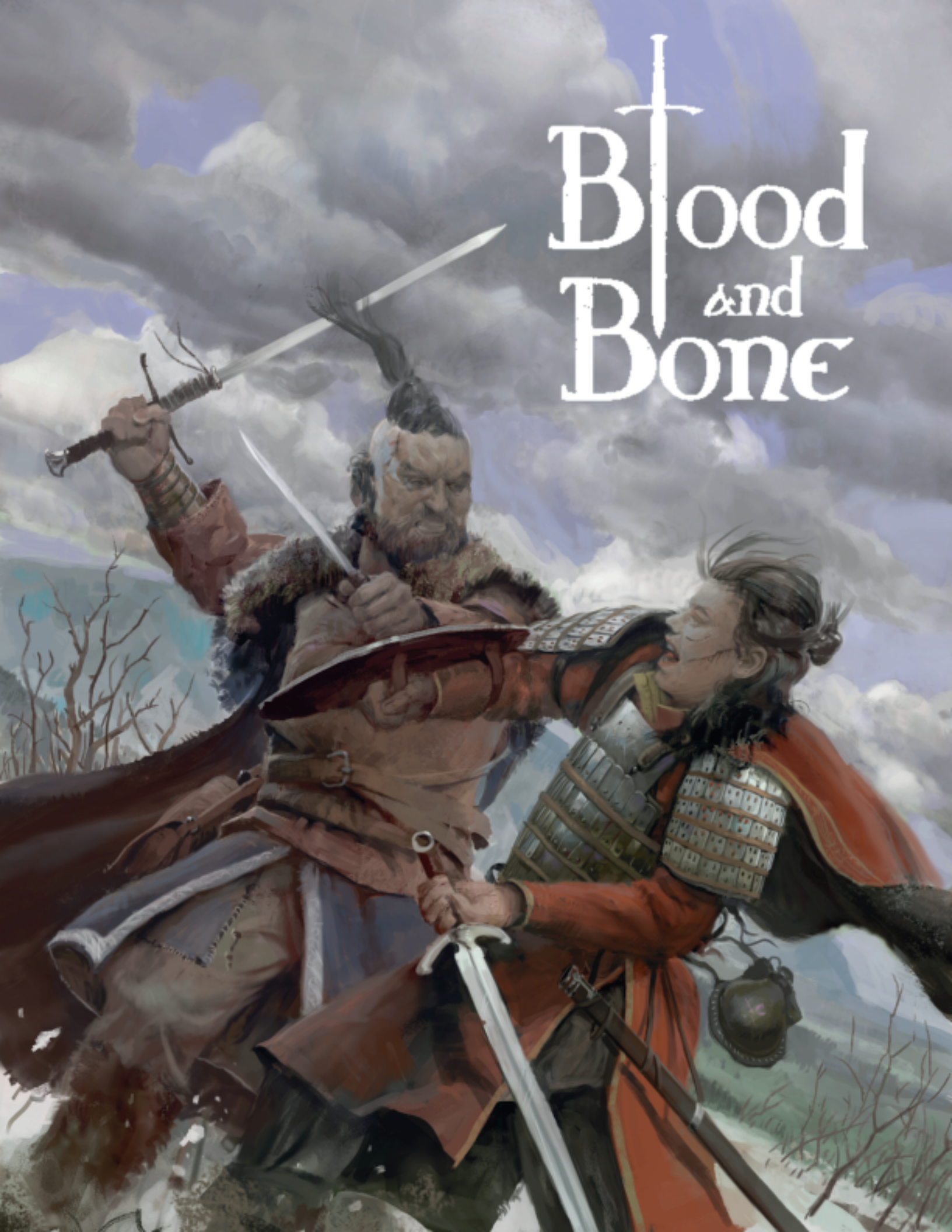


Blood and Bone





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INTRODUCTION

Blood and Bone is a game about telling stories in the dark fantasy world of Ossura. It is a game of the imagination where you will be picturing a story, much like reading a book. Unlike a book, you will play the role of a character in the story, interacting with the world and making choices. Since you will be playing alongside other people, dice and rules are used to help add structure to the story and lend a consistent backbone to your adventures.

Each Player creates a single Character — their avatar in the world. You can make any Character you desire, from a lowly hedge knight to a powerful queen. Most of the time, the other Players' Characters will have allied goals. Together you will confront conflict, be it defending a city against a siege, foiling a courtly assassination attempt, hunting a mysterious beast, fighting in an arena tournament, or delving into a ruined city lost beneath the sands. Throughout the game, Characters can interact with other interesting Characters, engage in gritty, deadly fights, and explore the vast world of Ossura. The game is about the Players and their Characters.

One Player does not make a Character. Instead, they take on the role of the game master, or Arbiter, and act as the lead storyteller, narrator, and facilitator of the world. They are responsible for creating the problems and conflicts that drive the story. Players navigate these problems and guide the direction of the story through their choices and actions. The Arbiter must be ready to improvise and react to the unexpected, as the story can take many directions. It is important for the Arbiter to know their Players and provide them opportunities to do what they want to do.

Game play happens in sessions, that often last around four hours. Groups of Players can meet as often they'd like, commonly once every week or two. Chapters are discrete units of gameplay that often last only one or two sessions. Each Chapter represents a complete narrative arc in a greater overarching story called a Campaign. Campaigns can be short and finite, comprised of only a couple of Chapters; or they can be long, spanning months or years of real time over the course of many Chapters. Some games have no end at all, but allow the Players to explore the world as their Characters grow and develop.

Blood and Bone has no inherent end. The Players and the Arbiter share the goal of wanting to craft interesting Characters, exciting adventures, and memorable stories. As a game, the most important goal of Blood and Bone is for all those involved to have an enjoyable experience. Feel free to disregard or change any rules in this book that you feel inhibit that ultimate goal for your particular group.

USING THIS BOOK

This book is written in two parts, each divided into multiple sections.

The first section of the book details the mechanics behind the game. It tells you everything you need to know about creating and advancing Player and non-Player Characters for a game of Blood and Bone, as well as the conflicts and threats with which they may interact.

The second section of the book outlines the world of Ossura. It presents a gritty campaign setting filled with rich cultures and rival factions. This section of the book deliberately makes no mention of the system's mechanics from the former section. Players should feel free to use the campaign setting of Ossura with any role playing system they prefer.

HOW TO PLAY

Gameplay is a back and forth between the Arbiter and their Players. The Arbiter describes a scene to the Players, the Players choose what to do, and the Arbiter narrates the results. If Players decide to do something difficult — where there is a chance of failure with meaningful results or consequences — dice are rolled to determine the outcome.

The core mechanic of Blood and Bone is centered on the twenty-sided die, or d20. Any time a Character wishes to make an action that will shape the narrative in some way, they will ultimately be rolling a twenty-sided die. The result of this roll will be affected by a Character's Abilities, Skills, and Traits. If their roll meets or exceeds a Challenge Rating — or CR — set by the Arbiter, they succeed in their attempt.

Most of the rules encountered in this book simply expand upon this core mechanic. Many of the rules govern specific situations or interactions. With a solid understanding of the core mechanic, an Arbiter can figure out how to handle almost any situation. For new Players, the core mechanic is all they need to know to dive in and start playing.

Every roll, called a Check, will always use 1d20 in addition to other possible factors. A Character's relevant Attribute will always be added; they are defining factors ranging from 0 to 5. If a Character is Skilled in what they are trying to accomplish, they will add the result of a Skill Die: 1d4 to 1d12, or Novice through Master Rank. Every roll will adhere to the following formula:

$$1d20 + \text{Skill Die (None to 1d12)} + \text{Attribute (0 to 5)}$$

Elaria is attempting to move unheard across the dry leaves of a forest floor. Her Player will roll 1d20 to determine the result. Elaria's Stealth Skill is at Adept Rank (1d8), so she will roll 1d8 as well. Since Stealth is a Dexterity-based Skill and Elaria has 2 Dexterity, she will also add 2.

1d20 lands on a 12
1d8 (her Skill Die for Adept Stealth) lands on a 5
Her Dexterity is 2
Her Player reports her result as 19 (12+5+2)

Malik tries to follow, cursing softly under his breath. He is not Skilled in Stealth, and his Dexterity is 0. He simply rolls a twenty-sided die.

1d20 lands on a 15
His Player reports his result as a 15

The Arbiter rules that the Challenge Rating (CR) for sneaking on the leaves was between easy and moderate, or about 13. They then narrate the results:

Elaria slips soundlessly into the shadows; stepping lightly over the dry leaves, she vanishes into the darkness. Malik curses softly under his breath and follows. He moves clumsily but manages to keep pace, following in Elaria's footsteps as the two of you make your way through the underbrush.

A GRIM WORLD

Blood and Bone is a game about violent conflict in a dark and gritty world. It is best played with a group committed to maintaining a serious tone.

There is no good or evil. Conflicts are driven by human desires, and morality is often ambiguous.

Combat is deadly. All violence is threatening, and poses a serious chance of grave injury. Vivid descriptions of pain and wounds can complement the mechanics.

The wilds are vast and frightening. The setting is a world in a dark age. Though there are dense cities, much of world is unexplored and untamed.

There is no magic. The gods are as silent and absent as in our own world. Blood, the hereditary power over life and death, is seen as a natural law of the world.

Blood is terrifying. The effects of Blooded destruction are a grisly sight to behold and Risen are more horrifying still.





CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS

PREMISE OF THE CAMPAIGN

Before Character creation, the Players should work with the Arbiter to decide on a general theme for their game. This theme should reflect a core idea that interests and excites both the Players and the Arbiter.

POTENTIAL CAMPAIGNS:

- Company of Mercenaries
- Division of Conscripted Soldiers
- Crew of Free Pirates
- Gang of Outlaw Bandits
- Alliance of Rebel Folk Heroes
- Party of Raiders
- Contingent of Royal Guards
- Pack of Huntsmen and Trappers
- Guild of Assassins
- Court of Scheming Nobles
- Band of Wandering Performers
- Traveling Trade Caravan
- Team of Gladiators

After the Players and the Arbiter have settled on a general idea, the Arbiter should explain the premise of the Campaign to the Players. They should include a bit about the setting, who the Characters might be, and what antagonists or problems they may face. It is important that the conflict presented in the premise is a problem for all the Characters.

This game will take place in eastern Tarn, and you are all somehow bound to House Thorn. Under an inept Lord, House Thorn is the weakest of the Noble Houses, and is facing ruin at the hands of Inorn raiders, a famine, and a mysterious bandit king who plagues the high roads. Whispers of rebellion simmer in the minds of peasants and court nobles alike.

This gives the Players a good idea about the kinds of protagonists that make sense for the game, the type of conflicts they are likely to encounter, and potential outcomes for the game. Players should collaborate to create Characters that will all be invested in solving the core problem of the Campaign together.

All stories are driven by conflict. Creating complex dramatic situations is key for an engaging Campaign. Moral dilemmas such as those charged with ideological quandaries, cultural, religious, or romantic elements, or involving social issues such as corruption, class, or poverty can be a strong and gripping foundation for a Campaign or Chapter. It is the Arbiter's duty to present the Players with clear problems that have unclear solutions.

CREATING A CHARACTER

Characters are the pieces through which the Players will interact with the world of the game. When imagining a Character it is important to consider what you want to do and how you want to play. A good Character is one that holds your interest and excitement and affords room for exploration and growth. Once the Arbiter has explained the premise of the Campaign and you have an idea for a Character in mind, follow the steps below to build them in the game.

Use the Character Sheets provided in the back of the book to record important information about your Character throughout the game.

All Characters in Blood and Bone are defined by five sets of factors: Beliefs, Complications, Attributes, Skills, and Traits. Below is a brief summary of the steps required to make a Character for Blood and Bone. It is a useful tool for guiding new Players through the creation process, or as a reference to aid experienced Players in quickly generating Characters.

- Create three Beliefs: World, Other, and Self
- Create or select a Complication
- Distribute Attribute points (5 Points)
- Spend Skill points (6 Points)
- Select Traits (3 Traits)

BELIEFS

On creation, each Player writes three distinct Beliefs for their Character to guide them through the story. Beliefs are what define a Character and declare to the other Players who that Character is and what they do. One focuses on the World, one on the Other, and one on the Self. When a Character's actions are strongly fueled by one of their Beliefs, the Arbiter may grant them a small bonus called Tenacity. A Character's Beliefs may change as they develop throughout the story.

COMPLICATIONS

Complications are flaws that further develop a Character. They somehow inhibit or hinder the Character in interesting ways and help to create dramatic situations. Each Character has at least one Complication. The Arbiter may grant Tenacity to reward a Player's exceptional enactment of their Character's Complication.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are the four primary physical and mental facets that define a Character's innate abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Mind, and Presence. They usually range from 0 to 5 and play a central role in how a Character interacts with the world around them. Characters receive a bonus Attribute point with every third Trait gained.

Characters begin with 5 Attribute points to allocate. No Attribute may be above 3 at creation. These Attribute Points include a bonus point granted by the initial 3 Traits.

After a Player allocates their Attributes, they should calculate their derived Combat Attributes. These include Vitality, Evasion, Armor, Alacrity, and Power.

SKILLS

Skills are particular trained actions in which a Character can gain proficiency. There are five Skill Ranks: Novice, Apprentice, Adept, Expert, and Master. When relevant, they affect the outcome of a Character's interaction with their surroundings. Skill Ranks are advanced by spending Skill Points; each point increases a Skill by one Rank. Two Skill Points are awarded at the end of each Chapter.

Characters begin with 6 Skill points to spend

TRAITS

Traits are specific techniques or aspects that set a Character apart from others. Each can only be learned once, and becomes a permanent part of the Character that provides hard mechanical bonuses in specific situations. Characters gain a Trait at the end of each Chapter.

Characters begin with 3 Traits

CHAPTERS AND ADVANCEMENT

Characters advance by completing Chapters to gain Traits and Skills.

Chapters are small complete narrative arcs or episodes within the greater story of a Campaign, that last a session or two. If Players are starting the Campaign with inexperienced Characters, the first few Chapters should each last only a single session to allow the Characters to solidify their identities through earning Traits and Skills. If Players are committed to a longer Campaign, the Arbiter may choose to only grant these benefits every other Chapter.

On completion of a Chapter, each Character gains 1 Trait and 2 Skill Points. A Character no longer receives these benefits after they have achieved their 12th Trait. Every third Trait a Character receives, they also receive a bonus Attribute point.

On Chapter Completion:

+1 Trait

+2 Skill Points

+1 Attribute Point (Every 3 Chapters)

In most games, Characters begin with 5 Attribute Points, 3 Traits, and 6 Skill Points as though they have already completed three Chapters. These three assumed Chapters signify the Character's backstory before the game begins.

In some Campaigns, Characters might begin as entirely inexperienced folk such as peasants or children, with only 1 Trait. Other Campaigns might jump right in, with the Players making seasoned professional soldiers; grizzled veterans with 6 Traits. Some more advanced Campaigns might even features asymmetric Trait levels, such as a narrative about an old Abkhazi master and her young student traveling the land, in which she begins with 10 Traits and her apprentice 3.

ADVANCEMENT TABLE:

Chapter	Attribute Points	Traits	Skill Points
1	4	1	2
2	4	2	4
3	5	3	6
4	5	4	8
5	5	5	10
6	6	6	12
7	6	7	14
8	6	8	16
9	7	9	18
10	7	10	20
11	7	11	22
12	8	12	24

Often one Chapter will begin almost immediately after the last left off. Other times, the narrative may step forward in time. The Arbiter may simply say "You travel for two days on the road to Brigill, undisturbed save for the soft grey rain, dampening supplies and spirits with its chill." Sometimes large spans of time will be bridged with mere words: "The winter was cold and hard, and you lost many good men."

Between Chapters it may be appropriate to jump many years or even decades into the future, providing the Arbiter opportunity to describe broad shifts in the Campaign setting.

Ultimately this is dependent on the scope of the Campaign, and should be something understood and agreed upon by all the Players.



BELIEFS

Characters are defined by their Beliefs, the fundamental ideas that drive them. Beliefs represent a Character's explicit outlook and their Player's goals. They help solidify what kind of Character their Player wants them to be, what they want to do, and how they are tied to the Premise of the Campaign and the other Characters. Beliefs let the Arbiter and other Players know what you as a Player want out of the Campaign, and help you to tell a better story together. Consider the types of activities you want to experience.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES:

- Skillful fighting
- Diplomatic negotiations
- Experimenting with alchemy
- Amassing a huge fortune
- Becoming a folk hero
- Pursuing romance
- Exploring the world
- Mastering swordsmanship
- Rising to power
- Seeking revenge
- Unraveling mysteries
- Defending the weak
- Making reckless choices
- Being a leader
- Acting as a skillful tactician

Beliefs are meant to be challenged. They can grow stronger or weaker, be shattered, and even betrayed. They can change as Characters grow and develop over the course of a Campaign, or remain the solid bastions that define a Character's journey.

Any time a Character gains a Trait, at the beginning or end of a Chapter, they may alter one or more Beliefs. Altering Beliefs is not mandatory; rather, it should be done rarely and only when a large shift occurs in a Character or the narrative.

A strong Belief is a compounded Ideology and Action. They are unambiguous and have no verbal nuance. Try the following formulas:

I think A, so I'll do B.
Because of A, I want B, so I'll do C.

My family is weak, and I must lead it if it is to prosper, so I must earn the favor of the Lord Thorn to ensure my position at its head.

This Belief combines an "Idea" (My family is weak.)
With "What" the Character will do about it (I must lead it if it is to prosper.)
And "How" the Character intends to do it (I must earn the favor of the Lord Thorn.)

Each Player should make one Belief about some aspect of the Premise of the Campaign (World Belief), one about another Player's Character (Other Belief), and one your Character has about themselves (Self Belief).

WORLD BELIEF

The World Belief directly connects your Character to a key part of the Premise of the Campaign and their goals regarding it. It could relate to a Character, a faction, impending conflict, recent disaster, or any other force requiring immediate action. Pick something that interests you as a Player, and think about your Character's opinion on it. How do they view it and feel about it? Consider how they will act based on this opinion, and what has prevented them from doing so already, or what stands in their way now.

The Arbiter may want to use this Belief to unite the Players under a common cause. Using our previous example, they might say the Campaign is about an impending disaster in Tarn. Each Player should have their Character's Belief provide a reason for them to sympathize with House Thorn or have animosity towards the factors that threaten it. Being bound by a similar World Belief helps move the story forwards while giving all Characters the opportunity to be true to their concept.

Malik's World Belief: House Thorn is the only power holding order in eastern Tarn, and if it falls many Eskarn will suffer. For the sake of my people I will use my might to defeat the House's enemies wherever I find them.

Elaria's World belief: Before he died, the Lord of House Thorn took me in even though I'm his bastard. I owe him my life, and I will defend House Thorn with my guile and my bow to the very end.

OTHER BELIEF

The Other Belief pertains directly to another Player's Character. Pick a Character that interests you as a Player, and think about your Character's feelings about or towards that Character. You may wish to help or hinder them in some way.

Malik's Other Belief: I loved Elaria's father as a brother and owed him my life. To pay this debt, I must protect his daughter's honor and person with my steel as if she were my own.

This tells us a lot about this Character. It is stronger than the simple expression of a statistic characteristic. We know from this that he is loyal, and imbued with a sense of honor and duty beyond the simple idea that he will protect Elaria. More importantly, it tells the Arbiter and other Players what types of activities his Player wants from the game. He wants to fight to protect others. Ideals of honor and bonds of kinship are important to him.

A strong Belief like this opens up the possibility for exciting interactions between Characters.

Elaria's Other Belief: As I grew to maturity, my adoration of Mailk became something more, but because he is half Eskarn and I am of Noble Tarnish blood, this love can never be. I must act coldly towards him while harboring my secret feelings.

This belief already strongly colors their interactions and adds potential for future intrigue. When Malik finds out, he may then be conflicted over Elaria's role as a surrogate daughter or perhaps reciprocate her amorous feelings. Malik's Player might even be inspired by this narrative avenue and shape his backstory to add fuel to it. He could say that Malik was always in love with Elaria's mother, whom she very much resembles, but who chose Elaria's father over him.

This is just one of a multitude of engaging interactions made possible by a strong Belief. Perhaps Elaria hates Malik, blaming him for her father's death, and wants nothing to do with what she views as his attempt at penance.

Even though each Player only makes a single Other Belief, they are encouraged when creating their Character to discuss potential shared backstory that may tie them to other Characters. The Other Belief simply represents the strongest or most interesting of these connections that a Player wishes to explore.

SELF BELIEF

The Self Belief is the most complex of the three, and is often the most difficult for new Players to craft well. It is a philosophical Belief, tied to one of the Character's moral or ethical priorities. The most interesting Characters will have this third Belief in some way come into tension with the other two.

Malik's Self Belief: I am of Eskarn blood, the Inorn are my kinsmen, and the Tarnish have caused much wrong to my people. I will uphold my bonds of blood and clan before those of gold or fealty.

Elaria's Self Belief: I have always resented being a bastard. I can lead the House better than my half brother, and I will use subterfuge to ensure that I sit upon my father's throne.



COMPLICATIONS

Complications are core negative or detrimental facets of a Character's personality. Each Character must start with at least one Complication. A Player may invent their own Complication or choose one from the following list.

MUTE:

You rarely speak. Perhaps you were born mute, or became mute after witnessing a terrible and traumatic event. Perhaps you had your tongue cut out as a punishment for some transgression or perhaps your silence may be voluntary, a solemn vow as penance or promise.

LONER:

Your trust is not easily earned. Even those you do trust, you never trust completely. You think everyone should be able to take care of themselves; if they can't, it's their own fault. You often have trouble saying thanks.

COWARDLY:

If things are going south, you're likely to save yourself. Even if you care for your companions, the fear for your own life is greater. Even if you're a fighter, you'd rather slit a man's throat than risk a fair fight.

COLD:

You are incapable of feeling empathy or understanding the emotional connections of others. You see others as tools to be manipulated, even by lies, and show no remorse or shame for your actions.

GREEDY:

You cannot resist the temptation of wealth or power. You will do terrible things for gold or valuables, even at great risk. You believe that coins or station can afford you happiness, and you're willing to pay whatever price it takes to get them.

TROUBLED:

You are haunted by memories of war, violence, or other trauma. You often have nightmares, replaying past events. Sometimes you experience flashbacks, triggered when presented with similar situations or placed under duress.

VENGEFUL:

There is a particular enemy you hate more than anything. They have done you an irreparable wrong. When stirred, this hatred can blind you and make you unreasonable. You would do anything to see this enemy fall.

NEAR-BLIND:

Your vision is blurred. Your sight is terribly impaired. You may have been born this way, or lost your vision through some sickness, accident, or act of violence.

SURVIVOR:

You have lost too many friends, and are slow to make new ones. You are slow to show warmth or form relationships, often keeping others distant for fear you might lose them.

ARROGANT:

You are always right. Everyone else is beneath you. You've been told your pride will be your undoing, but you are confident in your abilities.

THIEVING:

You cannot help but take loose coins and precious things that catch your eye. It's not avarice, it's that you just have to take it. You steal for the rush; it is compulsive.

DRUNK:

You'd always like a drink, and a drink always makes you want another. Seldom without cup in hand, or wineskin at your belt, you need to be drinking. It helps you sleep, or forget, or remember.

RESENTFUL:

You grow bitter at perceived slights. You remember all wrongs against you and allow them to fester in your heart. Everything is meant personally and that is how you take it.

SECRETIVE:

You harbor a great secret that could be your undoing or cause great harm to those you love should it come to light. No one can ever know what you know.

WRATHFUL:

You are quick to anger. Insult and frustration add fuel to your simmering temper. You lash out verbally or violently at perceived provocation.

LUSTFUL:

You have a weakness for carnal pleasures. If you find someone attractive, they have immediate power over you. Perhaps there is a particular brand of this vice you desire most of all.

LOOSE TONGUED:

You often say what you feel even when it is not appropriate. Perhaps you are too clever for your own good, a cynic with a sharp tongue, or an innocent fool oblivious to your blunders.

INDEBTED:

You owe your life to a powerful entity, be they an organization or individual. They use this to their advantage frequently and with little or no hope of reparation.

INTOLERANT:

You are strongly partial to your own creed and intolerant of others. You favor those who appear similar to you almost as much as you dislike those who do not.

CRUEL:

You take pleasure in causing pain. You will go out of your way to harm others for the sheer enjoyment of it, be it physical or mental. You delight in hurting others and do it without a trace of remorse.

FANATIC:

You have excessive zeal for a particular subject. Perhaps you are extremely religious, or unshakably devoted to a leader or cause. The ends always justify vicious means. Sometimes you do things for your group that they wouldn't agree with, but you do it for their own good.

GRUFF:

You have coarse manners and a lack of social graces. You seem to have a knack for committing social blunders and landing yourself in awkward or downright hostile situations.

REBELLIOUS:

You cannot help but flout authority. You'll break a law or disobey an order just for the sake of it. You instantly dislike those who command a higher station than yourself.

OBEDIENT:

You have unwavering faith in a particular institution or to a particular individual. You are loyal to a fault and will obey them without question.

HEROIC:

You have a desire to save everyone and always do right. You will always risk your own life or put yourself at risk for the sake of others. You wouldn't kill a defenseless foe, even if it proved wise or prudent.

FEARFUL:

You have a particular phobia that renders you helpless. It might be being alone and abandoned, being trapped in dark spaces, or some small thing that sows terror in the dark corners of your mind.

GAMBLING:

You love to take risks, gamble, and can't resist a challenge. You never back down from a wager, no matter the odds. Be it literal dice and bets or daredevil risks, you live to beat the odds.

GUILTY:

You blame yourself for everything even when it's not your fault. Every death or injury of those around you weighs on your conscience.

CHILDISH:

You are whimsical or naive, a poor judge of character and wont to be taken advantage of. Others may not take you seriously, viewing you as puerile or simple minded, but you simply experience the world in a different way.

LAWFUL:

You have a creed you live by, a code of honor you never stray from. Any violator of your precepts, no matter how close to you, is not above the code.

DWARF:

Your growth is stunted and you are extremely short, no taller than a child. You are frequently mocked, scorned, and treated as less than a man.

DEVIANT:

You act in a way contrary to what your culture dictates, flaunting its established concepts of gender or social roles and structure.

SUPERSTITIOUS:

You believe the old stories. Your exact notions are born from the culture you were formed in, but regardless of their specifics you believe in supernatural forces, prophecy, and luck.

OUTLAW:

You are an outlaw. Perhaps you were outlawed for a crime you did or did not commit, or for your perceived allegiance to a downcast group or bloodline. Whatever the reason, you are now hunted by a powerful force.

OUTCAST:

You have been banished from a place or group. Whether you earned your exile or not, you are no longer welcome by some. Whether for your own crimes or actions, or those of your kin or affiliates, some may react to you with hostility.

BASTARD:

Born of a cultural taboo, you are a second-class person shamed by your name and lineage. Born of some scandal, illegitimacy or forbidden love, your relationship to your kin may be complicated.

DISFIGURED:

Whether through birth or accident, you are hideously deformed. Your disfigurement is apparent for all to see, and is not easily concealed.

MENACING:

Justified or not, you are threatening to people. Maybe you're large, or just have an intense way about you, but you make people uneasy.

CRIPPLED:

Most normal injuries can be healed with Blood, but not always. The poor often do not have access to Blooded healing. Even if they do, a poor healer might mend bone and flesh incorrectly. They are also unable to replace a limb that has been destroyed or lost.

Malik chooses the Outcast complication, deciding that he has been exiled by his Eskarn tribe for his association with House Thorn.

Elaria chooses Bastard for her complication, as it ties nicely into her beliefs and lets the other Players and the Arbiter know how central it is to her character concept.

GRIZZLED CHARACTER

A Player may elect to give their Character an extra complication to enhance roleplaying opportunities. This may happen once at Character creation or during a significant point in the Character's story. Characters should not have more than two complications except in rare circumstances. Like Beliefs, some complications can be resolved through play, but a Character must always have at least one.



ATTRIBUTES

Every Character is defined by four core Attributes that represent their physical and mental abilities. They are typically scored from 0 to 5, with 0 reflecting the average human. If a Character is significantly below average in an Attribute, they will not only have a score of 0, but often a relevant Complication. A score of 5 is considered to be the limit of human capabilities.

These points provide a bonus to all rolls that are governed by that Attribute.

3 Mind would result in a +3 to all Mind-based Checks.

Player Characters start with a pool of 5 Attribute Points — a base of 4, plus 1 from their first 3 Traits.

A Character may never have a higher attribute than their number of Traits.

Through progression, no Attribute may exceed 5.

Characters gain an extra Attribute Point for every three Traits (3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th Traits). This includes the three Traits gained at creation.

With five points, a Character can start with one of the following Attribute arrangements:

3,2,0,0
3,1,1,0
2,2,1,0
2,1,1,1

These 5 points represent that the Player Characters have some prominent or definitive characteristics. The average human may have as few as 0 Attribute Points, and truly exceptional humans may have as many as 10.

STRENGTH

Strength is a Character's physical constitution and power. Characters with high Strength scores are characterized by their might and endurance. Strength is required to use some armor and weapons effectively. Strength also plays a role in determining a Character's chance of hitting a foe and inflicting devastating attacks (Major Wounds). It is also used in determining Vitality and staving off diseases and poisons.

Each point of Strength increases Vitality by 1 (see page 14).

Each Point of Strength may grant a +1 Chance of Major Wounds (page 30).

Example Strength Checks:
Move a cart with a broken axle
Break down a door
Lift an injured companion
Swim in a storm at sea
Climb a castle wall

DEXTERITY

Dexterity is a Character's agility of body and the quickness of their hand and blade. Dexterity is used in determining turn order (Alacrity) and a Character's chance of avoiding attacks (Evasion). Dexterity also affects a Character's chance to hit and the chance to inflict Major Wounds with some weapons.

Each point of Dexterity increases Evasion by 1 (see page 14).

Each Point of Dexterity increases Alacrity by 1 (see page 14).

Each Point of Dexterity may grant +1 Chance of Major Wounds (see page 30).

Example Dexterity Checks:
Leap from a balcony to a walltop
Avoid falling rocks on a cliffside path
Scale a dilapidated rooftop
Flourish a knife
Balance on a ship's deck

MIND

Mind represents a Character's mental capabilities. It can manifest as the cleverness of a street urchin, the raw intellect of a brilliant alchemist, the wisdom of a hermit, or the iron will of a warrior. It is a key attribute for Blooded. Mind is a factor used to determine turn order (Alacrity), and also increases the number of unique Reactions a Character is able to take each Round.

Each point of Mind increases your number of Reactions by 1 (see page 30).

Each Point of Mind increases Alacrity by 1 (see page 14).

Mind affects many Blooded Traits.

Example Mind Checks:
Memorize the turns you took to descend into the catacombs
Solve a riddle or win a game of skill
Recall facts or information
Remain composed upon seeing a horrific sight
Formulate a cunning plan

PRESENCE

Presence is a Character's ability to call social attention towards themselves and use it to their advantage. It may manifest itself in different ways; a Character could have great beauty, a skillful tongue, or charismatic manner. However, even a barbarian king — scarred and without social graces — could exude a strong Presence with his attitude of dominance and command. Presence also increases the amount of Tenacity a Character begins each Chapter with.

