

RUNE STRYDERS™



Revised and Expanded

**Fantasy Roleplaying in a
World of Machines & Magic**



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Fantasy Roleplaying in a World of Machines and Magic

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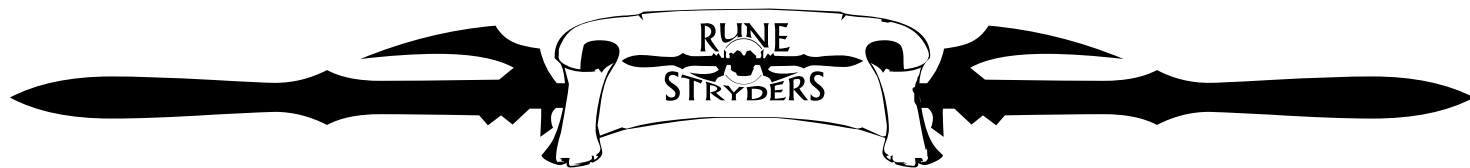
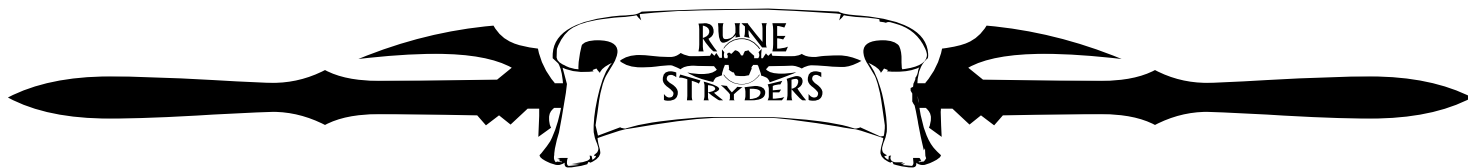


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USEFUL CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS

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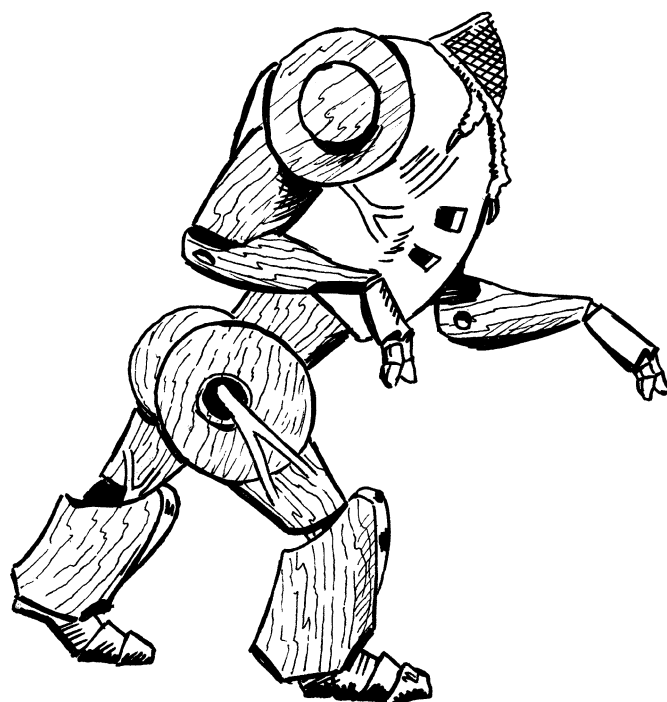
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SHADES OF RED

"You're late," said the Ambassador, speaking far too loudly for his own good. It was bad enough that the overweight, oversized beast of a Divaran had apparently come straight from a ball, dressed as he was in garish shades of red and gold that screamed "wealthy noble." Now he seemed determined to call down the wrath of the Skint's inhabitants as well, which was suicidal. Pulling attention to oneself in this part of town was a good way to grow a second smile, courtesy of the sharps lurking nearby. Thomis knew that all too well, had learned the hard way. As he watched several shapes shift in the shadows at the end of the alley, he nodded silently, thumb and forefinger nervously massaging the scar that ran along his neck from ear to ear; were it not for that passing Magus... but he shook off the memory; now was no time to reminisce.

It was time for business.

"Yes sir," he whispered in return, hoping the daft fool took his cue and followed suit. "I apologize for my lateness. I was. . . delayed." He indicated his swordbelt, which lacked its peace-ties, a sure sign that he'd drawn it for one reason or another in the recent past. In a better part of town, that alone would be enough to earn a trip to jail. But not here, and not now.

"I see," said the Ambassador, more quietly this time. "I suppose I can forgive it—this time." Thomis released his breath, thankful that the fool evidently lacked anything beyond basic Runic lore. If he'd been better trained, he might have whispered a Seeing, might have easily discovered that Thomis had simply broken the peace-ties himself, that the sword hadn't even been drawn, much less bloodied. His lack of Runelore meant this would all go a little easier. Thomis reminded himself, however, not to let too much slide. Underestimating an employer was more dangerous than underestimating a dedicated foe. And all too often, lately, the two turned out to be the same thing when the deal was done.

"Let's get this over with, then," said the Ambassador, reaching into his coat pocket. Thomis reacted with apparent horror.

"No, not here." He quickly scanned the rooftops, half for show, half out of real caution. "We need privacy. The streets have sharp eyes, and sharper tongues." As he said this last, he drew his thumb across his throat, wincing as he did so. The wound still hurt in places, even after all these months.

"I see," said the Ambassador with obvious impatience. "Then where?"

Thomis already had a room prepared, but he paused to consider all the same. No need to let on any more than he had to. After a moment, he seemed to brighten, and tugged the Ambassador along down the alley, past a dozen nondescript doors, stopping at one that resembled the others in every respect, save one: the dim red lantern hanging over the doorway. The Ambassador backed away, shaking his head.

"I cannot allow. . ."

Thomis ignored his babble, busily focusing on using his right index finger to carefully trace the faint impression of a Rune beside the door. A simple Rune, the sort designed to deliver a deadly shock to anyone not knowing how to disarm it. Which he didn't. Fortunately, it wasn't a real Rune; it merely resembled the real thing, closely enough that (he hoped) the Ambassador wouldn't be able to tell the difference. He needed to keep his edge here, and if that meant making himself out to be a Runemaster of sorts, so be it.

If the fat turd bothered to think about it, he might wonder how a building in this neighborhood could come by a Runic inscription like this, the price for such a carving being well beyond the reach of most individuals. Fortunately, the Ambassador said nothing, and before he could inspect the false carving more closely, Thomis opened the door and steered him inside.

The Ambassador immediately tried to push his way back out.

"I cannot be seen in a place like this," he insisted. "I-"

"That's precisely why we're here," Thomis countered. "No one will see us, or hear us. I can assure you of that."

"And what about. . . them." The Ambassador gestured broadly, indicating the young girls lounging around in the main room. Thomis waved to several, and they returned his gesture.

"They will no more talk than we will, because if they did they would bring down half the city council, including some that sit on higher chairs than you, Ambassador." This much was true, and they both knew it. "Now, shall we? I have just the room in mind."

The Ambassador scowled, but followed him in silence up to the second floor and down the hall to Room 21. Thomis noted with a smile that the Ambassador flushed slightly as they entered, but he said nothing; evidently the rumors about Room 21 were truer than he'd thought. Except for tonight, of course; as he'd arranged, the room was empty but for himself and the Ambassador, the bed and other usual "implements" having been replaced with a single table and two wooden chairs. Ignoring decorum and the chairs, he shut the door then leapt on the table and sat crosslegged.

The Ambassador remained standing, grasping for words. Thomis helped him along.

"Who's the target?" he asked bluntly. The Ambassador flushed, cleared his throat, and reached into his coat pocket, pulling out a small envelope which he tossed on the table. Thomis made no attempt to retrieve it, maintaining eye contact. The envelope could easily be Runed, either in the wax seal or on the vellum itself, in invisible ink of some sort. He'd check it out later, in privacy. The Ambassador paced, sweaty and uncomfortable in the stifling heat of the windowless room, stalling for gods knew what reason.

"Who's the target?" Thomis repeated.

"His name is Jonan," he answered.

"Full name."

The Ambassador hesitated. Thomis made a show of leaping off the table, reaching for the door.

"No, no, don't go."

"Fine," said Thomis, leaning against the doorframe, arms crossed. "Then talk. I don't work unless I know what I'm getting into."

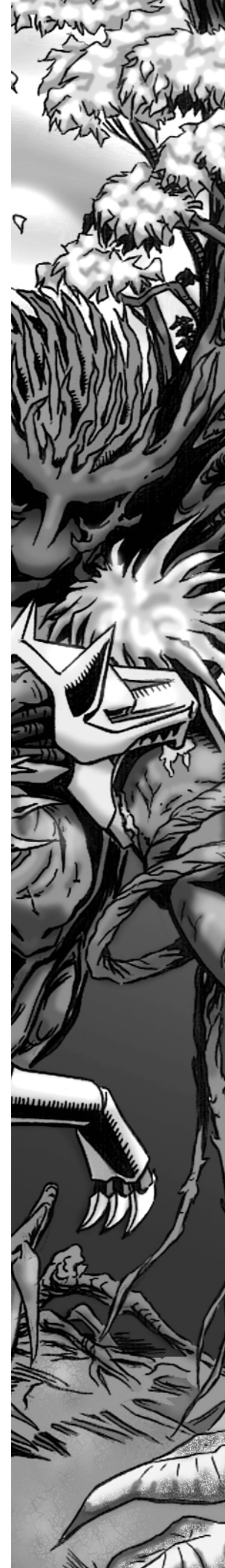
"The target's name is Jonan Marle-Thon," he began at last, and then the dam broke, and he spilled the rest. Thomis listened only half-heartedly, amusing himself with the sounds coming from across the hall. Ambassador Adour here wanted one of his opponents removed before an upcoming vote, hoping to sway the decision towards terms more favorable to his own position. He wanted this done relatively permanently, and with a fair amount of noise, hoping to scare others into backing down at the same time as he removed his most powerful opponent. Thomis had heard the entire story before. From Jonan himself, in fact, with a few of the names reversed. He'd almost taken that job, in fact. He had backed out at the last minute.

Adour had deeper pockets.

Still, something about this particular conversation was nagging at him, something about "the elder" and "the younger." He raised a hand, and the Ambassador broke off.

"Back up a second. There are two?" The Ambassador nodded.

"The father and his son, yes." This, he had to admit, was news to him. And he didn't like surprises.





“And which is the target?”

The Ambassador hesitated. Thomis didn’t push him to speak. It wasn’t necessary. And, to be quite fair, not altogether surprising. Thousands of sons disappeared every day, some at the hands of soldiers, others at the hands of people like Thomis. This shouldn’t be enough to make the old man pale, unless. . .

Thomis suddenly recalled something about the elder Marle-Thons, something about him being the youngest Ambassador in the history of Divar. Which meant. . .

“Exactly how old is the target?” he asked.

The Ambassador stumbled over his words, finally managed to spit it out.

Thomis said nothing. He shut his eyes, pursed his lips, lowered his head, tapped his foot. He cursed silently, considered his options. The Ambassador waited, and sweated, and stank. Finally, after several long seconds, Thomis raised his head and looked the old man in the eye.

“When?” he asked.

“Tonight,” said the Ambassador.

Thomis considered.

“I’ll do it,” he said at last, “for double the fee. Half now, half after.”

“Done,” said the Ambassador, too quickly, and Thomis cursed himself for giving in so easily. But even so, the fee was enough to keep him in wench and brew for weeks to come, high pay even for killing a dangerous, well-armed, full-grown warrior. Of which this target was none of the above. Somewhat ironically, that made it exponentially more difficult. They shook on it before he could back out.

“Good doing business with you,” said the Ambassador, leaving the room.

“Yeah,” said Thomis to no one, picking up the envelope, rolling the coins inside between his fingers, considering. It was a full ten minutes before he checked the package for Runes, slit it lengthwise and pocketed the money. Then he pulled out a charcoal stylus from his pocket and traced a simple Rune, one he did know, mouthing the syllable to himself a few times to get it right. As the envelope began to grow warm, he dropped it, quickly stepping back from the table as the contract burst into flames.

There were some things even he wouldn’t do. But now that he had the Ambassador’s money, he had to do something. It was his head on the line now. But he couldn’t do what he’d been paid to do, not ever, and if not, then what? He knew only one thing for certain.

Things were going to get ugly.





Rune Stryders is a Fantasy Roleplaying Game. Like other fantasy games, Rune Stryders features powerful magic, exciting combat, and fantastic monsters. And like other roleplaying games, Rune Stryders allows you, the player, to adopt the role of the characters that reside in this world, making their decisions and driving the action forward. If you have gamed before, you probably know enough about the basic concepts to enjoy and understand Rune Stryders as well.

ABOUT THE FORMAT

Rune Stryders is designed to appeal to a wide variety of gamers, and although it is not especially designed for use by novice players, there is no reason why anyone with at least a basic knowledge of gaming cannot enjoy it, either as a standard tabletop roleplaying game, or as a War Game, using miniatures, hex mats, and so on. The tactical combat rules are designed for ease of play in both cases.

Rune Stryders can also be used in *component* form, allowing you to add specific elements of the setting to your own existing fantasy roleplaying game. You can choose to add the mighty Stryders by themselves, or incorporate Runic magic as well, or even include some of the new character concepts featured within.

To make this easier, Rune Stryders has been divided up into different *Books*, each of which contains information about a

specific element of the game, and each of which can be used in connection with the others, or on its own in your own game setting. Though numbered for organizational purposes, these Books are not necessarily meant to be read in any particular order. In general, game mechanics are presented in earlier Books, and world and setting information comes later.

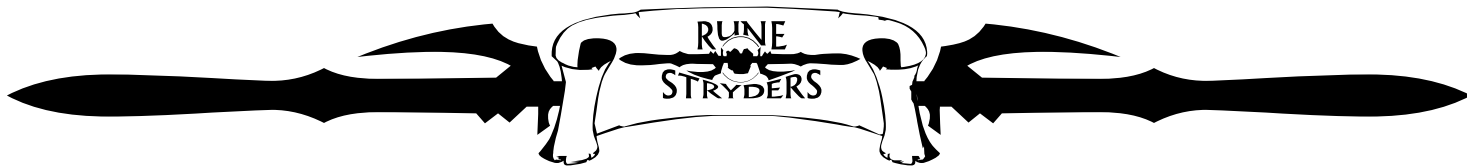
While it is possible to enjoy Rune Stryders without playing within the game world provided, you may wish to read through the **Book of the World** all the same, as the information contained therein does help to explain many of the concepts described elsewhere. If you do choose to use the world of Rhun as your campaign setting, you will find everything you need to get started, including new character archetypes, skill lists and detailed character generation rules.

ABOUT THE SETTING

Rune Stryders is a medieval fantasy roleplaying game. Medieval in the sense of being in-between two ages: a recent mythological past and an uncertain future; and fantastic in the sense that it contains strange elements that make it different from our own *real* world. However, Rune Stryders is not a traditionally medieval setting. To be certain, you will find swords and armor, castles and catapults—these are the tools of war, and the nations of the Rune Stryders setting are in constant conflict with one another. But the peoples and places of Rhun developed in a vastly different situation than our own real world, the world upon which medieval fantasy settings are typically based.

All of the action in this rulebook takes place in Rhun (pronounced *Roon*), a world filled with warring city-states, political intrigue, back-alley dealings and bold maneuverings on the field of battle. The name Rhun means many things to many people, at once describing the continent, the planet and the universe within which the inhabitants reside.

The most novel feature of the Rune Stryders setting is the presence of the Rune Stryders themselves. These huge war machines are created by expert craftsmen, brought to life through powerful Runic magic, and manned by expert warriors



trained to pilot them from within. Stryders come in many shapes and sizes, some forged from steel, others carved from stone, still others grown from living plants. All are powerful in their own right, highly prized and jealously guarded by their pilots, crews and patrons.

However, the Stryders are merely immobile suits of armor without the addition of the Runes, the powerful arcane symbols that make all magic possible. Since Runes are based on language, every living being capable of speech or writing has some ability to manipulate Runes to their advantage. But only the most powerful Runic Masters can summon up forces greater than simple charms and curses, conjuring storms, hurling meteors, and, of course, bringing the powerful Stryders to life.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play the game you will need these rules, pencils, paper, at least one ten-sided die (as many as five, ideally), and miniature figures (or other tokens) to represent your characters on the field of battle. Hex mats, a whiteboard, or sheets of paper on which you can scribble will also come in handy if you are planning on playing the game tactically.

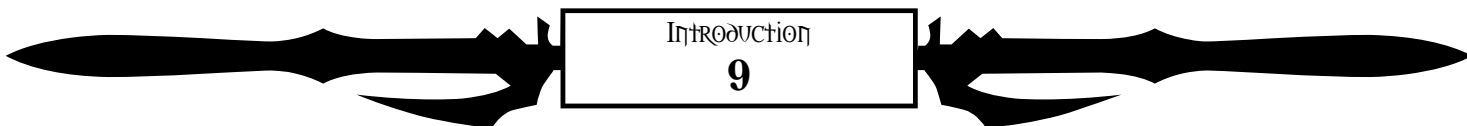
Having friends is also a boon; Rune Stryders is best enjoyed in gaming groups of three to six people, with one acting as the gamemaster and the others playing one or two characters each.

INCORPORATING MATERIAL INTO YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN

Although Rune Stryders deviates from the *norm* of fantasy roleplaying games in some quite dramatic ways, it is intentionally designed in such a way that you can easily alter some key facets of the setting in order to fit it more easily into existing campaigns.

The most notable example of this design characteristic is in the available character archetypes. Divided into six *Nations*, the people of Divar are all described in human terms, and indeed, they are all very much *human* in most respects. Just like in our own world, people from different parts of the world have varying physical characteristics that set them apart from one another, such as skin color, hair color, height, weight, language. In other words, there are no dwarves or elves in Rune Stryders; there are only humans of varying sorts. Should you wish to use this material in a campaign setting that incorporates alternative races, simply swap those races in where they seem appropriate for your own campaign world.

Likewise, in the case of magic, Rune Stryders dispatches with the oft-used mechanic of wizards in pointy hats memorizing spells. Here, the only *spells* are Runes, and the Runes are words, and those words can be used by anyone, without the need to laboriously memorize spells every few hours. Needless to say, such a switch makes for a different style of gaming than usual. Thus, if you are more comfortable with a more familiar mechanic, it is a simple matter to restrict the use of Runes to *Wizardly* or *Sorcerous* classes, or to apply spell memorization limits to them as deemed necessary.



A CRY IN THE DARK

The damned infant wouldn't stop wailing, half the team was missing, and there was blood on Thomis' hands. And the worst part was, he didn't know if it was his or not.

It had been that kind of a night.

Of course, in retrospect it was foolish to consider, but he nevertheless found himself wondering if he would have been better off refusing the job. He could have said no, could have walked out and left the Ambassador out in the cold. Of course, then he'd have had to deal with the Ambassador's bodyguards, who would no doubt have tried to keep him quiet, the permanent way. But that would have been preferable to the cluster of nightmares that this job had since turned into. Besides, it would have been somewhat pleasant to wrap his fingers around the throat of that overfed, overambitious...

But it was all moot, and far too late to back out now. The deed was done. Half a dozen lay dead, dying and wounded (some of his own among them) and stuffed in a sack at his waist was little Jonan. All because that bloated chunk of excrement wanted to keep the infant's father from voting against him in some upcoming session about some inconsequential issue. Thomis didn't even pretend to understand the machinations involved. It was politics, and politics was in many ways dirtier, bloodier and fouler than war. Which was what he would much prefer to be doing, all things considered.

He had stopped counting alleyways when the first bolts had zinged by his head, Marle-Thon's angry guards in pursuit, the plan gone all to hell, and he was thus now quite thoroughly lost in the twisted, tangled morass of streets that abutted the Skint. He had been hoping that as he approached the neighborhood he called home he would begin to recognize landmarks, would be able to get back on course, but at this point he had given up watching for signs and just started looking for sewer caps. He might not be able to find his way any better down there, but it was a sure way to throw his pursuers off the trail. At least long enough for him to resurface, rendezvous with the surviving members of his little collective, and then get back to the Stryders to make their getaway.

The Stryders were, of course, the key to all of this. Marle-Thon's goons might pursue on foot, but without Stryders of their own they would be hard pressed to keep up with his team once they got out onto open ground. Nothing in this city could move as fast as a Stryder.

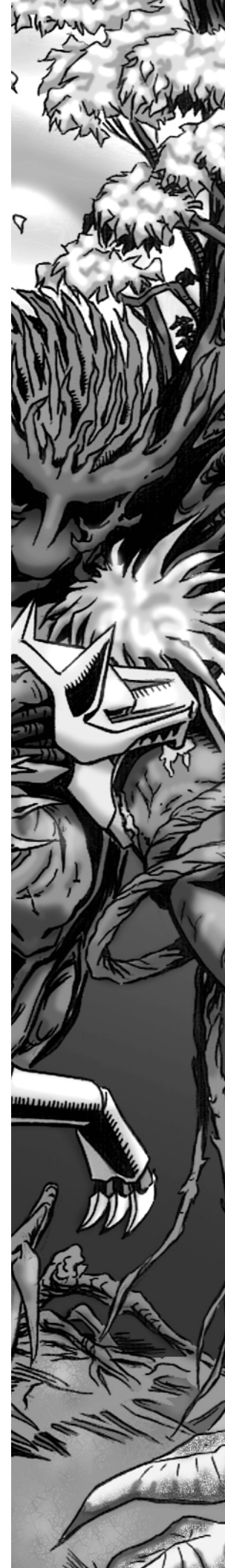
Running away, he thought. That's what I've been reduced to.

Considering the circumstances, however, the thought did not fill him with regret or embarrassment in the least. There was simply no other choice.

Up ahead, in the center of a broad intersection, he spotted what he had been looking for—a sewer grate, almost invisible in the street save for the faint wisps of foul-smelling steam escaping from below, glowing yellow in the faint light from the lamps hung on poles in the nearby park. Not bothering to scout the situation first, he plunged headlong into the intersection and knelt by the grate, fingers sliding into the grooves around the edge. He prayed it wasn't rusted shut, as so many were.

"Ngei-ess," he uttered, a small charm for luck, and pulled hard. With a soft sucking sound, the grate swung up and away. In a flash he swung his legs down and quickly dropped into the murky darkness below, landing with a splash in water three-feet deep just as the iron rang out on the flagstones above, announcing his escape. Quite inconsequential, all things considered. It didn't matter if they knew he had come down here. There was no way they would follow. He was counting on that.

Few came down here any more, afraid of the ghosts of those who lived here in ages past, in the old city, perhaps fearing the wrath of some long-dead ancestors, enraged that the living now saw fit to turn their once great city into a dung heap. The real dangers were far more tangible: the streets ran thick with sludge from above, making footing unstable at best. Shards of shattered glass and broken weapons lay





half buried in the muck, every step bringing with it the risk of tearing one's leg open. Though the wound might not be fatal itself, the disease-ridden filth that would inevitably seep into the wound would almost certainly be. And then, of course, there were the living that actually made the old city their home.

As if summoned by his thoughts, eyes, seen and unseen, began to peer at him from the near-blackness of the sewer, a few glowing in the dim light from above, others glowing with a light of their own. He ignored them all as he picked a random direction and began wading through the foul muck, his splashes now muffling the infant's continued sobs and wails. His seemingly lackadaisical attitude had nothing to do with bravado, however; inside, he quivered and shook, every instinct telling him to get back above, out of the darkness, away from the abominations which lived down here. Rather, two things kept him moving: the fact that he no longer had a choice (a more powerful force than bravery in most situations, he firmly believed), and the Runic talisman he wore around his neck, which he had bought off a huckster just a few hours ago.

He knew enough about Runes to recognize that the piece was genuine (or else he would not have bought it), but not enough to know exactly what it was capable of. The shopkeeper had insisted it was proof against vermin, and still had a few months left in it. So far, it seemed to be doing the trick. He had not even felt a fleabite since donning the charm, and the rats (and worse) down here did seem to be keeping their distance. That left only humanoid enemies to worry about. Which made his odds about even.

Which was pretty good odds for him, all things considered.

He had sloshed onward through the muck for a good quarter mile, all of it in near-blackness, before he realized what it was he had not been hearing for quite some time—the child's cries. In a sudden (and, considering the job, inappropriate) panic, he lifted the sack from his belt and opened it, bringing the child closer to his face. Though unable to see, he could definitely hear the child's breathing, labored but steady, and he released the breath he had not realized he was holding. His sudden relief at hearing the child breathe, however, gave him reason to pause, and he stopped moving altogether, considering.

He had been ordered to abduct the child, and he had done that. Unspoken, but nevertheless certain, was the fact that he had been expected to do away with the child as well.

That much he could not do.

This realization, however, did little to solve the problem at hand. Which was, namely, that if he had no intention of killing the child, and could not return the child to its family, he was left with the absolutely untenable option of taking the child with him.

A fourth option suddenly crossed his mind, a flash of dark insight so immediate and so obvious that he immediately began moving again before he thought twice about it. Now that he was in more familiar territory, it was only a few twists and turns until he found the place, one of the few areas of the sewer actually lit by Nhet-lamps.

The old orphanage was one of the few dry spots in the entire Undercity, having been built on a hillock beside a stream, now clogged with waste from above, that sluiced its way around three sides of the building. In a dozen years, perhaps fewer, the foundation would certainly be worn away, sending the building tumbling into the muck. For now, though, it was good enough to serve as home to...

Well, he refused to think too much about that one.

He could feel the stares from above as he strode up the stone dais in front of the building, placing the infant at the top in front of the building's iron doors. As the child's back came into contact with the slick,

RUINE

cold stone, it began once again to wail. He could not help but to take a moment to dote on it, opening the sack and lifting the cold, frail thing into his arms.

As if human touch were enough to chase away the darkness, the child quieted instantly, peering up at him through the thick, dank gloom.

"I don't know," he replied to the unspoken question. And then, tears be damned, he set the child down on top of the sack and walked away, ignoring its plaintive wails.

Others were not of a similar mind.

Within moments of his disappearance, the infant found itself surrounded by child-like shadows, clamoring around curiously. Three, in fact, all wasted, naked and thin, covered in filth, scab and sore. Less than a minute later, the child was gone, back in the sack, once again tracing a path through the sewers, now strapped to the back of a creature the child's mother had, ironically, sung to it about just that night. A song to lull stupid infants to sleep, and to scare older children into silence. A lullaby.

Shush-a baby Hush-a baby

Sleep, now, sleep

Safe and warm under quilt and sheet

Till the beasties come and grab your feet

Cry not, sigh not

Sleep, now, sleep

Else into your room, Dras will creep

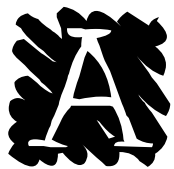
Your soul they'll take, fore'er to keep

For the first time that night, the baby slept soundly and dreamt of home, lulled to sleep by the gentle rocking and bouncing of a Draslander's uneven gait.



CHAPTER 1

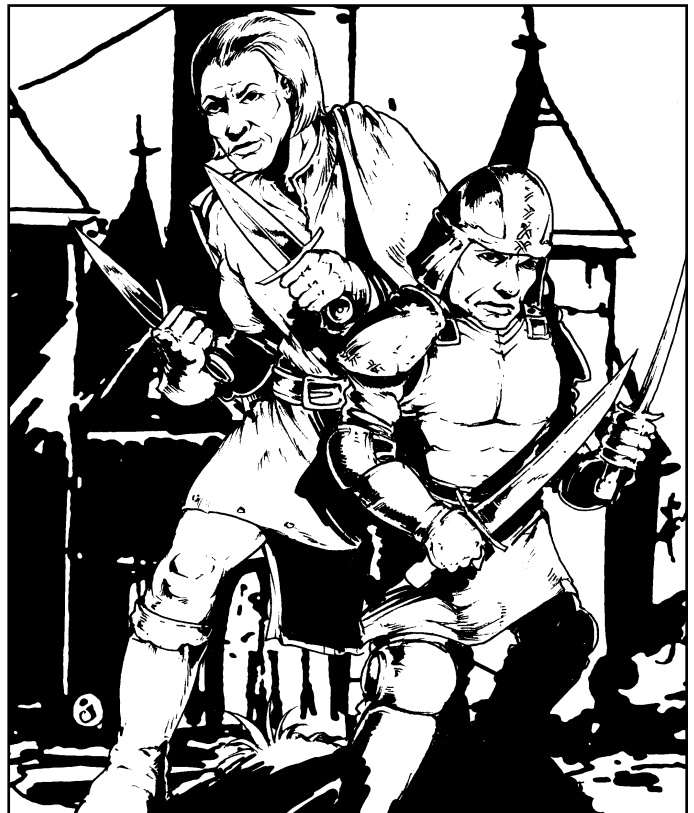
THE BOOK OF CREATION

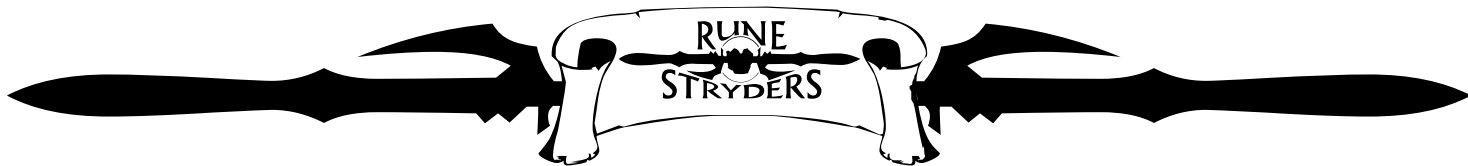


Are you a mighty warrior, charging across the field of battle with a defiant scream? Or a skulking thief, taking advantage of others in order to carve your own path through the world? Perhaps you prefer instead to delve into the secret lore of Runes, uncovering arcane secrets not meant for man. Or maybe you are one of your country's Stryder pilots, guiding your construct onto the field of battle in search of glory.

Before you can begin playing in the world of Rune Stryders, you will need to decide what sort of character you want to play. The usual way to go about this, and the one we recommend, is to get familiar with the Book of Roles. Find a role you think you will like, and make a note of the Skill and Attribute suggestions listed in the Role Template that follows it. If you do this, keep in mind that these Roles are only suggestions, and are in no way meant to limit the way in which you can develop your character.

Alternately, you can proceed without choosing a role at all. This is recommended only for players who are already familiar with the Rune Stryders setting, or those who truly like to





customize their character from the ground up, with no assistance whatsoever. At the very least, you should have a rough idea of your character in mind, and you should look at the Skills in the Book of Roles during character construction.

In either case, it is important to realize that the sorts of characters you will be generating in Rune Stryders are not ordinary peasants or merchants. The world of Rhun is a world that has been in an almost constant state of upheaval, and after centuries of hardship and suffering, only those tough

enough to survive the ravages of war, disease and famine have remained. The net result of this strengthening of bloodlines is that the average individual is of fairly sturdy stock, and the sorts of people likely to be able to manipulate world events, seek out dangerous adventures, and lead armies into battle are even harder and more capable. It is these sorts of characters that you will be playing, and the character generation system is designed with this in mind.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are a measure of a character's most basic abilities, used on their own to determine the results of tasks involving feats of strength or raw intellect, and in conjunction with skills to determine the results of more specific actions. There are six Attributes, divided into two categories: **Primary Attributes**, which are generated independently of other Attributes and **Secondary Attributes**, which are derived from Primary Attributes.

Primary Attributes

Intellect	The ability to reason logically and learn.
Agility	Overall coordination and manual dexterity.
Strength	The ability to lift heavy objects or strike solid blows.
Heart	An inner sense of connection to others.

Secondary Attributes

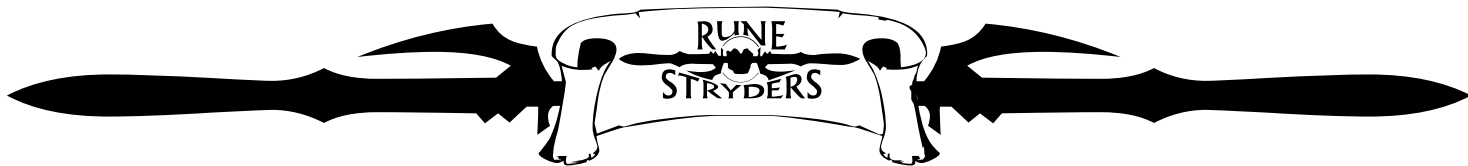
Body	A character's overall physical makeup. <i>Strength + Agility</i>
Mind	A character's overall mental makeup. <i>Heart + Intellect</i>

There are two ways to generate your character's **Primary Attribute** scores. The first is through simple random generation, which allows for a wider range of diversity among starting characters. To generate Primary Attributes randomly, roll one 10-sided die four times. Each time you roll, compare the result to the following table.

Roll	Score	Definition
1	1	Below Average; bottom 25% of the population
2-3	2	Average; roughly middle 50% of the population
4-7	3	Above Average; within the top 25% of the population
8-9	4	Superior, falling in the top 15% of the population
10	5	Heroic, falling within the top 5% of the population

As you roll, record each score from the table on a piece of scratch paper. You may then assign the four different scores to the four **Primary Attributes** (*Intellect*, *Agility*, *Strength* and *Heart*) as you see fit. If you happen to get a score of a 1, do not panic; other scores will certainly offset that one, and it does not mean that your character is totally worthless. If it really bothers you, just consider it a challenge to be overcome later in life. Obviously, this method generates a wide variety of characters, with point totals ranging from 4 to 20.

If you prefer not to leave so much to chance, the second method for generating Primary Attributes uses point distribution. To use this method, you start with 18 points, and use them to assign scores to the Primary Attributes using the table below.



Points	Score	Definition
0	1	Below Average; bottom 25% of the population
1	2	Average; roughly middle 50% of the population
3	3	Above Average; within the top 25% of the population
6	4	Superior, falling in the top 15% of the population
10	5	Heroic, falling within the top 5% of the population

Points	Score	Definition
0	1	Below Average; bottom 25% of the population
1	2	Average; roughly middle 50% of the population
3	3	Above Average; within the top 25% of the population
6	4	Superior, falling in the top 15% of the population
10	5	Heroic, falling within the top 5% of the population

This is the method used to generate the Role Templates found later. As with rolling, the maximum score for an Attribute is 5, and the minimum is 1. This method levels the playing field somewhat, giving you more control but ensuring that no character has too much of an edge over any other. This method is especially useful in a tactical game, as it allows characters to be generated on a more even scale.

Secondary Attribute scores are not rolled or chosen, but are instead derived from your character's Primary Attribute scores. Your character's **Body** score is the sum of his Strength and Agility scores, and your character's **Mind** score is determined by adding his Heart and Intellect scores. Obviously, the minimum score for either Body or Mind is a 2, and the maximum is 10.

IMPROVING ATTRIBUTES

Attributes can be improved (temporarily and, in some cases, permanently) through the use of Runes, but they cannot be improved by spending experience points (as Skills can be).

BARRIERS

Barriers represent your character's ability to avoid exceptionally difficult and challenging situations that may arise in the course of human events. When your character is challenged in some way from without, Barriers are what stand between his Attributes and danger; hence, the name. There are four Barriers, divided into two categories: **Primary Barriers**, which are derived from your *Primary* and *Secondary* Attributes and **Secondary Barriers**, which are derived from Primary Barriers.

Primary Barriers are derived from your character's Primary Attributes. Your **Endurance** score is the sum of your Body and Heart scores, and your **Perception** score is the sum of your Mind and Agility scores. Each of these Primary Barrier scores can range from 3 to 15.

Secondary Barriers are derived from your character's Primary Barrier scores. Your **Health** score is the sum of your Body score doubled, plus your Heart and Intellect scores. Your **Soul** score is the sum of your Mind score doubled, plus your Body score. The minimum Health or Soul score is a 6, and the maximum is 30.

Exactly what all these numbers mean is discussed further in the Book of War, and the various calculations are reprinted on the Character Sheet for your convenience.

Primary Barriers

Endurance	A character's ability to withstand physically draining situations. <i>Body + Heart</i>
Perception	A character's ability to notice things others might miss. <i>Mind + Agility</i>

Secondary Barriers

Health	A character's ability to withstand physical damage. <i>(Body x2) + Heart + Intellect</i>
Soul	A character's reservoir of "inner life" and spirituality. <i>(Mind x2) + Body</i>

8KILL8

Skills further define your character, setting her apart from others in the world, including those who may share her Role (*see the Book of Roles*) by specifying what she has learned to do over a lifetime.

If you are creating a character from scratch, without a Role, you get **35 skill points** to spend however you like, although skills may not be raised above 4 when creating characters. If you are using a Role from the Book of Roles, a list of skills is provided with each Role, along with suggested skill point distributions. Skills are divided into categories (based on the four Primary Attributes) and subcategories, which are merely a means of organizing skills but are not skills themselves. If you are not using a pre-generated Role, you can spend the skills on whatever you like. In all cases, each skill level you wish to purchase costs a number of points equal to the desired skill level.

For example, if I wish to take Stryder Pilot at level 1, it costs 1 point; if I want level 2, it costs 2 more points (a total of 3). Raising a skill to its maximum of level 4 thus costs a total of 10 points (4 + 3 + 2 + 1).

EXPERIENCE

After each gaming session, the gamemaster should award ten (10) experience points to each actively participating character. This number may be modified depending on the contributions of each player, but should never be less than five (5) or more than fifteen (15). Players may spend this experience as follows.

Attributes: An attribute may be increased by one at a cost of fifty (50) experience points, and may never be raised twice.

Raising Skills: Skills may be raised at a cost equal to ten times the desired level. In other words, raising a skill from level 3 to level 4 costs forty (40) experience points.

New Skills: New skills may be acquired at a cost of ten (10) experience points, but requires the gamemaster's approval first.

Runes: A character may learn a new effect rune at a cost of ten (10) experience points. New control runes may only be gained by increasing the Runelore skill.

Intellect-Based Skills

Language
Literacy
Memorization
Runelore
Second Language
Military Tactics
Enlisted
Guerilla
Sabotage
Siege
Small Unit
Stryder Crew
General
Roguary
Forgery
Gambling
Locksmithing
Trapwork
Skilled Trade
Appraiser
Archaeologist
Architect
Carpenter
Cook
Farmer
Healer
Historian
Hunter
Lawkeeper
Miner
Politician
Sailor
Smith (Metal)
Smith (Stone)
Tailor

Strength-Based Skills

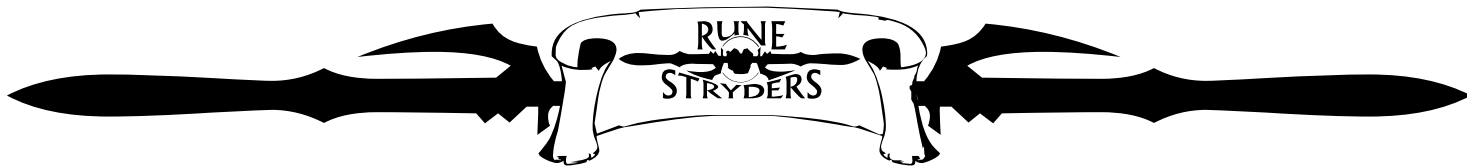
Armor
Athletics
Climbing
Jumping
Running
Swimming
Throwing
Heavy Weapon Combat
Axe Class
Heavy Blade Class
Mace Class
Pick Class
Spear Class
Strength-Based Combat Styles
Divaran Kickwrestling
Myndwar Stonefist
Zokili Nervestrike
Kantarin Skytackle
Sivatagi Bladefist
Draslander Kneeblowing

Agility-Based Skills

Acrobatics
Contortion
Gymnastics
Juggling
Riding
Steeplejacking
General Combat
Dodge
Initiative
Light Weapon Combat
Bow Class
Entanglement Class
Light Blade Class
Staff Class
Stone Class
Stryder Weapon Combat
Stealth
Hiding
Silent Death
Sleight of Hand
Sneaking
Agility-Based Combat Styles
Divaran Dueling
Myndwar Doublestrike
Zokili Risingsun
Kantarin Deathdancing
Sivatagi Mounted Combat
Draslander Disarmament

Heart-Based Skills

Bonding
Animal Empathy
Plant Empathy
Spirit Empathy
Stryder Pilot
Creativity
Art
Disguise
Mimicry
Music
Stories
Perception
Alertness
Awareness
Navigation
Observation
Tracking
Socializing
Deception
Diplomacy
Interrogation
Leadership
Teaching
Trading
Special
Willpower



GEAR

Many characters have no true homes, being wanderers and warriors always on the move. Thus, since what you carry with you often accounts for the entirety of your possessions, the selection of gear is crucial to a successful career. You will find an assortment of gear in the Book of the World. Each item is

assigned a value in **Divaran Vel**, a steel coin which is the most widely used form of currency on the continent. You get an amount of Vel equal to the roll of one die multiplied by ten to spend however you wish. More on Vel, and the economy of the world of Rhun, can be found in the Book of the World.

FINISHING TOUCHES

If you are going to be doing any roleplaying, you'll probably want to take a few extra minutes to polish off your character concept. This is a very fluid and individualized process, and can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours to truly get it right. Here are some things to think about:

Name: The Book of the World has some sample names to get you started, and if you do not like what is listed then you can want to check out the linguistic hints and tips listed thereafter to help you come up with something totally new. Try to avoid anything particularly silly or anachronistic, because you'll almost certainly regret naming your warrior Bob after a few sessions.

Background: Use your imagination to make you character more fully-fleshed out and interesting, taking into account the mythology, history and society of the Rune Stryders world (detailed in the Book of the World). When in doubt, make things up after checking with your GameMaster; chances are that he'll welcome your assistance in coming up with names for villages and families that you may want to include in your personal history.

Appearance: Using the basics provided with each Role category, decide how your character looks. Things to decide include height, weight, eye, skin and hair color, and any special distinguishing marks (like tattoos, speech impediments and scars).

Runes: If your character possesses at least one level of the Runelore skill, choose either one complete category of Runes per level or six different Runes and one control Rune per level.

Attitude: The world's nations are constantly at war with one another over land, resources, political differences and the like. What are your character's opinions of his neighbors, his countrymen, his nation's enemies, and neutral parties? This might be the most important decision you make, so choose wisely—you'll need friends eventually, so be sure not to make everyone your enemy.

Goals: It is one thing to merely exist, but it is another to truly try to shape the world you live in. What drives your character forward? Is she looking for greater knowledge and martial skill, or searching for Runic secrets, long since lost? Work closely with your GameMaster on this.

Turf: If you chose a Role, write down the "Home Turf" mentioned with that Role. If you have not picked a Role, take a moment to browse through the Book of the World to read up on what Turfs are available, and the Book of War to see what they mean to your character.

TRIAL BY FIRE

Thomis pushed the trap door aside and emerged into blackness, fumbling for the Nhet rune he knew was on the table, which he knew was in the corner, which he knew was three paces from the trap door in the floor. Unfortunately, there was no Rune. Nor was there a table. Instead, after three paces, he found himself in a bare corner, fumbling for emptiness.

