroes constantly engage in romantic interludes while everyone else sits quietly by, the Narrator should probably step in to nudge the focus of the game back towards the group, especially if the other players are getting bored.

If some of the *players* in the group are romantically involved with each other, running plots with romance can be tricky, particularly if one or more of the players is of a jealous disposition. Some people take all this in stride and reason that roleplaying is roleplaying and real

life is real life. In the end, some people comfortably do these things and others don't. Players can learn to deal with these things, but turning the game into a learning experience might not be too much fun. In general, if the players were prepared for and agreed on a style of play where relationships between their heroes might happen, things are likely to go smoothly.



## Romance Between Heroes and Narrator Characters

For many players, heroes becoming involved with Narrator characters is familiar ground. A hero falls in love with a villager she saves, another starts a romance with the region's governing noble, another has a longstanding relationship with a classmate from his youth; there are numerous possibilities.

Again, the question of time management pops up. If a hero is involved in a relationship with a Narrator character, it could take time away from the group. You can construct your adventures to minimize this, having the Narrator character appear in scenes that are meaningful for the whole group.

The nature of the relationship should be defined. After all, a romance with a traveling merchant is different from the relationship a hero might have with a spouse who stays home, which again is a far cry from a hidden affair with a married person. Where the focus should lie in game sessions depends on the nature of the series and what your players find interesting. Some players like in-depth character interaction, while others are more interested in treating them in broad terms and moving on to more adventurous plot elements.

## Romance Between Narrator Characters

It's easy to overlook this aspect of romance in the game world, for the Narrator can say two Narrator characters are married and leave it at that. However, as the supporting characters are bound to regularly interact with the heroes, romance allows for a great number of plot opportunities.

For example, the heroes might become involved in the machinations of someone trying to win someone

else's affection. If a hero has a favorite cousin who's been pining after a great beauty, surely it's the duty of any good relative to help him get noticed. Or perhaps, in Shakespearean fashion, two passionate lovers are separated by their respective families and the heroes end up relaying messages and organizing secret meetings between them, while trying to maintain some semblance of neutrality. Someone else might be trying to break up a relationship out of jealousy or to help someone escape a bad relationship. The heroes might be in a position to provide assistance or find themselves motivated to sabotage someone's love life. Remember that people do crazy things for love. This can lead to all sorts of adventure.

When designing adventures, bear in mind that romantic problems can weigh heavily on the heart and mind. As anyone who's been heartbroken knows, it's hard to concentrate on business when there's trouble in a relationship. People can make awful mistakes simply because they are preoccupied by romantic difficulties. Unscrupulous adversaries are sure to use this as a weapon. Just the rumor of an affair can cause scandal and put strain on a relationship, for example. Naturally, some people are better at dealing with romantic problems than others. Some rise to the challenge and take their frustrations out on their opponents, who end up getting more than they bargained for! It takes a skilled manipulator to master others' emotions.

On the flip side, many accomplish things more efficiently when things are going well in their romantic lives. This, too, can be an important plot point. A ruler dependent on the efforts of a trusted lieutenant might want to keep the man happy and therefore hire or order someone to make sure he doesn't find out about the affair his wife has been having. If the heroes get entangled in something like this and the lieutenant happens to be an abusive husband, while his wife's lover is a far kinder man, the heroes have a difficult choice: balancing the good of the state with their own consciences. Whether a neat solution to the problem exists is up to the Narrator. Situations like this can provide for interesting and challenging moments in the game.

## ROLEPLAYING INTRIGUE

When noble courts, high officials, powerful merchants, and underworld figures are mentioned, images of intrigue spring to mind. Hooded figures meeting in shadowy back alleys, documents and money changing hands in abandoned courtyards, halls of power echoing with determined, solitary footsteps in the middle of the night—the imagery is nice, but there's more to intrigue than skulking about in shadows. There's always a point to intrigue. Those involved are trying to accomplish something specific, whether for personal reasons, in order to advance a cause, or simply to maintain the status quo.

## Hatching a Plot

Forming the details of an intrigue can be intimidating, particularly if you've never done anything of the sort

before. It can be quite a change of pace from adventures where things get solved with swords.

To start with, it helps to outline the structure of the society where the intrigue takes place, whether that's a city, a smaller town, or just a village. The structure doesn't have to be built around a physical location; it may be an organization, such as the Noble Council or a group of local merchants. Ask a few simple questions. Which factions or persons wield power and influence? What resources do they have at their disposal? What do they want? Who are their allies and why? Who are their opponents and why? How far are they willing to go to accomplish their goals?

There are three main things to bear in mind when mapping out any person or organization involved in intrigue: their motives, their limitations, and their resources.



## ABOUT EVIL

Irredeemably evil men and their equally evil machinations are something of a staple of the fantasy genre. For many players and Narrators, foiling the plans of malevolent beings are the bread and butter of roleplaying. Some fantasy settings do away with the concepts of good and evil and replace them with endless shades of gray. *Blue Rose* is not one of these. In general, it's not too hard to tell the good guys from the bad.

That said, intrigue is all about motivations and plans, and pure evil is not a very good reason for any of them. There need to be other, more practical motivations, things that make sense from the game world's standpoint. Greed, hatred, and envy are all strong motivations, so are fear and personal grudges. They make for a more colorful and believable series than a bad guy who wants to do evil things just for the sake of being evil.

In the same vein, it's often best to leave actual moral judgments to the heroes. A Narrator who heavy-handedly underlines the morality of everyone's actions can easily give the impression she doesn't trust the players to think for themselves and make their own decisions about the characters. It also broadcasts the Narrator's intentions to the players and tells them instantly who the bad guys are. This is a good way to completely ruin a plot based around intrigues the heroes are attempting to figure out. After all, a great deal of the fun in an intrigue-based game comes from trying to figure out who's doing what and why, who can be trusted, and who should be watched.

Even if the plot involves a relatively clear-cut villain with no redeeming features, there's no need to hand the players a moral compass with a needle that always points toward evil. Let them make their own judgment calls, even if they are wrong—particularly if they are wrong.

Motivations are important in intrigue. Understanding why your opponent does something can be even more important than understanding what he's doing. If you know what his goals are, you can anticipate his movements or even attack him exactly where he's most vulnerable. Those well versed in clandestine power plays often conceal their real agendas if possible. If nothing else, it keeps opponents guessing. Of course, in many cases some motivations cannot be hidden. A diplomat visiting another nation has no reason to pretend she isn't there to make sure her people live long and prosperous lives, for example. This isn't to say she might not have another, less public agenda as well. In general, personal success and survival can be powerful motivations, but less selfish motivations—such as the good of the state, the success of one's employer, or the happiness of a loved one—are also common.

As for limitations, everyone has them, and in intrigue the most important limitations are often the ones we set for ourselves, whether for reasons of appearance, personal beliefs, or as a part of a bigger plan. These limitations vary from individual to individual, but it's easy to make certain assumptions. A palace guard, for example, is limited by his status and his sense of duty and will not do certain things, like abandon his post. Limitations are often more complex. For example, a merchant may be limited by his unwillingness to risk too much of his existing assets, which means he will not take part in risky and uncertain enterprises, even if the potential profits are great. Personal limitations can be overcome, if the right circumstances and motivations are met. In some situations, even a coward can overcome his fears.

Finally, there are available resources. Often, resources are concrete things like money, henchmen, or status within an organization, but they can also be more abstract, such as a powerful personality, a good reputation, or the willingness to do things others avoid at any cost. Resources are the extent of what one can actually do.

Even if you are well motivated and have no external limitations on your actions, it's hard to realize your plans if you don't have any allies or the money to buy what you need. You should have a rough idea of the general resources of the key figures in the plot you are creating: how much wealth they have, what kind of people they can call on for assistance, and so forth. Keep general track of them. If someone has twenty of his henchmen killed or disabled, for example, how serious a blow is that to his organization?

An intrigue should make sense; how else are the players going to unravel it? It's entirely possible they'll never manage to put all the pieces together, and often they don't even have to, but it's always much, much better if they *can*, at least in theory. If you can take the entire system apart and logically explain why and how people are doing what they are doing, you will have a much stronger plotline. You shouldn't feel compelled to explain everything, though, especially if the heroes aren't even investigating the matter in question.

Done right, this means the players are interacting with a complex and believable game world with depth and meaning, a world that doesn't exist just for them but has a life of its own. On a more practical level, it also means if the players suddenly decide to approach something from a completely surprising angle, you can easily determine what happens next. The ability to improvise is important to a Narrator, but so is the ability to maintain the world's internal consistency.

## Tools of the Trade

When reduced to its most basic level, intrigue is merely people trying to convince other people to do what they want, while attempting to keep their own actions and motives hidden. Generally, as in any normal business transaction, this involves mutual benefit: "Do as I

## — CHAPTER VIII: NARRATING BLUE ROSE —

ask, keep your mouth shut, and you'll be handsomely rewarded." There is usually a certain degree of risk involved, but those involved in these plots often hope to reap rewards great enough to make the risk worthwhile.

There is a darker side to this. Blackmail and outright threats can be a part of the negotiation process. In many cases, law-abiding and ethical individuals, whose motivations and limitations would normally keep them from taking part in a plot, end up as integral parts of them because of a potent threat. In high-level politics, methods like this are very dangerous; political careers hinge on having a respectable public image and maintaining a degree of trust among other people of status and influence. On the other hand, the stakes are often high, and maintaining control may require more than promises of wealth and success. Fear—fear of exposure, fear of pain, fear of dishonor—is a powerful tool, and it's used to keep underlings and co-conspirators in line.

*Backstabbing* is a term that comes to mind when complicated schemes are brought up. It's a well-established tactic, both figuratively and literally; though, political assassinations are a terribly risky business. If an attempt is unsuccessful and the perpetrator is caught, a scheme years in the making can unravel in minutes. The biggest problem with treachery is a traitor carries the stigma with him forever. In many cases, traitors try to avoid the backlash of distrust and disrespect by representing their treachery as necessity, patriotism, the common good, or in some other guise.

In commerce, some of these darker methods are commonplace. In fact, they can even become widely accepted business practices! Powerful merchants subtly threaten to make things difficult for those who sell them goods if they don't give discounts or if they attempt to deal with competitors. They simultaneously sweeten the deal with long-term contracts promising future business. They don't get anything more for their trouble than a reputation as tough businessmen.

### Practical Examples

A powerful merchant might be motivated to gain more wealth and power, among other things. However, she is limited by local laws and authorities, who expect her to pay taxes and declare any goods she intends to export to the area, as well as by the fact she isn't willing to take a loss or limit her income if she can help it. Thus, she might very well want to employ smugglers to bring her goods into the area. To ensure this operation is a success and no embarrassing incidents occur, she makes sure the right people in positions of authority have their palms greased. For the authority figures in question, this means a notable increase in resources, which is likely to fit in well with their motivations, but their own limitations (the fear of getting caught or their sense of duty) may become problematic for the scheme.

In another case, there might be an auction for something an unscrupulous nobleman wants, but he knows he isn't the only person after the object. He might therefore hire suitably callous individuals to hit his prime competitor

where he hurts most: his purse. Money doesn't actually need to be stolen, since a burning warehouse of goods can seriously limit the capital available to the other nobleman. Similar tactics can be equally effective with less worldly negotiations.

Because only those who have been deemed suitable by the Blue Rose Scepter can become nobles, it is rare for an Aldin noble to have nefarious schemes. For instance, it's unlikely a noble would wish to assassinate the queen and rule with an iron fist. Still, this doesn't mean a Light-aligned noble cannot disagree with the queen's decisions or engage in complex schemes. Personal success and the good of the state aren't necessarily in conflict. Many feel they can serve the kingdom better if they are higher up in the hierarchy.

In any case, a key factor in running successful games with intrigue is involving the heroes in one way or another. For example, trade negotiations may be vital to the economy of the realm, but it may not make for interesting roleplaying, unless there's a catch. If the heroes are actually related to an influential merchant family suffering from financial troubles, the outcome of the negotiations becomes a more personal issue. The heroes might even be in charge of an entire city or region, in which case both internal and external politics suddenly become quite important to both their careers and the people depending on their wisdom and fairness.

### Intrigue & Arcana

The existence of mind-reading arcana would seem to make it difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to successfully plot in secret. However, secret manipulators actually have a good chance of remaining hidden. Psychic arcana have limitations making their surreptitious use difficult, and Mind Probe, the most useful of them for ferreting out conspirators, is sorcery. A conspirator must certainly be careful, but avoiding detection is by no means impossible. This has led to a natural selection process ensuring only skilled conspirators remain in the game, and they are cunning indeed. It also makes sorcerers effective plotters, as they should be.

Further, a Mind Probe is hardly the same thing as proof. Even if you manage to read someone's mind and discover a plot, what are you going to say to the authorities? That you invaded someone's mind without permission and know he's up to no good? In the end, concrete proof of wrongdoing is required, complete with names, places, and dates.

If the accused is a wealthy merchant or influential noble, even relatively solid evidence suggesting they might be involved in something disreputable may get ignored, or at least buried somewhere in a bureaucracy; to make a mistake in such a situation is a guaranteed way to forfeit your political career. Then again, a poor farmer suspected of playing a part in treachery is not likely to have such courtesies extended to him, and it's not unheard of for this kind of investigation to begin with such characters. If their minds yield positive results, then moving on to bigger fish is a far safer proposition.



The world of Aldea is filled with many fantastic creatures. Some, like the rhydan, are allies of Aldis. Others are creatures of the wild, living out their natural impulses, while the rest are unnatural spawn of sorcery, a dark legacy of the Empire of Thorns and the reign of the Sorcerer Kings.

## CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

Each creature is organized in the same general format, described in this section. Much of the information on a creature is condensed into a creature statistics block, or “stat block.”

### Size

A creature falls into one of nine size categories, which are shown in the **Creature Size** table. Each size category includes a modifier applied to the creature’s attack rolls and Defense; a modifier applied to grapple checks; and a modifier applied to Sneak checks. These modifiers have been figured into the statistics of creatures described in this chapter.

The **Creature Size** table on page 184 indicates the typical heights and weights of creatures in each size category. The table also provides a carrying capacity multiplier, which you apply to the weights given in the table **Carrying Capacity**, page 151. For example, a Huge creature with Strength +2 could carry a maximum load of 1,400 pounds, rather than the 350 pounds that a Medium creature with the same Strength could carry.

### Level

Like heroes, creatures have levels, measuring their overall power and capabilities. Also like a hero, a creature’s level

determines its base attack bonus, Defense, and saving throws. Some creatures have levels in a role, others simply have levels in their creature type (called *creature level*), while others have levels in both. A creature’s total level is determined by adding its creature level to any role levels it has. For example, a lich that is a 4th-level unliving and 11th-level adept has a total level of 15th. Creatures with 1 or fewer creature levels count only their role levels when determining total level.

### Type

A creature’s type determines many of its characteristics: attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skills, feats, and special qualities, often based on its level. The description for each creature type lists the equivalent role for some of its capabilities. For example, if a creature’s attack is listed as “expert,” it has the same attack progression for its level as an expert. A creature belongs to one of the following types: aberration, animal, darkfiend, elemental, humanoid (human, vata, or sea-folk), plant, rhydan, shadowspawn, or unliving. A creature cannot have more than one type.

### Initiative

The creature’s modifier on initiative checks is usually equal to its Dexterity; although, the Improved Initiative feat provides a +4 bonus, as usual.

## CREATURE SIZE

Size	Minimum Level	Atk/Def Modifier	Grapple Modifier	Sneak Modifier	Height	Weight	Reach	Carrying Capacity
Colossal	32	−8	+16	−16	64–128 ft.	125 tons or more	15 ft.	x16
Gargantuan	16	−4	+12	−12	32–64 ft.	16–125 tons	15 ft.	x8
Huge	4	−2	+8	−8	16–32 ft.	2–16 tons	10 ft.	x4
Large	2	−1	+4	−4	8–16 ft.	500–4,000 lb.	10 ft.	x2
Medium	1	+0	+0	+0	4–8 ft.	60–500 lb.	5 ft.	x1
Small	1/2	+1	−4	+4	2–4 ft.	8–60 lb.	5 ft.	x3/4
Tiny	1/4	+2	−8	+8	1–2 ft.	1–8 lb.	0 ft.	x1/2
Diminutive	1/8	+4	−12	+12	6 in.–1 ft.	0.25–1 lb.	0 ft.	x1/4
Fine	1/16	+8	−16	+16	6 in. or less	0.1 lb. or less	0 ft.	x1/8

## Speed

A creature's speed on land is the amount of distance it can cover in one move action. If a creature wears armor that reduces its speed, this is indicated along with a note specifying the armor type; the creature's base unarmored speed follows.

If the creature has other modes of movement, these are given after the main entry. Unless noted otherwise, such modes of movement are natural, not arcane.

## Burrow

The creature can tunnel through dirt but not through rock, unless the descriptive text says otherwise.

## Climb

A creature with a climb speed has the Climb skill automatically with creature level + 3 ranks and gains a +8 bonus on Climb checks. The creature must make a Climb check to climb any wall or slope with a Difficulty greater than 0, but it can always take 10, even if rushed or threatened while climbing. The creature climbs at the given speed. If it attempts an accelerated climb, it moves at double the given climb speed (or its normal land speed, whichever is less) and makes a single Climb check at a −5 penalty. Creatures cannot move all out while climbing. The creature retains its dodge bonus to Defense (if any) while climbing, and opponents get no special bonus on their attack rolls against a climbing creature.

## Fly

The creature can fly at the given speed if carrying no more than a medium load. All fly speeds include a note indicating maneuverability:

- *Perfect:* The creature can perform almost any aerial maneuver it wishes.
- *Good:* The creature is agile in the air, but cannot change direction as readily as one with perfect maneuverability.
- *Average:* The creature can fly as adroitly as a small bird.
- *Poor:* The creature flies as well as a very large bird.
- *Clumsy:* The creature can barely fly at all.

Flying creatures can make dive attacks. A dive attack works like a charge, but the diving creature must move a minimum of 30 feet. It can make only claw attacks, but these deal double damage. Creatures can move all out while flying, provided they fly in a straight line.

## Swim

A creature with a swim speed can move through water at the given speed without making Swim checks. It gains a +8 bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. The creature can always take 10, even if distracted or endangered when swimming. Creatures can move all out while swimming, provided they swim in a straight line.

## Defense

A creature's Defense includes a parenthetical listing of the modifiers contributing to it.

## Attack

The stat block lists the creature's primary attacks. The attack bonus, form of attack (melee or ranged), and damage are provided. Unless noted otherwise, natural weapons threaten critical hits on a natural attack roll of 20.

If any attacks cause some special effect other than damage, that information is given along with the damage. Unless noted otherwise, creatures inflict lethal damage, and deal double damage on critical hits.

If the creature has multiple attacks listed, it may make more than one attack per round: a primary attack and one or more secondary attacks. This requires a full-round action, and the secondary attacks have a −5 penalty to the attack roll (this penalty is reflected in the stat blocks).

Natural weapons have types just as other weapons do. The most common are summarized here.

## Bite

The creature attacks with its mouth, dealing piercing damage.

## Claw or Rake

The creature rips with a sharp appendage, dealing slashing damage.



## Gore

The creature spears the opponent with an antler, horn, or similar appendage, dealing piercing damage.

## Slap or Slam

The creature batters opponents with an appendage, dealing bludgeoning damage.

## Sting

The creature stabs with a stinger, dealing piercing damage. Stings are often poisoned.

## Weapons

Creatures wielding manufactured weapons follow the same rules as heroes when using them.

## Qualities

Creatures often have various special qualities listed in their statistics and described here.

## Ability Score Reduction

Some creature attacks reduce an opponent's score in one or more abilities. This loss can be permanent or temporary.

- **Ability Drain:** This effect *permanently* reduces an ability score. The creature's description gives the ability and the amount drained. If an attack causing permanent ability drain scores a critical hit, it drains twice the normal amount. A draining creature can make an immediate recovery check whenever it drains an ability score, with a bonus on the check equal to the ability points drained (this is true even of creatures that do not normally make recovery checks, like the unliving).

Some ability drain attacks allow a Fortitude save with a Difficulty of 10 + half the draining creature's level + the draining creature's Charisma score (the exact Difficulty is given in the descriptive text). If no saving throw is mentioned, none is allowed.

- **Ability Damage:** This attack temporarily damages (reduces) an ability score. The description gives the ability and the amount of damage. A critical hit does twice the given amount. Ability damage returns at the rate of 1 point per day per damaged ability.

## Arcane Resistance

A creature with arcane resistance can avoid the effects of arcane used directly on it. To determine whether an arcanum works, the wielder must make a level check (1d20 + adept level). If the result equals or exceeds the creature's arcane resistance, the arcanum works normally; although, the creature is still allowed a normal saving throw. If the level check fails, the arcanum doesn't work (but the caster still suffers any fatigue and so forth).

## Arcana

The creature can use various arcana. Unless specified, a creature uses arcana like an adept of its level, with the normal effects and fatigue, if the arcanum is fatiguing.



## Blindsense

Using nonvisual senses, such as acute smell or hearing, a creature with blindsense notices things it cannot see. The creature usually does not need to make Notice checks to pinpoint the location of a creature within range of its blindsense ability, provided the creature does not have total cover. Any opponent the creature cannot see normally still has total concealment, and the creature still has the normal miss chance when attacking foes that have concealment. Visibility still affects the movement of a creature with blindsense. A creature with blindsense is still denied its dodge bonus to Defense against attacks from creatures it cannot see.

## Blindsight

Using nonvisual senses, such as sensitivity to vibrations, scent, acute hearing, or echolocation, the creature maneuvers and fights as well as a sighted creature. Invisibility and darkness are irrelevant to such a creature. The ability's range is specified in the text. The creature does not need to make Notice checks for creatures within range of its blindsight ability, it detects them automatically.

## Constrict

The creature crushes the opponent, dealing bludgeoning damage, after making a successful grapple check. The amount of damage is given in the creature's entry. If the creature also has the Improved Grab feat, it deals constriction damage in addition to damage dealt by the attack used to grab.

## Damage Reduction

The creature receives a bonus to its Toughness saving throws against certain attacks. The creature takes normal damage from energy attacks (acid, cold, electricity, fire, and sonic), arcane, and arcane special abilities.