Each point of Presence increases your starting Tenacity by 1 (see page 14).
Presence affects many Blooded Traits

Example Presence Checks:
Tell a compelling story
Charm a soldier
Befriend a stranger
Put on a riveting performance
Stand out at a feast

Malik decides he is big and strong with a powerful demeanor.

Strength: 3
Dexterity: 0
Mind: 0
Presence: 2

Elaria wants to be lithe, nimble, and clever.

Strength: 0
Dexterity: 2
Mind: 2
Presence: 1

COMBAT ATTRIBUTES

VITALITY

A Character's Vitality represents their physical fortitude and will to live. When a Character receives a number of Wounds (see page 30) equal to their current Vitality, they die. Wounds can be healed by Blood, or else mend naturally over time.

$Vitality = 3 + Strength + Traits$

Malik has 6 Vitality, the sum of his base (3) plus his Strength (3)

Elaria has 4 Vitality, the sum of her base (3) plus the Tough Trait (1)

EVASION

A Character's Evasion is the CR their attacker is attempting to meet or exceed in order to land a successful blow. Characters with higher Evasion are better at avoiding blows.

$Evasion = 10 + Dexterity + Shield + Traits$
Note: Dexterity may be limited by Armor or Shields

Malik has 12 Evasion. He adds his base (10) to his shield (2)

Elaria has 13 Evasion. She adds her base (10) to her Dexterity (3)

ARMOR

Armor acts as an extra layer of defense above Evasion. If an attacker beats the Evasion of their target but fails to beat their Armor, any Wounds they would receive are halved. A Wound becomes a Minor Wound, and Minor Wounds are absorbed entirely.

$Armor = Evasion + Armor Bonus + Traits$

Malik's Armor extends from 12-16. He has 12 Evasion, and an Armor Bonus of 4 from his scale mail. Any attacks that meet or exceed his Evasion but fall within this range are mitigated.

Elaria's Armor extends from 13-16. She has 13 Evasion, and gains 2 Armor from her studded leather plus 1 from the Ironclad Trait.

ALACRITY

Alacrity represents how fast on their feet and quick on the uptake a Character is. Natural reflexes and keen senses combine to make Alacrity. Alacrity determines turn order — Characters interact from highest Alacrity to lowest. It may be helpful to have Players sit in their turn order. The Arbiter should always have a list of the Players' Characters' statistics in front of them.

In the event of a tie, the Character with the higher Dexterity goes first. If their Dexterity is equal, the Arbiter decides the order. If the tie is between Player and non-Player Characters, it is recommended they favor the Players. A Player may always choose to treat their Character's Alacrity as a lower number if they have yet to take a Turn in the Round.

$Alacrity = Dexterity + Mind + Modifiers$

Malik has 0 Alacrity. Both his Mind and Dexterity are 0.

Elaria has 4 Alacrity. She adds 2 from her Mind and 2 from her Dexterity.

TENACITY

Tenacity is a resource given by the Arbiter to the Players, that can be expended to gain certain bonuses or fuel Traits. All Characters reset to their starting Tenacity at the beginning of each Chapter. They may be awarded additional Tenacity by the Arbiter for exceptional role playing. You may spend one Tenacity to gain Advantage (see page 18) on a single Check or give Advantage to another Character.

- Gain Advantage
- Give Advantage to another Character

Tenacity is awarded by the Arbiter when a Character acts in accordance with their Beliefs or Complications in a notable or exceptional way. Any time a Player

chooses to roleplay their Character's Beliefs or Complications in such a way that it creates a difficult situation for their Character or affects the story in an interesting way, the Arbiter should award them a point of Tenacity.

There is no limit on how much Tenacity a Character can have, but it resets to their starting amount at the beginning of each Chapter.

Starting Tenacity = 1 + Presence

Malik begins each Chapter with 3 Tenacity. His base 1 is added to his 2 Presence.

Alaria begins each Chapter with 2 Tenacity. Her base 1 is added to her 1 Presence.

POWER

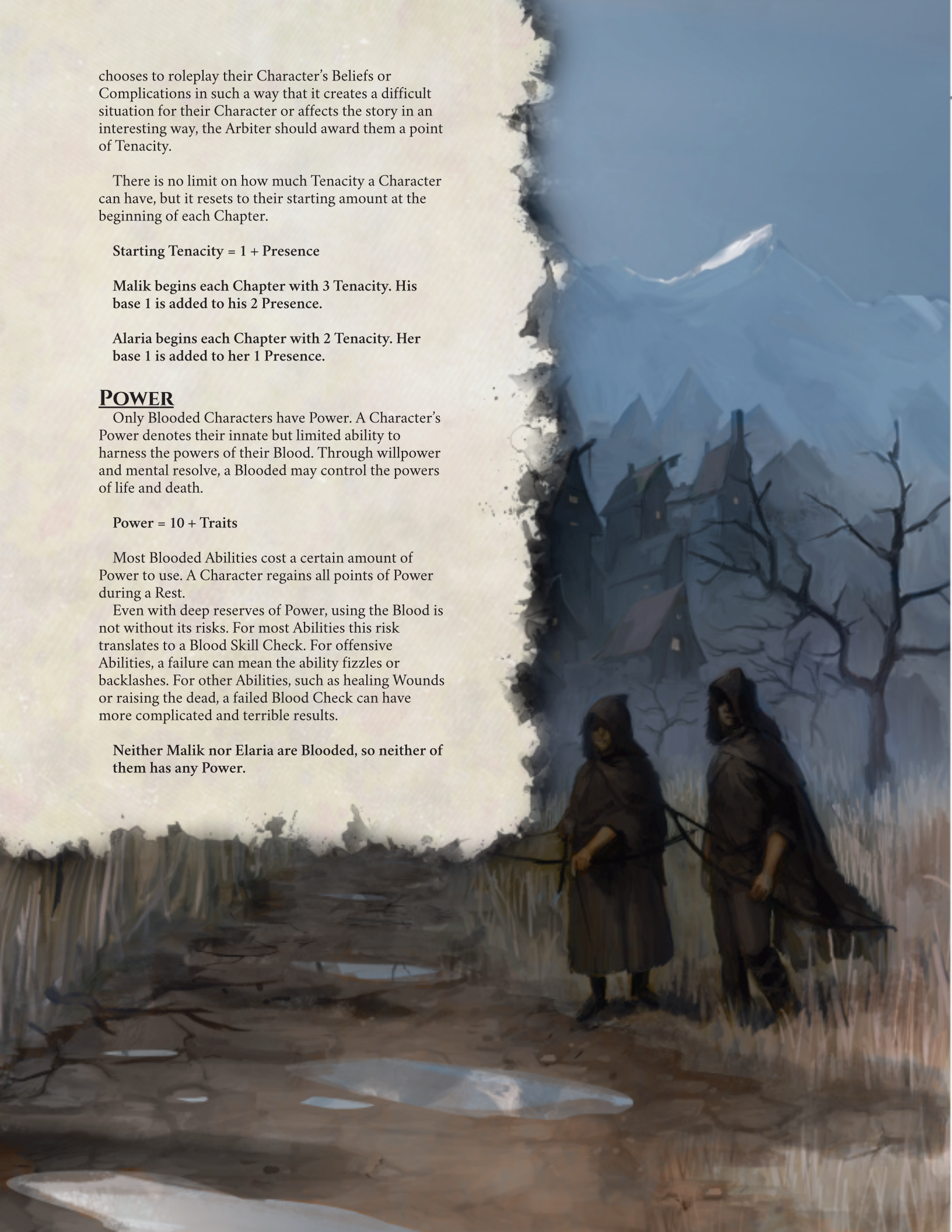
Only Blooded Characters have Power. A Character's Power denotes their innate but limited ability to harness the powers of their Blood. Through willpower and mental resolve, a Blooded may control the powers of life and death.

Power = 10 + Traits

Most Blooded Abilities cost a certain amount of Power to use. A Character regains all points of Power during a Rest.

Even with deep reserves of Power, using the Blood is not without its risks. For most Abilities this risk translates to a Blood Skill Check. For offensive Abilities, a failure can mean the ability fizzles or backlashes. For other Abilities, such as healing Wounds or raising the dead, a failed Blood Check can have more complicated and terrible results.

Neither Malik nor Elaria are Blooded, so neither of them has any Power.



SKILLS

If a Character is trained in a particular action, they will have a Rank in that Skill and roll a bonus die when attempting challenges to which the Skill applies. Skill dice reflect a Character's level of mastery in a particular Skill. The more Skilled that a Character is in that particular action, the larger the die they will roll. Each dice step is referred to as a Rank. There are five possible Ranks, ranging from Novice to Master.

When rolling a Skill Check, the Character rolls both a Skill die and a twenty-sided die and sums the result. They also add the Skill's governing Attribute. A Skill Check must equal or exceed the assigned CR in order to be successful

Rank 1: Novice — 1d4
Rank 2: Apprentice — 1d6
Rank 3: Adept — 1d8
Rank 4: Expert — 1d10
Rank 5: Master — 1d12

All Skills begin as untrained.

Characters gain 2 Skill Points after each Chapter.

A Skill can be increased one Rank by spending a Skill Point.

A Character may only invest one Skill Point per Skill per Chapter.

Depth of knowledge requires a broad foundation. Characters may not increase a Skill by spending Skill Points if its Rank would be higher than the number of Ranked Skills they currently possess. In other words, to become an Expert (Rank 4), you also need to know at least four Skills total. To become a Master (Rank 5) you also need to know at least five Skills total. Note that since they do not use Skill Points, Traits that increase Skill Ranks ignore this rule.

Malik is raising his Fighting Skill to Expert (Rank 4). He has three other Skills: Survival Apprentice (Rank 2), Intimidation Novice (Rank 1), and Perception Novice (Rank 1). Since he knows a total of 4 Skills, he can advance Fighting to the fourth Rank.

Even if a Character has a Master Rank in swords, that does not mean they are necessarily the best swordsman in the world. Maybe they have natural talent, maybe they've practiced parries and swings in an academy for their entire life, but the best swordsmen are the product of a combination of Traits, Skills, and Attributes. Their natural Skill will be tempered with a honed body and mind, and perfected with practiced maneuvers and special techniques.

Malik becomes a Novice in Fighting, Intimidation, Survival, and Perception.

Elaria becomes a Novice in Archery, Thievery, Stealth, and Manipulation.

Challenge Ratings

Very Easy: 5
Easy: 10
Moderate: 15
Hard: 20
Very Hard: 25
Extremely Hard: 30
Nearly Impossible: 35

SKILL LIST

STRENGTH OR DEXTERITY

Fighting

DEXTERITY

Thievery
Stealth
Archery

MIND

Learned
Survival
Perception
Apothecary

PRESENCE

Intimidation
Performance
Manipulation
Insight

MIND OR PRESENCE

Blood



STRENGTH OR DEXTERITY

Fighting: Your Fighting Skill Check covers all attempts to physically harm another Character at close quarters. It encompasses everything from punches and kicks to improvised weapons, such as a rock or broken antler. All melee weapons use the Fighting Skill. It is opposed by Evasion and Armor.

DEXTERITY

Thievery: Your Thievery Skill Check is made when attempting to perform sleight of hand, such as picking a pocket or stealing a coin purse. It is also used for concealing small items, whether stowing a dagger in your boot to avoid detection or palming a coin.

Stealth: Your Stealth Skill Check is made when you wish to remain unseen. It can be used to move silently through a dark forest or down a shadowed hall. It can be used to slip away undetected or hide. Even in plain sight, it can allow you to remain inconspicuous at a lavish banquet, or to move unnoticed through a crowded market.

Archery: An Archery Skill Check is made when attempting to shoot a Character with a bow or crossbow. It is opposed by Evasion and Armor.

MIND

Learned: Your Learned Skill measures how knowledgeable you are about the people and customs of Ossura. It can be used to recall obscure historical facts, identify prominent nobles, their coat of arms, seals, or liveries. It can also be used to recall information about the laws and customs of a particular place or peoples.

Survival: Your Survival Skill allows you to navigate the harsh wilds of Ossura. It can be used to find your way in the wilderness, forage for food, build a fire, or predict the weather. Tracking, trapping, or hunting, and handling animals are all part of Survival.

Perception: Perception is a measure of how attentive and observant a Character is. It is used when attempting to notice concealed objects. It can be used to spot or hear things others might miss.

Apothecary: An Apothecary Check lets you use basic herbalism and alchemical processes to create various potions, poisons, and medicines. The Apothecary section (page 52-53) expands on the many strange ingredients and elixirs of Ossura.

PRESENCE

Intimidation: Intimidation is used when you attempt to influence someone by means of a threat, menacing act, or show of violence.

Performance: Your Performance Skill determines how well you can entertain or influence an audience. It could be through beautiful music, rousing oration, or captivating storytelling. This Skill is also used for impersonation, to deceive others when you are pretending to be someone or something you are not.

Music is present in each of the realms of men. To the Inorn they are sounds of battle and revelry. Warhorns and drums signal both raids and homecomings, and songs are sung in both battle and in feast. In Tarn, gut-stringed or silver stringed harps and lutes can be found in noble houses, and in the hands of tavern bards, whose skills are known throughout the land. The Abkahzi play on flutes of clay or ancestral bone, each note a whisper to their dark gods.

Manipulation: The Manipulation Skill is used when attempting to sway Characters with your words. Manipulation can be honest or dishonest; both lies and the truth can be used to appeal to others through deception or persuasion. It can be used to negotiate prices or negotiate peace, to bribe a guard or charm information out of a shopkeeper.

Insight: Your Insight allows you to see through lies and discern a Character's true intentions or motivations. By reading body language and facial expressions, Insight can be used to sense a Character's mood and help predict their actions.

MIND OR PRESENCE

Blood: The Blood Skill measures a Character's mastery over the Blood. Most Blooded Abilities require a Blood Skill Check to succeed, and often have dire consequences for failure. Blood can repair or destroy all living things; spoiling food, rotting wood, and withering flesh like unseen fire.

CONTESTED CHECKS

If two Characters directly oppose one another's Checks, the CR is determined by one of the Character's rolls. Such rolls are frequently opposed by the same Attribute or Skill, such as Intimidation vs Intimidation or Strength vs Strength. They can also be asymmetrical, such as Insight vs Manipulation or Stealth vs Perception. Generally, the Character who acts first sets the CR for the other.

In the mercenary camp, grizzled soldiers crowd around a stump as Malik armwrestles a burly captain. He rolls a Strength Check. The captain also rolls a Strength Check, effectively setting the CR.

Sometimes it makes sense for the Arbiter to use a static CR even when a contested roll could take place.

Elaria slowly reaches for a knife on the banquet table. She lowers it to her lap, and slips the silver blade up her sleeve. She rolls a Thievery Skill Check. Since the nearby nobles do not have defined Attributes, the Arbiter rules that their Check is a 10. The nobles are drinking, distracted, and focused on Malik's loud and raucous tale.

ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

Advantage is used when circumstances play an exceptional role in determining the outcome of a Character's actions. If unusual factors, internal or external, contribute to a Character's chance of success in a substantial way, they are considered to have Advantage. Tenacity, as well as many Traits, can also grant Advantage.

Characters with Advantage roll 2d20 instead of 1d20 for Checks, and take the higher result. If these factors hinder a Character's efforts in a similarly substantial way, they are considered to have Disadvantage. They roll 2d20 on Skill Checks and take the lower of the two dice. Skill dice are unaffected.

Separate instances of Advantage or Disadvantage are not cumulative. A Character either has Advantage or they do not. If a Character would have both Advantage and Disadvantage, they receive neither.

Malik boasts he can beat a brawler blindfolded. The brawler gladly accepts the challenge and bets are placed as a group of onlookers rings them. Malik ties a scrap of cloth over his eyes. Since he is unable to see, all the brawler's Fighting Skill Checks against him have Advantage, and all his Fighting Checks have Disadvantage.

Elaria is loosing an arrow at a raider who is crouched behind the overturned wreckage of a cart. Since he is partially obscured, she will have Disadvantage on her Archery Skill Check.

Common Examples:

Making an Archery Skill Check against a Character behind cover imposes Disadvantage.

Making an Archery Skill Check against an Adjacent Character with a bow imposes Disadvantage.

Making an Archery Skill Check against a Distant Character with a bow imposes Disadvantage.

Attacking an alert but unaware Character has Advantage.

Attacking an unalert but aware Character has Advantage.

Helping another Character perform a task can give Advantage.



TRAITS

Traits are the definitive features and abilities that a Character will gain as they progress through the game. Many Traits require certain Skill Ranks, Attribute scores, or even other Traits to learn.

Characters gain a Trait after each Chapter. A Character cannot have more than 12 Traits. If a Character already has 12 Traits when they complete a Chapter, they may replace a Trait with a new one, even if the removed Trait is a prerequisite for another they possess.

Traits grant access to both active and passive bonuses. Benefits are persistent passive effects that may modify Attributes, Skills, or other aspects of the game. Many Traits also grant access to powerful Actions, Reactions, and Desperate Actions (see pages 29-30).

1-4 Traits	Huntsman
5-8 Traits	Sellsword
9-12 Traits	Elite Assassin

Malik takes Scrapper, Dangerous, and Deadly.

Elaria takes Ironclad, Tough, and Archer.

TRAIT LIST

BLOODED

Prerequisite: This Trait must be selected at creation.

Benefit: You are Blooded and may take Blooded Abilities instead of Traits.

Benefit: You have 10 Power.

Benefit: Any human Character that dies near you restores 1 Power to you.

BLOODSENSE

Desperate Action: When targeted with a Blooded Ability, you may impose Disadvantage on all Blooded Skill Checks made against you for a round.

Benefit: You may make an Insight Skill Check (CR 15) to determine how powerful a Near Blooded is (the Arbiter will provide their Blood Skill Rank).

BLOODBREAKER

Prerequisites: Bloodsense, Master Fighting

Reaction: If you receive a wound from a Blooded Ability, you may attack the Character who wounded you with a Fighting or Archery Skill Check.

HOUND

Benefit: Choose a Character. Gain Advantage to all base Dexterity and Strength Checks that separate you from moving to them so long as they are Far or less distance away. This lasts until you take a Rest or Hound a different Character.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on an attack against your Hounded Character.

TOUGH

Prerequisite: Strength 1

Benefit: +1 Vitality.

Benefit: +2 Armor while unarmored.

Desperate Action: When you would take more than 1 Wound from a single attack, you may reduce it to 1.

SLAYER

Prerequisite: Strength 1 or Dexterity 1

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Fighting and Archery Skill Checks made against Risen.

Reaction: If more than two Risen make Fighting Skill Checks against you in a round, you may attack an Adjacent Risen with your Fighting or Archery Skill Check.

Desperate Action: Make a Fighting or Archery Skill Check against a Risen.

BERSERKER

Prerequisite: Strength 4

Benefit: After you receive a Wound that would result in your death, you may make a Strength Check (CR 10). If successful, you do not die but heal 1 Wound instead. Increase the CR by 5 each subsequent time the Check is made. A Rest returns the CR to 10.

DUAL WIELDER

Benefit: Your base Evasion becomes 10 + your Fighting Skill Rank while dual wielding swords, daggers, maces, axes, or katar.

Benefit: When you would inflict a Major Wound while dual wielding, inflict an additional Wound.

OPPORTUNIST

Prerequisites: Dual Wielder, Dexterity 2, Master Fighting

Reaction: If you successfully Evade while dual wielding swords, daggers, or katar, you may attack your attacker with your Fighting Skill.

BRUISER

Prerequisites: Dual Wielder, Strength 2, Master Fighting

Reaction: If you attack while dual wielding swords, axes, or maces, is mitigated by armor, you may make another attack with your Fighting Skill.

DERVISH

Prerequisites: Opportunist or Bruiser, Strength 3 or Dexterity 3

Desperate Action: While dual wielding, make a single Fighting Skill Check against a number of adjacent Characters up to your Dexterity or Strength.

IRONCLAD

Benefit: Armor requires 1 less Strength. You may forgo this benefit to have all Armor grant +1 Armor.

Benefit: Armor's Dexterity limit is increased by 1. You may forgo this benefit to have all armor grant +1 Armor.

RETALIATION

Prerequisites: Ironclad, Master Fighting Skill

Reaction: If an attack from an adjacent source is mitigated by your Armor, you may attack them with a Fighting Skill Check.

DANGEROUS

Prerequisite: Novice Fighting or Archery

Desperate Action: You may make an attack with your Fighting or Archery Skill Check as if you had Master Rank. If your Fighting or Archery Skill is Master Rank, this affects two Characters (make a single Skill Check).

Desperate Action: You may take one additional Reaction this turn.

DEADLY

Prerequisite: Novice Fighting

Benefit: Your base Evasion becomes 10 + your Fighting Skill Rank while wielding only a single one-handed weapon. You may also be use a shield and retain this bonus.

Benefit: +3 Chance of Major Wounds with one-handed weapons. Holding a shield or dual wielding reduces this benefit by 1.

SCRAPPER

Prerequisites: Strength 1 or Dexterity 1, Novice Fighting

Benefit: +3 Chance of Major Wounds when making unarmed Fighting Skill Checks.

Benefit: When you spend one Tenacity to gain Advantage on an unarmed attack, that attack inflicts Wounds as if you were armed.

FORMIDABLE

Prerequisites: Strength 1, Novice Fighting

Benefit: Your base Evasion becomes 10 + your Fighting Skill Rank while wielding a two handed axe, mace, or sword.

Benefit: When you would inflict a Major Wound with a two handed weapon, inflict an additional Wound.

BUTCHER

Prerequisites: Mighty, Strength 2, Adept Fighting

Benefit: The first time you would inflict a Wound or Major Wound each round with a two handed axe, mace, or sword, inflict one more Wound.

CLEAVER

Prerequisites: Mighty, Strength 3, Master Fighting

Reaction: If you kill a Character with a two-handed weapon, you may attack a Character adjacent to them.

MANSLAYER

Prerequisites: Cleaver, Strength 4

Benefit: When Cleaver's Reaction Skill Check exceeds a CR 25, you may attack an Adjacent Character.

MIGHTY

Prerequisites: Strength 1

Benefit: Gain Advantage on all non fighting Strength rolls to push, pull, or lift objects.

LASHER

Prerequisite: Dexterity 1, Novice Fighting

Benefit: Your base Evasion becomes 10 + your Fighting Skill Rank if using a spear or staff in both hands.

Reaction: If you were not adjacent to an enemy on your last turn, gain Advantage on your first Fighting Skill Check this turn with a two-handed spear or staff.

STAVES

Prerequisite: Lasher, Dexterity 2, Adept Fighting

Reaction: If you would make a Fighting Skill Check with Advantage when using a two-handed spear or staff, you may instead make an attack against two adjacent Characters (make a single Skill Check).

LANCER

Prerequisite: Staver, Dexterity 3, Master Fighting

Desperate Action: You may spend one Tenacity to make a Fighting Skill Check with a two-handed staff or spear against any number of Adjacent Characters (make a single Skill Check).

DUELIST

Prerequisite: Mind 1, Novice Fighting

Benefit: When you would make a Fighting Skill Check with Advantage, roll three d20 instead of two and take the highest of the three.

Benefit: If you are adjacent to only one other Character, gain +2 Chance of Major Wounds with Fighting Skill Checks.

SKIRMISHER

Prerequisite: Duelist, Mind 2, Master Fighting

Benefit: +1 Chance of Major Wounds on Fighting Skill Checks.

Benefit: Once per round, when you use a Reaction, you may use a Reaction you have already used this round.

CHARGER

Prerequisite: Apprentice Fighting

Benefit: +2 Chance of Major Wounds with Fighting Skill Checks if you have no Wounds.

Benefit: If you move to attack a Character who is not currently adjacent with a Fighting Skill Check, gain +2 Chance of Major Wounds.

Benefit: You may use your Strength instead of your Dexterity when calculating Alacrity.

RECKLESS

Prerequisites: Strength 1, Apprentice Fighting

Benefit: You may choose for all your Fighting Skill Checks, and for all attacks against you, to have Advantage for a round.

DIRTY FIGHTER

Prerequisite: Strength 1 or Dexterity 1, Apprentice Fighting

Reaction: If you fail to hit with an attack from your Fighting Skill, you may attack again with your Fighting Skill at Disadvantage.

Benefit: You may choose to make Fighting Skill Checks with Disadvantage. Whenever you make a successful Fighting Skill Check with Disadvantage, you inflict an additional Wound.

DEFENDER

Prerequisites: Strength 2, Apprentice Fighting

Benefit: Shields grant +1 Armor.

Reaction: If you do not move this turn, you may use a heavy shield to grant you cover for the round, imposing Disadvantage on Archery or Blood Skill Checks made against you.

SHILDBEARER

Prerequisites: Defender, Adept Fighting

Reaction: If you fail to inflict any kind of Wound on an attack with your Fighting Skill, you may make an extra attack to bash with your shield. This attack uses your Fighting Skill.

STALWART

Prerequisites: Shieldbearer, Strength 3, Master Fighting

Reaction: If you are adjacent to more than one Character who has attacked you this round, you may make an attack with your Fighting Skill.

Benefit: If you end your turn adjacent to three or more hostile Characters, you gain Advantage on your next Fighting Skill Check.

VIGILANT

Prerequisites: Shieldbearer, Strength 3, Master Fighting

Reaction: When an adjacent Character attacks a friendly Character adjacent to you, you may attack them with your Fighting Skill.

Reaction: If an adjacent ally that does not have the Vigilant Trait would receive one or more Wounds and you are wielding a shield, you may take the Wound or Wounds instead. It is mitigated as if by Armor.

SAVAGE

Prerequisites: Strength 1, Adept Fighting

Benefit: +1 Chance of Major Wounds for every two Wounds you have.

Reaction: If you receive a Major Wound and it is not mitigated by Armor, you may attack.

Desperate Action: You may take a Wound to make an attack with your Fighting Skill an additional time this turn.

AGILE

Prerequisite: Master Fighting

Benefit: +1 Armor while unarmored.

Benefit: +1 Alacrity while unarmored.

Benefit: +1 Chance of Major Wounds while unarmored.

Reaction: If you Wound an unwounded Character, you may attack them again with a Fighting Skill Check.

WARRIOR

Prerequisites: Master Fighting, Archery, or Blood

Benefit: +1 Chance of Major Wounds.

Reaction: If a Character ceases to be Adjacent to you on their own turn, you may use your Reaction to attack them.

Desperate Action: If you inflict a Major Wound, you may attack again.

IMPASSABLE

Prerequisites: Master Fighting

Benefit: +4 Armor.

Special: Your Dexterity may not increase your Evasion.

LIGHT-FOOTED

Prerequisite: Dexterity 2

Benefit: +2 Alacrity.

Benefit: +1 Evasion if you are wielding neither weapons nor shields.

Benefit: You may use your Thievery Skill for Dexterity-based Checks involving tumbling or acrobatics.

ATHLETIC

Prerequisites: Dexterity 3 or Strength 3, Light-Footed

Benefit: Gain Advantage to all Dexterity-based Checks to jump, climb, and tumble.

Benefit: Reduce falling damage by half as if it were mitigated by armor.

Desperate Action: Prevent up to two Wounds that would be received from falling.

NIMBLE

Prerequisites: Dexterity 4, Light-Footed

Desperate Action: All attacks against you have Disadvantage for the round.

Desperate Action: You may halve the Wounds from an attack that would hit you, as if by armor.

THROWER

Benefit: You may use your Thievery Skill to throw knives, axes and chakkar as an attack against an Adjacent or Near Character.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Thievery Skill Checks for concealing small knives on your person.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on a Thievery Skill Check to throw a knife, axe or chakkar.

QUICK FINGERED

Prerequisites: Dexterity 1, Novice Thievery

Benefit: Once per Thievery Skill Check to pick pockets or perform sleight of hand, you may re-roll all dice.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to all Thievery Checks involving dice, coins, rings, and jewelry.

Benefit: If you would fail a Skill Check to win a game, you may cheat by making a Thievery Skill Check at Advantage and using that result instead.

Benefit: Increase your Thievery Skill one Rank.

LOCKPICK

Prerequisite: Novice Thievery

Benefit: You may use your Thievery Skill to pick locks.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage to a Thievery Skill Check to pick a lock.

Benefit: Increase your Thievery Skill one Rank.

BURGLAR

Prerequisites: Lockpick, Mind 1, Master Thievery

Benefit: You can always find something to pick locks with, regardless of tools.

Benefit: Gain Advantage on Thievery Skill Checks to pick locks if you have lock picks.

Benefit: Once you have picked a lock, you automatically succeed at Thievery Skill Checks to open it again.

SUBTLE

Prerequisite: Novice Stealth

Benefit: You gain Advantage to Stealth Checks to blend with crowds.

Benefit: Survival Skill Checks to track you have Disadvantage.

Benefit: Increase your Stealth Skill one Rank.

CUTTHROAT

Prerequisite: Novice Stealth

Benefit: Major Wounds that result from Surprise Attacks made with Advantage inflict an additional Wound.

Benefit: Your Death Blows are silent.

Benefit: Increase your Stealth Skill one Rank.

AMBUSER

Prerequisites: Cutthroat, Master Stealth

Benefit: Wounds from Surprise Attacks against Characters who have not acted in the round reduce their Alacrity to zero for the round.

Benefit: You may choose to make any of your killing blows silent.

UNSEEN

Prerequisites: Dexterity 3, Master Stealth

Benefit: Gain Advantage on Stealth Skill Checks if you only move to an adjacent location on your turn.

Benefit: You may spend one Tenacity to reroll a Stealth Skill Check.

ARCHER

Benefit: +2 Alacrity if your bow or crossbow is readied.

Benefit: +1 Evasion while wielding a bow or crossbow.

Benefit: If you do not move on your turn, Major Wounds inflicted by your Archery Skill inflict an additional Wound.

CROSSBOWMAN

Benefit: +2 Alacrity if your crossbow is loaded.

Benefit: When you make an Archery Skill Check with a crossbow, you may treat your Skill as if it were two Ranks higher (this bonus cannot exceed Master Rank).

MARKSMAN

Prerequisites: Dexterity 1, Adept Archery

Benefit: +2 chance of Major Wounds with Archery Skill Checks.

Benefit: You may make Archery Skill Checks with a bow or crossbow at Distant Characters without Disadvantage.

Benefit: Partial cover does not impose Disadvantage on your Archery Skill Checks.

WARDEN

Prerequisites: Marksman, Dexterity 2, Master Archery

Benefit: +2 Evasion while wielding a bow or crossbow.

Benefit: You no longer have Disadvantage on Archery Skill Checks made against Adjacent Characters.

Reaction: If you attacked a Far or Distant Character with an Archery Skill Check, you may attack a Character Near or Adjacent to you as well.

RANGER

Prerequisites: Marksman, Dexterity 2, Master Archery

Benefit: Archery Skill Checks with bows, crossbows, or thrown weapons from a hidden position do not automatically reveal your position.

Reaction: If you make an Archery Skill Check against a Distant Character and inflict a Major Wound, you may attack a Character Adjacent to them as well.

TONGUED

Prerequisite: Mind 1

Benefit: Learn how to speak, read, and write two languages you don't already know.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on a Manipulation Skill Check made in either of those languages.