“Ull-eq.” A voice rasped in the darkness, the runeword resounding through the room. He knew the Rune—Fire—and he knew what it could do in the hands of a master. He immediately turned to leap back down the trap door, expecting to feel the heat as the flames singed his hair and back. He didn’t get far. As he turned, two spears materialized from the shadows, dancing inches away from his face.

With nowhere to run, he slowly raised his hands above his head and surveyed the situation, somewhat amazed to be alive.

The spears were connected to two men in black leather armor, heads and faces shrouded in darkness not entirely natural. Behind them, a large portion of the wall was ablaze, the wood charring and snapping. Standing just inside the door, well away from the action, was a third individual, armored like the others, his hood drawn back, his hand outstretched. Middle-aged, weathered and scarred, his eyes narrowed. The caster, he assumed. Though by the look of them, any of the three could have cast the Rune. He knew what they were. He suppressed a shudder.

“Magi.” He cursed softly. No doubt Marle-Thon had set them on his trail. He should have expected as much from one so highly ranked.

“You know, then, that the Rune was not mis-cast,” said the one in the doorway. “If I had wanted, you would be aflame instead.” As if punctuating the statement, the wall sizzled and snapped, scattering embers across the room. Thomis flinched unconsciously, nodding.

“Bring him,” said the caster. The spears were lowered, and rope produced. He knew better than to resist. He might be headed for death, but fighting back here and now would bring the end about sooner. And if he wasn’t headed for execution, he had a better chance biding his time. He could always escape from a prison cell (and had on several occasions already), but he couldn’t escape three Magi. Or six, as it turned out—as he was led out of the room at spear point, he saw the others, crouched just outside in the shadows. Even had he made it past the three inside (sheer impossibility), he would have been gutted, eviscerated and cremated before he got two steps out the door.

As if to emphasize the point, one of the Magi jabbed him with a spear, urging him to move a bit faster. He winced as the tip of the short spear bit through his cloak and shirt, piercing his flesh, enough to bleed and scar, more than enough to poison (or worse) if the spear was Runed, but not enough to cause serious damage. He gritted his teeth and moved on, refusing to show pain or fear, though he felt both. There was a time for cowardice and panic, and this was not it. Not among these sorts.

He was certain the stories were only half true, but even if that were the case, the half that was not mere hearsay and folk tale (pick a half, any half) was enough to frighten even a well-seasoned warrior.

Most of the mercenary companies who fought for Divaros in some form were dangerous, deadly, and highly skilled with weapon and Rune alike. But among them, the Magi were the best of the best. And, at the same time, the worst of the worst. He had heard plenty of stories, had told some himself. Of the small contingent of Magi who snuck behind enemy lines during an extended campaign and harassed the enemy for months, killing ten times their own number before being discovered. Of the small encampment, guarded by two dozen armed mercenaries, and the pair of unarmed Magi who slew them all barehanded. Of the single Magi who escaped from the island prison colony of Sisian, swimming the entire way through predator-infested waters to eventually track down and kill the man who had imprisoned him.





He was sure most of it was nonsense. But he wasn't sure which parts weren't. And he wasn't about to ask. Several of the Magi escorting him ("Where?" he wondered at last, nearly making the mistake of asking aloud) looked as if they may have been the subjects of some of those stories.

They marched in silence and darkness for what seemed like hours, until finally they reached familiar territory. By the time he recognized where he was, and briefly pondered risking the wrath of the Magi, it was too late. He turned a corner and found himself face to face with the elder Marle-Thon.

A moment later, he was on the ground, bleeding from a gash on his cheek. The diplomat, as it turns out, had a nasty right. And left—before he could recover from the punch, Marle-Thon was atop him, hands at Thomis' throat, thumbs pressing on his windpipe, expertly. Diplomats were expert in a variety of forms of diplomacy, it seemed.

"Where is he?"

Thomis tried to answer, but found no words, no air, could only gasp helplessly. One of the Magi tapped Marle-Thon with a spear, gently. The diplomat looked angered, but took the hint, and released his grasp, standing. For a moment, he and Thomis both did nothing but breathe and gasp, both for their own reasons. Thomis shifted into a seated position, shuffling back towards the wall.

"He's dead, isn't he?" said Marle-Thon at last. A knife appeared from his sash, glimmering in the faint light from a far-off Nhet-lamp.

Thomis shook his head, surprised to see no reaction from the diplomat.

"Sold?"

"No," said Thomis. He would have killed the child before selling him off into slavery. "He..."

"What?" demanded Marle-Thon. "Tell me."

Thomis told him.

To his credit, the diplomat's face betrayed no sign of emotion, even as several of the Magi around him raised their brows. When he had finished, Marle-Thon turned, facing the lead Magi. Thomis took advantage of the distraction to shuffle a bit closer to the wall, finding the sharp rock he had noticed when he first hit the ground. He began to work at the rope, hoping none of the Magi would notice.

"No," he heard the hooded Rune caster note. "They have moved on."

"Where?" said Marle-Thon. "To where?"

"South and east," came the answer. "They—" There was more, but Thomis felt the rope give, was already on his feet and preparing to move when the conversation was swallowed beneath the low roar of a guard's horn. Within seconds, the plaza outside Marle-Thon's home was filled with mercenaries. He, the Magi, and Marle-Thon himself were surrounded.

Thomis was only half surprised to see Ambassador Adour push his way through, flanked by Judges, their sturdy Enan ready to deal out painful Justice if need be. Adour's flabby jowls bobbed as he moved, shiny new golden chains of office glimmering in the torchlight.

"Ah, Jonan. Associating with the rabble, are we? Perhaps that's why you missed the vote tonight."

Thomis half-listened, eyes and ears scanning the rooftops, alleyways, and nearby windows for any chance of escape. Unconsciously, he attempted to burrow further into the shadows behind him. Adour noticed, but said nothing, perhaps pretending not to recognize him.

"You are responsible for this, aren't you?"

"I have no idea what you mean," said Adour. "I only heard about your tragic loss just now, and came to offer my condolences."

Jonan shot a look at Thomis across the alley, curiosity and confusion evident even in the darkness.

"The other Diplomats will certainly be understanding. After all, how could a father not miss a key vote after discovering that his son was murdered?"

Thomis nodded slightly to Jonan, acknowledging the unspoken question. He had nothing to lose; he was dead anyway. May as well be honest about it.

"Truly a sad day," said Adour.

"Indeed," said Jonan, stepping forward. His eyes shone with hatred, reflections of the knife in his hand. "Though I find it curious how you heard of my son's demise. Especially seeing as he still lives."

Adour's face crumbled, the fat noble making no attempt to conceal the flurry of emotions that roiled through him. His eyes shot daggers at Thomis before turning back to scan Jonan, the six Magi arranged behind and around him, defensively.

"You imply something?"

"I imply nothing," said Jonan. "You are responsible. And I will have justice."

"Justice," said Adour. "Yes." A subtle gesture, a flick of his head, and the dozen warriors who'd accompanied him closed ranks, forming a tight semi-circle behind him as the Judges stepped forward.

"Let the Judges bear witness that Jonan Marle Thon, and all in his employ, are hereby found guilty of falsely accusing the city's chief Ambassador of a heinous crime. Also of public display of unlicensed weaponry. Also of unregulated use of Runic magic within city limits. Do you dispute these charges?"

"I do," said Jonan quietly.

As his Magi mercenaries raised their spears, Thomis scrambled on the ground, mumbling a Rune for luck as he desperately searched behind him for that sharp rock he'd bumped into a moment ago. He had the feeling he was going to need it. And more.



CHAPTER 2

THE BOOK OF WAR



s Rune Stryders is intended for use as both a roleplaying Game and a tactical war game, the game mechanics are designed to be equally useful in either case. For this reason, Rune Stryders tends to be more *rules-light* rather than *rules-heavy*. Those looking for a simple system that allows them to get to the roleplaying should be pleased with what follows, as is, and those who enjoy more complexity will find that the system is easily expanded or converted to your own favorite system.

That said, the primary purpose of the following game mechanics is undoubtedly efficiency. The rules are built to allow the use of one set of core rules for all rolls in the game, and to dispense with those rolls as quickly as possible, to allow more time for roleplaying. Whether you are flirting with the barmaid or laying siege to her father's castle, you will use the same numbers, the same rolls and the same combinations of attributes and skills. Everything is, in its own way, a little conflict, and so everything is treated that way.



TIME, INITIATIVE, & MOVEMENT

Many systems make a point of explaining that their combat rounds allow enough time for myriad actions and activities, including imaginary footwork, parrying, riposting, counter-riposting, dodging and ducking. In contrast, Rune Stryders gameplay (and, in particular, combat) is much more specific, each action representing a specific movement, each attack a single blow or quick series of blows, each defense a single block or dedicated series of maneuvers. This allows for more exciting role-played combat, and is much more appropriate for the small skirmish-style combats that often erupt between Stryders.

TIME

The measurement of time in Rune Stryders is divided up into two categories: **normal time** (which is the everyday, more or less real-time time that takes place during the course of roleplaying) and **conflict time**, which is how time is measured when conflict resolution is taking place (as in the case of combat). Normal time requires no further explanation; Conflict time, however, works a bit differently, and it is important to understand how and why it works the way it does.

Conflict time is divided up into **Rounds**, each round consisting of three seconds within which every active participant in that conflict gets a chance to act. Within each round, each person's individual action or set of actions is known as their **Turn**. In other words, in keeping more or less in line with actual definitions, a round is a three-second period of time in which everyone takes a turn.

This might sound like a lot going on in such a short period of time, but combat (or any related conflict situation) is a frenzy of activity, everyone doing their best to take the other guy out as quickly as possible while trying not to get killed in the process. The three seconds within that Round represent just enough time to dart in, lunge and strike your enemy, or be struck down yourself.

It is important to note that all those turns overlap within the same period of three seconds. The enemy is not going to wait for you to attack before he responds in kind. Rather, everyone takes their turn more or less simultaneously, attacks and dodges and movement all happening at once. However, within that more-or-less simultaneous action, there are slices of time, fractions of seconds that can mean the difference between life and death. And that is where Initiative comes in.

INITIATIVE

Combat situations are high-stress, highly-changeable situations, the advantage going to the warrior who has calm nerves and the ability to quickly and coolly assess the situation effectively, all within a very short period of time (less than a second, in fact!). For this reason, the method of determining the order of actions is also a matter of a quick die roll. Each combatant rolls his or her Initiative against a target of 10 at the start of each round (*dice rolls are explained in more depth in the next section*). Each character has at least one action by default, and each success on the Initiative roll grants the combatant one additional action during the round. Critical failure of the Initiative roll indicates that a character is unable to act this round.

The combatant with the greatest number of successes acts first, expending his actions until he has the same as at least one other combatant. A round can be thought of as consisting of up to six phases. A combatant has the option to act in every phase for which he has a success, and he acts before those with fewer actions. So every character with six actions acts first, followed by every character with five, and so on.

For example, three warriors are facing off in a three-way duel. They each roll Initiative at the start of combat. The Divaran warrior rolls four successes, the Zokili rolls two, and the Myndwar rolls only one. The Divaran will act twice, expending his first and second actions. The Divaran and the Zokili will both act after that, with their actions being entirely

simultaneous for purposes of damage resolution. Finally, all three combatants have two actions, assuming they are all still standing.

Tie scores are treated as truly simultaneous actions for the purposes of in-game actions; for the purpose of making gameplay more simple, however, characters with tie scores can flip a coin, roll a die, or simply agree that one can go before the other. In game, their actions take place simultaneously. This means that it is possible for one warrior to deliver a fatal blow to another, and yet be struck down himself by the enemy he just wounded, assuming they were both acting during the same phase of the round.

ACTIONS

So what can you do during your three second turn? Whatever you want provided you have enough actions to do so. Here are some examples of things you can do with a single action:

- Draw or put away a weapon
- Maneuver at normal speed, moving five feet
- Advance or retreat at double speed, moving ten feet (-1 Dodge for remainder of round)
- Full charge or flee at quadruple speed, moving twenty feet (-3 Dodge for remainder of round)
- Use a skill (includes combat)
- Attack a single opponent
- Speak all or part of a Rune (*See the Book of Runes*)

DISTANCE AND MOVEMENT

As indicated above, a character can move at normal speed up to five (5) feet per action, or at double speed up to ten (10) feet per action. When using miniatures, this translates into a scale of five (5) feet per inch, or roughly five (5) feet per twenty-five (25) centimeters. Thus, moving ten (10) feet means moving a miniature two (2) inches (50 cm) on a hex mat or grid. This translates into an average walking speed of about 5 feet per second, or roughly 3.5 mph (5.5 kph), a jogging/advancing speed of about 7 mph (11 kph), or a full-on charge/flat-out running away speed of about 14 mph (22 kph),

well within the realms of reason. Which is much more than most people will need to know, but for the sticklers out there, it does make a certain amount of mathematical sense.

Note that this movement rate applies to normal humanoid races; Stryders, larger creatures, and Runically-enhanced individuals can move at much faster rates.

While Maneuvering in battle can provide distinct advantages, it is difficult to stab a foe who is ten feet away—it is not without penalty. Moving five feet in a single action can be done easily, by moving any faster reduces a combatant's ability to defend himself. A character who moves ten feet in a single action suffers a -1 penalty for defense skills (including Dodge and Melee skills) for the rest of the round. A character who elects to move at a sprint for an action may cover twenty feet, but suffers -3 to defense skills for the rest of the round, including the turn in which he moves.

FATIGUE (OPTIONAL RULE)

With three seconds per round, there are thus twenty rounds per minute ($3 \times 20 = 60$). For each minute of uninterrupted combat, all participants suffer a +1 to the difficulty of all their actions. This is cumulative; for example, after sixty rounds of combat (three minutes), all active participants suffer a +3 penalty to their Difficulties, representing combat fatigue.

Such a penalty might seem unimportant and unlikely, but in the midst of a heavy, pitched combat where one side has fresh reinforcements just waiting to leap into the fray, being fatigued can mean the difference between life and death.

Anyone so winded can regain their wind and wits by simply taking a one-minute (sixty-round) *breather* break for every minute they've been engaged in combat. During this rest period, they can engage in no activity except moving at normal speed.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Many actions require no special resolution—simply declaring the action is enough. If, however, an action leads to a conflict (as in combat), then you need to resolve the situation. Conflict resolutions are used to handle situations that cannot be resolved through roleplaying or simple declaration of intent. Conflict represents the challenge, and resolution the way of overcoming that challenge. To put it simply, whenever there's doubt as to the success of a particular action, a conflict resolution must be made.

Prior to any situation involving multiple participants, Initiative should be checked, as explained above. Then each participant, in order, goes through the following process:

1. Determine Base Difficulty

All conflict resolutions in Rune Stryders start with a difficulty Number assigned to the situation at hand. In Combat situations, the difficulty is 10, and is opposed using the defender's Dodge skill. For other situations, an appropriate Barrier (if the target is another character) can be chosen, or a Difficulty based on the situation at hand can be applied.

Difficulty	Base Target Number for Success
Easy	7
Average	10
Hard	12
Challenging	14

Easy tasks are those at which just about anyone could succeed without trying hard at all, with limited repercussions if the attempt were to fail. *E.g.: Leaping from a second story window into a bale of hay, or tracking a heavily-loaded cart across a muddy field.*

Average tasks are the standard by which all others are measured, representing those things which can be overcome with relative ease, but which are not an automatic success. Failure to succeed at such a task often has negative consequences. *E.g. Leaping from a second story window onto hard ground, or tracking an opponent down a dirt road.*

Hard tasks are, as the name suggests, more difficult and dangerous than Average tasks, implying that an average, half-hearted attempt will probably fail, and/or result in severe consequences if failure occurs. *E.g. Leaping from a second story window to land on a moving cart, or trying to track someone at night without the benefit of a lantern.*

Challenging tasks are most likely to require the assistance of more than one character, or additional time and effort, in order to overcome. Failing to succeed at a Challenging task often has dire consequences. *E.g. Leaping from a fourth story window across a moat of broken glass to land on a moving horse, or tracking a snake through an overgrown swamp in the middle of a rainstorm.*

2. Modify Difficulty

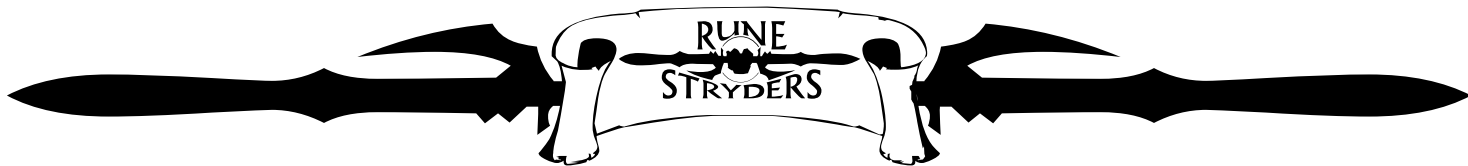
From the base difficulty number, you add or subtract the appropriate Attribute score plus any situational modifiers (penalties for weather conditions, etc.) A list of possible modifiers is provided later in this Book.

This final number, after modification, is called the *Target*.

3. Roll Dice

Once the Target is determined, roll zero or more 10-sided dice. If neither an Attribute nor a Skill is involved (as in the case of Barrier checks, described below) then dice are not involved at all. The comparison is between the Target and another number, success or failure based on that alone.

If an Attribute is involved, one ten-sided die is used. If a specific Skill is involved, then one or more additional dice are rolled, one per level of the character's skill, for a total of between two (level 1) and five (level 4) dice. Once the dice are rolled, the number of successes (results equal to or higher than the Target) is determined. If there is at least one success, then the attempt was at least partially successful. If there were no successes, the attempt was a total failure.



Step	Description
Base Difficulty	A number representing the initial complexity of the challenge at hand.
Target	Base Difficulty - Attribute $\pm$ Modifiers.
Roll	0 to 5 dice rolled, results compared to the Target.
Success	Result equal to or greater than the Target.
Failure	Result lower than the Target.

CATASTROPHIC FAILURE

Usually, a failure is just a complete lack of success, and the consequences are obvious—you alert the sentry, you miss your foe, or you fail to persuade the ambassador. Sometimes a failure has enormous consequences, however. At times, you fail so badly that the situation becomes worse than it was before you tried to change it—you knock over the boxes behind which you were hiding, and you are pinned under one as the sentry approaches; you strike your ally instead of your foe; or the ambassador is insulted and has you arrested.

Whenever you fail a roll and have more 1s showing than anything else, you have failed catastrophically. The gamemaster will determine the exact nature of the failure, but the consequences will usually include damaging yourself or your allies, destroying assets, or harming your reputation.



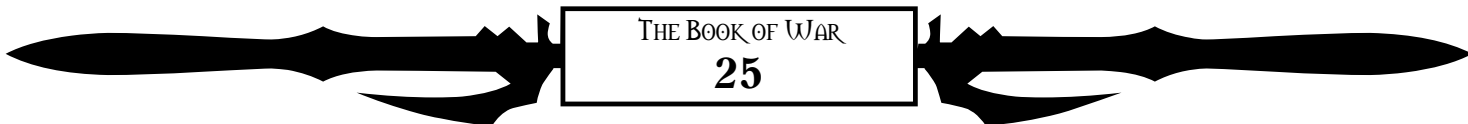
ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

Attribute checks are made in cases when you need to determine the outcome of an attempted action for which no specific Skill applies. Attribute checks can involve any Primary or Secondary Attribute.

Once the difficulty has been determined, the appropriate Attribute's score is subtracted from that difficulty. The player then rolls one die. If the result is a success, then the check has passed, and the character has escaped the consequences.

For example, Gorbar the Mercenary wishes to leap out of the way of a boulder that's crashing down the hill towards him. Difficulty is determined to be Average—10. His Agility is a 2, so his Target is an 8 (10-2). He rolls a 5, and fails the check, which means the boulder hits him.

Attribute	Type of Check
Strength	Attempt to lift a heavy stone.
Heart	Convince a crowd you are telling the truth.
Agility	Run between swinging blades.
Intellect	Perform complex calculations.
Body	Withstand a powerful physical attack.
Mind	Withstand a powerful mental attack.



SKILL CHECKS

Skill checks obviously involve a Skill, each corresponding to a specific Primary Attribute. The difficulty of the Skill check is reduced by that Attribute, and the Target is then compared to a roll of one or more dice. The number of dice rolled is equal to one plus the score of the applicable Skill score; a score of 4, for instance, indicates that 4 extra dice are rolled for checks involving that Attribute (for a total of 5), and a score of 0 (i.e., if the character lacks that skill altogether) indicates that no extra dice are rolled. Each result equal to or higher than the Target is a success, and each result below the Target is a failure.

As with single roll checks, multiple failures (i.e., lack of successes) are just that—failures. Nothing special comes of failing to achieve a task, aside from the obvious (being hit with a sword, or falling off a cliff). Success, however, can vary in degree, ranging from a minor success to a critical success, depending on the number of dice rolled. Thus, when multiple dice are rolled, successes are counted, not failures.

Successes	Result	Damage Multiplier (if applicable)
0	Failure	x0
1	minor success	x1
2	success	x2
3	major success	x3
4	outstanding success	x4
5	critical success	x5

The level of the success is thus obviously limited by the number of dice involved; if you can only roll two dice, you cannot get three successes. More skilled characters use more dice, and thus greatly increase the potential for tremendous successes. Characters with little skill can still achieve success, but can never reach the same level of success as those with more skill.

If the Skill roll involves damage (as in Combat rolls), the number of successes equals the damage multiplier (listed above), which is used to modify the damage caused by the

weapon being used. If no weapon is being used, then the damage caused is based on the character's Strength score, multiplied as indicated above.

OPPOSED SKILL CHECKS

In some cases, one character's success may depend on the success of another character opposing him. A good example of this is combat. Other examples of opposed checks are negotiations or chases.

For an opposed check, both parties roll checks based on their relevant skills. The difficulty for the checks is determined as normal, and successes are counted. The character with more successes subtracts his opponents successes to determine his final level of success.

For example, Handel is chasing a fleeing assassin. The assassin is dressed in loose black clothing, while Handel wears light metal armor. The gamemaster determines that because he is unencumbered, the assassins difficulty is 7, while Handels is 10. Both roll their running skill in an opposed check. Handel's Strength is 3, and the assassin has a strength of 2, giving Handel a target number of (10-3) 7 and the assassin a target of (7-2) 5. Handels Running is 2, and the assassin has a skill of 3. Handel rolls three dice, and the assassin rolls four. Handel gets one die equal to or higher than 7, and the assassin rolls three dice equal to or better than 5. The assassin has two more successes than Handel, and easily loses the lumbering warrior in the twisting city streets.

BARRIER CHECKS

Barrier checks do not involve an active die roll; instead, they are compared directly to a difficulty number, or used as a difficulty number themselves, as the case warrants. If the character's Barrier score is higher, the Barrier is surpassed and the character escapes consequences; if lower, the Barrier is not passed, and the character suffers the consequences. Dice are not added—success or failure is dependent on the score itself.

Barrier checks can involve any of the six Primary or Secondary Barriers.

Barriers can also be totally passive, and characters might never be aware of them until they fail.

For example, plague is sweeping the land, and the gamemaster determines that there is a difficulty of 10 applied to a chance of catching the Disease. This is a Health Barrier. Characters whose Health is 10 or higher will automatically pass the Barrier check, and remain healthy. Anyone whose Health falls below 10 (through injury, for example) will fail the Barrier, and contract the plague.

Barrier	Type of Check
Perception	Character may or may not notice something important.
Endurance	Character is in a strenuous situation, or needs to withstand damage.
Health	Character is confronted with damage, disease, poison or plague.
Soul	Character is confronted with spiritual assault or mental torment.

Outside of combat, it might seem somewhat confusing trying to determine when a situation calls for a Barrier Check, and when it calls for a regular Attribute or Skill check. The general rule of thumb is that Barrier Checks do not involve a specific skill, and do not involve a conscious action on the part of the character. They are automatic, do-or-die determinations made without active choice, subconscious and on the fly. They are the final barrier between an outside situation and a character's vital organs.

Barriers are sometimes encountered as a result of active Attribute or Skill checks.

For example, Johan is running cross-country to warn his friends. There are no particular obstacles in his path, so it's a feat of average difficulty 10. Since his Endurance Barrier is 10, he can keep running more-or-less indefinitely, unless something happens to reduce his Endurance or increase the difficulty of the situation (such as if it starts raining, or he encounters swampy terrain).



COMBAT CHECKS

Combat is really just a series of Attribute, Skill and Barrier checks, as described individually above. However, since most conflict resolutions in most gaming sessions will involve combat, it is worth reviewing the general flow of combat here so as to more clearly lay out what typical combat looks like.

The following assumes that Initiative has been determined (as explained above). Each character then proceeds, in turn, following this process for each attack they wish to make:

1. Attacker Makes a Combat Skill Check

Using the appropriate skill (see the Book of Roles), the attacker makes an Opposed Skill check to attack a single opponent within range. The defender opposes the roll with a Dodge Skill Check. The target for both the attacker and defender is 10. The attacker subtracts his Strength or Agility, based on his combat skill, and the defender subtracts his Agility. Both then add or subtract any appropriate modifiers.

For Example, Foirey will attack his opponent with a dagger (Light, Short Weapon Combat Skill level 4). He has an Agility of 2. His opponent has an Agility of 3 and a Dodge of 1. Foirey rolls five 10-sided dice (1 minimum, plus 1 per skill level). Any result of 7, 8, 9 or 10 on the dice is a success. The defender rolls two dice, and any result of 8, 9, or 10 is a success. If Foirey gets at least one more success than his opponent, the attack is at least partially successful.

2. Determine Incoming Damage

If the attack is successful in any way, the attacker takes the total of his character's Strength and his weapon's Strength, and multiplies that number by the number of successes showing. The result is called *incoming damage*.

For example, Foirey's player rolls two 10's and one 8, resulting in 3 successes. His opponent rolls one 9, allowing him one success. Foirey succeeds with two successes. Foirey's Strength is 2, and his dagger has a Strength of 2 as well, so he adds 2 and 2 (2+2=4) and multiplies this by the number of successes showing (4x2=8), resulting in 8 points of incoming damage.

3. Defender Faces an Endurance Barrier

The defender's Endurance Barrier is compared to the incoming damage. If the Barrier score is 2 or higher, the defender suffers only one point of direct damage regardless of the number of successes rolled. If the incoming damage is higher than the Endurance barrier, then the defender subtracts his Endurance Barrier score from the incoming Damage. The remainder is dealt to him as direct damage.

4. Defender Subtracts Damage from Health

The defender subtracts the amount of direct damage received from his current Health score. Direct damage taken to Health is painful, but not life-threatening, generally consisting of scratches, cuts, sprains and bruises which will heal on their own, given time and a modicum of care. However, if Health is reduced to zero or below from an attack, then the character has begun to suffer more grievous bodily harm.

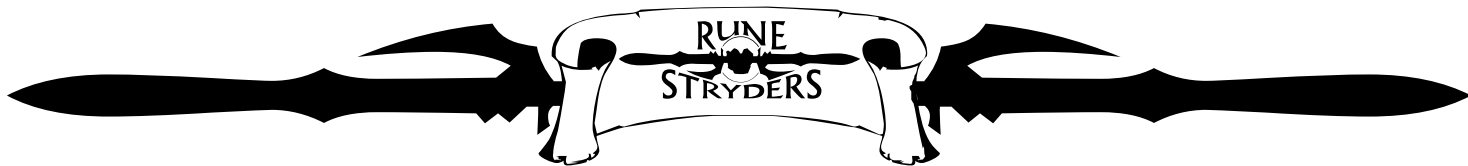
Any successive direct damage begins to directly affect the character's Body, and the character's Body score is reduced by the amount of direct damage. As the Body score goes down, the character begins to suffer from his wounds, rolling one less die for any Skill check for every point of Body he loses. A character can roll one die for Skill checks no matter how wounded, as long as he is still conscious.

The same rules apply to Mind and Soul damage. A character loses one die from every roll for every point of direct damage he takes to the Mind.

For example, Foirey suffers a devastating blow of 11 points of direct damage. His Health of 10 is reduced to 0 and he loses one point of Body. Foirey will lose 1 die from any Skill check until he can heal this point of damage.

On the following attack, Foirey's opponent deals out another 3 points of direct damage. Foirey has no more Health to act as a buffer, and loses another three Body. He now loses 4 dice on every Skill check, including Dodging, and is very near to passing out or dying. Foirey had better think about retreating while he still can.

Class	Weapon	Strength	Toughness	Body	Minimum	Missile Range (Feet)			
						Short	Long	Extreme	Maximum
H Axe	Axe	3	29	15	-	-	-	-	-
	Long Axe	4	34	20	-	-	-	-	-
	Throwing axe	2	24	5	5	10	20	40	60
	War Axe	5	44	30	-	-	-	-	-
H Blade	Back Sword	4	39	35	-	-	-	-	-
	Great Sword	5	44	30	-	-	-	-	-
	Sword	3	34	25	-	-	-	-	-
	War Sword	4	39	35	-	-	-	-	-
	Zokili Sheiwin	5	24	25	-	-	-	-	-
H Mace	Club	2	24	10	-	-	-	-	-
	Mace	3	29	20	-	-	-	-	-
	Maul	4	39	25	-	-	-	-	-
	War Club	5	39	30	-	-	-	-	-
H Pick	Fork	2	24	20	-	-	-	-	-
	Hammer	3	34	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Pick	3	29	15	-	-	-	-	-
	War Pick	4	34	30	-	-	-	-	-
H Spear	Spear	3	29	15	5	20	40	80	120
	Long Spear	3	24	20	-	-	-	-	-
	Sivatagi War Pike	5	44	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Throwing Spear	2	19	10	5	30	60	120	180
	War Spear	5	39	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Zokili Boom Spear	3	14	5	5	25	50	100	150
L Bow	Cross Bow	4	N/A	10	0	80	160	320	480
	Blowgun	1	N/A	0	0	10	20	40	80
	Hunting Bow	2	N/A	5	5	70	140	280	420
	War Bow	3	N/A	10	0	40	80	160	240
L Entangle	Bolas	1	24	5	0	10	20	40	60
	Garrotte	2	24	5	-	-	-	-	-
	Net	1	N/A	15	5	10	20	40	60
	Whip	1	N/A	5	-	-	-	-	-
L Blade	Dagger	2	24	10	5	10	20	40	60
	Divaran Rapier	3	29	15	-	-	-	-	-
	Knife	1	19	5	5	10	20	40	60
	Quick Sword	3	34	15	-	-	-	-	-
	Short Sword	3	34	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Zokili Sheitin	4	14	15	-	-	-	-	-
L Staff	Divaran Enan	3	34	30	-	-	-	-	-
	Long Staff	4	34	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Short Staff	2	24	20	-	-	-	-	-
	Staff	3	29	30	-	-	-	-	-
L Stone	Rocks & Stones	1	N/A	10	0	5	10	20	30
	Rune Thrower	4	29	20	0	30	60	120	180
	Sling	2	N/A	5	5	50	100	200	300
	Sling Shot	3	N/A	5	0	25	50	100	150



5. Determine the Results of the Combat Round

Lethal Damage

If Body (or Mind, for mental attacks; see the Book of Runes) is reduced to zero or below at any point, the character dies and can only be raised using magical means (again, see the Book of Runes).

Non-Lethal Damage

Not every combatant who falls is dead. Many times, a character's wounds will be enough to rob him of his consciousness without killing him outright. Any time a character takes more than his Health in direct damage, he must succeed at a Body check with a difficulty of 12 or fall unconscious. Each successive point of direct damage carries the same check, as the character wavers from the damage he has taken. As mentioned earlier, Body damage ability modifiers reduce the Body for the purposes of this check.

In the previous example, Foirey received 11 points of damage in one blow. His Health is reduced to 0 and he takes one point of Body damage. He must now succeed at a Body check with a target of 12. He has a Body score of 6, reduced to 5 by the damage he has received. His target is (12-5) 7. He rolls an 8, and manages to stay on his feet long enough to run away.

We have mentioned both incoming and direct damage in the previous discussion on damage, but not entirely defined them. To be perfectly clear, incoming damage is damage caused before armor and endurance are taken into consideration. Direct damage is subtracted directly from Health, Soul, Body or Mind as appropriate.

WEAPONS AND DAMAGE

Weapons work by adding to the damage that you cause (effectively increasing your Strength for the purposes of a particular attack). Without a weapon, the damage you do is equal to your Strength score times the number of Successes rolled. With a weapon, the damage done is equal to your Strength score, plus the weapon's damage value, times the number of Successes rolled.

For example. Grblg the Draslander Hero is attacking a Divaran Stryder with a large spiked club. His Strength score is 2, and the spiked club's Strength is also a 2. Thus, his base damage is a 4. If he gets one success on his roll, he multiplies 4 by 1 and gets 4. If he gets two successes, he multiplies 4 by 2 and gets 8 points of incoming damage. If he were not using the club, he would do only half as much incoming damage.

All weapons have Strength of at least 1, representing the fact that they are designed to cause additional pain and trauma to others. A weapon's Strength increases accordingly based on a number of criteria, including material, size, quality and so on. All the weapons listed in the Book of the World already have their Strength determined.

RANGED WEAPONS

In addition to Strength, all weapons have five Range Categories listed, expressed in terms of feet (which can be translated to inches on a tactical map at a rate of five (5) feet per inch): **Minimum**, **Short**, **Long**, **Extreme**, and **Maximum**.

Melee weapons typically have a range of Ø in all five categories, which indicates that they are not meant for use as ranged weapons, and can only be used to attack adjacent opponents. Missile weapons sometimes have a Ø range listed for the minimum category, and higher numbers for the remainder, but in some cases they might have a higher number listed for the first category, indicating a minimum range. Attacks on enemies inside that range are not possible. Some long melee weapons might also have this limitation, as in the case of some longer polearms and spears.

Attacks at various ranges may affect the difficulty.

Modifier	Range
-	Minimum Range
-	Short Range
+1	Long Range
+2	Extreme Range
+3	Maximum Range

For example, a bow has a range of 5/70/140/280/420. It can be used at a Short Range of 70 feet away with no penalty. Long Range is between 71 and 140 feet, and carries a +1 difficulty. Extreme Range is from 141 to 280 feet with a +2 difficulty, while Maximum Range is between 281 and 420, carrying a +3 difficulty. In addition, the bow has a minimum range of 5 feet, which means that it cannot be used against opponents within 5 feet (or farther than 420 feet).

ARMOR AND DEFENSE

Armor works by increasing your Endurance Barrier. Without armor, the sole means of protection from damage is your own body's Endurance, with any damage that gets through this barrier affecting your Health. Thus, increasing your Endurance Barrier by adding armor is generally a good idea for those who tend to put themselves in the line of fire on a regular basis.

For example, Grblg the Draslander Hero has just attacked a Divaran Stryder with a large spiked club. His Base Damage is a 4, and with two successes he multiplies 4 by 2 and does 8 Damage. The Stryder, however, is heavily armored, with a functional Endurance of 22. Grblg's 8 Damage is compared to the Stryder's Endurance Barrier of 22. Since 22 is much higher than 8, the Stryder passes the Endurance Barrier check, and suffers only the one point of Health damage caused by a successful attack. Grblg should probably think about fleeing, since it's unlikely that he'll be able to hurt the Stryder at all.

Armor does tend to weigh you down, sometimes resulting in a decreased Agility. Light armor confers a -1 Agility modifier, Medium Armor means a -2, and Heavy Armor means a -3. Using a shield applies an additional -1 to your Agility. Armor skill offsets this penalty—each level of Armor skill reduces the Agility penalty by 1.

For example, Handel the bodyguard has an Agility of 3. He wears Medium armor and carries a shield. His total penalty to Agility is -3, which reduces his functional Agility to 0. However, he also has Armor skill of 3, which offsets all Agility penalties, since he knows how to wear and maneuver in armor.

Class	Armor	Endurance	Toughness	Body
Base	Boilerplate	3	24	20
	Buff Coat	2	19	10
	Jack	1	14	5
	Rawhide	3	24	25
Mail	Chain, Coat	6	34	25
	Chain, Jacket	4	34	25
	Scale	5	24	20
	Ring Armor	4	29	15
	Veile	8	34	30
Plate	Banded Mail	8	34	25
	Brigandine	7	29	20
	Lamellar	6	29	20
	Plated Mail	10	39	30
Shield	Skirmish Shield	4	0	15
	Target Shield	2	0	5
	Tear Shield	8	0	25
	War Shield	10	0	30

All armor has an Endurance of at least 1, representing the fact that it is designed to resist trauma. Endurance increases accordingly based on a number of criteria, including material and quality. All armor in the Book of the World already has its Endurance determined.

ARMOR AND WEAPON TOUGHNESS (OPTIONAL RULE)

Like the body itself, armor and weapons can only take so much punishment before they are broken and useless. For this reason, every weapon and every piece of armor has a Toughness score as well as a Body score. For every attack that exceeds the weapon or armor's Toughness score (i.e., if the weapon causes it, or the armor receives it), the item must make a Body check. If the item succeeds, then it takes no extra damage; if the item fails the check, its Body score is reduced by 1 permanently. Any item reduced to 0 Body is broken and useless. Damaged items can be repaired, provided they are repaired before reaching 0.



SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Parry

A skilled swordsman can deflect blows without having to dodge out of the way. A combatant may oppose an attack roll with his weapon skill, rather than his dodge. This does not render the dodge skill redundant—a character cannot parry a falling tree or smashing wall.

Not all attacks may be parried. Stryder blows, for instance, will be difficult to deflect. If the base damage of an attack (weapon strength plus attacker strength) is higher than the base damage of the defender by more than 7, the blow cannot be deflected, and the combatant must dodge the attack.

Targeted Attacks

For most attacks, hit location is simulated by damage. An extraordinarily damaging strike may hit anywhere—a hit to the belly crushes a vital organ, or a blow to the arm severs an artery. Conversely, a low damage attack may hit tender locations, and skip off—a glancing blow to the head, or a shallow blow to the upper chest.

For some attacks, however, an attacker may want to target a specific location. A combatant may be holding a hostage, or wearing thick armor everywhere but on his head. In this case, the attacker may declare a specific target location and then roll a standard attack. Hitting a specific location requires a greater number of successes.

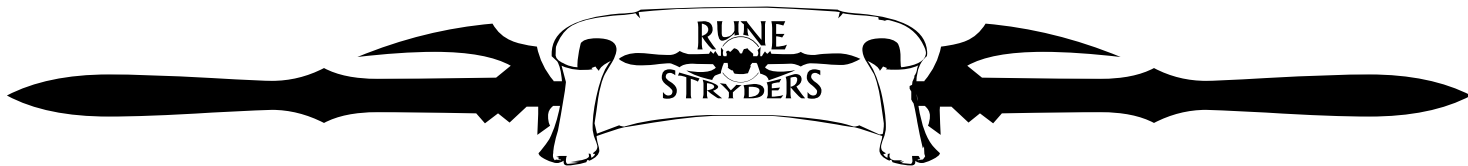
Location	Success Required
Chest	2
Head	3
Arm or Leg	3
Hand or Foot	4
Eye or Heart	5

Should a player announce a specific hit location and not roll the number of successes, one of two things has happened. If the player rolled no successes, or only one success, the attack missed entirely. However, if the player rolled at least two successes, the attacker still hit his target, just not where he wanted. Damage is calculated normally.

Targeting a specific location does not incur more damage beyond that caused by the multiple successes. If a specific location is not announced before the attack is made, the gamemaster may assign a hit location however he or she wants to interpret the damage incurred.

Full Defensive

Sheer numbers can overwhelm even a skilled fighter, and there are times when a combatant's only concern is surviving another round. A character can increase his Dodge or relevant combat skill by 2 by going full defensive. A character who wants to be considered full defensive, and thus enjoy the additional 2 dice of defense, must declare his intention at the beginning of the round. Once a character takes an action, he cannot be considered to be fully defensive. The character



forfeits all actions for the round. Note that if the character rolled a catastrophic failure for Initiative, he cannot go full defensive, as he has no actions to forfeit.

Multiple Weapons

Unless the character is using a specific combat style that allows for two weapons, it is assumed that the character is using only a single weapon. Splitting attacks between two weapons means a +1 difficulty modifier for the first weapon, and a +3 modifier for the second and successive attacks.

Multiple Attackers

Normal combat assumes that the same opponent is continuously attacking a character until one combatant falls. However, in some cases, a character may want to defend against more than one attacker in a round. A combatant may only use his full defensive roll against one attacker per action. If multiple combatants perform attacks against a character in one round, he must decide how he wishes to split his Dodge or Parry dice. Each point of defense skill is assigned to one opponent, and if he has no more dice to assign, he gets only one die to defend, as if he were unskilled.

For example, Yandro the Zokili Elyte is very adept with a sword, with an Agility of 4 and Weapon Skill of 4. He is attacked by three thugs, who each attack him on the same action. Yandro elects to go full defensive, which allows him another 2 dice with which to defend. He decides to assign 2 dice against each opponent. He will oppose their attack rolls with 3 dice each—2 from his skill and defensive bonus, and 1 free.

COMBAT STYLES

Combat styles can spice up the flow of combat by allowing players to perform more specific and exciting maneuvers in an attempt to achieve a more specific goal. For the most part, these Styles are used like any other Weapon-based Skill (and, indeed, some of them require a weapon). Passive effects require no special roll or modifier. Active special effects require a normal combat roll, using the Combat Style skill with a difficulty modifier of +2. All the descriptions below assume a successful roll.

Blind

The opponent is temporarily blinded, and suffers a difficulty of +4 to all attacks for a number of rounds equal to the roll of one die. On a Critical Success, the opponent suffers permanent blindness—roll one die and consult table below.

Roll	Result
1-9	Character loses one eye.
10	Character loses both eyes.

Blind Fighting (Passive)

The character suffers no penalties to combat-related activities, regardless of visibility. The character may still be blinded (see Blind), however, and if so, suffers accordingly, due to pain.

Catch Missile

The character catches a missile weapon that has technically struck him, preventing it from inflicting damage. Failure means double damage is taken. A critical success indicates that the character may use the weapon against his opponent in the same round by spending an attack.

Defensive Focus (Passive)

The character may decrease his difficulty for a Defense Roll by up to 4 points for one full round, but all attacks by that character in that round are increased by the same degree of difficulty. This maneuver must be announced at the beginning of a round, and the modifiers are in effect for the entire round.

Disarm

The opponent loses his weapon. If wielding two weapons, he loses one at random. A critical success indicates that the attacker has the option of catching the disarmed weapon, provided he has one hand free.

Dual-wield (Passive)

The character can wield two weapons without penalty, although he must attack the same opponent with both weapons. A critical success indicates that if both weapons hit in the same round, the opponent is stunned (see Stun).

Feint

The character tricks an opponent into defending against a false attack. The difficulty of the next attack against the target is reduced by 3. A critical success indicates that the character's feint was so good that his next attack against the target cannot be defended (the target does not make a Defense roll to counter the character's attack roll).