The entry indicates the bonus and the type of attack that negates the ability. An arcane weapon automatically negates any damage reduction negated by a mundane weapon type. For example, skeletons have damage reduction +2/bludgeoning. This means they get a +2 bonus to their Toughness saves, unless hit by a bludgeoning weapon. They would also lose their +2 bonus if hit by an arcane weapon.

For purposes of harming other creatures with damage reduction, a creature's natural weapons count as the type that ignores its own damage reduction. For example, a vampire has damage reduction +4/silver and arcane. This means a vampire can bypass the damage reduction of other creatures that are vulnerable to silver or arcane weapons, including other vampires.

## Darkvision

The creature can see in total darkness, out to the specified range (usually 60 feet). Darkvision is black-and-white only, but is otherwise like normal sight.

## Disease

When heroes come into contact with a disease, they must make a Fortitude saving throw against a Difficulty of 10 + the disease's virulence rank to avoid becoming infected. The method of infection depends on the disease. Some are airborne, while others require physical contact.

If a hero becomes infected, there is a period of anywhere from a few hours to a week or more during which the disease lies dormant. Then the disease takes effect. The initial effect is typically a point or two of ability damage (usually Strength or Constitution or perhaps a point of each).

After that, the victim makes another Fortitude save against the same Difficulty each day to fight off the disease. If that save fails, the character suffers the disease's effects again. If it succeeds, there is no effect that day. Two successful Fortitude saves in a row indicate the character has fought off the disease. Some diseases may have additional effects, such as fatigue, nausea, or even rendering the hero disabled while fighting off the disease.

## Fast Healing

The creature makes recovery checks at an exceptional rate, perhaps as often as once a minute (10 rounds). Fast healing stops working when a creature is dead. Except for its speed, fast healing works just like natural healing, and it doesn't provide any benefit against attacks that don't deal damage. It also doesn't allow a creature to regrow or reattach severed body parts.

## Immunity

The creature is completely immune to some effect, suffering no harm or other effect from it. Essentially, the creature always succeeds on its saving throws against that effect, regardless of the Difficulty. So a creature immune to cold never suffers damage from cold.

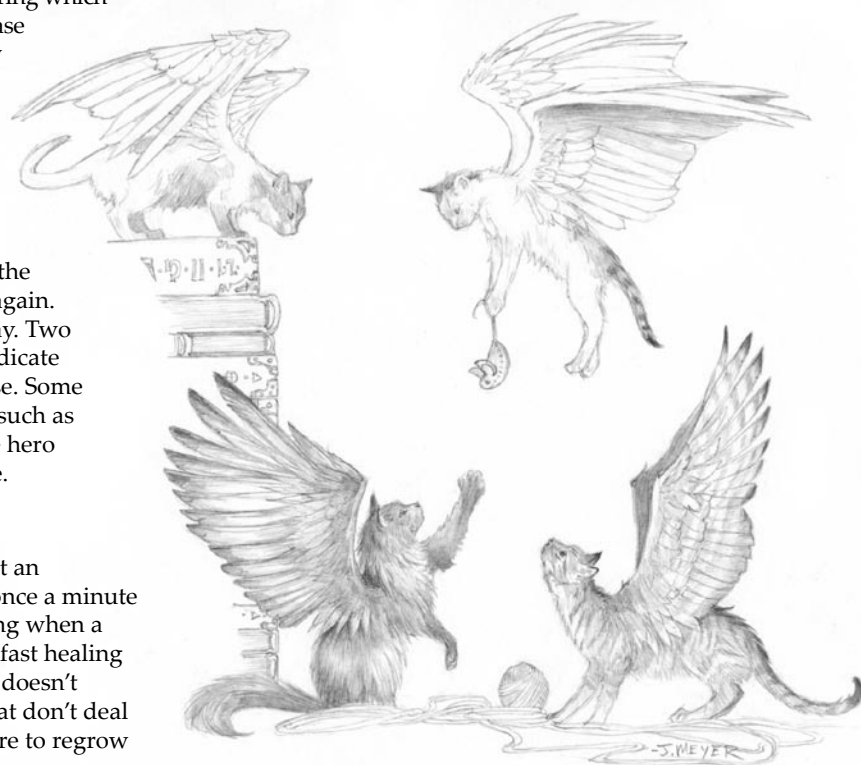
## Incorporeal

An incorporeal creature has no physical body. It can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, arcane weapons or creatures that strike as arcane weapons, and arcana. It is immune to all mundane attack forms. Even when hit by arcane or arcane weapons, it has a 50 percent chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source.

An incorporeal creature has no natural armor bonus but has a bonus to its Defense equal to its Charisma score (always at least +1, even if the creature's Charisma score is +0 or less).

An incorporeal creature can pass through solid objects. An incorporeal creature's attacks likewise pass through (ignore) natural armor, armor, and shields. Incorporeal creatures pass through and operate in water as easily as they do in air. Incorporeal creatures cannot fall or take falling damage. Incorporeal creatures cannot make trip or grapple attacks, nor can they be tripped or grappled. In fact, they cannot take any physical action that would move or manipulate an opponent or its equipment, nor are they subject to such actions. Incorporeal creatures have no weight and do not set off traps triggered by weight.

An incorporeal creature moves silently and cannot be heard if it doesn't wish to be. It has no Strength score, so its Dexterity modifier applies to both its melee attacks and its ranged attacks. Nonvisual senses, such as scent



## — CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY —

and blindsight, are either ineffective or only partly effective with regard to incorporeal creatures. Incorporeal creatures have an innate sense of direction and can move at full speed even when they cannot see.

### Low-Light Vision

A creature with low-light vision can see twice as far as normal in poor lighting conditions. The creature can still distinguish colors, even in dim lighting.

### Poison

Poison attacks deal initial damage, such as temporary ability damage or some other effect, to the victim on a failed Fortitude save. Unless otherwise noted, another saving throw is required 1 minute later (regardless of the first save's result) to avoid secondary damage.

The Fortitude save against poison has a Difficulty equal to 10 + half the creature's level + the creature's Constitution score. A successful save negates the damage.

### Regeneration

This ability works like fast healing, except regeneration *can* restore severed limbs and continues working even when the creature is dead, allowing it to make recovery checks to heal from death as if it were only disabled. Creatures with regeneration have certain damage types, like fire, from which they do not regenerate, and which can kill them permanently.

### Resistance to Energy

The creature has a bonus to Toughness saving throws against damage of the given energy type (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic) each time the creature is subjected to such damage. The entry indicates the bonus and type of damage affected.

### Scent

This ability allows the creature to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. Creatures with the scent ability can identify familiar odors, just as humans do familiar sights.

The creature can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet. Strong scents can be detected at twice the ranges noted above. Overpowering scents can be detected at triple normal range.

When a creature detects a scent, the exact location is not revealed—only its presence somewhere within range. The creature can take a move or standard action to note the direction of the scent. If it moves within 5 feet of the source, the creature can pinpoint that source.

A creature with the scent ability can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom check to find or follow a track. The typical Difficulty for a fresh trail is 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This Difficulty increases or decreases depending on the strength of the quarry's odor, the number of creatures being tracked, and the age of the trail. For each hour that the trail is cold, the Difficulty increases by 2. The ability otherwise follows the

rules for the Track feat. Creatures tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

### Swallow Whole

If the creature begins its turn with an opponent held in its mouth with a grapple, it can attempt a new grapple check (as though attempting to pin the opponent). If it succeeds, it swallows its opponent and deals normal bite damage. Unless noted otherwise, the opponent can be up to one size category smaller than the swallowing creature.

Being swallowed has various consequences depending on the creature, but a swallowed opponent is considered grappled, while the swallower is not. A swallowed opponent can try to cut its way free with any light piercing or slashing weapon (the amount of cutting damage required to get free is noted in the creature's description), or it can just try to escape the grapple. If the swallowed opponent chooses the latter course, success puts it back in the creature's mouth, where it may be bitten or swallowed again.

### Trample

As a standard action during its turn, the creature can run over an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself. The trample deals bludgeoning damage. Trampled opponents can attempt Reflex saves for half damage. The save Difficulty is 10 + half the creature's level + the creature's Strength score.

### Alignment

Creatures with Intelligence –3 or higher choose an alignment—Light, Twilight, or Shadow—and may have individual callings. Creatures with Intelligence –4 or less (including those with no Intelligence at all) are Twilight-aligned. The exception to this are creatures inherently linked to another alignment, as the unliving are linked to Shadow.

### Saves

A creature's Toughness, Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saving throw modifiers take into account the creature's level, type, ability scores, feats, and any other qualities.

### Abilities

Creatures have the same six ability scores as heroes: Strength (Str), Dexterity (Dex), Constitution (Con), Intelligence (Int), Wisdom (Wis), and Charisma (Cha).

### Strength

Quadrupeds can carry heavier loads than bipedal creatures. Rather than using the carrying capacity multipliers in the **Creature Size** table (page 184), quadrupeds use the following multipliers: Colossal x24, Gargantuan x12, Huge x6, Large x3, Medium x1-1/2, Small x1, Tiny x3/4, Diminutive x1/2, and Fine x1/4.

### Intelligence

A creature can speak all the languages mentioned in its descriptive text. Any creature with an Intelligence score of –3 or higher understands at least one language.

## Nonabilities

Some creatures lack certain ability scores. See **Nonexistent Ability Scores**, page 54, for more information.

## Skills

This section alphabetically lists the creature's skills by name along with skill modifiers, including adjustments for ability scores and any bonuses from feats or species abilities. All listed skills are considered favored skills for the creature. (Creature skill modifiers are sometimes higher or lower than those of a hero of comparable level; the modifiers are specific to the creature.)

## Feats

This section alphabetically lists the creature's feats.

## Conviction

Creatures generally have no Conviction points, yet they can gain Conviction by taking levels in a heroic role, in which case the creature acquires the same Conviction as a hero. This is ignored if the Narrator has determined that a particular creature is a minion (see **Minions**, page 161).

## Reputation

A creature has a Reputation bonus of +0 but may increase the bonus by taking levels in a heroic role.

## Advancement

The Narrator can improve a creature by increasing its creature level or giving it levels in a heroic role. The Advancement entry indicates the size of a higher-level version of the creature, or it indicates that the creature advances by taking levels in a role. An entry of "—" under Advancement indicates the creature doesn't advance.

## Increasing Level

As a creature gains levels, its game statistics change:

### Size

Adding levels to a creature can also increase its size. An increase in size affects a creature's Defense, attack rolls, and grapple checks, as shown in the **Creature Size** table (page 184). A creature's physical ability scores and natural armor bonus can also change when it grows, as shown on the **Adjustments to Physical Abilities and Natural Armor** table. Note that a natural armor bonus stacks with the bonus from worn armor.

### Attack Bonus

A creature's base attack bonus improves as its level increases, just like a hero. Each creature type has an attack bonus progression based

on one of the three heroic roles. For example, elementals have the same attack bonus progression as experts, so a 3rd-level elemental would have a base attack bonus of +2, just like a 3rd-level expert.

## Saving Throws

An increase in level improves a creature's saving throws, just like a hero. Each creature type has a Toughness saving throw progression based on one of the three heroic roles. For example, the unliving have a Toughness progression based on the warrior role. This means a 5th-level unliving would have a base Toughness bonus of +5, just like a 5th-level warrior.

Creatures' Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saving throw progressions are based on the expert role; although, creatures sometimes have a different number of good and normal saves than an expert would. The number of good saves a creature type has is specified in its description. For example, experts normally have two good saves and one normal, but aberrations only have one good save (Will), while darkfiends have three! A 6th-level aberration would therefore have base Fortitude and Reflex bonuses of +2 and a base Will bonus of +5. A darkfiend of the same level would have base Fortitude, Reflex, and Will bonuses of +5.

## Skills and Feats

A creature gains a feat each time it goes up in level. To learn new skills, creatures take the Skill Training feat, just like heroes. An increase in level also adds +1 to the bonuses for the creature's known skills.

## Acquiring a Role

A creature that acquires a heroic role follows the rules for mixed-role heroes; it is essentially a creature/hero character. The creature's total level equals its creature level plus its role levels. Creatures with 1 or fewer creature levels count only their role levels.

- **Size:** Adding roles to a creature does not affect its size.
- **Skills:** Creatures that take levels in a heroic role get 1 fewer skill at 1st level.
- **Feats:** Creatures that take levels in a heroic role get 1 fewer feat at 1st level.

## ADJUSTMENTS TO PHYSICAL ABILITIES AND NATURAL ARMOR

Old Size	New Size	Str	Dex	Con	Natural Armor
Fine	Diminutive	—	–1	—	—
Diminutive	Tiny	+1	–1	—	—
Tiny	Small	+2	–1	—	—
Small	Medium	+2	–1	+1	—
Medium	Large	+4	–1	+2	+2
Large	Huge	+4	–1	+2	+3
Huge	Gargantuan	+4	—	+2	+4
Gargantuan	Colossal	+4	—	+2	+5



# CREATURES

This section describes some of the better-known inhabitants of the world of *Blue Rose*. The wild and mysterious lands of Aldea contain far more creatures than the sample given here, but you can use existing creatures to provide inspiration for new ones to challenge the heroes of your *Blue Rose* series.

## Animals

This section provides information on common kinds of animals. These creatures operate on instinct, driven by simple needs such as food and reproduction. Most animals, even predators, do not attack unless they or their young are threatened.

Animals are not capable of detailed reasoning; although, with the Handle Animal skill it is possible to tame an animal and teach it to perform certain tricks. Animal adepts can accomplish even more using their arcana.

**Attack:** Expert.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throws:** Fortitude and Reflex (some animals have different good saves).

Animals share the following traits:

*Ability Scores:* Animals have Intelligence scores of –5 or –4 (predatory animals tend to have Intelligence scores of –4). No creature with a higher Intelligence can be an animal.

*Low-Light Vision:* Most animals have low-light vision.

## Bat

Bats are small, nocturnal flying mammals. The statistics presented here describe small, insectivorous bats. Bats have a –4 penalty to Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### BAT

Diminutive 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); Defense 16 (+4 size, +2 Dex); Attack —; Qualities: Blindsight (20 ft.), low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough –4, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2; Str –5, Dex +2, Con +0, Int –4, Wis +2, Cha –3; Skills: Notice +8; Advancement: —.

## Bear

Bears are found primarily in forested and mountainous regions of Aldea, particularly the Pavin Weald and the foothills of the Ice-Binder Mountains.

### BLACK BEAR

Medium 3rd-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +6 melee (+5 damage, claws), +1 melee (+4 damage, bite); Qualities:

Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str +4, Dex +1, Con +2, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Notice +4, Swim +8; Feats: Endurance, Run; Advancement: Medium (4th–5th level).

The black bear is a forest-dwelling omnivore, usually not dangerous unless an interloper threatens its cubs or food. Black bears can be pure black, blond, or cinnamon in color and are rarely more than 5 feet long.

### BROWN BEAR

Large 6th-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Attack +11 melee (+11 damage, claws), +6 melee (+8 damage, bite); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +8, Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str +8, Dex +1, Con +4, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Notice +6, Swim +12; Feats: Endurance, Improved Grab, Run, Track; Advancement: Large (7th–10th level).

These massive carnivores weigh more than 1,800 pounds and stand nearly 9 feet tall when they rear up on their hind legs. They are bad-tempered and territorial. The brown bear's statistics can be used for almost any big bear, including the grizzly or polar bear.



## Bison

Roaming herds of bison are found on the plains of Rezea. Bison can be aggressive when protecting young and during the mating season, but they generally prefer running to fighting. A bison stands more than 6 feet tall at the shoulder and is 9 to 12 feet long. It weighs 1,800 to 2,400 pounds. The bison's statistics can be used for almost any large herd animal.

### BISON

Large 5th-level animal; Initiative +0; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 13 (–1 size, +4 natural); Attack +8 melee (+9 damage, gore); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent, stampede; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str +6, Dex +0, Con +3, Int –4, Wis +0, Cha –3; Skills: Notice +5; Feats: Endurance; Advancement: Large (6th–7th level).

*Stampede:* A frightened herd of bison flees as a group in a random direction, but always away from the perceived threat or source of danger. They literally run over anything of Large size or smaller that gets in their way, dealing +5 damage for each five bison in the herd (Reflex save, Difficulty 18, for half damage).

## Boar

Though not carnivores, wild swine are ill-tempered and usually charge anyone who disturbs them. A boar is covered in coarse, gray-black fur. Adult males are about 4 feet long and 3 feet high at the shoulder.

### BOAR

Medium 3rd-level animal; Initiative +0; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 16 (+6 natural); Attack +4 melee (+6 damage, gore); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str +2, Dex +0, Con +3, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –3; Skills: Notice +5; Feats: Diehard, Great Toughness; Advancement: Medium (4th–5th level).

## Cat

Cats are common pets, particularly in Aldis and Jarzon. There are numerous breeds: long and short haired, with various markings and coloration. Some breeds are especially prized, fetching high prices among the nobility of different nations.

Cats use their Dexterity instead of their Strength for Climb and Jump checks. Cats have a –2 penalty to Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### CAT

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +4 melee (–5 damage, claws); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough –2, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str –4, Dex +2, Con +0, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Acrobatics +10, Climb +6, Jump +10; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

## Crocodile

Crocodiles are aggressive predators 11 to 12 feet long. They lie mostly submerged in rivers or marshes, with only their eyes and nostrils showing, waiting for prey to come within reach. (This grants the crocodile a +10 cover bonus on Sneak checks to hide.)

### CROCODILE

Medium 3rd-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +6 melee (+8 damage, bite or tail slap); Qualities: Hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str +4, Dex +1, Con +3, Int –5, Wis +1, Cha –4; Skills: Notice +4, Sneak +7, Swim +12; Feats: Improved Grab; Advancement: Medium (4th–5th level), Large (6th level).

*Hold Breath:* A crocodile can hold its breath for 20 rounds plus eight times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

The monstrous giant crocodile is found most often along the seashore of the Veran Marsh or a short distance inland. They grow 20 feet long, but otherwise behave like their smaller cousins.

### GIANT CROCODILE

Huge 7th-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; Defense 16 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural); Attack +11 melee (+14 damage, bite or tail slap); Qualities: Hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str +8, Dex +1, Con +4, Int –5, Wis +1, Cha –4; Skills: Notice +5, Sneak +7, Swim +16; Feats: Endurance, Improved Grab; Advancement: Huge (8th–14th level).

## Dog

The statistics presented here describe a dog of about 20 to 50 pounds in weight. They also can be used for small wild canines such as coyotes and wild dogs.

Dogs generally hunt in packs, chasing and exhausting prey until they can drag it down. Dogs have a +4 bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

### DOG

Small 1st-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +2 melee (+2 damage, bite); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str +1, Dex +3, Con +2, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Jump +7, Notice +5, Survival +1; Feats: Track; Advancement: —.

## Eagle

These majestic birds of prey inhabit nearly every terrain and climate; though, they all prefer high, secluded nesting spots (making them common in the Ice-Binder Mountains). Eagles have a +8 bonus on Notice checks to see things at a distance. A typical eagle is about 3 feet long and has a wingspan of about 7 feet. These statistics can describe any similar-sized bird of prey.

## EAGLE

Small 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); Defense 14 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +3 melee (+1 damage, talons); Qualities: Low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2; Str +0, Dex +2, Con +1, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -3; Skills: Notice +4; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (2nd–3rd level).

## Hawk

Hawks are similar to eagles but slightly smaller: 1 to 2 feet long, with wingspans of 6 feet or less. Hawks have a +8 bonus on Notice checks to see things at a distance. These statistics can describe falcons and similar-sized birds of prey. Hawks are common familiars in Aldis.

## HAWK

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); Defense 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +5 melee (-1 damage, talons); Qualities: Low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str -2, Dex +3, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -2; Skills: Notice +4; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

## Horse

Horses are widely domesticated for riding and as beasts of burden. The statistics describe large breeds of working horses, such as Clydesdales. These animals are usually ready for heavy work by age three. A horse cannot fight while carrying a rider.

- *Light Horse:* A light horse includes smaller breeds of working horses, such as quarter horses and Arabians as well as wild horses. These animals are usually ready for useful work by age two. Light horses have +10 ft. speed, but -2 to Strength.
- *Warhorse:* A warhorse is specially trained for combat. It is a 1st-level warrior, giving it +1 to its base attack bonus, Defense, and Toughness saves, along with +2 on its Fortitude saves.

## HORSE

Large 3rd-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +4 melee (+3 damage, hoof); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -2; Skills: Notice +4; Feats: Endurance, Run; Advancement: By role (warrior).

## Octopus

These shy, bottom-dwelling sea creatures are dangerous only to their prey. If disturbed they usually try to escape.

## OCTOPUS

Small 2nd-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; Defense 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +5 melee (no damage, tentacle), +0 melee (+0 damage, bite);

Qualities: Ink cloud, jet, low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1; Str +1, Dex +3, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Escape Artist +13, Notice +5, Sneak +11, Swim +9. Feats: Improved Grab, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (3rd–6th level).

*Ink Cloud:* An octopus can emit a cloud of jet-black ink 10 feet in diameter once per minute as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment, which the octopus normally uses to escape.

*Jet:* An octopus can jet backward once per round as a full-round action, at a speed of 200 feet.

## Owl

The statistics presented here describe nocturnal birds of prey from 1 to 2 feet long, with wingspans up to 6 feet. Owls swoop quietly down onto prey, attacking with their powerful talons. Owl's have a +8 bonus on Notice checks to hear sounds.

## OWL

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); Defense 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +5 melee (-3 damage, talons); Qualities: Low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str -3, Dex +3, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -3; Skills: Notice +6, Sneak +17; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Small (2nd level).

## Pony

The statistics presented here describe a small horse, under 5 feet tall at the shoulder. Ponies are otherwise similar to light horses and cannot fight while carrying a rider.

## PONY

Medium 2nd-level animal; Initiative +1; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +3 melee (+2 damage, hoof); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str +2, Dex +1, Con +1, Int -4, Wis +0, Cha -3; Skills: Notice +5; Feats: Endurance; Advancement: —.