TRAVELED

Prerequisite: Mind 1

Benefit: Increase 3 different Skills one Rank.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Prerequisites: Traveled, Mind 4, Adept any Skill

Benefit: Increase 4 different Skills one Rank.

SCHOLAR

Prerequisites: Jack of All Trades, Mind 5, Master any Skill

Benefit: Increase 5 different Skills one Rank

Benefit: +1 to your lowest Attribute.

TACTICIAN

Prerequisites: Presence 1 and Mind 1

Benefit: Any time you could attack, you may forgo your attack to allow another Near Character to use their Reaction to attack instead. If you do not move, you may allow them to also move a Near distance.

Benefit: You may use your Learned Skill to discern martial information such as battle tactics, strategy, and logistics.

LEADER

Prerequisites: Tactician, Presence 2 or Mind 2

Benefit: When you would use your Tenacity to give Advantage to another Character, give it to up to two Characters instead.

Benefit: Gain Advantage when using your Learned Skill to discern martial information such as battle tactics, strategy, and logistics.

Desperate Action: If your Mind or Presence is 4 or greater, you can award another Character Tenacity in the same manner as the Arbiter.

WILLFUL

Prerequisite: Mind 2

Benefit: Gain 1 Vitality.

Benefit: If you have 4 or more Mind, gain 1 more Vitality.

ARTISAN

Prerequisite: Mind 3

Benefit: Pick a specific craft (i.e. blacksmithing). Your Learned Skill now applies to all Skill Checks involving this craft.

Desperate Action: When using your Learned Skill to craft, you may make the Skill Check with Advantage twice and take the highest of both rolls.

TUTORED

Prerequisites: Mind 1, Novice Learned

Benefit: Gain Advantage on Learned Skill Checks to identify nobles and other lords.

Benefit: Gain Advantage on Learned Skill Checks to recall the laws of cities or regions.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Learned Skill Checks to write eloquently in your native language.

Benefit: Increase your Learned Skill one Rank.

COUNTERFEITER

Prerequisites: Mind 2, Novice Learned, Novice Thievery

Benefit: You may use your Learned Skill to determine the authenticity of documents, art, coins, and other goods.

Benefit: You may use your Thievery Skill to forge false documents, art, coins, or other goods.

Benefit: You may use your Mind as the base for your Thievery Skill Checks involving Counterfeiter and to open locks.

Benefit: Increase your Thievery or Learned Skill one Rank.

DECEIVER

Prerequisites: Counterfeiter, Mind 3

Benefit: Gain Advantage to all Learned and Thievery Skill Checks pertaining to authenticating or forging documents, art, coins, and other goods.

Benefit: If you study an object such as a key, coin, or seal for a Turn you are able to remember it in exact detail.

Benefit: You may use your Learned Skill to mimic handwriting that you have seen.

Benefit: Increase your Thievery or Learned Skill one Rank.

BESTIAL

Prerequisites: Novice Survival

Benefit: You may use your Manipulation Skill on non-human animals at Advantage.

Benefit: You may use your Intimidation Skill on non-human animals at Advantage.

Benefit: You may use your Insight Skill on non-human animals at Advantage.

Benefit: Increase your Survival Skill one Rank.

HUNTSMAN

Prerequisites: Novice Survival

Benefit: Gain Advantage on all Survival Skill Checks to track Characters, lay traps, skin animals, or learn about beasts.

Benefit: Gain +2 Chance of Major Wounds against beasts.

Benefit: Increase your Survival Skill one Rank.

NOMAD

Prerequisite: Novice Survival

Benefit: You gain Advantage to Strength Checks against extreme climates, hunger, and thirst.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on a Survival Skill Check.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Survival Skill Checks to determine location and direction.

Benefit: Increase your Survival Skill one Rank.

WILDLING

Prerequisite: Novice Survival

Benefit: You may use your Survival Skill on all Dexterity-based Checks to climb or swim.

Benefit: You may use your Survival Skill instead of your Stealth Skill to hide and move silently in natural environments. If your Stealth Skill is Master Rank, gain Advantage to all such Skill Checks.

Benefit: Increase your Survival Skill one Rank.

HORSEMAN

Prerequisite: Apprentice Survival

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Fighting Skill Checks against unmounted Characters while mounted on a trained horse.

Benefit: Your trained horse gains +1 Evasion for each Rank of your Survival Skill.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Dexterity and Survival Checks to control trained mounts.

ALERT

Prerequisite: Expert Perception

Benefit: If your Alacrity is less than 10, treat it as if it were 10.

Benefit: Surprise attacks against you do not gain Advantage.

Benefit: Increase your Perception Skill one Rank.

POISONER

Prerequisite: Novice Apothecary

Benefit: You may spend one Tenacity to automatically succeed at a Strength Check against a poison after seeing the result.

Benefit: You have Advantage on all Strength Checks against poison.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to all Apothecary Skill checks to diagnose or identify poison.

Benefit: The CR to resist all poisons you create is increased by 2.

Benefit: Increase your Apothecary Skill one Rank.

POULTICER

Prerequisites: Novice Apothecary, Novice Survival

Benefit: You may spend one Tenacity to use a raw herb as if it were brewed. It takes on the effects of its brewed version.

Benefit: Gain Advantage on all Survival Checks pertaining to locating ingredients.

Benefit: You find twice as many herbs when foraging.

Benefit: The CR for you to make all poisons and potions is decreased by 2.

Benefit: Increase your Apothecary Skill one Rank.

MASTER ALCHEMIST

Prerequisites: Poulticer or Poisoner, Master Apothecary

Benefit: You may create potions or poisons that have the combined active effect of two unique individual ingredients.

Benefit: If you succeed at an Apothecary Skill Check to brew a potion or poison, you make twice the amount you normally would.

BONESETTER

Prerequisites: Mind 1, Adept Apothecary

Benefit: Ironleaf potions made by you heal an additional Minor Wound.

Desperate Action: Spend one Tenacity to heal a dead Character a Minor Wound, bringing them back to life. They must have died within a number of minutes equal to your Mind.

Benefit: Increase your Apothecary Skill one Rank.

UNYIELDING

Prerequisite: Novice Intimidation

Benefit: You may use your highest Attribute as the base Attribute for Intimidation Skill Checks.

Benefit: Gain Advantage when contesting Manipulation and Intimidation Skill Checks.

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on an Intimidation Skill Check.

Benefit: Increase your Intimidation Skill one Rank.

PERFORMER

Prerequisites: Presence 1, Novice Performance

Desperate Action: Reroll a failed Performance Skill Check.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Performance Skill Checks made for audiences whose language you perform in.

Benefit: Increase your Performance Skill one Rank.

MASTER PERFORMER

Prerequisites: Performer, Master Performance

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Manipulation Skill Checks on Characters you have successfully performed for until they complete a Rest.

LIAR

Prerequisite: Novice Manipulation

Benefit: Gain Advantage on all Manipulation Skill Checks intended to deceive with deliberate falsehoods.

Benefit: Characters you have not previously met have Disadvantage to their first Insight Skill Check against you.

Benefit: Increase your Manipulation Skill one Rank.

ALLURING

Prerequisites: 1 Presence, Novice Manipulation

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on a Manipulation or Performance Skill Check.

Benefit: You may spend one Tenacity to gain Advantage to all Manipulation Skill Checks against a single Character until either you completes a Rest.

Benefit: +1 Presence.

Benefit: Increase your Manipulation Skill one Rank.

MERCANTILE

Prerequisites: Mind 1 or Presence 1, Novice Manipulation

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Learned Skill Checks to identify or appraise objects.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Manipulation and Insight Checks for negotiating prices or deals.

Benefit: Increase your Manipulation Skill one Rank.

WISE

Prerequisite: Novice Insight

Desperate Action: Gain Advantage on an Insight Skill Check.

Benefit: If you fail an Insight Skill Check, refresh Wise as if by a Rest.

Benefit: Increase your Insight Skill one Rank.



BLOODED ABILITIES

Blooded Abilities may only be learned by Characters with the Blooded Trait.

ADDICT

Benefit: +2 Power.

Benefit: Reduce the CR of Bloodthistle by 5.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to Bloodthistle Checks.

Benefit: Gain Advantage to all Survival or Apothecary Skill Checks to find Bloodthistle and all Apothecary Skill Checks to brew it.

Reaction: When you consume a Bloodthistle potion, you gain Advantage on your next Blood Skill Check this round.

Special: If you have not consumed Bloodthistle within a number of days equal to your Strength, you regain only half your power during a Rest.

UNBOUND

Benefit: +3 Power.

Benefit: Touching organic things inflicts a Minor Wound on them. You cannot wear leather armor or most fabrics. Food spoils when it touches you.

Benefit: Wither and all Abilities that invoke it inflict an extra Minor Wound.

Special: All Blooded Abilities that would heal Wounds inflict a Minor Wound in addition to their other effects.

SURGE

Benefit: +1 Power for each Blood Skill Rank.

Desperate Action: When you would receive a number of wounds, you may instead reduce your maximum power by twice that amount. You return to your normal maximum after a rest.

BRINK

Cost: 2 Power

Desperate Action: Make a Blooded Skill Check (CR 10) to heal 1 Wound from a Character who has recently died. Increase the CR by 5 for each day the Character has been dead.

CLING

Desperate Action: When you would take one or more Wounds, you may spend an equal amount of power to take no Wounds instead.

Desperate Action: When you would die, if your head is still intact and attached, you heal 1 Wound at the start of your next turn (you are not considered dead during this round).

Benefit: If your Blood Skill is Master Rank, you no longer need food or water, and you age one year for every five.

FLESHMELDING

Benefit: When you use Blood to heal injured beasts, gain Advantage on your next Survival Check to handle them.

Benefit: When you heal Wounds on non-human animals, heal 1 more.

Benefit: Gain 1 Power when Near non-human animals with 3 or more maximum Vitality die.

SKINWALKING

Prerequisites: Fleshmelding, Master Blood

Benefit: You may apply the horns or antlers of other beasts to your skull and replace your teeth with the teeth of other beasts. You may also do this to a willing creature. These procedures must be done during a Rest. You must make a Blood Skill Check (CR 20). If failed, you are successful but take a Wound.

Benefit: You may Raise beasts with less than 10 maximum Vitality. The CR for Raise when used in this manner becomes 20.

WITHER

Cost: 1 Power

Action: Use your Blood Skill to make an attack against a Near Character. This attack's Chance of Major Wounds is equal to your Mind + Pres. Characters killed by this attack become uncontrolled Risen after an hour.

Benefit: If your Blood Skill is at least Adept Rank, Wither's Major Wounds inflict an additional Wound.

Special: On a roll of 1 on the d20, you take a Wound as well.

VOID

Prerequisites: Wither, Dexterity 1, Novice Blood

Benefit: Your base Evasion becomes 8 + your Blood Skill Rank.

BLIGHT

Prerequisites: Wither, Mind 2, Expert Blood

Cost: 3 Power

Action: Use your Blood Skill to Wither all Adjacent Characters. Treat your attack roll as a Blooded Skill Check (CR 5). The CR increases by 5 for each Character affected. If failed, you receive a Minor Wound for each affected Character.

Special: When you would die, you must use Blight for no cost.

DEATH

Prerequisites: Wither, Mind 4, Master Blood

Cost: 2 Power

Reaction: When a Wither would inflict a Major Wound on a Character, you may use Death to inflict a number of Wounds equal to your Mind on that Character instead.

FLESHWARD

Prerequisite: Strength 1

Action: Each Rest, gain Armor equal to your Strength. This bonus only affects you if you are unarmored.

When you receive a Wound or Major Wound, this bonus is lost. Fleshward does not stack with itself.

Desperate Action: Halve any number of Wounds taken in a single attack as if by Armor.

Benefit: When unarmored, your flesh grants you +3 Armor.

Benefit: +1 Evasion while unarmored.

KINDLE

Prerequisite: Presence 1

Benefit: Your Abilities that heal Wounds grant Advantage on your next Manipulation Skill Check against the affected Characters.

Benefit: Your Abilities that inflict Wounds grant Advantage on your next Intimidation Skill Check against the affected Characters.

RADIATE

Prerequisites: Kindle, Presence 2, Adept Blood

Cost: 2 Power

Action: Inflict a Minor Wound on all Near Characters.

Action: Heal a Minor Wound on all Near Characters.

KNIT

Prerequisite: Novice Blood

Cost: 2 Power

Action: Make a Blooded Skill Check (CR 20). On a failure, heal 1 Wound from an Adjacent Character; on a success, heal 2.

Action: If used on a corpse, prevent it from rotting for a number of days equal to the amount of Power you spend. You may spend any amount of Power.

REGENERATE

Prerequisites: Knit, Adept Blood

Desperate Action: Knit a Character for no cost. You may spend 4 Power to refresh this benefit as if you had taken a Rest.

Desperate Action: Heal a total number of Wounds equal to your Presence or Mind split among any number of Near Characters.

RIP

Prerequisite: Adept Blood

Desperate Action: You may have your next Blooded attack restore 1 Power to you for each Wound inflicted. For every Power you would gain over your maximum, you receive a Minor Wound.

Desperate Action: Your next Blooded Ability inflicts Wounds on you equal to its Power Cost, but takes no Power.

SHAMBLER

Prerequisite: Apprentice Blood

Cost: 2 Power

Reaction: Make a Shambler from a nearby corpse. A Shambler is a Risen that rapidly decays over the next minute. You must succeed at a Blood Check (CR 10) or the Shambler is uncontrolled. If you die, it becomes uncontrolled.

RAISE

Prerequisite: Adept Blood

Cost: 3 Power

Action: Make a Risen from a Near corpse. You must succeed at a Blood Check (CR 10). You still make a Risen if you fail, but it is not under your control. If you die, it becomes uncontrolled. Risen may be controlled like loyal beasts. Risen can never be brought back to true life. They will follow vestigial instincts and verbal commands without a sense of self preservation.

Benefit: You can control a number of Risen equal to 1 + Mind or Presence.

DOMINANCE

Prerequisites: Raise, Master Blood

Cost: 1 Power

Reaction: Make a Blood Skill Check to bring a nearby Risen under your control — CR 10 for uncontrolled Risen, CR 15 + the controller's Mind or Presence for controlled Risen.

Benefit: Your Risen are considered Adept Rank in their Fighting Skill.

Benefit: Your Risen do not lose their Dexterity upon turning.

SHEPHERD

Prerequisites: Dominance, Master Blood

Benefit: You may control a number of Risen equal to 1 + Mind + Presence.

Benefit: Characters killed by your Wither effects will become Risen under your control after several minutes.

Reaction: You may spend 2 Power to instantly make a Character killed by a Wither effect into a controlled Risen.

Benefit: Your Risen are considered Expert Rank in their Fighting Skill.

QUICKEN

Prerequisites: Dexterity 1, Expert Blood

Desperate Action: Use another Blooded Ability. Its Power Cost is doubled, but then reduced by an amount equal to your Dexterity (to a minimum of 0).

BURST

Prerequisites: Strength 3, Master Blood

Cost: 1 Power

Reaction: When you would make a Strength-based Check, receive 1 Wound and gain Advantage on that Check.

SHORE FLESH

Prerequisites: Burst, Strength 5

Benefit: Increase your Strength maximum to 7 instead of 5. Gain 2 Strength.

Desperate Action: Ignore any Wounds you would receive for the rest of the round. If you use this Ability when you would take a Wound, that Wound is prevented.

REPULSE

Prerequisites: Dexterity 3, Master Blood

Reaction: If you successfully evade an attack, you may use Wither.

Benefit: If you also have the Void Ability, this Wither costs no Power.

THRALL

Prerequisites: Mind 2, Presence 2, Master Blood

Cost: 5 Power

Action: Create a Thrall from a fresh corpse. All limbs and organs necessary for life must be present. It must be preserved or have died within a day. Thralls are alive, but empty. The Character's mind is not intact; they are a walking catatonic. They will eat and drink if fed, and walk if led. You must succeed at a Blood Check (CR 15). If you fail the Check, treat the effect like a successful Raise Ability.

INNERVATE

Prerequisites: Presence 4, Master Blood

Cost: 1 Power per Character

Desperate Action: Award one Tenacity to any number of Near Characters in the same manner as the Arbiter. This Tenacity is lost upon completing a Rest.





CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT

COMBAT

Combat is a special situation in Blood and Bone that arises when a Character wishes to fight with or do physical harm to another. Such confrontations comprise a core pillar of the system. Blood and Bone is well suited to narratives where violent confrontation plays a pivotal and often frequent role.

The only thing that sets combat apart from the rest of play is that exact turn order matters. All Characters must act in this sequence. Being in combat does not mean role playing ceases and dice rolling begins. It simply means that some form of physical struggle is about to unfold.

Combat ends when one side is no longer able or willing to fight. It is not always about being the last man standing. Sometimes combat is about survival or escape. It can end in surrender, retreat, or the first blood drawn in a duel.

ROUNDS

Rounds represent the abstract amount of time it takes for all Characters to act nearly simultaneously over the course of a few moments. A round is the length of game time required for each Character involved to take a turn.

TURNS

Turns happen in order based on the Characters' Alacrity, from highest to lowest. Each turn lasts the amount of time it takes for a Character to do something of narrative significance. On their turn, a Character can do anything that could reasonably be done in several seconds. If a Character wants to draw their sword, leap a fallen log, and attack a bandit on the other side, they can do that in a single turn.

If a Character does something to instigate combat, they go first in the turn order regardless of Alacrity.

DISTANCE

Rather than exact metrics, distance is measured in loose ranges. If Players wish to use miniature figures to mark positions in combat, it is recommended that they do not use a gridded board.

The Arbiter shouldn't be concerned with policing exact movement. Most Characters are able to move to far away things on their turn. Movement should only be specifically addressed as a variable in situations where external factors highlight its significance. If a Player is attempting to flee while dragging a fallen armored comrade or hauling a sack of gold, have them move at a slower pace, whatever that means for the scene. Remember, turns are all about letting Players have their Characters do something meaningful. Movement should only be addressed in isolation if it serves to add tension or drama to a scene.

Adjacent: 0-2 yards away. Usually targets are engaged in an action of some kind, such as fighting. Ranged weapons have Disadvantage when used at this range.

Near: 3-15 yards away. A Short distance. This is about the distance one could close in several seconds. A Character might be able to dash twice this distance if they do nothing else on their turn.

Far: 25-50 yards. The range in which bows may be used accurately (beyond this they are at Disadvantage).

Distant: 50-100 yards. Distant things, the length of a field or cathedral away.

ACTIONS

A Character can take one action per turn. An action is often the compound of several smaller components. Movement is part of a Character's action. Running, ducking behind cover, or jumping an obstacle can all be part of an action. Small motions, such as drawing and nocking an arrow, unsheathing a sword, or dropping something, can also make up part of an action.

The bulk of an action is usually a single Skill Check. Often, in combat, the Fighting Skill is used to attack. Another common action is the use of the Blood Skill for a Blooded Ability. Characters can use virtually any Skill as their action on their turn — Survival to calm a frightened mare, Stealth to hide from thugs, or Intimidate to frighten a spineless opponent.

The most common action in combat is for one Character to attack another. At its core, attacking involves a Fighting, Archery, or Blood Skill Check against an opponent. The opponent's Evasion sets the CR the attacker is attempting to beat, as detailed in the next section.

A successful Fighting or Archery Skill Check with a weapon inflicts one Wound, with a chance of inflicting a Major Wound. Some attacks, such as unarmed attacks, inflict a Minor Wound.

If a Character wishes to delay their turn, they may choose to wait until a specified event occurs. The Player must specify what triggering event will prompt their Character to act, and the action they will take. Postponing a turn moves the Character permanently to a new place in the turn order.

Examples:

If the archer shows himself, I will shoot him.

If the rope breaks, I will grab her hand.

If the Blooded looks our way, I will dive behind the rock.

If the prisoner attempts to escape, I will grab him.

DESPERATE ACTIONS

Desperate Actions are additional actions granted by certain Traits. Generally, Desperate Actions are taken on a Character's own turn but some can be taken at any time. A Character may use any number of unique Desperate Actions in addition to their regular Action. After a Character uses a Desperate Action, they must complete a Rest before using that Desperate Action again.

REACTIONS

A Reaction is a type of action triggered by a specific event. These are granted by certain Traits. A Character may make a number of Reactions each round equal to 1 + Mind, but each must be unique—you cannot use the same Reaction twice in one round.

Number of unique Reactions = 1 + Mind

SURPRISE

Surprising a Character is a common situation that yields Advantage. A Character who is both alert to danger and aware of their attacker's presence cannot be surprised. However, if a Character is only one of the two — either alert to danger or aware of their attacker's presence — their attacker receives Advantage on their Skill Check. If a Character is neither alert to danger nor aware of their attacker's presence, a Death Blow may be delivered.

A lone Caroan soldier treads carefully down the forest path, sword in hand, eyes scanning the underbrush for signs of an ambush. In her tree branch, Elaria nocks an arrow and draws the string taut.

The Caroan soldier is alert to danger but not aware of Elaria's presence. She will gain Advantage on this attack.

Malik sees his bounty in the market square. Hooded and cloaked, he moves with the current of the crowd, in plain sight. As he walks past his mark, he lets a dagger drop into his palm and stabs the man in the gut before slipping back into the faceless tide before he drops.

Malik's bounty is aware of Malik's presence, but not alert to the threat of an attack. Malik gains Advantage on his attack.

DEATH BLOW

In many situations it is not necessary to make a Check if there is no real chance of failure. Death Blows are an example of this. One does not need to make an attack Check to slit the throat of a sleeping man.

WOUNDS

Wounds are injuries inflicted by attacks that directly compare to a Character's Vitality score. Characters die when they have a number of Wounds equal to their Vitality, and ignore any excess Wounds. Most successful Fighting or Archery attacks with weapons inflict one Wound.

Wounds have several grades.

Minor Wound: Large bruise, cracked ribs, twisted ankle, shallow cut, broken nose

Wound: Arrow in the shoulder, nasty gash, broken arm, long deep cut

Major Wound: Arrow to the neck, sword thrust to the gut, broken protruding femur, mangled hand.

MINOR WOUNDS

Minor Wounds are small injuries such as cracked ribs and shallow cuts. They can be inflicted by less lethal sources, such as unarmed attacks or short falls. A Minor Wound is equal to half a Wound, and thus it takes two Minor Wounds to match one Vitality.

MAJOR WOUNDS

A Major Wound is an attack that doubles the number of Wounds you inflict. This turns a Minor Wound into a Wound, or makes an attack that would inflict a Wound inflict two Wounds instead.

A Character's chance of inflicting Major Wounds increases directly with their attack Skill's base Attribute — Strength or Dexterity. The Attribute used to determine Chance of Major Wounds is always the same Attribute that is added to the Skill Check.

Chance of Major Wounds = 20 - Attribute - Traits

All Characters inflict Major Wounds on a roll of 20 on the d20 with their weapon Skill Check. Factors adding to the Chance of Major Wounds, such as Traits and Attributes, expand this number. A +1 Chance of Major Wounds would mean a weapon Skill roll where the d20 displays 19+ inflicts Major Wounds. A 5 would mean a roll where the d20 displays a 15+ will inflict Major Wounds. The number on the d20 determines if an attack inflicts a Major Wound, not the sum of the Skill Check.

Malik hacks at one of the thugs who has cornered him in the alleyway. Malik's Player rolls 1d20 +3 +1d8 for his Fighting Skill Check with an axe. Since Malik has a Strength of 3, he knows he inflicts Major Wounds on 17+. So if the d20 lands on 17, 18, 19 or 20, and his attack succeeds, Malik will have inflicted a Major Wound.

If the Player's roll were to sum 1d20 (10) +3 +1d8 (8), his attack Skill Check would total 21. This is not a Major Wound, as the number displayed on the d20 is a 10, and not 17+.

Major Wounds represent landing a well placed blow. A trained fighter can, however, deliberately choose not to grievously injure their opponent, reducing their Chance of Major Wounds to the base 20.

RESTING

Many Traits grant benefits that may only be used once until a Character completes a Rest. A Rest is an extended period of time in which the Character does not engage in strenuous activities such as fighting. A Rest can be a few hours walking down a forest path, a hot meal by a hearth, or a good night's sleep.

HEALING WOUNDS

Characters naturally heal all their Wounds over the course of several months if their Wounds are treated and they rest, not incurring further injuries. There are several more expedient ways for a Character to heal Wounds.

Blooded healing is quick, though painful, and only readily accessible to the wealthy or privileged. A more common solution is the Ironleaf plant, which boasts miraculous healing properties if used correctly. The great Waystones scattered over Ossura also offer accelerated healing, regenerating crippling wounds in a matter of days.

The art of healing is closely linked with the Blood. Practical techniques are often used in conjunction with Blood to heal wounds. Many commoners who do not have access to a Blooded healer rely solely on such means. Hedge-healers, herbalists, alchemists, midwives, and bonesetters all rely on various herbs and practices to remedy ills.

Wounds are often cleaned with boiled water or wine and tools disinfected with vinegar. Maggots are used to eat rotten flesh from a putrefied wound, and leeches to drain blood from swells. Advanced healers can cauterize wounds or even stitch them closed. Various poultices, potions and herbs are used for everything from preventing infection and dulling pain, to dealing with unwanted pregnancies and inducing sleep.

The Arbiter must consider how much of a factor they wish mortality to be in their game. If they want to emphasize the realism of natural healing rates, they should highlight the lengths of time spent injured between fights. If the Arbiter and their Players desire a more combat-oriented game, healing should be readily available to support many fights. Describing the effects of pain, shock, nausea and adrenaline can enhance the gritty immersion of combat.

WAYSTONE SHARD VARIANT

In this variant rule, Waystones can be shattered into small pieces that retain their potent healing aura. Rare, and much sought after, these shards offer unnatural regeneration. They can be polished into smooth dark stones, and set into sword hilts, shields, or amulets. A Character who takes a Rest in the presence of one or more shards heals 1 Wound.

DEATH

When a Character has a number of Wounds equal to their Vitality, they are considered Dead. A Character can never have more Wounds than their maximum Vitality. Though there are a few effects which may return a Character to life, Death is generally the end of a Character. Once a Character has died, their Player may introduce a fresh Character at the start of the next session, Chapter, or point the Arbiter deems appropriate. The new Character may be created with the same number of Traits as their old Character.

Though combat is deadly and Characters are fragile, death should never be random. Players should be made aware when their Characters are in mortal danger, and risking their lives should be a conscious decision.

It is up to the Arbiter to provide reasonable threats and know the level of mortality their Players expect and desire.



ARMOR AND WEAPONS

Weapons fall into one of three main categories that dictate how they interact with certain Skills and Traits. One handed and two handed weapons use the Fighting Skill, and Bows use the Archery Skill. Successful Archery or Fighting Skill Checks inflict a Wound.

Within these broad categories, the details for each specific weapon type define how they interact with Traits. Through Traits, each weapon gives access to certain unique benefits and abilities.

WEAPONS

ONE-HANDED:

Axe: The axe is a weapon of raiders, favored by the Inorn and the Eskarn. The Eskarn are feared for their stone axes, chipped from black rock.

Mace: Clubs and cudgels are easy to produce. Delivering crushing blows, these weapons are preferred by thugs and militia.

Dagger: Carried by almost every common man and woman in Ossura, daggers or knives are invaluable tools and implements as well as the preferred weapons of assassins and thieves.

Sword: Swords are the dominant weapon in every realm. They are the standard fare of soldiers and guards alike. Blades range from the mass-produced Mercish swords shaped in their tireless forges, to the fabled Numiran blades crafted by masters.

Katar: These punching swords are the preferred weapon of the Abkhazi. Since they have few metals in their desert homeland, their katar are often made from fired clay.

TWO-HANDED:

Great Axe: Two handed axes are favored by Inorn pillagers, and prove their worth in violent shock combat.

Great Sword: A weapon for lords or champions, great swords are intimidating and deadly if wielded with the proper skill and strength.

Maul: The preferred weapon of Paladins of the Order of Ash, mauls or great hammers are used to deliver crushing blows and put the dead to rest.

Spear: A common but deadly weapon, the spear is used by peasants and armies alike; as common as the sword and far cheaper.

Staff: A straight rod of ash or oak, the staff is a traveler's companion, providing some security on the high roads while not drawing the attention a blade might.

BOWS:

Crossbow: A powerful bow mounted horizontally on a triggered stock, the crossbow can deliver powerful and accurate bolts with little training. They are, however, slow and expensive.

Crossbows take an attack action to reload a bolt, but can be preloaded.

Bows: Ranging from small and light hunting bows to powerful longbows, bows are a powerful weapon used in every Realm.

Bows have Disadvantage on attacks against Adjacent or Distant Characters.

MASTERWORK WEAPONS:

Blacksteel Swords are those that were made in Old Tarn, before the empire fell. The methods for creating Blacksteel have long since been lost, though it is said some Numiran smiths can reshape the metal. Its surface is pearlescent black, as oil on water.

Tarnish Blacksteel swords grant +2 Chance of Major Wounds on Fighting Skill Checks.

Numiran swords are forged by masters using secret and arcane techniques. Such swords can be wielded in one hand or two, and bear a single edge. Such weapons are said to be blessed with the power to turn iron as lodestones do. It is said they never rust, nor blunt, nor dull their edge.

Numiran Blades grant +1 Chance of Major Wounds on Fighting Skill Checks.



SHIELDS

Shields grant additional Evasion but reduce the amount your Dexterity may contribute to Evasion. Light shields are up to two feet in diameter and heavy shields are larger than two feet in diameter. If the Strength requirement of a shield is not met, it does not grant a bonus to Evasion.

Shield Type	Evasion Bonus	Min. Strength	Max. Dexterity
Small	+1	0	4
Light	+2	1	3
Heavy	+3	2	2

ARMOR

Armor grants a defensive bonus, which is added to Evasion to provide an Armor value. If an attack beats Evasion but fails to beat Armor, the number of Wounds inflicted are halved. Any Character may wear armor, but if the Strength requirement is not met, all Skill Checks receive Disadvantage. Armor reduces the amount your Dexterity may contribute to Evasion.

Armor = Evasion + Armor Bonus + Traits

Malik has 12 Evasion. When he dons Scale Mail, he gains a +4 Armor Bonus.

As he has 12 Evasion he would have an Armor of 16 (12+4). Any attacks that beat his Evasion of 12 but fail to beat his Armor of 16 would inflict half as many Wounds.

Armor Type	Armor Bonus	Min. Strength	Max. Dexterity	Rarity
Padded	1	0	5	Common
Hide	1	0	5	Common
Ironsilk	2	0	5	Rare
Leather	2	1	4	Common
Basilisk Skin	3	1	4	Rare
Chain Hauberk	3	2	3	Common
Brigandine	3	2	3	Common
Numiran Scales	4	2	3	Rare
Scale Mail	4	3	2	Common
Ceramic Scales	5	3	2	Common
Ancient Scales	5	3	2	Rare
Splint Armor	6	4	1	Common
Banded Armor	7	4	1	Rare



PADDED ARMOR

Padded armor offers the most basic layer of protection. These tunics or gambesons are often worn by archers, or as an underlayer for other armor. They are made from thin leather or quilted cloth.