Grapple

The opponent is grappled and may do nothing but attempt to break free, rolling against the character's strength. A critical success indicates that the opponent's throat is grappled, and the attacker automatically deals 1 point of direct damage every round in which he maintains the grapple.

Kick

The character uses his foot and/or knee as a weapon, doing double the normal Strength damage. A critical success indicates that the opponent is also knocked to the ground (see Trip).

Offensive Focus (Passive)

The character may modify his attack rolls for one full round by up to -4 difficulty, but increases the difficulty for his defense skill checks for that round by the same amount. This maneuver must be announced at the beginning of a round, and the modifiers are in effect for the entire round.

Pierce

The character finds the chink in his opponent's armor. For the purposes of this attack, armor is ignored (i.e., not added to the defender's Endurance Barrier). A critical success indicates that double the normal damage is done.

Presence of Mind (Passive)

The character can never be stunned or surprised during any round in which he has attacked an opponent or defended against an attack from one.

Prone Fighting (Passive)

This counteracts all penalties for fighting while prone, for any reason whatsoever (see Trip).

Stun

The opponent is dazed and unable to see or act clearly. All actions are at +3 difficulty for a number of rounds equal to the damage done. A critical success indicates that the opponent is also knocked to the ground (see Trip).

Tackle

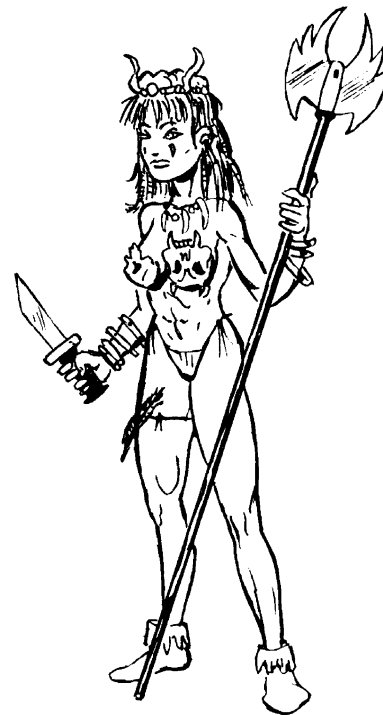
The opponent is effectively Tripped and Grappled (see respective maneuvers), with the attacker also prone on top of the opponent. A critical success indicates that the opponent is also Stunned (see Stun).

Trip

The opponent falls prone. Unless he has Prone Fighting, all actions are at +2 difficulty. Standing takes one action. A critical success indicates that the opponent is also Stunned (see Stun).

Whirlwind

The attacker can strike as many opponents as successes on the roll, each attack requiring a new, separate combat roll. A critical success indicates that the attacker can use the original roll as his attack on all targets if desired.



Maneuver	Divaran Kickwrestling	Divaran Dueling	Myndwar Stonefist	Mydnar Doublestrike	Zokili Nervestrike	Zokili Risingsun
Blind		✓	✓		✓	
Blindfighting						✓
Catch Missile					✓	
Defensive Focus					✓	
Disarm		✓		✓	✓	
Duel-wield		✓		✓		✓
Feint		✓	✓	✓		✓
Grapple	✓					
Kick	✓					
Offensive Focus	✓		✓	✓		
Parry		✓		✓		✓
Pierce		✓				✓
Presence of Mind	✓				✓	
Prone Fighting			✓			
Stun			✓		✓	✓
Tackle	✓					
Trip	✓		✓			
Whirlwind				✓		

COMBAT MANEUVERS BY STYLE

Maneuver	Kantarin Skytackle	Kantarin Deathdancing	Sivatagi Bladefist	Sivatagi Mounted Combat	Draslander Kneebiting	Draslander Disarmament
Blind			✓		✓	✓
Blindfighting			✓	✓		
Catch Missile			✓			✓
Defensive Focus		✓	✓			
Disarm	✓			✓		✓
Duel-wield						
Feint	✓				✓	
Grapple	✓	✓				
Kick	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Offensive Focus						
Parry						
Pierce				✓		
Presence of Mind			✓			
Prone Fighting		✓	✓			
Stun	✓				✓	✓
Tackle	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Trip					✓	
Whirlwind		✓		✓		

MODIFIERS

In general, most Skill, Attribute and Barrier checks (including those which take place in Combat) are done without the application of any special situational modifiers. However, in certain cases one side or another will certainly have a tactical advantage of one sort or another, and in these cases it is more than appropriate to apply modifiers as deemed appropriate.

Keep in mind that a **penalty** means you'll be **adding** to the difficulty, and a **bonus** means you'll be **subtracting** from the difficulty. If a situation has a difficulty of 10, and situational modifiers are making things harder, the number has to get higher (15, for example), making it more difficult for the player to roll the target number on his dice. If a situation has a difficulty of 10 and things are easier than usual, subtracting from the difficulty (to bring it down to 5, for example) will thus make it easier for the player to roll that target number on his dice.

Facing

In most situations, it is assumed that combatants will be able to wheel about and turn easily within combat situations, without giving any special advantage to their opponents. In situations where one is surrounded or surprised, however, an enemy can certainly take advantage of the opportunity. When facing opponents head-on, from the front, there is no modifier to difficulty. When facing opponents from the side or flanks, the attacker has his difficulty reduced by 1. When attacking from the rear, the attacker's difficulty is reduced by 3.

Home Turf

When you are not fighting on your home turf (chosen during creation, or listed with a chosen Role), there's no particular penalty or benefit. Since this is most often the case, it is the default situation. However, when you are on your Home Turf, you get a sort of *home field advantage*, and can reduce the difficulty of any applicable Skill rolls by 1. Fighting on home turf would mean a -1 difficulty for Combat checks, and tracking on home turf would mean a -1 difficulty for attempts to track

an opponent, but reading Runes or playing a musical instrument on home turf would not benefit, since these Skills do not rely on climate or geography in any real way. This Home Turf advantage never applies to Barrier or Attribute checks, only Skill checks.

Light and Darkness

In general, light and darkness are ignored for the purposes of combat and other skill checks, because the same lighting conditions apply for both attackers and defenders, and all are thus equally affected (with the effects essentially canceling one another out). However, in situations where light or darkness is affecting only one side (*e.g., bright sunlight shining in the eyes of the defenders, attackers firing arrows from within deep shadows*), then anywhere from a +1 to a +4 difficulty can be applied to the side that's inconvenienced. Typical penalty modifiers are +1 for generally mild effects (mild glare, slight shadow), up to +4 for serious incapacitation (blinding light, total darkness).

Morale

Should a situation call for a Willpower check (hopelessly outnumbered, leaders all killed, etc.), a combatant's attitude towards the situation will almost certainly change. A morale check is a Willpower check with a target of 10, modified as the gamemaster sees fit, depending on the apparent hopelessness of the situation. If the morale check succeeds, the combatant gets a -1 to his Difficulties for the duration of the combat due to a boost of courage. Critical success grants the combatant a bonus of -2. Failure indicates that the combatant is penalized +1 to all difficulties due to fear. Critical failure results in sheer panic, with a +2 penalty to all difficulties.

Movement

As indicated earlier, movement beyond a rate of five feet per second within combat situations should result in increased difficulty with certain activities (such as dodging).

Numerical Advantage

Any time one side outnumbers another by a ratio of 2:1 or greater, the Difficulties for the purposes of Skill checks made

by those characters with the numerical advantage are reduced by 1 point. This is increased by 1 point per additional unit of numerical superiority; i.e., 3:1 advantage receives -2 difficulty, 4:1 advantage receives -3 difficulty. There is no effective limit to this reduction; should someone be outnumbered 10:1, they should probably hope they have drafted a Last Will and Testament beforehand.

Armor

Wearing armor increases endurance against physical damage, but it tends to limit range of motion. Wielding a shield can also be a clumsy affair to one who is unskilled in the use of such an item.

Wielding a shield incurs a +1 difficulty penalty on every check. Wearing Base armor incurs a +1 penalty as well, and this effect is cumulative. Wearing Mail armor incurs a +2 difficulty penalty on every check, and Plate armor incurs a +3 difficulty penalty. The Armor skill is used to offset these penalties. Each level of the Armor skill reduces the penalty by 1, to a minimum of 0. A character with an Armor skill of 4 can wear plate armor and carry a shield with no penalty.

Weather Conditions

In general, weather conditions are assumed to be clear, but this need not always be the case.

In the event that you wish to determine whether or not some inclement weather is on its way, roll two dice and add them together. Consult the following chart and apply the appropriate difficulty modifier to all rolls.

Roll	Weather	Modifier
2-11	Clear weather	0
12-14	Light Precipitation	+1
15	Moderate Precipitation	+2
16	Heavy Precipitation	+3
17	Torrential Downpour	+4
18	Heavy Fog	+5
19	Windstorm	+10
20	Tornado or Hurricane	+15 or more





COMBAT EXAMPLE

What follows is a detailed account of a small skirmish. For the purposes of this example, we will assume that neither weapon is weak enough to be broken, and thus ignore the rules for weapon endurance. The example uses two Runes,

which can be explored further in the Book of Runes. For this demonstration, we will use the following two combatants: *Rolf* and *Dimitri*.

ROLF, MYNDWAR WARRIOR

4	3	3	3	9
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	6	20	10	19
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Heavy Weapon Combat [Axe] 3
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Agility-Based Combat Style [Myndwar Doublestrike] 2
 General Combat [Dodge] 3
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2

Weapon: Axe (strength 2), Knife (strength 1)
 Armor: Rawhide (endurance 3)

DMITRI, DIVARAN MAGE

2	3	3	5	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	8	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 3
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Language [Runelore] 3
 Willpower 2

Weapon: Quick Sword (strength 3)
 Armor: Buff Coat (endurance 2)
 Runes: Ull-eq (Fire attack), Fas-ej (agility use)

Round One

At the beginning of the first round, both combatants roll Initiative. Rolf rolls 3 dice (Initiative skill of 2 + 1 as standard). His target is 7 (10 standard minus his agility of 3). He rolls 5, 6, 0—one success, which translates to two actions. Dmitri rolls 4 dice (3 Initiative skill + 1). His target is also 7, and he rolls 3, 7, 7, and 9—three successes, giving him four actions.

Dmitri acts first, because he rolled more successes on the Initiative check. He decides to take advantage of his improved initiative to cast *Fas-ej* on himself, to increase his agility. The Rune will not take effect until the second action, but it will provide him with a considerable edge once it occurs.

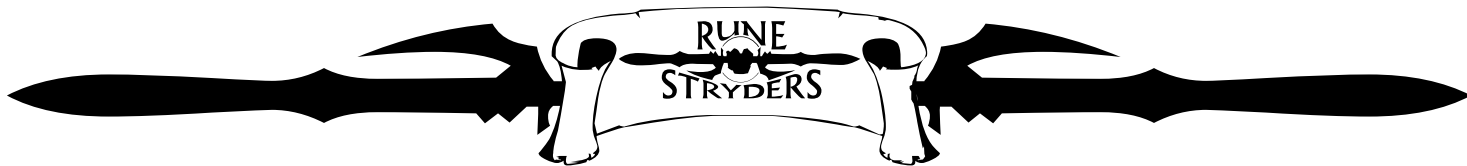
On the second action, Dmitri releases the Rune. Rolf still cannot act. Dmitri's target is 2 (7 base, minus 5 intellect). He rolls 4 dice (3 Runelore skill + 1) and gets three successes. His agility is increased to 6 for the next three minutes, which should be more than long enough for the combat.

After Dmitri has taken his first two actions, both combatants may act, and their actions are simultaneous. Dmitri elects to stab Rolf, and Rolf will attack with both his weapons.

Dmitri rolls his Light Blade skill, and Rolf rolls his Axe skill to defend. Dmitri's target is 4 (10 minus his modified agility of 6). He rolls 3 dice (Light Blade skill of 2 + 1) and achieves three successes. Rolf rolls 4 dice to defend (Axe skill of 3 + 1). His target is 6 (10 minus strength of 4). He gets only one success. Dmitri's attack succeeds with two successes.

Because he is using both his weapons, Rolf rolls his Myndwar Doublestrike skill once for each weapon. He rolls 3 dice with a target of 7 (10 minus agility of 3) for each weapon. He achieves three successes with his knife and one with his axe. Dmitri rolls his dodge skill (3 dice) with a target of 7, rolling against each attack separately. He gets one success against the knife and one against the axe. The axe damage is successfully dodged, but Dmitri takes two successes of damage from the knife.

Dmitri now assesses the damage he has caused. His strength is 2 and his weapon strength is 3, so his base damage is 5. He rolled two successes, so he does a total of 10 incoming damage. This 10 incoming damage is compared to Rolf's endurance of 13 (10 endurance + 3 armor). Rolf's endurance is higher, so he takes only 1 point of direct damage for the



successful attack. He subtracts 1 from his Health, basically shrugging off the blow.

Rolf has also hit Dmitri. He adds his strength of 4 to the knife's strength of 1, resulting in a base damage of 5. He multiplies his base damage by his two successes for 10 incoming damage, then compares that to Dmitri's endurance of 10 (8 natural plus 2 for his armor). The armor absorbs all but 1 point of direct damage, which Dmitri marks off his health.

For the final action in the round, Dmitri chooses to strike Rolf again with his sword. Rolf decides to use his disarm maneuver. Dmitri rolls his attack again—3 dice with a target of 4. He again rolls three successes. Rolf again parries with his axe, but is remarkably unlucky and gets no successes. Dmitri hits with three successes.

Rolf rolls his Myndwar Doublestrike to disarm. This is 3 dice with a target of 7, and he gets two successes. Dmitri rolls his dodge to oppose the attack, but gets only one success. His weapon spins out of his hand.

Dmitri assesses damage. He rolled three successes, which is multiplied by 5 base damage (15) and compared to Rolf's endurance of 13. Rolf takes 2 more points of Health damage, but he is still not hampered.



Round Two

Both combatants roll initiative again. Rolf gets two successes for three actions, and Dmitri scores three successes, granting him four actions. For his first action, Dmitri casts *Ull-eq*, an offensive Rune intended to burn Rolf to death. The Rune will take two actions to complete.

On their next actions, Dmitri will release his *Ull-eq* Rune and Rolf will attack again with both weapons. Rolf rolls an unopposed attack, because Dmitri cannot defend himself while casting a Rune. Rolf gets one success with the axe and two with the knife.

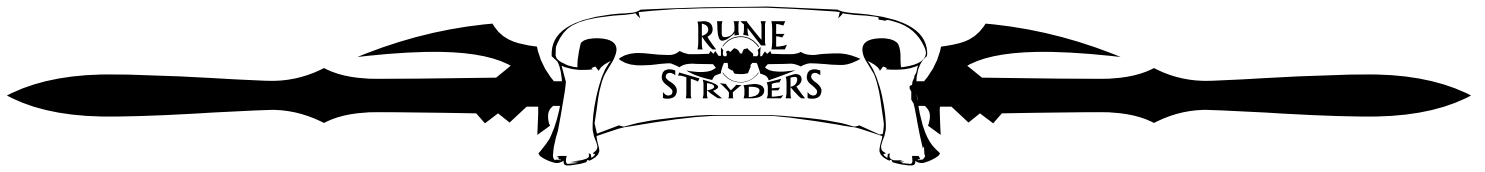
Dmitri casts his Rune. He rolls his Runelore skill (4 dice) with a target of 5 (10 minus his intellect of 5). He rolls three successes. Rolf opposes the roll with a Willpower check. Rolf rolls 3 dice with a target of 7 (10 minus his heart of 3). He rolls one success.

Rolf applies damage. The axe has a base damage of 6, and with one success, does not pierce Dmitri's armor. The knife, with two successes, also fails to pierce Dmitri's armor. Dmitri loses 2 Health from the hits, but no more.

Dmitri now adds up the damage caused by his *Ull-eq* Rune. The Rune is a strength 4 magical attack, which ignores armor. The base damage is 9 (4 for the Rune, plus Dmitri's 5 intellect). This is multiplied by Dmitri's two successes for a total of 18 incoming damage. That beats Rolf's endurance of 13, and causes Rolf another 5 points of direct Health damage. In addition, Rolf is on fire and will take another 4 damage next round. Rolf has now taken 8 points of direct damage, and Dmitri has lost 3.

On the third action, Dmitri tries to dodge to the side and retrieve his weapon. Rolf attacks again with both weapons. He rolls three successes on each weapon, and Dmitri's dodge roll fails completely. Dmitri recovers his weapon, but he takes 13 points of direct damage, leaving him with only a Health of 2.





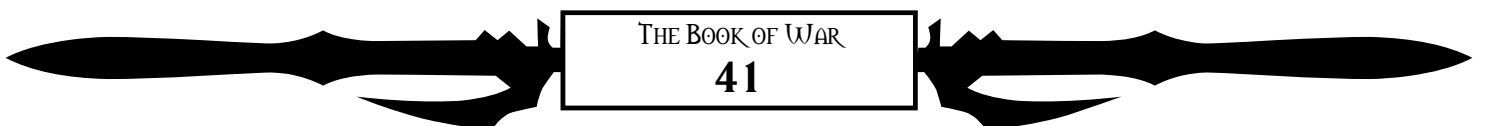
Round Three

Both combatants roll initiative again. This time Rolf rolls two successes, for three total actions. Dmitri fails his roll, and receives only one action this round.

Rolf loses 4 health at the beginning of the round due to the residual flame of the *Ull-eq* Rune. His health is now at 5.

Rolf uses his first action to swing at Dmitri. He abandons his second weapon and concentrates on hitting Dmitri with his axe. He rolls 4 dice (3 axe skill plus 1) with a target of 6 (10 minus 4 strength). He rolls very well, and gets three successes. Dmitri rolls his dodge and gets no successes.

Rolf calculates his damage. His base damage is 6, which is multiplied by 3 successes for 18 damage. Dmitri takes 8 more points of direct damage, reducing his Health to 0, and his Body to 4. Dmitri surrenders, wavering on the edge of consciousness.



RUINE

SQUELCH

Three shadows made their way through the sewer, deftly avoiding every single dry spot along the way, somehow managing to coat themselves head to toe in the muck until they were nigh indistinguishable from their environment. The noises they made as they moved might easily have been mistaken for those made by small rodents, or, upon closer investigation, small children, the sort of babble-speak that twins might concoct in idle hours.

“Yaw inant.”

“Anot”

“Ahsaw. Yadid juswat wetol yanot tado.”

“Shadup. Bochu.”

The third, the tallest, ended the argument with its interjection. As its utterance resounded through the dank sewer, mingling with the drips and drops from above, one listening more closely might have discerned, in the echo, the fact that this was not mere gibberish, but the Divaros tongue, perverted and twisted. Not the squeaks and growls of an ignorant predator, but an argument between two cohorts about who was at fault for some recent transgression.

All too human, in other words.

Alas, the only other ears to hear the chatter were not nearly old enough to appreciate the similarity, for they belonged to the youngster strapped in a bundle to the back of the tallest Draslander. “Tallest” being relative, of course, for even he, one of the largest of his kind, was still shorter than most Divaros children.

Fortunately, this had its advantages in the present circumstances, for all three of the Dras had been navigating their way through progressively smaller and tighter areas of the sewer system, through areas all but impassible to larger folk.

Unfortunately, it had also gotten them completely lost.

“Weda bindere bynow ifya hajust listent.”

“Eyetol jutoo tashu tup, yagid?”

“...lp...”

“Ifya donsh tupi gonta haf...”

“Shadup. Lissen.”

The leader stopped, holding out his flaking fingers in front of the other’s face to emphasize the point. All three stopped their squirming, holding deathly still as only a Dras could, the only sound the gentle breathing of their youngling cargo and the drip of water from their shins.

“Idun hearnuttin.”

“Shhhh.”

“Help...”

The call came again, clearly humanoid, in what sounded like the Divaros dialect. Faint, distant. Three pairs of keen Draslander ears honed in on the sound, pinpointing the source. No words were necessary, each as sure as the other two that he knew exactly where the voice was coming from. However, agreeing on how to react to this shared knowledge was a different matter entirely.

“Weesha go. Runnaway.”

“No, gosee whotis.”

“Yahgosee, ankillim.”





The argument took some time, the Draslander philosophy that life was not a series of journeys, but a series of locations. One was always exactly where one was supposed to be, and thus why should there be any hurry to leave? In this case, the argument was over whether or not the place to be was here, near the voice, or elsewhere. Each having its merits, all being related to the fact that these Dras knew very well they were being hunted down even now. To run, investigate, or eliminate a possible enemy?

In the end, it came down not to who had the most convincing argument, but who had the largest club in their hand. This happened to be the one carrying the child, and so it was that the trio found themselves altering their previous course to investigate the noise, two with broken noses.

The path (if it could be called a path, being merely yet another series of filth-clogged sewers) led them into larger and larger chambers, not quite back along the same route they'd been taking. Ten minutes and twelve arguments later, they found themselves outside a chamber. From within they could hear the faint sound of breathing, the splash of a shifting body struggling to find comfort where none could be found.

"Esindere."

"Oklesgosee."

Without another word, the smallest of the group pulled out a narrow rusty dagger and forged onward. Too late, his tall compatriot noted the Runes carved over the chamber's entrance.

"Nodongo..."

The shortest Dras turned, confused, opening his mouth to disagree. And was torn apart by a charge of electricity, spasming forth from the Rune to ricochet within the chamber entrance. Several breaths later, naught remained of him but an echo of a scream, half a mile down the pipes.

"Toljoo," said the leader, standing to brush clumps of muck off his clothing. He checked the baby on his back, remarkably still sleeping despite the chaos, and then looked around for his other companion, knowing better than to bother looking for remnants of the one who had been torn apart by the Nhet-eq Rune in the doorway. The other was nearly as bad off; having been caught in the edge of the wave of energy, he lay quivering and blackened on the floor of the sewer. Alive, but barely.

The lead Dras sighed. This was not going well. Nevertheless, he had led them this far to see who was in this chamber, and he was even more determined now than ever to see for himself. Runes be damned.

He stepped back, ignoring the further pleas for help that came from the man inside the chamber and his shattered compatriot. He took the time to carefully scan the ground, walls and ceiling for other Runes. He found several, faded and burned, dead Runes from years past, but otherwise the area was clean.

Now to deal with that pesky Nhet-eq Rune, he thought.

The Rune's shape gave it the power it held, power that was released when activated by, say, someone passing nearby, or touching it. Destroy the shape, and you made the Rune powerless. The trick was destroying the Rune without coming close enough for it to do the same to you. Whoever had put the Rune atop that chamber entrance had been clever, placing it out of reach of whoever was obviously trapped inside, preventing them from easily destroying the Rune without first triggering it.

Being on the outside, however, such a task was much more easily accomplished.

The Dras was no Rune Caster, but he knew the proper procedure. He settled down crosslegged across from the Rune, and scrounged in his pouch for several smooth stones, the sort designed for inscribing Runes. He carefully eyed the Rune, murmured to himself, and began hurling stones at the Rune.

He missed a lot, but he had more than enough stones.

After about a half hour of this, he was fairly satisfied that he had done enough damage to the Nhet-eq Rune to render it inoperable. For a moment, he considered pushing his crispy friend through first to test the theory, but decided that such a thing would somehow, in some way, be wrong of him. And so he shrugged, set the child down beside the other Dras, and strolled through the chamber opening.

Where he was instantly tackled to the ground, his arm wrenched behind his back painfully.

Under normal circumstances, on an average sized foe, this tactic might have resulted in a broken bone, a dislocated joint. However, the Dras' opponent was not expecting such a small intruder, and as such the larger man's grip was too loose, misplaced. The Dras quickly wriggled backwards out of his grip, drew his stout club, and smashed upward and away. With a grunt, his attacker was down on the ground tending to a bloody lip.

The Dras raised the club high, intending to stave his foe's head in, but paused as the man raised a hand, meekly attempting to ward off the blow. The Dras saw that the man's left arm was broken, the split end of the forearm jutting forth from the skin. His face was bruised and bloodied, not from the club blow but from repeated pummeling earlier in the night. And he appeared to be missing most of his left ear. The Dras knew the club didn't do that.

"No, stop... please." The human spoke with a broken mouth, many teeth loose or missing. He spat blood and looked up, pleadingly, knowing it was hopeless. Dras were not known for mercy. They were bloodthirsty, cunning little savages, known for cannibalism, torture and defilement. The best he could hope for was a quick death.

Yet the Dras paused, amazing them both. He lowered the club and considered his situation.

He needed to keep moving. But he was lost, and overburdened. Outside the chamber, he had not only a baby to carry but also a wounded clanmate. He could not possibly carry both, nor could they remain here. Here, he had a wounded Divaros man, obviously not a threat to one of his caliber, not in his condition. If he was down here for some reason, there was a chance he knew his way around. Perhaps they could help each other.

The Divaros man would hardly have thought it possible that a Dras savage could have such thoughts. And even if he had assumed ignorance, the Dras' broken speech would have erased all doubts.

"Youcomin itme, cha?"

Through trial, error, several minutes of fumbling around and another brief thrashing with the club, the Dras managed to convince the Divaros man that it was in his best interest to come along. And then the stupid Divaros mentioned that he had lost a baby. Just like these foolish tall folk. Losing their children. Imagine, two in one night?

"Funnydat, ynow?" he said. "I gotsa bebbie outder now. Youwannit?"



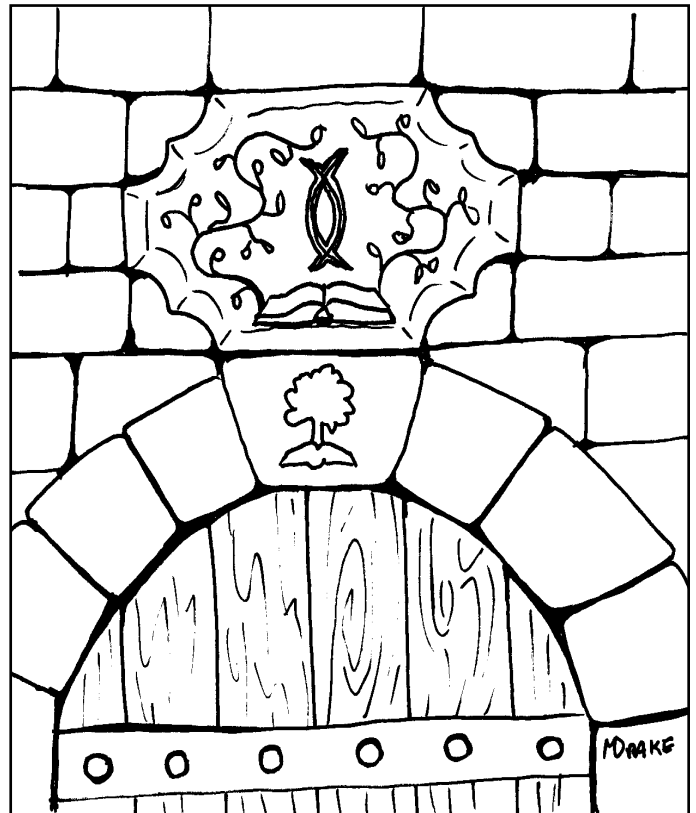
CHAPTER 3

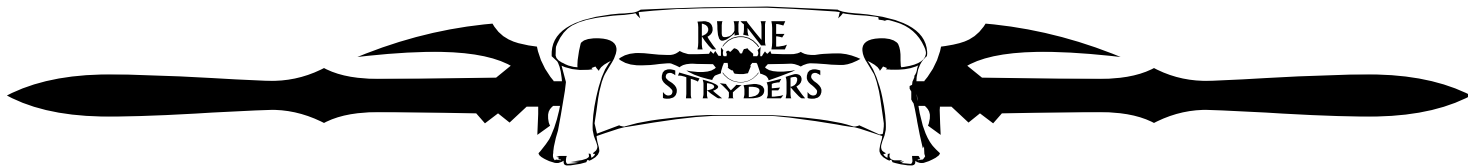
THE BOOK OF RUNES



he Divaros word *Rune* (or its archaic form, *Rhun*) means, simply, *language*. This is in part because the forty-five Runes known to the world today formed the basis for earlier written languages; all modern tongues are derived from this earlier, *divine* tongue. Each Rune is not only a symbol, but also a representation of a particular sound, a container to help in the correct pronunciation of the sound itself. Runes can thus be spoken aloud or inscribed in stone, steel or flesh. Runes are never used as a spoken or a written language in the present day, however. People use the same basic sounds in their languages, but they do not go around speaking Runic.

Runes are much more than mere sounds and scratches in stone. Each one is a complex magical symbol that represents a particular set of words and ideas, thoughts made form, energy locked in matter, waiting for release. A single Rune can represent dozens of things, from abstract ideas to concrete concepts such as numbers, colors and letters, depending on how it is used in context with other Runes. Thus, while it is true that anyone capable of language can technically use Runes





just by learning the proper pronunciation, true understanding of the Rune and its meaning in relation to specific situations is necessary to gain mastery of the art. Even the simplest peasant can manage to chant a blessing over his family at dinner, but handling more complex magic is best left to the masters.

The Runes go much, much deeper than mere language. They form the foundation for culture, society and, indeed, most of existence. Rhun is not only a word for language. It is also the name of the land, of the continent, and of the entire planet.

Rhun surrounds and supports and makes everything possible. Runes are a means to unlock the secrets of the Universe, stolen and secreted beneath the earth, later uncovered and unlocked by the Myndwar and their allies in ages past. These Runes were sound turned into matter, the literal act of creation inscribed into stones, later transferred onto the first Rune Stryders. Runes are the literal words of the gods, the syllables that created the Universe and will one day destroy it.

HOW RUNES WORK

Runes are cast by use of the Runelore skill, and in that respect they function just like any other skill, including combat. The basic procedure is as follows:

1. Determine Difficulty

The target for the caster's Runelore skill check depends on the target of the Rune. If the target is a living creature and unwilling target, the Runelore skill check is opposed—the defender rolls a Willpower check with a difficulty of 10. Otherwise, consult the table below.

Difficulty	Target
7	The Caster himself
10	Any object or willing creature

When inscribing or writing a Rune, the caster rolls a Runelore skill check to determine the number of successes. All Willpower checks by potential targets reduce the successes on this roll, even though they may not occur for days, weeks or months.

Casting at multiple targets does not increase the difficulty, but does require multiple successes.

A caster is only considered to have rolled a Critical Success if he rolls five successes and his opponent rolls none. Of course, it is much easier to roll a Critical Success when it is unopposed.

2. Modify the Difficulty

From the base difficulty number, you subtract the caster's Intellect score. Other modifiers may also apply (*see table below and the Book of War*). This final number, after modification, is the **Target**.

Modifier	Cause
+2	per each additional known Rune in a Runix phrase (<i>see Advanced Rune Usage</i>)
+5	for the addition of any Rune (including a single Rune word) with which the Caster does not have skill

3. Roll Dice

Roll one die, plus one additional die per level of the character's Runelore skill, for a total of between two dice (level 1) and five dice (level 4). Determine the number of successes (results equal to or higher than the Target). If there is at least one success, then the attempt was at least partially successful. If there were no successes, the attempt was a total failure.

For example, Tawny wishes to cast a Rune on herself. Her base difficulty is 7, minus her Intellect (3), giving her a Target of 4. With a Runelore skill of 3, she rolls four dice; any results of 4 or higher are successes.

Tawny wants to cast a Rune at an opponent. She subtracts her Intellect and gets a difficulty of 7; rolling four dice, she needs at

least a 7 on one or more dice to succeed in casting the Rune. She also needs to get more successes on her Runelore skill check than her opponent gets on his Willpower skill check.

CONTROL RUNES

As noted earlier, simply speaking a Rune or scribing it is not enough to release the magical energy within a Rune. In addition to supplying the energy required to power a Rune, a caster must define the effects he wishes to create. Runic energy cannot be tapped without a control Rune. Control Runes shape and focus the power of a Rune, and release it in a useful form. Without a control Rune, a Rune will be nothing more than a syllable.

There are currently five known control Runes: *eq*, *ej*, *ess*, *ex*, and *ett*. One of these five must be added to a Rune to invoke its power. Each creates a different effect, and by changing the control Rune, a caster can create a variety of effects with the same Rune. Knowledge of a single control Rune can take years to learn, and even the most dedicated Runemages never learn all five.

The *eq* control Rune translates roughly to attack. Runewords ending in *eq* are commonly used to damage an opponent. For example, *Ull-eq* can damage an opponent with a ball of flame.

The *ej* control Rune is used to defend. Finishing a Runeword with *ej* defends against the effect of the Rune. For example, *Ull-ej* protects its bearer against flame. It does not create a barrier of flame to protect the target, as commonly believed among the ignorant.

The *ess* control Rune allows a caster to use the effects of the Rune. Typically, a Runeword ending in *ess* will be easier to control and have more beneficial effects than either of the other control Runes. For example, *Ull-ess* will create a small fire, and can be used to cook a meal, light a torch or warm a hearth.

The *ex* control Rune allows a Runecaster to defend his target with a Rune's effect. For example, *Ull-ej* allows a Runecaster to increase his defense against fire, while *Ull-ex* wraps the caster in a sheath of flame that damages all who come close enough to strike him.

At first glance, the *ex* control Rune may appear to be similar to the *ess* Rune. Rather than using the subject of the Rune, however, the caster using *Ett* may shape or manipulate the subject. The caster does not gain power over the subject, except to mold it. In some cases this is very similar to the effect of the *Ess* Rune, but allows for more precise or longer-lasting effects.

As noted previously, each level of Runelore allows a character to select one control Rune to add to their Runic vocabulary—a character with level 2 Runelore could have knowledge of two of the five Runes, but true power often comes at level 4.

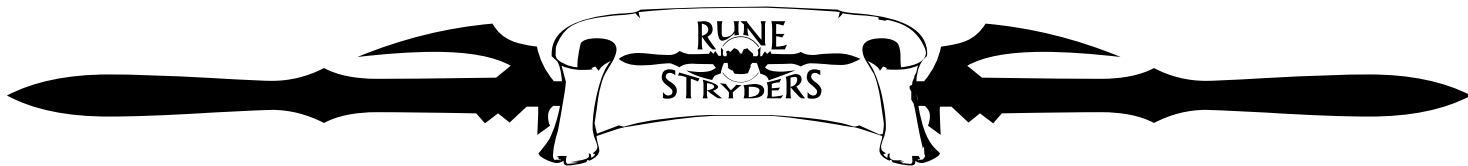
RUNIC ATTACKS

Some Runic effects are simply damage-causing attacks. A bolt of flame, a spear of ice, or a blast of energy all reduce a target's Health or Body. In these cases, the opposed Runelore skill check is rolled as normal. The base damage is equal to the strength of the attack (as with a weapon's strength) added to the caster's Intellect. The base damage is multiplied by the number of successes on the Runelore check (remembering to subtract the target's Willpower successes) and applied as incoming damage, as described in the Book of War.

In the case of written Runes, the caster adds his Heart to the strength of the Runic attack and notes the number of successes. Willpower checks are made to reduce these successes each time a target enters the Rune's range; if a target leaves the area and returns, he must perform another Willpower Check in order to reduce successes from the magical attack.

RUNE COMBAT

As one would surmise, Runes can grant enormous benefit in combat. The option to mix a devastating blow with a disabling Rune makes a knowledgeable fighter quite dangerous. It should also be noted, however, that releasing a Rune word takes more than just mouthing the words. Energy must be summoned and controlled, and the character that releases a Rune can do nothing else for two actions while he



concentrates on the release of magical power. This means that he cannot even defend himself. Because of this disadvantage associated with casting Runes, few warriors take the time out to cast a Rune while in the middle of a duel.

Another consideration for casting Runes during combat is the possibility of interruption. If a character takes any direct damage at all during the first action of casting a Rune, the Rune fails. The interrupted character may act normally on the second action, assuming he has not suffered enough damage to merit a difficulty modifier.

Runic Law

Each Rune carries with it a particular meaning, and can only be used in accordance with the rules that govern that particular Rune; a Rune of Fire will always create fire in one form or another. However, certain general rules govern the way all Runes function, and practitioners of the Runic arts must learn those laws if they are to achieve mastery (and survive past their first casting). The six Runic Laws are each named for one of the world's gods.

Zei's Law

The Law of Chaos

Runes are a swirl of chaos, momentary syllables that must be carefully shaped before they will work. Gathering such chaos is not easy, particularly when one is attempting to catch the chaos in matter, to trap it and shape its power.

The Law of Chaos affects Casting time, the amount of time it takes to properly shape the Rune so that its power can be

released. Casting Runes verbally by speaking them takes relatively little time, and tracing Runes atop other matter (as with sketches and drawings) is also a relatively quick process. Actually carving a Rune into the material takes more time and effort to get right, however. The casting/inscription time increases with the relative hardness of the material, with those materials which are *more orderly* being more difficult to inscribe. Because some materials take such a long time to inscribe, they cannot effectively be inscribed in the midst of a combat situation. In all cases, it is assumed that the Caster possesses a tool to do the type of inscription needed.

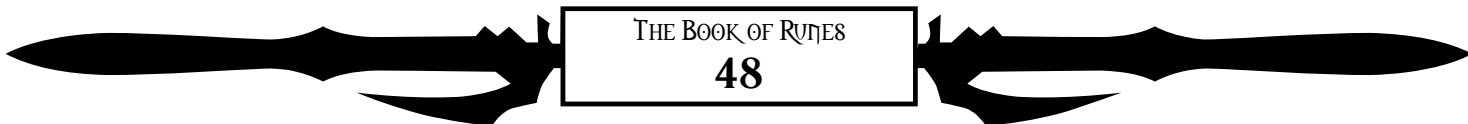
The chaotic nature of Runes means they must be started and completed in a single instance in order for the Rune to function properly. Thus, a Runic utterance must be started and finished in a single breath; it cannot be begun and then "stored" for later completion. Likewise, a Runic carving must be started and worked on continuously, without interruption. Any break in construction or inscription ruins the Rune, and it must be abandoned and started anew.

Hei's Law

The Law of Order

Runes must be perceived in order to be effective. They must be spoken aloud or inscribed visibly, taking actual material form. They cannot be invoked with a thought or a gesture, and they cannot be made invisible or inaudible. Because of this, they are limited to a specific Range, within which others can perceive them, and thus be affected, based wholly on the skill of the Caster during the Rune Casting process, and the number of Successes rolled. The maximum range limit is five feet, multiplied by a number determined by the success.

Material	Casting Time
Spoken	2 actions
Drawings	
Sketch (chalk, charcoal)	10 rounds (30 seconds)
Drawing (ink, blood)	20 rounds (1 minute)
Tattoo (ink in flesh)	1 hour
Inscriptions	
Flesh or Leather	10 minutes
Clay or Soft Stone	30 minutes
Soft or Living Wood	60 minutes
Typical or Hard Wood	90 minutes
Chitin or Bone	2 hours
Soft Metal	3 hours
Brick or Hard Stone	4 hours
Hard Metal	12 hours



Successes	Result	Multiplier	Max Range
0	Failure	x0	0
1	Minor Success	x1	5 feet
2	Success	x2	10 feet
3	Major Success	x5	25 feet
4	Outstanding Success	x10	50 feet
5	Critical Success	x20	100 feet

Since they are limited by the orderly rules that govern the world, Runes can only affect things (including people) that are capable of hearing or seeing the Rune. This is not to say that the blind or deaf are immune, merely that the power the Rune contains is carried with the sound or the symbol (if inscribed), and thus its power is limited by line-of-sight to the Rune. Runes inscribed on a surface can affect the material upon which they are scribed, though few Runes confer their effects to unliving matter. Inscribed Runes cannot affect things around corners or on the other side of doors, and a caster cannot hide behind a shield while Casting. However, the things that a Rune creates are not subject to this limitation. Once the Rune is used, the products of its casting are physically present in the real world, and can affect any and all things, including the caster himself.

For example, A Rune that summons a giant boulder whenever someone looks at it is carved onto a stone at the top of a steep hill. It will not be triggered by a man on horseback riding by the bottom of the hill, since he cannot see the Rune. However, it can be triggered by a man on the top of the hill, and the boulder then summoned could easily roll down the hill and crush the man and his horse, despite the fact that he never saw the Rune.

The specifics of what can be affected by a Rune are up to the gamemaster, based on the particular circumstances at hand and the nature of the Rune.

Mheta's Law

The Law of Matter

Spoken Runes tend to be highly unstable, energetic and explosive, quickly moving towards expending their energy as the Rune is spoken. Runes that are physically inscribed in stone, flesh, wood or steel, however, trap the Chaos within Order for a period of time. How long an inscribed Rune will remain viable is dependent on the type of material inscribed.

Material	Durability
Spoken	Instantaneous
Drawings	
Sketch (chalk, charcoal)	1 hour
Drawing (ink, blood)	5 hours
Tattoo (ink in flesh)	1 year
Inscriptions	
Flesh or Leather	1 day (25 hours)
Clay, Wood, or Bone	1 week (7 days)
Brick or Stone	2 weeks (14 days)
Soft Metal	3 months
Hard Metal	6 months
Chitin or Living Wood	1 year

Note that in all cases, this is the maximum duration shown for a Rune that remains undisturbed. It is quite possible for a Rune to be destroyed merely by erasing the mark that forms it.

Nheta's Law

The Law of Energy

The amount of energy a Rune can expend is based wholly on the amount of energy the Caster can put into it, and is thus dependent on the skill of the Caster during the Rune Casting process, and the number of Successes rolled. The energy released is not easily dampened, and while it is possible to do so, the Caster himself suffers the penalties.

Should a Caster roll more successes than is prudent for a specific circumstance, he may ignore as many successes as he likes, suffering direct damage to Mind as follows:

Successes Ignored	Mind Damage
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	5
4	10
5	15

Lheta's Law

The Law of Life

A caster's own knowledge and potential limit the power and potential of a Rune. No living thing is capable of wielding or controlling more energy than is already present in his or her body at any one time. Thus, while the effects that individual Runes have are always the same, the degree of those effects

varies in direct relation to the individual's own knowledge, skill and luck. This directly applies to the controlling, wearing and inscribing of Runes on the body. No individual or Stryder may carry, wield, control or have on their body (via inscription or tattoo) more Runes than their Mind score; additional Runes carried or inscribed merely fail to function.

Furthermore, the energy of a Rune is constantly at odds with other Runes. Two Runes from the same school of Runic magic cannot be active on or by the same target at the same time. For example, a Runemage cannot command both a Nhet and Mhet Rune at the same time. A living target cannot harness the power of both an Ull and Un Rune simultaneously. Not only that, but the same Rune cannot be applied twice with the same control Rune, so a creature cannot be at once protected by Ull-eq and armed with Ull-ess. If a second, illegal Rune is applied to a target, it cancels out the first, and all continuing effects of the first Rune cease immediately.

Dheta's Law

The Law of Death

Each Rune can be represented safely in only one precise way. Since many Runes sound and look similar to others, care must be taken not to accidentally trace or pronounce an incorrect Rune (called a Corruption) during the tracing or speaking of another (accidentally drawing the Rune for oneself while trying to curse someone else could result in disaster!) In most cases, mispronunciation or misinscription of a Rune will have no effect, since the particular magic associated with that Rune was simply never tapped. However, in some cases (on a Catastrophic Failure roll) mistakes can be disastrous, and even deadly.