## Rat

These omnivorous rodents thrive almost anywhere. Rats usually run away when confronted. They bite only as a last resort. Rats have a -5 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

## RAT

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +4 melee (-5 damage, bite); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough -5, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str -4, Dex +2, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Acrobatics +10, Climb +12, Sneak +14; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

Dire rats are hideous creatures up to 4 feet long. Anyone bitten by a dire rat must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 13) to avoid being infected with a disease (virulence 3,

## — CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY —

1 Constitution damage). Dire rats have a -1 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### DIRE RAT

Small 1st-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +4 melee (+0 damage, bite); Qualities: Disease, low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str +0, Dex +3, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -3; Skills: Climb +11, Notice +4, Sneak +8, Swim +11; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Small (2nd–3rd level), Medium (4th–6th level).

### Raven

These glossy black birds are about 2 feet long and have wingspans of about 4 feet. They combine both claws into a single attack. The statistics presented here can describe most nonpredatory birds of similar size. Ravens are common familiars among Kernish adepts. Ravens have a -5 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### RAVEN

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +4 melee (-6 damage, claws); Qualities: Low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough -5, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2; Str -5, Dex +2, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -3; Skills: Notice +3; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

### Shark

Sharks are aggressive, carnivorous fish liable to make unprovoked attacks against anything approaching them. Medium sharks are from 5 to 8 feet long and not usually dangerous to creatures other than their prey (smaller fish and sea mammals). Large sharks can reach around 15 feet in length and are a serious threat. Huge sharks are true monsters, like great whites, that can exceed 20 feet in length. Dire sharks are monstrous creations of the Sorcerer Kings, up to 25 feet in length and weighing 10 tons.

### MEDIUM SHARK

Medium 3rd-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed swim 60 ft.; Defense 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +4 melee (+3 damage, bite); Qualities: Blindsense, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str +1, Dex +2, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Notice +6, Swim +9; Feats: Rage, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (4th–6th level).

### LARGE SHARK

Large 7th-level animal; Initiative +6; Speed swim 60 ft.; Defense 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +7 melee (+6 damage, bite); Qualities: Blindsense, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3; Str +3, Dex +2, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Notice +7, Swim +11; Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Rage; Advancement: Large (8th–9th level).

### HUGE SHARK

Huge 10th-level animal; Initiative +6; Speed swim 60 ft.; Defense 15 (-2 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural); Attack +10 melee (+9 damage, bite); Qualities: Blindsense, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +6; Str +5, Dex +2, Con +2, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Notice +10, Swim +13; Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Rage; Advancement: Huge (11th–17th level).

### DIRE SHARK

Huge 18th-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed swim 60 ft.; Defense 17 (-2 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural); Attack +18 melee (+14 damage, bite); Qualities: Blindsense, scent, swallow whole; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +16, Fort +14, Ref +13, Will +12; Str +6, Dex +2, Con +3, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +10, Swim +13; Feats: Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Rage, Weapon Focus (bite); Advancement: Huge (19th–20th level).

### Snake

Various sorts of snakes are found in Aldea, particularly in the Veran Marsh, where they thrive.

Constrictor snakes usually are not aggressive and flee when confronted. They hunt for food but do not attempt to make a meal out of any creature too large to constrict. Constrictor snakes hunt by grabbing prey with their mouths and then squeezing it with their powerful bodies.

### CONSTRICTOR SNAKE

Medium 3rd-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; Defense 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +5 melee (+3 damage, bite), +5 grapple (+3 damage, constrict); Qualities: Scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str +3, Dex +3, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Climb +14, Notice +7, Sneak +10, Swim +11; Feats: Great Toughness, Improved Grab; Advancement: Medium (4th–5th level), Large (6th–10th level).

Giant constrictor snakes are more aggressive than their smaller cousins, mostly because they need a tremendous amount of food to survive.

### GIANT CONSTRICTOR SNAKE

Huge 11th-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; Defense 15 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +13 melee (+9 damage, bite), +23 grapple (+9 damage, constrict); Qualities: Scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +10, Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +4; Str +7, Dex +3, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Climb +17, Notice +9, Sneak +10, Swim +16; Feats: Endurance, Great Toughness, Improved Grab; Advancement: Huge (12th–16th level), Gargantuan (17th–20th level).

Vipers are not particularly aggressive, but will often lash out with a bite attack before attempting to retreat. They rely on their venomous bite to kill prey and defend themselves. Small vipers have -1 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.



### SMALL VIPER

Small 1st-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed 20 ft., climb 20ft., swim 20 ft.; Defense 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +4 melee (–8 damage plus poison, bite); Qualities: Poison, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough –1, Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str –2, Dex +3, Con +0, Int –5, Wis +1, Cha –4; Skills: Climb +11, Sneak +11, Notice +7, Swim +6; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (2nd level), Large (3rd–5th level), Huge (6th–18th level).

*Poison:* A viper's bite requires a Difficulty 10 Fortitude saving throw. The venom deals initial and secondary damage of 2 Constitution.

## Squid, Giant

These voracious creatures can have bodies more than 20 feet long and attack almost anything they meet. An opponent can attack a giant squid's tentacles with a sunder attempt as if they were weapons (see **Sunder**, page 166). A giant squid's tentacles have a Toughness of +2 each. Severing one of a giant squid's tentacles inflicts a hurt result on it. A giant squid usually withdraws from combat if it loses four tentacles. The creature regrows severed limbs in 10–20 days.

### GIANT SQUID

Huge 12th-level animal; Initiative +3; Speed swim 80 ft.; Defense 17 (–2 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +15 melee (+10 damage, tentacle); Qualities: Ink cloud, jet, low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +11, Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +5; Str +8, Dex +3, Con +1, Int –5, Wis +1, Cha –4; Skills: Notice +10, Swim +16; Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Great Toughness; Advancement: Huge (13th–18th level), Gargantuan (19th–20th level).

*Ink Cloud:* A giant squid can emit a cloud of jet-black ink 20 feet in diameter once per minute as a free action. The cloud provides total concealment, which the squid normally uses to escape.

*Jet:* A giant squid can jet backward once per round as a full-round action, at a speed of 200 feet.

## Weasel

These little mammals are aggressive predators but usually confine themselves to smaller prey. The statistics presented here can also apply to ferrets, fishers, and similar small creatures. Weasels and ferrets are sometimes found as pets or familiars. Weasels have a –4 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### WEASEL

Tiny 1st-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +4 melee (–5 damage, bite); Qualities: Attach, low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough –4, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str –3, Dex +2, Con +0, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –3; Skills: Climb +10, Notice +3, Sneak +8; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.



*Attach:* If a weasel hits with a bite attack, it uses its powerful jaws to latch onto the opponent's body and automatically deals its bite damage each round. An attached weasel loses its dodge bonus to Defense (making it Defense 12). An attached weasel can be struck with a weapon or grappled. To remove an attached weasel through grappling, the opponent must pin the creature.

## Wolf

Wolves are pack hunters known for their persistence and cunning. A favorite wolf tactic is to send a few individuals against the foe's front while the rest of the pack circles and attacks from the flanks or rear.

### WOLF

Medium 2nd-level animal; Initiative +2; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +3 melee (+3 damage, bite); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent, trip; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str +1, Dex +2, Con +2, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Notice +3, Sneak +3, Survival +1\*; Feats: Track, Weapon Focus (bite); Advancement: Medium (3rd level), Large (4th–6th level), or by role (warrior).

*Trip:* A wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent (+1 check modifier) as a free action. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

\*Wolves have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

## Rhydan

Rhydan are like animals but can have an Intelligence score higher than -4. All rhydan have some proficiency with psychic arcana.

The statistics here are for Narrator characters who are rhydan. To play a rhydan, see **Chapter II: Creating Your Hero**.

**Attack:** Warrior.

**Toughness:** Warrior.

**Good Saving Throws:** Fortitude and Reflex.

Rhydan share the following traits:

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*Low-Light Vision:* All rhydan have low-light vision.

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*Psychic:* All rhydan have the Psychic Talent feat and untrained use of the Mind Touch, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana. Many rhydan are trained adepts as well.

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## Dolphin

Dolphins usually travel together in pods of 3-20 individuals. They are friendly, playful, and usually eager

to help others in need. Dolphins are known for saving sailors in distress and helping drive off sharks (their mortal enemies).

### DOLPHIN

Medium 2nd-level rhydan; Initiative +3; Speed swim 80 ft.; Defense 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +5 melee (+2 nonlethal damage, slam); Qualities: Blindsight (120 ft.), hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Any; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; Str +0, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +8, Swim +8; Feats: Psychic Talent, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: By role.

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*Hold breath:* Dolphins can hold their breath for 60 rounds (6 minutes), plus 6 rounds per point of Constitution, before they risk drowning.

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## Drake

Drakes or "pocket dragons," as they are sometimes called, are small reptilian rhydan about a foot long with a tail about the same length as their body and bat-like wings. They look like miniature dragons, with scales ranging from reddish through dull orange to vivid greens and blues. Like other rhydan, drakes are intelligent and capable of communicating via Mind

Touch. They tend to be shy and somewhat vain, with cat-like personalities. Some drakes bond with human companions, while others remain in the wild, particularly in forested areas.

Drakes have a -2 penalty to Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.



## DRAKE

Tiny 2nd-level rhydan; Initiative +2; Speed 15 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); Defense 18 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +6 melee (–2 damage, bite); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), low-light vision; Alignment: Any; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str –2, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +6; Feats: Psychic Talent, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

## Griffon

Griffons are powerful, majestic creatures with the characteristics of both lions and eagles. From nose to tail, an adult griffon can measure as much as 8 feet. Neither males nor females are endowed with a mane. A pair of broad, golden wings emerge from the creature's back and span 25 feet or more. A griffon weighs about 500 pounds.

Like other rhydan, griffons are innately psychic. Elder griffons are often talented and trained in other arcana as well. They communicate through Mind Touch; although, they are proud and are cautious around outsiders. In combat, griffons prefer to pounce on their prey, either diving to the attack or leaping from above. Many griffons have levels of the warrior role.

## GRIFFON

Large 7th-level rhydan; Initiative +2; Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); Defense 17 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +11 melee (+8 damage, bite), +5 melee (+3 damage, claws); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +10, Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str +4, Dex +2, Con +3, Int +1, Wis +1, Cha +1; Skills: Jump +8, Notice +10; Feats: Iron Will, Psychic Talent, Weapon Focus (bite); Advancement: By role.

## Rhy-cat

Rhy-cats are about 4 feet long and weight 120 pounds. Their coloration and markings are similar to those of Siamese cats: a mixture of chocolate and cream color with blue, green, or amber eyes. Rhy-cats generally prefer sleeping during the day and hunting at night; although, they vary their routines if living alongside human companions.

Rhy-cats can always take 10 on climb checks, even when rushed or threatened.

## RHY-CAT

Medium 3rd-level rhydan; Initiative +4; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +7 melee (+5 damage, bite), +2 melee (+3 damage, claws); Qualities: low-light vision, rake, scent; Alignment: Any; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2; Str +3, Dex +4, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Acrobatics +10, Climb +11, Jump +12, Notice +6, Sneak +8; Feats: Psychic Talent, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: By role.

*Rake:* If a rhy-cat hits with its bite attack, it can attempt a grapple as a free action. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake with its rear claws for +5 lethal damage as a free action.

## Rhy-horse

Rhy-horses often travel in the company of herds of their mundane cousins, especially in Rezea. Physically, they are indistinguishable from regular horses; although, rhy-horses often have star patterns or similar markings on their faces or hindquarters. Rhy-horses serve as mounts only in rare circumstances, either for rhy-bonded companions or especially trusted or honored friends.

Attempting to ride a rhy-horse uninvited is considered terribly rude. Capturing and breaking rhy-horses to the saddle is seen as a form of slavery in Aldis and Rezea, and a waste of time in Jarzon, since captured rhy-horses tend to be rebellious and temperamental at best.

## RHY-HORSE

Large 3rd-level rhydan; Initiative +1; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 13 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +5 melee (+3 damage, hoof); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Any; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +4; Feats: Endurance, Psychic Talent, Run; Advancement: By role.

## Rhy-wolf

Rhy-wolves are pack hunters like their mundane cousins. They don't often adopt humanoid companions into their packs, but they are loyal unto death when they do. Rhy-wolves are most common in the Pavin Weald and other forests of Aldea.

## RHY-WOLF

Medium 2nd-level rhydan; Initiative +2; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +4 melee (+3 damage, bite); Qualities: Howl, low-light vision, scent, trip; Alignment: Any; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str +1, Dex +2, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +3, Sneak +3, Survival +1\*; Feats: Psychic Talent, Track, Weapon Focus (bite); Advancement: By role.

*Howl:* By letting out a howl as a move action, a rhy-wolf gets a +4 bonus to Intimidate checks that round.

*Trip:* A rhy-wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the rhy-wolf.

\*Rhy-wolves have a +4 racial bonus on Survival checks when tracking by scent.

## Unicorn

Unicorns are the most majestic and exalted of rhydan, similar to a horse with a pure white coat and an elegant spiral horn like mother-of-pearl. A unicorn has deep sea-blue, violet, brown, or fiery gold eyes. Males sport a white beard. A typical adult unicorn grows to 8 feet in length, stands 5 feet high at the shoulder, and weighs 1,200 pounds. Females are slightly smaller and slimmer than males.

Unicorns are particularly renowned for their wisdom. Even proud griffons defer to them. Unicorns normally fight only when defending themselves or their forests.

## — CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY —

They either charge, impaling foes with their horns like lances, or strike with their hooves. A unicorn's horn strikes as an arcane weapon, but its power fades if removed from the unicorn.

### UNICORN

Large 4th-level rhydan; Initiative +3; Speed 60 ft.; Defense 18 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +8 melee (+8 damage, horn), +3 melee (+6 damage, hoof); Qualities: Arcana, aura of light, darkvision (60 ft.), immunity to poison and emotion-effects, low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +6; Str +5, Dex +3, Con +5, Int +0, Wis +5, Cha +7; Skills: Jump +21, Notice +11, Sneak +9, Survival +8; Feats: Cure Disease, Cure Poison, Healing Talent, Psychic Talent, Wild Empathy; Advancement: By role.

*Arcana:* All unicorns are trained in the following arcana: Cure +12, Mind Touch +14, Psychic Shield +12, and Second Sight +12, with an adept level equal to their total level. Many unicorns are also adepts. Elder unicorns often mix warrior and adept roles.

*Arcane Horn:* A unicorn's horn is considered an arcane weapon.

*Aura of Light:* Unicorns radiate the power of the Light so strongly they receive a +2 bonus to Defense and saving throws against Shadow-aligned creatures.

## Whale

Whales of various sorts are found in the deep seas around Aldis. Islanders and sea-folk sometimes befriend them through the more outgoing dolphins. Jarzoni ships regularly hunt the gentle sea-giants, which has led to skirmishes between Jarzoni and islander ships.

Certain elder members of whale pods train in the arcane arts. These eldersingers are keepers of whale lore and ambassadors of a sort when dealing with races other than dolphins. Eldersingers are formidable adepts. An eldersinger usually acquires the Healing Talent and Psychic Talent feats, along with training in the following arcana: Bliss, Body Control, Calm, Cure, Mind Reading, Mind Touch, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, and Sleep. They may have various other arcane feats and training, depending on their adept level.

### Baleen Whale

The statistics here describe a plankton-feeding whale between 30 and 60 feet long, such as gray, humpback, and right whales. These massive creatures are surprisingly gentle. If harassed or provoked, they are as likely to flee as they are to retaliate.

### BALEEN

Gargantuan 12th-level rhydan; Initiative +1; Speed swim 40 ft.; Defense 16 (–4 size, +1 Dex, +9 natural); Attack +20 melee (+15 damage, tail slap); Qualities: Blindsight (120 ft.), hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +19, Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +5; Str +12, Dex +1, Con +6, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +1; Skills: Notice +14, Swim +20; Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Great Toughness, Psychic Talent; Advancement: By role.

*Hold Breath:* A whale can hold its breath for 80 rounds (8 minutes), plus 8 rounds per point of Constitution, before it risks drowning.

### Chachalot Whale

Also known as sperm whales, these giants of the sea can be up to 60 feet long. They prey on giant octopi and squid.

### CACHALOT

Gargantuan 12th-level rhydan; Initiative +1; Speed swim 40 ft.; Defense 16 (–4 size, +1 Dex, +9 natural); Attack +21 melee (+20 damage, bite), +15 melee (+15 damage, tail slap); Qualities: Blindsight (120 ft.), hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +20, Fort +15, Ref +9, Will +6; Str +12, Dex +1, Con +7, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +15, Swim +20; Feats: Diehard, Endurance, Great Toughness, Psychic Talent, Weapon Focus (bite); Advancement: By role.

*Hold Breath:* A whale can hold its breath for 80 rounds (8 minutes), plus 8 rounds per point of Constitution, before it risks drowning.

### Orca

Orca, also known as killer whales, are black and white patterned. They are the bold warriors of their kind, known for being headstrong and not quite as bright as their brethren.

### ORCA

Huge 9th-level rhydan; Initiative +2; Speed swim 50 ft.; Defense 16 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +15 melee (+12 damage, bite); Qualities: Blindsight (120 ft.), hold breath, low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +15, Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +5; Str +8, Dex +2, Con +5, Int –1, Wis +2, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +14, Swim +16; Feats: Endurance, Great Toughness, Psychic Talent, Run; Advancement: By role.

*Hold Breath:* A whale can hold its breath for 80 rounds (8 minutes), plus 8 rounds per point of Constitution, before it risks drowning.

## Winged Cat

In Aldis there is a unique breed of cats with feathered wings and innate psychic abilities. They are not infertile with ordinary cats, only their own kind. They are wholly natural, yet some Jarzoni priests claim winged cats are creations of sorcery (making them unpopular in that nation). Winged cats are common familiars for adepts in Aldis. Winged cats have a –2 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

### WINGED CAT

Tiny 1st-level rhydan; Initiative +2; Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +5 melee (–5 damage, claws); Qualities: Low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough –1, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str –4, Dex +2, Con +0, Int –4, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Acrobatics +10, Climb +6, Jump +10; Feats: Psychic Talent, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.



## Plants

On Aldea, some plants possess the arcane ability to move. Some even think and speak. Some plant creatures are elemental spirits of a sort, while others are unnatural creations of sorcerous plant-shaping or the remnants of arcane experiments from the Shadow Wars.

**Attack:** Expert.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throw:** Fortitude.

Plants share the following traits:

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*Blindsight:* Most plants without visual sensory organs have blindsight with a range of 60 feet.

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*Immunities:* Plants are immune to sleep, paralysis, stunning, and mind-influencing effects. They are not subject to critical hits.

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*Low-Light Vision:* Most plants with visual sensory organs have low-light vision.

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### Assassin Vine

The assassin vine is a semi-mobile plant that collects its own fertilizer by grabbing and crushing animals, depositing the carcasses near its roots. The Sorcerer Kings originally created assassin vines as guard plants for their strongholds. The sinister plants are particularly common in the Veran Marsh.

A mature plant consists of a main vine, about 20 feet long. Smaller vines up to 5 feet long branch off from the main vine about every 6 inches. These smaller vines bear clusters of leaves, and in late summer they produce bunches of small fruits resembling wild grapes. The fruit is tough and has a hearty but bitter flavor. Assassin vine berries make a potent, and rare, wine.

An assassin vine can move about, albeit slowly, but usually stays put unless it needs to seek prey in a new vicinity.

An assassin vine uses simple tactics: it lies still until prey comes within reach, then attacks. It uses its entangle ability both to catch prey and deter counterattacks.

#### ASSASSIN VINE

Large 4th-level plant; Initiative +0; Speed 5 ft.; Defense 15 (–1 size, +6 natural); Attack +7 melee (+7 damage, slam); Qualities: Blindsight (30 ft.), camouflage, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant immunities, resistance to cold and fire +2; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +7, Ref +1, Will —; Str +5, Dex +0, Con +3, Int —, Wis +1, Cha –1; Feats: Improved Grab; Advancement: Huge (5th–16th level), Gargantuan (17th–20th level).

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*Camouflage:* Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a Difficult 20 Notice check to see it before it attacks. Anyone with ranks in Survival or Knowledge (nature) can use one of those skills instead of Notice to detect the plant.

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*Entangle:* An assassin vine can animate plants within 30 feet of itself as a free action to entangle other creatures. The effect is similar to the plant growth effect of the Plant Shaping arcanum (Reflex save Difficulty 13). The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action).

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### Shambler

Shamblers look like heaps of rotting vegetation. They are actually intelligent, carnivorous plants, found primarily in wetlands like the Veran Marsh. A shambler's body has an 8-foot girth and is about 6 feet tall when the creature stands upright. It weighs about 3,800 pounds.

A shambler batters or constricts opponents with two huge armlike appendages. It crushes up dead prey and absorbs organic nutrients through its root clusters.

#### SHAMBLER

Large 8th-level plant; Initiative +0; Speed 20 ft.; Defense 20 (–1 size, +11 natural); Attack +11 melee (+9 damage, slam or constrict); Qualities: Constrict, darkvision (60 ft.), immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant immunities, resistance to fire +4; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4; Str +5, Dex +0, Con +3, Int –2, Wis +0, Cha –1; Skills: Notice +6, Sneak +8; Feats: Improved Grab, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam); Advancement: Large (9th–12th level), Huge (13th–20th level).

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## Treant

Treants are intelligent, humanoid trees, also known as forest wardens and tree watchers. They are guardians of the deep forest, particularly in the Pavin Weald.

A treant is about 30 feet tall, with a trunk about 2 feet in diameter. It weighs about 4,500 pounds. A treant's leaves are deep green in the spring and summer. In the fall and winter the leaves change to yellow, orange, or red, but rarely fall out. A treant's legs fit together when closed to look like the trunk of a tree, and a motionless treant is nearly indistinguishable from a tree.

Treants watch intruders in their forests carefully before attacking. They often charge suddenly from cover to trample despoilers of forests. If sorely pressed, they animate trees as reinforcements.

### TREANT

Huge 7th-level plant; Initiative -1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural); Attack +12 melee (+13 damage, slam); Qualities: Animate trees, arcana (Mind Touch +11, Plant Shaping +11, Psychic Shield +13, Second Sight +13), damage reduction +4/slashing, low-light vision, plant immunities, vulnerability to fire; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +10, Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +7; Str +9, Dex -1, Con +5, Int +1, Wis +3, Cha +1; Skills: Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Notice +8, Sense Motive +8, Sneak -9\*, Survival +8; Feats: Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack; Advancement: Huge (8th–16th level), Gargantuan (17th–20th level), or by role.