HIDE

Hide armor or clothing is made from animal pelts, furs, and unhardened leather. Favored by the Eskarn and Inorn, as well as hunters and other men of the wilds.

IRONSILK ARMOR

Ironsilk armor is a wondrous black fabric made from the spinnings of the huge pale spiders of Tarn. It is extremely difficult to harvest and thus the armor produced from it is both exceedingly rare and expensive. It can be woven into robes and armor, or braided to make the strongest of ropes.

LEATHER ARMOR

Leather armor is made from thick hide, hardened with wax or water and sometimes reinforced with metal rings, plates, or studs for added protection.

BASILISK SKIN ARMOR

Basilisk Skin armor is made from the thick scaly hide of Ossura's giant serpents. As these serpents can grow as long as ten men and inhibit Blood with their gaze, their skin is rare and much coveted, fetching a high price in all realms.

CHAIN HAUBERK

Chain Hauberks are simple shirts of mail. They are made from thousands of small interlocking rings, riveted together. They are not cheap, but can be readily purchased by anyone with coin thanks to Mercish production.

BRIGANDINE

Made from overlapping metal plates riveted to the inside of a leather or cloth tunic, this is the armor of the average professional soldier or mercenary. They are still expensive, as is all metal armor, but they are easy to maintain and repair, and are significantly cheaper than armor made of larger plates.

NUMIRAN SCALES

Numiran Scales are suits of full scale armor, forged in Numir. They are difficult to come by as it is against Numiran custom to sell their work to strangers. As such, they are incredibly expensive.

SCALE MAIL

Scale Mail is comprised of metal scales worn over or meshed with chain. Made common through Mercish industry, these suits are readily available for those with the coin to purchase them.

CERAMIC SCALES

Ceramic Scales are crafted by the Abkhazi claysmiths. They are strong and much less costly than their metal counterparts, but they are unreliable and prone to failure. If the armor ever mitigates three Major Wounds in a single round, it breaks.

ANCIENT SCALES

Ancient Scales are made from the cast-off plate-like scales of ancient beasts found in caves and beneath the sands. White as bone, they are as strong as and lighter than steel. Such scales are uncommon and often damaged. Full suits of Ancient Scales are rare and vastly more expensive than steel.

SPLINT ARMOR

Splint Armor is made from heavy slats of metal, interlocked with chain to create a heavier, more protective, more expensive armor. This is the armor most soldier aspire to own. Caroan career soldiers will often hand down their armor over generations as an heirloom.

BANDED ARMOR

Banded Armor is the pinnacle of Ossuran metalworking. It is built from forged bands of metal, laid in overlapping lines to form a carapace of steel. Banded Armor, though readily available, is exorbitantly expensive and only owned by lords or the very wealthy.



NARRATING COMBAT

Combat is dynamic, and attacks are an interaction between two Characters. A single Fighting Skill Check does not represent a single blow, but rather an exchange between the combatants. When a skilled fighter fails to hit, it is not because he missed, it is because his opponent dodged or parried. An unsuccessful attack roll should be interpreted as a successful “defense roll” for their opponent. The Arbiter should use active words to describe not only the attack but also the defense.

Malik swings his greatsword in a wide sweeping arc, trying to cleave the gladiator’s skull... and his Player rolls a 3.

This roll, though it fails to hit the gladiator’s Evasion CR of 17, doesn’t necessarily mean Malik missed. It means he failed to wound his opponent.

The gladiator barely manages to avoid the blow, ducking just in time as the massive greatsword slices overhead, shearing one of the bronze spikes from his skull-faced helm.

Descriptive terms can help make combat feel more natural, fluid, and immersive. There are many ways to narrate an attack that fails to hit.

Arrest, Avoid, Bash, Bat, Batter, Block, Catch, Clash, Deflect, Dodge, Duck, Elude, Evade, Fend, Glance, Graze, Halt, Leap, Parry, Rebuke, Reel, Repel, Repulse, Sidestep, Stave, Swerve, Turn, Ward

Turns in Combat should unfold as close to real time as possible. It is the duty of both the Arbiter and the Players to maintain a pace that is appropriate to the action. Large amounts of game time should not be devoted to resolving the actions of a few tense seconds. If a single swift action or attack has taken a minute to unfold, tension and dynamism are lost.

The Arbiter should have an updated copy of each Player’s Character Sheet so they can quickly reference their Evasion and Armor values. As they work with Players to deal with Character advancement at the beginning of sessions, they should update their sheets as well. Before the game, Players should ensure that the Arbiter has the correct information. To maintain tension and fast-paced action, it is essential that the Arbiter has this information and that it is correct. (See the appendix for Character reference sheets.)

PLAYER’S TURN

Player Combat Steps:
Player States Intent
Player Rolls
Player Reports
Arbiter Checks
Arbiter Narrates

Player States Intent: (Malik’s Player): I draw my sword, raising my shield between us. I pace forward, gauging my opponent. Once I’m close, I spring forward, bashing him with my shield, and following with a quick sword thrust to his chest.

Player Rolls: [Malik’s Player Rolls 1d20 + 3 + 1d8. He rolls a 17 and a 4. He gets a total of 24.]

Player Reports: “I rolled a 24! It’s a Major Wound, too!” [Malik inflicts Major Wounds with 17+ on the d20.]

Arbiter Checks: [They compare the roll of 24 to the Bandit’s 14 Evasion.]

Arbiter Narrates: You spring forward, checking him in the chest with your shield; he stumbles back and, seeing your opening, you thrust with your sword, puncturing his side. Your sword pierces his leather armor and pulls away bloodied as you level your blade once more. Your adversary staggers backwards, panting.

ARBITER’S TURN

Arbiter Combat Steps:
Arbiter States Intent
Arbiter Rolls
Arbiter Checks
Arbiter Narrates

Arbiter States Intent: “With a roar, the bandit rushes Malik. Brandishing his axe above his head with both hands, he charges you.”

Arbiter Rolls: [They roll 1d20 + 1 + 1d6. They get an 11 total.]

Arbiter Checks: [They compare the roll of 11 to Malik’s 12 Evasion and see that the attack does not inflict a Wound.]

Arbiter Narrates: He brings the axe down in a great cleaving chop, but you raise your shield just in time — with a thud, the axe buries itself in the wood, jarring your arm. With a tug he yanks it free. He roars again, enraged and battlemad, his huge chest heaving with each ragged breath as he hefts his axe and readies himself for another attack...



CHAPTER 3: THE ARBITER

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-Player Characters in Blood and Bone can be created in varying levels of detail. A major antagonist or ally might be created with as much depth as a Player Character, with explicit Beliefs and Complications of their own. A nameless merchant or guard, on the other hand, might not even have defined Attributes or Skills. At any level, it is important that NPCs are given life through their actions. Most NPCs will behave intelligently and in their own best interest.

Characters can be given more solidity by emphasizing the unique or memorable characteristics they possess. Varying your voice, or even describing theirs, can help paint a more memorable picture; be it high or low, slow or fast, nasal, stuttering, or accented. Adding a single physical detail can also help. Even when distinguishing a group of bandits, differentiate them with humanizing details, such as a pock-marked face or missing eye.

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Combat is a central pillar of Blood and Bone. The amount of fighting in each game may vary based on the desires of the Players and the Arbiter. Like all other parts of the game, combat is about roleplaying. It affords dramatic situations for Characters to make decisions and provides an opportunity to develop. The Arbiter can help this by providing Players the opportunity to do what they want and what their Character excels at.

BALANCING COMBAT

It is the duty of the Arbiter to use the tools provided in this book to ensure that combat remains fun and interesting. To determine how challenging a planned combat might be, the Arbiter should assess how many combat focused Characters are in their group, and how many Traits they possess.

Minor Threat: Death is unlikely but possible.
Moderate: Death possible but avoidable.
Major Threat: Death likely.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Enemies	Strength	Threat
Fewer	Greater	Moderate
Fewer	Similar	Minor
Equal	Weaker	Minor
Equal	Similar	Moderate
Equal	Greater	Major
More	Weaker	Moderate
More	Similar	Major

WHO TO ATTACK

There are no rules to determine who NPCs should attack. Instead, the Arbiter should attempt to present danger without trying to kill the Characters. If a Player has built their Character with heavy armor and a shield, it is likely they want to be the one at the front lines in combat; reward them with a challenging fight. Do not punish Players who have not tried to build the strongest of Characters. It is also important to keep all Players engaged. It is often good to pair off enemies appropriately, such that each Player feels their Character is in danger.

PLAYING WITH FATE

The Arbiter's rolls should be hidden, behind a screen or cupped hands. Rarely, as the Arbiter, you may change rolls and alter fate. This is not a technique that should be applied often, nor is it necessary to do so. This should only be done in the Player's favor and never against them. The dice only exist to help the story, not the other way around.

ENDING COMBAT

Most of the enemies the Characters face will be human, and should behave like humans. They may not fight to the death. Demoralized soldiers often retreat, bandits might flee if their leader falls, a merchant may beg for his life, or a wounded wolf could slink off into the shadows.

Sometimes, the Characters will find themselves in a fight they can not win, and the goals of combat change. Perhaps they need to hold a mountain pass against a tide of Risen while a caravan of sick and injured escape, perhaps they are running and hiding from a pack of Eskarn hunters. Sometimes a fight is about de-escalation, such as when a deal with Black Wheel merchants goes wrong and mercenary steel is drawn. The transition between combat and the rest of play should be fluid and roleplaying continuous throughout.



SAGA VARIANT

The Saga Variant is an optional and alternate way to play. In the Saga Variant style of play, each Player creates several Characters at once, but only acts as one per session. Each Player creates a Protagonist who begins the game with 10 Traits, a Major Character who begins with 5, and a Minor Character who begins with 2. Protagonists and Major Characters each begin the game with one Destiny Token. A Destiny Token may be used to make that Character survive a situation that would otherwise lead to certain death, be it a Wound, a high fall, poison, or even an executioner's axe. They may regain this token, but are limited to a maximum of one each.

If a Minor Character dies, create a new one and introduce them at the start of the next session. If a Major Character dies, the Minor Character takes their place. If the Protagonist dies, the Major Character takes their place.

During a session of play, Players are free to choose which of their Characters they play, and thus any given group can be of drastically varying power. Unplayed Characters exist in the background, pursuing other goals.

If a Protagonist or Major Character does not see play for two sessions, they regain one Destiny Token. If a Protagonist sits out for three sessions, they not only regain a Destiny Token, but also increase their Destiny Token limit by one. These absent sessions must be continuous. If a Character is actively played for a session, they lose all progress accumulated toward regaining Destiny Tokens.

Saga Example:

Protagonist: Leader of a mercenary company

Major: Captain, an old friend

Minors: Foot soldiers

Saga Example:

Protagonist: Head of a Noble House

Major: Daughter, heir to the House

Minor: Servants of the House

HEROIC VARIANT

The Heroic variant provides an optional rule to set Player Characters apart from Non-Player Characters. This rule makes Player Characters much more powerful than most of their foes. As such, combat in games using the Heroic variant feels less gritty and dangerous. Consider using the Heroic Variant in campaigns that focus heavily on frequent combat.

For every two Traits a Player Character gains they gain 1 maximum Endurance. Any time a character would receive a Wound, they may spend 1 Endurance per Wound to prevent it. When a Player Character rests, they regain all their spent Endurance.

EXAMPLE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

ABKHAZI AMIR'ZAL

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	5	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
7	5	20 (-)	17

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
Stealth: Master (1d12)
Perception: Master (1d12)
Survival: Adept (1d8)
Apothecary: Adept (1d8)
Insight: Adept (1d8)

Traits:

Dual Wielder
Opportunist
Bruiser
Dervish
Agile
Light-Footed
Athletic
Nimble
Subtle
Cutthroat
Ambusher
Unseen

ABKHAZI MERCENARY

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	3	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
4	6	18 (21)	17

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
Insight: Expert (1d10)
Stealth: Expert (1d10)
Perception: Adept (1d8)
Survival: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Dual Wielder
Opportunist
Dervish
Dangerous
Warrior
Tough
Light-Footed
Nimble
Nomad



ABKHAZI HORSE NOMAD

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	3	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	5	14 (-)	17

Skills:

Survival: Expert (1d10)
 Archery: Apprentice (1d6)
 Fighting: Apprentice (1d6)
 Perception: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Horseman
 Bestial
 Nomad
 Archer
 Marksman

ABKHAZI SHAMAN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	1	2	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	3	11 (-)	19

Skills:

Blood: Adept (1d8)
 Insight: Expert (1d10)
 Survival: Apprentice (1d6)
 Performance: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Blooded
 Raise
 Knit
 Wise
 Nomad



ASHLANDER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	3	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
4	5	13 (14)	18

Skills:

Fighting: Adept (1d8)
Stealth: Adept (1d8)
Survival: Apprentice (1d6)
Archery: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Cutthroat
Ambusher
Agile
Nomad
Wildling

BARD

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	1	1	3
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	3	11 (-)	19

Skills:

Performance: Adept (1d8)
Manipulation: Adept (1d8)
Thievery: Apprentice (1d6)
Learned: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Performer
Traveled
Tutored

CITY GUARD

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	0	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	6	17 (22)	15

Skills:

Fighting: Expert (1d10)
Perception: Apprentice (1d6)
Intimidation: Apprentice (1d6)
Learned: Novice (1d4)
Archery: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Deadly
Crossbowman
Ironclad
Retaliation
Defender

BANDIT

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	2	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	6	12 (15)	17

Skills:

Fighting: Adept (1d8)
Archery: Novice (1d4)
Intimidation: Novice (1d4)
Survival: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Dangerous
Crossbowman
Unyielding





CAROAN SOLDIER (RECRUIT)

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	0	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	6	17 (24)	15

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Archery: Novice (1d4)
 Perception: Novice (1d4)
 Survival: Novice (1d4)
 Learned: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Deadly
 Shieldbearer
 Stalwart
 Vigilant
 Ironclad

CAROAN SOLDIER (SEASONED)

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	0	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	8	18 (24)	14

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Archery: Master (1d12)
 Perception: Apprentice (1d6)
 Survival: Novice (1d4)
 Learned: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Deadly
 Shieldbearer
 Stalwart
 Vigilant
 Ironclad
 Tough
 Slayer

CAROAN SOLDIER (VETERAN)

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
5	0	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	9	15 (21)	13

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Archery: Master (1d12)
 Perception: Adept (1d8)
 Survival: Adept (1d8)
 Learned: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Deadly
 Shieldbearer
 Stalwart
 Vigilant
 Ironclad
 Tough
 Slayer
 Impassable
 Tactician



CLERIC OF THE ORDER OF ASH

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	0	4	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
4	4	10 (13)	20

Skills:

Blood: Master (1d12)
 Learned: Master (1d12)
 Manipulation: Adept (1d8)
 Intimidation: Adept (1d8)
 Insight: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Blooded
 Brink
 Cling
 Knit
 Regenerate
 Thrall
 Tutored

DEVOTED

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	1	2	5
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	3	11 (-)	19

Skills:

Insight: Master (1d12)
 Performance: Master (1d12)
 Manipulation: Master (1d12)
 Learned: Master (1d12)
 Perception: Master (1d12)
 Apothecary: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Liar
 Alluring
 Performer
 Master Performer
 Tutored
 Wise
 Tongued
 Mercantile
 Traveled



ESKARN DRUID

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	0	4	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
4	4	10 (-)	19

Skills:

Blood: Master (1d12)
 Insight: Expert (1d10)
 Survival: Expert (1d10)
 Perception: Expert (1d10)
 Stealth: Adept (1d8)

Traits:

Bestial
 Wildling
 Blooded
 Brink
 Cling
 Fleshmelding
 Skinwalking
 Knit
 Regenerate
 Innervate

ESKARN HUNTER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	1	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	4	12 (-)	19

Skills:

Archery: Apprentice (1d6)
 Survival: Apprentice (1d6)
 Stealth: Novice (1d4)
 Perception: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Cutthroat
 Archer
 Huntsman
 Wildling

INORN BERSERKER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	3	0	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	8	18 (21)	16

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Survival: Expert (1d10)
 Perception: Expert (1d10)
 Intimidation: Expert (1d10)
 Stealth: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Mighty
 Butcher
 Cleaver
 Manslayer
 Reckless
 Berserker
 Savage
 Dangerous
 Tough

INORN RAIDER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	2	0	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	7	17 (20)	16

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Survival: Apprentice (1d6)
 Perception: Apprentice (1d6)
 Stealth: Novice (1d4)
 Intimidation: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Wildling
 Nomad
 Dual Wielder
 Bruiser
 Dervish
 Thrower



JUSTICAR

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	0	1	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	7	15 (20)	14

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Learned: Master (1d12)
 Insight: Expert (1d10)
 Intimidation: Adept (1d8)
 Survival: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Horseman
 Slayer
 Tutored
 Tactician
 Leader
 Deadly
 Defender
 Shieldbearer
 Stalwart
 Vigilant

PALADIN OF THE ORDER OF ASH

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	0	1	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	7	15 (20)	16

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Learned: Master (1d12)
 Intimidation: Adept (1d8)
 Insight: Adept (1d8)
 Survival: Adept (1d8)

Traits:

Slayer
 Mighty
 Butcher
 Cleaver
 Manslayer
 Skirmisher
 Duelist
 Dangerous
 Tutored

PICKPOCKET

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	2	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	3	12 (-)	18

Skills:

Thievery: Expert (1d10)
 Fighting: Novice (1d4)
 Stealth: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Quick Fingered
 Lockpick

PITFIGHTER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	2	0	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	6	17 (21)	16

Skills:

Fighting: Master (1d12)
 Performance: Adept (1d8)
 Intimidation: Adept (1d8)
 Perception: Apprentice (1d6)
 Survival: Novice (1d4)
 Apothecary: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Dirty Fighting
 Dangerous
 Warrior
 Deadly
 Performer
 Agile
 Scrappier

TARNISH CAPTAIN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	0	4	5
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
4	3	11 (17)	20

Skills:

Blood: Master (1d12)
 Learned: Expert (1d10)
 Insight: Expert (1d10)
 Perception: Expert (1d10)
 Intimidation: Adept (1d8)
 Fighting: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Tactician
 Leader
 Blooded
 Wither
 Death
 Void
 Shambler
 Dominance
 Shepherd
 Fleshward
 Cling

TAVERN SWINDLER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	2	1	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	3	12 (-)	18

Skills:

Manipulation: Adept (1d8)
 Thievery: Adept (1d8)
 Stealth: Apprentice (1d6)
 Learned: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Liar
 Alluring
 Mercantile

TOWN WATCHMAN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	0	1	1
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	5	10 (-)	18

Skills:

Fighting: Apprentice (1d6)
 Perception: Apprentice (1d6)

Traits:

Crossbowman
 Lasher

VILLAGE HEALER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	1	2	2
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	4	11 (-)	19

Skills:

Apothecary: Expert (1d10)
 Survival: Apprentice (1d6)
 Insight: Apprentice (1d6)
 Perception: Novice (1d4)

Traits:

Blooded
 Knit
 Alchemist
 Bonesetter

THE DEAD

Characters that become Risen or Thralls gain the following Traits. As Player Characters must die to become Risen or Thralls, any that do so immediately become NPCs.

There are several types of Risen. Risen can be controlled, serving under the mental commands of the Blooded who raised them; or uncontrolled, operating on their base instincts to feed and kill. In Tarn's army, enemies slain in battle are often turned into Ghouls, with finger-bones filed into bone claws, teeth broken into fangs, and eyes torn from their sockets. Tarnish Lords use Risen as personal guards, outfitting them in armor and warding them against rot so they endure as pale, intact bodies called Wights. The uncanny lifelessness of Wights is often enhanced by silver masks, or silver spheres that replace their eyes.

RISEN

Special: You are unaffected by all your other Traits and considered unskilled in all Skills. All your Attributes except Strength are considered 0.

Special: Your Fighting Skill becomes Adept (Rank 2) 1d6.

Special: If you would receive a Major Wound, you are killed.

Benefit: Bites and scratches by Risen infect the wounded Character. A Character who dies after receiving a Wound from a Risen becomes a Risen after several minutes. A Rest removes this effect.

RISEN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	4	10 (-)	19
Skills:		Traits:	
Fighting: 1d6		Risen	

GHOUL

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	6	10 (-)	17
Skills:		Traits:	
Fighting: 1d8		Risen	

WIGHT

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	7	10 (16)	16
Skills:		Traits:	
Fighting: 1d10		Risen	

CORPSEBLOOM

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	0	1-20	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1-20	10	1 (12)	0
Skills:		Traits:	
Blood: Master (1d12)		Blooded	
		Raise	
		Dominance	
		Unbound	
		Potent	
		Radiate	

THRALL

Special: You are unaffected by all your other Traits and considered unskilled in all Skills. All your Attributes are considered 0.

Special: You have Disadvantage on all Checks.

THRALL

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
0	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	3	10 (-)	1
Skills:		Traits:	
		Thrall	



BESTIARY

Livestock are common across all realms. Pigs, chicken, sheep, goats, and cows can be found all places that men dwell. They vary somewhat by region, from the oxen of Caros to the yaks of Inor. Horses too are prevalent alongside men, found in every region of the Shard, from the sleek southern horses of the Abkhazi to the hardy northern mares of Tarn.

In the vast untamed wilderness of Ossura, wild beasts still roam. Many pose dangerous threats to those who travel the forest paths or camp in the wilds. Large and fierce are the bears and boars and wolves.

Making beasts of your own:

Fighting Skill Ranks:

1d4 fight in defense

1d6 fight to mate

1d8 hunter predator

1d10 hunter of hunters

1d12 monster

Natural armor:

Thick skin +1

Tough Hide +2

Plates or Scales +3

Survival Skill Checks to handle animals are at Disadvantage if an animal is hungry or hurt. Each Fighting Skill Rank the beast has increases its CR by 10. Docile livestock represent a 0 on this scale, while most predatory beasts are near impossible.

All animals have the Feral Trait.

FERAL

Prerequisite: You are a Beast.

Benefit: Use your Strength or Dexterity, whichever is higher, as the base Attribute for your Perception Skill.

Special: You have 0 Base Vitality.

Special: You do not have Mind or Presence.

APE

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
6	3	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	6	14 (15)	15

Skills:

Perception: 1d4

Stealth: 1d4

Fighting: 1d4

Traits:

Feral

Athletic

Wildling

Dangerous

BASILISK

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
9	5	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
5	9	16 (-)	16

Skills:

Perception: 1d10

Stealth: 1d12

Fighting: 1d10

Traits:

Feral

Seaborn

Wildling

Nimble

Alert

Bloodsense

Bloodbreaker

ANCIENT BASILISK

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
14	7	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
7	14	20 (-)	13

Skills:

Perception: 1d12

Stealth: 1d12

Fighting: 1d12

Traits:

Feral

Seaborn

Wildling

Nimble

Alert

Retaliation

Warrior

Cutthroat

Skirmisher

Duelist

Bloodsense

Bloodbreaker

BLOOD VIPER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
1	2	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	1	17 (-)	16

Skills:

Perception: 1d4

Stealth: 1d12

Fighting: 1d8

Traits:

Feral

Dangerous

BOAR

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
6	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	6	10 (11)	14

Skills:

Perception: 1d6

Stealth: 1d0

Fighting: 1d6

Traits:

Feral

Reckless

Mighty

HUGE BOAR

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
11	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
0	12	12 (14)	16

Skills:

Perception: 1d8

Stealth: 1d0

Fighting: 1d8

Traits:

Feral

Reckless

Mighty

Butcher

Tough

Charger

Savage

Hound

BLACK BEAR

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
7	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
7	7	12 (13)	17

Skills:

Perception: 1d6

Stealth: 1d0

Fighting: 1d6

Traits:

Feral

Warrior

Mighty

Dangerous

Charger

GRIZZLY BEAR

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
10	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
10	10	14 (15)	15

Skills:

Perception: 1d6

Stealth: 1d0

Fighting: 1d8

Traits:

Feral

Tough

Reckless

Butcher

Warrior

Mighty

Cleaver

Dangerous

Charger



GREAT CAT

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
5	2	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
5	5	16 (-)	15

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d8	Feral
Stealth: 1d12	Retaliation
Fighting: 1d10	Warrior
	Charger
	Unseen
	Cutthroat
	Ambusher
	Mighty

HORSE

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
6	1	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
1	6	11 (-)	17

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d6	Feral

KRAKEN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
20	14	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
14	21	24 (-)	0

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d12	Feral
Stealth: 1d12	Dangerous
Fighting: 1d12	Warrior
	Mighty
	Butcher
	Cleaver
	Manslayer
	Alert
	Tough
	Nimble
	Seaborn

PALE SPIDER

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
2	2	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
2	3	16 (-)	18

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d4 (1d12 in web)	Feral
Stealth: 1d6 (1d12 in web)	Wildling
Fighting: 1d8	Athletic
	Cutthroat
	Ambusher
	Unseen
	Dangerous
	Tough

WILDMAN

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
10	0	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
7	10	18 (19)	11

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d4	Feral
Stealth: 1d4	Savage
Fighting: 1d8	Mighty
	Athletic
	Wildling
	Dangerous

ROC

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	3	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	4	13 (-)	17

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d10	Feral
Fighting: 1d8	Charger
	Warrior
	Tough

WOLF

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
3	3	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
3	3	16 (-)	18

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d10	Feral
Stealth: 1d8	Warrior
Fighting: 1d8	Hound
	Dangerous

DIRE WOLF

Strength:	Dexterity:	Mind:	Presence:
4	7	0	0
Alacrity:	Vitality:	Evasion:	CMW:
7	5	17 (18)	14

Skills:	Traits:
Perception: 1d12	Feral
Stealth: 1d10	Mighty
Fighting: 1d10	Warrior
	Hound
	Dangerous
	Tough

THE WILDS

Many of these rules will not apply in all campaigns. Most of them deal with specific aspects of survival in the wilderness and should only be used in stories where such details are desired.

WAYSTONES

These monolithic standing stones emanate an aura of warmth and calm. They can be found all across Ossura, many as the centers of towns or city squares. A Character who spends a Rest Near a Waystone is healed 1 Wound.

CORPSEBLOOM

This vile black mold has the power to create and control Risen through its spores. It is considered to have a Master Rank Blood Skill, and the Raise and Dominance Blooded Abilities. For the purposes of these Traits, it has a Mind score that ranges from 1 to 20 depending on the concentration of the mold.

FIRE

A Character engulfed in flame automatically takes 1 Wound each round.

SMOKE

Smoke inhalation from a large fire such as a building, ship, or forest, prompts a Strength Check (CR 12) each round. If successful the Character takes a Minor Wound. If failed they take a Wound.

CALTROPS

Also called Crow's Feet, these small iron spikes are manufactured in Mercos. As an action, they can be scattered on the ground to cover a small area. Avoiding caltrops requires a Dexterity Check (CR 12). Stepping on caltrops yields a Minor Wound.

FALLING

Falling Characters must make a Dexterity Check. The CR of the Check is based on the distance fallen. The base CR for falls is 0, adding +2 for each yard. Falls beyond 25 yards are considered killing blows.

FALLING ROCKS

An avalanche, rockslide, or collapse is treated as an attack. Getting hit results in a Wound. The rocks' Chance of Major Wounds is 10+. Their Rank, Novice to Master, is based on the severity of the occurrence.

FORAGING

In order to find adequate food for a meal, a Character must succeed on a Survival Check. The CR of the Check is based upon the frequency of available food. If food is abundant, the CR is 10. If food is limited, the CR is 15. If food is scarce, the CR is 20. For each person after the first that the forager wishes to provide for, increase the CR by 1.

LOST

A lost Character may seek to find their way by rolling a Survival Skill Check. The CR of the Check is based upon the difficulty of the terrain, and ranges from CR 5 to CR 20. An easy Check might be determining which fork in the trail will lead to town. A difficult Check could be navigating a snowfield during a blizzard. Having a map, moving slowly, or having supplemental knowledge of the sun and stars can give Advantage. Attempting to move very quickly while navigating can give Disadvantage.

SINKING MUD

A Character entering sinking mud must make a Dexterity Check (CR 12) or sink 2 feet into the mud. A Strength Check (CR 12) is needed to pull free; if failed, they sink an additional 2 feet and increase the CR by 2. A Character entirely covered by mud takes a Wound each round until freed.

EXTREME TEMPERATURE

Characters must make a Strength Check (CR 10) for every hour spent in an extreme environment that is inhospitably cold or hot. Every subsequent time the Check is made, increase the CR by 1. If failed, the Character receives one Wound. Heavy clothing gives Advantage in cold climates and Disadvantage in warm ones. The CR resets once the Character undergoes a Rest outside of this environment.

SLIPPERY ICE

A Character beginning their turn on slippery ice must make a Dexterity Check (CR 10) or receive Disadvantage on any actions taken on their turn.

THIN ICE

Thin ice breaks on a Arbiter's Check of CR 20. Each Character on the ice decreases the CR by 2. The Arbiter makes this Check at the start of each Character's turn.

FRIGID WATER

A Character can exist in frigid water for a number of minutes equal to their Strength. After each subsequent minute, they must succeed on a Strength Check (CR 10) or receive a Wound. Every subsequent time the Check is made, increase the CR by 1. The CR resets once the Character undergoes a Rest out of this environment.

FREEZING WATER

Each minute a Character remains in freezing water they must make a Strength Check (CR 15). If failed, the Character receives a Wound. Every subsequent time the Check is made, increase the CR by 1. The CR resets once the Character undergoes a Rest out of this environment.

SWIMMING

Characters swimming in open water must make a Strength Check (CR 10) every hour. If they fail, they receive a Wound. Every subsequent time the Check is made, increase the CR by 2. In turbulent water, such as the ocean, the CR begins at 15. The CR resets once the Character undergoes a Rest out of this environment.

APOTHECARY

Many herbs and plants can be found in the wilds of Ossura. Each herb has a specific CR to find growing wild, through use of Survival or Apothecary. Some herbs only grow in specific environments, while others are pervasive and found in most areas of Ossura. Many common herbs are also available for sale by traders or in market places. Each herb also has a specific CR to brew into an oil or elixir. Both a failed and a successful Apothecary Skill Check to brew herbs consumes them.

AUGUR'S FIRE

Found: Distilled from Mercish Oil

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 22)

This thick, volatile, golden oil is extraordinarily dangerous to create and use. Even master alchemists will decline wealthy clients who seek to pay a fortune to have it made. Sometimes called alchemist's gold, this oil burns with a white-amber heat. Only the Augurs have perfected the art of producing the oil, and the Tower of Eyes closely guards this secret.

A failed check to create the oil results in an explosion, inflicting a major wound on the brewer and all adjacent characters. On a roll of 1 on the d20 to brew the oil, this effect occurs twice.

The oil is stored in clay spheres or other impermeable vessels. A character can light and throw such a vessel. If the Skill Check does not exceed a CR 10, it explodes in their hand, engulfing them and all adjacent characters in flame. If successfully thrown, it engulfs a small area in flame. Character that are engulfed in flame take one wound each round.