When a Rune is badly miscast, the energy inherent in the Rune releases against the caster. The caster takes damage according to how wrong the spell went. For every 1 rolled on a catastrophic failure, the caster takes 2 points of direct damage to Mind. No armor can prevent this damage, and no Barrier check will reduce it. The penalties for mistakes can be steep indeed.



Name	Letter	Pronunciation	School	Symbolism
Hei	H	he	Prime	Order, Law, Stability, Structure, Solid, Male
Xhei	K, C	ark	Prime	Chaos, Disorder, Movement, Fluid, Female
Nhet	N	run	Prime	Energy, Sun, Bright, Shiny, Red, Male
Mhet	M	him	Prime	Matter, Moon, Dull, Yellow, Sleep, Dreams, Female
Lhei	L	ill	Prime	Life, Creation, White, Male
Dhei	D	odd	Prime	Death, Destruction, Black, Female
Shrai	Shr	shred	Prime	Time
Ain	A	ale	Elemental	Sky, Above, Up, Light Blue, 6
Ott	O	o	Elemental	Earth, Stone, Below, Down, Dark, Brown, 10
Ull	U	full	Elemental	Flame, Heat, Light, Orange, Many but separate
Un	U	up	Elemental	Ocean, Water, Cold, Dark Blue, Many as one
Aan	A	an	Elemental	Wood, Plants, Trees, Green, 3
Khet	Kh	ankh	Elemental	Shadow, Darkness
Zhei	Z	azure	Sensory	Sight, Vision, Visibility
Zei	Z, S	buzz	Sensory	Hearing, Sound, Noise, Thunder
Shei	Sh	fish	Sensory	Smell, Odor, Disease
Chei	Ch	much	Sensory	Taste, Flavor, Poison
Rhün	R	run	Sensory	Speech, Language
Enn	E	bet	Sensory	Hard, Impervious, Rough, Coarse, Stable, Steady, 8
Ean	E	eat	Sensory	Soft, Giving, Yielding, Flexible, Enstable, 7
Frei	Fr	fray	Sensory	Thought
Awn	A	all	Life	Self, Me, 4
Gai	G	egg	Life	Other, You
lin	I	it	Life	Living Things, Man, Animals. 2
Pei	P	up	Life	Power, Strength, Fortitude
Fas	F	if	Life	Speed, Agility, Fast
Thei	Th	thy	Life	Mind, Thought, Knowledge
Sen	S, C	sin	Life	Spirit, Soul, Heart, Wisdom
Dron	Dr	drag	Life	Unliving Things
Ngei	Ng	sing	Conceptual	Blessing, Luck, Fortune, Fate
Wei	W	woe	Conceptual	Curse, Bad Luck, Misfortune
Thürn	Th	thin	Conceptual	Pain, Hurt, Suffering, Harm
Yon	Y	yet	Conceptual	Pleasure, Healing, Laughter
Bei	B	ebb	Conceptual	Truth, Honesty, Justice
Whin	Wh	when	Conceptual	Lies, Falsehood, Betrayal, Concealment, Secrecy, Stealth
Vel	V	volt	Conceptual	Valuable, Expensive, Precious, Dear, Loved, Cherished
Blei	Bl	blue	Conceptual	Worthless, Cheap
Oun	O, U	do	Spatial	Open, Door, Window, Portal, 9
Ahn	A	arm	Spatial	Closed, Barrier, Wall, Enclosure, 5
Ite	I	ice	Spatial	Straight, Line, Beginning and End, Finite, Near, 1
Owt	Ou	foul	Spatial	Circle, Round, Far, Infinity
Ote	O	ode	Spatial	Absence, Void, Nothingness, Ø
Jin	J	jet	Spatial	Large, Giant, Big, High
Tin	T	it	Spatial	Small, Miniscule, low
Grei	Gr	gray	Spatial	Motion
Eq	—	deck	Control	Attack
Ej	—	edge	Control	Defend
Ess	—	ester	Control	Use
Ex	—	ex	Control	Defend with
Ett	—	bet	Control	Shape, Manipulate

The forty-five Runes (plus five control Runes) presently known to the peoples of the world are believed by many to be merely a fraction of those left behind when the god Nheta stole his father's secrets and hid them beneath the earth. A constant search goes on for new Runes. In the meantime, scholars and mages focus on categorizing and understanding the Runes they do know about. By grouping like concepts with one another, the known Runes can thus be divided into six broad categories.

Those practiced in the arts of magic start off with mastery of one category or any six Runes of their choosing. See the *Book of Roles* for more information.

PRIME RUNES

These seven Runes are named for the six gods of Rhun, and represent an assortment of core concepts, some intangible, some very real. They are among the most powerful Runes, capable of creating and taking life with a sound, but are also among the most unpredictable and chaotic. As such, casters versed in their use must take extra care, for a mispronunciation could easily result in the immediate death of the caster and his allies.

Hei *Order, Law, Stability, Structure, Solid, Male* Spoken

Hei-eq: The target must obey the caster. The caster may give the target one command per success, which the target must obey to the best of his ability. Each command may be only one word. The casters control lasts for one minute per success.

Hei-ej: The target is able to fight the effects of any sort of mind control, whether that control is Runic or not. The target is able to think for himself, ignoring the effects of brainwashing or societal norms, and receives a -1 difficulty bonus per success for Willpower checks against mind control effects. This defensive bonus lasts for one minute per success.

Hei-ess: This Rune rarely targets living things, instead causing chaotic elements to organize on their own. Papers may arrange themselves in order, bricks will stack neatly, a deck of cards will arrange itself in an orderly fashion.

Hei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Xhei-ej.

Hei-ett: The caster may re-order previously ordered items. For instance, a set of tiles containing names and tiles may be organized in many different ways—by first names, last names, or order of importance. By casting this Rune, the caster may decide exactly how those items should be ordered, and cause the target items to re-order as he desires. The objects must already be in some order for this Rune to succeed—the Rune does not create order from chaos, it simply alters the order that has already been determined.

Written

Hei-eq: The caster concentrates on a single-word command while scribing this Rune. Any living creature able to see the Runic phrase must obey the command to the best of their ability for one round per success (targets are allowed the standard Willpower check to reduce the number of successes). This control lasts for one minute per success. If written on a living creature, the effect targets on that target, but lasts for one hour per success.

Hei-ej: Any living creature within range of the Rune gains the defensive benefits as described under the spoken usage of Hei-ej. If this Rune is written on a living creature, it targets only that creature, but the effects last for one hour per success, after which time the Rune fades away.

Hei-ess: When scribed onto an object or person, the object will effectively cast the spoken Hei-ess Rune on anything placed on top of or near the object. This effect lasts for the duration of the Rune, as described under Mhetas Law.

Hei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Xhei-ej.

Hei-ett: By writing this Rune on every element within a group which the caster wants to order, the caster may manipulate the order of the objects for up to one hour per success.

Xhei *Chaos, Disorder, Movement, Fluid, Female* Spoken

Xhei-eq: The mind of the target is seized by chaos. The target suffers uncontrollable fear, rage or confusion, and acts appropriately. The target may strike out against his allies, wander aimlessly, run away, or simply curl up on the floor and cry. The gamemaster determines the exact nature of the effect, which lasts for one minute per success.

Xhei-ej: The target's mind is calmed. The chaotic effects of fear, rage, or sadness are removed. All Willpower checks to defend against chaotic thoughts or emotions are granted a difficulty bonus of 1. This defensive bonus lasts for one minute per success.

Xhei-ess: As with Hei-ess, this Rune generally targets inanimate objects. The objects so targeted will scatter randomly. Cards will fly in random bursts and bricks will fall in chaotic patterns. Xhei-ess is not powerful enough to destroy anything strong enough to have an Endurance rating, but it can cause untold misery to a scholar, alchemist or bureaucrat.

Xhei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Hei-ej.

Hei-ett: Chaos is, by definition, random. In general, those who cause chaos will not be able to control the results of that chaos. Using this Rune, the caster may control a chaotic effect. The chaos must exist in order to be manipulated, but the caster may place certain items where he desires them, or cause specific chaotic effects. The Rune lasts for one use—the clutter in a disorderly room may be moved around once, or the birth defects of a Draslander may be altered a single time.

Written

Xhei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Xhei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Xhei-ess: When scribed onto an object or person, the object will effectively cast the spoken Hei-ess Rune on anything placed on top of or near the object. This effect lasts for the duration of the Rune, as described under Mhetas Law.

Xhei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Hei-ej.

Xhei-ett: By writing this Rune on every element within a group that the caster wants to control, he may manipulate the chaos of the objects for up to one hour per success.

Nhet

Energy, Sun, Bright, Shiny, Red, Male

Spoken

Nhet-eq: The caster hurls a beam of pure energy. This is a Strength 5 magical attack that ignores armor.

Nhet-ej: The target receives Runic armor against any magical attack. The target's Endurance is increased by 2 per success against any magical attack. This protection lasts for one round per success.

Nhet-ess: This Rune creates a small field of shimmering energy that glows with a white light. This Rune can be cast and the resulting energy attached to a staff or pole, resulting in a Runic torch. The light lasts for ten minutes per success.

Nhet-ex: The target is wrapped in a cloak of energy that harms all who approach within melee range. This does not provide any protection versus damage. It simply causes 8 points of incoming damage per success to anyone who comes too close. The protection lasts for one round per success.

Nhet-ett: The caster may shape raw energy from a distance. A beam of light may be focused or dispersed, or a tongue of flame may be spread or contained. The caster may shape energy from five feet away per success, and he may affect five cubic feet of energy per success. The effects of the Rune are permanent, but given the impermanent nature of raw energy, will still probably not last very long. The caster may shape energy for one round per success.

Written

Nhet-eq: The Rune discharges against any target within range, and operates identically to the spoken Rune, including granting the target a Willpower check to reduce successes.

Nhet-ej: All targets within range receive the benefits of the Rune, as described under the spoken version of this Rune. The protection lasts for one round per success, and will be reapplied if the target reenters the range of the Rune. If written directly onto a living target, that target gains the protection for five rounds per success, though the Rune will not affect multiple targets.

Nhet-ess: The Rune creates a field of energy that lasts for a much longer time. The light remains in place for one hour per success.

Nhet-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Nhet-ett: Obviously, this Rune cannot be written directly onto a target. It is therefore impossible to use the written version of this Rune.

Mhet

Matter, Moon, Dull, Yellow, Sleep, Dreams, Female

Spoken

Mhet-eq: This ranged attack disintegrates matter and affects only inanimate objects. It is a Strength 5 magical attack, and since inanimate objects do not get Willpower checks, is usually quite powerful. This is a good way to get through a door, though it is not very subtle.

Mhet-ej: The target is granted increased Runic armor against all physical attacks. The target's Endurance is increased by 2 per success against any physical attack. This protection lasts for one round per success.

Mhet-ess: The caster can repair inanimate objects by weaving the matter of which they are composed. Each success restores 1 point of direct damage caused to walls, doors, shields, armor, or other inanimate objects.

Mhet-ex: A solid shield of dense matter protects the target, who cannot see through this wall, and attackers cannot see the target. In order to damage the target, attackers must break through the protective barrier, which has an Endurance of five (5) times the number of successes and a Body of ten (10) times the number of successes. The wall lasts for one round per success, after which time it simply dissolves away.

Mhet-ett: The caster may shape any form of matter from a distance. A living target is allowed a Willpower roll to resist the effects. The caster may shape up to one cubic foot per success, at a distance of five feet per success. The effects of this Rune are permanent. If used to cause damage to a living target, the target suffers 1 direct damage per success. The caster may manipulate matter for one round per success.

Written

Mhet-eq: The Rune causes damage to the object on which it is written, as per the spoken version. However, since the effect is much more focused, the written version of this Rune is a Strength 10 magical attack.

Mhet-ej: All targets within range receive the benefits of the Rune, as described under the spoken version of this Rune. The protection lasts for one round per success, and will be reapplied if the target reenters the range of the Rune. If written directly onto a target, that target gains the protection for five rounds per success, and it applies only to that target.

Mhet-ess: By writing this Rune, the caster focuses its energy more specifically. Each success repairs 2 points of direct damage to the inanimate object upon which it is scribed.

Mhet-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Mhet-ett: The caster may shape the target for up to one minute per success, though the duration ends immediately if the Rune itself is altered in any way. The effects of this Rune are otherwise identical to the spoken version.

Lhei

Life, Creation, White, Male

Spoken

Lhei-eq: The target ages by one month per success. Hair and nails grow several years in moments. On most people, this effect is disconcerting, but for some, it can be deadly. The sudden onset of aging can cause older targets to experience heart attacks, liver failure or other damaging effects. The gamemaster should determine the exact nature of such an attack, though those affected drastically should be fairly old.

This Rune can be used on vegetation or animals as well as people. It could be used to raise a forest from a field of saplings, or turn a baby animal into a full-grown beast.

Lhei-ej: The target is immune to aging for one month per success. Unfortunately for those who would use such an effect to make themselves immortal, it has detrimental side effects if used repeatedly for too long. The target begins to suffer insanity if this Rune is used for more than about two years, and quickly becomes irrevocably mad.

Lhei-ess: The caster can use this Rune to heal the wounded. Every success heals 1 point of physical direct damage. This Rune can be used on any living thing, so blighted trees or wounded animals can also be restored.

Lhei-ex: The target is wrapped in an invisible field of lifeforce. Anyone approaching within melee range is affected as per the spoken version of Lhei-eq. The field lasts for one round per success.

Lhei-ett: The caster may manipulate new life. Newborn creatures and sapling plants may be manipulated at a basic level. The caster may not open vast bleeding holes or split plants in two, but he may direct the growth of the target.

Blonde babies can be made brunettes, or the caster can make them more or less attractive or intelligent. Trees may be directed to grow tall or short, thick or wide, and the caster can dictate the shape of their leaves. He may change one element of a target with a single casting of this Rune, and the effects of this Rune are permanent. In case of catastrophic failures, the target will almost certainly be permanently damaged or destroyed. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Written

Lhei-eq: When written on an inanimate object, this Rune functions as a trap, affecting all within its range as per the spoken version of this Rune. If scribed onto a living thing, the target ages by one year per success. Such a drastic acceleration of aging is decidedly bad for the target; the target suffers 1 direct damage to Body for each success,

Lhei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect to every target within range. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one year per success. Writing this Rune on a living target again before the first effect has expired will cause madness.

Lhei-ess: By writing this Rune, the caster focuses its energy more specifically. Each success heals 2 points of direct damage to the living thing upon which it is scribed. It can be used on the dead as well. If enough successes are achieved to bring the target back to 1 Body, the target returns to life. Every day that the target has been dead reduces the number of successes by one, so a target that has been dead four days will need five successes at a minimum to be revived. After being revived, a target will sleep for one full day and need rest for a full week before being fully healed.

Lhei-ex: The target is encased as per the spoken version of the Rune, but the effect lasts for one minute per success.

Lhei-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may continue to manipulate the development of the target for the duration of the Rune (see Mheta's Law).

Dhei

Death, Destruction, Black, Female

Spoken

Dhei-eq: The caster destroys life. The living tissue of the target decomposes as if he were dead. The victim suffers 2 points of direct damage to Soul per success.

Dhei-ej: The target gains a limited ability to deny death's grip. Each success grants the target +1 Endurance for the purposes of resisting illness or disease. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

Dhei-ess: The target dries out. Flowers wilt and wither, trees crack and split, and hides tan. The maximum direct damage that can be caused by this Rune is 1 point of Health, making it essentially useless as a combat Rune.

Dhei-ex: The target is wrapped in an invisible field of death. Anyone approaching within melee range is affected as per the spoken version of Dhei-eq. The field lasts for one round per success.

Dhei-ett: The caster may shape newly dead creatures or animals. The target must have died within one hour of when this Rune is cast. The target may be altered to be more attractive or ugly in death, wounds may be opened or closed, or the caster may disguise the cause of death. One alteration may be made per casting of this Rune, and the effects are permanent.

Written

Dhei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the damage caused is 4 points of direct damage to Soul per success and applies only to that target.

Dhei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one day per success and applies only to that target.

Dhei-ess: This Rune functions similarly to the spoken version, but if it is written directly onto a living target, the target dries faster, losing as much as 1 point of Health per success.

Dhei-ex: The target is encased as per the spoken version of the Rune, but the effect lasts for one minute per success.

Dhei-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may continue to manipulate the target for the duration of the Rune (see Mheta's Law).

Sfrai

Time

Spoken

Sfrai-eq: The target perceives time as passing much faster for himself than for those around him. The effect is to make

the target much slower in relation to those around him. All skills related to quick action, such as Initiative, Dodge and Melee, are reduced by 1 for each success on the roll. The effect lasts for one minute per success. The Rune obviously has little effect on inanimate objects, which cannot perceive the passage of time.

Shrai-ej: The target perceives time as passing much slower for himself than for those around him. All skills related to quick action, such as Initiative, Dodge and Melee are increased by 1 for each success on the roll. The effect lasts for one minute per success. The Rune obviously has little effect on inanimate objects, which cannot perceive the passage of time.

Shrai-ess: The target is able to compress his actions into smaller amounts of time, covering ground faster and gaining more time to commit to his efforts. He may gain bonuses to his actions, though this Rune may not be applied to combat-related tasks. The effects are more subtle than the other spoken versions, but last longer. The effect lasts for one hour per success. The Rune obviously has little effect on inanimate objects.

Shrai-ex: The target is wrapped in a field of time-distortion. Anyone within melee range of the target has all skills related to quick action reduced by 1 per success. The effects apply only to those within melee range—ranged attacks are not affected. The protection lasts for one minute per success. Unlike the other spoken versions of this Rune, this Runeword can be cast on an inanimate object, as it effects those physically interacting with the target, and not the target itself.

Shrai-ett: Shaping time itself is a tricky task. The runecaster does not specify a target when casting this Rune. Rather, he may alter time itself by either slowing or speeding the passage of time around himself. The range of this Rune is ten yards per success. The caster may not reverse time, but he may cause time to speed up or slow down considerably. The area of effect does not move with the caster, so anyone or anything leaving the area is instantly subject to the normal rules of time. The amount by which time may be manipulated is a ratio—one success allows time to be either doubled or halved, with additional successes adding one to the ratio. In other words, three successes would allow the caster to reduce the passage of time to one-quarter its normal speed or speed time to four

times normal speed. The Rune lasts for one minute per success, and the duration is measured outside the affected area.

There are many possibilities with this Rune. A caster waiting for a specific event may wish to speed up time for himself, thus keeping him from cramping or growing tired while waiting. A caster wishing to fire arrows at a group outside the area may wish to slow time, giving him additional turns to aim.

Written

Shrai-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shrai-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shrai-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shrai-ex: Regardless of whether the Rune is written on a living or unliving target, the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Shrai-ett: As time is such a nebulous concept, and not one upon which a Rune may be written, it is impossible to cast this Rune by writing it.

ELEMENTAL RUNES

These six Runes represent the core elements of Rhun's universe—Sky, Stone, Flame, Water, Wood, and Shadow. As is typical with Runes, they also represent various colors, numbers and directions, and are commonly used along with other Runes to create additional effects (*see Advanced Rune Usage*). The elemental forces they control and manipulate are not magical in any way; they are ordinary manifestations of that particular element, and will thus react with the world in ordinary ways (water soaks things, fire burns things), and will remain even after a particular Rune has burned out.

Ain

Sky, Above, Up, Light Blue, 6

Spoken

Ain-eq: The caster summons a powerful wind that frenzies the air around a target, slamming it against him forcefully. This is a Strength 4 magical attack. The target must succeed at a Strength check with a target equal to triple the successes of the attack roll. For instance, if the attacker rolls four successes on his Runelore check, and the target rolls one success on his opposing Willpower check, he takes incoming damage equal to three times the sum of the attackers Heart plus 4. He also must succeed at a Strength check with a target of 9 to remain standing.

Ain-ej: The caster surrounds the target in a field of still air, increasing Endurance by 1 per success against any incoming damage caused by strong winds. This protection can be applied to an inanimate object, making sails droop even in a strong wind or keeping a single piece of parchment from blowing away. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ain-ess: The caster creates a breeze that he can control. This can be used to clear a room of noxious fumes or fill a sail. The breeze lasts for one minute per success.

Ain-ex: The target is surrounded by a funnel of wind. Melee attacks against the target are made at a +1 difficulty per 2 successes, and ranged attacks are made at a +1 difficulty per success. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Ain-ett: The caster may shape wind and direct it. A wind must be present in order for this Rune to work, but it need not be much more than a gentle breeze. The caster may determine the direction of the wind and increase or decrease its strength. A ship at sea may be stalled when the wind in its sails reverses direction, or a brisk sirocco whipping through an alleyway may be slowed to a breeze. The wind may not cause damage directly, though targets may suffer from the wind indirectly (for example, if the wind blows a sign over on top of a person). The gamemaster should exercise discretion in allowing casters to use this Rune—a slow breeze may not be turned into a typhoon, and a monsoon gale may not be reduced to a harmless breeze. The caster may shape the wind up to ten feet from himself per success, and he may shape the wind for one minute per success.

Written

Ain-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, this is considered a Strength 7 magical attack and applies only to that target.

Ain-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ain-ess: The caster summons a breeze atop the item on which the Rune is carved. The item may fly away, depending on the successes rolled, but the caster maintains control of the wind affecting the target. Moving a target of human size requires at least three successes, and even then the target will only move at a walking pace. Five successes will allow the caster to move the target at running speed. The caster is frequently the target of this Rune, allowing him to fly. The wind created lasts for ten minutes per success.

Ain-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Ain-ett: As it is impossible to write on the wind, this Rune may not be cast by writing it.

Ott

Earth, Stone, Below, Down, Dark, Brown, 10

Spoken

Ott-eq: The target is turned to stone, though it takes many successes to make the transformation complete. This is a Strength 4 magical attack. The target loses 1 point of Agility for each success. If this Rune causes a target enough direct damage to kill, the target is completely petrified. The direct damage must be enough to kill a person at full Health, even if they are at death's door already. If the target survives the attack, the Agility penalty remains for one round per success, after which time the target's limbs loosen.

Ott-ej: A caster may use this Rune to reverse the effect of petrification, with each success reversing 2 points of direct damage caused by the process of turning to stone. However, this Rune is more often used as armor against metal or stone weapons. The target gets +1 Endurance per success against metal or stone. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ott-ess: The caster summons stone and earth, allowing him to hastily build a rough wall. The wall thus summoned is one foot thick per success, and three feet square per success. These dimensions can be manipulated—a wall created with three successes could be nine feet by three feet, or five feet by five feet, or even an organic shape with non-standard dimensions. A wall or mound created with this spell is permanent, though not particularly sturdy.

Ott-ex: The target is covered with magical armor made from stone and dirt. The armor adds 1 Endurance per success and lasts for one minute per success. The armor is created by magic, but the material from which it is made is not magical, and this armor is therefore not proof against magical attacks. If the target is soaked with water before the effect expires, the armor loses half its Endurance bonus, rounded down.

Ott-ett: The target may shape earth or stone as he sees fit. He may shape stone up to ten feet away per success, and he may affect up to three cubic feet of earth or stone per success. The effects are permanent, but are still vulnerable to erosion or other forms of damage. The caster is able to shape earth or

Written

Ott-eg: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, this is considered a Strength 7 magical attack and applies only to that target.

Ott-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target. If used to reverse petrification, the Rune reverses 4 points of direct damage per success.

Ott-ess: The caster summons stone and earth atop the Rune, shaping it as he would with the spoken version. However, the writing increases the power of the rune, and each success creates a wall one foot thick and five feet square.

Ott-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Ott-ett: The caster may shape the target for up to one hour per success, though the duration ends immediately if the Rune itself is altered in any way. The effects of this Rune are otherwise identical to the spoken version.

UII

Spoken

Ull-eg: The caster hurls a burst of flame, scorching his target. This is a Strength 4 magical attack. If flammable, the target will be on fire after the attack. The round after a target is damaged by the Rune, he takes half the incoming damage caused in the initial attack. The target takes a quarter the initial incoming damage on the third round.

Ull-ej: The target is resistant to flame. Each success grants the target +1 Endurance against any incoming damage caused by fire. The effect lasts one minute per success.

Ull-ess: The caster summons a flame, though the fire is not large enough to cause significant damage on its own. The caster could light a torch or campfire, or simply warm his hands. Once created, the fire is bound by the natural laws of physics. If it does not have fuel, the flame will vanish in moments.

Ull-ex: The target is sheathed in a ring of fire that damages all those who come within melee range. The flame causes 5 points of incoming damage per success and sets the offender aflame. The offender takes half the damage on the following round, and a quarter of this damage on the third round.

Ull-ett: The caster may manipulate the shape, size and color of a flame or fire. The fire will not cause more damage than if it was not altered, and it will not gain the ability to burn without fuel. However, the caster can cause a common campfire to turn into an brilliant green demon that flies into the air and explodes dramatically, or other less fantastic effects. The caster may affect fire up to ten feet away per success. The size of fire he may alter depends on his successes as well—a single success would allow a caster to shape a candle flame, two successes would allow him to shape a campfire, and five successes would allow him to easily change the shape of a fire consuming a large house. The caster may continue to shape the target for one minute per success.

Written

Ull-eg: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, this is considered a Strength 7 magical attack and applies only to that target.

Ull-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ull-ess: The caster can use this rune to light an object on fire, and maintain the flame despite a lack of fuel. The object will burn for one minute per success, or until it runs out of fuel, whichever happens last. If applied to a weapon, the weapon gains a +1 Strength for purposes of causing incoming damage. The Rune remains active on the weapon for the life of the Rune (see *Mhetas Law*). If written on a living target, the fire causes 1 point of physical direct damage per round it is burning.

Ull-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Ull-ett: Even if the caster were able to shape this Rune in flame, the transient nature of flame would obliterate the Rune before the caster could affect it. It is therefore impossible to use this Rune by writing it.

Un Ocean, Water, Cold, Dark Blue, Many as one Spoken

Un-eq: The caster hurls a stream of high-pressure water at his target. This is a Strength 4 magical attack. In addition to any physical damage, the target is stunned and loses one action for each success as he gasps for air.

Un-ej: A shield against moisture surrounds the target. Rain will evaporate before it touched the target, and the target gains +1 Endurance per success against any incoming damage caused by water. The protection applies for one minute per success. The target can breathe under water for as long as the protection is in place.

Un-ess: The caster summons a small amount of clean, pure water. Each success on this roll will provide a person with enough water to survive a single day. If this water is not summoned into a water-tight container, it will fall on the ground.

Un-ex: The target is surrounded by a swirling column of water. All melee attacks against the target receive +1 difficulty per success, while all ranged attacks receive +1 difficulty per 2 successes. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Un-ett: The caster may shape water or water-based liquids.

The caster may make a hole in a wave, he may create temporary sculptures from a pail of beer, or he may send a stream of whiskey into a fire. He may affect water up to ten feet away per success, and he may shape three cubic feet of water per success. He may not make the water disappear, aside from moving it to a different location. *For example, the caster could send the contents of a keg into a bonfire, effectively eliminating it, but he cannot simply empty the keg into thin air.* The caster may shape water for up to one minute per success.

Written

Un-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, this is considered a Strength 7 magical attack and applies only to that target.

Un-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Un-ess: The caster can create a larger amount of water. Each success creates enough water for five men for one day.

Un-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Un-ett: The only way that this Rune may be written in water is through the use of the spoken version of this Rune. Since the written Rune will disappear once the duration of the spoken Rune ends, there is no real benefit to casting it by writing it.

Aan Wood, Plants, Trees, Green, 3 Spoken

Aan-eq: The caster targets a living thing, which begins to take on the aspects of wood. Thorns poke through flesh, skin becomes rough and twisted, and roots grow out of the target's feet and sink into the ground. This is a Strength 4 magical attack. The target may not run or walk for one round per success.

Aan-ej: The target is protected from wood and plants, allowing him to pass through thorny brambles without harm. Furthermore, the target gains +1 Endurance versus wood weapons per success. Note that this only protects against wood or plants a weapon with a wood handle but a steel head

will still cause normal damage. This protection lasts for one minute per success.

Aan-ess: The caster gains some very slight control over a targeted plant. A tree can be compelled to bend slightly to offer shade, or a vine could loop downward to be used as rope. The plants will not move fast enough to harm anyone who could avoid them, and will only act as guided by the caster. The caster can control the target for one minute per success.

Aan-ex: The target is covered by a suit of wooden armor. The armor is created by magic, but the material from which it is made is not magical, and this armor is therefore not proof against magical attacks. The target's Endurance is increased by one per success, and the effect lasts for one minute per success. If the target is the subject of a fire-based attack before the effect expires, the armor loses half its Endurance bonus, rounded down.

Aan-ett: The caster may shape any wood, alive or dead. He may burrow through wooden doors, weaken wooden beams, or force plants into improbable configurations. If this Rune is used against a manned Stryder, the pilot may resist the effects as if he were the target. The caster may affect wood up to tenfeet away per success, and he may shape up to three cubic feet of wood per success.

Written

Aan-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, this is considered a Strength 7 magical attack and applies only to that target.

Aan-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Aan-ess: This Rune is traditionally written on the target to increase the duration of the Rune. By writing the Rune directly onto the target, the caster can control the target plant for one hour per success. He can release his control and regain it for the duration of the Rune.

This Rune can also be written onto an inanimate object, which will allow it to be used against all targets within range, as per the spoken version. The caster cannot control more

plants than his level of Runelore. The Rune remains active for the life of the Rune (*see Mhetas Law*).

Aan-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Aan-ett: The caster may shape the target for up to one hour per success, though the duration ends immediately if the Rune itself is altered in any way. The effects of this Rune are otherwise identical to the spoken version.

Khet

Shadow, Darkness

Spoken

Khet-eq: The target is enveloped in darkness. Each success on the roll adds +1 Difficulty to all of the target's actions that involve sight. The effect lasts for 1 minute per success.

Khet-ej: The target may dispel any darkness around him, as if he had a light by which only he can see. Difficulty modifiers for darkness are reduced by 1 per success. Obviously, if the lighting is only poor enough to provide a +1 Difficulty, multiple successes are wasted. The absence of darkness is not visible to anyone else, and does not provide targeting bonuses for the target's foes. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Khet-ess: The caster may summon shadows to help him hide, or to hide objects within the darkness. This effect is best used where shadows already exist, as a person hidden in a shadow is somewhat conspicuous in an open field on a sunny day. The depth of the shadows depends on the successes gained, with more successes adding to stealth and hiding-related skills. The shadows last for one minute per success.

Khet-ex: The target is wrapped in a cloak of shadow, which shuns light for a small area around him. He can see normally, as can all within melee range. Ranged attacks against the target receive a +1 Difficulty penalty per success, as the target is difficult to discern. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Khet-ett: The caster may shape target shadows to alter their appearance. Shadows may be shaped to resemble objects other than those casting them, or they may simply be larger or smaller than possible given lighting conditions. A caster could even alter a shadow to be smaller than a coin, reducing the

chance of a person being spotted by his shadow. The caster may shape up to ten square feet of shadow per success, and the changes are permanent. However, if the shadow disappears or reforms drastically, as it might if exposed to a powerful light source, the effect is dispelled.

Written

Khet-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Khet-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Khet-ess: The area around the Rune is covered in shadows regardless of the time of day, providing the bonuses described in the spoken version. The shadows last for one hour per success.

Khet-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Khet-ett: The only way that this Rune may be written on a shadow is through the use of the spoken version of this Rune. The caster may manipulate the shadow for one hour per success, but as with the spoken version, the effect ends immediately if the shadow is drastically reshaped by environmental conditions.

SENSORY RUNES

These eight runes relate to the senses that living things use to perceive the world around them. They produce effects that can deceive and challenge the limits of those senses, and used in combination with other Runes can be used to create stunning and often unpredictable effects (*see Advanced Rune Usage*). The potential for such Runes to be used for devious purposes (or to uncover the same), particularly in urban settings, has led to their use being banned or restricted in many cities, especially during legal proceedings, trade negotiations and political gatherings.

Zhei

Sight, Vision, Visibility

Spoken

Zhei-eq: The caster floods the target's sight with a burst of visual stimulation. The target sees a barrage of images and extraordinarily bright lights, which blind him for one round per success. See *The Book of War* for more on blindness modifiers. Should the caster roll a Critical Success (five successes), the target is permanently blind.

Zhei-ej: The target automatically compensates for glaring lights, and cannot be blinded by bright lights. The target may still be unable to see in the dark. This effect lasts for one minute per success.

Zhei-ess: The target is able to ignore penalties caused by poor visibility conditions. Sandstorms or pitch darkness, blazing light or swirling smoke, the target can see. Not only that, but the target's Perception is increased by +1 for each success for any sight-based Perception checks. Each success cancels out 1 point of sight-based modifiers. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Zhei-ex: The target is able to see in every direction, and cannot be surprised for the duration of the Rune. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Zhei-ett: The caster may alter the target's vision. Each success allows the target to increase or decrease the target's Perception score by 1 for all vision-related Perception checks. If Perception is reduced to 0 in this manner, the target is effectively blind. Unlike many other uses of the Ett Rune, the effects are not permanent, and last for one minute per success.

Written

Zhei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one minute per success and applies only to that target.

Zhei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Zhei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Zhei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Zhei-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Ze

Hearing, Sound, Noise, Thunder

Spoken

Ze-eq: The caster overwhelms the target with a blast of noise. The target is deafened, able to hear nothing for one minute per success. The blast of sound is also very disruptive, stunning the target, who loses one action per success. Should the caster roll a Critical Success (five successes), the target is permanently deafened.

Ze-ej: The target cannot be deafened by loud noises, and is able to ignore any penalties caused by loud explosions, screaming crowds, or other sounds. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ze-ess: The target gains excellent clarity of hearing. The target gains +1 Perception per success for any hearing-based Perception checks. Loud noises may still overwhelm the target, but they are not amplified, simply sorted out. This effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ze-ex: The target is able to hear and pinpoint movement all around him, allowing him to apply his entire defense against attackers behind or flanking him. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Ze-ett: The caster may alter the target's hearing. Each success allows the target to increase or decrease the target's Perception score by 1 for all hearing-related Perception checks. If Perception is reduced to 0 in this manner, the target is effectively deaf. Unlike many other uses of the Ett Rune, the effects are not permanent, and last for one minute per success.

Written

Ze-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one round per success and applies only to that target.

Ze-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ze-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ze-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ze-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Shei

Smell, Odor, Disease

Spoken

Shei-eq: The caster assaults his target with a searing cloud of noxious gas, which burns directly up the target's nose and into his lungs. The target coughs and gags, losing one action per success. Should the caster roll a Critical Success, the target contracts a viral infection, giving him a +1 penalty to all checks for a number of weeks equal to one die roll.

Shei-ej: The target cannot smell anything. He can breathe normally, but his sense of smell is totally inert. Filthy sewers and dead bodies may look disgusting, but they do not stink. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Shei-ess: The target gains an extraordinarily sensitive sense of smell. He can use this heightened sense to increase Perception by +1 per success for any scent-based Perception rolls. The target also gains 1 bonus per success to all Tracking checks. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Shei-ex: The target can smell diseases and airborne poisons and pinpoint their location, allowing him to stay out of the dangerous areas. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Shei-ett: The caster may alter the target's sense of smell. Each success allows the target to increase or decrease the target's Perception score by 1 for all smell-related Perception checks. Unlike many other uses of the Ett Rune, the effects are not permanent. They last for one minute per success.

Written

Shei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one round per success and applies only to that target.

Shei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Shei-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Chei

Taste, Flavor, Poison

Spoken

Chei-eq: This Rune is not always immediate, but it is often quite deadly. The caster poisons the target, which can be a living thing, a weapon, a glass of wine or a plate of food. If the target is a living creature, he (or it) is immediately poisoned. The target takes 4 direct damage per round, for one round per success. If the target is a weapon or consumable, the next living thing struck with the weapon, or any creature that consumes the drink or food, must roll an opposed Willpower roll against the original Runelore check, suffering as if they were personally targeted by the Rune. Should the caster roll a Critical Success, the target dies horribly and quickly.

Chei-ej: The target cannot taste anything, no matter how vile or delicious. Traveling Runemages often use this Rune to allow them to eat foreign foods by which they would otherwise be repulsed. Of course, having no ability to taste indicates no Perception at all as related to taste-based Perception checks. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Chei-ess: The target has incredibly sensitive taste. He can taste a drop of poison in a glass of strong wine, or sample a dish to determine the ingredients. The target gains +1 Perception per success for all taste-based Perception checks. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Chei-ex: The target gains the ability to eat or drink poisoned food or drink with little or no ill side effect. The poison is simply filtered out and neutralized. Damage caused by ingested poison is reduced by 2 per success, and this

protection applies every round in which the effect is active. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Chei-ett: The caster may alter the target's sense of taste. Each success allows the target to increase or decrease the target's Perception score by 1 for all taste-related Perception checks. Unlike many other uses of the Ett Rune, the effects are not permanent. They last for one minute per success.

Written

Chei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one minute per success and applies only to that target.

Chei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Chei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Chei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Chei-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Rhun

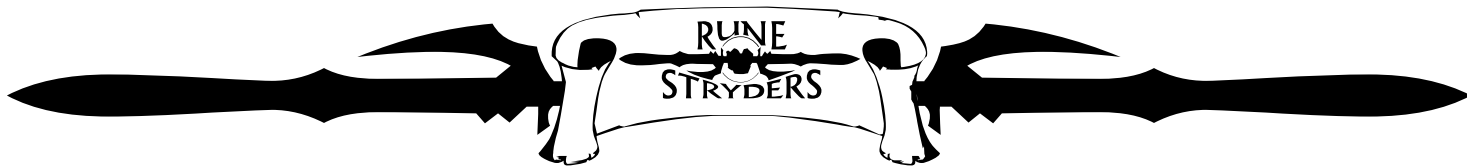
Speech, Language

Spoken

Rhun-eq: The target's language becomes total gibberish, unintelligible to anyone listening. The target also cannot write intelligibly, and even sign language or charades will be garbled. Obviously, the target cannot cast Runes. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Rhun-ej: The target gains an instant mastery over language. The target can speak, write and understand one additional language per success, for one minute per success.

Rhun-ess: The target can store and recite any speech heard within the range of the Rune. If the target is an object that cannot speak, the speech can be played back by recasting the Rune before it expires, which is one minute per success. The memory of the speech is lost when the effect ends.



Rhun-ex: The target becomes very eloquent, able to win over listeners or defend his position in an argument. The target effectively gains +1 to every social skill for the duration of the Rune, which lasts for one minute per success.

Rhun-ett: The caster may alter the target's speech. Every word out of the target's mouth may be altered by the caster to any other word desired. The target will realize immediately that his speech is being altered, but he will be unable to say anything other than what the caster decides to make him say. If the target does not speak, this Rune is ineffective. Unlike many other uses of the Ett Rune, the effects are not permanent. The caster may affect the target's speech for one minute per success. Casting this Rune on an unwilling target allows the target a Willpower roll to resist.

Written

Rhun-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Rhun-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Rhun-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Rhun-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Rhun-ett: The caster may alter the target's speech as per the spoken version, but he may control the target's speech for one hour per success.

Enn

Hard, Impervious, Rough, Coarse, Stable, Steady

Spoken

Enn-eq: The target's body begins to harden. Every move is a struggle. The target loses one action per round per success. If the target does not roll any successes on the Initiative roll, he may not defend himself or take any actions aside from dull

muttering or blinking slowly. On the actions he does manage to take, his Agility is reduced by 1 for each success. The effect lasts for one round per success.

Enn-ej: The target becomes incredibly agile and flexible, as joints and cartilage loosen. The target gains +1 Agility per success, but the loose connections of the body make the target weaker, and the target loses 1 Strength and 1 Endurance per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Enn-ess: The target becomes physically harder and more difficult to break. If cast on a person or animal, the target gains +1 Armor but loses 1 Agility per success. If cast on a piece of armor, the wearer gains a +1 Armor bonus per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Enn-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ean-ej.

Enn-ett: The caster may manipulate the hardness of physical objects. He may not actually manipulate the target itself, just its hardness. The target gains 1 Endurance per success. As with other Sensory Runes, the effect is not permanent. It lasts for one minute per success.

Written

Enn-eq: The Rune affects every living target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one minute per success and applies only to that target.

Enn-ej: The Rune affects every living target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Enn-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the protection lasts one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Enn-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ean-ej.

Enn-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the caster may manipulate the target for one hour per success.

Ean

Soft, Giving, Yielding, Flexible, Unstable

Spoken

Ean-eq: The target becomes soft. If cast on a person, their bones refuse to support them, and they lose 1 point from

Strength and Agility per success. If cast on armor, the armor loses 1 point of Armor value per success. If cast on a weapon, the weapon loses 1 Strength per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ean-ej: The target's muscles harden, granting +1 Strength and Endurance per success. However, the target also becomes less flexible, losing 1 Agility per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ean-ess: The target becomes soft and pliable, easily reshaped with bare hands. The Rune affects one cubic foot per success, so a skilled Runemage could dig doors out of stone walls or shape handholds in a cliff face. Artisans sometimes use this Rune to shape stone or even precious jewels. If cast on flesh, any direct damage caused to the target is doubled for the duration of the Rune, which is one minute per success.

Ean-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Enn-ej.

Ean-ett: The caster may manipulate the softness of physical objects. He may not actually manipulate the target itself, just its softness. The target loses 1 Endurance per success. As with other Sensory Runes, the effect is not permanent. It lasts for one minute per success.

Written

Ean-eq: This Rune will not affect multiple targets, even if they are able to see the Rune, because it affects only the target onto which it is scribed. The effect lasts one hour per success, and applies only to that target.

Ean-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ean-ess: This Rune is somewhat problematic. By writing this Rune on a target, it will become pliable as with the spoken version. However, if the Rune is disturbed in any way, it will warp and become useless immediately, and the target will return to its original consistency. There are still benefits to writing this Rune, however. The Rune affects an area of three cubic feet per success, and lasts for one hour per success, as long as the Rune is intact.

Ean-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Enn-ej.

Ean-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the caster may manipulate the target for one hour per success.

Frei

Thought

Spoken

Frei-eq: The target is attacked by a barrage of thought not his own. This is a Strength 2 magical attack, ignoring armor, but the attack causes Mind damage rather than Body, and cannot be reduced by Endurance.

Frei-ej: The target may shut out thought and emotion, preventing them from reaching the surface. He is stone-faced and emotionless, and any attempts to read his thoughts (such as with Frei-ess) suffer a +1 Difficulty per success. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Frei-ess: The caster may sense the thoughts of the target. The effect may be resisted as normal, though unless the caster is obvious about his attempt, the target may not know that he is resisting. Only surface thoughts may be read—the caster will not glean facts about which the target is not currently thinking. The effect lasts for as long as the caster concentrates on his target, up to one minute per success.