*Animate Trees:* A treant can use Plant Shaping to animate trees within 180 feet at will, controlling up to two trees at a time. It takes 1 full round for a normal tree to uproot itself. Thereafter it moves at a speed of 10 feet and fights as a treant in all respects. Animated trees lose their ability to move if the treant that animated them is incapacitated or moves out of range. Animated trees have the same vulnerability to fire as a treant.

*Arcana:* Treants have the Mind Touch, Plant Shaping, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana at rank 10.

*Vulnerability to Fire:* Treants suffer double the normal damage from fire. They're particularly mistrustful of anyone carrying an open flame or using Fire Shaping in their forests. Give treants an initial attitude of unfriendly towards such individuals.

\*Motionless treants have a +16 Sneak bonus to hide in a forest.

## Elementals

An elemental is a being composed of one of the primal elements: air, earth, fire, or water. Elementals arise spontaneously in some places of power, but adepts can also summon them using the arcane arts. They are allies of those who respect and defend the natural order; although, sorcerers are known to enslave elementals to serve them.

**Attack:** Expert.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throw:** Fortitude (earth, water) or Reflex (air, fire).

Elementals share the following traits:

*Darkvision:* Elementals have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

*Immunities:* Elementals are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. They are not subject to critical hits or flanking.

*Special:* Elementals cannot be raised from the dead.

## Air Elemental

Air elementals are swirling masses of cloud and vapor. Their rapid speed makes them useful on vast battlefields or in extended aerial combat.

### AIR ELEMENTAL

Small 2nd-level elemental; Initiative +7; Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect); Defense 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +5 melee (+0 damage, slam); Qualities: Air mastery, darkvision (60 ft.), elemental immunities, whirlwind; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +0; Str +0, Dex +3, Con +0, Int -3, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +3; Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (4th–7th level), Large (8th–15th level), Huge (16th–20th level).

*Air Mastery:* Airborne creatures take a -1 penalty on attack rolls and damage against an air elemental.

*Whirlwind:* An air elemental can transform into a whirlwind once every 10 minutes and remain in that form for 1 round for every two levels it has. In this form, the elemental can move through the air or along a surface at its fly speed.

The whirlwind is 5 feet wide at the base, up to 30 feet wide at the top, and up to 50 feet tall. The elemental controls the exact height, but it must be at least 10 feet.

Another creature might be caught in the elemental's whirlwind if it touches or enters it or if the elemental moves into or through the creature's space.

Creatures one or more size categories smaller than the elemental may take damage when caught in the whirlwind and may be lifted into the air. An affected creature must succeed on a Reflex save when it comes into contact with the whirlwind or take the indicated damage. It must also succeed on a second Reflex save or be picked up bodily and held suspended in the powerful winds, automatically taking the damage each round. A creature that can fly is allowed a Reflex save each round to escape the whirlwind. The creature still takes damage but can leave if the save is successful. The Difficulty for saves against the whirlwind's effects is 10 + half the elemental's level + the elemental's Strength score. Damage is +1 per size category (+1 at small, +2 at medium, and so forth).

Creatures trapped in the whirlwind cannot move except to go where the elemental carries them or to escape the whirlwind. Creatures caught in the whirlwind can otherwise act normally, but must succeed on a Concentration check (Difficulty 15) to

use *arcana*. Creatures caught in the whirlwind take a  $-4$  penalty to *Dexterity* and a  $-2$  penalty on attack rolls. The elemental can have only as many creatures trapped inside the whirlwind at one time as will fit inside the whirlwind's volume.

The elemental can eject any carried creatures whenever it wishes, depositing them wherever the whirlwind happens to be.

If the whirlwind's base touches the ground, it creates a swirling cloud of debris. This cloud is centered on the elemental and has a diameter equal to half the whirlwind's height. The cloud obscures all vision, including *darkvision*, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have concealment, while those farther away have total concealment.

An elemental in whirlwind form cannot make slam attacks.

## Earth Elemental

Earth elementals are roughly humanoid creatures made up of earth and stone. When summoned, an earth elemental consists of whatever types of dirt, stones, precious metals, and gems it was conjured from.

Though an earth elemental moves slowly, it is relentless. It can travel through solid ground or stone as easily as humans move through air. It cannot swim, however, and must either walk around a body of water or go through the ground under it. Earth elementals can move along the bottom of a body of water but they prefer not to.

### EARTH ELEMENTAL

Small 2nd-level elemental; Initiative  $-1$ ; Speed 20 ft.; Defense 17 (+1 size,  $-1$  Dex, +7 natural); Attack +5 melee (+5 damage, slam); Qualities: *Darkvision* (60 ft.), *earth glide*, *earth mastery*, elemental immunities; Alignment: *Twilight*; Saves: *Tough* +2, *Fort* +4, *Ref*  $-1$ , *Will* +0; *Str* +3, *Dex*  $-1$ , *Con* +1, *Int*  $-3$ , *Wis* +0, *Cha* +0; Skills: *Notice* +3; Feats: *Power Attack*; Advancement: Medium (4th–7th level), Large (8th–15th level), Huge (16th–20th level).

*Earth Glide*: An earth elemental can pass through stone, dirt, or almost any other sort of earth, except metal, as easily as a fish swims through water. Its burrowing leaves behind no tunnel or hole nor does it create any ripple or other signs of its presence. *Earth Shaping* used on an area containing a burrowing earth elemental flings the elemental back 30 feet, stunning it for 1 round unless it succeeds on a *Difficulty* 15 *Fortitude* save.

*Earth Mastery*: An earth elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage if both it and its foe are touching the ground. If an opponent is airborne or waterborne, the elemental takes a  $-4$  penalty on attack rolls. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.)



## Fire Elemental

Fire elementals are humanoid shapes of blazing fire. A fire elemental cannot enter water or any other nonflammable liquid. A body of water is an impassable barrier unless the fire elemental can step or jump over it.

A fire elemental is a fierce opponent that attacks its enemies directly and savagely. It takes joy in burning creatures and objects to ashes.

### FIRE ELEMENTAL

Small 2nd-level elemental; Initiative +5; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +3 melee (+0 damage, plus +0 fire damage, slam); Qualities: Burn, darkvision (60 ft.), elemental immunities, immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +2, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +3; Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Medium (4th–7th level), Large (8th–15th level), Huge (16th–20th level).

**Burn:** A fire elemental's slam attack deals bludgeoning damage plus fire damage from the elemental's flaming body. Those hit by a fire elemental's slam attack also must succeed on a Reflex save or catch on fire. The save Difficulty is 10 + half the elemental's level + the elemental's Constitution score. A burning creature can take a move action to put out the flame. Creatures hitting a fire elemental with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take fire damage as though hit by the elemental's attack and also catch on fire unless they succeed on a Reflex save.

**Vulnerability to Cold:** A fire elemental suffers 50 percent more damage from cold effects than normal.

## Water Elemental

Water elementals are vortices or swirls of water that coalesce into a vaguely humanoid shape. A water elemental can't venture more than 180 feet from the body of water from which it was summoned.

A water elemental prefers to fight in a large body of water where it can disappear beneath the waves and suddenly swell up behind opponents.

### WATER ELEMENTAL

Small 2nd-level elemental; Initiative +0; Speed 20 ft., swim 90 ft.; Defense 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Attack +4 melee (+4 damage, slam); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), drench, elemental immunities, vortex, water mastery; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str +2, Dex +0, Con +1, Int –3, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +3; Feats: Power Attack; Advancement: Medium (4th–7th level), Large (8th–15th level), Huge (16th–20th level).

**Vortex:** A water elemental can transform into a whirlpool once every 10 minutes, provided it is underwater, and remain in that form for 1 round for every 2 levels it has. In this form, the elemental can move through water or along the bottom at its swim speed. Other than the fact that its vortex form is limited to a body of water, the effects are the same as an air elemental's whirlwind form.

**Drench:** The water elemental's touch puts out torches, campfires, exposed lanterns, and other open flames if they are of Large size or smaller. The creature can dispel arcane fire it touches with a level check (1d20 + level) against the controlling adept's level check.

**Water Mastery:** A water elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage if both it and its opponent are touching water. If the opponent or the elemental is touching the ground, the elemental takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls. (These modifiers are not included in the statistics block.) A water elemental can be a serious threat to ships. An elemental can easily overturn small craft (5 feet of length per level) and stop larger vessels (10 feet long per level). Even large ships (20 feet long per level) can be slowed to half speed.

## Shadowspawn

Shadowspawn are humanoids with monstrous features, corrupted by Shadow, and altered by the flesh-crafting arts of the Sorcerer Kings. Once, legions of shadowspawn served as the armies of the Sorcerer Kings. Now they are hunted and hounded outside of the Kingdom of Kern. Small tribes of shadowspawn live in wild and forlorn lands. They raid villages and settlements, and forces like the Knights of the Blue Rose, the scouts of Aldis, the riders of Rezea, and the Knights of the Hearth in Jarzon are often called upon to repel shadowspawn raids.

**Attack:** Warrior.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throws:** Reflex and Will.

Shadowspawn share the following trait:

**Darkvision:** Most shadowspawn have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

## Ettercap

Ettercaps, also called spider-folk, are hideous creatures like 6-foot tall humanoid spiders (but with only four limbs). They have spider-like heads and faces, with multiple eyes. Ettercaps live in dark places like the depths of the Pavin Weald and the Veran Marsh.

Ettercaps are not brave creatures, but their cunning traps often ensure an enemy never draws a weapon. When an ettercap does engage enemies, it attacks with its keen-edged claws and venomous bite. It usually will not come within melee reach of any foe still able to move.

### ETTERCAP

Medium 5th-level shadowspawn; Initiative +3; Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; Defense 14 (+3 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +7 melee (+5 damage, plus poison, bite), +2 melee (+1 damage, claws); Qualities: Low-light vision, poison, web; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +6; Str +2, Dex +3, Con +1, Int –2, Wis +2, Cha –1; Skills: Climb +10, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Notice +8, Sneak +9; Feats: Great Fortitude; Advancement: By role.



**Poison:** An ettercap's bite is poisonous: Fortitude Difficulty 13, initial damage of 1 Dexterity, secondary damage of 3 Dexterity.

**Web:** Ettercaps can throw webs up to eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to Large size. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (Difficulty 12) or burst the web with a Strength check (Difficulty 16). Both are standard actions. The web has hardness +2.

Ettercaps often create sheets of sticky webbing 5 to 60 feet square. They position these sheets to snare flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed on a Difficulty 20 Notice check to detect the web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free.

## Hag (Annis)

Although different hags are unique in appearance and mannerism, they have many aspects in common. All take the form of hideous crones whose gnarled shapes belie their fierce power and swiftness. Hags are tremendously strong. They are naturally resistant to arcana and usually capable sorcerers themselves. Hags often gather to form covets, allowing them to combine their powers.

An annis, also called a shadow hag, looks like a twisted crone some eight feet tall, with blue skin and wild, matted black hair. Her skin is warty and wrinkled. Hags use Illusion to appear as lovely young women or stately matrons, as suits their needs.

Though physically powerful, hags do not favor simple assaults but try to divide and confuse their foes before combat. They love to pose as commoners or gentlefolk to lull victims into a sense of false security before they attack.

### HAG (ANNIS)

Large 7th-level shadowspawn; Initiative +1; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 20 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural); Attack +13 melee (+9 damage, claws); Qualities: Arcane resistance 19, damage reduction +1/bludgeoning, darkvision (60 ft.), rend; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +7, Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str +7, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +1, Wis +1, Cha +0; Skills: Bluff +8, Notice +10, Sneak +5; Feats: Arcanum (Illusion +7), Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Grab; Advancement: By role.

**Rend:** An annis that successfully grapples a foe latches on and rends the flesh. This attack deals +11 damage.

## Harpy

Hideous hags with bird-like wings and lower bodies, harpies like to entrance hapless travelers and lead them to unspeakable torments. Only when a harpy has finished playing with its new toys will it release them from suffering by killing and consuming them.



Harpies can use the Fascinate feat when they sing. The victims walk toward the harpy, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through fire, off a cliff, or the like), the victim gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures take no actions other than to defend themselves.

### HARPY

Medium 7th-level shadowspawn; Initiative +2; Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.; Defense 14 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural); Attack +7 melee (damage by weapon or +0 with claws); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.); Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str +0, Dex +2, Con +0, Int –2, Wis +1, Cha +3; Skills: Bluff +11, Intimidate +7, Notice +7, Perform (sing) +5; Feats: Dodge, Fascinate; Advancement: By role.

## Ogre

Ogres are hideous humanoid giants 9 to 10 feet tall and weighing 600 to 650 pounds. Their skin color ranges from dull yellow to dull brown. Their clothing consists of poorly cured furs and hides, which add to their naturally repellent odor. Ogres are fond of eating humanoid flesh, and consider vata a particular delicacy.

Ogres favor overwhelming odds, sneak attacks, and ambushes over a fair fight. They are intelligent enough to use ranged weapons to soften up their foes before closing, but ogre gangs and bands rarely feature any real organization or tactics.

## OGRE

Large 4th-level shadowspawn; Initiative -1; Speed 30 ft. (hide armor), base speed 40 ft.; Defense 16 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural, +3 hide armor); Attack +9 melee (+9 damage, greatclub), +2 ranged (+7 damage, javelin); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), low-light vision; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str +5, Dex -1, Con +2, Int -2, Wis +0, Cha -2; Skills: Climb +5, Notice +2; Feats: Great Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatclub); Advancement: By role.

### Merrow

Merrow are aquatic cousins of land ogres; they have greenish skin and webbed hands and feet. They can breathe both water and air and have a land speed of 30 ft. and a swim speed of 40 ft. Instead of greatclubs, merrow prefer longspear with the same damage bonus. They often train sharks as pets and hunting animals and have a taste for sea-folk and dolphin flesh.

### Troglodyte

Troglodytes are revolting reptilian humanoids standing about 5 feet tall and weighing about 150 pounds. Their scaled hides are mottled green and black and they have long crocodile-like tails. They're accompanied by a hideous and revolting stench. Troglodytes are mostly found in the Veran Marsh, where they attack travelers or raid nearby settlements. Their crude villages are partially submerged, and troglodytes are known to keep crocodiles and constrictors snakes as pets.

Half of any group of troglodytes is armed only with claws and teeth; the rest carry one or two javelins and clubs. They normally conceal themselves, launch a volley of javelins, then close to attack. If the battle goes against them, they retreat and attempt to hide.

## TROGLODYTE

Medium 2nd-level shadowspawn; Initiative -1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 15 (-1 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +1 melee (+2 damage, club), +1 ranged (+2 damage, javelin); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), stench; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; Str +0, Dex -1, Con +2, Int -1, Wis +0, Cha +0; Skills: Notice +3, Sneak +5\*; Feats: Weapon Focus (javelin); Advancement: By role.

**Stench:** When a troglodyte is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily musk nearly every form of animal life finds offensive. All living creatures (except other troglodytes) within 30 feet must succeed on a Difficulty 13 Fortitude save or be shaken for 10 rounds, also suffering a -2 on weapon damage. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same troglodyte's stench for 24 hours. A use of Cure Poison removes the stench's effect, and Body Control can substitute for the Fortitude save to resist the stench. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws.

\*The skin of a troglodyte changes color somewhat, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and providing a +4 bonus on Sneak checks to hide. In rocky or underground settings, this bonus improves to +8.

## Aberrations

An aberration has a bizarre anatomy, strange abilities, an alien mindset, or all three. Aberrations are creations of the Sorcerer Kings, molded using Flesh Shaping and other, more mysterious, arcana. They are wholly unnatural; some adepts and rangers believe they should be killed whenever they are encountered. This is certainly the policy of the Theocracy of Jarzon. Although first created artificially, many aberrations now breed on their own in the wilds of Aldea, particularly in places like the Shadow Barrens and the Veran Marsh.

**Attack:** Expert.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throws:** Will.

Aberrations share the following trait:

*Darkvision:* Most aberrations have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

### Choker

Chokers are vicious little predators that lurk underground, grabbing whatever prey happens by. Their hands and feet have spiny pads that help chokers grip almost any surface, while their rough gray hide blends in with stonework and shadows. The Sorcerer Kings made and used chokers as spies, guardians, and assassins.

A choker likes to perch near the ceiling, often at intersections, archways, wells, or staircases, and reach down to attack its prey. A choker attacks creatures of almost any size, but prefers lone prey of its size or larger. If one is very hungry, it may attack a group, but it waits to grab the last creature in line. Chokers can use their Improved Grab feat on creatures up to Large size.

## CHOKER

Small 3rd-level aberration; Initiative +6; Speed 20 ft., climb 10 ft.; Defense 17 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +6 melee (+3 damage, tentacle), +5 grapple (+3 damage); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), quickness; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +4; Str +3, Dex +2, Con +1, Int -3, Wis +1, Cha -2; Skills: Climb +10, Sneak +10; Feats: Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes; Advancement: Small (4th–6th level), Medium (7th–12th level).

**Quickness:** A choker is supernaturally quick. It can take an extra standard action or move action during its turn each round.

### Naga

Nagas have long, serpentine bodies covered with glistening scales, and more or less human faces. They range in length from 10 to 20 feet and weigh from 200 to 500 pounds. The eyes of a naga are bright and intelligent, burning with a hypnotic inner light.

Nagas favor arcana over other forms of combat. They are almost always found in the lairs they guard and know well, allowing them to set traps and use the terrain to their advantage. Nagas meet foes boldly using their arcane

## — CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY —

powers. They quickly slither forward to bite foes who resist their arcana.

### NAGA

Large 7th-level aberration; Initiative +1; Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; Defense 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Attack +7 melee (+8 damage plus poison, bite); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), poison; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +8; Str +3 Dex +1, Con +4, Int +0, Wis +3, Cha +2; Skills: Concentration +12, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Notice +7, Swim +11; Feats: Arcane Training (x5), Lightning Reflexes, Psychic Talent, Shaping Talent; Advancement: Large (8th–10th level), Huge (11th–20th level), or by role.

*Arcana:* Nagas use arcana as 7th-level adepts. They always have the Psychic and Shaping Talents. All naga have the following arcana: Bliss, Dominate, Heart Reading, Heart Shaping, Illusion, Manipulate Object, Mind Touch, Move Object, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight. Nagas with levels in adept add their adept level to their creature level for determining their total adept level and arcana.

*Poison:* A naga's bite is poisonous (Fortitude save Difficulty 17), initial and secondary damage is 2 Constitution.

### Stirge

A stirge is a hideous cross between a bat and a giant mosquito, about a foot long with a wingspan of 2 feet. Coloration ranges from rust-red to reddish-brown, with a dirty yellow underside. The proboscis is pink at the tip, fading to gray at its base.

A stirge attacks by landing on a victim, finding a vulnerable spot, and plunging its proboscis into the flesh. It then drains the prey's blood to feed.

### STIRGE

Tiny 1st-level aberration; Initiative +4; Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); Defense 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex); Attack +6 melee (attach), +1 grapple (blood drain); Qualities: Attach, blood drain, darkvision (60 ft.), low-light vision; Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +3; Str –4, Dex +4, Con +0, Int –5, Wis +1, Cha –2; Skills: Notice +4, Sneak +14; Feats: Weapon Finesse; Advancement: None; Advancement: –.

*Attach:* If a stirge hits with its proboscis attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge is effectively grappling its prey. The stirge loses its dodge bonus to Defense and has a Defense of 12, but holds on with great tenacity. Stirges have a +12 bonus on grapple checks (already included in the stat block). An attached stirge can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached stirge through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the stirge.

*Blood Drain:* An attached stirge drains blood, dealing 1 point of Constitution damage each round. Once it has dealt 4 points of Constitution damage, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal. If its victim dies before the stirge's appetite is sated, the stirge detaches and seeks a new target.

### Will-o'-Wisp

Will-o'-wisps are yellow, white, green, or bluish spheres of faintly glowing light. They are easily mistaken for lanterns, especially in the foggy marshes and swamps where they reside, such as the Veran Marsh. A will-o'-wisp's actual body is a globe of spongy material about 1 foot across and weighing about 3 pounds, shedding as much light as a torch.

Will-o'-wisps have no vocal apparatus but can vibrate to create a voice with a hollow, ghostly sound. They are fiendishly intelligent and cunning. Will-o'-wisps avoid combat. They prefer to confuse and bewilder travelers, luring them into morasses or other hazardous places. Will-o'-wisps feed on the dying life force of their victims and lay spores for new will-o'-wisps in their corpses. When forced to fight, they loose small electrical shocks by touch.

### WILL-O'-WISP

Small 9th-level aberration; Initiative +13; Speed fly 50 ft. (perfect); Defense 29 (+1 size, +9 Dex, +9 deflection); Attack +16 melee (+4 damage, shocking touch); Qualities: Arcane immunity, darkvision (60 ft.), invisibility; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +3, Ref +12, Will +9; Str –5, Dex +9, Con +0, Int +2, Wis +3, Cha +1; Skills: Bluff +13, Diplomacy +3, Intimidate +3, Notice +17, Search +14, Survival +3; Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse; Advancement: Small (10th–20th level).

*Arcane Immunity:* A will-o'-wisp is immune to any arcana allowing a saving throw.

*Invisibility:* A startled or frightened will-o'-wisp can extinguish its glow, becoming invisible as a free action.

### Unliving

The unliving are once-living creatures animated by arcane forces and the power of Shadow. Sorcerers create the unliving through a perversion of the healing arts, and many sorcerers seek to attain an unliving state themselves. The unliving are tolerated only in the Lich King's domain of Kern. Elsewhere they are considered abominations, to be destroyed on sight.

**Attack:** Expert.

**Toughness:** Warrior.

**Good Saving Throw:** Will.

Unliving share the following traits:

*Ability Scores:* An unliving has no Constitution score.

*Darkvision:* Most unliving have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

*Healing:* Unliving cannot heal damage on their own if they have no Intelligence score. Mindless unliving are destroyed immediately if they are disabled.

*Immunities:* Unliving are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, and mind-influencing effects (including psychic arcana). They are not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, or any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless the effect also works on objects.