BLACK NIGHTSHADE

Found: Pervasive - CR 17

Black Nightshade is a flower with a black bell. It grows in dark forests, caves, sewers, and other damp places with little light. It is used as a medicine and a poison. Its seeds are often brewed into beer as a way to increase its intoxicating effects. It impairs vision and causes deep dreamless sleep, but too much of it is poison. Merchants of the Black Wheel peddle it throughout Ossura.

Consuming the seeds or essence of Black Nightshade prompts a Strength Check. If the dose is small, meant to induce sleep, the CR is 11. A successful Check results in blurred and darkened vision. A failure results in deep sleep, lasting (10 - Strength) hours.

If the dose is large, meant to kill, the Strength Check is CR 16. If passed, the Character falls into a deep sleep and awakens with a Wound. If failed, they fall into a deep sleep and must make a Strength Check (CR 16) each hour they are asleep or take a Wound. The drug-induced slumber lasts (10 - Strength) hours.

BLOODBANE

Found: Pervasive - CR 20

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 18)

A rare silver-leafed herb with a sawtoothed edge.

Ingesting raw Bloodbane, or being injured by a blade coated with its brewed oils, gives Disadvantage to all Blood Skill Checks. Each round, an affected Character must make a Strength-based Blood Skill Check (CR 20) to be free of the poisonous effects. This CR decreases by 2 each round. A Character cannot be affected by Bloodbane a second time until they complete a Rest.

BLOODTHISTLE

Found: Pervasive - CR 15

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 12)

A rust-colored, spiky-leaved plant that often grows on graves and battlegrounds. When broken or crushed, the plant oozes a blue ichor. It is highly addictive when chewed and makes one's gums bleed, giving its users a distinctive red smile. It enhances the abilities of Blooded, giving them a euphoric surge of power.

Bloodthistle prompts a Strength Check (CR 5). If passed, it restores 3 Power. If failed, they receive a Wound. The CR permanently increases by 1 each time they use the plant, whether the Check fails or not.

If brewed as a potion, the CR is reduced by 5.

BLUE LOTUS

Found: Banks of the Grey River - CR 10

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 10)

Blue Lotus is grown along the banks of the Grey River and the foothills that are its wellspring. Referred to as sapphire-bliss, the Blue Lotus causes a state of relaxed inhibitions in which users are more talkative, comfortable, and aroused. Known to induce lassitude and blissful sleep, it is harvested seasonally and sold for recreational use in Mercos. It is especially popular among nobles and high-end pleasure houses. The most common method of consumption is to brew the flowers into a tea or steep them in alcohol for up to three weeks, as the alcohol enhances the effects of the active chemicals.

Those affected by Blue Lotus have Disadvantage to contest all Manipulation Skill Checks until they complete a Rest.

CALLOUSROOT

Found: Pervasive - CR 16

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 17)

This herb numbs the body to the effects of Blood. Poor Caroan soldiers favor its consumption out of fear of their Tarnish foes and certainty that their own Clerics' energy will be devoted to more important soldiers.

A Character that consumes the root receives one less minor wound from all Blooded sources, included healing, until they rest.

CHOKEWEED

Found: Pervasive - CR 12

Chokeweed is a common grass used by hunters and trappers.

Eating the herb imposes Disadvantage on all Perception Checks made against you by beasts. This effect lasts until you complete a Rest.

CORPSEBLOOM EXTRACT

Found: Harvested from Corpsebloom - CR 20

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 18)

This ashen powder is a rare and sinister substance. It can be painstakingly collected from live colonies of Corpsebloom by very skilled or very foolish apothecaries. The culture is preserved and nurtured in a hermetically sealed jar or urn.

When the urn is shattered the Corpsebloom is released into the air like ash. All near corpses are raised as uncontrolled Risen as if by the Shambler ability. This extract is used as a weapon by the fanatics of the Rotting Tide in Tarn. While it is outlawed in Caros, such urns are prized in Abkhaz, and used by tribes without shaman in their rituals to honor the dead.

CORPSEDUST

Found: Pervasive - CR 16

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 14)

An ash grey mold that grows best on land scorched by fire, Corpse Dust is used by thieves and assassins in powder packets to blind and disorient their foes.

Each packet creates a small cloud of dust that hangs in the air for a round. The dust blinds those caught in it, giving them Disadvantage on a variety of Checks requiring vision, such as Fighting. The dust also provides cover, imposing Disadvantage on all Archery or Blood Skill Checks directed at Characters inside or on the far side of the cloud.

COPPERBELL

Found: Pervasive - CR 11

Small copper flowers that can be added to other concoctions as a catalyst.

Adding Copperbell reduces the Apothecary brewing CR by 2 per Copperbell. Up to 3 flowers can be added to any one brew.

FEVER BLOOM

Found: Northern Realms - CR 8

These bitter red berries are common in the north. When ingested, they accelerate one's metabolism, increasing body heat while draining energy.

Once eaten, these berries give Advantage to Strength Checks against cold climate until a Rest. They give Disadvantage to Strength Checks against hunger and thirst.

FIRENETTLE

Found: Pervasive - CR 16

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 14)

A spined plant, Firenettle has vicious barbs that burn to the touch. Though painful it is useless unless its spines are ground into an oil that inflicts terrible pain on those it contacts.

A weapon coated with Firenettle oil has a +1 Chance of Major Wounds. This effect lasts until a Rest or similar amount of time passes.

IRON LEAF

Found: Pervasive - CR 14

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 15)

Iron Leaf is a potent herb, often cultivated for its miraculous healing properties. Its leaves can be chewed raw or brewed as a potion for powerful effects. It grows particularly well in Mercos, and Mercish merchants trade it in every realm. Though expensive, seldom is there a soldier or mercenary who does not carry an Iron Leaf potion.

When consumed as raw leaves, a Character heals 1 Wound. During their next Rest, they must make a Strength Check (CR 10). If they pass, they take a Minor Wound. If they fail, they take a Major Wound. A Character may only gain the restorative effects of Iron Leaf once until they undergo a Rest.

If brewed and distilled as a potion, it can be consumed to heal 1 Wound. During their next Rest, they must make a Strength Check (CR 10). If they fail, they take a Minor Wound. A Character may only gain the restorative effects of an Iron Leaf potion once until they undergo a Rest.

Each time Iron Leaf is ingested in either form, the CR of the Strength Check permanently increases by 1 for that Character.

MOONWORT

Found: Pervasive - CR 13

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 16)

A common, almost colorless flower, Moonwort delays the effects of poison. Moonwort can be used to stave off a poison until an antidote can be made — but it is also used for nefarious ends, giving ill-doers a window to poison others and escape before the deed becomes evident.

Eaten raw, it delays or postpones the onset of a poison by a few minutes (equal to Strength). If brewed as a potion, it can delay the effects by much longer (20+Strength minutes). Subsequent doses continue to postpone the poison, but each inflicts a Minor Wound.

NIGHTFOIL

Found: Pervasive - CR 12

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 10)

A common grey herb, used by healers to make antidotes.

Nightfoil can be eaten raw by a poisoned Character to grant them Advantage on their next Strength Check against it. When mixed with a small dose of poison it can be brewed in a potion that grants Advantage to all Strength Checks to shake that poison.

RED DEATH

Found: Red Expanse - CR 14

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 20)

A rust-colored scrub grass from the edge of the southernmost deserts of the land, this herb can be decocted into a powerful elixir. Once boiled to its essence, it can be consumed to dramatically increase one's heart rate to an unstable speed. Using such an elixir causes bleeding from the eyes, nose, and mouth, giving the herb its name.

A character who ingests such an elixir gains +4 Alacrity and +2 Evasion. They receive a minor wound each round they exert themselves, such as engaging in combat. These effects last until the Character rests. When the effects of the drug end, they receive a minor wound for each time they have ever used the drug.

RIMEWOOD

Found: Pervasive - CR 13

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 15)

The bark of this tree can be ingested to treat fevers, relieving pain, and cooling the body, but it is prized for its other uses.

When distilled with other alchemical ingredients it becomes a powerful and addictive drug, referred to as Rime. It numbs the body and creates a state of euphoria while the heart slows and warmth drains from the body. It is highly addictive and its users are given away by their pale complexion, shivering, and chattering teeth. Many poor users of the drug die during cold winters and are found, covered in frost.

Consequently, Rime is outlawed in most realms. Its illicit nature only makes its creation and smuggling profitable and dangerous trades. Despite this, its users are many, especially among the poor in great cities. In seedy quarters, one can find Rime-houses, dens for the thin, pale users to huddle around greasy fires, trying to rid themselves of the drugs deep chill.

A character who ingests Rime must succeed a Presence Check (CR 8) or gain Disadvantage on all Checks until they rest. Each time Rime is taken, the CR of the Presence Check permanently increases by 2 for that Character, to a maximum of 20.

SERPENT'S FANG

Found: Pervasive - CR 18

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 20)

A thorny plant that can be ground into a sinister poison. It is useless unless prepared as an oil.

A Character injured by a weapon poisoned with Serpent's Fang oil must make a Strength Check (CR 18) after each hour or take a Wound. The CR decreases by 2 each hour. One passed, the poison stops. A Character cannot be affected by more than one dose of Serpent's Fang at a time.

SHADOW ROOT

Found: Desert - CR 15

The root of an amber desert flower. When chewed, it temporarily enhances the consumer's night vision. They do not get Disadvantage due to darkness. It makes their eyes sensitive to bright light while affecting them and for a short time afterward. Consuming too much at once can cause temporary or lasting blindness. Frequent use of the herb leads to permanent catlike pupils and discomfort in bright light.

The effect lasts a few minutes for each root consumed. After the roots wear off, the Character must succeed on a Strength Check (CR 5) or be sensitive to bright light for (8-Strength) hours, receiving Disadvantage on all Skill Checks with a visual component. +1 CR for each additional root consumed.

SPOTCAPS

Found: Pervasive - CR 13

To Brew: Apothecary (CR +2)

These small speckled mushrooms are edible and harmless on their own. When mixed with poisons however, they have a compounding effect.

Being poisoned by a toxin containing Spotcaps increases the Strength CR of the poison by 1 for each Spotcap added to the mix, up to a maximum of 5. This increases the CR to brew the poison by 2 per Spotcap.

VENOMSTAR

Found: Pervasive - CR 20

To Brew: Apothecary (CR 16)

The venom of this toxic plant can be made into a slick, coagulated oil. It is illegal to cultivate in most realms and few know how to find it in the wilds.

Poisoning a weapon with brewed Venomstar oil makes the next Wound it inflicts more deadly. A Character injured by a Venomstar oil coated weapon must make a Strength Check (CR 15). If they pass, they take a Minor Wound. If they fail, they take a Wound. This cannot affect a Character more than once per Rest, and the oil must be applied within an hour of use.

The Lands and Seas of Ossura



THE WORLD OF OSSURA

The world of Blood and Bone is painted in broad strokes to outline its various regions and peoples. Rather than focusing on specific dates, events, or individuals, information is presented to convey the thematic feel of a specific world during a particular era. Often, the details are framed in anecdotal and colloquial ways, as the people of Ossura would know and understand them.

BLOOD

Humankind possesses a strange and terrible gift — the Blood. Blood is the powerful hereditary ability to manipulate the forces of life and death at will. Those born with this ability can work their will upon the world. Used to destroy, Blood can wither flesh, rot wood, and mold leather. Used to restore, it can mend skin, knit flesh and bone, and heal gaping wounds. The regenerative powers of the Blood may challenge even death itself. It can also be used to create Risen — horrible, unliving men reduced to primitive rotting husks. Blood is exhausting to use, and requires great skill and training to control.

Though it cannot restore lost youth, it can be used to abnormally extend life and even truly bring back the recently dead. However, if this goes awry, it may create a Risen or Thrall. Thralls, though returned to true life, are empty — reduced to hollow, mindless, shadows of their former selves.

Blood is a defining force in the world of Ossura. Its inherent existence is essential to each of the unique cultures of the world. It is a core pillar of almost all aspects of society, shaping the faces of religions, economies, political regimes, and military forces.

Each culture views the Blood differently, but all consider it a natural occurrence. Like being born strong or cunning, being Blooded is simply another gift one may possess. Some Blooded are innately stronger or weaker than others but, like any talent, one's skill in using the Blood may be honed through use and careful practice.

While nearly one in every hundred people may be Blooded, many of them will be weak, a lesser Blooded. Only a fraction of those with the gift will have genuine power, and a smaller fraction still have both the potency and mastery to wield the Blood to its full potential. At its extreme, a master of the Blood can live for centuries, their bodies woven with power, returning the dead to life at will and reducing their enemies to dust at a glance.

ON AGES PAST

In the beginning, when the world was new, there lived the Masons. They were so named, for nothing remains of their lost civilization save their great works of stone, testament to a bygone age. They were a race apart, beings before men. Their civilization flourished for thousands of years.

Some myths speak of a great event of cataclysmic proportions that led to the end of the Masons, blotting out the sun and turning the world to ash. Other myths tell that the Masons simply disappeared; every man, woman, and child, gone in an instant. However it happened, by the coming of the First Men to Ossura, every trace of the Masons had all but vanished.

Across the land are scattered the crumbling remnants of their once-great civilization. While much of their splendor has been lost to the sands of time, their stones endure. Great flagstone roads bridge the realms, and ruined aqueducts, sewers, and even whole cities remain the marvels of men.

Perhaps the greatest mystery left by the Masons are their Waystones. These ancient monoliths are scattered across Ossura. They feel alive, eternally warm as if touched by the sun. Around them, the wildlife grows thicker, the trees and beasts growing large and old. The injured heal faster by a Waystone, and rest comes easily to the weary. Travelers often camp by them, and many a small town or farm has a stone at its center. The First Men viewed these stones as sacred and worshiped the Old Gods before them.

The dawn of the First Age of men can be traced back some three thousand years, to the origin of the most ancient Abkhazi carvings. It is possible the Abkhazi once held works more ancient still, but the grandeur of their civilization has long since been swallowed by the sands. The men of the First Age lived in an age of savage darkness, and kept the old ways and the Old Gods.

The Second Age of men saw the rise of the Empire of Tarn. It conquered and occupied much of Caros and northern and western Mercos. During this time, a common tongue emerged as Mercish merchants moved freely throughout the Tarnish Empire. Over the last thousand years that empire crumbled. Brought down by rebellion in Caros, Inorn raids, and a civil war, Tarn has not been an imperial force for centuries.

As the Tarnish Empire fell, Caros was soon united under a King, and a royal line was established. An ever-present tide of warfare and animosity still divides Caros and Tarn to this day.

Caros founded the religion of the Light and most of the Inorn on the continent were forced out to the northern isles, though their raids persist even now. Those that remained came to call themselves the Eskarn. The religion of the Light stretched as far as Mercos and distant Numir.

Mercos, rather than uniting, gave rise to a series of city-states allied under the cause of mutual profit in the face of Ossura's perpetual conflict. Trade and cultural ties between Mercos and Caros strengthened, and Mercos eventually adopted the religion of the Light. Two centuries ago, what are now called the Free Cities broke from Mercish law and formed their own trade laws along the coast of southwest Mercos.

Thus the six great realms of men were born unto Ossura and so begins the Third Age.



THE SIX GREAT REALMS OF MEN

INOR

North across the cold Sea of Ghosts lies the rocky cluster of islands known as Inor, the Shattered Isles. With long cold winters and brief summers, it is upon these battered rocks that the clans of the Inorn dwell.

There are three major islands, and more than half a dozen smaller fragments of land. The Shield is the largest island, covered in dark forest like Tarn. The Axe, despite its rocky coast, is bathed in warm currents from Caros. The Dagger, central and north, is the coldest of the three, rimed in frost. Ruled by warlords and scattered chieftains, the clans hold an uneasy peace, uniting only to turn back invaders. Perhaps once in a lifetime, a great chieftain may join the clans under a single banner. Such events are rare and short-lived, often collapsing soon after their leader's death.

The Inorn are the largest of Ossuran men, towering a head higher than the rest. They are sturdy and muscular, with tanned and weathered skin. Beneath their long thick black hair, they have eyes of brown, hazel, green, or rarely of blue. Like the men of the continent they wear tunics and breeches, though such clothes are often buried beneath hides and heavy furs.

Both men and women plait their hair and it is customary for men to wear beards as a mark of adulthood. Such braids are often more elaborate for ceremonies such as those at Midwinter. The Inorn braid in beads of different materials to signify great feats and deeds. Each bone bead is for an enemy slain in battle. Copper marks a successful raid. Oak is for the cycle of the seasons. Stone signifies battles won.

Inorn warriors favor axes, whether one to a hand, paired with a shield, thrown, or massive and wielded with both hands. They wear furs, and armor of thick leather and hide, protection from both blades and the piercing northern cold.

The other peoples of Ossura view the Inorn as a primitive, barbaric, and superstitious folk. Despite this they are acknowledged and feared as great warriors, a reputation born of their seasonal raids on the continent that terrorize the northern coasts of Tarn and Caros. They are skilled seafarers, though their vessels are suited for coasts and rivers rather than the open sea. It is an unspoken law that, when upon another man's vessel, he is to be treated as a chieftain. Even a king, if aboard another man's ship, is to pay him the proper respect.

Though most Inorn are tall by nature, there are among them a number of men who some would call giants. Eight to nine feet tall, there are perhaps a hundred of these rare men among the Inorn at any given time. Only loosely tied to clan lines, this trait manifests in young children, seemingly at the whim of the gods. Named after their giant god, such men are referred to as children of Wunark.

THE ESKARN

The Eskarn are a similar peoples to the Inorn, sharing many of the same traditions but geographically separated. They live on the mainland of the Shard in the border mountains and forests of Caros and Tarn. In both realms they are viewed at best as second-class citizens, and at worst as outright enemies of their respective crowns. The Eskarn, like the Inorn, are fearsome warriors. They gather their defeated foes and place their bodies by the Wyrd Trees; offerings to themselves and the gods. Unlike the Inorn, the Eskarn do not braid their hair, but allow it to fall in matted coils instead. Similar to the Inorn beading practice, many Eskarn warriors will attach claws or talons to the end of each lock of hair.

The Eskarn are also masterful hunters and trackers. They produce a special cloth made from hemp and dyed with dark greens, browns, and tans, making them nearly invisible in both mountains and forests. On their feet, they wear boots made from the paws of beasts so as to disguise their tracks. Their archers carry a variety of whistling arrows, fletched with the feathers of different birds and tipped with bone whistles to send secret messages or even call or drive back the beasts of the forest. It is said they can walk for days over mountainous and rugged terrain without rest, and never tire.

THE WILD GODS

The Inorn and the Eskarn keep the ways of the wild gods. They say that all things have a spirit, an innate potency — mountains and rivers, the wind and wild beasts, men and gods. All animate things possess this spirit, and older things more so. Druids have more than most men, and all that separates men and gods is how much spirit they possess. One gains it through true action, having their stories told, songs sung, and names spoken or carved.

Inorn Blooded are seen as Druids, children of Dagara. Blooded among the Inorn are rarer than among other races, but they are frequently powerful when they do emerge. Waystones are their sacred sites. Druids often carve the ancient trees, particularly around such stones, with their own faces. Known as Wyrd Trees, their aged trunks can bear hundreds of faces.

Druids tend their forests, repairing storm-damaged trees and mending sick or injured beasts. Thus their forests grow ancient and thick and their animals large like the beasts of old. With their Blood they bind horns, tusks, antlers, and fangs to creatures from other beasts. Often, such Druids have companions — packs of wolves, or a great bear or giant boar.

Through Blood and ritual, they remove their own teeth and replace them with the fangs of wolves, and upon their heads fuse the horns or antlers of other

beasts. They teach the ravens of the deep wood to speak their names and the names of the gods.

Though most worship occurs at sacred sites in the form of prayer or offerings, temples do exist. They are built on the fringes of towns, bridging man and the wilds. Their roofs are affixed with long copper rods to call the power of storms. It is at these sites that the Inorn burn their dead and cast what is left to the sea. It is the old tradition to sail north and entomb the dead in ice. This is still done for great kings, left to slumber eternally in frozen tombs.

The Inorn tell tales of countless gods and spirits. Many small villages have their own legends and gods, blurred and mixed with older tales. A handful are known by all, across every island and among the Eskarn. Dagara, Fenkir, Wunark, and Lyss are chief among them. The Inorn believe their gods walk the earth as men.

Dagara is the first of Druids. They say he was the first Blooded among men, and that he wanders the earth to this day, immortal, tending to the wild places of the world. He is described as an old and wizened man, beard and hair woven with thorns, a crown of single pointed antlers sprouting from his head; beneath it, he has the eyes and teeth of a bear. They say that Dagara taught the First Men to see through the eyes of ravens and speak to the trees, but these things have long since been lost.

Marokir is the wolf god, a great trickster and lover and fighter. Sometimes he walks as a wolf, sometimes as a man or a man with a wolf's head. Legend tells that the First Men were like Marokir and could run both as wolves and men. In many clans, Inorn are given huge wolf-dogs as guardians and companions as they come of age. The wolf is seen as an extension of its master, and it is disrespectful for others to touch the animal.

In times of great need, a wolf-man has always come to defend the Eskarn. In this age, he has become a symbol of their resistance to Caroan oppression, striking back with daring deeds. Some say this folk hero is simply a man in wolf furs and a mask, but others swear it is Marokir himself.

Wunark the giant god is said to be the greatest of all warriors. Mighty beyond men, many tales are sung of his deeds of strength. He is a force of madness: the battle-madness of a bloodied warrior and the madness of the drink and feast that follows victory. When a giant is born, they are called Karn Wunark regardless of their birth. It is often said that all Inorn are descended from Wunark and his blood runs in their veins.

Lyss is the goddess of water and of the seasons. She is a whimsical child, beautiful and terrible. Appearing as a pale naked girl, covered only by her long raven hair, she is a creature of joy and of rage. Her laugh is the burble of the brook and rush of the spring melt. Her wrath is in the ceaseless waves that shatter ships and the dark fury of the storm. Hers is the silence of the abyssal ocean deep and that of the untrodden morning snow.

CLANS AND REAVERS

Many of the Inorn's customs paint them as savages to the men of the Shard. Marriages among the Inorn are often used to solidify peace and forge alliances between clans. During courtship, suitors will offer tokens of their prowess — the skulls of great beasts, or the weapons of fallen foes. Upon marriage, the families of the wedded each give half their wealth to the newly-wedded couple. As this boon halves with each successive heir, elder children are considered more desirable spouses.

Many warriors also take hearthwives — women of a lower caste, ineligible for marriage and posing no societal threat to their spouse. Such women are frequently captives, taken during raids on the Shard. For some Inorn clans, it is customary for raiders to take foreigners captive as slaves or hearthwives, earning them a fierce reputation among those they pillage.

Women warriors are common in the northern clans, though they are more common still among the Eskarn. Not only do they adopt the social roles of hunting and raiding, but some even take wives and hearthwives of their own.

The Inorn count time by the passage of seasons. Frostfire marks the onset of winter, Coldbite its deepest chill. Midthaw is the melting, and Fairweather the brief warmth. The winter solstice marks the start of a new year. The winter solstice is a time for much revelry and merrymaking where free amorous unions are seen as an offering to the gods, and thus many children are born in the fall of the following year.

LANGUAGE

Inorn script is not written, but carved into stone or wood or horn. It is comprised of blocky pictographic runes, often as a supplement to an actual image or artistic depiction. Names are written as bind-runes, knit images of two or more pictographic symbols. When spoken it is a slow, low, and heavy monotone, though it carries a certain lilt which is more pronounced when spoken by women.

Prized objects such as axes, shields, leather armor, drinking horns, and feasting knives often bear bind-runes of their owner's name and their clan name, and may even bear a name of their own. At feasts, each man will drink from their chieftain's carved horn in a show of respect.

NAMES

First names often honor great warriors, gods, or heroic ancestors. Sometimes they are combined with runes for animals, seasons, or colors. Surnames are preceded by Karn, meaning of a Clan. Those in exile, or foreigners, do not have Karn.

Male Names: Arik, Malik, Kannir, Tulimak, Ujirak, Kinnalik, Najyiskar, Grimjr, Ulfur, Kaillikar, Merek, Torilak

Female Names: Anyaa, Ila, Sighna, Desna, Eska, Kaya, Ingren, Vijyiska, Aesa, Anaraka, Ragna, Sanya

Surnames: Karn Malkir, Karn Sterk, Karn Digra, Karn Ramm, Karn Ransk, Karn Irsk, Karn Dorak, Karn Boer, Karn Senir, Karn Eskir

CITIES

The cities, and islands on which they rest, are named for their literal meanings. This is how the Inorn would hear and understand them and speak them in the common tongue.

COLDHOME

The largest city of the Inorn Isles, Coldhome rests at the center of the Shield. In one of the Isles' few passably hospitable regions, Coldhome and the surrounding forests bear the hallmarks of true civilization. It is ringed by an earthen wall, topped with stone and crowned with wooden spikes. Beyond this, there are fields cut into the rocky soil. Farmers raise goats, sheep, and yaks around the city's limits.

Like most Inorn villages, the buildings of Coldhome are longhouses, half sunken in the earth for warmth and roofed in shale or peat. At the center of the city stands a massive Waystone, and by it the Gildentree, an ancient oak with golden leaves.

STORMSHELTER

Stormshelter is a small port on the southeastern rim of the Shield. Beyond a wooden palisade, a mess of timber houses cling the coast, mortared together with tar and straw. It is home to hunters, trappers, and fishermen. They barter skins, furs, fat, meat, bone, and timber with Coldhome and the other isles. They may even see an occasional foreign trader, looking to buy skins or oil to sell in his homeland.

Just inland of Stormshelter, the pine forests of the Shield grow thick and are logged for timber. These pines are traded to the other Isles as building materials for longhouses and ships, as well as much-needed fuel for the long winters.

STONEHARBOR

Stoneharbor is cut where the handle of the Axe meets its head. It is a harbor toothed in jagged rock. Apparently impassable, nestled between the jaws of two ragged cliffs, Stoneharbor is actually an ideal berth for ships. The bay is shallow, and perfect for sleek Inorn

longboats. Larger ships must wait for high tide to enter or leave, lest they risk running aground on the jagged rocks. These natural defenses shield Stoneharbor from both weather and attack. Atop its eastern cliff, a standing stone is capped with silver. It draws lightning and is often called, in jest, the Lighthouse of Stoneharbor.

To say a ship is of Storm and Stone means that the ship is lucky or well made. The expression comes from praise of Stormshelter timber and Stoneharbor craftsmanship.

WINTERHOME

Built on a small island of the same name, Winterhome is the warmest and most temperate of the Inorn cities. Close to Caros, its residents are more peaceful than their northern brothers. Though it is illegal by Caroan law, they trade with mainland Caros for grain and distant Mercish luxuries. The city even has a church to the Light. Many of the other clans view Winterhome as weak, small, and soft. However, they rarely begrudge the grain it trades northwards.

FROSTGUARD

At the hilt of the Dagger rises Frostguard, a bleak city of dark stacked stones and shale. Frostguard is peopled almost entirely by raiding clans, many of which are feared by even their fellow Inorn. It is said that during the darkest winters when food runs scarce, some men of Frostguard consume the dead.

The rocky land around Frostguard produces coal, and Frostguard's forges create many of the axes, shields, and tools for the other Isles. As few Mercish merchants dare to come this far north, much of the Inorn steel is their own.

THE RIME

The northernmost bastion of men in all Ossura, the Rime is more fortress than city. The only settlement in Northlands, the unexplored and inhospitable frozen continent above the Shard, it sits along a fjord that springs from a chasm cleft in the glacier known as the White Expanse. Built into this glacier, spanning the cleft, carved of dark ice and black rock, rises a fortress built by the First Men. It marks the threshold of the mortal world. Here winter spells eternal night, and summer sings the gloam. They say the land of ice to the north is inhabited by the Pale Men, beings of frost and death, left over from a time before even the Masons.

The Druids say that the cleft in the glacier leads back and away from the world of men, into the underworld, a realm of darkness and cold. Not far down the chasm's mouth, great tombs of ice are carved into its blue walls. There rest the Inorn Chieftains of old, blue-lipped, sealed in tombs of ice and stone, weapons and accursed frost-rimed ancient gold piled high around them.



CAROS

Caros is a patchwork of several smaller realms, united under a single king. The people of Caros vary slightly in complexion, with skins ranging from dark olive in the east to fairer tones in the north and west. Caroans commonly have wavy or curly hair, almost always black or deep brown like their intense dark eyes. Caroans wear traditional continental clothes: tunics and breeches for the men, and dresses for the women. Their clothes are often functional, and dyed in muted earthen tones of brown and red. It is not uncommon for women, especially those of lower status, to dress in tunics and breeches as well.

The Kingdom of Caros is made up of four provinces, each somewhat independent but ultimately beholden to the king. The unity of Caros is a relatively recent evolution. During Tarnish occupation, Caros was still no more than a collection of half a dozen warring kingdoms, petty and divided. Through the unifying religion of the Light and a powerful surge from an alliance of the southern kingdoms, Caros united to fight its common foe. After the Tarnish Empire began to crumble, the alliances forged in centuries past lingered, and Caros became a single realm. Its small kingdoms melded into the four provinces, each ruled by several lords, all loyal to the king.

The southern coast of Caros is its most densely populated province, home to the king, the capital, and much of Caros' wealth. Though temperate like the rest of Caros, winds from the gulf keep it warm and mild even in winter. Many prosperous cities and ports rise along this shining stretch of coast, trading freely with the rest of Ossura.

Caroan coinage is a testament to the state of the kingdom, having a short-lived circulation after the kingdom's founding. Copper, brass, and gold brands were the standard of the king before Caros adopted the Mercish system of rings. Despite being larger and heavier than Mercish rings, old Caroan coins are, as coins, actually worth less. Because of this, the Caroan crown, among other entities, has taken to collecting them from circulation and melting them down to make its own rings, defaulting to a one-to-one exchange rate with Mercish currency. While technically prohibited under Mercish law, these new Caroan rings are widely used. Unique to the Caroan ring system are their brass rings, worth approximately twice as much as their copper Mercish counterparts.

The east, covered in Mason ruins, is considered by many to be a holy land. It is there that the Order of Ash presides. Though a part of the Kingdom of Caros, the east has no lord, but is instead ruled directly by the High Cleric and controlled absolutely by the Order. It is a wealthy province, made rich through tithes, ceremonial taxes, and offerings. The entire region and its numerous holy sites draw many pilgrims from throughout Ossura.

The north is a sparsely populated wild land, dotted with small isolated villages and castle towns. Often raided by the Inorn, those who dwell in the north rely on its dark cliffs and the soldiers of the northern lords to protect them.

The west is largely forested, right up to the Spine and the border of Tarn. These woods are home to many Eskarn, poorly treated by their Caroan lords. Viewed as barbaric, many face hardship under Caroan rule. Some clans cling to the old, wild ways, and are openly hostile to Caros, living in the forests and foothills beyond the reach of red cloaked soldiers.

AMARI

The Amari, or the road folk, as they are called, are an outlawed people. Though they have the dark eyes and hair and tanned skin of southern Caroans, they are scattered across the entire realm. They do not uphold the king's law, and it, in turn, affords them no protection.

They are not bound to land nor city, neither to crown nor Order-chain. The Order despises them, dismissing them as vermin like the Eskarn for they pay no tithes to the Order.