Frei-ex: The target may read the immediate surface thoughts of those around him, though the depth of knowledge gained is very shallow, much more than with Frei-ess. However, he can read those thoughts more quickly, and therefore gains a significant advantage when time is of the essence. In game terms, the target may wait to announce his action until he hears what every other combatant is going to do. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Frei-ett: The caster may manipulate the thoughts of a target person or animal. This affects thoughts, not actions, and the target is not compelled in any way to act on those thoughts. The target will know that the thoughts are not his own. This is a good way to communicate silently, though it is also an exceptionally good way to frighten a person who does not realize what is happening. The caster may also communicate with intelligent animals with this Rune, though it may take time to train the animal so that it does not react in fear or ignore the unexpected thoughts. The caster may use this ability on only a single target per casting, though he may cast it multiple times to communicate with multiple targets. The caster may use this effect for one minute per success.

Written

Frei-eq: The Rune discharges against any target within range. The attack operates identically to the spoken Rune.

Frei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Frei-ess: When written on a living target, the caster gains access to the target's surface thoughts at will, as long as the caster is within 1 mile per success. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

Frei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Frei-ett: As it is impossible to write on a thought, this Rune may not be cast by writing it.

LIFE RUNES

These eight Runes all have to do with living animals and the qualities they possess. Casters specializing in these runes are masters of their own bodies, and the bodies of others, possessing the ability to alter physical and mental attributes and even control minds, to a limited extent. Though these runes seem limited, they are likely to have the greatest effect on characters during the course of a campaign, since they have such great ability to alter the body.

Awn

Self, Me

Spoken

Awn-eq: The caster hurls his consciousness into the target and seizes control of the target's body. The caster can control the target's movements from within the body for one minute per success. The caster cannot control his body and his target's body simultaneously; he can prevent his target from taking actions or defending, but he cannot even defend himself if he is actively controlling the target.

Awn-ej: The theory of this Rune is a little strange. The caster theoretically repels the target from itself. Since this is not actually possible, the caster creates a mirror image of the target. In fact, one mirror image is created per success. These

mirror images are completely illusory, all standing near the target and mimicking his every move. The images will vanish on a successful attack, but the target cannot be struck until all the images have been removed, as the illusions will shift to protect him for as long as any exist. The illusory targets remain for one minute per success, or until they are dispelled.

Awn-ess: The caster exerts his will against the environment, and can manipulate small objects without touching them. The control extends to the range of the Rune, and lasts for one minute per success. The caster can move one pound per success, as if he were holding them in his hands.

Awn-ex: The caster may interpose his Soul between the target and an attacker. All damage received by the target is subtracted from the caster's Soul before affecting the target's Health or Body. The damage will not carry over to Mind; any damage caused in excess of the caster's Soul begins to affect the target's Health. The protection lasts for one minute per success, or until the caster decides to end the effect.

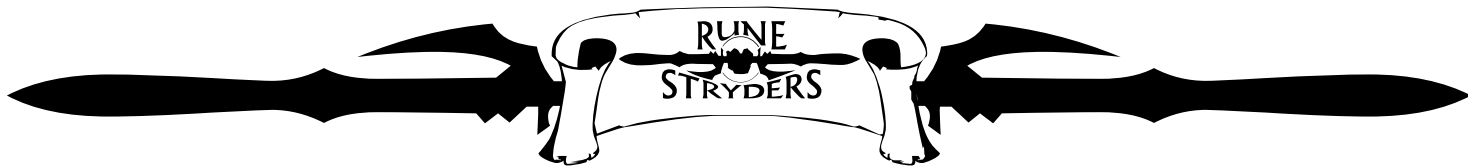
Awn-ett: No apparent effects are generated by this Rune. Some say that it distort's elements of the caster's beliefs and memories, but no proof exists for this theory.

Written

Awn-eq: This Rune cannot affect a group, as the caster cannot control more than one target at a time. However, by writing this Rune on a living thing, the caster can control the target for one hour per success. Other than the duration, this Rune functions just as the spoken version.

Awn-ej: This is a much more powerful version of the spoken Rune. By writing this Rune on a target, two mirror images are created per success and last for ten minutes per success or until dispelled.

Awn-ess: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster can move the Rune without touching it, just as with the spoken version. However, since writing the Rune focuses its power, the caster can now manipulate that item for one hour per success, and can manipulate the object just as if he were holding it. For example, the caster could write this Rune onto a twelve-pound sword and swing it as if he were holding it. He could write this Rune on a huge stone slab, but unless the caster could move the slab with his hands, he could not move it with this Rune.



Awn-ex: The target gains the protection as per the spoken version for one hour per success.

Awn-ett: As with the spoken version, no apparent effects are generated by this Rune.

Gai

Other, You

Spoken

Gai-eq: The target loses all confidence in himself and remembers all of his failures and faults. The target must pass a Willpower check to act at all, with the target equal to triple the number of successes. He may make this check at the beginning of each round, and if successful may roll Initiative as normal. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Gai-ej: The caster selects one target, and gains protection against any attack by the target, physical or otherwise. All checks gain a -1 difficulty bonus as long as they pertain to avoiding harm caused by the particular target. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Gai-ess: The caster gains the ability to manipulate the mind of the target. The target receives a +1 difficulty penalty per success on any opposition to bluffs, intimidation, or other forms of persuasion.

Gai-ex: The caster forces another person to interpose his Soul between the target and any attacks. The spell effectively has two targets—the person whose Soul score is depleted, and the person enjoying the protection. The protected target does not receive a Willpower roll to resist being protected, but the target whose Soul is being used as armor is allowed a Willpower check to resist being used as a proxy. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Gai-ett: The effects of this Rune seem to be identical to Gai-ess.

Written

Gai-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Gai-ej: The caster gains protection from every target within range, as per the spoken version of this Rune. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Gai-ess: All targets within range become more susceptible to

the casters persuasion attempts, as per the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Gai-ex: If the caster wishes to invoke the written version of this Rune on any target other than himself, the Rune must be written on both targets. The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the protection lasts for one hour per success.

Gai-ett: The effects of this Rune seem to be identical to Gai-ess.

lin

Living Things, Animals, 2

Spoken

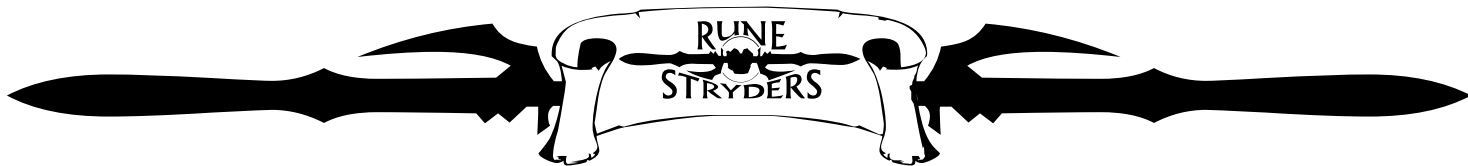
lin-eq: The caster summons the nearest small animals to attack the target. This can vary from being annoying (the caster summons a mouse) to deadly (the caster summons a nest of venomous snakes). The caster has no control over the creature summoned; the nearest creatures simply arrive and attack the target. One creature will be summoned per success. The creatures will stay to fight for one round per success, or until slain. The gamemaster can select creatures appropriate to the region or roll a die and consult the table below.

Roll	Species
1-4	Bats/fliers (including birds, depending on the setting)
5-7	Amphibians (and/or reptiles, depending on the setting)
8-10	Mammals (mouse, rat, ferret, rabbit, squirrel, etc.)

lin-ej: The target becomes fearsome in the eyes of animals, and any animal must overcome a Willpower check in order to attack the target, including the Stryders of the Sivitagi. The target for this check is ten plus the number of successes, and the effect lasts for one minute per success.

lin-ess: The caster gains the trust and friendship of the target animal. This can be used to calm a wild beast, get close to hunted prey, or befriend an angry guard animal. The target remains calm for one minute per success, as long as the caster is the only person approaching. Other people are not included in the effect.

lin-ex: The caster summons the nearest small animals to protect him. The animals will not attack unless they or the caster are threatened, but they will do their best to block attacks, confuse attackers, or otherwise keep the caster from



harm. One creature is summoned per success. The creatures summoned stay for one round per success, or until slain. The gamemaster can select creatures appropriate to the region, or simply roll a die on the table below.

Roll	Species
1-4	Bats/fliers (including birds, depending on the setting)
5-7	Amphibians (and/or reptiles, depending on the setting)
8-10	Mammals (mouse, rat, ferret, rabbit, squirrel, etc.)

lin-ett: The caster may shape living things. The caster must physically touch his target. If used on an unwilling target, the target gets a Willpower roll to resist. If used to cause damage, the Rune causes 1 direct damage per success. The effect is permanent, though the caster may manipulate the target for up to one minute per success.

Written

lin-eq: Animals are summoned to attack all targets within range. Each target is attacked by one animal per success. If written on a living target, the target will be attacked by one animal per success, and the animals will continue to attack for one minute per success, or until slain.

lin-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

lin-ess: The caster must write this Rune directly on the target animal. The target will be friendly toward the caster for one hour per success.

lin-ex: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success. The target may be anything or anyone—casting this Rune on a doorway will make it difficult for anyone to approach.

lin-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the caster may work with his subject for one hour per success.

Pei

Power, Strength, Fortitude

Spoken

Pei-eq: The target loses 1 Strength per success. Derivative scores are not affected. If Strength is reduced below 1, the target collapses, unable to move at all. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Pei-ej: The target may ignore penalties to Strength, such as fatigue or damage. The target may ignore 1 point of modifiers per success. This effect lasts for one minute per success.

Pei-ess: The target gains 1 Strength per success. Derivative scores are not affected. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Pei-ex: The target's Strength increases by 1 per success, but only for the purposes of opposed rolls using Strength skills. The target gains this bonus for one minute per success.

Pei-ett: The target's Strength is increased by 1 for every two successes. The increase affects derivative stats as well (so for every 1 point increase in Strength, the target also gains +1 Body, +1 Endurance, +2 Health, and +1 Soul). The bonuses last for one minute per success.

Written

Pei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Pei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Pei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Pei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Pei-ett: The effect is the same as the spoken version, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Fas

Speed, Agility, Fast

As with the **Pei** Rune, but the Stat affected is Agility.

Thei

Mind, Thought, Knowledge

As with the **Pei** Rune, except the Stat affected is Mind.

Sen

Spirit, Soul, Heart, Wisdom

As with the **Pei** Rune, except the Stat affected is Heart.

Dron

Unliving Things

Spoken

Dron-eq: The target is assailed with whatever rocks, metal, or other unliving material is nearby. This is a Strength 4 magical attack, though it may be blocked by armor. The Strength of the attack may be changed depending on the environment and availability of unliving detritus—a rubble-strewn street might make the attack a Strength 5 attack, while a verdant forest might reduce the attack to Strength 2. Casting this Rune inside an armory or smithy might even increase the attack to Strength 6.

Dron-ej: The target gains armor versus any weapons made of stone or steel. Each success grants 1 point of Endurance versus unliving weapons. Weapons made of bone, wood or other organic materials do damage as normal, though a metal head on a wooden shaft is considered to be unliving. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Dron-ess: The caster may summon unliving material to him. Each success calls one cubic foot of material, but the exact material summoned depends on the environment. It will not strike the caster, but does end up within easy reach.

Dron-ex: The target is encased in armor created from whatever unliving material is nearby. A single success grants 1 point of increased Endurance, and every 2 successes thereafter increase Endurance by 1. Five successes would therefore grant 3 additional Endurance versus any attack. As this armor is created using a Rune, it is proof against both magical and physical attacks. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Dron-ett: The caster may shape whatever inorganic material is at hand, though he must physically touch the item as he shapes it. The effects are permanent, and once shaped, the material keeps its form. The caster may shape the material for one minute per success.

Written

Dron-eq: The Rune discharges against any target within range. The attack operates identically to the spoken Rune.

Dron-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Dron-ess: The Rune draws unliving material to itself. Each success calls one cubic foot of material, which sits close to the Rune. If the material is removed, more will take its place for as long as the Rune is active. As with the spoken version, the actual material summoned depends largely on what is available nearby.

Dron-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Dron-ett: This Rune must be written directly on the target material. The caster may manipulate the target material for one hour per success.

CONCEPTUAL RUNES

These eight runes deal with intangible concepts with little or no presence in actual physical reality. Although they cannot always be physically represented, there can be no doubt that they play a major role in everyday life. The caster who can control these runes can have great influence over the lives of others, both subtly and quite directly.

Ngei

Blessing, Luck, Fortune, Fate

Spoken

Ngei-eq: In most cases, attack Runes are detrimental to the target. This Rune is the exception. The target of this Rune gains one success on every check for every success on the Runelore skill check. Critical failure on any affected roll indicates merely a failure, and a standard failure is at least a marginal success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ngei-ej: Most defense Runes protect their targets, but by warding off a blessing, the target actually suffers. The target cannot be exceptionally lucky. The target's maximum successes on any check is equal to five minus the number of successes the caster gets on the Runelore check. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ngei-ess: The world just seems to work in the target's favor. The target gains a -1 difficulty bonus per success on every check. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ngei-ex: For the duration of the Rune, the target may reroll any one check per success. He must fail at the roll in order to



invoke this protection. The protection lasts for one minute per success or until the target has rerolled his limit.

Ngei-ett: The caster may alter his good luck, saving it until he needs it. He may save and reroll one check per success. The check must succeed in order to be saved. The number of successes on the saved roll is noted, and the check is rerolled. When the caster wants to invoke his altered luck, he may accept the successes on the saved roll in place of rolling another check. The caster can save rolls for one minute per success. If the caster has unused rolls saved when the effect ends, those rolls are substituted for his next checks. He will not roll again until the saved rolls are used up.

Written

Ngei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ngei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ngei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ngei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ngei-ett: The Rune must be written onto a living target. The target gains the benefits of the spoken version of this Rune, but has one hour per success to use the saved rolls.

Wei

Curse, Bad Luck, Misfortune

Spoken

Wei-eq: The target is saddled with terrible luck. The target loses one success on every check for each success on the Runelore check. Any time the target's check results in negative successes, the target is considered to have rolled a Critical Failure. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Wei-ej: The target is granted a minimum of one success on any check as a ward against bad luck. Any check that fails is considered to be a single success, and Critical Failures are

reduced in severity to a normal failure. Should the target roll more than one success, this Rune has no effect it is used to prevent bad luck, not create good luck. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Wei-ess: The target suffers a +1 difficulty penalty per success to all checks. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Wei-ex: The target may force anyone within melee range to reroll any one check per success. The character who has to reroll must succeed at the first roll in order for the caster to invoke this protection. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Wei-ett: The caster may alter his bad luck, saving it until it hurts less. He may save and reroll one check per success. The check must fail in order to be saved. When the caster wants to invoke his altered luck, he may accept the failed roll in place of rolling another check. The caster can save rolls for one minute per success. If the caster has unused failures saved when the effect ends, those failures are substituted for his next checks. He will not roll again until the saved rolls are used up.

Written

Wei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Wei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Wei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Wei-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

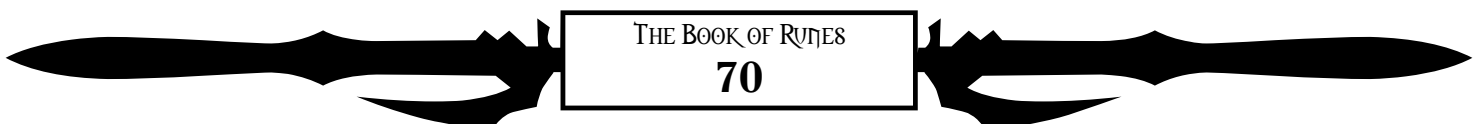
Wei-ett: The Rune must be written onto a living target. The target gains the benefits of the spoken version of this Rune, but has one hour per success to use the saved rolls.

Thurn

Pain, Hurt, Suffering, Harm

Spoken

Thurn-eq: The target suffers horrible pain, and 1 point of direct damage per success. In this and all other cases involving



this Rune by itself, damage is only applied to Health; if Health is depleted, the pain inflicted by this Rune will never affect the Body score. Thus, while it can hurt, it cannot kill on its own. Pain in and of itself is not lethal.

Thurn-ej: The target can ignore debilitating pain. Each success cancels 1 die of penalties due to pain or injury. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Thurn-ess: The target is shocked with an instant of sharp pain. The pain causes no damage, but it can shock a target badly enough to make the target lose an action. The target must succeed at a Willpower check with a difficulty of 10 plus 1 per success or lose his next action. The shock of pain can also be used to wake a sleeping target or clear a target's mind.

Thurn-ex: Every sentient creature within melee range of the target suffers stabbing pain. The suffering creatures lose one action and 1 point of Health per success. This damage will not transfer to Body. The protective effect lasts for one minute per success.

Thurn-ett: The caster may determine the location of the target's pain. The target must already be in some form of pain, but the location of that pain is moved to another part of the target's body at the caster's discretion. A comrade may have a headache moved to a leg in order to clear his mind, or an opponent may have the pain from a stab wound to the shoulder moved to a hand in order to cause the target difficulty modifiers. The Rune does not inflict extra damage. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Written

Thurn-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the target takes 2 direct damage per success. The target also loses his next two actions writhing and screaming in pain.

Thurn-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Thurn-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the target automatically loses his next action. If written on a weapon, any successful attacks apply the spoken effect to the

opponent, and the Rune remains active on the weapon for the life of the Rune (*see Mhetas Law*).

Thurn-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Thurn-ett: The Rune must be written onto a living target. The caster may manipulate the target's pain for one hour per success.

Yon Spoken

Pleasure, Healing, Laughter

Yon-eq: The target's mind is flooded with pleasurable hallucinations, and he becomes highly susceptible to suggestion. The hallucinations will also cloud a target's mind, forcing them to succeed at a Willpower check with a target of 10 for every round in which they want to act. The effect lasts for 1 minute per success.

Yon-ej: The target becomes immune to the allure of pleasure. All Willpower checks gain a +1 Bonus to resist temptation of any kind, be it alcohol, eating, sex, or anything else that brings the target pleasure. This protection has the unhappy side effect of preventing the target from enjoying pleasure in any form. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Yon-ess: The target is blanketed with soothing bliss. The target recovers 1 point of Health damage per success, and is able to relax for the duration of the effect. This Rune can be used to ease suffering, allowing targets to sleep despite their injuries or think clearly past their pain. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Yon-ex: Every sentient creature within melee range of the target is distracted by a burst of overwhelming pleasure. The creature so affected loses one action due to the extreme distraction. The protective effect lasts for one minute per success.

Yon-ett: The caster may determine the location of the target's pleasure. The target must already be enjoying pleasure on some level, but the location of that pleasure is moved to another part of the target's body at the caster's discretion. This Rune could be used to cause an aphrodisiac effect on a person who is merely enjoying a tasty beverage, or it could be

used to alter the effects of physical intimacy. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Written

Yon-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Yon-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Yon-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Yon-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Yon-ett: The Rune must be written onto a living target. The caster may manipulate the target's pleasure for one hour per success.

Bei

Truth, Honesty, Justice

Spoken

Bei-eq: The target is unable to lie. He will be totally unable to speak, write or even sign if he is lying. The effect lasts for one Minute per success.

Bei-ej: The target gains resistance to interrogation, torture, or any other methods of questioning. The target gains a -1 difficulty bonus per success to resist any questioning, magical or not. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Bei-ess: This Rune is typically cast upon an item about which the caster would like to learn. The Rune will give the caster information about the item or person, revealing one truth about the target per success. The exact nature of the truths revealed is left to the gamemaster's judgement, but should begin with the most important and relevant facts. At the gamemaster's discretion, some objects or people could be allowed an opposing Willpower roll to reduce the successes.

Bei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Whin-ej.

Bei-ett: The caster may manipulate the truth. The message being shaped must be truthful, but the caster may alter its

delivery or phrasing. This Rune could be used to put a positive spin on ugly truths, or to put the truth in its ugliest light. If the target is a person, the words that come out of his mouth or pen are subtly twisted, but still true. If the target is a book or other written message, anyone reading the message for the duration of this Rune will read the message as the caster intends it, not as it was written. The caster may control the target's message for one minute per success. The effect is permanent on permanently recorded truths—after the Rune expires, written messages will not revert to their original wording.

Written

Bei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Bei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Bei-ess: This Rune can be written on a durable surface, such as stone or steel, and anything placed upon the Rune grants the caster knowledge, as with the spoken effect. The caster does not have to be the person placing the object on the Rune. As long as he is in range of the Rune, he is granted the knowledge. If the caster is not in range, this Rune has no effect. By writing this Rune directly onto a person or object, the caster is able to glean two truths about the target per success.

Bei-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Whin-ej.

Bei-ett: The caster may manipulate the truth of the target's message for one hour per success.

Whin

Lies, Falsehood, Betrayal, Concealment, Secrecy, Stealth

Spoken

Whin-eq: The caster creates illusions in the mind of his target. The target believes the illusions to be real. The caster controls the illusions, and may direct them however he sees fit. The illusions can never cause damage, though they can frighten a target considerably. The caster may create one illusion per success, and maintain them all for one minute per success.

Whin-ej: The target can detect falsehoods. He can detect lies, disguises, illusions, or secret doors. The target gains a -1 difficulty bonus on all Perception checks that relate to discovering untruth.

Whin-ess: The caster places a disguise on the target. The disguise is quite believable, giving all who see the target a +1 difficulty penalty to Perception checks relating to seeing through the disguise. The target may alter his voice, height, weight, clothing, or any other personal details. If the disguise is emulating a specific person, the gamemaster may reduce these penalties for those who are familiar with the person being imitated. The disguise lasts for one minute per success.

Whin-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Bei-ej.

Whin-ett: The caster may manipulate falsehoods or lies. The message being shaped must be untrue, but the caster may alter its delivery or phrasing. This Rune could be used to make lies sound more believable, or it could be used to make the target sound absolutely unbelievable. If the target is a person, the words that come out of his mouth or pen are subtly twisted, but still a lie. If the target is a book or other written message, anyone reading the message for the duration of this Rune will read the message as the caster intends it, not as it was written. The caster may control the target's message for oneminute per success. The effect is permanent on recorded truths—after the Rune expires, written messages will not revert to their original wording.

Written

Whin-eq: The caster imbues the Rune with specific illusions that will appear to every target in range. The caster can create one illusion per success, and the illusions will act as if recorded and played back for each target. Their behavior will not vary in any way. The caster must prioritize the illusions, because each target receives a Willpower check to oppose the caster's successes as usual.

Whin-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Whin-ess: The target's disguise lasts for one hour per success. The Rune will not affect multiple targets.

Whin-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Bei-ej.

Whin-ett: The caster may manipulate the lies of the target's message for one hour per success.

Vel Spoken

Valuable, Expensive, Precious, Dear, Loved, Cherished

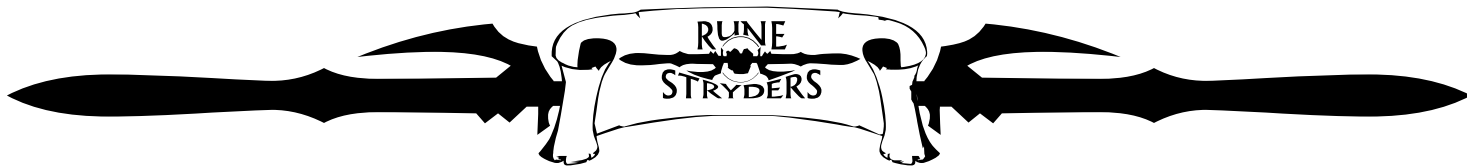
Vel-eq: The target becomes utterly devoted to the caster. The target will do absolutely nothing that might harm the caster, and will do everything in his power to aid him. This does not mean that the target will follow orders, merely that the target will attempt to preserve the well-being of the caster by any means necessary. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Vel-ej: This Rune can be cast on either a person or object. It disguises the appearance of the target, making expensive vases look cracked and pitted, swords look cheap and chipped, and people dirty and ugly. By casting this Rune on an item, a caster could conceal a valuable Runed weapon or expensive amulet in plain site. Note that the target is recognizable for what it is a sword is still a sword, and a woman is still a woman. They are just cheaper, dirtier, and more used. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Vel-ess: When cast on an object, this Rune polishes, shines, dusts and otherwise makes the object appear more valuable. A simple metal coin will gleam bright, drab clothes will be clean and attractive, and weapons will be sharp and meticulously kept. Any person who sees the target item will place a very high value on the item, much higher than it is really worth. The item will appear to be worth its actual value times the number of successes rolled on the Runelore check—if the caster rolls three successes, the apparent value of the item is tripled. Any person so affected is allowed a Willpower check to oppose the casters successes as normal. When cast on a living creature, the target becomes much more attractive, with perfect hair, clean skin, and flawless skin. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Vel-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Blei-ej.

Vel-ett: The caster may alter the appearance of an item or person, twisting the ways in which it is valued. For example, a precious stone on a piece of jewelry will still be present on the target, but the caster may move it to a less obvious location, making the item appear less valuable. Conversely, a poorly placed marble tile may be swapped with another to improve the appearance of a room. The caster may manipulate the



target for one minute per success, but the effects of this Rune are permanent.

Written

Vel-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target. Any targets affected in either case are loyal to the caster of the Rune.

Vel-ej: This Rune must be written on the target, which appears to become less valuable as per the spoken effect. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

Vel-ess: This Rune must be written on the target, which appears to become more valuable as per the spoken effect. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

Vel-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Blei-ej.

Vel-ett: The Rune must be written directly onto the target. The caster may manipulate the appearance of the target for one hour per success.

Blei

Worthless, Cheap

Spoken

Blei-eq: The target becomes much less attractive and disreputable. While this has no effect in combat, it can seriously damage a politician or public speaker. The target loses 1 level of skill in all socializing skills per success. If cast on a non-living target, the target becomes uglier and less valuable for the duration of the Rune. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Blei-ej: The target becomes immune to effects that would worsen its appearance or devalue it, such as staining or chipping. This is not the perfect armor—if cast on a living thing, the target can still be harmed. He just will not bleed on his clothing. The same theory applies to armor itself—it may not look any worse for being punctured by an arrow, but the arrow penetrates all the same. A human target who crawls through mud after a successful application of this Rune emerges clean, but he can still be damaged by sharp rocks in the muck. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Blei-ess: The target suffers damage that devalues it. Metal will rust or become brittle, wood will split and splinter, and

living things will grow warts or sores on their tongues. The effect becomes more pronounced with more successes, though the exact result is up to the gamemaster.

Blei-ex: The target appears to be worthless or insignificant, though this is an illusion. A living target may augment a disguise, pass as a peasant, or be overlooked by opponents seeking a more worthwhile foe. A sword with this Rune may look like cheap junk, even if it is a powerful runesword. The protection lasts for one round per success.

Blei-ett: The caster may alter the appearance of an item or person, twisting the ways in which it is devalued. For example, rust on a sword will still be present, but the caster may move the rust to a less obvious location on the weapon. Conversely, a mole beneath a person's hairline may be moved to that person's nose, making him appear much less attractive. The caster may effect up to ten pounds of material per success. The caster may manipulate the target for one minute per success. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Written

Blei-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Blei-ej: The target gains the protection as per the spoken version of this Rune, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Blei-ess: The target suffers much more than cosmetic damage. Each success on this Rune reduces the target's Endurance by 1.

Blei-ex: The target gains the protection as per the spoken version of this Rune, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Blei-ett: The Rune must be written directly onto the target. The caster may manipulate the appearance of the target for one hour per success.

SPATIAL RUNES

These eight Runes affect the *real world*, dealing with dimensions, distance, space and existence in general. On one end of the scale, such Runes are rather mundane and are often

used to perform such ordinary tasks as opening doors and windows. However, these same Runes also offer the potential to truly shift a person's place in the world, and are not to be taken lightly.

Oun

Open, Door, Window, Portal

Spoken

Oun-eq: The caster forces a breach in a wall, creating an opening where none exists. The hole thus created is a sphere one foot in diameter for each success. The material removed, which may be stone, wood, glass, steel, or any other material, is turned to dust and rubble.

Oun-ej: The target portal, which is capable of closing, closes and locks, and will not open until the effect ends or the door is battered from its hinges. The effects lasts for one minute per success, but it can be countered by Oun-ess.

Oun-ess: The target of this Rune must be a door, window, chest, or the pilot hatch of a Stryder; any target that can be opened and closed. The target opens, releasing one lock per success. If the portal has been locked magically (as with the Oun-ej), each success counters one success of the locking Rune. So if a door has been secured with two physical locks and two successes with an Oun-ej Rune, a caster would need four successes with this Rune to open the door.

Oun-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ahn-ej.

Oun-ett: The caster may alter the height and width of an opening, such as a doorway or breach in a wall. The opening will not be enlarged by this Rune, but it may be reshaped to allow or deny access. For example, a round hole just big enough to grant access to a person may be reshaped to be long and narrow, making access impossible, or a barred window may be reshaped to push the bars to one corner, allowing escape. The caster may manipulate the target for one minute per success. The effects are permanent.

Written

Oun-eq: By writing this Rune directly onto the target material, the magic of the Rune is focused and strengthened. The breach created by the rune is two feet in diameter per success. The Rune is destroyed in the process, even if the Rune fails.

Oun-ej: By writing this Rune directly onto the target portal, the magic of the Rune is focused and strengthened. The portal thus locked is reinforced. As long as the Runelore check results in at least one success, the lock is strengthened by one additional success. The lock stays intact for the life of the Rune (see *Mhetas Law*).

Oun-ess: By writing this Rune directly onto the target portal, the magic of the Rune is focused and strengthened. The portal opens more easily. As long as the Runelore check results in at least one success, the caster is granted one additional success for the purposes of opening the door.

Oun-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ahn-ej.

Oun-ett: By writing this Rune directly onto the edge of a target, the caster may shape the target for up to one hour per success.

Ahn

Closed, Barrier, Wall, Enclosure

Spoken

Ahn-eq: The caster forces an opening to seal over. This is not a shutter or door swinging closed; the material of which the wall is made grows over the opening, removing the portal altogether. Bricks materialize to grow over the opening, planks lengthen and stretch, and metal flows over the hole. The material that grows over the opening is one foot in diameter per success. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Ahn-ej: The caster can use this Rune to seal a portal open. The portal, be it a door, window or dresser drawer, will be very difficult to shut, requiring a Strength check with a target of 12, plus 1 per success on the Runelore check. These successes can be canceled with successes with Ahn-ess. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ahn-ess: The target, which must be something that can open and close, snaps shut. If the portal has been sealed with Ahn-ej, each success on this Rune counters a success on the Ahn-ej Rune.

Ahn-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Oun-ej.

Ahn-ett: The caster may manipulate the dimensions of a closure, whether that closure is a door, window shutter, or the lid of a chest. The caster may make the closure thicker or thinner, adding or subtracting 2 Endurance per success. The

effect is permanent, though the target may be manipulated for only one minute per success.

Written

Ahn-eq: The caster writes this Rune somewhere on the inside of the portal. The material that grows over the opening will be a sphere two feet in diameter. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Ahn-ej: By writing this Rune directly onto the target portal, the magic of the Rune is focused and strengthened. The force keeping the portal open is more powerful. As long as the Runelore check results in at least one success, the force maintaining the portal is strengthened by one additional success. The portal stays open for the life of the Rune (*see Mhetas Law*), or until the effect is dispelled, either through magic or sheer strength.

Ahn-ess: This Rune will close a portal just as with the spoken effect. However, the portal can always be opened again, since this Rune does not lock the portal, only close it. If this Rune is written and intact on the portal, the portal will swing shut again as soon as no outside force is preventing it. The effect stays intact for the life of the Rune (*see Mhetas Law*).

Ahn-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Oun-ej.

Ahn-ett: By writing this Rune directly onto the target, the caster may shape the target for one hour per success.

Ite *Straight, Line, Beginning and End, Finite, Near, 1* Spoken

Ite-eq: All physical attacks against the target enjoy increased accuracy. The effect does not come from the attacker, but from the target himself. Any physical attack against the target gains a -1 difficulty bonus per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ite-ej: The target becomes difficult to strike, since all incoming blows tend to veer off. The target gains a -1 difficulty bonus per success to all Dodge skill checks. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ite-ess: The target enjoys increased accuracy on all physical attacks. Each success grants the target a -1 difficulty modifier on all attack rolls. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ite-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Owt-ej.

Ite-ett: The caster may alter the nature of the target's accuracy. Whenever an attack is successful, the caster may move the location of the hit. The attack does not do any more incoming damage, though it might ignore armor. The caster may ignore 1 point of armor-based Endurance per success on all attacks that hit the target. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Written

Ite-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ite-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ite-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ite-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Owt-ej.

Ite-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may manipulate the accuracy of the target as per the spoken version of this Rune, but for one hour per success.

Owt

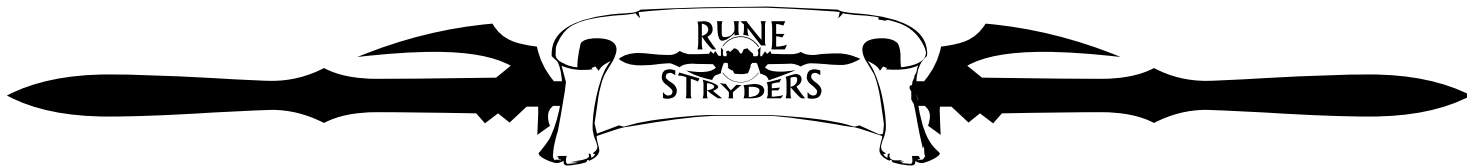
Circle, Round, Far, Infinity

Spoken

Owt-eq: The target suffers a reduced ability to strike opponents, as his attacks tend to veer off. The target suffers a +1 difficulty penalty per success to all attack rolls. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Owt-ej: The target's attacks stay on course over longer distances. Attacks made with ranged weapons are made as if they were one range class closer per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Owt-ess: An object thrown or fired by the target returns to him one round later, unless destroyed along the way. Weapons embedded in a target will yank themselves free to return to the caster's hand, and will strike anything or anyone in the way on the return flight, causing damage to their targets. The incoming damage caused is based solely on the Strength of the weapon times the number of successes rolled on the Runelore skill check. The target will have one object return per success.



These items will be the last items thrown or fired; the target may not choose to save one for later.

Owt-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ite-ej.

Owt-ett: The caster may alter the nature of the target's inaccuracy. When an attack is unsuccessful, the caster may control where the missed attack hits, though he may not redirect the attack to make it successful. For example, the caster could direct an arrow that misses a foe in a thick crowd to fly over the heads of the innocents, rather than striking an unarmed civilian. If the caster wished to relocate the missed attack to strike a nearby target, the caster must perform an attack roll, substituting the number of successes on this Rune for the relevant combat skill. The caster may *push* the missed attack by up to three feet per success, and he may do so for up to one minute per success.

Written

Owt-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Owt-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Owt-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the target will have two items return per success.

Owt-ex: The effects of this Rune are identical to Ite-ej.

Owt-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may manipulate the inaccuracy of the target as per the spoken version of this Rune, but for one hour per success.

Ote

Absence, Void, Nothingness, 0

Spoken

Ote-eq: The caster teleports the target, sending him in a random direction. The target is sent ten yards per success, even into physical objects. The target and everything directly touching him teleport together. Should the target be sent into a physical object, his body will merge with the object. In most cases, this is fatal.

The amount of material teleported depends on the successes rolled on the Runelore check. The Rune will send

roughly half a human's weight for each success, so it will take two successes to teleport a human. If the Runelore check does not result in enough successes to teleport the target and everything he is directly touching, the Rune has no effect.

Ote-ej: The target may set his feet down and be totally immovable. Neither strong winds, powerful blows or towering waves will move the target against his will, though he may suffer damage. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Ote-ess: The target teleports to a location carefully predetermined by the caster. The caster may send the target and everything he is directly touching two-hundred yards per success. As with Ote-eq, the amount of material teleported is determined by the Runelore check. As this Rune is much more precise, with much greater range, the amount teleported is not as large. Each success teleports roughly a third of a human's weight, so it takes three successes to teleport a human. This Rune is generally used on willing targets, as it is difficult to roll three successes if opposed.

Ote-ex: The target is able to shift his position instantly with a thought, but only up to a few feet. For each success, the target may add 1 to his Dodge skill check to avoid an attack. Invoking the extra defense causes the target to move up to 6 inches per success instantly, in a direction chosen by the target. The effect of such a defense can be fairly disorienting, however, and so the target loses 1 from all other skill checks on a turn when he activates this defense. The target may choose not to shift if attacked. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Ote-ett: Technically, this Rune does allow the caster to shape void. However, since the caster is shaping nothing, there is no practical effect to this Rune.

Written

Ote-eq: By writing this Rune directly on a target, the caster focuses the magic of the Rune. The target will teleport in a random direction, twenty yards per success. The Rune will move roughly a human's weight per success, so this Rune could be used to randomly teleport objects larger than a human.

Ote-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ote-ess: By writing this Rune directly on a target, the caster focuses the magic of the Rune. The target will teleport to a predetermined location, four-hundred yards per success. The Rune will move roughly half a human's weight per success.

Ote-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Ote-ett: While this Rune allows the caster to shape void, there is no practical effect to this Rune.

Jin

Large, Giant, Big, High

Spoken

Jin-eq: A portion of the target swells and grows disproportionately. A target's head may swell, or one arm may distort dramatically. The pain of the unnatural growth will cause 1 point of physical direct damage per success. The target will also suffer a +1 difficulty penalty to all physical checks as his grossly distorted body becomes desperately uncoordinated. If the target is wearing armor or any other binding attire, he takes an additional 1 point of direct damage per success every round the Rune is in effect, or until he can remove the attire. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Jin-ej: The target gains protection from crushing damage. The target gains +2 Endurance per success against incoming damage caused by having large objects fall on top of him. This can be particularly helpful to those who are likely to be in combat against Rune Stryders, which tend to defeat human-size opponents by stepping on them. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Jin-ess: The target grows in size and mass. The target suffers no pain because of the growth, and gains 1 Strength, 1 Endurance and 2 Health per success. The target grows by 50% per success. Two successes, therefore, will double a target's size, and four will triple it. The growth is smooth and painless but very quick, taking one round per success to reach the full augmented size. Just as with Jin-eq, however, the target will take 1 point of direct damage per success per round for as long as he is wearing armor or any other binding attire. The effect lasts for minute per success.

Jin-ex: All living creatures within melee range of the target feel disproportionately large. Their actions are more clumsy as

they attempt to adjust to the sudden change in perceived size. Agility is reduced by 1 per success for all skill checks attempted while in range of the target. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Jin-ett: The caster may increase the size of the target. The target may be increased in size by 10% per success. Every two successes (or 20% increase in size) grants the target +1 Strength, +1 Endurance and +2 Health. For the duration of the effect, the caster may resize the target as often as desired, though he may not make the target smaller than its original size. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Written

Jin-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Jin-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Jin-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Jin-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Jin-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may manipulate the size of the target as per the spoken version of this Rune, but for one hour per success.

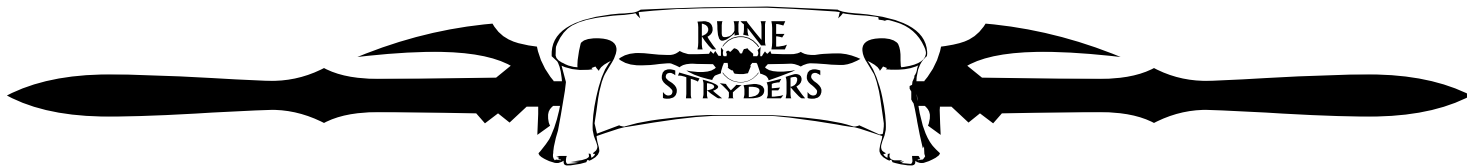
Tin

Small, Miniscule, Low

Spoken

Tin-eq: A portion of the target shrinks disproportionately. A target's chest may shrivel, or a leg may shrink to half its normal size and length. The body revolts against this unnatural distortion, causing 1 point of physical direct damage per success. The target will also suffer a +1 difficulty penalty to all physical checks as his grossly distorted body becomes desperately uncoordinated. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Tin-ej: The target gains protection from very small attacks. Any attack with a weapon smaller than a mans thumb is



entirely ignored. Many Divaros diplomats favor this Rune's protection against poison darts, and the Rune is widely used among the Kantarin, who use it to protect themselves from the gnats, wasps, mosquitoes, ants, and other insects native to their forest homes. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Tin-ess: The target shrinks in size and mass. The target suffers no pain because of the change, but he loses 1 Strength, 1 Endurance and 2 Health per success. The target shrinks by half per success, so two successes will make a target $\frac{1}{4}$ original size, and three will make him $\frac{1}{8}$ his normal size. Armor and clothing do not shrink with the target, so if the target is not careful, he could suffocate inside his own clothing. The size change is smooth and painless but very quick, taking one round per success to reach the final augmented size.

Tin-ex: All living creatures within melee range of the target feel disproportionately small. Their actions are weaker as they attempt to adjust to the sudden change in perceived size. Strength is reduced by 1 per success for all skill checks attempted while in range of the target. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Tin-ett: The caster may decrease the size of the target. The target may be decreased in size by 10% per success. Every two successes (or 20% increase in size) costs the target -1 Strength, -1 Endurance and -2 Health. For the duration of the effect, the caster may resize the target as often as desired, though he may not make the target larger than its original size. The effects of this Rune are permanent.

Written

Tin-eq: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Tin-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Tin-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Tin-ex: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for one hour per success and applies only to that target.

Tin-ett: By writing this Rune on a target, the caster may manipulate the size of the target as per the spoken version of this Rune, but for one hour per success.

Grei

Motion

Spoken

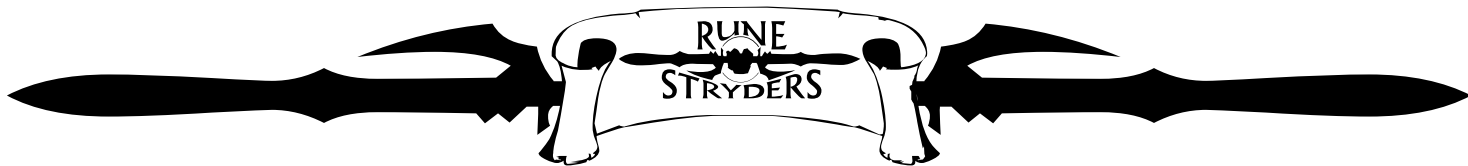
Grei-eq: The target loses his ability to control his momentum. Every action is greatly exaggerated. A living target will suffer considerable difficulty in stopping his movement, resulting in overstepped attacks or dodges that hurl the target to the ground. The target suffers no penalty on the initial action after this Rune is successful, but incurs a +1 difficulty penalty on all actions taken after the first action resolves. A non-living target would not be affected unless it is moved by an outside force during the duration of the Rune, in which case it will move much farther than normal. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Grei-ej: The target is able to compensate for movement-related modifiers. The target negates 1 difficulty level modifier for each success when fighting atop a moving platform, firing an arrow in an earthquake, or throwing knives while sprinting, for example. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Grei-ess: The target gains the ability to move objects by force of will. The target may move objects at a distance equal to five feet per success. The objects must weigh less than five pounds per success, and may be moved as if the target were holding them in his hands. The Rune obviously has no effect when cast on a non-living target. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Grei-ex: The target moves with random motion. This erratic movement makes him exceptionally difficult to strike, granting a +1 difficulty modifier per 2 successes to any attack that targets him. Since the target knows which way he will move next, he suffers no such modifiers himself. If cast on a non-living target, the object will begin to shudder and dance in place, whether it is capable of motion or not. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Grei-ett: The caster may force the target to change its speed or direction of movement. A target that is not moving when the Rune is cast will not be affected. The target may be forced to run into a wall or run very slowly, or the target may be able



to move much faster. The power of the effects are determined by the number of successes rolled and the size of the object—it may require only one success to double the speed of an arrow, while it might require five successes to slow the advance of a falling boulder. The changes to movement are at the whim of the caster, not the target, so if the caster loses sight of the target, the effects end. As long as the caster stays within sight of the target, the effects last for one minute per success.