*Special:* Unliving cannot be raised from the dead.



## Ghost

Ghosts are the unliving spirits of intelligent beings who, for one reason or another, cannot move on from their living existence to their next life. A ghost greatly resembles its living form, but in some cases the spiritual form is somewhat altered.

Ghosts have the manifestation ability plus one to three other qualities described below. The save Difficulty against a ghost's qualities is 10 + half the ghost's level + the ghost's Charisma score, unless otherwise noted.

### GHOST

Medium 5th-level unliving; Initiative +4; Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect); Defense 13 (+3 deflection); Attack +3 melee (touch); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), manifestation, rejuvenation, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +5, Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5; Str —, Dex +0, Con —, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +3; Skills: Notice +9, Search +8, Sneak +8; Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative; Advancement: By role.

**Corrupting Touch:** A ghost that hits a living target with its incorporeal touch deals +2 damage.

**Drain Vitality:** The ghost can use the Drain Vitality arcanum with its incorporeal touch.

**Frightful Moan:** A ghost can emit a frightful moan like the fear effect of the Heart Shaping arcanum. Doing so causes the ghost no fatigue.

**Horrific Appearance:** Any living creature within 60 feet that sees the ghost must succeed on a Fortitude save or immediately take 1 point of damage to all physical ability scores. A creature successfully saving against this effect is immune to the same ghost's horrific appearance for 24 hours.

**Malevolence:** Once per round, the ghost can merge its incorporeal form with a living creature by touch. The target can resist the attack with a successful Will save (Difficulty 15 + ghost's Charisma score). A creature that successfully saves is immune to that same ghost's malevolence for 24 hours, and the ghost cannot enter the target's space. If the save fails, the ghost vanishes into the target's body and controls it like a use of the Dominate arcanum.

**Manifestation:** Every ghost has this ability. A ghost dwells in the misty border realm between life and death and, as such, cannot affect or be affected by anything in the living world. When a ghost manifests, it partly enters the living world, becoming visible but incorporeal. A manifested ghost can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, arcane weapons, or arcana, with a 50 percent chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. A manifested ghost can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks pass through armor, ignoring armor bonuses to Defense. A manifested ghost always moves silently. When a ghost manifests, it can use any arcana it possesses on material targets, provided they do not require physical contact.

**Move Object:** A ghost can use the Move Object arcanum as a standard action (adept level 12th or equal to the ghost's total level, whichever is higher). Ghosts cannot expend fatigue on Move Object.

**Rejuvenation:** It's difficult to destroy a ghost through simple combat. The destroyed spirit restores itself within eight days. A ghost that would otherwise be destroyed returns to its old haunts with a successful level check (1d20 + ghost's level) against Difficulty 16. As a rule, the only way to get rid of a ghost permanently is to determine the reason for its existence and set right whatever prevents it from moving on. The exact means varies with each ghost and may require a good deal of research.

## Lich

A lich is a sorcerer who has become unliving by embracing the power of corruption. A lich is a gaunt, skeletal humanoid with withered flesh stretched tight across horribly visible bones. Its eyes are lost to decay, but bright pinpoints of crimson light burn on in the empty sockets.

### LICH

Medium 4th-level unliving/11th-level adept; Initiative +1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 22 (+1 Dex, +6 role, +5 natural); Attack +8 melee (+4 damage plus paralysis, touch); Qualities: Damage reduction +6/bludgeoning and arcane, darkvision (60 ft.), draining touch, fear aura, immunity to cold, electricity, and flesh shaping, paralyzing touch, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +9, Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +14; Str +0, Dex +1,



Con —, Int +5, Wis +3, Cha +2; Skills: Concentration +17, Diplomacy +16, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Sense Motive +17; Feats: Arcane Training (x8), Healing Talent, Imbue Unlife, Psychic Talent, Shaping Talent, Summon Darkfiend, Skill Training; Arcana (all +30, rank 14 plus Corruption 16): Cold Shaping, Dominate, Fire Shaping, Flesh Shaping, Harm, Illusion, Manipulate Object, Mind Probe, Mind Reading, Mind Shaping, Mind Touch, Move Object, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sense Minds, Sorcerer's Grasp; Advancement: By role (usually adept).

*Draining Touch:* A lich's touch inflicts +4 lethal damage to living creatures; a successful Will save (Difficulty 10 + half the lich's level + the lich's Charisma score) halves the damage.

*Fear Aura:* Liches are shrouded in a dreadful aura of evil. Creatures in a 60-foot radius that see the lich must succeed on a Will save or be affected by the fear effect of the Heart Shaping arcanum. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same lich's aura for 24 hours.

*Paralyzing Touch:* Any living creature a lich hits with its touch attack must succeed on a Fortitude save (Difficulty 12 + lich's Charisma score) or be permanently paralyzed. A Cure check against the save Difficulty can restore the victim. Anyone paralyzed by a lich seems dead; though, a Difficulty 20 Notice check or a Difficulty 15 Heal check reveals the victim is still alive.

*Phylactery:* An integral part of becoming a lich is creating a phylactery in which the sorcerer stores his life force. As a rule, the only way to get rid of a lich for sure is to destroy its phylactery. Unless its phylactery is destroyed, a lich reappears within ten days after its apparent destruction. Each lich must make its own phylactery, which requires a unique Craft Phylactery feat. The sorcerer must also have an adept level of 11th or higher. The phylactery has a cost of 35 and a level equal to its creator at the time of creation. A phylactery can be any small item, typically a ring, amulet, circlet, or the like. It has hardness +16, regardless of its original composition.

## Shadow

Shadows are the spiritual remnants of those who have perished in a place corrupted by Shadow, making them common in regions like Kern and the Shadow Barrens. They look like pitch-black shadows without physical bodies, floating weightlessly.

Shadows are barely intelligent and have nothing but hatred of the living to motivate them. They attack any living creature they encounter.

### SHADOW

Medium 3rd-level unliving; Initiative +2; Speed fly 40 ft. (good); Defense 13 (+2 Dex, +1 deflection); Attack +3 melee (2 Strength damage, touch); Qualities: Create spawn, darkvision (60 ft.), incorporeal, strength damage, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str —, Dex +2, Con —, Int —2, Wis +1, Cha +1; Skills: Notice +7, Search +4, Sneak +8\*; Advancement: Medium (4th–9th level).

*Strength Damage:* The touch of a shadow deals 2 points of Strength damage to a living foe. A creature reduced below Strength –5 by a shadow dies.

*Create Spawn:* Any humanoid killed by a shadow's Strength damage becomes a shadow under the control of its killer within 3 rounds.

\*Shadows have a +4 bonus to Sneak when hiding in areas of shadowy illumination. In brightly lit areas, they take a –4 penalty on Sneak checks.

## Skeleton

Skeletons are the bones of the dead, animated by sorcery, mindless automatons obeying the commands of their creators. A skeleton is seldom garbed in anything more than the rotting remnants of whatever clothing or armor it wore when it died.

### HUMAN SKELETON

Medium 1st-level unliving; Initiative +5; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +2 shield); Attack +1 melee (+3 damage, scimitar, or +2 damage, claws); Qualities: Damage reduction +2/bludgeoning, immunity to cold, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str +1, Dex +1, Con —, Int —, Wis +0, Cha –5; Feats: Improved Initiative; Advancement: —.

### WOLF SKELETON

Medium 2nd-level unliving; Initiative +7; Speed 50 ft.; Defense 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +2 melee (+3 damage, bite); Qualities: Damage reduction +2/bludgeoning, immunity to cold, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3; Str +1, Dex +3, Con —, Int —, Wis +0, Cha –5; Feats: Improved Initiative; Advancement: —.

*Immunity to Cold:* Skeletons are not affected by cold.

*Damage Reduction +2/Bludgeoning:* Skeletons lack flesh or internal organs.

## Spectre

Spectres are the restless spirits of the corrupt, denied new incarnations. A spectre looks much as it did in life and can be easily recognized by those who knew the living individual. In many cases, evidence of a violent death is visible on its body. A spectre is roughly human-sized and weightless.

In close combat, a spectre attacks with its numbing, life-draining touch. It makes full use of its incorporeal nature, moving through walls, ceilings, and floors as it attacks.

### SPECTRE

Medium 7th-level unliving; Initiative +7; Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect); Defense 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection); Attack +8 melee (1 Constitution damage, touch); Qualities: Create spawn, darkvision (60 ft.), incorporeal, life drain, sunlight powerlessness, unliving traits, unnatural aura; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +7, Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str —, Dex +3, Con —, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2; Skills: Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Search +12, Sneak +13; Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative; Advancement: Medium (8th–14th level).

## — CHAPTER IX: BESTIARY —

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*Create Spawn:* Any humanoid slain by a spectre becomes a spectre three rounds later. Spawn are under the command of the spectre that created them and remain enslaved until its destruction.

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*Life Drain:* Living creatures hit by a spectre's incorporeal touch attack suffer 1 point of Constitution damage. For each use of life drain, the spectre gains an immediate recovery check.

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*Sunlight Powerlessness:* Spectres are powerless in sunlight and flee from it. A spectre caught in sunlight cannot attack and can take only a single move or standard action each round.

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*Unnatural Aura:* Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the presence of a spectre at a distance of 30 feet. They do not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range.

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### Vampire

Second only to liches, vampires are the most powerful and feared of the unliving, and also the most desired. Those seeking the immortality of unlife often seek to become vampires in order to retain their living appearance (and perhaps influence, if they can conceal their condition). Vampires appear as they did in life; although, their features are often hardened and feral, with the predatory look of wolves, and their skin is usually pale (except immediately after feeding).

Like liches, vampires often embrace finery and decadence and may assume the guise of nobility (if they were not

already in life). Despite their appearance, vampires can be recognized by the fact that they cast no shadows and no reflections in mirrors.

Vampires have the following qualities. Saves have a Difficulty of 10 + half the vampire's level + the vampire's Charisma score, unless noted otherwise.

#### VAMPIRE

Medium 8th-level unliving; Initiative +7; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 19 (+3 Dex, +6 natural); Attack +12 melee (+8 damage, slam); Qualities: Alternate form, blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, damage reduction +4/silver and arcane, darkvision (60 ft.), dominate, fast healing (per round), gaseous form, resistance +4 to cold and electricity, spider climb, unliving traits, vampire weaknesses; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +8, Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +9; Str +6, Dex +3, Con —, Int +1, Wis +3, Cha +1; Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes; Advancement: By role.

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*Alternate Form:* A vampire can assume the shape of a bat or wolf as a standard action. The vampire gains the natural weapons and attacks of its new form. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise.

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*Blood Drain:* A vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, draining 1 point of Constitution each round the pin is maintained. On each such successful attack, the vampire gains a recovery check with a bonus equal to the Constitution drained.

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*Children of the Night:* Vampires command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth swarms of rats or bats or a pack of a dozen or so wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in within a minute and serve the vampire for up to an hour.

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*Create Spawn:* If a vampire kills a victim with blood drain, the victim returns as a vampire in three days. The new vampire is under the command of the vampire that created it and remains enslaved until its master's destruction. At any given time, a vampire may have enslaved spawn totaling no more than twice its own level; any spawn exceeding this limit are created as free-willed vampires. An enslaved vampire may create and enslave spawn of its own, so a master vampire can control a large number of lesser vampires in this fashion. A vampire may voluntarily free enslaved spawn in order to enslave new spawn, but once freed, a vampire cannot be enslaved again.

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*Damage Reduction:* A vampire has damage reduction +4/silver and arcane. A vampire's natural weapons are treated as arcane weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

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*Dominate:* A vampire can dominate a victim like a use of the arcanum of the same name. The ability has a range of 30 feet.

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*Fast Healing:* A vampire makes a recovery check from damage each round. If dying, a vampire automatically assumes gaseous form and flees. It must reach its coffin within two hours or be destroyed. (It can travel up to nine miles in two



hours.) Any additional damage dealt to a vampire forced into gaseous form has no effect. Once at rest in its coffin, a vampire is helpless. It becomes disabled after an hour, then is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of one recovery check per round.

*Gaseous Form:* As a standard action, a vampire can assume gaseous form. It has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability, and is immune to physical harm, but unable to make attacks or use any of its abilities.

*Spider Climb:* At a speed of 20 ft., a vampire can climb sheer surfaces with no Climb check and no chance of falling.

## Weaknesses

For all their power, vampires have a number of weaknesses.

Vampires cannot tolerate the strong odor of garlic and will not enter an area laced with it. Similarly, they recoil from mirrors or strongly presented holy symbols. These things don't harm the vampire, merely keep it at bay. A recoiling vampire must stay at least 5 feet away from the mirror or holy symbol and cannot touch or make melee attacks against a creature holding the item. Holding a vampire at bay takes a standard action each round. Vampires are also unable to cross running water, yet they can be carried over it while resting in their coffins or aboard a ship. They are unable to enter a home or other building unless invited in by someone with the authority to do so. They may freely enter public places, since these are by definition open to all.

Reducing a vampire's condition to disabled incapacitates it but doesn't destroy it (see the note on fast healing). However, certain attacks can slay vampires. Exposing any vampire to direct sunlight disorients it; it can take only a single move or standard action and is destroyed utterly the following round if it cannot escape. Similarly, immersing a vampire in running water causes it one level of lethal damage each round until its condition is disabled, then it is destroyed. Driving a wooden stake through a vampire's heart instantly slays it. However, it is disabled if the stake is removed, and will recover, unless the body is destroyed. A popular tactic is to cut off the vampire's head and fill its mouth with garlic, or to burn the body (or both).

## Zombie

Zombies are corpses animated by sorcery. Because of their utter lack of intelligence, the instructions given to a newly created zombie must be simple and specific. Zombies do nothing except what they are commanded to do.

Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or standard action each round. A zombie can move up to its speed and attack in the same round, but only if it charges.

### HUMAN ZOMBIE

Medium 1st-level unliving; Initiative -1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); Attack +1 melee (+3 damage, slam, or +3 damage, club); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), simple actions only, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +2, Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +2; Str +1, Dex -1, Con —, Int —, Wis +0, Cha -5; Feats: Great Toughness; Advancement: —.

### TROGLODYTE ZOMBIE

Medium 2nd-level unliving; Initiative -2; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 16 (-2 Dex, +8 natural); Attack +2 melee (+5 damage, greatclub, +2 damage, bite, or +3 damage, slam); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), simple actions only, unliving traits; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +3, Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +3; Str +1, Dex -2, Con —, Int —, Wis +0, Cha -5; Feats: Great Toughness; Advancement: —.

## Darkfiends

The darkfiends are creatures from the depths of Shadow. They are embodiments of corruption and evil. Lesser darkfiends are often servants of sorcerers, while the more powerful of their kind are tempters and corruptors without equal. Legends claim seven great exarchs rule over the darkfiends, plotting to corrupt the whole of the world and plunge it into darkness forever. With the rule of the Sorcerer Kings, they nearly succeeded, and they may do so again, should the people of Aldea waver in their vigilance.

**Attack:** Warrior.

**Toughness:** Expert.

**Good Saving Throws:** Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

Darkfiends share the following traits:

*Darkvision:* Most darkfiends have darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

*Immunities:* Most darkfiends are immune to acid and poison.

*Mind Touch:* Most darkfiends can communicate via Mind Touch as adepts of their level. A darkfiend's mental touch is both chilling and strangely seductive.

*Resistance:* Most darkfiends have +4 resistance to cold, electricity, and fire.

*Special:* Darkfiends, not being truly living, cannot be raised from the dead. Slain darkfiends vanish back into the depths of Shadow that spawned them.

## Circles and Stations of Shadow

Darkfiends fall into seven circles related to the seven Shadow natures (and their ruling exarchs) and four distinct roles they play. None—save perhaps servitor—is more important than another, yet every darkfiend would have mortals believe its power and authority are without equal. Scholars have identified the following sorts of darkfiends:

- **Watcher:** Every person has a Shadow nature, and every Shadow nature falls under the watchful eye of the inhabitants of Shadow. Watchers look for the darkening of mortal shadows in their domain, seeing in them opportunities for corruption and temptation.
- **Whisperer:** Other fiends follow the shadows of the living and whisper to them, encouraging them to give in to their darkest impulses. Theirs are the voices inside us, tempting, justifying, exhorting us to do wrong. Watchers and whisperers both learn a great deal about what tempts us and how to draw mortals deeper into the realm of Shadow.

- **Soldier:** Soldiers fight and serve. They protect and carry out the plans of other darkfiends, and they are the most easily summoned and bound by sorcerers to do their bidding. They will even serve other mortal masters; although, the price they demand is rarely, if ever, in silver or gold.
- **Servitor:** The dread servitors are the noble darkfiends, servants of the mighty exarchs of Shadow themselves.

## Fiendish Creatures

Fiendish creatures are mortal beings tainted by Shadow, usually the result of a darkfiend spawning with a mortal creature. They are more fearsome and sinister in appearance than their mundane counterparts.

### Fiendish Rat

These hideous creatures have night-black fur and glowing red eyes. They are among the least of darkfiend spawn in the world, but still dangerous, especially in packs. Fiendish rats have a -3 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

#### FIENDISH RAT

Small 3rd-level darkfiend; Initiative +3; Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; Defense 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Attack +7 melee (+0 damage, bite); Qualities: Arcane resistance 8, darkvision (60 ft.), disease, low-light vision, resistance to cold and fire +2, scent; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4; Str +0, Dex +3, Con +1, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -3; Skills: Climb +11, Notice +4, Sneak +4, Swim +11; Feats: Smite Foe (Light-aligned), Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

### Fiendish Raven

These shaggy-feathered ravens with glowing red eyes are most commonly found in Kern, where they serve as spies of the Lich King and familiars of his sorcerers. Fiendish ravens are excellent vocal mimics; they can make Bluff checks to trick people into following their voices, often leading them into traps. Fiendish ravens have a -7 penalty on Toughness saves, which is reflected in the stat block.

#### FIENDISH RAVEN

Tiny 3rd-level darkfiend; Initiative +2; Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); Defense 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Attack +7 melee (-6 damage, claws); Qualities: Arcane resistance 8, darkvision (60 ft.), low-light vision, mimic, resistance to cold and fire +2; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough -5, Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +5; Str -5, Dex +2, Con +0, Int -4, Wis +2, Cha -3; Skills: Bluff +4, Notice +3; Feats: Smite Foe (Light-aligned), Weapon Finesse; Advancement: —.

### Fiendish Shark

Sinister dark-gray hunters of the deep, fiendish sharks savagely attack any prey entering their domain. They have a particular taste for the flesh of sea-folk and dolphins.

#### FIENDISH SHARK

Large 9th-level darkfiend; Initiative +6; Speed swim 60 ft.; Defense 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +11 melee (+6 damage, bite); Qualities: Arcane resistance 12, blindsight, damage reduction +2/arcane, resistance to cold and fire +4, scent; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +7, Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str +3, Dex +2, Con +1, Int -3, Wis +1, Cha -4; Skills: Notice +7, Swim +11; Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Rage, Smite Foe (Light-aligned); Advancement: Large (10th–11th level), Huge (12th–20th level).

## Darkfiend Soldier

These stats are for a typical darkfiend soldier. They appear in various hideous and inhuman forms, but are typically humanoid, heavily armored, and equipped with powerful claws, weapons, or both. Many darkfiend soldiers appear like humanoid insects, covered in chitinous armor, with eyes like burning coals.

#### DARKFIEND SOLDIER

Medium 5th-level darkfiend; Initiative +2; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Attack +9 melee (+6 damage, claws, or +4 damage plus poison, bite, or weapon damage +2 for Str); Qualities: Darkvision (60 ft.), immune to acid and poison, mind touch, poison, resistance +4 to cold, electricity, and fire; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +6, Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; Str +4, Dex +2, Con +2, Int -2, Wis +1, Cha -1; Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Notice +6, Swim +9, Survival +6; Feats: Endurance, Great Toughness, Rage; Advancement: Medium (6th–8th level), Large (9th–12th level), Huge (13–16th level), Gargantuan (17th–20th level).

*Poison:* A darkfiend soldier's bite is as poisonous as their souls. The poison requires a Difficulty 14 Fortitude save. It causes 2 points of Strength damage initially, followed by another 2 Strength damage a minute later.

## Darkfiend Watcher

Watchers vary greatly in form, from insect-like creatures to monstrous combinations of different loathsome forms (reptiles, insects, fish, arachnids, and so forth). Many watchers have multiple sets of eyes (like a spider), representing their duties. The attributes given here represent the typical watcher. In addition to the qualities given in the stat block, choose one of the following, plus an additional quality for every two additional levels:

*Ability Drain:* A watcher can drain any ability score by touch. This is usually a mental ability score, but sometimes Dexterity or Constitution. If the watcher touches a target, a Fortitude save is required with a Difficulty of 10 + half the watcher's level + the watcher's Charisma score (15 for the standard watcher here). A failed save results in 1 point of permanent ability drain.

*Arcana:* The watcher can use a single arcanum with an adept level equal to its own. Psychic arcana are the most common for watchers, followed by visionary arcana. That said, watchers have displayed virtually every sort of arcana. Watchers are often skilled in sorcery.



*Dazzle:* The watcher can unleash a flurry of shadows, colors, or other effects. If onlookers fail a Reflex save (Difficulty 10 + half watcher level + Charisma score) they are dazzled (–1 to attack rolls and Notice checks) for 2 rounds.

*Poison:* The watcher's bite or claw attack is poisonous; Fortitude save, Difficulty 10 + half the watcher's level + its Constitution score (13 for the default), initial and secondary damage 1 Strength or Dexterity.

The Narrator may also choose from the other qualities given in this chapter; watchers vary considerably in abilities as they grow more powerful.

### DARKFIEND WATCHER

Medium 4th-level darkfiend; Initiative +8; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +5 melee (+2 damage, claw or bite); Qualities: Arcane resistance 12, darkvision (60 ft.), immune to acid and poison, mind touch, resistance +4 to cold, electricity, and fire; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +4; Str +1, Dex +4, Con +1, Int +4, Wis +0, Cha +3; Skills: Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Notice +7, Search +11; Feats: Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative; Advancement: Medium (5th–10th level), Large (11th–15th level).

## Darkfiend Whisperer

Whisperers are often the most ephemeral and alien of darkfiends, appearing as figments out of nightmare, as wicked but alluring figures, or as fiendish versions of the foulest vermin (cockroaches, bloated and diseased rats, daemon cats, slugs, and worse). However monstrous their appearance might be, whisperers' psychic voices are usually sweet and seductive, and that is often all their victim's perceive of them.