To steal from an Amari is not a crime, as the law does not shield them. Even killing one of their kind is a matter that could be settled by law with the compensation of a few rings. They are a nomadic people and often find themselves unwelcome in towns and cities. Many view them as bandits and thieves. In reality, the Amari are a people of many skills, working as traveling laborers. Some say they create as many problems as they fix — hire one to thatch your roof, and your cow goes missing. Others say they slip into towns to create the problems they later offer to remedy. Thus rat infestations, sickness, and general misfortune are often blamed on the Amari.

While associated with misfortune, the Amari themselves are considered to boast uncanny luck, as they are skilled dice players and have a reputation for quick wit and quick fingers. They are also renowned storytellers, spreading news and tales of old as they travel the land. Though they speak the common tongue as Caroans, they also keep a secret cant, sounding like nonsense to one not of their kind. It can be written in the form of symbols or markings, on trees, or doorways, or scratched in stone as a secret system of messages for their traveling bands.

THE ORDER OF ASH

The essence of the Kingdom of Caros is inseparable from the Order of Ash. The roots of the Order date back to the Tarnish occupation of Caros. Clerics of the Order believe in a single divine radiance — the Light, a supreme being representing all law and order in the cosmos. He is control, the payment of debt and reward. He is a righteous, wrathful, and vengeful king. His is the judgment, life and death, to heal and purge and cleanse with fire.

High Clerics of Light undergo a ritual called the Searing. They stare into the sun until their eyes are burned blind and white. After a year of blindness their eyes are restored with Blood. After regaining their eyes some are blessed with a holy sight, able to see a layer of the world in white-violet fire forevermore.

The Book of Fire, the most guarded of the Order's secrets, can only be read by those possessing such vision. To all others it appears blank, but to blessed eyes, each ancient page is thick with pale purple runes, made from a secret ink of certain crushed stones. Like the Black Book, it is a guide to the Blood, and a deeply spiritual text.

It is the sworn duty of His Clerics to put down the undead wherever they are found. Each Cleric carries a single stiletto dagger to put down the dead or take his own life, should he be faced with the prospect of undeath. Robed in white, wearing circular amulets cut by a square cross, all Clerics carry a copy of the scroll of the Light, a sacred text that lays down His divine law. At the heart of His altars, a fire is always kept burning. On holy days, it is fed with epsom salts and wax to burn white.

It is customary for Caroan Blooded to join the Order, and all High Clerics are Blooded. Non-blooded who pledge themselves to the Order become servants or Paladins, the guardians of the Order. While membership is not compulsory for Blooded, the Order conducts inquisitions against powerful independent Blooded they deem threats, claiming they Raise the dead, and burning them alive. Often such moves are political and self-serving, a testament to the Order's corruption.

Blooded found guilty of Raising the dead are branded for their crimes, or burned at the stake — the most severe punishment in the eyes of the Order. With the destruction of the flesh, there is no hope for redemption through Thralldom.

Though they do not Raise the dead, the use of Thralls is common practice among the clergy. People who cannot repay debts to the Order are killed and turned to Thralls in the service of the Light, and their families are released from debt. Sinners — or most men, in the eyes of the Light, or at least the Order — are given to the Church as Thralls upon their deaths. Their mortal flesh may toil in our world to save their immortal soul from an

eternity of white fire. Some lesser Clerics even elect to become Thralls, consigning their immortal soul to the Light while their bodies continue to serve. Of course, a way to avoid being a sinner is to do good deeds in life, and the best of deeds is to serve the Order.

Thus many wealthy may absolve themselves of sin and guilt by donating gold to the church, and save themselves from Thralldom. Even the death penalty by religious law is to be killed and raised as a Thrall. Thralls of the church are branded, their foreheads seared with the sign of the circle and cross. When Thralls finally expire — becoming damaged, or wasting away, as they often do — they are committed to the pyre and burned to ash.

The poor often seek out Clerics to heal dire wounds or save loved ones from the brink of death. Sometimes the price is the pledge of Thralldom for the soul making the request. Other times, often in addition to this, the price is the indenturement of one's life to the Crown and joining the king's army as a recruit.

There are some men of Caros, particularly in the north, who cling to the myriad Old Gods as their ancestors once did in ages past. Even in the south, there are those who openly worship the Light, yet above their hearth still keep a small carved statue of bone, or antler, or wood, of a nameless, faceless man.

The rise of the Light has kindled many small groups who have different interpretations of its core tenets.

The Brothers of the Rotting Tide are a fanatical cult bent on bringing about the prophesied end of the world. They often target nobles with attacks and assassination attempts, and are most hated and feared for their tactic of releasing Risen on populated cities.

The Justicars are an order of paladins who, with the crown's blessing, hold the power of judge, jury, and executioner. Trained from childhood in the White Citadel they are taught moral and philosophical principles based on the Light, rather than a fixed set of rules. They are also taught how to fight and lead men in battle. With these tenets as guidance, they roam the land serving the people, settling disputes, and protecting the weak.



MATRIMONY AND SIN

Romance and marriage are heavily controlled by the Order. The more sins that exist, the more gold the Order can justify taking in the name of salvation.

Most Caroans are married young, and the process involves paying the Order a portion of their wealth. Because of this, many poor marry in secret. Divorce is legal, but it too involves paying the Order a hefty tax. Doing either of these things without the consent and blessing of a local Cleric is a crime, and the Order's punishments are often harsh. Inheritance too is taxed by the Order. Property is to be divided equally among all children of the deceased, after the Order has taken its desired third. Many try to cheat the Order by burying their gold.

In the eyes of the Order, breaking marital monogamy is a sin, expunged by paying the Order. For a man to lie with a man or a woman with a woman is a sin, expunged by paying the Order. The repressive atmosphere of the Order is often shirked by the less devout. Laws about not lying with another before marriage or not mingling with prostitutes are simply ignored by many, especially in cities.

LANGUAGE

The most important Caroan gesture is the act of touching two fingers to one's forehead as a show of respect, often coupled with the universal nod or bow. The head, the destruction of which prevents undeath, is seen as the seat of the soul.

Caroan, sharing much with Mercish, translates fluidly into the common tongue. It is a rapid, rolling, and loud language, coupled with hand gestures and rhythmic phrasing all of which carry over into the merchant's tongue. Many of its common social niceties are rooted in the culture's religious overtones. "Light be with you" is a more reverential farewell than "goodbye".

"He sees" is often used in lieu of thanks in Caros, implying that the Light has seen their kind act. It is also used in the same way one from Mercos might say thanks in a sarcastic manner, implying that the Light has judged their lack of kindness.

Most Caroan curses revolve around dogmatic slurs and condemnation of sin. They often take the form of threats: be purged, the light shall burn you, the light shall blind you, you shall be judged, white fire hungers, and so forth. They view other races, especially the Inorn and Abkhazi, as barbaric and uncivilized. Many of their insults revolve around the perversion they perceive in other cultures.

NAMES

Male Names: Rizo, Gerardys, Jacohar, Varigo, Visconti, Barbaro, Karelton, Syrio, Lysos, Soranzo, Ambrose, Garro

Female Names: Bianca, Magdalena, Colleta, Celsi, Natale, Denea, Rosana, Miria, Vienna, Orsianah, Sissilla, Loretta

Surnames: Ammirati, Bastarion, Cipriani, Moris, Rinieri, Torellion, Valoris, Castellani, Foresi, Medacar, Cavano, Sansone

CITIES

ARCOS

Arcos is the royal capital of Caros. Beyond patched miles of amber farmland, it sits upon a cliffed island just off the southern coast. Half a dozen massive bridges connect it to the mainland, each large enough to bear several wide streets and rows of sprawling towering buildings. The city proper is huge, a wall-less mass built right up to the edge of the encircling cliff. In classic Caroan fashion, the buildings are tightly packed stone and plaster, their multiple levels roofed in low sloped terracotta tiles. From the harbors at the cliff's base to the buildings built into and against its sheer face, and up over the lower city, the height of the buildings rises as one moves towards the city center and the spires of the royal castle — which are rivaled only by those of the grand cathedral of the Order.

The city is divided into nominal districts based on functionality. The Docks, King's Bridge, Low Bridge, The Warrens, and so forth. The King's Guard have maintained order in the city for centuries. The White Cloaks, as the guard are commonly called, are a branch of the king's army, tasked with policing the city and maintaining order.

As the Caroan bloodline weakened, it is said that one heir to the throne tried, in his own way, to achieve immortality like the Tarnish kings of old. He ordered Waystones brought to the castle. He gathered three before he died. They say the fourth was lost at sea as his ships met with a fateful storm. Though his successor put a stop to such madness, three Waystones stand in the throne room at Arcos to this day. They loom behind the throne on marble plinths. Many say the air in the room is heavy, like the air before a storm, crackling with silence and power and the pulse of one's own blood.

THE IRON EYE

At the far western edge of Caros, against the face of the Spine and the Tarnish border, there is a pass. Called the Iron Eye, it is a huge and ancient Mason gateway spanning the mouth of a canyon that cuts clean through the mountains. It named for a huge carved eye in the arch, its pupil a lump of iron, all but rusted away. The gate is streaked with trails of rust, as if the eye were crying blood. The site of many battles, it has often changed hands between Caros and Tarn.

VENCIA

Vencia is the sister city to Arcos, a trading port built on the southwest coast in the crux of the gulf of Caros. The city sits in a protected bay, constructed on the water itself. It is an intricate series of arched stone bridges and old canals. All of Vencia is slowly sinking into the sea. In the oldest part of the city, called the Drowned Quarter, only the roofs and towers of the tallest buildings still endure against the tide.

Mercish ships and caravans stop in Vencia on their way into greater Caros. Ships from Abkhaz, Karazan, the Free Cities, and even distant Numir make port in the manmade harbors of Vencia.

Year round, grain and other goods from Caros flow south, graced by warm currents and gentle trade winds.

IVERIA

In the cold dark of the north sits Iveria. Small for a city, it presides in a valley ringed by looming craggy slopes. Its peak-roofed houses, shingled with pine slats, cluster in the shadow of a jagged rise crowned in the spires of Iveria Castle. Though parts of the castle now lie in ruin, much of it has been converted into a cathedral of the Order. In days past, it was home to a lord of the north.

Too far inland for Inorn raids, and only readily accessible by a handful of treacherous mountain passes, the city feels more Tarnish than Caroan. Indeed, many of its residents are blue eyed, and have fairer skin than most other northern Caroans. Locals say that many Tarnish who occupied the valley during the days of the empire remained after its fall, uncharacteristically mingling with the conquered.

TURAN

In the south, where the gold hills of Tuscar meld into the great sea of grass, rests high-walled Turan on the banks of the River Lesari. A blend of Caroan, Mercish and Abkhazi influences can be seen in the city's dense architecture, from its massive thick walls, along the pylons of its main gate, to the great domed temple at its center. It has changed hands between the three realms many times over centuries, becoming a strange cultural blend of the three.

Never conquered by Tarnish expansion, high-walled Turin has always been largely independent and is only nominally a part of Caros based on its location. In truth, it shares much more with the Free Cities of Mercos than any city in Caros. The birthplace of the common tongue, it is said that even the beggars of Turan can speak in several tongues, and know the value of every coin ever minted by man.

In eastern Caros rises Voltira, the seat of the Order's power. The entire city is a dense and spiraling tower, broad as it is tall. Ringed around its base is a city of tents and ramshackle huts, where pilgrims and refugees cluster against its walls. Each spiraling tier of the city becomes more affluent and pristine as it reaches upwards. At its top is the largest and grandest cathedral to the Light in all Ossura, like a crown upon the ziggurat of the city. Pilgrims come from all corners of Ossura to bathe in the glory of radiant Voltira. They travel from Caros itself, Mercos, and even the distant reaches of Inor and Abkhaz, where the Light is small and scarce. Some venture from Tarn, where the Light is little more than a persecuted cult.

Not governed by royal law, the Voice of the Order speaks for the Light, and it is his divine law that governs the city. In theory, all Clerics of the Order are, in name, beholden to his absolute power. Voltira is also home to a large hospital in the lower tier. There, Blooded and Unblooded alike are trained in the arts of medicine and aid. Many of them are Clerics of the Order, but all are welcome to study in its halls.

FARHOLME

Where the western forest grows wild and thick, and the ancient trees have never felt the bite of steel axes, there with old stones and green moss is nestled Farholme. It is the largest, if not the only true Eskarn city. Built on the moss-covered ruins of a crumbling Mason city, Farholme is ringed by a ruined Mason wall patched with live trees and thick thorny vines. It is said Dagara himself made the walls of Farholme, wove them from bramble's bough and thistle's root. The Druids tend his work, and the wall of thorns remains thick and impassable.

Though geographically part of the Caroan Kingdom, it remains functionally independent of the crown. During the unification of the kingdom, the Caroan army was ordered to put the city to the torch. The Eskarn struck at the large slow ranks of heavily-armored Caroan soldiers. They would strike from the hidden places of the forest, painted as shadows and leaves and draped in moss, before fading back into the underbrush. It was many years before Caroans were allowed to enter Farholme. It is now one of the few cities where Eskarn and Caroans mingle freely. Even the Inorn are welcome within its twining walls

VOLTIRA

UMBRIA

Much of western Caros is vast wilds. Against this frontier is set Umbria, a city that spans a mighty waterfall. The first structures of Umbria were laid by explorers, trappers, and eventually miners attempting to strike gold in the rock banks of the falls. Gold there was, but it was soon depleted. Umbria, however, grew. A frontier city, it is controlled by several feuding family bloodlines. Isolated in the wilds, the city is effectively lawless, and, as such, is home to many bandits and outlaws otherwise unwelcome in the kingdom. It also has a substantial Eskarn population.

ANDRINA

Andrina was once the proudest city of Caros. Given its central location, it may have become the capital over Arcos, had it not been put to the torch as the shadow of Tarn withdrew across the land. New Andrina, built on its ruins, is still a central hub for trade. Its outer walls lie largely in blasted ruins to this day, toppled down and twined in ivy. Many of these outer stones were taken by farmers for houses and low pasture walls. As such, Andrina has no distinct boundaries, and is more a single vast sprawling town than a city. Old wells and sewers help to support the low, village-like expanse of New Andrina, which eventually fades into gentle farmland and pastures.





TARN

The Tarnish are the fairest race of Ossura, so pale as to be almost white, stark against the dark forests and castles of their land. Unlike the other races, they have striking blue or grey eyes. Though they have dark hair, it is known to turn white in early adulthood and is considered a mark of beauty. Many Tarnish wear long straight wigs of white horse or yak hair. Fair complexion is also prized among them. Through its imperial spread, Tarnish attire has become pervasive on the continent. Be they noble or common, men wear tunics, and women dresses. Though frequently dyed dark tones, clothes for the wealthy are embellished with silver thread. In the capital, and especially the high court, such clothing is often elaborate.

The Blooded of Tarn are the most common and most powerful of any realm. Tarnish pride themselves on being able to manipulate Blood with nothing but a glance of their blue eyes. Blooded children have the tops of their ears cut and healed into pointed tips. This crown marks them as Blooded, making their power and station instantly recognizable by all who cross their path.

Blooded are the driving heart of Tarn. Governing five of the six Noble Houses, Blooded are Tarn's upper caste, an elite and ancient heritage. Their power is consolidated through the Risen they command. As a culture they view Thralls as weak and impotent. Risen are superior. Controllable at a distance, able to follow specific commands as well as intuitive broader instructions, they are Tarn's backbone. In the army, slain enemies are converted into horrible ghouls: Risen with each finger flayed and the exposed bone filed to claws, their teeth broken into fangs, and their eyes torn from their sockets.

Requiring neither food nor rest and feeling no cold, they are a workforce, tilling fields with their bare hands or clawing through rock in the cold still water of Tarn's deep silver mines. Each Noble House controls sizable numbers of the undead through their many Blooded children. Thus Lords of these Houses hold supreme power in their domains, boasting complete judicial power and owing loyalty to none but the King.

Though the dead are common place, Tarnish view the creation of Thralls as distasteful. Under Tarn's old imperial rule, it was illegal and barbaric to turn humans into Thralls. They viewed this practice as only fit for beasts. So-called Thrall'd animals are common in Tarn and can be found in places touched by the empire. Thrall'd animals are docile, their eyes blank and glassy. In Tarn Thrall'd horses are used as work beasts, alongside the dead, for they pay them no heed nor fear. Such broken animals are also popular in the great cities of Mercos and Caros, as they do not frighten. A Thrall'd horse will never throw a rich merchant's son, nor buck an expensive

load. An Abkhazi would never ride a Thrall'd horse, for they prize their mounts for their wild spirit. The Inorn and Eskarn view Thrall'd beasts with a similar fear and disgust.

In place of Thralls, many Lords create Wights, Risen preserved through Blood. These pale, cold, dead-eyed creatures can follow mental commands and, though gaunt and lifeless, still have a semblance of humanity. They are often used as bodyguards, as they are considered preferable to thier rotting counterparts. Many are adorned with silver masks or have their eyes replaced with silver spheres, and are fitted with armor, riveted to their very flesh. To complete this terrifying presence, their fingers are fitted with talon-like steel claws.

Tarn's army too is largely undead. Blooded captains command huge hosts of Risen, controlling each pack as skillfully as other warriors wield a sword. The King may send a summons for more troops, not only drafting peasants as soldiers, but calling for the reserves of preserved dead to be coughed forth from each Covenant temple.

It is said that when Tarn was still a great empire the dead outnumbered the living, but as its ruling Houses squabbled amongst themselves, many controlling Blooded died and their Risen wandered without purpose, preying on all men for their flesh. Tarnish bards are famous for their sad and beautiful songs on lute and harp, singing of great Blooded from this era, still alive and sealed in dusty chambers beneath the earth.

A DARK REALM

Largely isolated beyond the Wall and the mountains of the Spine, Tarn is home to many curiosities not readily found in the other realms. Like the men of Tarn, such things are often dangerous and powerful.

Darksteel blades are the swords forged in Old Tarn. Left over from the dawn of the empire, they are said to be the best swords ever made by Men. They are exceedingly rare. Stronger than even the work of the Numiran, this strange black steel never rusts, never dulls, and never breaks. It is lighter than other steel, and when it clashes, no sound is made. Though no one is able to make this metal, nor has any more of it been found, some masters among the Numiran may be able to reshape it.

Tarn still uses its own Imperial currency, circulating silver coins minted with the face of the Black King and words from the Black Book. Each denomination is silver and worth nearly twice its weight as such, from silver nails to silver stars, moons, and crowns. Those found counterfeiting silver coins have a hand thrust into molten silver as punishment.

Despite the Black Citadel's strict rule, the shadowy cartel known as the Black Wheel thrives in Tarn. The realm's dark forests produce many rare herbs

and poisons that make lucrative trade stock for the Wheel's hidden dealings.

Even the diseases of Tarn are dark and deadly. Night Sickness is a plague that causes its carriers to be extraordinarily sensitive to sunlight. It is transferred by tainted water and thus affects small populations almost simultaneously. Nearly any contact with sunlight will soon cause drastic burns and blindness. While Blood can cure these burns like normal wounds, it cannot cure the disease itself. Though more common in Tarn, the disease is known to afflict all the realms. Those affected are called Night Walkers. They often develop catlike eyes from prolonged use of Shadow Root to enhance their vision in the dark.

Tarn is also home to a terrifying black mold called Corpsebloom. Like ashen snow, its spores infect corpses, animating them as Risen under its control like insect drones. The living may also be infected by the spores, rotting like lepers. Those cursed with the mold are known as the Afflicted, and shunned by all. Many wear bandages and masks so as to hide their decaying flesh. When the disease finally take them, they will Rise. Superstitious peasants believe the caves and old ruins infested by the spores are cursed, the homes of ancient Blooded from days of old.

There exists an apocalyptic cult called the Rotting Tide who believe in worshiping the Black King by spreading rot and ruin. They make free Risen and set them on towns and cities. They will perpetuate Corpsebloom and spread it, creating hordes of uncontrolled Risen.

THE COVENANT

Each successive Tarnish Emperor is worshiped as the living incarnation of the Black King. The current Emperor has ruled for over three centuries. He is called the Old One and the King Eternal. Over the centuries rumors of His powers have become legend, and though He now sits decrepit upon the Obsidian Throne, He is feared and respected, commanding absolute loyalty from His noble court.

Enemies of the crown, traitors, criminals, and prisoners of war, are sacrificed in His name. Their eyes are torn out and replaced by spheres of polished blackwood. Their bodies are tattooed with black runes, prayers to the Old One. They are then Risen and bound with Blood—preserved Wights to serve in His name.

Temples to the Black King are stone chapels or cathedrals where men come to pay homage to their dark god. Beneath them sprawl crypts or catacombs, where the dead are entombed to serve as reserves, lest their King call upon them even in death. The corpses of peasants are considered property of their Lord's House, and thus property of the King. Black Priests extract the venom of Aniric spiders — black horrors, each the size of a child's hand. The venom is used to preserve these corpses for later use. When

noble lords with unnaturally prolonged lives finally expire, they are sealed in tombs with hosts of Risen guards.

Black priests drink a wine made from Bloodthistle sap, mixed with salt and powdered silver that turns their pale skin blue-grey. Each is a powerful Blooded. Often the younger children of noble Houses, far removed from the line of succession, join the Covenant as a way of joining House Black, the Black King's own House. They are ritually killed and resurrected, sworn to serve in the Old One's undying name. The Black Book, sacred text of the Covenant, is bound in human flesh and written in the blood of his priests. It is a guide to the Blood, filled with thousands of years of masters' notes and observations.

The White Queen, wife to the Black King, is also known as the Mistress of Changes, the Pale Lady, or simply the Lady. Her priests and priestesses, the Devoted, worship her under the light of Ossura's pale blue moon, and their sacred cult is as a luminous spider's web cast over the Shard. They are companions, skilled in the arts of love, politics, and diplomacy. They offer their flesh in her name. The Devoted are renowned for their perfect speech. It is said they need only look on any man or woman to know what words would make them fall in love, and which would break their heart.

The Devoted take in bastard and unblooded children from noble families and orphans that show promise. Some join by choice, some are given. Taken in at birth, these acolytes grow up under the wings of order, provided protection and education in many things. When they come of age, the body of each potential initiate is auctioned off for one night, their purity the price of The Pale Lady's protection.

Thereafter they are offered the choice to leave the protection of the order for an arranged job in a city or noble house, or to become a Devoted and stay as a companion, selling their flesh for the White Queen. Should they choose this latter path, they speak a secret vow and their backs are scarred and healed with Blood, leaving the mark known as the White Brand. During this guarded rite they are scarred inside as well, for none who follow the Lady may sire children of their own.

Their secret rites are held on the full moon, and prayers are offered to The Lady. This is her only night of worship. When the moon is eclipsed, the priests of the Black King visit the Devoted of the White Queen and hold the Night's Court, where, it is said, they see beyond the veil of death.

She is the barren field and the dry-sown seeds; He is the reaper, the harvester, and the rot of bounty. The Tarnish call Waystones tearstones. They say they are shards of the moon, the tears the Pale Lady wept when first she was taken by the Old One.

HEIRS AND BLOODLINES

In Tarn, gifted lovers are seen as the method for producing strong Blooded heirs. Because of this, bloodlines are tightly controlled. Noble or wealthy men and women are circumcised at birth and the wounds healed with Blood. For both genders, it is considered taboo to have children before marriage as it adds ambiguity to bloodlines and inheritance rights. To preserve the power of the Blood, nobles often marry from closely related Houses or even within their own, wedding cousins or sometimes even siblings.

There is an archaic tradition known as First Night. Mostly abolished, this old law states that it is a lord's right to be the first to take a commoner's wife on her bridal night. Though the practice is officially discouraged by the crown, it is a theme often invoked in tragic ballads by Tarnish bards.

Through Blooded healers in every Noble House, most infants survive to adulthood. Houses have many children, from six to over a dozen. However, only Blooded children may inherit leadership of a House. It is customary that the current leader name their heir. Heirs are chosen regardless of gender or age and are often the most potent Blooded. Unblooded noble children are often given to House White.

The first Blooded children of a Noble House are considered tribute to the throne. At the age of ten, each firstborn Blooded son or daughter is inducted into House Black. Like priests, they are ritually killed and returned to life to signify their birth into a new House.

Some are trained in courtly affairs and make up the ruling body of Tarn. In the court they wear masks of silver so that they all appear alike. They are bound with Blood and their aging slowed. They often serve in the court for two or three decades before reaching adulthood. Many remain at court, while others marry back into one of the Noble Houses.

Others are given to the Imperial Army and serve the King for life. Though it is against their sworn oaths to sire children, bastards are common and often fated to ultimately join the army themselves. Tarn's army boasts Blooded men and women in equal number; merit is based largely on the strength of their abilities.

Ambitious Blooded commoners, often the product of an ill-fated union between Nobles and their subjects, frequently join the ranks of the army or Covenant in the hopes of gaining the power and prestige they were denied at birth.

LANGUAGE

Though it stems from the same roots as Mercish and Caroan, Tarnish sounds more pointed than its sister tongues. It is an elegant and reserved language, beautiful even to those who do not understand it. Even though Tarn's empire has long since crumbled, it is still considered fashionable for lords in Caros and the merchant elite in Mercos to learn Tarnish as a court language. It is written chiefly on paper or vellum and bound into books. Messages are rolled up and sent by way of trained ravens.

A few of their most common expressions carry over into the common tongue. Eternal, short for my eternal gratitude, is a way of saying thanks. It is not offered lightly, and they will use the whole phrase in more serious situations. Pale is a standard and informal greeting, meaning "may the Pale Lady be with you". It is also used informally as a farewell.

The formal farewell is structured as a ritual exchange, based on the station of the speakers. It is appropriate to bow when addressing those of equal or higher station.

"May you live to see me again," says one of a higher station to one of a lower.

"May I live to see you again," replies the one of lower station.

"May we live to see each other again," is spoken by two people, each of similar station.

Insults in Tarnish are largely based on social standing: Unblooded, bastard, loose-tongued, fool, child, common, and the like.

NAMES

Male Names: Lothar, Clovis, Merovech, Alain, Evenon, Hurion, Marcel, Remont, Sirion, Sevrin, Tybalt, Brom, Fendryl, Jarin

Female Names: Avenia, Emeloth, Elaria, Lescel, Naria, Sabina, Aaline, Katherine, Cisila, Lucia, Sylva, Liann

Surnames:

Commoners are named after their profession: Smith, Hunter, Tanner, Fletcher, Baker, Fisher, Player, Archer, Carver, Skinner, Keeper, Shepherd

Nobility are named after their house, such as Alain of House Thorn.

House Black - The Royal House
House White - The Devoted
House Frost - Along the northern shorecliffs
House Thorn - In the dark forest
House Stone - By the Wall
House Pine - On the western coast
House Pike - Exiled to the northern isle

CITIES

THE BLACK CITY

Tarn's capital, The Black City, is one of the oldest cities in all Ossura. At its center, the Black Citadel looms over the cobbled streets, beneath which sprawl the maze-like levels of an even older necropolis. The Black City looms over the heart of Tarn. Made of dark stones and timber, it was once the seat of Tarn's mighty empire. Though large, it is only the inner ring of what was once an even greater city, for around it in the dark forest there stretch stone ruins, half again as expansive as the city itself.

The Black Citadel, home to House Black, is both castle and cathedral, its Obsidian Throne the dual seat of religious and political power. Within the walls of the Black Citadel rises the Tower, an academy for the Blooded where commanders of the Imperial Army are trained in the arts of Blood and war. Beneath the Tower is an infamous prison where, it is said, trained torturers can keep a man alive for lifetimes, making and unmaking his flesh with Blood.

House White also makes its home in the city. The temple to the White Queen is one of the largest buildings in the city, shadowed only by the Black Citadel. It is there that the Devoted are taken and trained until they take their vows and are sent out into greater Ossura.

BELESGAR

Off Tarn's northern coast, cold grey waves break endlessly against the rocky coast of Belesgar. Home to House Pike, the island is inhabited by the survivors of a failed rebellion against the crown. Sent to this desolate rock at the edge of the realm, House Pike endures perpetual assault from the sea, the cold, and the Inorn raiders who ravage the northern coast.

The isle itself is an unforgiving spar of rock, sparsely covered in rocky farmland and storm-battered trees. Built against the sound on the lee of its southern face is Castle Pike, an ancient granite keep rising from the waves. House Pike once controlled much of northern Tarn, but after an ill-fated rebellion against the crown during the empire's decline, its holdings were greatly diminished and its surviving heirs exiled to Belesgar.

The Children of Whispers are rumored to be a resistance movement in Tarn, old as the empire and sworn to destroy it. While supposedly eradicated centuries ago, some say they still exist, working to undermine the empire from the shadows of Belesgar.

SARPENSTONE

At some point during the decline of the empire, two great parallel walls were built, the longest Ossura has ever known. Built as a last hold against

the Mercish, they spanned from the edge of the Spine out past the edge of the sea. Mostly ruins now, what is left divides the two realms, its gates still guarded by vestigial Tarnish garrisons serving as little more than toll collectors. To avoid these high taxes, many Mercish merchants attempt to cross through the ruins and the stretch of thick forest between the walls. Such crossings are made dangerous not only by Tarnish patrols, but also by the bandits who live in the ruins, and worse — the Corpsebloom.

The Walls are infested with Corpsebloom, the black mold whose spores can create Risen drones or infect the living with leprous rot. Many poor Afflicted, those tainted by the rot, live in their own rundown quarter of Sarpenstone wearing bandages and masks. They are those unfortunate enough to not be killed outright by the spores. They cling to short lives, their swaddled flesh slowly rotting from their bones. There is a band of Afflicted Eskarn that lives between the Walls. Mad from the rot, they are barely human, and sacrifice intruders to the Corpsebloom that they worship.

House Stone rules the south of Tarn. It is their duty to maintain the Wall, man its crossings, and send long patrols into northern Mercos. It is based in Sarpenstone, a keep-and-walled town built against the inside face of the northern wall. All goods that come north pass through Sarpenstone. An outwardly beautiful and peaceful city, the fringes of Sarpenstone are a hub not only for legal trade, but also for the underhanded dealings of the Black Wheel. In the shadow of the inner wall that marks the city's back springs another city, dubbed Lower Sarpenstone. Built of ruined masonry, tents, and broken caravans, in this lower quarter Tarnish poisons and Mercish drugs are as much a currency as any gold or silver.

LANGETOF

House Frost holds the north, the region once controlled by House Pike. Charged with the defense of the North, House Frost controls a series of decrepit keeps along the northern cliffs. Once a bastion against Caroan invasion, now they stand empty, half-ruined wards against would-be Inorn raiders. Castle Langetof is their primary holding, centered along the coast where the cliffs give way to grey sand. It is a fortification built from the ruins of what once was Castle Pike. Undermanned and undersupplied, they tax what they can from the peasants of the north, and parley for support from the capital.

NARCROFT

House Thorn rests at the far eastern edge of the dark forest. Its holdings extend past ancestral Eskarn lands to the foothills of the Spine. These dark and forested hills are rich in silver veins, making House Thorn's wealth and power second only to that of House Black. Once the very surface of the dark hills bled silver. For thousands of years the mines of Thorn have grown deeper and darker. Tunneled by slaves coughing blood, and packs of Risen clawing earth until their hands are worn to bloody stumps, the mines are vast. Many Eskarn have been enslaved to work in the mines over the centuries. The Eskarn of this region do not trust the Tarnish, and hostilities often erupt into skirmishes.