Written

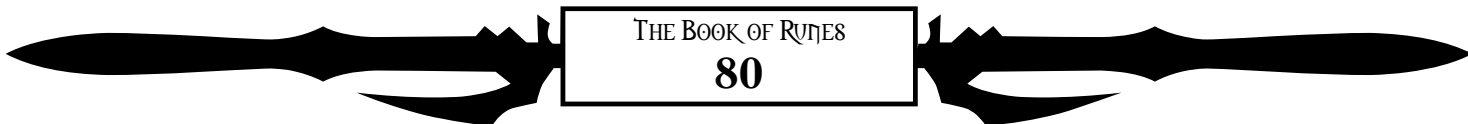
Grei-eq: The target is affected as per the spoken version of this Rune, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Grei-ej: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for 1 hour per success and applies only to that target.

Grei-ess: The Rune affects every target within range, applying the spoken effect. If written on a living creature, the effect lasts for 1 hour per success and applies only to that target.

Grei-ex: The target is affected as per the spoken version of this Rune, but the effect lasts for one hour per success.

Grei-ett: The Rune must be written directly onto the target. The caster may manipulate the motion of the target for one hour per success.



ADVANCED RUNE USAGE

Beginning practitioners of the Runic arts will find it easiest to use simple spells, typically consisting of two syllable, Rune and control Rune spells and inscriptions. Thus, a beginning Magus with mastery of Elemental Runes could relatively easily produce two-syllable incantations, according to the rules laid down for that particular Rune. *Ull-ess*, for instance, would produce a simple flame, or *Un-ess* could produce water for drinking.

The exact uses of the effects produced vary from caster to caster, and this is where a true Rune Master is distinguished from those who merely know a few Runes. A Master will understand that summoning fire can produce a variety of effects, limited only by the number of functions that fire itself might serve. He could cook food, boil water, burn down a village, harass his enemies, frighten animals, cauterize wounds, melt ice, provide light, or merely dazzle some children, all with a single Rune and a little creative application. The intelligent use of control Runes separates the novice from the professional. Beyond creativity, however, Runes can also be used in a variety of other advanced ways.

COMBINING RUNES

Just as single Runes can represent simple concepts and ideas, Runes strung together can form more complex ideas. More experienced Runic Masters can thus produce far more spectacular combinations with even a limited supply of Runes by combining Rune sounds and symbols to form Rune Phrases.

Not all such phrases are necessarily empowered; not only do Runes only work if they are pronounced or inscribed precisely, but since they function in much the same way as language, random combinations of syllables will not necessarily produce meaningful results. When Runes are combined, the order in which they fall in the Runic phrase determines their meaning as part of the whole phrase; A+B is not the same as B+A. Thus, for any two-Rune combination, there are four combinations, each unique: AA, AB, BA and BB.

For example, given the letters O and T, the following combinations are among those possible:

O, OO, OOO, ...

OT, OTT, OTTT, ...

T, TT, TTT, ...

TO, TOO, TOOO, ...

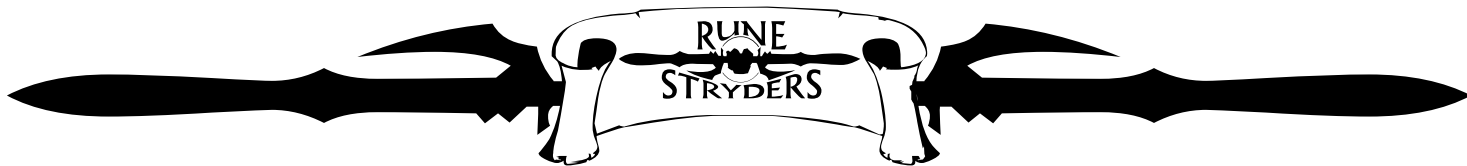
Of the twelve examples above, only two really have actual meaning in the English language (TO and TOO). All are combinations of letters, but those other combinations hold no special power or meaning. Certainly, there are other combinations that make sense that are not shown (TOT, TOTO, TOOT, etc.), but the vast majority (approaching infinity) has no special meaning.

In much the same way, given the forty-five known Runes, it is safe to say that most combinations will be completely meaningless, without effect of any sort. Thus, random experimentation by Rune Scholars will likely prove to be a waste of time for the most part, and impressively dangerous should they happen to stumble upon a word that actually works (since the effects would be unknown and unpredictable).

However, over the years, Rune Masters have discovered a series of Rune Words that do hold special power, functioning in ways different from their component Runes. Most of these are simple three-Rune Words, some going as far as stringing four together. Although there is no theoretical limit to how many can be put together (some theorize that it is these long strings of Runes that the Gods used to create the Universe), practically the limits of human experimentation keep things to just a few in a row.

Runic Syntax

For simple Runes, a caster need only pronounce the effect Rune and the accompanying control Rune. However, for longer strings of Runes, casters must follow an exact set of rules. Casting a lengthy Rune in the wrong order could result in terribly unpredictable results, or fail to produce an effect at all.



The first Rune in a Rune Word defines the effect of the Rune, and is thus called the effect Rune. In Ull-eq, Ull is the effect Rune. It can be controlled more narrowly by mod Runes, additional Runes placed between the effect Rune and the control Rune which activates the Rune Word. After any desired mod Runes are added, the caster must finish the Rune Word with a control Rune. Without a control Rune, a Rune Word is merely a collection of sounds. The Rune Word will have no effect until the control Rune is pronounced or written.

A few Runes serve particularly well as mod Runes. Most of the Spatial Runes can be used to specify a direction, shape, duration, size, or motion of an effect. They can be used to make a Rune more powerful, or to reduce the energy of a Rune Word. A gamemaster is encouraged to consider the alternate definitions for a Rune when deciding the effect of a Rune Word.

While catastrophic failures for normal Runes cause the caster to take 2 direct damage to Mind for every 1 rolled on a catastrophic failure. In the case of Advanced Runes, however, the stakes are higher. If a caster rolls a catastrophic failure on an advanced Rune Word, he takes 2 direct damage to Mind for each 1 rolled, plus each mod Rune used inflicts another 1 point of direct damage for each 1 rolled. A catastrophic failure on a long Rune Word could kill the caster instantly.

Lheta's Law prohibits a target from bearing multiple Runes of the same category. This is not applicable with mod Runes, however. A complex Rune Word may contain Runes from the same category as the effect Rune, and may contain multiple mod Runes from the same category. The only limitation on mod Runes is that a single Rune Word may not contain two of the same Runes, whether those Runes are effect or mod Runes.

A few particular Runes make exceptional, all-purpose mod Runes. The following list describes the mod Runes most popular among the very talented Runecasters who can use advanced Rune Words.

Owt

This Rune can effectively increase the duration of a Rune Word. While many Runes take place instantly, the majority of Runes are ruled by the longevity of their effects. By adding Owt as a mod Rune, the caster may dictate a longer effect. In game

terms, spoken Rune Words cast using Owt as a mod Rune last for a number of minutes equal to the number of successes squared—three successes allows the Rune to last for nine minutes, while five successes will cause the effect to linger for twenty-five minutes. This is not a universal rule—the durations of shorter Runes will still be dramatically increased, but they will not last as long as other Runes. Take, for example, Nhet-ej. The effects of Nhet-ej last for one round per success. The effects of Nhet-Owt-ej would last for a number of rounds equal to the square of the successes earned. Written Runes containing Owt as a mod Rune obviously last much longer.

Ite

This Rune can be used to decrease the duration of a Rune Word. Each success using Ite as a mod Rune reduces the duration of an effect by 50% per success.

Jin

On many occasions, a larger effect may be desired. lin-eq summons a single small animal to attack an opponent, such as a rat or small bird. lin-Jin-eq will summon a larger creature. Two or three successes might even summon a handful of dusk hunters (*see core rules, page 172*). As the effects of Runes are wildly different, increasing the size of an effect will act differently for different Runes.

Tin

Sometimes, smaller is better than larger. A standard Rune used to start a campfire would not be practical for lighting a pipe. By using Tin, the caster may shrink the size of the effect. The exact results are up to the gamemaster to determine, as different Runes will be affected different ways.

lin & Dron

These Runes may be used to limit the effects of a Rune to a specific category of target. For example, by protecting with fire, but only against living things, a target may be wrapped in a sheath of flame that only harms living creatures, leaving furniture, papers and curtains unharmed.

Elemental Runes

Possibly the most interesting mod Runes are those from the Elemental category of Runes. Adding an elemental Rune also

adds the element to the effect of the Rune. If the mod Rune is compatible with the effect Rune, a more powerful Rune may be created. On the other hand, if the mod Rune has little in common with the effect Rune, or if the two tend to cancel each other out, the effects may be very different indeed.

SAMPLE RENE COMBINATIONS

Some examples of possible Rune Combinations follow. These are only examples; should a gamemaster and/or a player wish to experiment with additional Rune Words, they should work together to come up with effects that make sense for that combination.

OttXhei-eq

Earth + Chaos + Attack = Earthquake

Spoken

The earth trembles violently for one Round per success, covering an area equal to ten feet per Success. All who are standing must pass an Endurance Barrier of 10 or fall to the ground, unable to take any actions save stumbling back to their feet. Objects within range made of soft stone, glass or other fragile materials will crack and split as appropriate.

Written

By writing this Rune on a patch of stone or earth, the caster focuses its power and creates a violent quake. The quake will be particularly powerful, affecting an area one-hundred square feet per success. Those standing in the area must pass an Endurance barrier of 15 or fall to the ground, as above. Buildings may crumble, and huge cracks may open in the earth. However, since the Rune will be at the center of the quake, it will be destroyed quickly. The quake will go on for a number of rounds equal to the roll of one die, after which time the Rune will be ruined.

Vellin-eq

Value + Living Things + Attack = Lure

Spoken

The target, which is usually an object but can be a person or animal, becomes alluring to anyone who can see it. Every person and animal within range must pass a Willpower check of 10 plus 1 per success or find themselves inexorably attracted to the Lure. They may perform other actions, defend



themselves, etc., but will make all possible attempts to reach the Lure, putting it above all else in their minds. Once they have touched the Lure, the effect is dispelled, though others may be affected. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Written

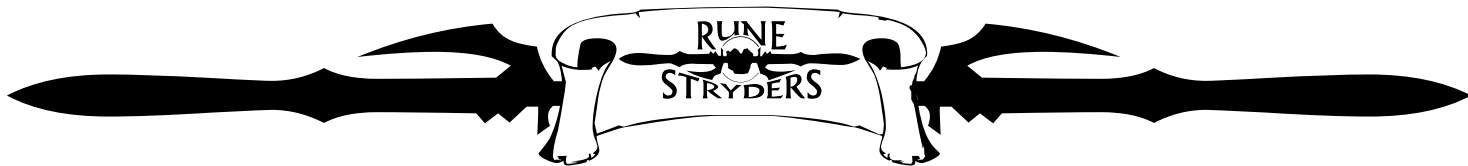
This Rune functions identically to the spoken version, although anyone wishing to ignore the lure must pass a Willpower check with a difficulty equal to 12 plus 1 per success. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

UnUll-ess

Water + Flame + Use = Steam

Spoken

A swirling cloud of steam rises up in an area equal to five feet per Success, reducing all vision to five feet in front of oneself. Ranged attacks into, through or out of the cloud of steam are at +5 difficulty due to the dense cloud of steam. The steam remains in place for one Round per Success and then dissipates.



Written

As above, except the Rune thus inscribed generates steam on an ongoing basis, churning forth enough to keep an area equal to ten feet per Success completely shrouded in Steam for the duration. The effect lasts for one hour per success.

VeINhetOtt-ess *Value + Shiny + Earth + Use = Metal*

Spoken

Rune Scholars have been unable to determine the proper way to join these Runes in spoken format.

Written

An item thus inscribed will transmute into a form of metal, as determined on the chart below. The amount transmuted is one cubic foot per Success; the remainder of an object that encompasses more material than this will remain as it was. Note that this will typically kill any living thing. The metal thus summoned remains permanently. Metal thus inscribed will transmute into a different type of metal if appropriate; if the same type is indicated, no change occurs. Roll a number of dice equal to the number of successes and consult the table below using that sum of that roll.

Roll	Metal Created
1-10	Lead
11-20	Tin
21-30	Copper
31-40	Silver
41-50	Gold

AanAinUll-ess *Wood + Flight + Flame + Use
= Flaming Arrows*

Spoken

This Rune has no effect when spoken.

Written

Inscribed on an arrow, spear or other such wooden projectile, this imbues that missile with the ability to burst into flames as it flies through the air. The chance of ignition is a cumulative 20% chance per Success. Such flaming projectiles deal out 1 extra point of direct flame damage to anything they strike, and have a 50% chance of igniting combustible items they contact.

AanAinUll-ej *Wood + Flight + Flame + Defend
= Heat Shield*

Spoken

This particularly unique Rune Word was developed by the Kantarin, and then forgotten due to the devastation it could potentially wreak in their jungle homes. Upon uttering the Rune, the air within a five foot area per Success around the Caster shimmers with heat waves. All wooden projectiles traveling through the heated air (spears, arrows, bolts, etc.) have a cumulative 20% chance per Success of bursting into flame, turning the shafts into cinders that fall harmlessly to earth. The effect lasts for one minute per Success.

linJin-eq *Living Things + Large + Attack*

The caster summons large creatures to attack his foes. The Rune functions similarly to lin-eq, but the animals summoned are larger. Each success increases the size of the creatures summoned. The gamemaster should choose an appropriately-sized creature based on the successes rolled. The animals remain until the target is dead, or for one minute per success.

UllJin-eq *Fire + Large + Attack*

The caster hurls an enormous burst of flame at his target. This is treated as a Strength 6 magical attack, but is otherwise identical to Ull-eq.

SheiYon-ess *Smell + Pleasure + Use*

The target is cloaked in a very pleasurable odor. This is basically a magical perfume. The target gains 1 in every Socializing skill for each success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

linOte-eq *Living Things + Void + Attack*

The target, which must be a living thing, disappears. The target has no perception of time or place while gone, and reappears after the duration of the effect. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

PeiOwt-ess *Strength + Infinity + Use*

The target enjoys the benefits of the Pei-ess Rune for a number of minutes equal to the number of successes squared.

ZheiThurn-eq

Sight + Pain + Attack

The target experiences pain whenever he opens his eyes. Each round that the target has his eyes open, he suffers 1 point of direct damage per success to Health. This damage cannot spill over to Body. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

AinXhei-ess

Sky + Chaos + Use

The caster summons a storm. One success may cause a localized rain cloud, while five may summon a full-blown tornado. The storm lasts for one minute per success, and once summoned, is outside the caster's ability to control.

EnnAan-ess

Hard + Wood + Use

The target, which must be wooden, is hardened. The caster may affect up to ten pounds of wood per success, and the wood gains 2 Endurance per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

OteRhun-eq

Void + Language + Attack

Since language is the basis of Runic magic, by voiding the language of a target Rune, a caster may nullify the lingering effects of a Rune. The caster targets a Rune effect, not the bearer of the Rune effect. However, if the bearer of the Rune effect is enjoying the effect, he may wish to resist the caster with a Willpower roll. The caster nullifies one success on the initial Runecasting roll per success. This Rune may not be used to reverse permanent effects, as the effects are no longer magical after their initial effect expires.

XheiRhun-ess

Sight + Language + Use

This advanced Rune allows a caster to view the magic affecting an item and determine the power and duration of the effect. A single success on this roll allows the caster to determine if the target item is under the influence of a magical effect—magical items glow slightly to the caster's eyes. Two successes shows the caster more information, from which he can determine the number of successes rolled when writing the Rune. A third success allows him to discern the effect's duration and time remaining. A fourth success lets the caster see a signature of sorts, which may reveal the identity of the original caster, assuming the caster of this Rune is familiar with the original caster's work.

LheiAanSenOwt-ess

*Life + Wood + Spirit
+ Circle (Infinity) + Use
or
Life + Stone + Spirit
+ Circle (Infinity) + Use*

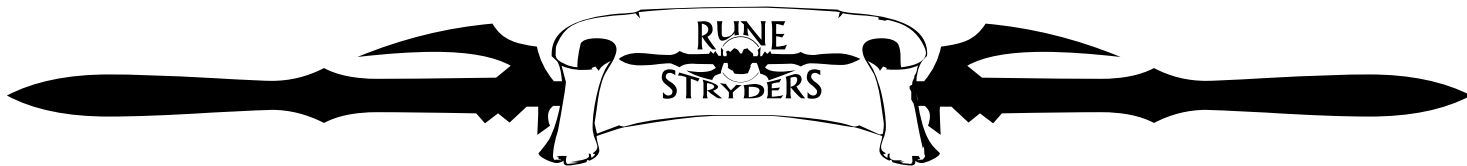
This is basic Rune Word used to animate a Stryder. Other complex Runes must be utilized to cause it to move, sense its surroundings, or interact with a human pilot, but without this particular Runes, a Stryder is only a statue. Even with this Rune, Stryders require weekly maintenance to rescribe the Runes and extend the life of the Stryder, as every Rune eventually fades (*see Mheta's Law in the core rules, page 49*). Most characters responsible for maintaining Stryders will be able to renew fading Runes, keeping them intact, but would be unable to create them without considerable assistance.

MECHANICAL RUNE WORDS

It should be obvious that there are some difficulties involved in scribing many Rune Words. For instance, many Runes affect an area, and when they are completed, it is quite likely that the caster will be in that area, and thus affected by the Rune. This can be problematic in the case of attack Runes meant to damage all within range.

Another consideration with written Rune Words is time delay. In many cases, the caster may not want the Rune to activate immediately. For example, a Rune that causes a sword to be lined with flame is going to be most useful during a battle, at which time the bearer of the sword may not have the time to wait and write on his weapon.

For this reason, many Rune Scholars write the entire Rune out on two separate pieces of material. The Rune must still be written or inscribed in one sitting, but if the component Runes are separated, or if the control Rune is written elsewhere, the Rune will not take effect until the pieces are brought together. This allows a scribe to write a trap Rune onto two pieces of stone, then set them into place from a safe location. A Rune may be inscribed into two different pieces of steel, then attached to a switch allowing it to be activated at a later time.



Rune Swords

Most Rune weapons are created through advanced Rune usage, using advanced Rune Words to lengthen the duration of the effect. For some Runed weapons, however, this is not entirely practical. It may be problematic to have a flame-lined sword that will not go out, for example. Delayed effects can be achieved by the use of a simple metal switch. A narrow sheath of steel at the base of the blade can be slid into place next to a control Rune carved into the blade. When the switch is slid into place, the Rune takes effect, and when it is slid out of place, the effect ends. This method may also be used to prolong the life of a Rune while the Rune itself lasts its ordinary duration. As per the Law of Mheta, the effects will ordinarily be used up in a matter of hours. By turning off the Rune Word, the effects can be preserved for another day.

Rune Throwers

Rune Throwers (described more fully in the Book of the World) are a creation of the Sivatagi Masasan, seen rarely elsewhere in the world, but with growing frequency as time passes. They are mechanisms consisting of a sturdy, somewhat flattened barrel (typically steel) with Runes inscribed inside the base of the barrel, along the shaft's side. Specially constructed, Rune-inscribed bars (also typically steel, though often stone) are custom-fit for the barrel, made to fit snugly inside so they can slide down to the bottom of the barrel.

At the bottom, a thin layer of flammable wadding separates the two Rune Words. When this wadding is ignited, the steel bar or disc is free to contact the Rune Word inside the barrel. This collision of the two Rune Words forms a new, longer Rune Word that has a very specific function—to create a small explosion in the barrel that sends the projectile out of the barrel at immense speeds.

Smaller Rune Throwers are capable of being carried by foot troops. Larger versions can be toted by Rune Stryders, and have been used to lay siege to fortresses.

Unfortunately, for all their power, Rune Throwers have numerous points of failure that have made them somewhat unreliable. Soot, dirt and other material tends to gather in the base of the barrel, obscuring the Rune Word there and increasing the chance of misfire or failure to fire at all. If the

number of failures on any given attack roll exceeds successes, the Rune Thrower will not discharge its missile. Attempts to make it work (shaking the barrel, cleaning it out, etc.) can be made in successive Rounds without penalty merely by making new attack rolls.

Rune Throwers also carry a potential chance for catastrophic failure. If at any time all failures are rolled, the barrel shatters and cracks, dealing out 1 point of direct damage per failure rolled to all within a one foot radius per failure (maximum of 5 direct damage to all within a five foot radius).

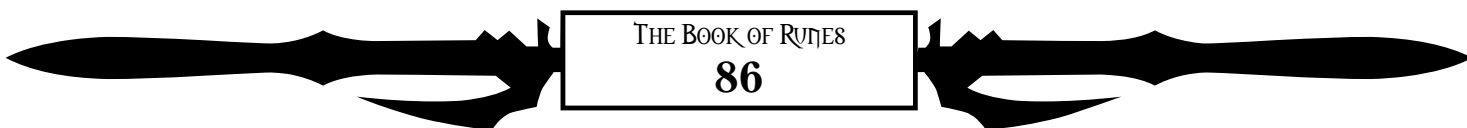
The secrets of creating Rune Throwers are known only to a select few Rune Scholars, most of them Sivatagi Masasan, and as such the specific Runic combinations for creating one are not listed here. Players may have access to such devices, but should not be able to make them themselves.

RUNE STRYDERS

Rune Stryders (described fully in the Book of Stryders) are, as with Rune Throwers, quite rare, quite powerful, and filled with Runic secrets that are not known to the general populace. The particular combination of Runes and Rune Phrases that turn a heap of metal and stone into a true Rune Stryder are much more complex than can be handled by any single Rune Master, and the inscriptions take months, if not years, to complete properly. As such, individual players are highly unlikely to actually be involved in the creation of a Stryder. While a Stryder Crew (of which players might be a part) are certainly capable of patching Rune Stryders up, fixing small Rune problems, etc., it is simply impossible to put a Rune Stryder together, and bring it to life, during the course of any normal campaign.

RUNE MASTERS

There are those who use Runes like common peasant charms, and there are those who study Runes more intently, using them to further their own ends. These latter include any of the sorts found in the Book of Roles, including the Divaran Runescribe and Magus. However, none of these (and, indeed, no other Role presented herein) are truly considered to be Rune Masters.



These mysterious, reclusive few (perhaps less than one-hundred in all), are rarely seen and even more seldom heard. They are responsible for crafting the key Runic components in items such as Rune Stryders and some varieties of Runed armor and weapons, using complex Runic phrases that are impossible for most to even comprehend, much less master. Because of their secretive nature, it is impossible to fathom how much knowledge they possess. Some claim each has mastery over all the known Runes, while others claim that they have access to unique Runic secrets. More likely, each knows the dozen or so Runes necessary to craft those items needed by the Rune Master's sponsor, typically a rich warlord or high-ranking politician. Even so, this is a remarkable achievement; very few individuals ever master even a handful of Runes.

Interaction with Rune Masters, if it happens at all, will be a once-in-a-lifetime event. Masters typically communicate through an army of servants, go-betweens and underlings, perhaps fearing for their own lives (many would seek to destroy an opposing country's Masters), perhaps merely refusing to debase themselves by interacting with unworthies. Nearly everything a typical individual will "know" about the Masters will be rumor and legend, those few who truly know a piece of the truth tending to keep that information to themselves. Those who have sold secrets about the Rune Masters to others have tended to meet sudden, unusually painful deaths.

Or perhaps this, too, is merely rumor, meant to scare off the unwary. The exact role that Rune Masters will play in a campaign is up to the gamemaster. Examples of rumors that might circulate are found here; some, most, all or none of these may be true in any given campaign.

Divaros

Divar has a high council of seven Rune Masters who meet every month to share knowledge and craft those complex Runic items needed by the country as a whole. The Prime Chancellor is a Rune Master, and hides his knowledge lest his enemies have another reason to kill him. The last true Rune Master vanished under mysterious circumstances after the death of the others. Some say she killed them all herself and kept their knowledge. Others claim she fled to avoid the same fate.

Zokili

Anyone can become a Rune Master through deep meditation on the Runes themselves, the knowledge already present in every individual, merely waiting to be untapped. The Zokili have three Rune Masters, one of whom has been taken prisoner by the Divaros. The leadership refuses to acknowledge this event, as it would surely lead to open warfare that would destroy the country. The secret Runes that activate a Stryder number twelve, and include all six of those Runes named for the Gods.

Myndwar

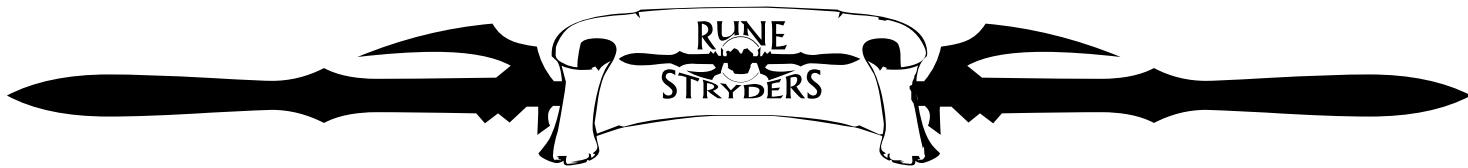
The Myndwar Rune Masters have another seven Runes not commonly known anywhere else in the world. They know their function and choose not to reveal their secrets for fear that it would bring about the world's end. The Myndwar Rune Masters have stumbled across the giant corpse of the fallen Dead God, her corpse resting atop a mound of thousands of Runes, each unique. Her resting place lies far to the South, near Draslander country. There are ten Myndwar Rune Masters, but they will not reveal their true nature even to each other, lest any try to kill the others. However, one of the ten knows who the others are, and is plotting their demise.

Kantarin

There is but one Rune Master among the Kantarin, and he wanders the small islands between the mainland and the subcontinent, acting in accordance with a prophecy he himself has discovered. The Kantarin Stryders are actually Rune-less, requiring no interaction from Rune Masters, and function entirely due to the special bond between the Kantarin people and the jungle they dwell in. The Druid Kantar was the last true Rune Master. When he died in exile, all hope for humanity died with him.

Sivatagi

The Sivatagi Rune Masters have discovered a form of insect life naturally inscribed with Runes of power, and have cultivated these beasts into giant war steeds. The Rune Thrower actually has nothing to do with Runes, and is instead a chemical concoction involving secret spices and minerals found only in the inland desert. Sivatagi Rune Masters trace



immense Runes in fortress walls to decimate armies that would march against them.

Draslander

A small Divaros child found by the Draslander has immense Runic knowledge, which he bestows upon these otherwise ignorant individuals, and is in turn worshipped like a god. The Draslander have no Rune Masters, as they are illiterate and incapable of the intense study necessary to be one. All Draslander Rune Masters are female, and they kill off all other females in the swamp to maintain control.

COLLABORATIVE RUNECASTING

Given the limitations of casting advanced Rune Words, it would require extraordinary skill to release even a four-Rune phrase. Only a Runemaster of legendary ability could hope to successfully scribe the most basic Runes needed to power a Stryder. When a complex Rune Word is required, several Runecasters may pool their abilities and increase the chances of success. All contributing Runecaster must have at least 1 level of Runelore.

Each additional Runecaster after the first reduces the difficulty of the Runelore check by 2. Every caster contributing must be working simultaneously and for the entire casting time. Only one caster rolls the skill check, so it should be the caster with the highest Runelore skill.

The number of casters who may contribute to the scribing of a spell is equal to the number of mod Runes, plus one. After that point, the casters would simply be in each other's way.

This is the method used to create Stryders. The original Runes were discovered by Runemasters now lost to time and history, and those artisans and Runecasters who make Stryders must cooperate simply to make it possible to accurately scribe the intensely complicated Runes that power Stryders.

These rules only apply to written Runes. Casters may not work together to reduce the difficulty of spoken Runes, and so many complex Runes must be written to be effective.

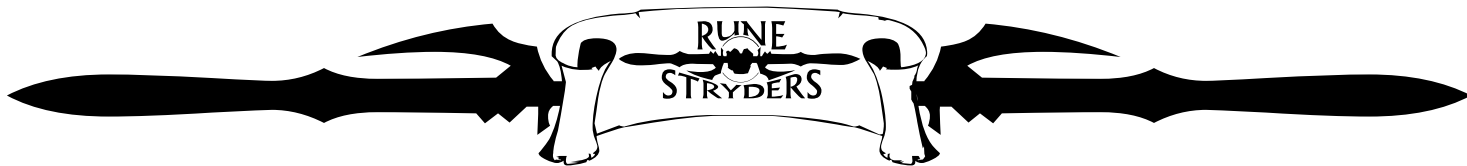
RUNIC ARTIFACTS

The real problem with Runed items is that any Rune creating a magical effect eventually fades. Not even the powerful Runes scribed into Stryders are immune to this effect—such Runes must be maintained regularly if the Stryders are to continue to operate. However, there are several ways to work around this shortcoming and lengthen the durability and duration of Runes.

The first way to lengthen the life span of a Rune is to mechanically separate the individual components. This is the method used on Rune Swords, Rune Throwers, and many other Runed items. The Rune is carved into a piece of metal, at which time the caster makes his Runelore skill check to find the number of successes that will determine the strength and

duration of the Rune. The Rune is then split in two, so that the control Rune is separated from the effect Rune. The two halves of the Rune remain intact, since the Rune is not active. When the pieces are joined, the Rune releases, and both the effect and the durability of the Rune begin to fade. Once the effect is no longer needed, the two pieces are separated again, and the countdown ends. Using this method, a Rune could theoretically last indefinitely.

Another method used to prolong the life of a Rune is simple maintenance. A character with at least 1 level of Runelore skill can redraw the Runes, prolonging and renewing them. The time needed to maintain a Rune is equal to one-tenth the time it took to create the Rune in the first place. The maintenance



must occur before the Rune fades completely. Once the Rune's durability expires, it must be rescribed from scratch. This method only lengthens the durability of the Rune, not its effect. The effect can be prolonged mechanically by separating the components of the Rune, but it cannot be lengthened through maintenance.

The final method for lengthening the durability of a Rune has more to do with the substance upon which the Rune is carved than the process of carving it. The core rules describe different Rune durability based on the material used (*Mheta's Law*, page 49), but there is one very rare material not listed in the core rules—precious stones. The small, hard stones can hold Runes for up to one-hundred years, as long as the effects of the Runes do not expire.

The drawbacks to using precious stones are obvious—very small work areas mean that incredible precision is required to carve a Rune, and the stone itself must be very large to accommodate a Rune. Such large precious stones are very expensive and relatively rare. A final concern is the actual difficulty involved in carving a Rune into a precious stone. The time required is significant, and the skill required is legendary. For these reasons, Rune-inscribed precious stones are very rare and extraordinarily valuable.

Runic Items

While Runed items can be very valuable and powerful, they are not infallible. Only the caster who scribed the Runes into the items knows how many successes he achieved on his Runelore skill check, and so the market for Runed items is not particularly stable. It is not difficult for a charlatan to create items that appear to be Runed, but which have no value. A person selling Runed items depends heavily on his reputation, as there is little besides his word to assure his customers regarding the reliability of their purchases.

Light Rod

These handy devices do little more than provide light on demand. Light rods can come in many shapes and forms, from simple wooden planks to ornate gold wands. Regardless of the

form, however, they all operate on the same basic principle. A Nhet-ess Rune is carved into two pieces of material, which are then separated to preserve the effect. The individual Runes are mounted on a rod with a slider or switch that joins them and releases the Rune, creating light. The switch can also be used to separate the two halves of the Rune, saving the light for another day. Many incorporate other features such as hoods to focus the light or colored glass to color the light. The value of a light rod varies greatly, depending on the material used, the decorations on the device and the extra features. In general, however, a light rod will cost anywhere from 5 to 200 Vel.

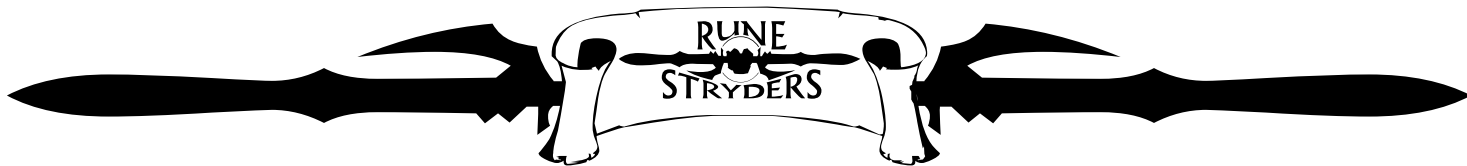
Attack Icons

A large band of foes can spell trouble for many mercenaries, and items that release attack Runes will affect everyone in range, including the wielder. Zokili mercenaries were the first to use attack icons to deal with such difficulties, but the use has spread to most of Rhun.

At their most basic, attack icons are simply attack Runes scribed onto two different pieces of material. When the pieces are joined, the Rune releases the attack against anyone within range. However, users would most likely want to be a ways away before the Rune is joined, or the Rune would also attack them. Therefore, attack icons include a small spring-loaded mechanism that joins the Runes when the icon strikes a solid obstacle. An easily-removed safety is inserted between the two halves to prevent accidental discharge, and removed before the Rune is thrown.

The array of Runes used on attack icons is impressive. Elemental Rune attacks are popular, as are many Prime Runes. Many thieves use Sensory Runes to improve their chances of escape, and even some Life, Conceptual and Spatial Runes are sometimes used in these icons.

Attack icons are not absolutely reliable, unfortunately. Their very mechanical nature makes them liable to breakdown and failure. If they land in the middle of a group of opponents, they almost always release as intended, but if the ground is too muddy, or if the icon lands in water, the spring mechanism may not snap properly, and the Rune could fail to discharge. This is especially problematic if the user is standing on firm land, since the foes could recover the icon and throw it back.



Removing the safety from an attack icon is a single action, as is throwing the item. The user then makes a Throwing skill check with standard difficulty, modified for range. If the roll is successful, the Rune releases properly, either by striking the ground, a wall, or an opponent. If the roll fails, the Rune does not release. If the roll is a catastrophic failure, the Rune snaps closed before it is out of range of the user, and affects him and anyone close to him.

The gamemaster should determine how many successes are contained within an attack icon, unless the icon is crafted by a player who makes the Runelore skill check himself. These successes determine the power of the Rune, and should be noted when a player carries such an item.

Attack icons are not inexpensive to create. The mechanism upon which they are carved is difficult to produce without delicate engineering, and once made, a competent Runecaster must scribe the attack Rune. These little portable attack Runes thus cost anywhere from 50 to 250 Vel, based on the skill of the Runescribe and the successes achieved when carving the Rune.

Personal Charms

Many of the people of Rhun wear jewelry, such as bracelets, necklaces or rings. These otherwise harmless decorations can be equipped with sliding Rune Words, turning the most innocent of bracelets into a charm designed to boost the wearer in some way.

Most charms are created on the underside of jewelry, facing the user so that he is the only target. For example, a Rune might be scribed on the inside of a bracelet, activated when the user slides the control Rune into place. Some few Runes are worn more prominently, in order to offer their effects to anyone close enough to enjoy the benefits.

The most popular Runes to adorn such charms are Pei-ess, Fas-ess, Thei-ess, and Sen-ess, the Runes that boost attribute scores temporarily. Defense Runes are also common, with Nhet-ess (defense against any magical attack) being the most popular defense Rune.

The effects provided by charms are very fleeting, but they can be released with a single action. The effects last as described in the written description of the Rune, so their

durations are usually only one minute per success. However, when a combatant needs a quick edge, these charms can be very handy. Once a user no longer needs the effect, he can separate the Runes, saving the balance for another day.

The cost of personal charms varies depending on the quality of the jewelry and the successes achieved by the Runescribe. They are rarely less than 15 Vel, with a maximum price limited only be the value of the jewelry and quality of the Rune.

Ite Weapons

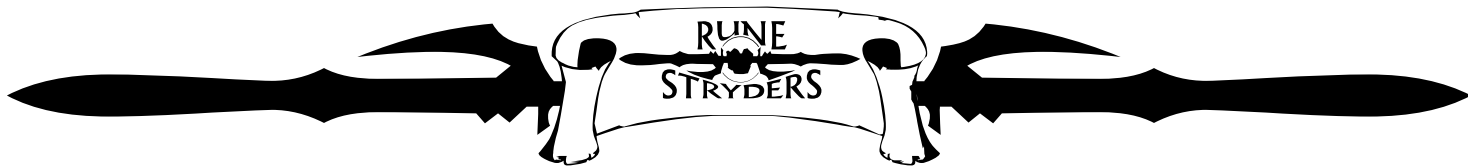
The Ite Rune is ideal for fighters, as it can increase the accuracy of attacks, making them more deadly in combat. A few lucky mercenaries wield weapons charmed with the Ite Rune. In order for the Ite Rune to affect the weapon, not the wielder, the weapon must be properly scribed.

The Runescribe creating an Ite weapon must first prepare the weapon. Since the Ite Rune only affects living things, the weapon must be scribed in a manner similar to that used to create Stryders. A shortened version of the Rune Word used to power a Stryder is carved into the weapon, usually in a location that can be covered or hidden within the weapon. The Ite-ess Rune is carved upon the same material as the animating Rune, and both are separated so that they can be joined with a switch. The Rune is generally covered by the weapon's handle, so that it is protected from damage that might occur in a melee.

When the switch is activated, the weapon is animated on a very basic level, and the Ite-ess Rune is allowed to affect the weapon instead of the wielder. The weapon actually guides the hand of its wielder, increasing the accuracy of attacks according to the number of successes rolled on the initial Runescribe attempt.

Rumors of legendary warriors carrying these weapons have been grossly exaggerated. Some mercenaries talk of warriors swinging talking axes, or blades that actually twist or elongate to strike multiple foes. These stories are not true—Ite weapons are not sentient. They merely possess enough animation to allow the Ite-ess Rune to take effect.

Since very skilled Runescribes must make these weapons, they tend to carry very significant accuracy bonuses. The difficulty for attacks made using Ite weapons is usually



reduced by at least 2, but 3 or even 4 point modifiers are not impossible. An Ite weapon made with 5 successes is a truly wondrous weapon, capable of incredible feats of military prowess.

Ite weapons are difficult to create. The Ite-ess Rune itself is not particularly difficult, but the Rune used to animate the weapon is a four-syllable advanced Rune Word, and can be a challenge for even the most skilled Runescribes. Therefore, these weapons are rarely sold. When they are sold, they generally fetch up to one-hundred times the value of the basic weapon from which they are made.

Mhet and Nhet Armor

The incredible defensive powers of the Mhet-ej and Nhet-ej Runes are somewhat offset by their very short durations. Even writing the Runes only grants a small improvement in the duration, and even then, the target must be a living creature. This limitation can definitely be overcome, however, and the result is very expensive but useful armor.

As noted in the core rules (*page 53*), Mhet-ej strengthens Endurance versus all physical attacks, while Nhet-ej protects against any magical attack. The bonus provided is significant, if short-lived, and so is highly valued. Mhet-ej and Nhet-ej Runes are sometimes scribed into armor to allow those unskilled in Runelore to enjoy the benefits of these Runes.

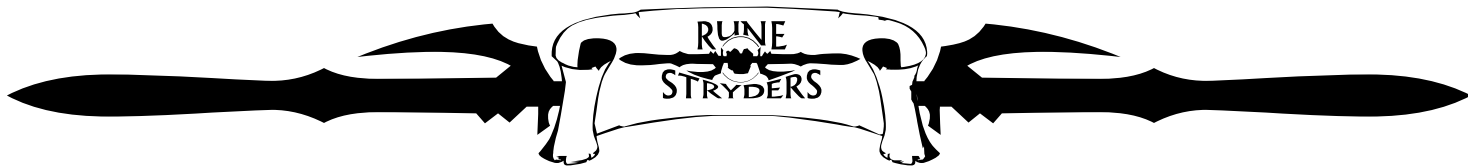
Both Mhet and Nhet armors are generally metal armor. The armor is rigged with several Mhet-ej or Nhet-ej Runes, and one complex Rune as used in Ite weapons. To activate the protection, the user activates the animating Rune and then one of the protection Runes. Each activation takes one round. The protective Runes are not designed to be deactivated, as their effect is too short-lived. A Runescribe may be employed to scribe new Runes into the empty slots on the armor, once all the existing Runes are used up. A suit of armor may include both Nhet-ej and Mhet-ej Runes, though only one form of protection will work at a time.

Mhet and Nhet armors are very expensive. To determine the cost of a suit of armor, start with the base price of the armor and multiply it by one-hundred for the animating Rune. Then add 100 Vel per Mhet-ej or Nhet-ej Rune included in the armor, or 20 Vel per Rune if the Runes have been activated. Rescribing the protective Runes costs, on average, 50 Vel per Rune.

Ote Wafers

These wafers are actually thin metal disks about the size of a dinner plate. They come in two halves, with half of an Ote-ess Rune written on each half. Each half has a handle. The user holds each half tightly and places them together, after which the wafer (and the user) teleport to the location previously determined by the Runescribe who created the wafer. The user does not determine the location, and once the wafer is created, the location is fixed. The wafer will not function if carried outside the range of the Rune, and so these disks have very limited usefulness.

The cost of an Ote wafer is usually just the price of the metal used to scribe it, plus a small fee for scribing the Rune. The wafers are usually custom made, so that the user may dictate his exact destination. Typical wafers cost 40 Vel, though they may be more expensive if the user wishes to travel to a range requiring extra successes. At least two successes on the Runelore skill check are required to carry a human, and anything farther than eight-hundred yards away requires more successes. Failure simply means the disk leaves and the user stays.



Finding Runes

As an option, the gamemaster can decide to disallow some of the Runes provided or limit knowledge of certain Runes to isolated areas. The players may be surprised the first time they encounter a Kantarin Runecaster who surrounds himself in a cloak of flames, or they might be amazed when they meet night watchmen who walk the city carrying light rods instead of torches. The characters might be able to gain access to these rare Runes or they may be limited to admiring them. A player who sees a new, powerful Rune must push to learn it himself, and limiting the players' access could frustrate him considerably.