### DARKFIEND WHISPERER

Medium 4th-level darkfiend; Initiative +4; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Attack +4 melee (+1 damage, claws or bite); Qualities: Arcane, darkvision (60 ft.), immune to acid and poison, mind touch, resistance +4 to cold, electricity, and fire; Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +4, Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +7; Str +0, Dex +4, Con +0, Int +2, Wis +3, Cha +3; Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +10, Notice +14, Sneak +14; Feats: Fascinate (Diplomacy), Taunt; Advancement: Small (3rd–4th level), Medium (5th–10th level).

*Arcana:* Whisperers can use all aspects of the Heart Reading and Heart Shaping arcana with an adept level equal to their darkfiend level. They can see into the hearts of creatures to know what they feel and desire, and twist those feelings to suit their own ends. They encourage mortals to give in to their Shadow nature whenever possible.



Leo Lingas 2005



# INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE: THE CURSE OF HARMONY

**T**he *Curse of Harmony* is an introductory adventure for *Blue Rose*, intended to show the players something about the setting and how the game is played, while allowing the Narrator to start running *Blue Rose* right away. If you're the Narrator, read through this whole adventure carefully before running it for your players.

If you are intending to play in this adventure, *stop reading now!* Reading any further might spoil some of the surprises in the story and affect your enjoyment of it. Players should not read the rest of this section!

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

**I**n this adventure, the heroes visit the village of Harmony in the eastern area of Aldis called Ata-San (see **The East**, page 46). Ata-San is a collection of towns recently settled by immigrants from the Theocracy of Jarzon. Although heretics according to the Purist Church, the people of Ata-San are still devoted to traditional Jarzoni culture.

This proves to be a bit of a challenge when the people of Harmony claim a visiting clan of Roamers has placed a curse on them and the heroes are assigned to investigate. The villagers are willing to accept help, but they are mistrustful of outsiders, the arcane arts, and the "foreign" ways of Aldins. The heroes have to uncover the truth, while keeping hostilities from breaking out between the villagers and the Roamers.

The supernatural occurrences in the village are not the fault of the visiting Roamers at all. They actually come from a teenage boy named Jan, who has latent, but considerable, arcane talents.

Verrik, the healer of the Roamer clan, is secretly a sorcerer and agent of Kern. He holds a rhy-cat named Lurra prisoner in his wagon. The rhy-cat sought aid, but could only psychically reach Jan, awakening his latent

gifts. A lifetime as a shy, tormented child, coupled with a growing awareness he is *caria daunen* (and attracted to a Roamer lad his age) and the sympathetic echoes of the rhy-cat's suffering, have turned Jan's powers against his tormentors.

Verrik is concerned the heroes' investigation will expose him and seizes the opportunity to inflame the villagers. He hopes to disrupt relations between the central valleys and the eastern villages of Aldis (to say nothing of Aldis-Jarzon relations), while arranging a smokescreen to cover his own escape.

The heroes have to unravel the mystery of the "curse" of Harmony before Verrik does and before he either kidnaps Jan or tries to corrupt him. They also have to uncover the Kernish threat to Aldis and rescue the rhy-cat from Verrik's clutches, while maintaining good relations with the people of Harmony.

## Adapting the Adventure

This is a fairly freeform adventure, so you can modify it to suit your players and their heroes. There are some things you might want to consider:

# — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

## Motivation

The adventure assumes the heroes are junior members of the Sovereign's Finest, assigned to investigate matters in Harmony. If that's not the case in your game, adjust the introduction as needed. The heroes might just be passing through, independent merchants, explorers on their way to the Veran Marsh, a small band of Rezean mercenaries, or even diplomatic envoys going to, or coming from, Jarzon.

## Location

You can change the location of Harmony. Having the village on the coast, or even on an island, makes the adventure easier for sea-folk heroes. Moving the setting to the outskirts of the Pavin Weald lets you include rhy-wolves and forest folk. Jarzoni immigrant villages are less common away from the eastern borders of Aldis but can still exist. Some refugees may want to get as far from Jarzon as possible!

## Characters

You can change around the supporting characters. Feel free to modify the names and genders of the characters in this adventure. For example, you can either make Jan or

the Roamer object of his affection a young woman, if you'd rather ignore the *caria daunen* subplot. Likewise, you can alter character descriptions, backgrounds, and so forth.

## Rhy-bonding

Even though the assumption of the adventure is that Lurra bonds with Jan, given the opportunity, that doesn't have to be the case. If one of the heroes has the Rhy-bonded feat, you can start the hero off without a rhydan companion and have Lurra form a bond with the hero during the adventure, for example. You can even substitute a different type of rhydan (such as a rhy-wolf or even rhy-horse) for Lurra.

## Challenges

Include whatever other challenges you'd like for the heroes in this adventure. If you have an idea for an ongoing adversary you'd like to introduce, perhaps that character replaces Verrik in this story or is working with him in some way. You can also set up an encounter or two on the way to Harmony, like a brush with bandits or shadowspawn, to warm up the players and allow them to get into the feel of the game.

## INTRODUCTION

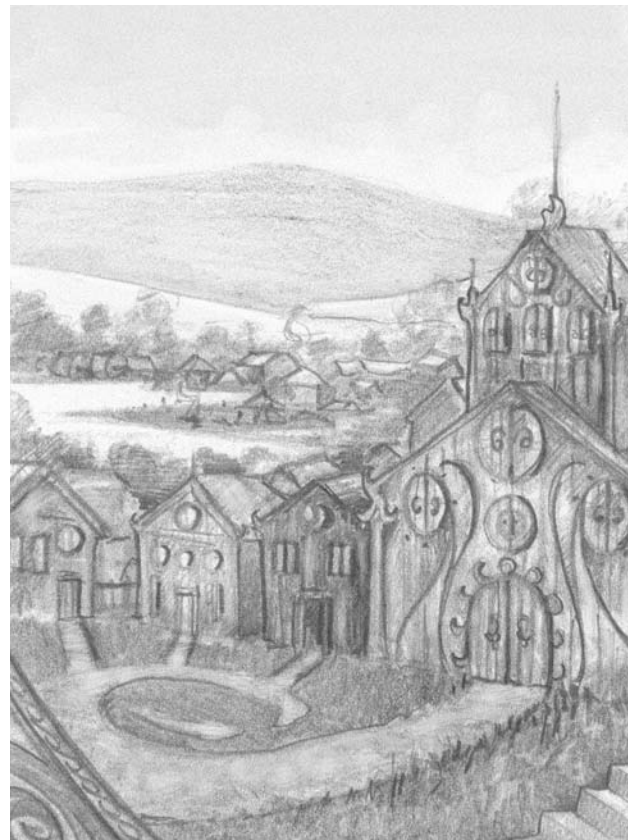
**T**he heroes are junior envoys of the Sovereign's Finest, on assignment along the eastern borders of Aldis. They might be patrolling the outskirts of the Veran Marsh or riding a circuit between outlying towns and villages. Read or summarize the following for the players:

You receive a psychic communiqué directing you to go to the village of Harmony, just over a day's ride from your present location. Harmony is part of Ata-San, an area settled by immigrants from Jarzon. The villagers have reported various odd happenings and claim a visiting band of Roamers has laid a curse upon them. They've asked for help in dealing with it. The crown wants the dispute settled fairly and without the situation escalating into bloodshed. You're reminded that the Jarzoni settlers in Ata-San have only lived in Aldis for a generation. They tend to cling to their traditional ways, which include a mistrust of the arcane arts and women in positions of power and influence. Since the support of the border settlements is important to the defense of Aldis, you're asked to be mindful of these things in carrying out your duties.

Allow the players an opportunity to digest the information, ask a few questions (keeping in mind the psychic contact is kept relatively brief), and make what preparations they wish before heading off to Harmony.

The village is a humble gathering of dark wood-beam buildings and outlying farms around a central square. The largest structure in Harmony is the whitewashed church building, and the heroes can see a collection of brightly colored Roamer wagons circled at the outskirts of the village buildings.

The bright garments and jewelry of the Roamers forms a contrast to the rather somber clothing and manner of the villagers, all going about their daily business. There's a clear sense of tension in Harmony, and the villagers eye the heroes warily as they arrive.



## — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

Harmony's village priest, Keeper Los, greets the heroes coolly. He invites them into the church to discuss the matter at hand, with a suspicious glance toward the Roamers and their camp.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Keeper Los guides you through the main hall of the church, past its benches and continual hearth fire, the dimly lit room smelling strongly of incense and lavender oil. He brings you into a small study in the back of the building, where a somber, middle-aged man in dirt-stained work clothes joins you.

"This is Elder Croft," the priest says, "our village leader. Please, be seated." He gestures toward the simple bench and chairs in the room.

Croft clears his throat, clearly more at ease in his fields than speaking with representatives of the crown. "Thank you for coming," he says. "Our village is in need. We are under a curse, placed upon us by these Light-forsaken Roamers!"

Allow the heroes to speak with Elder Croft and Keeper Los, getting their side of the story. They relate the following information:

1. Four days ago, a band of Roamers arrived in Harmony from the north, looking to trade their wares. They were allowed to set up camp near the village and trade their trinkets; although Keeper Los points out no villagers were allowed to traffic with Roamer soothsaying or "other powers better reserved for true servants of the gods."
2. Not long after the Roamers arrived, strange things began happening in the village:
  - Arik, a farmer's son, described how objects in his room seemed to "come alive" in the dead of night, flying around the room, before he himself was hurled out his window to the ground, suffering minor injuries.
  - The village well froze solid, apparently overnight. It eventually melted, but with no explanation.
  - An outlying barn, belonging to Goodman Ferris and his wife, burned to the ground. The animals were saved, but the building was a total loss.
  - Jan, the teenaged son of Torren the Smith, has fallen ill, taking to his bed, and has not responded to medicines. Harmony has no arcane healer. The Roamers have one, but the villagers have refused to ask for their aid.
  - Last night, objects flew around the interior of the church under their own power, and then the church's hearth fire flared and went out, a terrible omen. The damage was minimal, but it's clear both men are deeply concerned.
  - In addition to these incidents, there are numerous reports of cattle ceasing to give milk, chickens no longer laying eggs, and

all livestock exhibiting nervousness and irritability.

Jan's wild shaping talent caused most of these things. The last is the result of the general psychic disturbances in Harmony, although the villagers are unaware of it.

### Investigation

How the heroes choose to investigate is up to them. This section provides some guidelines you can use. Feel free to fill in details, and provide the players with opportunities to roleplay their heroes interacting with the people of Harmony and the Roamers.

While the heroes conduct their investigations, Elder Croft invites them to stay at his home, as there is no inn in Harmony.

### Arcane Evidence

Examining the sites of some incidents (the farmhouse bedroom, the town well, the church, and the ruins of the barn) may turn up something, if the heroes have the right arcana. Heroes with Object Reading can see the events as they were described. Those with Second Sight and Visionary talent can confirm the events were supernatural in origin, not freak accidents or the like. However, this doesn't tell the heroes who or what was responsible.

### The Smith's Son

If the group includes a healer or someone with the Heal skill, the heroes might try to treat the smith's son, Jan. They may also want to talk to him. Any healer can determine Jan is suffering from exhaustion and lack of sleep (Difficulty 5 Heal or Cure check). There's no clear cause, but the young man is clearly uncomfortable in the presence of the heroes. Although he claims to have no idea about the cause of his condition, a Sense Motive check (Difficulty 15) reveals he's lying (a use of the Truth-Reading feat reveals this automatically). Jan refuses to discuss the matter with the heroes, and his father asks the envoys to leave if they press the matter. Obviously, any use of arcana to read Jan's mind against his will deeply offends the villagers, in addition to being sorcery.

### The Roamers

The Roamers are not overly cooperative with the heroes and their investigation. The two men they're most likely to deal with are Darius, their headman, and Verrik, the clan's healer.

Darius is a proud and stubborn man, who wants to avoid any trouble, but his pride is stung by the villagers' accusations. He tells the heroes he wanted to leave at the first sign of trouble, and it's the village elder and priest who keep the Roamers here, claiming they're responsible. Darius hotly denies any involvement on the part of the Roamers and claims Harmony is trying to exhaust his clan's food and wear down their spirits so they will capitulate.

Verrik supports Darius' claim of innocence and suggests perhaps a malevolent spirit may be responsible. He points



## — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

out that he offered to help treat “the sick lad” but that the villagers refused his help. Although he doesn’t press the matter, he’s happy to renew the offer, since he’s looking for an opportunity to get a closer look at Jan and confirm his suspicion that the young man is responsible for the arcane happenings recently.

If the heroes go to the Roamer camp, they also meet up with Milos, a young Roamer who approaches them after they speak with Darius and Verrik. If the heroes don’t go to the camp, Milos may seek them out once they’ve done some investigating. He asks about Jan, if the envoys have heard whether his condition has improved, and expresses concern. If pressed, Milos reveals how Jan caught his eye when the Roamers first arrived in Harmony and that he thinks the smith’s son returns his feelings after the two of them talked briefly. Milos hasn’t been able to see Jan since he took ill and is worried about him.

The heroes should be aware that Jarzoni society frowns upon *caria daunen*. Jan will vigorously deny even speaking with Milos, much less having any feelings for him (he is, again, lying to protect himself).

### Hauntings

While the heroes investigate in Harmony, Jan’s wild shaping talent continues to manifest itself, directed by the young man’s subconscious. Lurra the rhy-cat remains imprisoned in Verrik’s wagon, but is now too weak to send out any sort of psychic call for help. Verrik also takes careful note of the heroes’ investigation and activities.

The “curse” on Harmony continues to manifest through Jan’s uncontrolled use of his arcane talents. While he sleeps, his dreaming mind directs his shaping ability. Some things you can have happen while the heroes are in Harmony include the following:

- Ghostly images appear and move in and out of the shadows of the village. They look like a glowing, faintly translucent young Roamer. Heroes who succeed on a Difficulty 15 Notice check see a resemblance to Milos if and when they meet him. Villagers believe these images (created by Light Shaping) are Roamer ghosts.
- Poltergeist phenomena: book pages turning, small objects flying through the air, doors or windows slamming or opening, glass breaking, and so forth. Most of these things aren’t dangerous, but can potentially be, such as if a candle flies into and ignites a curtain, or if someone is struck by a shard of broken glass.
- The earth turns to mud under a corner of a building (the church, perhaps), causing part of it to collapse.
- A structure in the village catches fire. Once the fire is out, the angry and frightened villagers blame the Roamers and a mob goes after them. It’s up to the heroes to prevent violence from breaking out.
- A howling windstorm (see the Wind Shaping arcanum, page 124) tears down branches, pulls shutters off windows, and causes both damage and

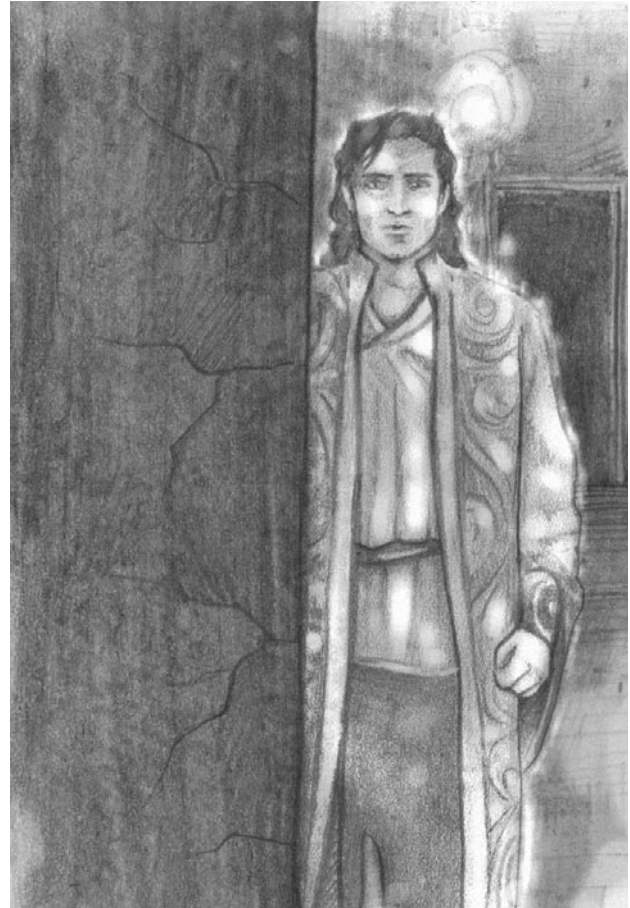
panic during the night. The storm may overturn lanterns (touching off fires) or damage Roamer wagons.

Use as many of these events as seem interesting. Consult the various arcana descriptions for other ideas. Astute players may note all the events are things different shaping arcana can accomplish.

### The Night of Fire

Verrik the sorcerer is not idle while the heroes are investigating. He uses arcana to pry information from Milos (after noticing the young man talking with the heroes, most likely), and determines Jan is a potential prize. He decides to quit the Roamer encampment with both Jan and the rhy-cat, leaving Harmony (and Aldis’ relations with the local immigrants and Roamers) in shambles.

Using sorcery, he influences Milos into luring Jan to the Roamer camp. He then uses his powers to overwhelm the budding adept and turn his wild talents against Harmony. Through Jan, Verrik uses Fire Shaping to ignite a number of the buildings in Harmony, including the church, smithy, and Elder Croft’s home, to help cover his own escape from the Roamer camp. Ideally, it will all be blamed on “the curse” and the villagers will believe Jan was killed in the blaze. If the fire also kills the heroes, so much the better. When people notice the fire, Verrik influences Darius to lead the Roamers away quickly,



## — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

knowing they'll be blamed. He then sets out on his own with Milos, Jan, and Lurra toward a hideout in the nearby Veran Marsh.

### Out of the Frying Pan . . .

If one or more of the heroes are awake through the night, have them make Difficulty 10 Notice checks to smell the smoke and catch the first glimpses of fire coming from outside their room(s) in Elder Croft's house. If the heroes are all sleeping, the Notice check is Difficulty 20. If they make the check, they have a few moments to decide what to do. If they fail, they don't notice the fire until the smoke becomes thicker in the room and they begin suffering from suffocation (see page 169).

The heroes have to deal with the thick smoke as well as the fire (see **Catching on Fire** and **Smoke** on page 169). They may be able to use arcana to contain or even put out the fire, but it already affects much of the lower floor and stairs (the bedrooms are located on the upper floor of the house). The heroes can get out the window, but there's also Elder Croft, his wife, and their two small children to consider. Encourage heroics and the use of Conviction points to get everyone to safety.

Once they get out of the building, the heroes discover several structures in Harmony are ablaze and the Roamers are departing as quickly as possible. Let the players decide what they want to do. They can help the villagers try to contain and put out the fires, go after the Roamers, or whatever else they wish. With some appropriate roleplaying and



interaction checks, they might even be able to convince the Roamers that their headman is acting irrationally and get them to help save Harmony from the fire.

### On the Road

The fire hardens Elder Croft's resolve against the Roamers. If the heroes do nothing, he orders them all hunted down. If Croft dies, Keeper Los assumes leadership and does the same. Croft's attitude toward the heroes improves if they help save him and his family, but they have a difficult time convincing him there is no curse. A mob of vengeful villagers will go after the Roamers at the first opportunity after the fires are out.

Even if the heroes believe the Roamers are responsible for the fire, they should want to see justice done, and not mob violence. If the heroes do nothing, the fight between the villagers and the Roamers will result in many deaths and injuries. If the heroes intervene, they can try to convince the two parties to settle things peacefully, especially if they point out Verrik's absence or otherwise explain the truth. Allow the players to make Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks as appropriate to change attitudes.

### Verrik's Trail

Eventually, the heroes should realize the healer Verrik is missing, along with his wagon, Jan, and Milos. If they don't, others will. Darius will shake off Verrik's influence and tell the heroes about the sorcerer's escape, Torren the Smith will tell the heroes his son has gone missing, or Milos' parents will do the same about their son. Darius can tell the heroes Verrik headed east, toward the Veran Marsh. The heroes can also try to pick up his trail (a Difficulty 10 Survival check for a hero with the Tracking feat or a rhydan with the scent ability). Given that the heroes don't know Jan or Milos well, they're likely beyond the range of Mind Touch (Difficulty 30 for familiarity, something 1st-level heroes can't accomplish without some outside bonus or aid).

How quickly the heroes catch up depends on how soon they set off in pursuit and whether they're on foot or mounted. The heroes should have mounts they rode to Harmony, and the village or the Roamers will loan them horses if they ask. If they set out immediately, they can catch up with Verrik before he enters the Veran Marsh. Otherwise, they have to pursue him into the outskirts of the marsh (leading their horses or leaving them behind, since the foliage and swampy ground make riding too difficult).

Once the heroes catch up to him, Verrik uses his hostages and arcana to hold them off, threatening to kill Milos first unless the heroes let him go. Allow the heroes to try and negotiate or come up with some other plan. If all else fails, the threat to Milos' life can trigger Jan's wild talent, causing Verrik's weapon to fly from his hand and giving the heroes an opening. Keep in mind arcana use in the marsh has certain side effects (see **Arcana in the Veran Marsh**, page 47). You can use these to spice up the conflict with Verrik.

Ideally, the heroes capture Verrik for trial. Alternately, he may be killed in combat, or you can have him sucked down into the depths of the swamp by a backlash from

## — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

an attempt to use sorcery against the heroes, never to be seen again. The sorcerer doesn't fight to the death, doing everything he can to escape.

### Conclusion

Once Verrik is dealt with, Jan begs the heroes to help Lurra. He can feel the rhy-cat's pain in his mind and she is beginning to fade. He shows the heroes where she is in the wagon.

Lurra's condition is dying. A hero with the Heal skill or the Cure arcanum can stabilize her with a Difficulty 10 check. Spending a point of Conviction allows the hero to do so automatically (and is a suitably heroic act). A healer can then attempt to treat the rhy-cat's other injuries. Jan remains

by her side, whispering encouragement and stroking her soft fur. If Lurra survives, he hugs her gratefully, tears of joy streaming down his cheeks, and says he will never let her be hurt again. If the rhy-cat dies, Jan sobs bitterly, embracing her body, and later asks the heroes to help him bury her respectfully outside the borders of the marsh.