House Thorn's seat of power is Narcroft, a city centered around a castle that towers above it atop a granite rock. From here they oversee the silver mines and tally their ledgers. Raw ore is processed in Narcroft, and minted into Imperial coins. The castle at its center serves as a massive bank, the hollow rock beneath it carved into vaults and storerooms, and filled with blackened silver.

House Thorn is also charged with the defense of the eastern front against Caros. Though there has not been open warfare between the two in some time, it is the duty of House Thorn to guard the passes through the Spine from Caroan advancement.

HORNCASTRE

House Pine governs the western region of Tarn, controlling its one gentle coast. They operate from Horncastre, a city that straddles the Black River as it feeds into the sea. Massive waterlogged doors gate the river's mouth, spanning a wide gap between two stone towers. Spreading out from both riverbanks, the city is walled in, with a second gate barring passage upriver. Horncastre serves as a tollbooth for all goods entering or leaving Tarn by sea. They trade extensively with merchants from Mercos and the Free Cities.

There are several small islands in the wide mouth of the Black River. The largest is home to Castle Horncastre. It boasts the only bridges connecting the north and south sides of the city, and taxes all who cross. The ancient stone bridges are vaulted to allow large ships passage out to sea.





MERCOS

The Mercish are tall and slim, their tawny skin fairer in the north and more bronze in the south. Their hair too ranges regionally, from auburn to almost black. Lighter hair is less common, and it is considered fashionable to dye one's hair reddish-brown with henna. In some cities, it is common for both men and women to pluck the hair on their bodies to maintain a youthful appearance. The Mercish typically have hazel, brown, or amber eyes, and both men and women frequently accent them with dark makeup.

Among the elite it is viewed as a mark of wealth to be slightly portly. Individuals owning land or property shave their heads bare as a mark of status. Lower castes may emulate this by shaving part of their head, such as one or both sides. It is Mercish fashion for men's tunics to extend much lower than those of Caros or Tarn, almost to the ground. Lavish vestments are important for the Mercish as a visible display of wealth, power, and sensuality. Both women's dresses and men's tunics often bear intricate patterns and sport low, open necklines. Such garments are cut to accent the body, tight around the waist and chest, with flowing sleeves or hems.

Nearly all Mercish, regardless of status, undergo a ritual at birth. The webbing below their tongue is clipped to increase its length and mobility. Then the tongue is split down the center. The Mercish believe it is a mark of attractiveness, enhancing both sensual pleasure and eloquence, making the speaker sound more sophisticated.

Mercish coins are small metal rings, which are worn as false piercings as a visible display of wealth. They can be worn bent closed on the ears, nose, nipples, and even genitals. They are also linked and worn as bracelets and necklaces.

Mercos is a land of traders, built upon principles of commerce, trade, and decadent prosperity. Comprised of a dozen city-states, and ruled by a guild of trade princes, Mercos is governed by a central will to prosper. Marks of its widespread industry and commerce can be seen in all corners of Ossura. Mercish oil, Mercish maille, Mercish locks, and — most famously — Mercish swords, are pervasive.

Mercish swords are perhaps the most common weapon in the world. Mass-produced from three flat cast pieces, the blade, guard, and pommel lock together and a ceramic handle is fired on around the tang. They are everywhere, from the clutches of commoners in Tarn to the most distant and isolated Inorn clan.

By way of trade, Mercos has become the most wealthy of Ossura's realms. Exploiting their natural bounty of gold and iron mines, the Mercish have become known for their wealth and power. Virtually all aspects of Mercish life revolve around commerce, property, and, of course, gold. Mercish cities are nexuses of exchange. From their open markets and grand bazaars to narrow alley shops and underground black markets, one may buy and sell almost anything

coin can buy.

By necessity, not all Mercish are wealthy. Though it is famed for its large trade caravans, and indeed whole cities have sprung up as waypoints along such prosperous routes, fortune does not smile on all men. Many poor Mercish merchant families with only a single wagon to their name travel these same paths as peddlers or tinkers. Carts loaded high, they wander through the other realms, mending or bartering small goods.

Some become swindlers, running petty cons from town to town, selling cure-all potions or hustling games of Bones with leaden dice. There is an ugly side to the easy prosperity of Mercos; throngs of starving poor exist for each trade prince that grows fat off gold and iron. From these urban masses come bandits, thieves, and charlatans, each looking to carve their piece of Mercish prosperity.

Mercish love to gamble. Skill-based games are their favorites, and the gambling houses of the trade cities enjoy huge popularity. A common game enjoyed by soldiers and aristocrats alike is Bones, also dubbed liar's dice. Seen anywhere the common tongue of man is spoken, Bones is so common that many people carry their own set of six dice with which to play. In Abkhaz it is standing practice to mix your dice with the other players', perhaps as a method of preventing cheating. Another popular game is Scarachi. Generally not a gambling game, it is a complex strategic wargame played on a checked board.

Even the Mercish legal code revolves around the reparation of debt. A death sentence may be commuted to death in the arena, where it is possible for the guilty to buy back their freedom should they survive enough fights. People can also indenture themselves to settle debts, selling their body for work or pleasure. It is even common practice to sell limbs or injury, agreed upon by the court, to settle various wrongs.

THE GOLD STANDARD

The pervasive spread of Mercish culture through trade has led to many of its customs becoming the standard measure in other realms.

Both Mercos and Caros use the Order's calendar. Though solar like Tarn's, its year is only three hundred and sixty days, with nine months of forty days each. At the end of the year, often at the flooding of the Grey River, there are five inter-calendar days. During this period, all taxes are suspended in observance of the Light's Mercy. Huge trade deals and mass caravan border crossings often occur during this week.

A standard week is five days: Sparkday, Flameday, Blazeday, Emberday, Ashday. The latter is a holy day. In Caros it is a day of rest; in Mercos, it is market day.

Mercos uses small rings as currency. Each ring is marked with the minter's seal and are worth more than their weight as metals. It is illegal to manufacture currency unless you are of the Banker's Guild. Common denominations of rings are as follows.

Ring: One single loop, often worn on a finger or as a piercing.

Link: Two joined rings, often linked on the spot.

Chain: Ten rings (or five links) often worn about the wrist.

Necklace: Twenty rings (or two chains, or ten links) often worn about the neck.

A silver ring is worth more than ten times the value of a copper one. Gold is worth three times as much as silver. A Silver necklace can purchase between one and two pounds of silver. A one-pound silver bar can purchase a Mercish sword.

A poor laborer might earn anywhere from a copper link to a copper chain each day. A sellsword might earn a copper chain or necklace per day.

The Banker's Guild is a network of moneylenders operating in most major Mercish cities, and abroad at other bastions of the Silver Concordance. Dealing in coin, for a small fee they will act as money changers, exchanging Tarnish silver or old Caroan coins for Mercish rings. They will also exchange a sum of one metal for another; say, copper rings for silver. They assay all their coins and rings, weighing them to ensure authenticity. Such banks are also charged with the minting of Mercish rings.

The Banker's Guild also lends money. A wealthy Mercish merchant may wish to buy a slave as she wanders the market, but having insufficient funds she — a known and trusted resident of the city — may take the amount from a Guild bank. They also mediate large deals, etched on fired clay tablets, where large sums of gold and property change hands.

Mercish currency, the three rings, is standard for all trade and is used throughout Ossura. Abkhaz has no currency of its own and relies entirely on Mercish production. Caroan coins have fallen out of mint, largely due to the prevalence of Mercish gold. To ease trade and cut conversion costs, they have even started to manufacture rings themselves.

The Silver Concordance is the force behind much of this economic power. They are a loose trade pact between a coalition of Mercish Princes, the representatives of the Free Cities, the King of Caros, and the lords of Houses Thorn and Pine in Tarn. Rich and influential merchants and guild members join the pact to further their wealth and power. It is rumored that many political decisions have been swayed by Concordance gold. They say the Concordance seeks a monopoly on all trade by whatever means necessary, using hired muscle to take what gold cannot buy.

In addition to manufactured goods, Mercos also exports many herbs, potions, and alchemical compounds, such as its lamp oil. There is a high demand for their drugs such as blue lotus, a coveted aphrodisiac; and silver leaf, a potent stimulant.

Though based in Mercos, agents of the Black Wheel can be found in the shady corners of virtually every city of Ossura. Peddling drugs and poisons, they operate from the shadows and never seem to want for clientele. Across borders or the open sea, they smuggle their

contraband from realm to realm at great profit. Members of the Black Wheel know a special cant, allowing them to speak and exchange messages not easily understood outside the guild.

Their sinister vocation, mixed with moving trade, makes agents of the Wheel excellent fences for thieves and bandits. Though their prices are steep, it is not wise to cross the Wheel. They have been known to assassinate those who would stand in the way of their underground trade empire, and their preferred methodology is poison.

THE LIGHT

The Mercish, like the Caroans, also worship the Light, though their highly secular society leads to more lax interpretations of His doctrine. They focus more on His aspects of debt, payment, and reward. They view Him as a distant judge, the law and order necessary for commerce and exchange. The Mercish tend to be pragmatic; sacrifices and donations to the Order are little more than shows of social, political, and economic clout. The largest difference between the two however, is their view of Thralls. While Mercos has similar misgivings about the undead, it views Thralls in a similar light to slaves. Unlike in Caros, they are not property of the Order, but simply another commodity for exchange by secular citizens.

When the wealthy and powerful truly die and no gold-bought Blood can save them, they are buried in elaborate family tombs. The poor who cannot afford this, often sell their dead, if they be fit or beautiful, to Thrallmakers. If they will not or can not, the dead are burned, as in Caros, by Clerics of the Order.

The Broken Chain is a group of outlaws who operate chiefly in Mercos and the Abkhaz border, dedicated to the freeing of slaves and the execution of any Blooded who turn a profit making Thralls. Their vigilante actions are decidedly against Mercish trade law, and any members who are caught are subject to the will of the Trade Prince whose forces apprehended them.

INHERITANCE AND FLESH

The Mercish view pleasure as a service, and people as goods — at the right price, both can be bought and sold. Men and women are seen as social and legal equals, with factors of wealth and class mattering far more than physical gender.

Marriage in Mercos is a secular affair. Pairings are often formed for economic reasons: solidifying trade deals, merging holdings, or mitigating taxation. Such partnerings are meant to be for life, though perhaps half dissolve. It is not uncommon for a citizen to have two or even three such pairings over the course of their lifetime. Much of Mercish law revolves around the division of property and ownership rights. Legally, a partnership may be made between any two citizens, regardless of gender. Typically, a Mercish inheritance is left first to their partner, then to the eldest child of their current partnership.

Pleasure and comfort are central to Mercish ideology, and while marriages are pragmatic affairs, seeking extramarital pleasure is customary for both men and women. They often seek out slaves, courtesans, or Thralls. It is generally frowned upon for relationships to blossom with other unpartnered citizens, as it can complicate economic and personal interests.

The business of pleasure thrives in Mercos. Brothels and houses of flesh can be found in virtually every city, catering to every taste under the sun. For the the lower class, houses of flesh stock Thralls. While they are the preference of some, they are generally seen as cheap and unsophisticated. When it comes to brothels, there is a wide range. In many lower districts, the brothels are populated chiefly by slaves or common prostitutes. The lavish brothels of upper districts are home to courtesans, skilled dancers and musicians whose skills rival those of the Devoted. They are often as wealthy and respected as any other master of a craft.

There exists a third gender in Mercish society: that of the eunuchs, or Damiin. Healthy male babies may be sold at birth to the Damiin Guild where their manhoods are completely removed and the wounds closed with Blood. Growing almost as tall as the Inorn, they are then trained as guards or soldiers, and later sold into the service of the wealthy. It is a crime to break the celibacy of a Damiin.

Mercos uses black tattoos on the back of the neck to mark slaves, eunuchs, Thralls, and criminals. In the three former cases, the tattoo tells where they were bought and who owns them. For criminals, it denotes the type and severity of the crime.

LANGUAGE

Mercish, Caroan, and Tarnish all use the same script, comprised of harsh thorny lines. Mercish, and consequently the common tongue, sounds fast and clipped with many words for trade, commerce, and exchange. Most writing is inked on paper, but business contracts and laws are printed on clay tablets, fired and glazed.

Mercish niceties have become commonplace in virtually all the realms of mainland Ossura. The act of grasping forearms with a friend or associate upon meeting has become common practice. Expressions like “hello” as a wish of good health or fortune, or “thanks”, “thank you” and “my thanks” as a means of expressing gratitude, are universally used. Despite its common usage, Mercos does retain its own cultural identity. “I am in your debt” is sometimes used as a way to offer sincere thanks, though only in situations where it is meant literally.

Similarly, while “farewell” is a customary parting, they also use old expressions, especially when speaking to other Mercishmen or people with whom they have just done business. “May your coffers overflow”, “may all you touch turn to gold”, “may you gain all you desire”, and other such wishes of good fortune.

Mercish curses reflect negatively on the use of Blood for reanimation. Shit, putrid, rotting, dirty, filthy, thrallish, and the like.

The common tongue, also known as the Silver Tongue or the Merchant’s Tongue, is a shared language spoken across most of Ossura. Linguistically, Tarnish, Mercish, and Caroan share similar roots. By way of many shared cognates and a similar structure, the common tongue is second nature for most native speakers of the three, and indeed, even without it, they are still intelligible to one another. The common tongue is effectively a reconstruction of the protolanguage that preceded the three before they diverged in ages past.

NAMES

Though initially based in virtues or some aspect of the Lord of the Light, the meaning of most Mercish names has fallen by the wayside and they are simply passed on along family lines. Parents will often name their firstborn after themselves, and subsequent children after various relatives of appropriate gender.

The Mercish have two surnames: their family name, and their city or region of origin prefixed with “de” or “d’”. For example if Diego Ferrer were from Castora, he would be Diego Ferrer de Castora.

Male Names: Diego, Sanzor, Ferro, Serenos, Alvario, Vaasco, Arias, Taion, Durante, Mence, Lorencio, Rodrigo

Eunuch Names: These are male names preceded by Il.

Female Names: Annaia, Keiah, Sonna, Eldonza, Johana, Violante, Vevian, Tressa, Catalina, Leonar, Ysabel, Ynes

Surnames: Duran, Ferrer, Telles, Saaverda, Villasis, Salazar, Drago, Ayres, Castell, Rana, Valladolid, Alconte

CITIES

VADALANTIS

Located near the center of Mercos, Vadalantis, called the Shining City, is its grandest major city and the largest city in all Ossura. Able to encompass the next three largest cities within its outer wall, seen from its high towers Vadalantis is an endless sea of buildings arranged in a great circle. Built of flat-roofed, whitewashed clay houses constructed one against the next, the lower quarter of the city is a densely packed sprawl. Here, poor peddlers, tinkers, and beggars fill the streets, spilling out of cheap wine houses and illegal fighting pits. The lower quarter has its own market known as the low market, where cheap goods — sometimes of circumspect origin — may be bought, sold, bartered, and stolen.

From the most shabby to the most grand of Mercish markets, it is common practice to paint eyes on stalls, doors, posts, and carts. It is believed that these watchful eyes will deter theft.

Near the wall that divides the lower quarter from the upper can be found one of the city’s squares, a massive

open courtyard for public gatherings with a fountain at its center. This border area is filled with the city's licensed brothels and arenas. The square is home to an open-air bazaar, where people and goods from both quarters mingle once a week on market day.

Beyond the square, behind a second ring of walls, the upper quarter is populated by merchants and craftsmen and, beyond them, the truly wealthy and powerful. The streets are lined with shops and merchants selling fine goods; there are appraisers and bankers, and all manner of earthly things on which to spill gold. Like the lower quarter, the upper district has its own market — the high market, where commerce thrives. The upper quarter's flagstone streets are lined with fountains and statuary and arches. Above them rise towers and villas with great domes, capped in copper, brass, and even gold. The city, like most Mercish cities, is ruled by a handful of its most wealthy and influential Mercish families. Notoriously corrupt and greedy, they keep the balance of power among themselves and continue to prosper.

RAAVANA

Raavana, referred to as the city of flesh, sits along Mercos' southern coast. A trade partner with Marib'zul, it is the gateway of the Mercish slave trade. Centered around its grand arena, Raavana is a city of earthly pleasure, suffering, and the entertainment some find in both. Warriors of local fame often come to prove themselves in the arena. From young and fiery Abkhazi to grizzled Caroan veterans, all types fight in the arena. The crowds always have their favorites, and a great deal of gold goes into hiring Blooded to ensure that favored gladiators are healed for the next fight.

Special fights often draw the largest crowds; battles between rival champions, or battles against beasts such as bears or great apes clad in spiked armor. Duels between citizens can be fought in the arena as well, ensuring a fair fight while earning gold for the city and glory for the combatants. Sometimes, the arena is home to a nonviolent performance such as an operatic play or lavish erotic show. Every year the city has a month of games, funded by its princes in an elaborate display of wealth and violence.

In Mercos, violence walks hand in hand with carnal pleasures, and the houses of flesh and brothels of Raavana are considered one of the wonders of the realm. The city boasts dozens of public brothels, and half again as many hidden ones, catering to more specific tastes for a select clientele. Like slavers, Thrallmakers see a roaring trade.

The Broken Chain is particularly active in Raavana and along the trade routes that, by land and sea, connect it to Marib'zul and the other cities of Mercos. While some may agree with the sentiments of the order, slavery is a large part of Mercish culture and their economy. Thus the Broken Chain are considered outlaws, and many powerful merchant princes work to seek out and destroy the brotherhood.

MIDINA

Midina is the city on the sea. On Mercos' western shore, its white stone docks and pillars extend out from white sands into clear blue waters. Astride the Vadalan River that divides the city, a foot on either bank, stands a huge stone sentinel — the Titan of Midina. A gift from the Augurs, it is said that the Titan will spring to life to defend the city should it ever be in need. It is also said that the Titan built Midina's wall, a huge white bulwark half a mile out to sea, running the length of the city parallel to the coast. It breaks the large waves of spring storms, ensuring that Midina's white harbor is always safe.

Midina is a city of peaceful prosperity. Controlling much of the coast, as well as several key rivers — the Vadalan River prime among them — it controls much of Mercos' western trade. Its architecture reflects this peaceful prosperity. Midina has no walls. It is built on a series of hills above the sea, white flat-roofed houses and brass-domed towers descending to the soft warm sand of the gentle harbor to the west, and fading into fields and farms to the east.

Despite its peaceable ways, Midina was born as a pirate city, free of law. Some old codes still exist. For example, in Midina it is legal to kill a man if they agree to single combat and more than one public official, kin to neither, bears witness to the entire exchange.

TARILLE

Tarille is the heart of Mercish industry. Soot-blackened buildings cluster around the base of the Jagged Mountains, sprawling outwards and upwards on either darkened bank of the polluted Iron River. Its flow mingles with the muddy sludge, dredged up from the depths of Tarille's iron mines in the mountains.

Despite this, the river serves as a power source for the city, turning huge water wheels that power the hammers and bellows of forges. It is banded by a series of dams and floodgates that control its flow, trapping spring melt from the mountains and releasing it over a season for power. Man-made channels filter the black water down side streets, performing the same functions on a smaller scale.

When the water fails, the huge windmills that top many of the buildings turn, and creaking wooden gear-shafts groan to life to power the orange glow of Tarille's never-dying forges. The air is thick with soot and smoke and the smell of brimstone. Mercish swords are made in pieces and assembled by teams of workers. The same is true of their locks, arrows, and tools, all assembled by the score. Day and night, the sounds of steel, gears and hammer-falls ring out through the poisoned air.

Against the base of the Jagged Mountains rises an immense dark cliff that separates the city from its nidus of mines. In ancient days, a series of stone steps were carved into the cliff's face, perilous and crumbling. Now, to keep pace with Tarille's production capacity, a system of lifts has been built. Two immense wooden platforms move every few minutes, connected by an elaborate pulley system. One always rises as the other descends, the ascending side taking on slightly less weight. In this way, vast amounts of iron ore, miners, and equipment are shifted from one level to the next.

SARCOSA

Sarcosa was once a grand trade city, a radiant jewel set along the main trade route between Mercos and Caros, but those days are long past and its light diminished. As trade routes shifted, Sarcosa fell into ruin. Its once grand bazaar is now home to petty merchants, swindlers, pickpockets and thugs. Dirty tattered clothes hang in doorways, and the narrow winding streets and alleyways are braced by wooden posts that prop up buildings crumbling from disrepair. Draped with ragged cloth, these beams form a shadowy canopy, casting the maze of Sarcosa's filthy streets into perpetual twilight.

Beneath the crumbling walls of Sarcosa sprawls a labyrinth of sewers and waterways, home to a sinister underground of thieves and beggars. It is said this motley court names its own ragged king to rule the undercity. Some even tell of an undermarket, as vast and bustling as Sarcosa's grand bazaar once was above. Perhaps there is some truth to these rumors, for it is whispered that the Black Wheel use ruined Sarcosa as their base of operations, the nexus of their invisible web. The city also has a reputation for smugglers. Whether they be carrying banned herbs, slaves, or weapons, they seek to avoid taxes by taking dangerous routes or hiding their wares as they move into Abkhaz and Caros.

CARRABAAS

By poets, Carrabaas is called the city of gardens. By those who pass through its high guarded walls, it has been described as a paradise. Filled with fountains, wells, and baths fed by natural hot springs deep beneath the city, it is a wonder of the Mercish world. These warm nutrient-rich waters feed hanging gardens, allowing lush vegetation to thrive inside the city nearly year round. Vines twine up the city's arches, and leafy plants hang in veils over doorways. There is even a tower in Carrabaas whose dome is made of plates of glass joined with brass, inside which plants from all over Ossura grow year-round.

It is illegal to carry weapons inside Carrabaas, and they must be forfeited at one of its many gatehouses, though special — and expensive — permits may be purchased to bypass this law. Historically, Carrabaas has been ruled by a woman, governed by a matriarchal line. Though practically speaking Carrabaas is controlled by its elite merchant families, the role of the Lady of Carrabaas still exists as a testament to the old ways. She is seen more as a spiritual and social leader than a political one, wielding no real power but acting as a personification of the city, adored by its residents and respected by other leaders.

ALZAMAN

Alzaman is the most ancient city in Mercos. Built atop the ruins of a Mason city, it rests in northern Mercos at the edge of an ancient forest. Called the Twice Walled city, it is ringed by a pair of towering Mason walls, impossibly tall and thick. Despite its

location, they say Alzaman never fell to the Tarnish Empire. Inside its giant walls rests the squat gold-domed building of the Banker's Guild, adjoined by several high windowless towers where cold men count out gold and press it into rings.

Beneath Alzaman, the ruins of the Mason city descend deep beneath the earth. It is said those who first entered its depths returned laden with gold, and it was they who founded the Banker's Guild. Such stories of lost and buried treasure have attracted many to the ruin's depths. Some portions of the expanse have been mapped, but such treasure hunters are often loath to share what they have found. No one has yet reached the bottom of Alzaman's foundation.

THE FREE CITIES

A loose confederacy of cities not under Mercish common law dot the southwestern coast of Mercos. In these shining cities, slavery and the ownership of Thralls is illegal. Any slave who enters such a city is considered a free man. All religions are recognized in the Free Cities, and there are shrines to all the gods, old and new.

Though the population is mostly Mercish, the Free Cities boast a large number of Caroan sailors and traders; some on the tail end of a long trade journey, others who simply decided to stay. There are a surprising number of Tarnish as well — some are exiles, others are left over from the descendants of families at the edge of the Tarnish Empire before it fell. The Free Cities are also one of the few places in Ossura that Numiran can be found in large numbers.

The Free Cities are home to the Augurs, a black-robed mystical order of magi believed to be able to predict the future through their secret arts. In their Tower of Eyes, reaching high over the rest of Brovance, they study the esoteric arts of mathematics, alchemy, medicine, and astronomy. It is said the Tower holds the greatest library in all of Ossura, containing a copy of every book ever written.

There is an uneasy peace between the denizens of the Free Cities and the Augurs. Many superstitious commoners fear the magi and their unnatural powers, but enjoy the fruits of the tower. The magi provide useful potions, information, and devices used throughout the Free Cities and beyond.

They can predict the weather through knowledge of wind and cloud, and the color of the sky. They study the stars through lenses, and can foretell the coming of eclipses and falling stars. It is even whispered that they have devices that warn of far-off disasters — earthquakes, volcanoes, and sea storms.

It is said that lightning strikes their tower but never burns it, and at its peak is a great eye that overlooks the city and the sea. They are said to have mastered fire, and may cause flame simply by holding a crystal sunstone. In a dark room one may stare into a wooden bowl, filled with the city and its movements. Many come hoping to study with the Augurs and learn their guarded secrets. Few are accepted, and fewer still master their ancient art. Those who do learn the way often venture back into the world to serve as advisers to powerful lords and even kings.



ABKHAZ

Abkhaz is the largest realm of Ossura. The grasslands of the north give way to desert at its heart and vast wastes beyond, on into the impenetrable unknown of the Red Expanse. Too large and inhospitable to be conquered or controlled by a single ruler, the sands of Abkhaz are home to hundreds of nomadic tribes.

In the face of such a hostile land, the Abkhazi are a resourceful and resilient race. Slightly shorter than the other races, they are thin and lean, often muscular, with dusky skin and similarly dark eyes and hair. To protect themselves from the desert, they wear garb of full-length cloth, with their heads wrapped to shield them from sun and sand. It is typical for men, and especially elders, to wear full beards. The horsemen of the north have sparser facial hair, often sporting long mustaches or goatees.

The Abkhazi are famed and feared throughout Ossura as mercenaries, honorable warriors, and vicious bandits. Bands of Abkhazi mercenaries can be found in every realm of the Shard, as noble house guards, caravan escorts, or bolstering the ranks of an army marching for war. While mercenaries in other realms are viewed as lowly, one who is a mercenary in Abkhaz culture commands great respect and social standing, second only to elders or chieftains. Wherever they may find work, they deposit their earning in Mercish banks so that their distant tribes may prosper.

Horses are sacred to the Abkhazi. In the great plains of northern Abkhaz, every member of a tribe has a mount. The worse the desert grows, the more scarce they become; though, or perhaps for this very reason, they are equally cherished. During sand storms or cold nights, they may even shelter in the warmth of a family's tent.

Unlike common sellswords, the Abkhazi have a reputation for being loyal to their word, unswayed by gold or morale. Even greater than this, however, is their reputation as fearsome fighters. They believe in being turned into Risen upon death so that they may continue to fight even after their mortal bodies have failed. Ceramic katars, the preferred weapon of Abkhazi warriors, are strapped to their arms and wielded in undeath.

Not all Abkhazi are noble warriors. For many, notions of loyalty extend only to their own tribe. Some turn their skills towards equally dangerous endeavors. Bandits are common, especially at the borders of Caros and Mercos and along the trade routes that link them. They raid villages, waylay caravans, and ambush travelers. Should they capture someone of wealth, they may try to ransom them. Often they take prisoners to be sold in Mercish bazaars as slaves for the brothels, fighting pits, or grand palaces — or worse, they are taken to be turned into Thralls.

Abkhazi weapons are not made of metal like those of the other realms. Their smiths have mastered the art of firing ceramic blades and armor. Though hard and perpetually sharp, such weapons are brittle, and thus

only make for short thrusting blades. Daggers, spears and katars are their weapons of choice. Abkhazi bowmen are of particular renown. Crack shots, they pride themselves on being able to pierce the skulls of their foes with their ceramic-tipped arrows, making it difficult for them to be returned as Risen — which is seen as a great dishonor.

To augment their already considerable skill, the Abkhazi ingest an elixir, the Grinner's Teeth. Technically a poison, it is made from desert herbs and drunk at every meal. Not only does it fight thirst, but each time it's drunk, it progressively deadens their nerves to pain and heat.

Another alchemical aid carried by warriors is Shadow Root, the root of a black desert flower. When chewed, it temporarily enhances night vision. Thereafter it makes the eyes sensitive to bright light for a short while. Consuming too much at once can cause temporary or lasting blindness. Some Abkhazi warriors have cat-like eyes, a side effect from extended and repeated use of the root. Shadow Root and this condition are also common among Eskarn hunters.

As a race of warriors, honor and respect are paramount to the Abkhazi. If the body of a fellow Abkhazi warrior is found, especially that of a friend, kin, or respected foe, it is honorable to Raise them and fight, and offer them a good death. After the dead are returned as Risen and killed again, they are buried and shrines constructed to show their deeds. Though nomadic, tribes often have burial grounds and sacred sites hidden in the hills, cliffs, or deep desert.

These final rites are performed by the Ka'na, the Abkhazi word for Blooded. Loosely, it translates to "the blessed cursed", someone who has been crippled or burdened and received a great gift. The Blooded of Abkhaz are common, but frequently weak. While most Blooded gesture with their hands to improve concentration, the Abkhazi use specific ritualized hand gestures to help focus. Some Ka'na become shamans, men wise in the ways of The Three. It is their duty to ensure movement through each life. They raise the dead, bury them, and tell their tales.

Blooded are inherently respected because of their central role in the tribe, and often become elders — partly because they simply live longer than most. Some tribes are led by an elder or group of elders, while others have a Sha, or chieftain. The rulers of these tribes, though independent of one another, have strong ties and, even despite feuds, may come to each other's aid in times of dire need. Each tribe has its own laws, and judgments are usually passed by their elders or Sha. One universally respected Abkhazi law is the ancient claim to trial by combat, where an accused may fight to prove their innocence before the gods of death.

THE THREE-WHO-REMAIN

In Abkhaz, it is said that there once were nine gods, a shadowy pantheon who together ruled over this world and all the rest, none more powerful than the next. In the darkness, they devoured one another until but Three Remained.

The Three-Who-Remain are called He-who-has-a-thousand-faces, She-who-grins, and He-who-has-no-name. They each rule over a lifetime and its end. Thousandfaces rules over life and mortal death. From her throne of bones, The Grinner rules over the space between, the unlife and second-death of a Risen warrior. The Nameless rules the time thereafter, until the last memory of a man dies or darkness swallows the world.

The Abkhazi honor each of these three lives. After their first death, an Abkhazi will traditionally be Raised. Warriors then fight, either on the battlefield moments after they were slain, or in ritual combat with a member of their tribe. Many tribesmen are not warriors, however. Upon death, these Abkhazi are also ritually Raised, only to be swiftly and ceremoniously returned to death. After this, stories are told, not only of those who have passed but also of their ancestors, and their ancestors' ancestors. Some old tribes take a single bone from their deceased and make it into a flute with clay and reed. They play haunting tunes in the desert night.

There are no temples to The Three, though all graves are considered their sacred sites. Their sign is to hold three hushed fingers over one's lips. As a form of worship, all members of Abkhazi society meditate on their knees at sunrise and sunset, or before battle. They also sit in this manner for formal meetings and ceremonies, and as a result have exceptional posture. Abkhazi warriors may practice the Katzan in lieu of some meditative sessions. It is a slow, secret, dance-like ritual used to practice the movements of their fighting styles.