Runes can also be used as powerful enticements. Any Runecaster would be delighted to be the only living person with knowledge of a new control Rune. Entire adventures could be built around finding these new Runes or items.

Finally, some Runes and items might initially only be found in the hands of the players' opponents. A foe armed with an unknown Rune or a powerful Ite weapon could be a great challenge to the players and provide for all manner of exciting confrontations. Defeating the foe might allow the players to take the knowledge for themselves, providing extra incentive.

The Runes presented are by no means the only Runes you may use in your game. You may want to create new Runes, for any of the uses presented above. While this is not a particularly difficult process, there are some guidelines you may want to follow to keep them consistent with existing Runes.

I. Select a Definition for the Rune

The first step in creating a new Rune is to decide what kind of Rune you want to make. The Rune should be general enough to be flexible, but not so vague that it is difficult to define. At this stage, you only need a basic concept.

*For example, we have decided to create a Rune, and we think that **gravity** is a cool and flexible idea.*

2. Determine a Category for the Rune

New Runes should fit into one of the categories—Prime, Elemental, Sensory, Life, Conceptual, Spatial, or Control. Since a target may not have more than one Rune from a given category active at the same time, it is important that the Rune belong to only one category. Use the existing Runes to help you decide on a fitting category.

*For example, gravity is a powerful Rune, and a very global concept, so it could fit nicely as a prime Rune. However, it is a concrete enough concept, and could easily be considered an elemental Rune. Given the effects we're considering for the Rune, we decide that the **elemental** category is the best fit.*

3. Name the Rune

Your new Rune needs a name. The name is generally based on a sound found in language. You should decide on a spelling and pronunciation of the Rune.

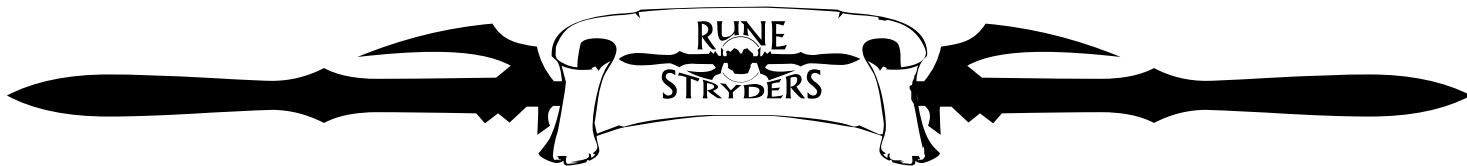
*For example, the name of our new gravity Rune will be **Kit**. It is based on the sound made when a k sound is next to a t, as in pack.*

4. Determine the Effects of the Rune

There are three requirements when creating the effects for a new rune. The first is to determine a general effect which is consistent with every control Rune. The effects will vary, but they should all follow a common theme.

*For example, we have decided that the gravity Rune **affects a target's weight**. The various control Runes will alter the target's relationship with the ground.*

The second requirement is to apply the different control Runes to the effect Rune. As mentioned above, these should all be consistent in theme.



For example, we now decide on the different effects caused by combining the gravity Rune with control Runes.

Attack with gravity (Kit-eq): The target is slammed with the force of gravity, pulling him painfully toward the ground.

Defend against gravity (Kit-ej): The target becomes lighter than air, able to float a few feet above the ground.

Use gravity (Kit-ess): The target becomes heavier and more difficult to move.

Defend with gravity (Kit-ex): The target is surrounded by a field of gravity. Incoming attacks are drawn to the ground.

Shape gravity (Kit-ett): The caster may manipulate the weight of the target, making the target either heavier or lighter.

The final requirement is to decide on specific game effects. Use the existing Runes to determine damage, protective effects and durations. In general, very powerful Runes have shorter durations.

For example...

Kit-eq: This is a Strength 4 magical attack. In addition to any damage caused, the target loses 1 Agility per success for the rest of the turn and the entire next turn.

Kit-ej: The target may float one foot above the ground per success, and may move over any surface, including water, mud or boiling lava. He may move forward at half his regular walking pace with 1 success, at a standard walking pace with 2 successes, at running speed with 3 successes, at a sprint with 4 successes, and he may move faster than a man can run with 5 successes. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

Kit-ess: The target effectively gains weight and density, so wood may sink or a sheet of paper may stay flat in a strong wind. The caster may affect up to ten pounds of material per success. The effect lasts for one minute per success.

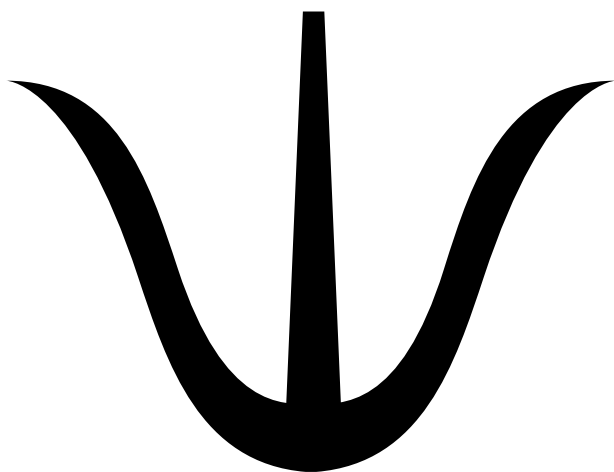
Kit-ex: All incoming projectile attacks suffer a +2 Difficulty modifier per success. The protection lasts for one minute per success.

Kit-ett: The target's weight may be changed by 10% per success. The target does not change in form, merely density, so fat people will still be fat, just lighter, and thin slivers of wood will not become thicker, just heavier. The caster may manipulate the target's weight for up to one minute per success, and the effects are permanent. However, the target is altered by the effect—a 1 point increase or decrease in endurance accompanies each 10% change in weight. If the target is a person, his strength decreases by 1 for each point gained in endurance, and increases by 1 for each point lost.

5. Draw your Rune

This step is largely optional, but adds playability and a sense of depth to your Rune. Find a pattern compatible with the existing Runes, and sketch the Rune.

For example, We have decided to draw the Kit Rune as follows:



THE KNOWN RUNES



Awn



Ngei



Oun



Gai



Wei



Ahn



iin



Thurn



lte



Pei



Yon



Owt



Fas



Bei



Ote



Thei



Whin



Jin



Sen



Vel



Tin



Dron



Blei



Grei



Hei



Xhei



Nhet



Mhet



Lhei



Dhei



Shrai



Ain



Ott



Ull



Un



Aan



Khet



Zhei



Zei



Shei



Chei



Rhun



Enn



Ean



Frei



Ej



Ess



Eq



Ex



Ett

RUNE CONVERGENCE

“Isa bigun, ya?”

Thomis did his best to shield his eyes from the blinding sun, with little success due to the fact that his good arm was tied painfully behind his back, and his broken arm was splinted to his chest. The Dras had decided that he would be less likely to harm anyone that way. Thomis didn’t bother telling the little bugger that he had already loosened the knot enough to slip his hand out. It seemed best to play along, especially considering the fact that his recent ordeal had left him weak, to say nothing of the broken arm.

He had no idea how the Dras had managed to find this long-forgotten entrance to the city’s sewer system, spilling out into what must have once been a small river before damming had diverted its course and left it to the weeds. To be honest, he didn’t care. He was glad to be out of the stink, out in the real world again. Though tempted to raise a hand to fend off the light, blinding after being underground for so long, he resisted. He instead blinked away the pain as he looked around in circles for whatever it was the Dras was talking about. He assumed “bigun” meant “big one,” but to one as short as the Draslander, everything (including the infant child, gods be thanked he was well) was a “big one.”

Then he spotted what it was the Dras was talking about.

It was, indeed, a big one.

He did a slow circle around the behemoth standing before him, details becoming clearer, shapes becoming shadows becoming colors becoming...

A Rune Stryder.

It was not of Divaran make; of that he was sure. Well, relatively sure. Not being a ‘Monkey himself, he was no expert on Stryders, but he’d seen his fair share, and this was not a typical configuration for a Divaros pilot. For one, it was smaller than others he’d seen, about 15 feet high at the shoulder. Big, certainly, nearly thrice his own height, but nowhere near the 30-foot monsters he’d stood next to in the past. The general shape was the same, and it followed the human convention in that it had two legs and two arms, but this lacked a head, and seemed altogether more squat than any Stryder he’d seen before. It resembled an amphibian, he decided, complete with (as he discovered upon reaching the tail end of the beast) a vestigial tail. No doubt serving some purpose beyond being merely decorative, but exactly what that might be was beyond him.

A sudden bleat from the infant, currently being tended to by the Dras (they’d been taking turns), broke him out of his reverie, and reminded him that they needed to be moving. He retraced his steps and turned, expecting to see the Dras once again rocking the feeble human child in a futile attempt to quiet it.

“Dhhhhhhhhei-eq,” came a throaty whisper, a nearly inhuman growl from the back of a throat. He didn’t stick around to see who it belonged to, knowing full well that the Rune was Death, and that the best place for him to be was out of sight. He abandoned all pretense of being restrained and dove for the bottom of the dry creek bed, landing between the legs of the Stryder in a small patch of what he hoped was mud, wincing in pain as the earth reminded him of his broken arm. Overhead, nothing happened, which was a good sign; either the Rune had misfired, or it had affected someone else. In either case, all that mattered was that for the moment, Thomis was alive. Now, to make sure that remained the case.

His good hand reached out for a stone, small enough to throw, large enough to do a good bit of damage. His hand closed around it and he pulled, trying to loosen the earth around it in order to pull it free. He was quite surprised when the rock moved of its own accord, along with the earth on both sides of him.

A half second later he was peering down the shaft of a nocked crossbow bolt.





RUINE

CHAPTER 5

The crossbow was connected to the stout arm of a Zokili mercenary, one of two who had, moments ago, been lying in the mud beside him, unseen. Even now that they were moving, low to the ground, he could barely see them, so thoroughly camouflaged were they, covered in mud and filth, weeds and grasses woven through their clothing. But it had to be them. As tall as a Dras, but altogether more... human, these two moved with an unnatural grace, effortless. One of the two leaned back and stared at him, a slight head wiggle indicating some movement to the other. The crossbow never wavered.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the other Zokili creep towards higher ground, craning her neck to listen more closely, catching sounds on the air. She seemed to sniff the air, shutting her eyes. And then it was as if the earth moved beneath her, thrusting her up and out in one smooth movement, her crossbow descending, her finger pulling the trigger, releasing the bolt. The missile was barely off the bow when she threw it down and rushed up and out of the gully, hand reaching for her dagger. And then she was gone.

Beside Thomis, the second Zokili had not even blinked.

Several long moments went by, broken only by a large fly buzzing its way onto his upper lip. Irritated, he blew it away, and it flew across and landed on the forehead of the Zokili mercenary. He did not react. Thomis began to wonder if, perhaps, the chap had died, when suddenly from outside the gulley came a shrill whistle, quite obviously unnatural.

"Up," said the Zokili, without moving. Thomis did his best to obey, managing to attain a half-crouch beneath the Stryder that loomed overhead while the Zokili stood fully on his feet. "Out," again without emotion, the crossbow never wavering. Thomis complied, scrambling out of the gulley, heading towards the second Zokili, who stood staring down at a spot in the tall grass. He walked until he heard "Stop" from behind him, and then stopped, peering curiously ahead as the second Zokili walked past him to stand beside his partner.

Lying in the grass was, as he had already guessed, one of the late Jonan Marle-Thon's Magi. He was not dead. The bolt had merely pierced the flesh and sinew at the side of the Mage's neck, missing major arteries as well as the Mage's voice box (which would have been a fate worse than death). He was bleeding like a stuck Lodo, a bright red pool already forming beneath him, but the wound was not necessarily fatal if he were tended to. The Zokili, however, seemed quite content to watch him die.

Thomis considered whether he could do the same, and in spite of himself, and the fact that mere moments ago the Mage had tried to hurl a Death Rune, he decided he could not.

"You can't let him die," he said. The Zokili did not react, so he spoke louder. "Killing him is one thing. If you're going to kill him, kill him. But don't let him die like that."

The male Zokili turned, aiming his bow at Thomis.

"Why do you care, Divar? He would do the same to you."

For a moment, Thomis wondered how much the two Zokili knew about his recent problems, which had led to the battle in the alleyway, the elder Jonan's death, and his being tossed in a Rune-guarded chamber in the sewers and left for dead. But then he realized the Zokili was speaking more generally about the habits of the Divaros as a whole. And Thomis would have been hard pressed to refute those beliefs.

Still, he could not watch a man die like this. Not even a Mage.

"Either kill him, or let me tend to him."

The two Zokili stared at one another wordlessly, and then the male lowered his bow, pointing it again at the Mage. For a moment, Thomis thought he would fire, but then the Zokili looked at him and, with a nod of his head, indicated that he should approach.

RUINE

He took two steps forward and fell to his knees as the earth shook beneath him. He calmly crawled the rest of the way to the Mage, familiar enough with the sensation to know that it was no earthquake; merely the Zokili Stryder beginning to move. Evidently its Pilyt had been inside the whole time, observing, and only now that things had shaken loose did the frog-like construct make a move towards higher, more stable ground, much better terrain for a Stryder to fight on, if it came to that.

"Who are you?" rasped the Mage. Thomis ignored him, tending to the wound as best he could with one hand, knowing that the Mage was speaking to the Zokili, knowing with equal certainty that the Zokili would not reply. He was, however, somewhat surprised when the Dras suddenly emerged, bedraggled and dirty, from a nearby mudhole he'd taken cover in. Seeing the dripping wet Draslander, Thomis nearly leapt at his throat out of concern for the child, but then he saw the child, safe and dry, bundled within an oilcloth sack the Dras had been secreting away.

The male Zokili eyed the Dras curiously, keeping his crossbow pointed at the Mage's forehead the entire time. Could it be that this well-trained warrior had never seen a Dras before? His answer, the obvious one, he thought, came a moment later. The two obviously knew each other.

"What are you doing with that thing?" asked the Zokili.

"Disa bebbie," said the Dras. "Ewas inda swar, widdis guy heyah."

"I know what it is," said the mercenary. "Kill it."

Thomis' heart sunk momentarily, but quickly the Dras clasped the child to his chest.

"Ono," he said. "Isabebbie, noway."

The Zokili rolled his eyes and looked down at Thomis and the mage, obviously weighing which matter required more of his attention at the moment. Satisfied that neither of the Divaros was going anywhere, he turned the bow away and wandered off to argue with the Dras.

"What the hell is going on here?" asked the Mage, wincing in pain. "Dras? Zokili? A Stryder? What the..." He broke off, coughing. It was just as well that he was unable to finish his question.

Thomis had no answers.



CHAPTER 4

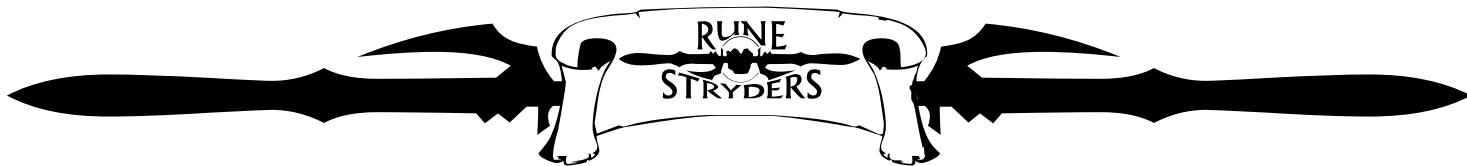
THE BOOK OF STRYDERS



tryders are towering constructs of wood, metal, leather, rock, bone, or chitin, created by humanity for the purpose of waging war. Certainly, Stryders have been put to use in other, less military occupations. Lacking large beasts of burden in most parts of the world, people have used Stryders to plough fields, tear down trees and raise the walls of homes and castles. In other areas, Stryders have taken on an almost mythic stature, as with the Kantarin, who revere their Stryders, formed of living wood, as deeply as they revere the forest in which they dwell. Among the Myndwar, Stryders are put to the task of burrowing beneath the earth, hewing stone and steel from the ground itself much faster than human hands could manage. And for the Sivatagi, whose Stryders are very much alive, the relationship between man and mount takes on a whole new meaning.

Yet despite the exceptions, there can be no doubt that the primary purpose of Stryders is waging war, whether the intent is to conquer one's enemies or defend one's homeland. These constructs are built to destroy, and to withstand destruction, and for that reason they are at once treasured, feared, loved





and reviled by all who encounter them. Well-built Stryders literally carry the stench of battle with them for years, the blood and smoke of conflict lingering about their bodies long after the war has ended. No one who has encountered one in battle can ever forget the experience.

THE STRYDERS OF OTHER GENRES

In studying Stryders, comparisons to other, similar creations in science fiction and fantasy will inevitably be made, and thus it is first crucial to understand what Stryders are not.

Mecha

The Mecha of Japanese anime and games are, for the most part, little more than giant anthropomorphic machines designed for war, or, using the original definition, any sort of machine at all. Stryders are not machines. They are not driven by fuel, nor do they contain cogs, gears, electrical wiring or steam-driven turbines. They are magical constructs that function only by way of Runic magic and a bond with their Pilot.

Automatons

Robots and other automated mechanical creations are much like Mecha, but for the fact that they are self-propelled and capable of independent action and (depending on the setting) a degree of free will. Stryders have no cognitive ability without their Pilots. With some few notable exceptions, a Stryder in the absence of its Pilot is merely an inanimate hunk of matter, no more alive than a pile of bricks or a mound of wood.

Golems

Originating in Jewish mythology, and then translated into standard fantasy fare, a golem is a construct of clay, stone or other material that is brought to life by means of magical, divine or scientific intervention. In some cases this is the application of a rune or spell; in others (as with Frankenstein's monster), it is a mysterious brew of chemicals and other agents. While Stryders are given potential for life through the application of Runes, they are generally not self-directed or self-aware. They cannot be given orders to dumbly follow; they are not merely ignorant, they are completely lifeless and mindless without their Pilots.

THE STRYDER-PILOT BOND

A Stryder without a Pilot is not a Stryder. It is merely an empty shell, devoid of life (except among certain nations), much as a suit of armor or a crossbow is powerless and useless unless wielded by an expert warrior in combat. The Stryder Pilot is responsible for initiating all of the Stryder's actions, acting as its brain, nervous system and, some would have it, its soul.

But despite the common moniker, the Stryder Pilot is much more than a driver or taskmaster. If all he did was steer, anyone could hop in the seat and take it for a spin. On the contrary, becoming a Stryder Pilot involves much more than study and practice. It involves an ability to more deeply bond with the Stryder itself, achieving a symbiotic relationship in which the Pilot becomes a part of his Stryder, and vice-versa. The Pilot's own consciousness and "heart" extend to the Stryder itself, bestowing it with a sort of shared intelligence, and creating, in a sense, a new form of life that is greater than either the Pilot or the Stryder on their own.

For this reason, the relationship between Stryder and Pilot is much less akin to that of a brain and its body, and more appropriately compared to that of a pregnant mother and her unborn child.

Certainly, without the presence of the child in her womb, the mother would continue to exist; but she would be a woman, and not a prospective mother. The presence of the child bestows on her a new sort of identity, one in which she has reciprocal responsibilities for the child inside (protection, nourishment), without which the child could not exist. The Stryder Pilot gives the Stryder itself existence of a sort, and in return for benefiting from that existence, the Stryder protects (and in some cases nourishes) the Pilot within, enhancing and extending the bond. The two become one.

The closeness of the bond can, and often does, have a psychological effect on the Pilot, though the intensity of the bond varies depending on the technologies of the different nations. In all cases, Pilots will spend much of their spare time around and inside their Stryders, looking after the construct or enhancing the bond.

In the most extreme cases, some go so far as to remain within their Stryders for weeks at a time, emerging only to eat and perform other essential tasks. A few become so attached to their Stryders that they ultimately refuse to emerge at all, instead lumbering off into the wilderness to pursue an independent existence that can only, in most cases, end in tragedy, with the wasting death of the Pilot, and thus the gradual decay of the thus inanimate shell of the Stryder. This is a particular issue with the Kantarin people, whose bond with their Stryders is at once dangerous and addictive.



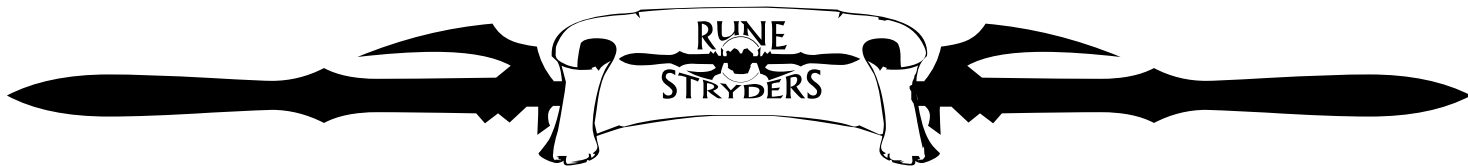
STRYDER CONSTRUCTION

Legend has it that the Stryders were originally developed to battle the Deijin, the giants who enslaved humanity in ages past. Images and imaginings of these first Stryders bear little resemblance to the Stryders used to wage war in the modern age, these older constructs being much taller, much broader, and, as any engineer will tell you, much more impossible. Time, after all, has a way of making things larger than life. Were these early Stryders a hundred feet tall, capable of tearing up mountains and bringing down the moons? Certainly not. But time also has a way of revealing truths, for those who choose to look.

The remains of the earliest Stryders, built centuries and generations ago, can still be found, on occasion, buried beneath piles of stone, crouched in fetid swamps, submerged in shallow lakes and rivers, their legs broken and shattered, ankles and feet crushed and mangled, torsos split in two. Their flaw was not necessarily in being too large, but rather in trying to mirror too closely the proportions of the human form (i.e.,

eight heads high), with the center of mass where the legs met the body. Were these first Stryders made of flesh, blood and bone, they might have managed more than a few feeble steps before collapse. However, the stone, metal and wood that they were made of consistently proved too heavy for their bodies to carry, and inevitably resulted in years of wasted effort and, quite often, the death of their Pilot and/or creator.

It is still considered a mystery how the very first Stryders managed to defeat the Deijin giants at all (*see the Book of the World*), considering their lumbering, ungainly bodies destined for collapse. Not so coincidentally, this is often one of the points raised by those who believe that the Deijin are a mere figment of mythological imagination. Allowing that the first Stryders were used to fight the Deijin, however, perhaps it was some combination of the element of surprise, as well as some ancient Rune, yet to be re-discovered, that allowed them to defy the laws of nature, and to fight as well as stand and walk.



CREATING A STRYDER

While all Stryders are designed for war, each Nation on the continent has a somewhat different method for creating Stryders, and each uses vastly different materials and methods. In all cases, the process of creating a Stryder is a complex one, requiring anywhere from months to years to complete, and is not easily role-played in real-time.

However, a group of players that includes a Stryder Pilot will also need a Stryder, and as such it is important to decide what sort of Stryder is available. The following few sections thus outline the creation of Stryders among the various nations, giving the Pilot's player some idea of what went into its making. Since the methods vary so much, it is best to examine how each race goes creating Stryders individually.

THE CONFEDERATED NATIONS

Having built an empire spanning the continent, Divaros learned that standardization was the key to effectively equipping and maintaining a larger army. The Divaran engineering tradition was built on a process of construction, fielding, and repair that needed to be sustainable regardless of distance. Therefore, Divaran Stryders tended to be (and still are) utilitarian and uniform in construction. The Divaros have the advantage of larger forces and widely available spare parts to repair damaged Stryders. On the other hand, the Divaran militarys engineers are the most dogmatic and conservative, and shun innovation outside a careful, derivative progression.

After hosting the armies of Divaros on their path to conquest, as allies, and at times even as foes in battle, the Myndwar and the Zokili were heavily influenced by the Divaran way of Stryder construction. The Myndwar and Zokili learned most of what they know about modern Stryder construction from the Divaros. Many years have passed since their first Divaran-copied Stryders were built, however. While the Divaran influence is still obvious, over time both nations gradually evolved their own distinct traditions, and learned a few things on their own.

Confederated Nation Stryders have in common their general use of a central body, with articulated limbs for locomotion. The Pilot almost always resides in an internal Rune Chamber, which is designed to facilitate the runic magic-based link between he and his Stryder. Confederated Nation fighting Stryders are almost all humanoid, while other types of supporting and siege Stryders often follow loosely turtle- or spider-shaped constructions. These may or may not have a head; if one is present it is mainly aesthetic.

In keeping with Divaros tradition, those of the Confederated Nations classify all of their Stryders (and many of those belonging to others) into categories, to keep the logistics chain manageable. These four Stryder categories are organized according to basic body design, as follows.

Valley Rat

These Stryders are commonly used when tactical ability is more crucial than raw offense. The most flexible of Stryders, Rats are well-rounded, but not suited for a single function.

Meadow Fox

The agile Meadow Fox is most often used as a scout or forward spotter. Its trim design and upright stance allow it to move quickly in any direction, avoiding attacks easily and rarely returning them. They are the only Confederated configuration capable of leaping into the air.

Black Dog

These workhorse Stryders are built low to the ground, with four legs and no arms. They are designed to haul soldiers, siege engines or other heavy items, and do not have exceptional mobility. They are able to cover ground very rapidly, and often wear considerable armor to compensate for their inability to defend themselves.

Iron Wolf

These powerful, low-slung Stryders are stricly war machines, capable of punching huge stone or steel fists through enemy soldiers, Stryders, or stone walls. Built for power, not utility, they are not very useful outside of combat.

Divaran Stryders

The Divaros build their Stryders in central guildhalls known as Rune halls, where many technical and Runic experts are gathered together. Rune halls are large walled compounds containing numerous buildings including workshops, barracks, mess hall facilities, homes, libraries, pubs, and other support facilities, much like a self-contained town. Rune halls are typically isolated by distance and heavy security. The Divaros guard their technology fiercely and actively control communication. The Rune halls provide little room for inventiveness, being primarily concerned with production of existing models. A Chief Mage-Engineer oversees each Rune hall, and he has nearly complete power over his charges. His main purpose is to ensure that the quality of the Stryders remains to standard. Beneath him, high-ranking Artisans and Runescribes are tasked with supervising day-to-day production and, if necessary, coordinating improvements with other Rune halls. Below them, in turn, are journeymen and apprentices with specialized, limited, knowledge, who perform most of the actual construction.

The Divaros use many traditional construction materials in creating their Stryders—mostly wood, metal, leather, and rope. A typical Divaran Stryder consists of a wooden frame, with leather skin, wood planks, or metal sheeting forming an outer shell, depending on type. Because parts are standardized, Divaran Stryders mostly use one of four body types (Smart, Agile, Strong, or Tough) with semi-modular limbs in an arrangement selected for specific kinds of missions. Divaran Stryders are still magical creations, but the Runic magic involved in their creation is used in a strictly utilitarian way.

Divaran Stryders are maintained and repaired in the field by specialist mage-engineers, highly trained Runescribes who are among the workers in the army's camp followers. These Runescribes are given just enough information to make basic repairs to the Stryders, but could provide little information of use in building a new Stryder if captured. Even so, these specialists are closely monitored, and any found to learn enough about Stryders to become an information risk are quickly relocated to a Rune hall.

Divaran Stryders follow tried-and-tested configurations when determining size. Rather than replicate the mistakes of the past, modern Divaran Stryder engineers and mechanics have since thrown out the ancient human ratio of upper to lower body (4:4) and settled on a much more functional ratio of 3:4. This has proven stable, durable and functional, and many have gone so far as to suggest that Stryders built in accordance with it are actually superior in form and function to the obviously inferior human form. Others have even posited that the Deijin giants, or even the gods themselves, are formed in such a ratio, further calling into question the supposed superiority of humanity. The 3:4 ratio finds its way into the construction of a Stryder in various guises, sometimes appearing as a figure, proportion or calculation to guide Stryder design, in other places appearing as a general organizational theory.

Divaran Pilots (known as Homunculi in the Divaran military) have little to no influence on the construction of the Stryders they will pilot. In many cases, a Homunculus might pilot several Stryders over the course of a campaign, although in some rare cases, veteran Homunculi might grow particularly attached to a specific Stryder, and refuse to allow anyone else to pilot it.



Myndwar Stryders

The Myndwar, who contributed the first Runic discoveries to the creation of the Rune Stryder, initially built their own Stryders in the same fashion as the Divaros. However, over the years their widespread cultural use of stone led to their beginning to substitute greater and greater amounts of rock in their Stryders main parts. This is not to say that their Stryders are completely made of stone. A solid stone Stryder would be an impossible feat. However, they use stone in more ways, and in greater quantities, than any other Nation.

The Myndwar found several advantages in constructing stone-based Stryders. Few materials retain Runic magic as well as rock. Wood and even most metals are not nearly as sturdy over the long run. Stone structures also support more weight than other types of Stryder bodies, and therefore can be built larger and carry more. In fact, the Myndwar boast the largest Stryders anywhere. Their legendary Mountain Guardian Stryders are nearly forty feet tall. The disadvantages of stone lie mainly in slow construction time, lessened mobility, and extreme weight, but because the Myndwar hold the mountains, these problems matter less than they would elsewhere. The hard ground of the broad mountainous valleys the Myndwar call home has little trouble supporting several tons of Stryder, even though such creations would sink immediately on a Divaran plain or in a Draslander swamp.

Aside from stone construction, the biggest difference between Myndwar and Divaran Stryder construction is philosophy. The Myndwar are a nation with a tradition of craftsmanship, and the concept of blindly mass-producing Stryders as quickly as possible is alien to them. Additionally, the sheer durability of a Myndwar Stryder in combination with their isolationist outlook means that a Myndwar Stryder, once built, will be likely around not just for a single campaign, but perhaps for generations. While Myndwar and Divaran Stryders share common features, Myndwar do not design theirs with cheap replacements in mind.

Each Myndwar Stryder is a unique piece of art, its construction a labor of love largely undertaken by the Myndwar Pilot (known as a Jacker) herself over several years, even decades in the case of larger types. Naturally, in this system the Jacker must be a skilled craftsman as well as

Runesmith; novice Jackers are therefore carefully apprenticed by an experienced Jacker (often a father or close relative) for many years before ever wielding their own mount. The result is an intensely strong bond between Jacker and Stryder, surpassed perhaps only by the Kantarin Stryders living bond. The destruction of a Myndwar Stryder most often means the death of the Jacker; if she somehow survives the event that led to its destruction, she is often a broken person, never quite whole again.

Zokili Stryders

Zokili lack the resources in sufficient quantity to produce metal-armored Stryders like the Divaros. In fact, they are lucky to be able to spare metal for tools and weapons. Thus forced to use other materials as a substitute, wood and leather feature far more predominantly in Zokili Stryders than in Divaran types. As a result, Zokili tend to focus on agility and speed, although some of their heavier wooden Stryders can, in numbers, easily hold up to metal or stone types.

Like the Myndwar, the Zokili are a nation that appreciates craftsmanship, but in a somewhat different sense. While a Myndwar sees a Stryder as an enduring piece of himself, the Zokili prefer a uniquely carved and decorated Stryder for more aesthetic and psychological aspects, which they feel are nearly as important as the Runes that animate their creations. The destruction of a Stryder is expected eventually, but is not seen as a deterrent to producing Stryders with distinct character and identity. Stryder Pilyts are known for going to great lengths to have the best artists ornament their creations, preferring fearsome and intimidating designs.

Zokili have borrowed the idea of using standardized limbs from the Divaros to make maintenance easier, but have no qualms about improvising or modifying to gain an advantage. It is not uncommon to find uniquely equipped Stryders in Zokili armies, at the cost of having to abandon broken pieces and spend additional time and effort creating or adapting a replacement.

Zokili engineers are more restricted in the overall shape and size of a Stryder than even the Divaros, given the materials they have to work with. Zokili Stryders rarely reach twenty feet in height, and are rarely able to carry very heavy weapons.

However, as Zokili Pilyts tend to be among the shortest and lightest of the Pilots of all Nations, they can afford to whittle some of the bulk away. As a result, Zokili Stryders are generally the fastest around, their agility contested only by some Sivatagi Stryders.

THE OUTCAST NATIONS

The Stryders of the Outcast Nations vary greatly in size, shape and function, straining and in some cases breaking the rules that the Confederated Nations adhere to in the construction of their own Stryders. The Kantarin use living trees as their Stryders, their Pilots (called Melded) literally bonding with the Stryder in a way well beyond what other Pilots experience. The Sivatagi do not build or grow their Stryders, instead taming and training the giant insects that roam the deserts they call home. And the Draslander make their Stryders from the cast-off materials of other Nations, putting together piecemeal Stryders that are as fearsome and unpredictable as they are likely to fall apart in the midst of battle.

Many citizens of the Confederated Nations refuse to acknowledge that the Stryders of these other Nations are truly Stryders at all. For all intents and purposes, however, they are treated as Stryders, and considered as such by the people that use them.

Kantarin Stryders

Kantarin Stryders are created from a specific type of tree native to their home region, through a process the Kantarin Shapers jealously conceal both out of concern for their security and for the well being of the trees. The process is extremely special, beginning at the first

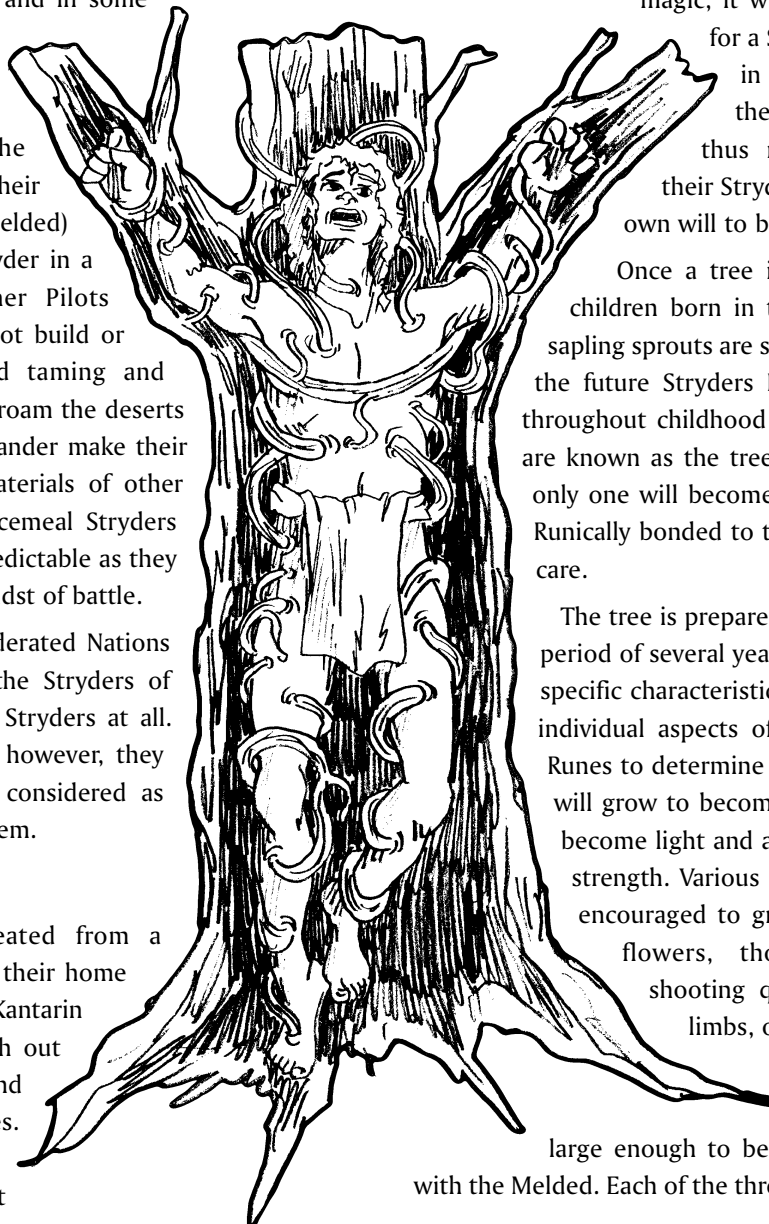
sprouting of a sapling, and continues through the entire lifecycle of the tree, which at an early age becomes intertwined with that of the Pilot, known among the Kantarin as a Melded. The Runic magic involved is known nowhere else on Rhun, and the Kantarin will carry their secret to their last breath.

Kantarin Shapers search the woods constantly for the specific type of tree suitable for Stryder cultivation; if the new plant grows even a month without being prepared with Runic magic, it will never grow to be suitable for a Stryder. The type doesn't grow in orchards or anywhere where they are planted by hand, and thus many Kantarin believe that their Stryders are the result of the tree's own will to become one.

Once a tree is discovered, three Kantarin children born in the same month as the new sapling sprouts are selected to potentially become the future Stryders Melded; they will each train throughout childhood to fill that role. These three are known as the tree's Companions, and although only one will become the Melded, all of them are Runically bonded to the tree, and participate in its care.

The tree is prepared by ritual Runic magic over a period of several years, allowing it to manifest the specific characteristics of the Stryder desired. The individual aspects of the tree combine with the Runes to determine what kind of Stryder the tree will grow to become. Certain trees are raised to become light and agile; others are cultivated for strength. Various types of natural defenses are encouraged to grow such as carnivorous trap flowers, thorny vines, thick spikes, shooting quills, poisonous saps, heavy limbs, or other such protection.

After a period of fifteen to twenty years, the tree is large enough to begin the process of symbiosis with the Melded. Each of the three Companions stands around



the tree, and one of them is chosen (some say by the tree itself). This one, the Melded, then undergoes an excruciatingly painful ritual whereby the plant extends tendrils under his skin. Subsequent separations and reunions with the Stryder, while not as painful as the initial bonding, still hurt intensely. However, the resulting euphoric warmth and sense of completeness the Melded feels while connected to the tree always makes him advocate the ritual as well worth the cost.

While joined, the tree and the Melded are essentially one being. The tree is magically uprooted and becomes able to move around at the Melded's direction. The vines, limbs, and other extensions of the tree extend and swing at the Melded's thought, and so on. It becomes a full-fledged Stryder, extremely resilient (especially against blunt force and projectile attacks), and capable of regeneration as long as the tree as a whole stays relatively intact. If kept watered, Kantarin Stryders are also resistant to fire, and this, coupled with their many other natural defenses, make them equal or superior to those of man-built Stryders.

While a Kantarin Stryder certainly begins as a tree, it adapts to its new form through the ministrations of its Companions and a Shaper. The Stryder will have roots, but they will withdraw into the legs when the Stryder is in motion. The Stryder will have limbs, but they will be articulated and generally free from bushy leaves. The leaves at the crown of the tree will generally disappear or fall off. The trunk is no longer straight and thick; it narrows and reforms to allow for a flexible and agile form. The Kantarin Stryder grows to be sleek and deadly, and is rarely mistaken for a tree once it uproots and begins its existence as a Stryder.

The Melded can stay connected with the Stryder for only so long before he must be removed, severed, really, to be fed and recover from the symbiosis to prevent risk to his body and mind. The Melded cannot do this himself, and requires assistance from Kantarin Shapers or from the Companions. Runes protect the Melded from ill effects for awhile, but if he is not eventually separated, the Stryder's own life-force will eventually overcome him and he will go insane as the suppressed natural needs of the tree become dominant and guide his will. If the Melded is ever killed while joined to the tree, it also results in the death of the tree. As the separation

process is painful and the bonding process so addictive, Kantarin Melded must struggle to separate, but the potential death of the tree provides a powerful motivation.

At the same time, the Stryder still requires nourishment and sunlight as other trees do, albeit less frequently than normal flora. After the Melded is severed from the Stryder, the Stryder re-roots to feed until rejoined with its Melded. In this phase the tree can be killed without physical risk to the Melded, although the Melded (and the two other Companions) will experience emotional anguish as deep as the loss of any human loved one. However, if the Stryder is killed while the Melded is joined, the Melded will also die.

In return for their sacrifices, the tree provides all three Companions with long life; a Kantarin Stryder can live for as long as two-hundred years and the Companions can live out their natural lives or until the tree dies, whichever lasts longer. Their health is intertwined with the tree's health from the point of the Melded's first joining with the Stryder, and if the tree becomes diseased or is injured seriously, the Companions will experience fatigue and malaise accordingly.

Sivatagi Stryders

The Sivatagi follow a sharply different tradition in their Stryders than the other races. They have subjugated the large insect races of the desert and have adapted them for uses including domestic labor and combat. This development stems from the necessity posed by limited conventional construction materials available in their desert homeland and from their tradition of utilizing things on hand.

The Sivatagi use three main breeds of insect as Stryders. The Horlac, a kind of giant beetle, is the least common of the three but prized because of its nearly impervious carapace. The Sindle, a burrowing, nesting insect, is individually not very dangerous but fast and deadly in numbers. The Shmul is a swarming bug with stinging barbs on its front limbs and razor-sharp mandibles. All three are raised on farms by the Sivatagi Reavers, and, with the exception of the Shmul, are also used (especially with smaller varieties) for a wide array of domestic purposes.

The smallest of the three, the Sindle, is over six feet long and three feet high. The Horlac are even larger, about the size of a small horse cart. The Shmul is the largest of the three,

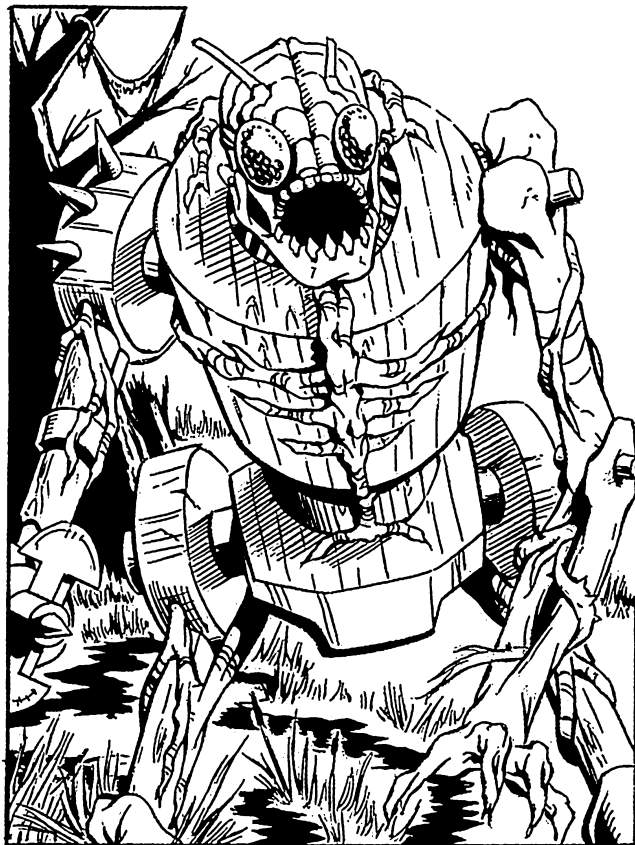
growing as big as fifteen feet tall and thirty feet in length, though most adult Shmul are between eight and ten feet tall. All the species are extremely strong, capable of moving weight many times their own mass, and must be dealt with cautiously even by their masters. All the insects rely on a pheromone-based method of communication and possess little intelligence of their own. They would be just ordinary bugs were it not for their size.