Once the traitor Verrik is dealt with, Jan decides to leave Harmony and travel with the Roamers and Milos. Darius says the clan will need a new adept, and Jan has considerable potential he needs to learn to control, hopefully with Lurra's aid. The two young men profusely thank the heroes, and Darius says they are welcome in his camp at any time. Even the people of Harmony are grateful, and some may begin changing their views on Aldins and their ways. At the very least, the door is open to rebuilding Harmony to truly live up to its name.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

The following are the major Narrator characters in the adventure. Feel free to create other characters and fill out the inhabitants of the village.

### Jan, latent Jarzoni adept

Jan is the inadvertent focus of this adventure. The only child of the village smith, Jan was always a shy, imaginative boy, misunderstood by his blacksmith father. Jan's mother passed away a few years ago, and he has largely retreated into his own world, having few close friends in Harmony. Now aged sixteen, Jan is increasingly aware of both his latent arcane potential and his attraction to other boys, both things his father and people wouldn't understand. He feels alone, confused, and frightened.

Jan's first meeting with Milos triggered the events in this adventure. He was instantly attracted to the Roamer youth, but feels ashamed for it. Jan wants to reach out to someone but can't. Bonding with Lurra at the end of the story helps Jan find his courage.

Jan is a tall young man with a shock of short blond hair, blue eyes, and a freckled face. He dresses in a simple belted brown tunic over loose-fitting pants most of the time and wears sandals or low boots as the weather and his chores dictate.



#### JAN

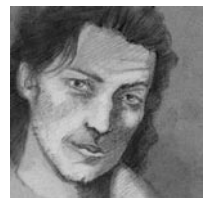
Initiative +0; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 10 (+0 Dex); Attack +1 melee (+1 damage, strike); Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str +1, Dex +0, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +1; Skills: Notice +6; Feats: Visionary Talent, Wild Talent (Shaping).

### Milos, Roamer youth

Milos is a Roamer recently come of age, never dreaming of anything other than a life with his clan, until he recently met Jan in Harmony. He felt an immediate attraction, but Jan avoided him and then fell mysteriously

ill, so Milos hasn't been able to spend more time with him. Milos is torn between the mysterious stranger and his ties to his people. He's also unaware of the danger posed by Verrik, whom he considers a respected elder.

Milos is a lithe and handsome young Roamer, with curly black hair and dark eyes. He usually wears close-fitting black pants, black leather boots, and a red shirt under a black leather vest. His dagger is more a tool than a weapon, although Milos will use it to defend himself, if he must.



#### MILOS

Initiative +1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +0 melee (+1 damage, dagger); Resistance +0; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +1; Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +2; Skills: Bluff +6, Handle Animal +6, Sneak +5; Feats: None; Equipment: dagger.

### Verrik, sorcerer and spy

Verrik has been the healer and chief adept of his clan for several years now. Also, unbeknownst to his people, he is a spy and agent of the Lich King of Kern. On one occasion, when the Roamers made their way through the outlying regions of Kern, Verrik was seduced and corrupted by promises of power. He has mostly passed information on to Kernish agents via the psychic arts and performed small tasks. He sees this latest opportunity as a way of advancing in the esteem of the Lich King and gaining real power.

Verrik is a hawk-nosed Roamer with a short beard and long black hair he normally wears pulled back under a colorful bandana. He normally wears a light-colored linen shirt under a laced-up vest and wears close-fitting pants and sturdy boots. A dagger is always sheathed in his sash, and he keeps a loaded crossbow close at hand in his wagon.



# — THE CURSE OF HARMONY —

## VERRIK

3rd-level human adept; Initiative +1; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 17 (+1 Dex, +3 role, +3 Wis); Attack +1 melee (+1 damage, dagger), +2 ranged (+3 damage, light crossbow); Alignment: Shadow; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str +0, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +2, Wis +3, Cha +1; Skills: Bluff +7, Concentration +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Sneak +7; Feats: Arcane Training (x3), Canny Defense, Healing Talent, Lightning Reflexes, Psychic Talent; Arcana: Cure +9, Dominate (Difficulty 12 Will save), Mind Touch +7, Psychic Blast (+4 nonlethal damage), Psychic Shield +9, Second Sight +9; Equipment: dagger, light crossbow.

## Lurra, rhy-cat prisoner

Lurra is a free rhy-cat. She was exploring the Veran Marsh when Verrik captured her in a snare and imprisoned her. Starved and tormented by the sorcerer, she has struggled to escape, without success. Lurra's last attempt to psychically call for help reached Jan, but his untrained mind was unable to maintain contact with her.

When the heroes encounter Lurra in this adventure, she's exhausted, disabled, and staggered (note the appropriate damage conditions), so there's not much she can do to help them, except perhaps a last cry for help to lead them to Verrik, or giving Jan the psychic support he needs.

Note that Lurra has the Rhy-bonded feat but she has not yet bonded with a companion. It's assumed she bonds with Jan at the end of the story.



## LURRA

1st-level rhy-cat expert; Initiative +3; Speed 40 ft.; Defense 16 (+3 Dex, +3 role); Attack +1 melee (+1 damage, claws); Qualities: Improved grab, low-light vision, scent; Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +2; Str +1, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +0; Skills: Acrobatics +7, Climb +13, Jump +9, Notice +6, Search +5, Sense Motive +6, Sneak +11, Survival +6; Feats: Arcane Training, Psychic Talent, Rhy-bonded, Surprise Attack; Arcana: Mind Touch +2, Psychic Shield +4.

## Elder Croft, Harmony headman

The elder of the village of Harmony is far more a farmer than a leader at heart. Elder Croft defers to Keeper Los on anything vaguely spiritual and does his best to settle any disputes arising in Harmony. He's woefully out of his depth dealing with such a serious threat to his home, but he hides it with bluster and leaning more heavily on Keeper Los for advice.

Elder Croft is a somber middle-aged man with dark hair just starting to go gray. He's put on a bit of weight since his youth, largely due to the cooking of his younger wife, Ansa, whom he adores. They have two children, Luka and Corrin, who are the apples of their father's eye.

## ELDER CROFT

Initiative +0; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 10 (+0 Dex); Attack +1 melee (damage by weapon); Alignment: Light; Saves: Tough +1, Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; Str +1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +1; Skills: Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (nature) +4; Feats: None.

## Keeper Los, village priest

The village priest of Harmony, Keeper Los is a dour and humorless man. He's responsible for the spiritual well being of his people, which he takes seriously (Keeper Los takes *everything* seriously). He's also a firm believer in traditional Jarzoni ways, apart from the elevation of the goddess of justice and a mistrust of the established hierarchy of the Purist Church, which he considers corrupt.

The heroes will find Keeper Los resentful of their presence in Harmony. He believes he should deal with the problem, but secretly knows he cannot. He expresses this frustration through passive-aggressive behavior toward the heroes. He cooperates only grudgingly and hampers their efforts by insisting they refrain from using arcana and that they respect Jarzoni customs in all ways. He is not at all sympathetic to Jan's plight, since he considers arcana suspect at best and *caria daunen* perverse and destructive to the family. Los sees Jan as in need of healing to "cure" him of these unfortunate conditions.

About the only thing Keeper Los will agree with the heroes on is the need to deal with the sorcerer Verrik, if his true nature is revealed. Los sees a sorcerer as a far more serious and immediate threat than the Aldin envoys or an untrained adept like Jan.



## KEEPER LOS

Initiative +0; Speed 30 ft.; Defense 10 (+0 Dex); Attack +0 melee (damage by weapon); Alignment: Twilight; Saves: Tough +0, Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str +0, Dex +0, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +1, Cha +3; Skills: Diplomacy +7, Knowledge (religion) +5; Feats: None.





# APPENDIX: D20 SYSTEM CONVERSION

The game systems in *Blue Rose* are based on the popular d20 System. However, there are some important differences, notably in how *Blue Rose* handles damage and injury. This appendix offers conversion guidelines for players familiar with other d20 System games and products interested in adapting those materials for use with *Blue Rose*. Among other things, this opens up a wide range of source material usable in your game, including various creatures, supporting characters, supplemental rules, and so forth. It also allows you to adapt material from *Blue Rose* to your favorite d20 System games.

## Abilities

Other d20 games rate ability scores on a scale from 1 to 20 or more, with ability modifiers based on the ability score. Those ability modifiers are equivalent to the -5 to +5 or more scores found in *Blue Rose*. When using other d20 creatures in *Blue Rose*, drop the ability scores and just use the ability modifiers. When converting *Blue Rose* creatures for use in other d20 games, determine ability scores by doubling the *Blue Rose* ability modifier and adding 10. Treat a result of 0 as 1. So Strength +1 becomes Strength 12 ( $1 \times 2 + 10$ ), while Intelligence -5 becomes 1 ( $-5 \times 2 + 10 = 0$ , which becomes 1).

## Damage and Injury

Damage in most d20 System games is recorded using *hit points*. Essentially, each character and creature has a number of hit points based on their level (modified by things like Constitution), and each attack inflicts a number of hit points of damage. When hit points drop to a certain level, certain conditions, like disabled and dying, come into play.

The *Blue Rose* system of damage involves a Toughness saving throw in place of hit points, with damage conditions showing the effects of damage.

## Toughness and Hit Points

A character or creature's hit points are based on its Toughness. Essentially, each +1 Toughness from level (but not Constitution) provides 1d10 hit points (the same as a d10 Hit Die in d20). You add the creature's Constitution modifier to each die. So someone with Constitution 14 and a base +3 Toughness from level has 3d10+6 hit points (adding 2 hit points per die from Constitution bonus).

If you want to convert Toughness bonuses from level directly to d20 Hit Dice, then adepts have d6 hit dice, experts have d8, and warriors have d10. To convert d20 hit dice to *Blue Rose* Toughness, see the **Hit Dice to Toughness Conversion** table. Round down any fractional bonuses left over after adding up all Toughness factors.

### HIT DICE TO TOUGHNESS CONVERSION

Hit Die	Toughness Bonus
d4	+0.25
d6	+0.5
d8	+0.75
d10	+1
d12	+1.25

## Other Toughness Factors

Hit Dice are not the only factor determining the Toughness bonus, as noted below. Remember that a Toughness save is not the same as a Fortitude save. Any Fortitude save bonus the creature may have is not added to the Toughness bonus. Also, while the Endurance feat affects some Constitution checks, it does not affect the Toughness save.

- **Bonus Hit Points:** Some creatures receive bonus hit points. A creature receives +1 to its Toughness save bonus for every 5 bonus hit points (round down).
- **Damage Reduction:** A creature with damage reduction receives +2 to its Toughness save bonus for every 5 points of damage reduction. This bonus does not apply against damage from sources that bypass the damage reduction. For instance, a werewolf does not gain a Toughness bonus from damage reduction for damage inflicted by silver weapons.
- **Energy Resistance:** A creature receives +2 to its Toughness bonus for every 5 points of energy resistance it possesses, but only against energy attacks of the matching type.
- **Temporary Hit Points:** If a spell or effect provides a variable number of bonus hit points, the recipient gains a bonus based on the effective Hit Die granted. For example, *aid* gives the recipient 1d8 temporary hit points, which would increase the recipient's Toughness bonus by +0.75 (round down as normal).
- **Toughness feat:** A character receives a cumulative +1 to his Toughness bonus every time he takes the Toughness feat, the equivalent of the Great Toughness feat in *Blue Rose*. When converting *Blue Rose* characters with Great Toughness to hit points, the Great Toughness feat grants 3 additional hit points on top of the character's total (based on level and Constitution).

## Damage Bonus

In *Blue Rose*, attacks have a damage bonus, used to determine the Difficulty of the target's Toughness save. In d20, attacks have a damage roll, a die roll plus a modifier determining how many hit points the attack removes from the target.

To quickly convert *Blue Rose* damage bonus to dice of damage, divide the base damage bonus (not including

## — D20 CONVERSION —

modifiers for abilities like Strength) by 2; the attack does that many d6 of damage. If there's a remainder left over, the attack does an additional d4 damage. Add the attacker's Strength modifier to the total damage, so Strength 18 adds +4 damage to the attack's total damage after it is rolled.

To convert d20 damage to *Blue Rose* damage bonus, see the **Damage Dice to Damage Bonus** table. If an attack does multiple dice of damage, multiply the damage bonus on the table by the number of dice rolled. The exception to this rule is for attacks based on a d3 or d2, since multiplying by zero gives a result of zero; in this case, every additional die adds +1 to the bonus (so an attack of 4d3 has a bonus of +3).

To this base damage bonus, add any damage bonuses for Strength, magical enhancement, special abilities, and the like, as normal. If an attack includes bonus damage dice, such as a rogue's sneak attack bonus or energy damage from a magical weapon, convert that damage to a bonus as above and add it to the attack's base damage.

### DAMAGE DICE TO DAMAGE BONUS

Die Type	Base Damage Bonus
d3 or lower	+0
d4	+1
d6	+2
d8	+3
d10	+4
d12	+5

In some circumstances, attacks may do a bit more or less damage than normal. A critical hit does double, triple, or even more damage than usual, while many attack spells do only half damage if the target succeeds in a saving throw.

## Magical Healing

Instead of healing a certain number of hit points, d20 healing spells in *Blue Rose* grant a magical recovery check, using the normal Difficulty. The character using the healing magic makes the recovery check for the wounded subject, as follows:

**1d20 + caster level + magic bonus**

The magic bonus depends on the spell used; see the **Spell Changes** section later in this appendix.

The recipient heals the most serious wound condition if the magical recovery check succeeds. Every 10 points by which the magical recovery check result succeeds, the recipient's next most serious damage condition heals. (Unlike natural healing, magical healing can heal multiple damage conditions at once.) If an attempt to use magical healing on a dying character fails, the recipient of the spell still stabilizes automatically.

## Supernatural Healing

The paladin's lay on hands ability, the monk's wholeness of body ability, and other such supernatural healing powers allow characters to make one or more magical recovery checks per day. The total hit points the character

can heal per day using the standard d20 rules becomes a bonus to his magical recovery check. The character decides how much, from a minimum of +1 to the full bonus, to allocate to any given magical recovery check. Once the total bonus is used up, the character can make no more supernatural healing checks that day. This otherwise works the same way as a healing spell and can improve damage conditions by multiple steps.

**Example:** *Donovan Rel is a 4th-level paladin with Charisma 14, giving him a +8 bonus (4th level + 2 Cha modifier) to magical recovery checks when using lay on hands. He could use this bonus for eight separate magical healing attempts, each with a bonus of +1; he could make just one check with a bonus of +8; or he could make anywhere from two to seven magical healing attempts with various bonuses, as long as the total bonus used for the day does not exceed +8.*

## Damage to Objects

Just as *Blue Rose* characters and creatures suffer damage conditions instead of losing hit points, so too do inanimate objects. The effects of damage are slightly different, since objects don't feel pain or suffer from wound trauma, but the core system remains the same.

### Hardness and Hit Points for Objects

In *Blue Rose*, each object has a hardness bonus. In d20, objects have two qualities: hardness and hit points. Hardness serves as damage reduction; the object ignores points of damage equal to its hardness each round. Hit points work like those of creatures, except objects are destroyed at 0 hit points instead of being disabled.

To convert from *Blue Rose* hardness to d20, give the object hardness equal to its *Blue Rose* hardness and hit points equal to 2.5 times its *Blue Rose* hardness (rounding down).

To convert from d20 hardness and hit points to *Blue Rose* hardness, give an object +1 hardness for every 5 hit points and +2 hardness for every 5 points of hardness.

**Example:** *A strong wooden door has hardness 5 (+2) and 20 hp (+4), giving it a total +6 hardness bonus in Blue Rose. A stone door has hardness 8 (+3) and 60 hit points (+12) for a total +15 hardness bonus.*

## Feat Changes

The d20 metamagic feats Empower Spell and Maximize Spell must be changed in *Blue Rose* to reflect the nonvariable nature of damage and healing spells. Empower Spell increases the bonus of such spells by 50 percent (round down). Maximize Spell doubles the bonus of suitable spells. If a spell is both empowered and maximized, its bonus increases by 150 percent. All other aspects of the feats remain the same.

**Example:** *An explosive runes spell inflicts 6d6 damage in d20, which translates to a +12 damage bonus. An empowered explosive runes has a +18 damage bonus (+12 x 1.5); a maximized explosive runes has a +24 damage bonus (+12 x 2); and an empowered, maximized explosive runes has a +30 damage bonus (+12 x 2.5).*

## Spell Changes

The following d20 spells have altered effects or mechanics in *Blue Rose* to reflect the nature of the damage system.

Spells inflicting hit point damage (other than *harm*) should be adjusted as shown on the **Damage Dice to Damage Bonus** table.

- *Cure Critical Wounds*: This spell provides a base +12 bonus to the magical recovery check, with an additional +1 bonus per caster level (to a maximum +20 caster level bonus).
- *Cure Light Wounds*: This spell provides a base +3 bonus to the magical recovery check, with an additional +1 bonus per caster level (to a maximum +5 caster level bonus).
- *Cure Minor Wounds*: This spell provides a +0 bonus to the magical recovery check, with no caster level bonus.
- *Cure Moderate Wounds*: This spell provides a base +6 bonus to the magical recovery check, with an additional +1 bonus per caster level (to a maximum +10 caster level bonus).
- *Cure Serious Wounds*: This spell provides a base +9 bonus to the magical recovery check, with an additional +1 bonus per caster level (to a maximum +15 caster level bonus).
- *Cure, Mass*: All *cure* spells (except for *cure minor wounds*) have corresponding *mass cure* versions. Each provides the same bonus to the magical recovery check as the single target version, but the maximum caster level bonus increases by +20. *Mass cure moderate wounds*, for example, provides a base +6 bonus with a maximum +30 caster level bonus.
- *Harm*: This spell inflicts damage on the target, with a base +10 damage bonus, and an additional +2 damage bonus per caster level (to a maximum +30 caster level bonus). The total damage bonus is halved if the target makes a successful Will save, and the spell cannot reduce the target past disabled.
- *Heal*: This spell provides a base +10 bonus to the magical recovery check, with an additional +2 bonus per caster level (to a maximum +30 caster level bonus). All other factors of the spell function as described in the *PH*.
- *Regenerate*: In addition to regenerating the subject's body parts, this spell provides a base +12 bonus to the recovery check, with an additional +1 per caster level (to a maximum +35 caster level bonus).

2. Convert damage of the creature's attacks to a damage bonus.
3. Convert any spell-like abilities into arcana or equivalent arcane abilities.
4. Convert any d20 System skills to *Blue Rose* skills. Generally, this means combining skills like Listen and Spot or Hide and Move Silently, using the average of the skill bonuses.

Most other creature statistics remain the same between the two systems, so it's fairly easy to use creatures from any d20 System book in *Blue Rose*. This includes other Green Ronin Publishing books, like the *Book of Fiends* (a great resource for darkfiends) and *Creatures of Freeport*.

**Example:** Nicole wants to convert a corpse flower (from *Creatures of Freeport*) for use in her *Blue Rose* game, thinking it will make a great hazard for the Veran Marsh.

The corpse flower has 3d8+9 HD, so its Hit Dice convert to a +2 Toughness bonus (3 x .75 = 2.25, rounded down to 2). Nicole adds the flower's +3 Constitution bonus for a final Toughness bonus of +5.

The corpse flower has no attacks apart from its special abilities, so there's nothing to convert there.

Nicole looks over the corpse flower's special attacks and qualities. Its fetid burst and stench of death abilities are both poisons and work just fine in *Blue Rose* by halving their usual affects on ability scores. She converts its damage reduction 5/slashing to a +2 Toughness bonus, except against slashing weapons, and its resistance to cold 10 to a +4 Toughness bonus against cold damage. Its immunity to electricity and other plant qualities don't require conversion.

**Example:** Hal finds the malkin (also from *Creatures of Freeport*) an interesting idea for *Blue Rose*: an outsider (creature from another plane) trapped in the form of a cat. He thinks they'd make an interesting variation on the rhydan in *Blue Rose*.

The malkin has 3d8+3 HD, giving it a base +2 Toughness. Its Constitution 12 increases that to +3.

A malkin has a simple claw attack doing 1d2 base damage. This becomes a +0 damage bonus, -1 when the malkin's Strength modifier is applied.

Malkin have various special qualities. Its resistance to acid, cold, and fire 10 becomes a +4 Toughness bonus to those forms of damage. Its spell resistance 13 becomes arcane resistance 13. Hal decides the malkin's telepathy should be innate and gives it the Psychic Talent feat, like a rhydan (allowing it use of the Mind Touch, Psychic Shield, and Second Sight arcana). Its true sight ability Hal leaves essentially unchanged, noting malkin are immune to the Illusion arcanum and can penetrate all disguises, see invisible creatures, and even penetrate darkness created by arcana.

Now Hal considers whether or not a malkin always arises from a darkfiend (the only outsiders known in Aldea) and whether or not that means the creatures are always Shadow-aligned or if they could perhaps move toward Twilight or even Light. Can life as a feline redeem a creature of Shadow?