Masters of the Abkhazi art of meditation are said to be able to heal much faster than normal men, mending wounds in weeks that should take months to heal. There are tales of great masters, who through breath and thought alone could rest, hot-skinned, through the coldest desert nights. It is believed that dreams are sent by The Three as prophecy, shrouded in esoteric symbolism and the fog of sleep.

If The Three can be said to have true acolytes they are the Amir'zal, or The Secret Network of Brothers. They are a guild of assassins who, for the right price or the right reasons, can kill any man. There is a certain Abkhazi phrase known only to the Brothers which they may place in conversation. If another of the Brothers overhears it they will treat the speaker as if they were their blood brother. It is believed such words change with the stars.

WARRIORS AND TRIBES

The Abkhazi see marriage as the seed from which love and relationships are born, rather than its fruit.

Marriages are usually arranged in order to unite tribes. There is little courtship, and the parties are wed for life. Sometimes the arrangement is to a tribe, rather than an individual of that tribe, affording the betrothed husband-to-be some freedom of choice. As this is often the case with marriages between clan leaders, it is usually little more than an illusion of agency, as the betrothed husband must select from the daughters of the other tribe's chief or elders. If a leader of a tribe takes a wife from another tribe, many of his tribesmen may do so as well, to strengthen the bond.

Abkhazi women have the right to reject a match, but this rarely occurs. Unions are made to strengthen tribes, and love is seen as a product of such joinings. Widows are free to choose their own husbands should they wish to remarry, though it is respectful to marry an eligible man of the same family if one should exist.

At a wedding, gifts are exchanged. Among them are sets of tight copper bands for the bride and groom's arms, fingers, necks, and so forth. They are worn throughout the day-long ceremony, and removed at night to leave green markings for the consummation. On death, the personal belongings of an Abkhazi pass to their youngest child. As most Abkhazi own no land and share gold with their tribe, this often amounts to little more than a horse, a tent, and a weapon.

The Abkhazi treat men and women as equals in life, as they believe they are in death. There is no distinction between male and female warriors. Female warriors are rare in some tribes and customary in others.

Sha'amal is an Abkhazi word used to describe a romantic relationship between two members of a warrior band. It can refer to a pairing of any genders, though frequently it is used to describe that of two of the same.

Naam'amal is the customary relationship between a young warrior in training and an adult warrior. The child undergoes training in martial arts as an apprenticeship to a more experienced warrior. The mentor is permitted, if their student agrees, to take the student as a lover until their training is complete. As with Abkhazi marriage, it is expected to be a monogamous relationship.

The older warrior teaches their apprentice valuable skills, educates them, and imparts their code of honor. Both parties are loyal unto death and will assist the other in honor-driven obligations such as duels and vendettas. The amorous aspect of such a relationship, should one exist, is expected to end when the student comes of age, but sometimes evolves into Sha'amal. Either way, the relationship will ideally blossom into a lifelong bond of friendship between the two.

LANGUAGE

The Abkhazi tongue is markedly different from the rest of those on the Shard. Abkhazi sounds harsh and guttural and is full of idioms. It is hard to understand and harder still to speak for non-natives. The Abkhazi speak Merchant's Tongue with a distinctive accent, and often lapse into Abkhazi for untranslatable words or

appropriate phrases. Each tribe has their own dialect and expressions.

Despite its rough sound, written Abkhazi appears fluid, like the trails of snakes on sand with each letter flowing into the next. Messages are inked on cloth and are often delivered by trained hawks. The ceramic armor and weapons of Abkhaz are molded with script set into them, giving each item its own name.

It is considered unlucky to destroy writing, so all cloth messages are saved and affixed to road cairns or in the cracks of ruins or other masonry like prayer flags.

Each tribe uses a different hand gesture as a show of respect. Sometimes paired with a nod or bow, the gestures are combined with greetings, farewells, thanks, and other symbolic exchanges. They all use both hands and are often, but not always, symmetrical.

Greetings in Abkhazi are a compound of a general wish for good fortune or Shazad, coupled with an appropriate honorific that subtly changes the meaning based on who is addressed. Each is accompanied by the hand gesture for the speaker's tribe.

Shazad Kal: Spoken to greet a fellow clan member, war comrade, or esteemed friend.

Shazad Ral: Given to pay respect to an enemy you're about to fight or have killed. It is used to address a rival, adversary, or enemy commander in negotiations.

Shazad Eth: Used to welcome a beloved one who shares your tent — a lover, child, elder, or horse.

Shazad Or: Uttered to acknowledge a neutral acquaintance, or one whose standing is unknown.

Shazad Nir: Offered in recognition of a holy man of any cloth.

There are many ways to say farewell in Abkhazi. Several of the most common are listed below. As with greetings, the speaker couples each with the gesture of his or her tribe. It is customary to answer a farewell with one of your own. It is often, but not always, a repetition of the phrase you were offered.

"Raash a Raash" is informal. Literally it is a wish for one's nights to not be like nights. It is often translated as "cool days, warm nights", the opposite of the usual case in the harsh Abkhazi deserts. It is a wish for good fortune, safe travels, and good companions.

"Nazabal" is often repeated by warriors upon parting. It means, "may you die three deaths", and thus ties into the spiritual practices of the Abkhazi.

"Zashir" is an extremely nuanced expression, meaning "I will see you soon", or "our fates are one". It has a dual meaning. It is used both in everyday situations, and spoken with reverence to an ally before battle. The implication of using a single expression in such different contexts emphasizes the fact that one may die at any time, that every parting may be the last. When used before battle, it is a pledge that the speaker and the recipient of the phrase will either both die or both survive the coming battle; their fates are shared, and either way, they shall see each other soon.

"Kalah" is an offer of thanks, which translates to "I owe you the same" and is, like most Abkhazi expressions, accompanied by various hand gestures for the speaker's tribe. It is sometimes spoken with a sense

of irony after an insult or injury is received.

The Abkhazi do not curse idly. When they insult another, it is because they believe the literal truth of their words. It is only appropriate to call a man a coward if you have witnessed or know of his cowardice. "You will die a thousand deaths" is to call a man a coward. "Water-on-sand" is to call a man dishonest; or worse, an oath breaker. To jeer "one horse, one tent, one fire" is to call a man tribeless or friendless.

The Abkhaz are famous for their nuanced and often untranslatable idioms that have found their way into the common tongue. Here are several examples.

"Victory is as the sea." Power, gold, and success will never satisfy those who crave them. They do not quench desire as the drinking the seawater simply makes you want more. It is impossible to dwell on the water, yet to live near it is a good thing. Power, like the sea, must be respected and takes skill to navigate without losing your way.

"All men are sand." Human nature is intrinsic. Men are the same everywhere, and ultimately, all men are mortal and will one day return to dust.

"A sword is ten thousand parts." All matters are of equal importance. Should one of the steps in the making of a ceramic blade be false, the entire blade will shatter and be no more than sand.

"Shazad Kal-Ral-Eth-Or-Nir." All five greeting in the Abkhazi tongue, said as a prayer to the gods before certain death. "I greet you as my oldest friend, and my eternal adversary. I greet you as my lover, as my mother, as myself. I greet you as a stranger and I greet you as Death."

"Akar Ithan." Roughly, it means "together-against". It implies a connection between exactly two people who stand together against, or as opposed to, all the rest. A great warrior might say it to a worthy foe, or two brothers to each other when back to back against a horde of foes.

NAMES

Names often translate to the location of the child's birth, or significant events at the time of birth such as a victory or the astrological signs overhead. Virtually all Abkhazi names are preceded with honorifics, conveying important information on social standing.

Honorifics:

Warrior: Ro

Leader: Sha

Blooded: Ka'na

Bastard or Clanless: Zir

Male Names: Bakkar, Hassan, Nasir, Zayd, Rashid, Qasim, Yasir, Siad, Umar, Tahir, Yafreem, Zutar

Female Names: Jaida, Naila, Zulaikha, Sara, Sanaa, Raziya, Ramaht, Izza, Atikah, Azel, Elar, Kalara

Surnames: Prefixes come before all Abkhazi surnames: Al' and El' mean son or daughter respectively, and precede the names of their mother and father. For example, Naila El'Bakkar-Jaida means Naila, daughter of Bakkar and Jaida.

The more formal the situation, the longer back one lists a chain of lineage, following the line of one's own gender. If Husan were to list her lineage, she would speak of her mother, and her mother's mothers. Husan El'Bakkar-Jaida, El'Nasir-Ramaht, El' Yasir-Izza.

Similarly, the prefix Zal' means "student of", and is used by warriors to denote their teacher.

CITIES

KARAZAR

The Port of Karazar sits upon a large island off the eastern coast of Abkhaz. A towering mass of densely packed ramshackle buildings, it is known as a lawless city governed by pirate lords and wealthy free traders. It is built upon the foundation of an old Abkhazi city, but it has been expanded beyond recognition. Sprawling outwards and upwards, most of the stone buildings have second, third, or even fourth stories, built of Caroan timber or salvaged ships.

Order is loosely enforced by hired Abkhazi mercenaries. Brave or foolish merchants from Caros, Mercos, Abkhaz, and the Free Cities come to try their luck at exploiting Karazar's unchecked market. With no taxes, and lax port laws, the city and its sheltered harbor make an ideal berth for the pirates of the Endless Sea. What gold such men save by dodging taxes, they spend in Karazar's brothels and gambling houses, virtually all of which are controlled by its current ruler.

Sailors speak of a monster, an octopus-like creature from the depths that attacks ships and drags men down, tentacle-bound, into the watery abyss. Though of mythical proportions, this Kraken is indeed real. Every so often, the ancient storm-battered corpse of such a monster will wash ashore on Karazar. The Augur's records state that one such specimen reached over a hundred paces, though its tentacles were ragged and incomplete.

MARIB'ZUL

The slave city Marib'zul sits to the southwest at the mouth of the Grey River, by the sea. Built of rocks quarried from the Spine and shipped downriver, the tall red walls of Marib'zul have earned it the title of the Red City. Some say this name has other roots, born of the city's thriving slave trade. The worst combination of Mercish greed and Abkhazi discipline, Marib'zul buys slaves from pirates and Abkhazi bandits, selling them across the river in Mercos. Beautiful women find their way into Marib'zul's pleasure houses, and strong men are thrown into the Red Pit, the city's bloodstained arena.

Marib'zul is also known for its guards that maintain order in the slave city. Known as the Faceless, they are a legendary private army. Taken from the strong male children of slave families at birth, training begins for these warriors at the age of three. Their tongues are removed and they are stripped of their individual identities. They wear identical clay armor masks, painted gold. Many Mercish cities and palaces are staffed by these elite guards.

BORAZAN

The impenetrable fortress city of Borazan is split atop two adjacent mesas in the heart of the northern steppe. Its walls rise from the cliff face, giving the distant city the appearance of two massive broken towers. The narrow pass between the two is blocked by two sets of massive gates. The top of these gates act as bridges, connecting both halves of the city. In the space between the gates is a steep, packed earthen ramp that ascends to the western mesa.

The only permanent city in Northern Abkhaz, the never-breached fortress of Borazan serves as a barrier towards unwanted Caroan aggression, and is recognized among the Abkhazi as a symbol of strength. Surrounded by plains grasslands, Borazan is responsible for the production of a hearty wheat that is shipped south along Mercish trade routes and feeds much of Abkhaz. The city is surrounded by windmills and farms made from stacked stones. Because of the softness of its millstones, bread from Borazan often contains fine rock dust, which over a lifetime can grind teeth flat.

SHARINA

Sharina, also called The Wandering City, is a huge encampment of thousands of tents that can be set up and taken down in a matter of hours. It is not one city, but rather an amassing of all the tribes of the northern horse lords. Such gatherings occur perhaps twice a year, and last for several weeks. Many Waystones are lost in the desert, though others are mapped and used as waypoints by the nomads.

MORZAH

At the heart of the great desert of Abkhaz sits the Black Pit of Morzahi. Built upon the ring of an ancient and ruined city, Morzahi encircles the Maw, a huge black sinkhole whose edges suck in a constant fall of sand. It is rumored that the Maw contains a system of tunnels that some say lead to the realm of the dead. Others claim it opens upon a vast underground sea where strange and ancient beasts still dwell. Yet others say it has no end, and sinks forever into blackness.

The crumbling walls and towers of the city endure only as a rest stop for nomadic tribes. It has many wells, and sees the trade of small goods. Much of the city rests in ruins and is only inhabited by bandits and ragged folk. Just beyond the city's edge lies a boneyard, scattered with the remains of giant ancient beasts. Some scavenge these bones to sell in Mercos, to be ground into medicinal powder. Many Abkhazi come to Morzahi on a pilgrimage at the end of their lives. For a warrior who has grown too old to fight, it is considered a good death to cast oneself into the pit.

RAMAMAT

Ramamat, the City of Forty-Four Gates, rests along the eastern bank of the Grey River. It is the largest and most populous city in all Abkhaz. As the Grey River swells each year with melt from the Spine, a fertile harvest season provides bounteous grain for much of Abkhaz and Mercos. During the planting and harvesting season in the cooler half of the year, many of the smaller, weaker tribes flock to Ramamat for seasonal work in the fields. The Abkhazi calendar is lunar, following Ossura's large pale blue moon. Their year is based on the flood, which comes every ten moons. Some years are longer, some shorter.

It is forbidden to spill blood in Ramamat, and to do so is punishable by death by thirst. All crossings of the Grey River are subject to a tax that sees its way back to the City of Forty-Four Gates. So too are taxed all ships sailing past Ramamat or docking at its river port. Being so large and prosperous has attracted many Mercish merchants and moneylenders, and though technically on Abkhazi land and ruled by a council of elders, Ramamat is culturally and ideologically a Mercish city. Many of its Abkhazi upper class have adopted Mercish customs, even going so far as to shave their heads and split their tongues. The desert tribes speak of the city with bitter scorn, as they believe those there have grown soft behind their walls and forgotten the warrior's way.

SHIRAM'ZUL

Shiram'zul occupies an inhospitable stretch of the southern wastes, at the border of the Red Expanse. Ringed by three clay walls sits the Ironstone, a massive fallen star around which the city sprang. Mostly iron, a rare substance in Abkhaz, the holy rock is ritually mined for its ore. It is mined in tiers, forming a great black ziggurat at the city's center, as large as a keep.

The Claysmiths of Shiram'zul are legendary among the Abkhazi. They produce the finest ceramic weapons and armor, marked by their red hue — a byproduct of the iron in their clay. Shiram'zul trades its artisan goods for food from Ramamat, and to ports along the coast who trade with Mercish merchants, the Free Cities, and the Port of Karazar. Those who dwell in the red wastes are plagued by dry lung, a coughing disease from a lifetime of breathing in the rust-colored dust of the Red Expanse. Its denizens wear cloth masks around their noses and mouths to lessen the effects.

Beyond Shiram'zul lies the Red Expanse. It is an endless sea of red sand and perpetual dust storms that blankets southern Abkhaz, receding into the unknown and marking a border to the realms of men.

IZAL

Separating the sands of the Abkhaz desert from the harsh wastes in the south lies the Ridge, a low and jagged mountain range. The city of Izal is built in the canyon of its name, a rough pass that splits the Ridge. At the entrance, two huge sentinels have been carved from the face of the cliffs, warriors of stone that tower well over the top of the canyon. A high tax is charged to merchants seeking passage.

Once wide enough to allow an army's march, the canyon has been narrowed to a single broad street, either side crowded with tall rock houses rising up against the canyon's cliffs. Support beams and cloths bridge the gap, blocking out almost all light. Much of the city recedes into connecting tunnels and chambers carved from the cliffs. Above the city, on either side of the canyon, coal is mined in open pits. A rare and precious resource, it is sent to Mercos, to Shiram'Zul, and even as far south as Numir.

MOUNT VISHAR

Perhaps the most ancient city in all Ossura, Vishar is home to a monastic tribe of Abkhazi known as the Ratu. Their ancestral home rests in the mountains at the base of the Spine. They dwell in the great Mason halls of old, carved deep into the very mountain itself. Unlike their brother tribes, the men of the red mountain are not warriors, but instead lead a peaceful and monastic life, meditating on the Three-Who-Remain. The mountain is regarded by all Abkhazi as a holy place, and no tribe exists that would not rise up to defend it.

Carved deep in the heart of Mount Vishar lies an ancient temple to the Nine, built into a Mason ruin of old. In it there is a cleft in the rock, caused by some sundering long ago, from which a gas has seeped for thousands of years. Its keepers call it the breath of life, and the oracle may inhale it to enter a trance and recite prophecy. Though the Ratu are peaceful people, this holy place is fiercely guarded. Much of the rest of their city is little more than goat-herders' huts clinging to the rocky hillsides and mountain valleys they call home.

The denizens of Vishar do not believe in currency or ownership. They will, however, trade for goods. Their mountains are rich with fiery stones that they mine and polish into smooth gems. They also export a rare blue stone the Mercish call azurite. This is the only place the stone is found, and it is used to make a blue pigment for manuscripts, making it much sought-after by merchants.



NUMIR

The Numiran are a proud race of dark-skinned metalworkers, sailors, and warriors from the land beyond the Boiling Sea. Their civilization is carved from the mediterranean coast of Numir, and reaches back into the ashlands beyond. A jagged mountain range of active volcanoes marks the southernmost border of what the men of the Shard consider to be their known world.

The Numiran are perhaps the greatest metalworkers in all Ossura. They say the metals were a gift to man, each a boon from a patron god. First they gave the gift of gold, then of copper, then silver, then tin, then lead, and finally, one of iron. They refer to themselves as the Iron Ones, man and woman each born from an ancient fire long ago.

Both men and women wear skirt-like kilts of cotton, heavy metal adornments, and little else. Such metal clothing usually takes the form of bracers, armbands, or collars. They are often made from copper, brass, or bronze, with gold popular among the elite. In more elaborate outfits, the metal bands often connect dramatically to free swaths of cotton cloth.

The greatest smiths of the Numiran are religious figures, swearing sacred oaths when they choose to take up the hammer. Children join this cult and pledge their lives to the mastery of fire and earth. Upon mastering each metal, they receive a gold ring with a stud of that metal. After they have earned their rings, these sacred smiths are gifted with an ancient Numiran secret — the Iron Touch. Powerful but small lodestones are plated in gold and slipped into incisions in the tips of each finger, and then healed into place with Blood. With these they can feel the shape of the radiance of iron and steel, know when it loses its pull through heat, and draw to themselves small pieces of metal.

The Numiran view Mercish metalworking as crude and primitive. Common and uneducated men of the Shard see Numiran metalworking as supernatural, and are wary of these strange men from across the sea. Such perceptions are lent fuel by the Numiran understanding and mastery of the secret of iron's attraction. Swords made by Numiran weaponsmiths are polarized at their tips to cleave to metal, seeming to hunger to meet armor and blade. They have even invented an object others call a Numiran Rose. It is a small iron needle suspended in fluid, a compass to guide them on the seas.

Swords made by Numiran smiths are of the highest quality. They may be used in one hand or two and, and unlike most blades of the Shard, have only a single edge.

Chakkar are a weapon unique to the Numiran, flat steel rings that can be thrown like disks at foes. Warriors typically carry around a half dozen hanging from their belts.

Foreigners trade with Numir not only for weapons. Numiran smiths have mastered the art of crafting Argra. This metal is an alloy of copper and gold that appears to even the most skilled observer as if it were

pure gold. Pirates from the Shattered Coast often come to have their hauls converted, turning a hundred gold rings into a thousand.

To outsiders, the most striking and occult of the Numiran customs is that of the Warding. Performed upon a warrior's eighteenth birthday, it is a sign of adulthood. Brass plates, engraved with lines of prayers and plated with gold are, through a painful ritual, implanted in the man or woman's shins, forearms, and sternum. These incisions are then mended with Blood. Numiran Blooded are the rarest and the weakest of all the realms.

Messages and lists are recorded on metal as well. Smiths are also Numir's scribes, using stamps, strikers, or engraving tools to write on thin sheets of beaten copper or gold. Their language, rounded and full-sounding, appears as clusters of horizontal and vertical lines latticed into squares that form vertical rows. Horses are not native to Numir, so messages are carried by runners.

Their metal follows the Numiran even into death. They see death a natural change of state; life the hot iron, and death its cooling. Though beautiful, this glowing state is a fading one, and so they do not raise their dead. Numiran are buried with funeral masks in their likeness, of beaten gold or copper, facing south. If warriors, their weapons are heated a final time and bent into waves so that they may wield them in the afterlife. They are buried without marker or tomb.

Beyond the volcanic mountains that mark the edge of Numira live the Scaled Men, cloven-fingered, skin painted with cracked grey clay. They file their teeth to points and fashion weapons from black glass and bone, shunning steel and cold iron. They kill all outsiders, and shirk the ways of men. It is said they have no gods and speak no tongue. Daring or desperate Numiran sometimes venture into the ashlands of the Scaled Men for the brimstone and rare ores divulged by the violent earth. Few return.

MASKED GODS

The Numir once worshiped a pantheon of six gods, each bearing a mask of metal: gold, silver, copper, bronze, lead and iron. Such images remain only in old temples and statues. Though some still keep the old ways, many, especially those along the coast, have adopted the Light. The Light is seen as a smith god, a creator, the heart of forge, wielder of the burning sword, the light of guiding stars at sea. There are those who worship both, viewing light as the gold-masked god, head of their pantheon.

MOTHERS AND ROGUES

Numiran culture has many coming-of-age rituals to signify a person's passage through life. When men spill their first seed they are, though ritual and Blooded healing, given several pebble-sized golden balls to be implanted under the skin of their manhood. Gold is seen as a divine and pure substance. To them, this ritual ensures strong and healthy offspring. Similarly, women upon their first bleeding are gifted a gold and copper cross, which is inserted inside them. The cross may last for well over a decade, and as long as it endures they are infertile.

The Numiran see a divide between love and amorous relationships. The latter are simply a fulfillment of bodily needs, no different than eating or breathing. They believe in having multiple amorous relationships simultaneously. It is common practice to lie with strangers for one night. Children of Numir inherit their mother's name and line.

The Numiran do not marry in the general sense. A woman may take one or more husbands, effectively adopting them into her family line. It is common not to marry at all, and though a Numiran may live with several lovers for long periods during their lives, the idea of exclusivity is a foreign one. Similarly, Numiran ideas of ownership differ from those of the other realms. Nominally, nothing is individually owned, but rather belongs to a matriarchal family line.

While accepted in Numir, this practice of single-night trysts is somewhat problematic in other realms, especially when it results in a child. Such a cultural misunderstanding has given Numiran men and women a roguish reputation. There is an old Numiran custom that any Numiran man, woman, or child may approach a Numiran ship and ask to be taken home. They will be granted free passage, back to the ancient land of Numir.

NAMES

Male Names: Obakah, Baiju, Degei, Ghazan, Jegu, Megetu, Nayanti, Oljietu, Udati, Yuru, Akuu, Udaku

Female Names: Altun, Eke, Ibakha, Khojin, Yesu, Sokhati, Ebegei, Xangei, Ajai, Maqali, Iffey, Nisa

Surnames: Numiran surnames follow in the same naming pattern as female first names. One is named for their mother's line, or her most distant known female ancestor. Frequently the firstborn girl will be given the same name as her mother, and thus her first and last name will repeat, such as Altun Altun.

CITIES

DJEDGE-UMATU

Along the coast lies the dual city of Djedge-Umatu, spanning the canyon mouth of the river Dje. Built from sandstone and red clay, it rises in tiers away from the coast and the canyon's edge to two great parallel ziggurats plated with green copper. The river canyon itself is spanned by dozens of great bridges, connecting the city while the canyon's towering height still allows for the passage of masted Mercish ships. Wide stone wharves project from the otherwise inhospitable cliff face along the coast, leading back to ancient hollowed stairs carved within the cliff's face. A short distance out to sea sits the famous lighthouse of Umatu, built of interlocking stones and set upon an enormous man-made square plinth of granite. For both docking and passage down the canyon river Dje, Djedge-Umatu collects a healthy tax.

IDIRR

Idirr is built into the heart of a great volcanic mountain that lends its molten heat to the city's sacred forges. It is here that the wondrous weapons of Numir are forged by the secret art of sacred smiths. Deep underground lakes and steam vents power great wheels that drive their giant hammers and quench their steel, and also supply the city with water. Though secretive about their art, the smiths of Idirr trade their masterful crafts to Mercos and Abkhaz by sea. It is a symbol of status for lords to carry swords of Numiran steel, forged in the heart of Idirr.

APPENDIX

NAMES OF THE REALMS

Inorn Names

Male Names: Arik, Malik, Kannir, Tulimak, Ujirak, Kinnalik, Najyiskar, Grimjr, Ulfur, Kaillikar, Merek, Torilak
Female Names: Anyaa, Ila, Sighna, Desna, Eska, Kaya, Ingren, Vijyiska, Aesa, Norak, Ragna, Sanya
Surnames: Karn Malkir, Karn Sterk, Karn Digra, Karn Ramm, Karn Ransk, Karn Irsk, Karn Dorak, Karn Boer, Karn Senir, Karn Eskir

Caroan Names

Male Names: Rizo, Gerardys, Jacohar, Varigo, Visconti, Barbaro, Karelton, Syrio, Lysos, Soranzo, Ambrose, Garro
Female Names: Bianca, Magdalena, Colleta, Celsi, Natale, Denea, Rosana, Miria, Vienna, Orsianah, Sissilla, Loretta
Surnames: Ammirati, Bastarion, Cipriani, Moris, Rinieri, Torellion, Valoris, Castellani, Foresi, Medacar, Cavano, Sansone

Tarnish Names

Male Names: Lothar, Clovis, Merovech, Alain, Evenon, Hurion, Marcel, Remont, Sirion, Sevrin, Tybalt, Brom, Fendryl, Jarin
Female Names: Avenia, Emeloth, Elaria, Lescel, Naria, Sabina, Aaline, Katherine, Cisila, Lucia, Sylva, Liann
Surnames (Commoners are named after their profession) Smith, Hunter, Tanner, Fletcher, Baker, Fisher, Player, Archer, Carver, Skinner, Keeper, Shepherd

Mercish Names

Male Names: Diego, Sanzor, Ferro, Serenos, Alvario, Vaasco, Arias, Taion, Durante, Mence, Lorenzo, Rodrigo
Eunuch Names are male names preceded by Il.
Female Names: Annaia, Keiah, Sonna, Eldonza, Johana, Violante, Vevian, Tressa, Catalina, Leonar, Ysabel, Ynes
Surnames: Duran, Ferrer, Telles, Saaverda, Villasis, Salazar, Drago, Ayres, Castell, Rana, Valladol, Alconte

Abkhazi Names

Honorifics: Warrior: Ro / Leader: Sha / Blooded: Ka'na / Bastard or Clanless: Zir
Male Names: Bakkar, Hassan, Nasir, Zayd, Rashid, Qasim, Yasir, Siad, Umar, Tahir, Yafreem, Zutar
Female Names: Jaida, Naila, Zulaikha, Sara, Sanaa, Raziya, Ramaht, Izza, Atikah, Azel, Elar, Kalara
Surnames: Prefixes come before all Abkhazi surnames: Al' and El' mean son or daughter respectively, and precede the surnames of their mother or father. The more formal the situation, the longer back one lists a chain of lineage, following the line of their own gender. Zal can be used the same way to mean "student of".

Numiran Names

Male Names: Obakah, Baiju, Degei, Ghazan, Jegu, Megetu, Nayanti, Oljietu, Udati, Yuru, Akuu, Udaku
Female Names: Altun, Eke, Ibakha, Khojin, Yesu, Sokhati, Ebegei, Xangei, Ajai, Maqali, Iffey, Nisa
Surnames: Numiran surnames follow in the same naming pattern as female first names. One is named for their mother's line, or her furthest back known female ancestor. Frequently the first born girl will be given the same name as her ancestor, and thus her first and last name will repeat.

DISTANCE

Adjacent: 0-2 yards away. Usually targets are engaged in an action of some kind, i.e. fighting. Ranged weapons have Disadvantage when used at this range.

Near: 3-15 yards away. Short distance. This is about the distance one could close in several seconds. A Character might be able to move twice this distance if they do nothing else on their turn.

Far: 25-50 yards. The accuracy range of bows (beyond this they are at Disadvantage).

Distant: 50-100 yards. Distant things a the length of a field or cathedral away. Ranged weapons have Disadvantage at this range.

COMBAT DESCRIPTIONS:

Arrest, Avoid, Bash, Bat, Batter, Block, Catch, Clash, Deflect, Dodge, Duck, Elude, Evade, Fend, Glance, Graze, Halt, Leap, Parry, Rebuke, Reel, Repel, Repulse, Sidestep, Stave, Swerve, Turn, Ward

COMBAT ATTRIBUTES

Vitality = 3 + Strength + Traits

Evasion = 10 + Dexterity + Shield + Traits

Armor = Evasion + Armor Rating + Traits

Alacrity = Dexterity + Mind + Modifiers

Power = 10 + Traits

Reactions = 1 + Mind

Tenacity = 1 + Presence

SKILL LIST

Strength or Dexterity: Fighting

Dexterity: Thievery, Stealth, Archery

Mind: Learned, Survival, Perception,

Apothecary

Presence: Intimidation, Persuasion, Insight

Mind or Presence: Blood

SKILL RANKS

Untrained: -

Novice: 1d4

Apprentice: 1d6

Adept: 1d8

Expert: 1d10

Master: 1d12

CHALLENGE RATINGS

Very Easy: 5

Easy: 10

Moderate: 15

Hard: 20

Very Hard: 25

Extremely Hard: 30

Nearly Impossible: 35

ADVANTAGE

Characters with Advantage roll 2d20 instead of 1d20 for Checks and take the higher result. Characters with Disadvantage take the lower result. Skill dice are unaffected.

TENACITY

A resource granted by the Arbiter. It may be spent on the following:

- Gain Advantage

- Give Advantage to another Character

WOUNDS

Minor Wound: Half a Wound

Wound: A Single Wound

Major Wound: Double Wounds

SUPRISE

If Alert and Aware: No Surprise

If Alert or Aware: Suprise (Advantage)

If Neither Alert nor Aware: Deathblow

ACTIONS

Round: The time it takes for all characters to act.

Turn: The order in which Characters act, based on Alacrity

Action: The main interaction a Character has on their turn.

Desperate Action: A special action a Character can do once between Rests.

Reactions: A special Action a Character can take when triggered by a certain event.

Blood and Bone

Player Name

Character Name



Strength _____

Dexterity _____

Mind _____

Presence _____

Alacrity _____

Vitality _____

Evasion _____

Armor _____

Power _____

Reactions _____

Tenacity _____

World Belief

Other Belief

Self Belief

Complication

Skills Rank
Str. or Dex.

Fighting ○○○○○

Dexterity

Thievery ○○○○○

Stealth ○○○○○

Archery ○○○○○

Mind

Learned ○○○○○

Survival ○○○○○

Perception ○○○○○

Apothecary ○○○○○

Presence

Intimidation ○○○○○

Performance ○○○○○

Manipulation ○○○○○

Insight ○○○○○

Mind or Pres.

Blood ○○○○○

Traits

Notes and Possessions