## Converting Creatures

Converting d20 System creatures for use with *Blue Rose* is a simple process:

1. Convert the creature's Hit Dice and hit points to its level and Toughness modifier.

# INDEX

## A

Aberrations 202–203  
 Abilities 52–54  
   *Altering Scores* 54  
   *Charisma* 53  
   *Choosing Scores* 52  
   *Constitution* 53  
   *Dexterity* 53  
   *Intelligence* 53  
   *Mental* 53  
   *Nonexistent Scores* 54  
   *Strength* 53  
   *Wisdom* 53  
 Abilities, Creature 187  
 Accurate Attack 90  
 Acid 167  
 Acrobatics 77  
 Actions 12  
 Actions, Free 158  
   *Drop an Item* 158  
   *Drop Prone* 158  
   *Speak* 158  
 Actions, Full-Round 157–158  
   *Move All Out* 157  
   *Recover* 158  
 Actions, Move 157  
   *Manipulate Object* 157  
   *Move* 157  
   *Stand Up* 157  
 Actions, Physical 150–152  
 Actions, Social 147–149  
 Actions, Special 163–167  
 Actions, Standard 157  
   *Attack* 157  
   *Begin/Complete Full-Round Action* 157  
   *Dodge* 157  
   *Total Concentration* 157  
 Action Types 155–156  
 Adept 62–63  
 Advancement, Creature 188  
 Adventure Ideas 176–177  
 Adventuring Gear 139–140  
 Aid Another 163  
 Air Elemental 198  
 Aldis  
   *Arcane Arts in* 33  
   *Calendar* 32  
   *Crime and Justice* 33  
   *Education* 32  
   *Geography* 42–46  
   *Government* 28  
   *History* 21–25  
   *Marriage* 32  
   *Nonhumans in* 26–28  
   *Religion* 34  
 Alignment 71–72  
 Alignment, Creature 187  
 Alignments  
   *Changing* 72  
   *Light* 71  
   *Shadow* 71  
   *Twilight* 72  
 All-out Attack 90  
 Animals 189–193  
 Animism Talent 91  
 Anwaren 16  
 Arcana 107–127  
   *Attack Rolls* 108  
   *Familiarity* 108  
   *Fatigue* 109  
   *Learning* 107  
   *Maintaining* 109  
   *Mental Contact* 108  
   *Multiple Subjects* 108  
   *Range* 108  
   *Saving Throws* 108  
 Arcane Balance 91  
 Arcane Elixirs 145–146

*Enhancing* 145  
   *Healing* 145  
   *Recovery* 145  
   *Stamina* 145  
   *Stimulation* 145  
   *Suppression* 146  
 Arcane Focus 91  
 Arcane Speed 91  
 Arcane Stones 146  
   *Beacon* 146  
   *Meditation* 146  
   *Memory* 146  
   *Pacifying* 146  
   *Scribing* 146  
   *Sensing* 146  
   *Shielding* 146  
   *Suppression* 146  
 Arcane Strike 91  
 Arcane Training 91  
 Arcane Weapon 91  
 Arcanum 91  
 Armor 137–139  
   *Masterwork* 139  
   *Qualities* 137  
 Armor Training 91  
 Arrows 132, 134  
 Assassin Vine 197  
 Ata-San 46  
 Attack, Creature 184  
 Attack Bonus 152  
 Attack Rolls 11  
 Automatic Hits 153  
 Automatic Misses 153  
 Axe  
   *Battle* 134  
   *Great* 134  
   *Hane* 134  
   *Throwing* 134

## B

Backgrounds 54–60  
   *Aldins* 55  
   *Choosing* 54  
   *Dolphins* 58  
   *Features* 55  
   *Forest Folk* 55  
   *Humans* 55–57  
   *Islanders* 56  
   *Jarzoni* 56  
   *Kerns* 56  
   *Night People* 57  
   *Rezeans* 56  
   *Rhy-cats* 58  
   *Rhy-horses* 58  
   *Rhy-wolves* 59  
   *Rhydan* 57–59  
   *Roamers* 57  
   *Sea-Folk* 59  
   *Vata* 60  
   *Vata'an* 60  
   *Vata'sha* 60  
 Banded Mail 137  
 Bat 189  
 Battle Dance 110  
 Bear, Black 189  
 Bear, Brown 189  
 Beast Link 110  
 Beast Messenger 110  
 Beast Reading 110  
 Beast Speech 110  
 Beast Summoning 112  
 Beast Trance 112  
 Beloved 92  
 Bison 190  
 Blind-Fight 92  
 Bliss 112  
 Bluff 78, 148  
 Boar 190

Body Control 112  
 Bolas 132, 135  
 Braniel 16–19  
 Breastplate 138  
 Brew Elixir 92  
 Buckler 138

## C

Calling 70  
 Calm 113  
 Canny Defense 92  
 Carrying 151–152  
 Cat 190  
 Cat, Winged 196  
 Chainmail 138  
 Chain Shirt 138  
 Characteristics 69–74  
 Charge 163  
 Checks 9  
   *Ability* 11  
   *Aiding Others* 11  
   *Opposed* 9, 171  
   *Skill* 11  
   *Time and* 10  
   *Trying Again* 10  
   *Without Rolls* 10  
 Chezia Thalix 31  
 Choker 202  
 Church of the Pure Light 48  
 Circumstance Modifiers 10, 171  
 Cleave 92  
 Climb 79  
 Clothing 142  
 Club 133  
   *Great* 134  
 Cold 167  
 Cold Shaping 113  
 Combat Modifiers 161–163  
 Combat Round 155  
 Combat Sequence 152  
 Command 149  
 Comprehend 92  
 Concealment 162  
 Concentration 79  
 Conditions 161  
 Conditions, Damage 159  
   *Dazed* 159  
   *Dead* 159  
   *Disabled* 159  
   *Dying* 159  
   *Staggered* 159  
   *Unconscious* 159  
   *Wounded* 159  
 Condition Summary 160  
 Conviction 12, 73  
   *Gaining* 73  
   *Regaining* 73  
   *Using* 73  
 Conviction, Creature 188  
 Corruption 126–127  
   *Effects* 126  
   *Embracing* 127  
   *Items* 126  
   *Places* 126  
   *Redemption* 127  
 Cover 161–162  
 Craft 80  
 Crippling Strike 92  
 Critical Hits 159  
 Crocodile 190  
 Crocodile, Giant 190  
 Crossbow  
   *Heavy* 132, 133  
   *Light* 133  
 Cryston 133  
 Cure 113  
 Cure Blindness/Deafness 92

Cure Disease 92  
 Cure Poison 92  
 Currency 129

## D

Dagger 133  
 Damage 153–154, 158–161  
   *Lethal* 158  
   *Nonlethal* 158  
 Darkfiends 207–209  
 Darkfiend Soldier 208  
 Darkfiend Watcher 208  
 Darkfiend Whisperer 209  
 Darkness 168  
 Dart 133  
 Defense 153  
 Defense, Creature 184  
 Defensive Attack 92  
 Deflect Arrows 92  
 Dehydration 169  
 Delay 163  
 Diehard 94  
 Difficulty 9  
   *Assigning* 170  
 Difficulty Levels 9  
 Diplomacy 81, 148  
 Disable Device 81  
 Disarm 164  
 Disguise 81  
 Dodge 94  
 Dodge Bonus 153  
 Dog 190  
 Dolphin 194  
 Dolphins 58  
 Dominate 113  
 Dominate Beast 113  
 Drain Vitality 113  
 Drake 194  
 Drink 142  
 Drowning 169

## E

Eagle 190  
 Earth Elemental 199  
 Earth Shaping 113  
 Elementals 198–200  
 Empire of Thorns 23  
 Empower Arcana 95  
 Endurance 95  
 Enhance Other 115  
 Enhance Self 115  
 Enhance Senses 115  
 Erase Signature 95  
 Escape Artist 82  
 Ettercap 200  
 Evasion 95  
 Evil 181  
 Exarchs of Shadow 21  
 Exotic Weapon Training 95  
 Expert 64–65  
 Extra Effort 152

## F

Faenaria 51  
 Falling 168  
 Falling Objects 168  
 Familiar 95  
 Familiarity 108  
 Familiars 34  
 Far Shot 96  
 Fascinate 96  
 Fast-Talk 148  
 Fatigue 109, 161  
 Favored Foe 96  
 Favors 97

Feats 90–106  
   *Arcane* 94  
   *Expert* 94  
   *General* 93  
   *Martial* 94  
   *Prerequisites* 90  
   *Types* 90

Feats, Creature 188  
 Fiendish Rat 208  
 Fiendish Raven 208  
 Fiendish Shark 208  
 Fighting 152–167  
 Finishing Blow 97  
 Fire 169  
 Fire Elemental 200  
 Fire Shaping 115  
 Flail 133, 134  
 Flanking 164  
 Flat-Footed 154  
 Flesh Shaping 116  
 Food 142  
 Fortune's Favor 97  
 Full Plate 138

## G

Gather Information 82, 149  
 Gauntlet 133, 134  
   *Spiked* 133, 134  
 Gentle Beasts 116  
 Disarm 164  
 Ghost 204  
 Gods of Light 19–21  
 Gods of Twilight 19  
 Grappling 164  
 Greater Arcane Focus 97  
 Greater Weapon Focus 98  
 Greater Weapon  
   *Specialization* 98  
 Great Cleave 97  
 Great Fortitude 97  
 Great Khana 50  
 Great Rebellion 23–24  
 Great Toughness 97  
 Great Westerly Road 47  
 Griffon 195

## H

Hagglings 148  
 Hag (Annis) 201  
 Half-Plate 138  
 Hammer  
   *Light* 134  
   *War* 134  
 Hampered Movement 150–151  
 Handle Animal 83  
 Harm 116  
 Harpy 201  
 Hawk 191  
 Heal 83  
 Healing Talent 98  
 Heart Reading 116  
 Heart Shaping 116  
 Heat 168  
 Heirloom 98  
 Hide 138  
 Hierophant, the 49  
 Holy Days 35  
   *Feast of Amcaeren* 36  
   *Feast of Braniel* 35  
   *Midsummer Day* 35  
   *Midwinter Night* 35  
 Horse, Light 191  
 Horse, War 191

## I

Ice 168  
 Ice-Binder Mountains 47



# — INDEX —

Illusion 117  
 Imbue Life 98  
 Imbue Unlife 98  
 Imbue Weapon 99  
 Immunity to Disease 99  
 Immunity to Poison 99  
 Improved Balance 99  
 Improved Climb 99  
 Improved Critical 99  
 Improved Demoralize 99  
 Improved Disarm 99  
 Improved Dodge 99  
 Improved Evasion 99  
 Improved Feint 99  
 Improved Grab 99  
 Improved Initiative 99  
 Improved Precise Shot 99  
 Improved  
   Ranged Disarm 99  
   Improved Speed 99  
   Improved Strike 99  
   Improved Sunder 99  
   Improved Trip 99  
 Improved  
   Uncanny Dodge 99  
 Improvised Tools 99  
 Influence 147–148  
 Initiative 154–155  
 Initiative, Creature 183  
 Inspire 100  
 Interrogation 149  
 Intimidate 84, 149  
 Intrigue 180–182  
 Iron Will 100

**J**  
 Jack of All Trades 100  
 Jarek 49  
 Jarzon 48–49  
 Javelin 133, 134  
 Jump 84

**K**  
 Kern 49–50  
 Khanate of Rezea 50  
 Knights of Purity 49  
 Knights of  
   the Blue Rose 37–38  
 Knights of the Pure Light 49  
 Knowledge 84

**L**  
 Lance 134  
 Language 85  
 Lar'tya 43  
 Laritha 31  
 Leonoth 48  
 Level, Creature 183  
 Level-Dependent Benefits 61  
 Level Advancement 68  
 Lich 204  
 Lightning Reflexes 100  
 Light Shaping 117  
 Lodging 142  
 Longbow 134  
   *Composite* 134, 135  
 Longspear 133, 135  
 Lord Jarish Dukay 31  
 Lord Sayvin 30  
 Low-Light Vision 100

**M**  
 Mace 133  
 Manipulate Object 118  
 Master Plan 100  
 Maurena 16–19, 48

Meditative Talent 100  
 Mental Contact 108  
 Merrow 202  
 Mind Probe 118  
 Mind Reading 118  
 Mind Shaping 118  
 Mind Touch 119  
 Minions 161  
 Mixed-Role Heroes 68  
 Morningstar 133  
 Mounted Archery 100  
 Mounted Combat 100, 165  
 Mounts 143–144  
 Move Object 120  
 Moving 150–151  
 Mythic Age 16–20

**N**  
 Naga 202  
 Natures 71–73  
   *Light and Shadow* 72  
 Nature Reading 120  
 Negotiation 148  
 Net 135  
 Night People 27, 57  
 Notice 85

**O**  
 Object Reading 121  
 Octopus 191  
 Ogre 201  
 Old Kingdom 21–22  
 On the Run 100  
 Overrun 165  
 Owl 191

**P**  
 Pace 150  
 Pain 121  
 Pavin Weald 42  
 Perform 86, 149  
 Persuasion 149  
*Pick* 134  
 Plants 197–198  
 Plant Shaping 121  
 Point Blank Shot 100  
 Pony 191  
 Power Attack 100  
 Precise Shot 100  
 Primordials 16–19  
 Psychic Blast 121  
 Psychic Shield 122  
 Psychic  
   Shield Penetration 101  
 Psychic Talent 101  
 Psychic Weapon 101  
 Pure-Hearted 101  
 Purifying Light 101  
 Purists 36, 46

**Q**  
 Qualities, Creature 185–187  
   *Ability Score Reduction* 185  
   *Arcana* 185  
   *Arcane Resistance* 185  
   *Blindsight* 185  
   *Blindsight* 185  
   *Constrict* 185  
   *Damage Reduction* 186  
   *Darkvision* 186  
   *Disease* 186  
   *Fast Healing* 186  
   *Immunity* 186  
   *Incorporeal* 186  
   *Low-Light Vision* 187  
   *Poison* 187

*Regeneration* 187  
*Resistance to Energy* 187  
*Scent* 187  
*Swallow Whole* 187  
*Trample* 187  
 Quarterstaff 133, 135  
 Queen Fashi 47  
 Queen Jaellin 29  
 Quicken Arcana 102

**R**  
 Rage 102  
 Ranged Pin 102  
 Range Penalty 153  
 Rapier 134, 135  
 Rat 191  
 Rat, Dire 192  
 Raven 192  
 Ready 165  
 Recovery 158–161  
   *Damage* 159  
   *Fatigue* 161  
 Relgis 40  
 Relics 46  
 Religion 34–36  
 Reputation 74  
 Reputation, Creature 188  
 Rewards 174  
 Rezea 50–51  
 Rhy-bonded 102  
 Rhy-cat 195  
 Rhy-cats 58  
 Rhy-horse 195  
 Rhy-horses 58  
 Rhy-wolf 195  
 Rhy-wolves 59  
 Rhydan 26, 57–59, 194–197  
 Ride 86  
 Ride-By Attack 102  
 Roamers 51  
 Roles 60–69  
   *Adept* 62–63  
   *Expert* 64  
   *Warrior* 66–67  
 Romance 179–180  
 Rose River 43  
 Royal Road, the 71  
 Run 102

**S**  
 Sap 134, 135  
 Saves, Creature 187  
 Saving Throws 11, 154  
 Scale Mail 138  
 Scatterstar Archipelago 45  
 Scimitar 134  
 Scrying 122  
 Scythe 134, 135  
 Sea-Folk 26, 59  
 Search 87  
 Second Chance 102  
 Second Sight 122  
 Seduction 148  
 Selene 16–19  
 Self-Healing 102  
 Selling 130  
 Sense Minds 123  
 Sense Motive 87, 149  
 Sensitive 103  
 Services 144–145  
 Shadow 205  
 Shadowgates 41  
 Shadowspawn 200–202  
 Shadow Cults 40  
 Shadow Dancers 40  
 Shadow Wars 23  
 Shambler 197  
 Shaping Talent 103  
 Sharit Ranith 36

Shark, Dire 192  
 Shark, Huge 192  
 Shark, Large 192  
 Shark, Medium 192  
 shas crystals 49  
 Shield  
   *Heavy* 135, 139  
   *Light* 134, 135, 138  
   *Tower* 139  
 Shield Training 103  
 Shortbow 134, 135  
   *Composite* 134, 135  
 Shortspear 133, 136  
 Sickle 133, 136  
 Silence, the 40  
 Size, Creature 183  
 Size Modifier  
   *Attack* 152  
   *Defense* 153  
 Skeleton 205  
 Skills 75–90  
   *Acquiring* 75  
   *Adding* 76  
   *Basics* 75  
   *Favored* 75  
   *Interaction* 76  
   *Specialty* 77  
   *Untrained* 76  
 Skills, Creature 188  
 Skills, Professional 129  
 Skill Affinity 103  
 Skill Focus 103  
 Skill Mastery 103  
 Skill Training 103  
 Sleep 123  
 Sleight of Hand 87  
 Sling 133, 136  
   *Bullets* 132, 133  
 Slow Fall 103  
 Smite Foe 103  
 Smoke 169  
 Snake, Constrictor 192  
 Snake, Viper 193  
 Snatch Arrows 103  
 Sneak 88  
 Sorcerer's Grasp 123  
 Sorcery 41, 110, 126–127  
 Sovereign's Finest 36–37  
 Sovereign's Guard 37  
 Sovereigns of Aldis 24  
 Spear 133, 136  
 Spectre 205  
 Speed, Creature 184  
 Spirited Charge 103  
 Spirit Dancers 38  
 Splint Mail 139  
 Squid, Giant 193  
 Starvation 169  
 Stirge 203  
 Stunning Attack 103  
 Subtle Arcana 103  
 Suffocation 169  
 Suggest 103  
 Suggestion 123  
 Summon Darkfiend 103  
 Summon Elemental 104  
 Sunder 166  
 Surprise 154  
 Surprise Attack 104, 166  
 Survival 89  
 Swim 89  
 Sword  
   *Bastard* 135, 136  
   *Great* 134  
   *Long* 134  
   *Short* 134

**T**  
 Taking 1 10  
 Taking 10 10, 171

Taking 20 10, 171  
 Talented 104  
 Tath River 47  
 Taunt 104  
 Throwing 152  
 Tools 140–142  
 Touch Attack 167  
 Track 104  
 Trackless Step 105  
 Trample 105  
 Transportation 144  
 Trapfinding 105  
 Treant 198  
 Trident 134, 136  
 Trip 167  
 Troglodyte 202  
 Truth-Reading 105  
 Two-Weapon Defense 105  
 Two-Weapon  
   Fighting 105, 167  
 Type, Creature 183

**U**  
 Unarmed Strike 133, 136  
 Uncanny Dodge 105  
 Unending Circle, the 40  
 Unicorn 195  
 Uniforms 39  
 Unliving 203–207  
 Using 107–109

**V**  
 Vampire 206–207  
 Vata 26, 60  
 Veran-Tath 47  
 Veran Marsh 46, 47  
   *Arcana in* 47  
 Visionary Talent 106  
 Visions 124

**W**  
 Ward 124  
 Warrior 66  
 Water 169  
 Water Elemental 200  
 Water Shaping 124  
 Wealth 128–130  
   *Awards* 130  
   *Gaining* 129  
   *Losing* 129  
 Wealthy 106  
 Weapons 130–137  
   *Arcane* 137  
   *Categories* 130–131  
   *Improvised* 131  
   *Masterwork* 137  
   *Qualities* 131  
 Weapon Finesse 106  
 Weapon Focus 106  
 Weapon Specialization 106  
 Weapon Training 106  
 Weasel 193  
 Whale, Baleen 196  
 Whale, Cachalot 196  
 Whale, Orca 196  
 Whip 135, 136  
 Widen Arcana 106  
 Wildwalk 106  
 Wild Empathy 106  
 Wild Talent 106  
 Will-o'-Wisp 203  
 Wind Shaping 124  
 Wolf 193

**Z**  
 Zombie 207

NAME	
BACKGROUND	
ROLE	
LEVEL	

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THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF ROMANTIC FANTASY

DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND	CHARACTER PORTRAIT

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STRENGTH		INITIATIVE		TOUGHNESS		SIZE	
DEXTERITY		DEFESNE		FORTITUDE		SPEED	
CONSTITUTION		BASE ATTACK BONUS		REFLEX			
INTELLIGENCE		MELEE ATTACK BONUS		WILL			
WISDOM		RANGED ATTACK BONUS		CHARACTERISTICS			
CHARISMA						ALIGNMENT	
DAMAGE TRACK				CALLING			
0	5+	10+	15+	LIGHT NATURE			
BRUISED	DAZED	STAGGERED	UNCONSCIOUS	SHADOW NATURE			
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HURT	WOUNDED	DISABLED	DYING	DEAD	REPUTATION		
WEAPON		ATTACK BONUS		DAMAGE BONUS		RANGE	

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ARCANA

SPECIAL ABILITIES

EQUIPMENT

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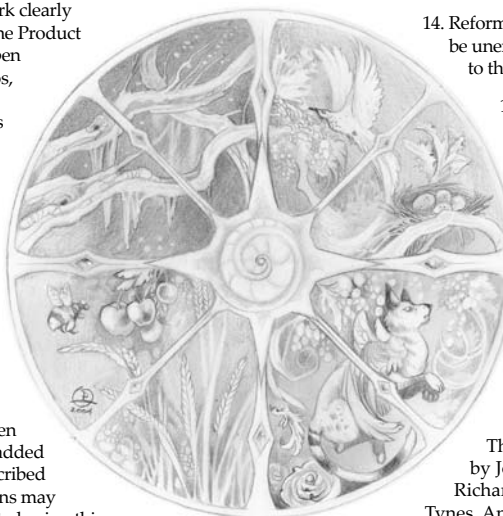
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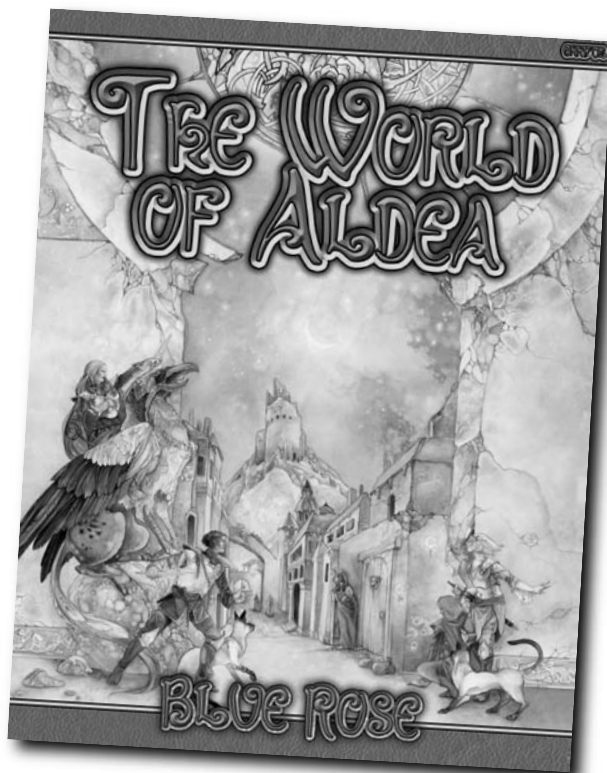
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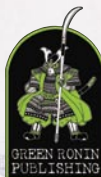
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