While the Sivatagi carve Runes on their insects carapace in order to subdue them for use as Stryders, most of the time the Sivatagi simply use herding tactics involving either following instincts or natural plant essences that repel or attract each species to control them. Sivatagi Reavers know these creatures in and out, and are experts at selecting the best of the breed to be Stryders. The biggest single advantage to using the insects is the ability to breed them by the dozens. From gestation to hatching, a brand new Stryder insect is ready in mere months, not years as the other nations Stryders require.

The Sivatagi Reavers have the least amount of connection with their mounts of any Pilots on Rhun, a fact reflected in their un-enhanced bareback riding position. Insect Stryders are considered expendable, especially because the natural lifecycle of the insects ranges only from a few months (Sindle) to a few years at most (Horlac and Shmul). Sivatagi Reavers on Rune-carved insects do have a mental bond with their mounts, but at a much more superficial level than do other kinds of Stryder Pilots. They can do little more than lead the direction their mounts travel and provoke the creatures natural instincts, although the insects instincts do include some useful skills.

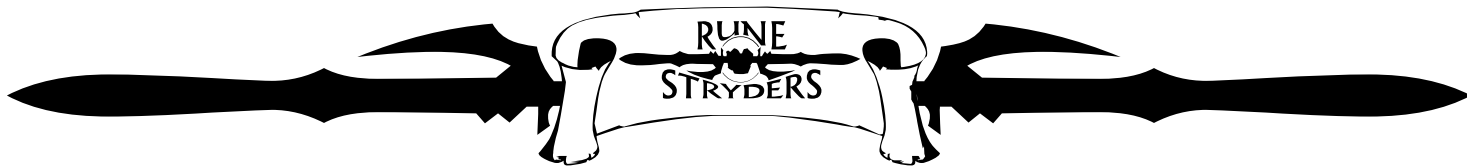
Sivatagi Reavers are still a trained elite. They are skilled in combat tactics and taught every nuance of their insects behaviors, making up for many of the disadvantages of riding their Stryders exposed. The key tactic of the Sivatagi Reaver is to use a Stryder insect to command a larger group of the same species, multiplying the effectiveness of a single insect. Facing down Sivatagi insects on foot is a terrifying (and probably fatal) experience for any opponent foolish enough to do so. Even in an enclosed Stryder, the prospect of being eviscerated by a swarm of giant bugs worries those who know what is good for them.

Since Sivatagi Stryder breeds are insects, there is not much one can do to customize their construction. However, the ever-resourceful Sivatagi have developed a few types of equipment and weapon packs that can be harnessed to the insects. Many of the add-ons include simple spikes and blades that attach to the insects limbs, enhancing the creatures natural fighting abilities, while the most complex add-ons include heavy weaponry designed to be carried on the back of a Horlac making it a mobile siege machine. Even without them, however, the insects own inborn defenses are as formidable on the offense.



Draslander Stryders

Having no permanent settlements, trained engineers, refining or finishing facilities, or anything else the Confederated Nations might consider essential to modern construction, the Draslander are forced to rely on salvage to build Stryders. Fortunately, the swamp conceals many wrecks, pieces, and even whole Stryders stuck in the murk or washed



downriver. Through the bounty resulting from centuries of combat across the continent and uncounted attempts to subdue the swamps, the Draslanders always seem to find just enough.

An aspiring Dras Pilot (called a Stomper) does not have many options. Though the Dras hear many things and know that Stryders are required if fighting is to be done with any modern force, the Stomper is still essentially stuck with whatever he can find. Therefore, all Dras Stryders are by necessity misfit creations, and the Dras are skilled at improvising and lashing together whatever they find. Choice in construction usually boils down to whether to give up using the one piece found through exhaustive searching and trying to trade it to someone else, or somehow making it work by throwing in something else either begged, borrowed or stolen.

Rune Chambers, when they can be found, are usually designed for people a few feet taller than most Dras, so most often the hulk will have to be lashed with a handmade basket for the Stomper to ride in. Dras Stryders rarely move the way the parts were originally intended to move, and it is usually anyone's guess how they get around, but somehow when the Dras actually do manage to get a whole Stryder together, they

make it work. They may not be pretty, but Dras can come up with some pretty inventive methods for getting Stryders to function.

One unique feature of Draslander Stryders is the use of bones in some of their Stryders. While there are not many large domesticated herd animals in Rhun, there is no shortage of large predators in the swamps. Although constructing a Stryder totally out of the bones of such creatures is unlikely, using bone structures like limbs or entire jaws is not unheard of, particularly for weapons or for simple effect. Among the Confederated Nations, stories circulate of skeletal monsters running off with children in the night; chances are, these old wives' tales, minus the children, were based on encounters with these nightmarish Stryders. A chomping skull attached to a marauding war machine will test the mettle of any opponent.

Since they are so hard to come by, Dras Stryders rarely get used except for surprise attacks and emergencies. Usually, that is the moment when an overconfident fighter thinks he has just about wrapped up his raid on the hapless Draslanders, only to find his force suddenly demolished by an impossible contraption appearing out of nowhere.

STRYDER BODY TYPES

Although every Stryder is different from every other, those most commonly seen can be broken down into ten basic archetypes. There are four configurations used among the Confederated Nations, two basic types used by the Kantarin, three insectoid mounts most often seen among the Sivatagi, and the iconoclastic Draslander configuration that seems to defy classification.

A designation or code word identifies each template. These terms of reference are most often used among veteran Divaros Pilots and their crews, but can be a useful tool for quickly

referring to enemy Stryder. A Stryder resembling a known configuration will most likely have many of the same characteristics, allowing a team to prepare a proper offensive and defensive strategy for dealing with it.

The first thing to do when constructing a Stryder is to choose a template. Each of the following templates contains general information about the Stryder, including their typical usage, crew, and weaponry. These factors may change from one Stryder to the next, depending on options chosen, but the basic construction stays the same regardless of modifications.

CONFEDERATION NATIONS STRYDER TEMPLATES

Valley Rat

Valley Rats are the chameleons of the Confederated Nations, the jack-of-all-trades Stryders. They are adaptable, easy to repair, and adjust easily to a wide variety of circumstances. They have strong hind legs that will support their weight when standing, and long front arms that can drop to the ground and allow them to run on all fours. One or more Valley Rats supports nearly every mercenary company, as they can be used to patch holes in defensive patterns, deliver supplies, or scout potential battlefields.

The Valley Rat is generally among the smallest of the Confederated Nations Stryders. Not designed for extended periods of intense combat, it is built of more lightweight materials to enable it to move across terrain with great speed. The Stryder generally has a low-to-the-ground configuration, often with a hunched back, allowing all four limbs to be used in locomotion when speed is necessary. The Valley Rat also generally features hands on its upper/front limbs that are capable of manipulating and gripping a wide assortment of weapons and tools. Most Valley Rats lack a head, sometimes replacing it with a crew compartment/basket featuring a mounted ballista or pair of crossbows. The Pilot compartment is generally located in the belly of the beast.

Construction

Valley Rats are about twenty feet tall when standing straight up, though they are usually found hunched over or squatting on all fours. They are composed mostly of wood planks molded over a wooden skeleton for the best combination of durability and speed.

Mission

Valley Rats tend to have small crews, numbering between two and five individuals, plus the Pilot. All tend to be lightly armored and capable of quick movement. The Zokili in particular are fond of using such Stryders, as they can carry more crewmembers atop the Stryders body, enabling an even quicker getaway while providing support fire from atop the construct. Such tactics assume flat, open terrain, as in the Zokili highlands or the northern plains. Their ability to move



relatively unseen through the shallow valleys common in such areas gives them their name. Variants on the standard configuration are used by the Myndwar in subterranean capacities, often for mining and recovery of artifacts.

Assembly and Repair

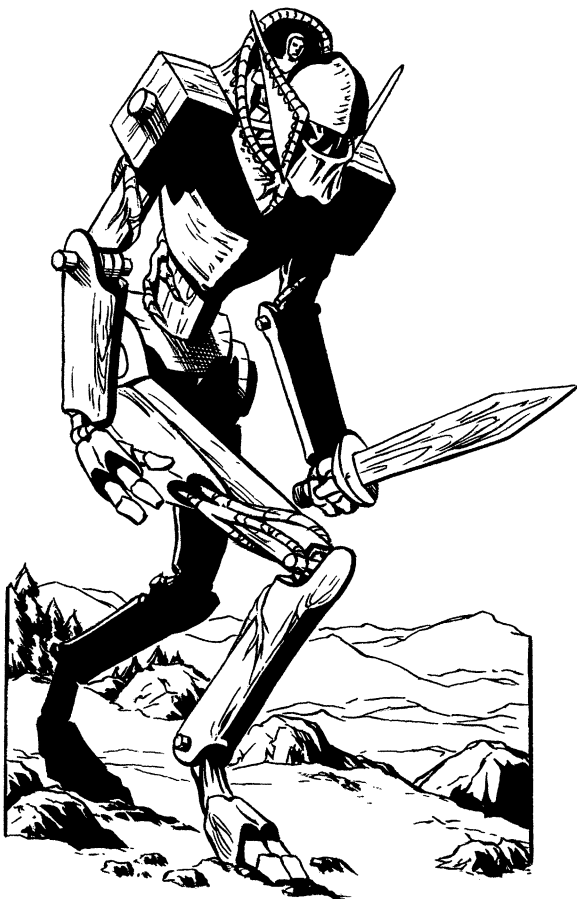
Construction takes a crew of ten people six months, including torso, limbs, Rune scribing, and other modifications. Repairs cost 10 Vel per Health, 100 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

These Stryders often carry a missile platform on the Stryders neck or upper back (generally paired crossbows, or a single ballista) and a pair of small bladed weapons grasped in the Stryders front limbs. As these are the most versatile Stryders, however, they are often equipped with a large variety of options, including digging or farm-working tools or small baggage carts, for example. Armor is optional depending on the intended use of the Stryder, but wooden armor is more common than steel or stone.

Meadow Fox

The Meadow Fox is slightly taller than a Valley Rat, though not nearly as bulky or large as other Stryder configurations. As one of its primary functions is often to act as a spotter, scout or missile support for other troops, it generally sacrifices melee capabilities and armor in order to maximize speed and agility. Their strong legs are disproportionately large compared to other Stryders, especially when compared with their relatively small torsos. Meadow Foxes generally have a head, often containing space for an additional archer or an observation platform. The Pilot compartment is generally located in the chest of the Stryder, though it may extend into the head to take advantage of the advanced observation capabilities included in a head.



Construction

Meadow Foxes are roughly twenty feet tall and are composed mostly of leather stretched over a wooden skeleton, a configuration optimal for speed.

Mission

As Meadow Foxes are often advance scouts or spotters, they do not always function with crews, as no living creature alive can keep up with a Meadow Fox at full speed. However, when they are necessary, crews number between 4 and 8 individuals, plus the Pilot. Those riding mounted platforms tend to be lightly armored, while those providing support and defense functions from below wear heavier armor and carry additional weaponry. Zokili and Myndwar are fond of using such Stryders along border positions, particularly on higher terrain or along ridges where the additional height gives them a decided advantage, although the Divaros also use these Stryders, typically as part of larger contingents.

Assembly and Repair

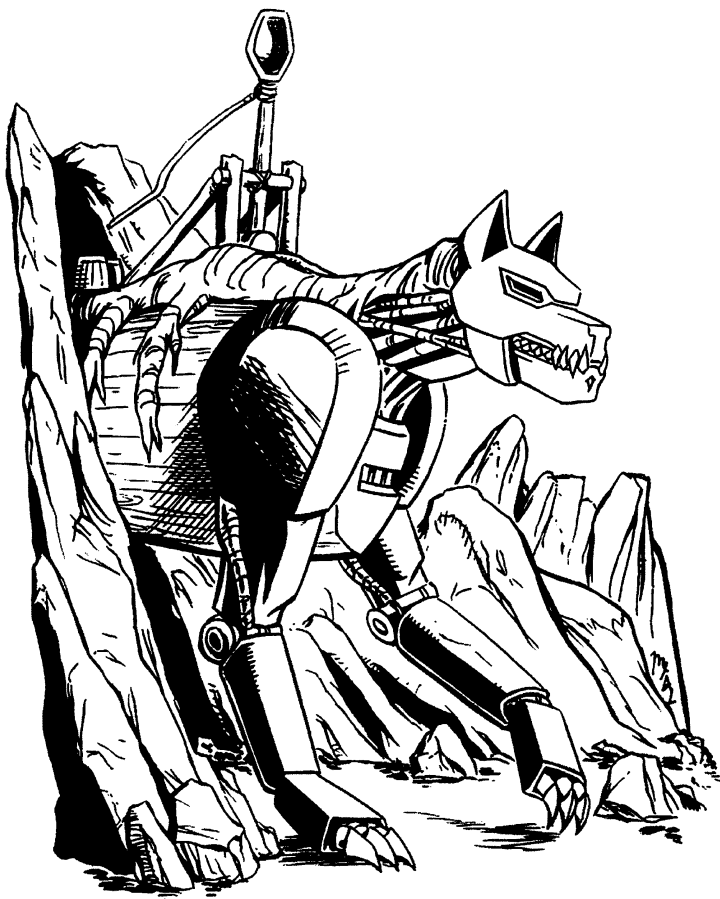
Construction takes a crew of ten people six months, including torso, limbs, Rune scribing, and other modifications. Repairs cost 5 Vel per Health, 50 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

Meadow Foxes are typically equipped with a high-quality head that increases the observation capabilities of the pilot. They are typically armed with a single Stryder sword, and may have a crewman atop the shoulders manning a heavy crossbow. While they are not exceptional in combat, Meadow Foxes are still more than capable of dealing with infantry and ground troops, so when sent into combat, they are often girded with wooden armor. However, as armor adds considerable weight, slowing the Stryder, many Meadow Foxes do not bear armor of any kind.

Black Dog

The Black Dog is working machine, commonly used to carry cargo and troops or pull heavy wagons. It is useful in combat as a mobile siege engine, carrying ballistas, catapults and battering rams into position with little concern for the battle raging around. Black Dogs are built on four legs, though they may sometimes mount an extra pair of arms to add versatility. Their torsos are horizontal, and provide a great deal of space atop the Stryder to mount siege engines, passenger accommodations, or cargo.



Construction

Black Dog Stryders are typically about fifteen feet high and thirty feet long. They are composed mostly of heavy wood and metal with additional metal plate in key areas, a construction that grants a great deal of durability without adding too much weight.

Mission

The four legs of a Black Dog grant it extraordinary mobility. A Black Dog can cover ground very quickly, and is often used as cargo or passenger transportation. Crews number between one and ten individuals, plus the Pilot. For battle-ready Black Dogs, the crew consists of several pairs of heavily armed swordsmen and/or Runecasters who provide additional firepower and defense, with one or two crewmen atop the Stryder and operating the ranged weapon mounted on its back. If used more domestically, the Black Dog may be supported solely by a skilled repairman. Black Dogs are used most often by the Divaros, though they are not uncommon amongst Myndwar and Zokili ranks either.

Assembly and Repair

Construction takes a crew of twenty people a full year, including torso, limbs, Rune scribing, and other modifications. Repairs cost 25 Vel per Health, 250 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

When they carry melee weapons (which is rare, since they do not usually have arms), Black Dogs carry light Stryder weapons such as lances or long swords which can be wielded easily in their lightweight limbs. They are more likely to be equipped with siege engines, however, especially catapults or ballistae. If they need additional armor beyond their powerful frame, they typically wear steel or stone plates to deflect incoming attacks.

Iron Wolf

Iron Wolves are thick, powerfully built Stryders, broad-shouldered and often riddled with spikes and plates beyond the point of utility. They are giant steel warriors, designed to cause and absorb tremendous damage. Generally having four limbs and no head, they are humanoid (and thus have two arms and two legs), though with a pronounced crouch that lowers their center of mass and provides additional stability. Many feature a single, solid compartment atop the shoulders for a pair of archers or spearmen. The Pilot generally rides inside the belly area.

Construction

Iron Wolves are roughly twenty-five feet tall, and extraordinarily powerful. They are constructed of stone slabs over a steel frame, making them incredibly solid but terribly slow.

Mission

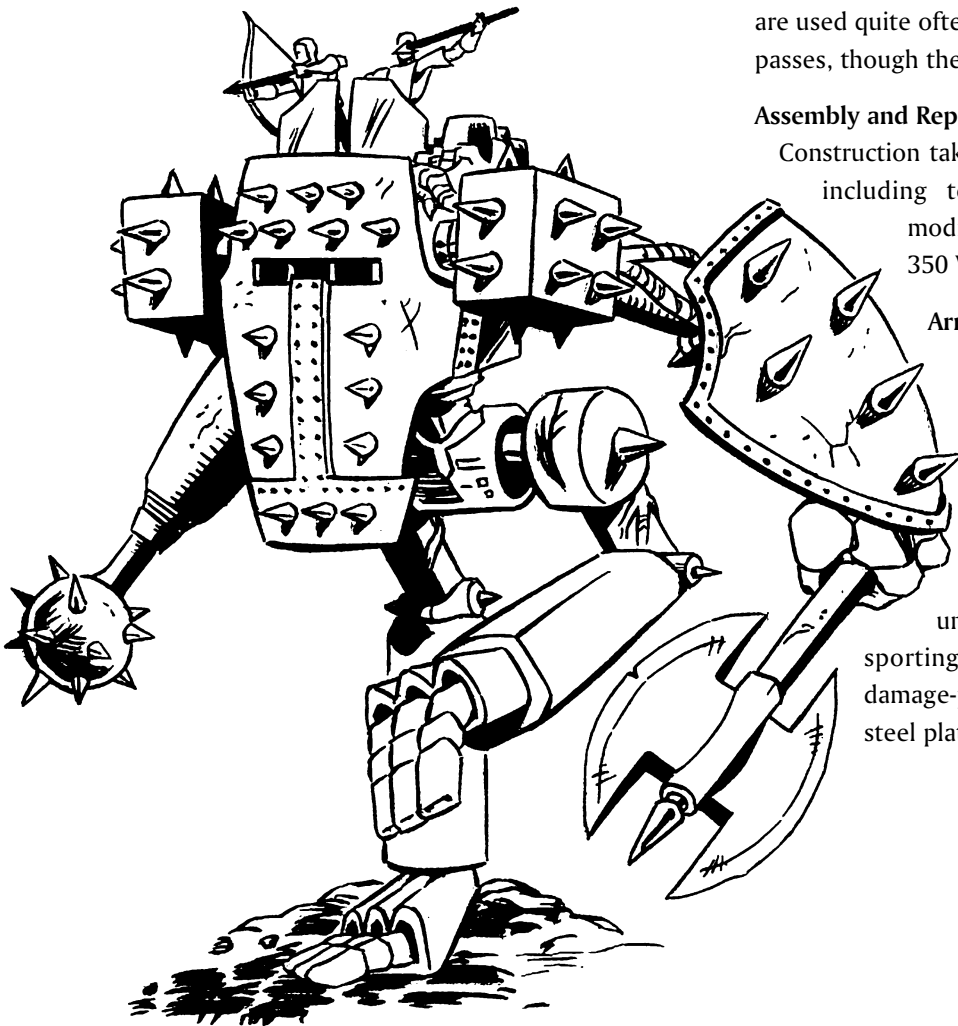
Crews are typically large, numbering between five and fifteen individuals, plus the Pilot. This includes any assortment of heavily-armored individuals, typically armed with swords or axes designed to strike at the most determined foes. More lightly-armored crew members in shoulder-mounted compartments often carry spears or crossbows. Iron Wolves are used quite often by the Myndwar in the defense of narrow passes, though the Divaros are fond of them as well.

Assembly and Repair

Construction takes a crew of twenty people two full years, including torso, limbs, Rune scribing, and other modifications. Repairs cost 35 Vel per Health, 350 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

Iron Wolves generally rely on melee weapons to do their damage, typically carrying one in each hand, fixed by a crew and swappable between engagements. Weapons are typically large-bladed weapons such as swords or axes, though clubs and maces are not uncommon. It is rare to see an Iron Wolf sporting additional armor, though particularly damage-prone Stryders may sport one or two thick steel plates.



OUTCAST NATIONS STRYDER TEMPLATES

Vine Cat

Although there are wide assortments of trees used by the Kantarin to create their Stryders, they can be roughly split up into two categories based on age and size. Many mercenary crews refer to the smaller of the two, known among the Kantarin as Saplings, as Vine Cats. These are the type most frequently encountered along the fringes of Kantarin society, and are more commonly seen grouped together than their larger cousins. They possess two upper limbs and two lower limbs, causing them to have a humanoid appearance that can be unsettling to those unused to them. Although it is not Kantarin habit to ride on their Stryders, Vine Cats can easily support a pair of riders on their upper limbs. The Pilot rides in the center.

Construction

Vine Cats are usually about twenty-five feet tall. They are composed almost entirely of living wood, with leather and other materials added for ornamentation.

Mission

Kantarin do not mass Stryder crews as such, with their Stryders generally attacking and defending as part of a larger whole. In times of crisis, the Melded may call on his other two Companions to provide additional defense of the Stryder itself. This additional crew will fight with light armor and weaponry, emphasizing agility over power.

Gestation and Repair

It takes three Companions and a half dozen other Kantarin to assist in the growth of a Sapling over a period of fifteen years, costing the equivalent of 10,000 Vel in material and development. As the Stryder is able to heal itself, repair costs are not an issue.

Armament and Armor

The primary weapons of such Stryders are their two sturdy arm branches, wielded like clubs to pummel opponents. Blades and spikes of various sorts are often affixed to these limbs to cause additional damage, with other plants such as



vines and shooting quills grown on the tree itself to offer additional attack methods. They may also wield enormous hardened wooden swords or spears, custom created by Kantarin Shapers. Adding additional armor in the form of leather skins and metal plates is theoretically possible, though most Kantarin would scoff at the idea of doing anything like this.

Bramble Bear

The Elder Stryders of the Kantarin jungle are among the largest to stalk the earth, though rarely seen to non-Kantarin eyes, as they tend to lurk near the center of the jungle where they provide service and defense (as necessary) for the heart of Kantarin civilization. Towering among their smaller sapling brethren, they typically have between two and four main arm limbs and two solid leg limbs. Although it is not Kantarin habit to ride on their Stryders, these Stryders can easily support two pairs of riders among their upper limbs. The Pilot rides in the center, as always.

Construction

Bramble Bears are usually about thirty-five feet tall. They are composed almost entirely of living wood, with leather and other materials added for ornamentation.

Mission

Kantarin do not mass Stryder crews as such, with their Stryders generally attacking and defending as part of a larger whole. In times of crisis, the Melded may call on his other two Companions to provide additional defense of the Stryder itself; these will fight with light armor and weaponry, emphasizing agility over power.

Gestation and Repair

It takes three Companions and a half dozen other Kantarin to assist in the growth of an Elder over a period of twenty-five years, costing the equivalent of 25,000 Vel in material and development. As the Stryder is able to heal itself, repair costs are not an issue.

Armament and Armor

The primary weapons of such Stryders are their two sturdy arm branches, wielded like clubs to pummel opponents. Blades and spikes of various sorts are often affixed to these limbs to cause additional damage, with other plants such as vines and shooting quills grown on the tree itself to offer additional attack methods. They may also wield enormous hardened wooden swords or spears, custom created by Kantarin Shapers. Adding additional armor in the form of leather skins and metal plates is theoretically possible, though most Kantarin would scoff at the idea of doing anything like this.



Rock Beetle

The Horlac (called a Rock Beetle by non-Sivatagi) is the least common but most powerful of the Sivatagi insect Stryders, filling a role not unlike that of the Confederate Nations Black Dogs. The Horlac always has the same basic shape: a long, vaguely oval body with six legs of equal size and a head equipped with small (but sharp) mandibles. The sturdy back of the Rock Beetle can support up to three or four riders, though most commonly it is manned only by its Pilot, who sits atop it behind the head.

Construction

Mature Horlac suitable for grooming as Stryders are fifteen feet long, and about six feet tall. Despite their relatively small size and weight compared to other Stryders, they are extremely powerful. Their thick chitinous shell provides good protection and durability, and their powerful legs allowing them to carry tremendous weight.

Mission

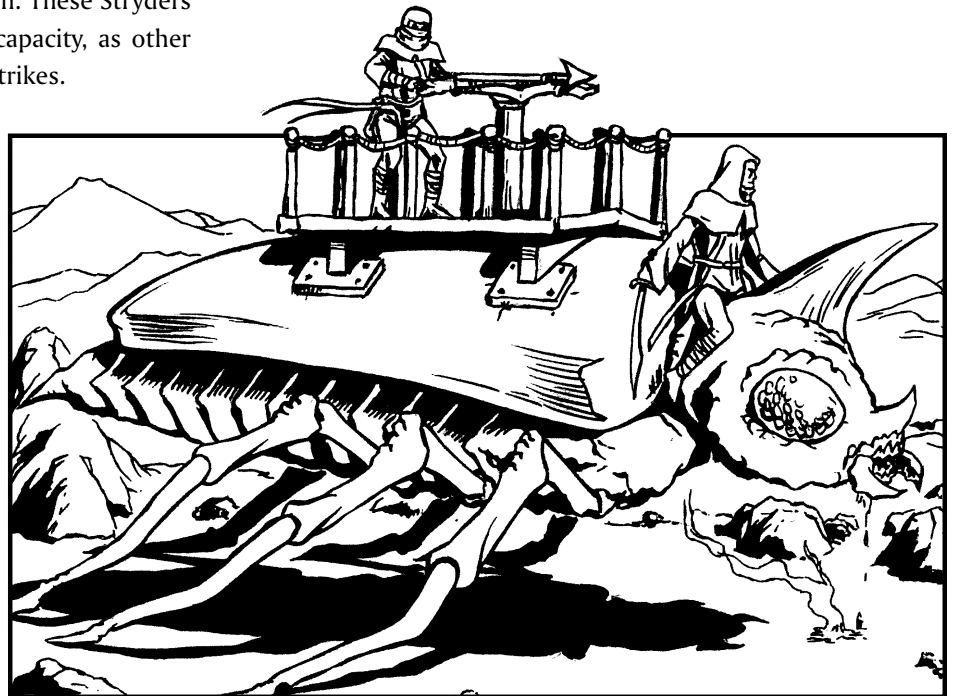
Sivatagi fight in swarms with dozens of warriors and insects collaborating. When necessary, between two and five Sivatagi may assign themselves to a particular Stryder, but more often the Pilot is the only crew to speak of, defending his Stryder with a long spear or pike, or a missile weapon. These Stryders are generally used in more of a defensive capacity, as other types of insect are used for more offensive strikes.

Gestation and Repair

A single Sivatagi Reaver can hatch and cultivate a Horlac to adulthood over a period of a single month. The tradeoff for such rapid growth is that the Horlacs life expectancy is only about two years, at most. The cost in training and feeding a Horlac over that period of time is approximately 500 Vel. As the Stryder is able to heal itself, repair costs are not an issue, although it will cost an additional 50 Vel per week to feed it and keep it in good health until it heals.

Armament and Armor

The Rock Beetles primary weapons are its strong mandibles, capable of splitting bone, metal or even stone, with those objects not destroyed being slowly dissolved by the creatures digestive enzymes. Aside from weapons carried by the Reaver himself, siege engines or crossbows can be mounted on platforms atop the Horlacs broad back. The Stryder is naturally armored with thick chitin, which regenerates along with Health at a rate of 1 point per day, when damaged. Additional armor of leather or steel can be added, and many Rock Beetles sport some sort of extra protection.



White Mantis

The ShMul (or White Mantis) is a killing machine, raised to hunt and attack by the Sivatagi, and has little use in domestic applications. It is vaguely mantis-shaped, with four sturdy back limbs carrying it along, and two barbed claws on an upright forward torso topped with a small head equipped with razor-sharp mandibles. Though formidable, the ShMul is only capable of carrying one or two riders, and typically carries only its Pilot, who rides directly in front of its forward legs, behind the upper torso.

Construction

Mature ShMul suitable for grooming as Stryders are fifteen feet long, and about six feet tall. Though more deadly in combat than other Sivatagi Stryders, their body construction means that they are not capable of carrying much weight.

Mission

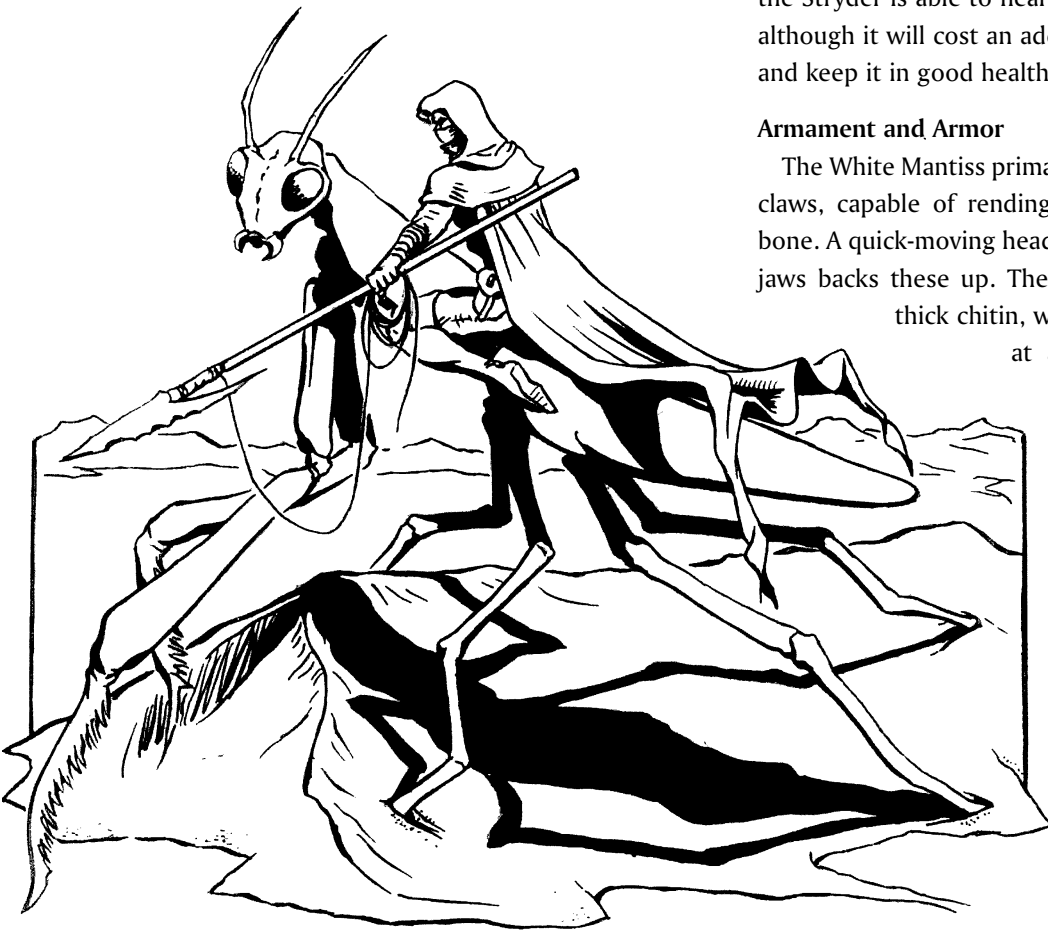
Sivatagi fight in swarms with dozens of warriors and insects collaborating. With the ShMul, Sivatagi wandering nearby may easily fall prey to the hungry insects' attentions, so more often than not the Pilot is the only crew to speak of, defending his Stryder with a long spear or pike, or a missile weapon (and occasionally backed up with a co-pilot carrying a similar weapon). These Stryders are only ever used in an offensive capacity.

Gestation and Repair

A single Sivatagi Reaver can hatch and cultivate a ShMul to adulthood over a period of three months, the tradeoff for such rapid growth being that the ShMuls' life expectancy is only about two years, at most. The cost in training and feeding a ShMul over that period of time is approximately 2500 Vel. As the Stryder is able to heal itself, repair costs are not an issue, although it will cost an additional 250 Vel per week to feed it and keep it in good health.

Armament and Armor

The White Mantiss' primary weapons are its powerful barbed claws, capable of rending flesh and steel alike or crushing bone. A quick-moving head capped with powerful, razor-sharp jaws backs these up. The Stryder is naturally armored with thick chitin, which regenerates along with Health at a rate of 1 point per day, when damaged. Additional armor of leather or steel can be added, though such armor is rare on a White Mantis.



Shin Spider

The Sindle (or Shin Spider) is a relatively small burrowing insect found across the entirety of the Eastern desert. Built low to the ground, its eight legs carry it quickly across the desert sands, the two foremost legs slightly thicker than the rest and also used for digging its burrows and spreading its web, which is secreted from the insects mouth like saliva. Most Sindles are far too small to be ridden, but the largest varieties, chosen for their size, are capable of carrying a single rider on their backs.

Construction

Sindles that are suitable for grooming as Stryders are six feet long, and about three feet tall. They are valued for their speed and deadly attacks, and can carry little more than their own weight and their Reavers.

Mission

Sivatagi fight in swarms with dozens of warriors and insects collaborating. Sindle also tend to swarm with their own kind, smaller types following the larger ones and acting in kind. Thus, while the Sindles Pilot is the only crew to speak of, defending his Stryder with a long spear or pike, it is likely that the Sindle will also be surrounded with up to twenty other (roll two dice) smaller Sindles who will eagerly attack the nearest non-insectoid target.

Gestation and Repair

A single Sivatagi Reaver can hatch and cultivate a Sindle to adulthood over a period of one month, the tradeoff for such rapid growth being that the Sindles life expectancy is only about six months, at most. The cost in training and feeding a Sindle over that period of time is approximately 500 Vel. As the Stryder is able to heal itself, repair costs are not an issue, although it will cost an additional 50 Vel per week to feed it and keep it in good health.

Armament and Armor

The Shin Spiders main weapon is its mandibled jaw, small yet powerful, and capable of spreading a thick, sticky weblike fluid over its prey as it attacks, reducing that target's movement and actions. It can also attack with its front forelimbs, which have sharp, irritating hairs that can penetrate skin and non-metal armor. The Stryder is naturally armored with light chitin, which regenerates along with Health at a rate of 1 point per day, when damaged. Additional armor will have little effect, since adding enough to make a difference would weight the Stryder down too much for it to be useful.



Swamp Gnat

Rather than referring to a specific, exact configuration, the term Swamp Gnat is used more generally to refer to any of the small, generally laughable Stryders manned by the Draslander Nation. These Stryders are generally masses of spare parts, lacking one or more limbs and frequently covered in moss, mold and other detritus. However, used with surprise by clever Dras, they can be formidable opponents, striking with lightning-like efficiency in irritating hit-and-run attacks and then quickly blending back in with the terrain. They are almost always manned by a single Pilot who may ride anywhere inside or atop the Stryder, although as many as a half dozen Dras may also pile atop it to enjoy the ride.

Construction

Swamp Gnats are typically about fifteen feet tall, since the Dras would have difficulty boarding one that was any taller. They may be made from nearly any material, though the sad maintenance and shoddy construction of these Stryders means that they all suffer from very low durability.

Mission

Swamp Gnats are typically surrounded by anywhere from two to ten Draslanders, plus the pilot, all of whom are lightly armored (if at all) and carrying an assortment of light weapons. They generally attack together in a swarm, Dras fighting beside the Stryder to attack the same foe, be it human or Stryder, using hit-and-run guerrilla-style tactics rather than a full-frontal assault.

Assembly and Repair

Construction can take a lifetime, as a Draslander Stryder is almost never truly complete or fully functional. In general, it takes a crew of two to four Draslander some six months to get a Stryder up and running, using about 5,000 Vel in material (mostly stolen or scrounged from the swamp). Repairs cost the equivalent of 5 Vel per Health, 25 Vel per Body.

Armament and Armor

A Swamp Gnats weaponry generally consists of one or two melee weapons wielded relatively ineffectually by the Pilot. All weapons, from a bare arm to a large sword, are swung like clubs at a foe. If available, Dras may add armor to their Stryders in the form of scavenged metal, wood or stone.



STRYDER TEMPLATE COMPARISON CHART

The table below compares the ten different templates available for Stryders. Sivitagi Stryders are listed below the table, as these creatures have their own attributes, rather than being modifiers for their pilots. The table represents the basic template, before any modifications have been made. Therefore, cost will nearly always be higher than listed here, and other numbers may change as well.

Weight Restrictions

The template table lists ten different base Stryders with their weight and carrying capacity. Adding customizations can increase weight, but carrying capacity is fixed. A Stryder whose weight is more than its capacity but less than twice its capacity is still capable of acting, but its movement is halved and its Agility drops by 2 (it may not be reduced below 1). A Stryder whose weight exceeds twice its capacity cannot move at all.

Reading the Table

Cover/Skeleton:	The material from which both the cover and the skeleton is made.
Strength:	Either a modifier to the pilot's strength rating (or is used as a straight strength rating for Sivitagi Stryders).
Movement:	Expressed in multiples of human walking speed. A Stryder may move slower than this, but not faster.
Endurance:	The Stryder's endurance rating.
Agility:	Either a modifier to the pilot's agility rating (or is used as a straight agility rating for Sivitagi Stryders).
Health:	The Stryder's health rating.
Body:	The Stryder's body rating.
Weight:	The Stryder's weight in pounds.
Capacity:	The Stryder's carrying capacity in pounds.
Modifications:	The number of modification spaces in the Stryder. <i>See explanation in Step Two.</i>

Template	Cover/Skeleton	Strength	Movement	Endurance	Agility	Health	Body	Weight	Capacity	Modifications	Cost
Valley Rat	Wood/Wood	+5	x2	20	-3	40	20	1500	3000	4	10,000
Meadow Fox	Leather/Wood	+2	x5	15	-2	40	20	1000	1500	3	10,000
Black Dog	Wood/Steel	+10	x3	45	-3	60	30	5600	9000	8	15,000
Iron Wolf	Stone/Steel	+15	x1	50	-4	50	25	6900	8000	4	12,500
Vine Cat	Living Wood	+7	x2	40	-1	50	25	3000	4000	5	—
Bramble Bear	Living Wood	+10	x3	50	-2	70	35	3500	5000	7	—
Rock Beetle	Insect	14	x3	45	4	30	15	1000	3000	5	500
White Mantis	Insect	8	x2	50	5	50	25	1500	2200	4	2,500
Shin Spider	Insect	5	x4	15	6	20	10	300	600	1	500
Swamp Gnat	varies	+3	x2	20	-3	40	15	1200	1800	2	5,000

Sivatagi Stryder Statistics

Because Sivatagi Stryders are living creatures, and do not interact with their pilots like other Stryders, they must each have their own statistics.

ROCK BEETLE

14	4	1	1	6
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
15	2	30	45	5
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Weapon Skill [Mandibles] 4

Dodge 0

Willpower 1

Initiative 2

Weapon [Mandibles] (strength 6)

White Mantis Notes

A White Mantis may attack the same target twice in one action using its claws. If both attacks are successful, the White Mantis automatically inflicts another two successes of damage on its next action as the claws continue to crush the victim. Also, the Mantis may make an unopposed attack with its mandibles on any round in which it is holding a victim in both claws. Escaping the claws requires beating the Mantis at an opposed Strength check.

Shin Spider Notes

On any given action, the Shin Spider may attack with mandibles or forelimbs, but not both. If it uses forelimbs, it may make two attacks against the same target in one action. If it uses mandibles, it may spread webbing. Every success on an attack after the first subtracts 1 from a target's Agility. This webbing can be burned, torn or cut off. If left, it will dissolve after two days. Any combatant with Strength of 10 is immune to the effects of the webbing, as they can tear through it with ease.

WHITE MANTIS

8	5	1	1	7
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
25	2	50	50	5
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Weapon Skill [Mandibles] 2

Weapon Skill [Claws] 4

Dodge 1

Willpower 2

Initiative 1

Weapon [Mandibles] (strength 3)

Weapon [Claws] (strength 7)

SHIN SPIDER

5	6	1	1	8
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
10	2	20	15	5
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Weapon Skill [Mandibles] 3

Weapon Skill [Forelimbs] 3

Dodge 3

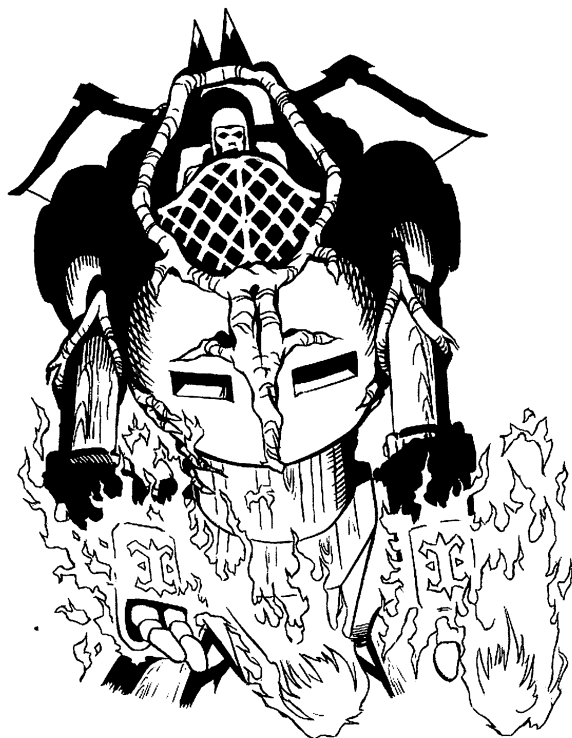
Willpower 1

Initiative 3

Weapon [Mandibles] (strength 2)

Weapon [Forelimbs] (strength 4)

STRYDER CUSTOMIZATION



Once a basic body type has been selected, the next step is to add modifications such as heads, weapons and advanced Runes. The following customizations are not applicable to every Stryder, and their relevance is noted with the listing.

RUNE CHAMBERS

Confederated Nation Stryders Only

The Rune Chamber is where the Stryder Pilot sits while operating the Stryder, issuing mental, verbal and physical commands to the construct. The actual dimensions of the chamber vary—it can be as tall as the Pilot, allowing him to stand, or half his height but much wider, meaning that he will have to crouch. The specifics are up to the Pilot.

Standard Rune Chambers are built in the bowels of a Stryder, as normal, but they provide very little feedback or life

support. They are quite inexpensive, however, and add nothing to the cost of the Stryder. A Pilot can exit from such a Rune Chamber by taking two full turns to do so. Sleep is impossible in such Chambers, and the Pilot must exit the Stryder at least four times a day to eat, sleep and perform other necessary functions. Such chambers are cheaper because they are easier to build, and are included in the basic cost of the Stryder.

Good Rune Chamber provides advanced interaction between the Stryder and its pilot, and provides a few more amenities than the standard chamber. A Pilot can exit such a Rune Chamber and escape from the Stryder by taking two full turns to do so. The Pilot must leave the Chamber at least twice a day to eat, sleep and perform other necessary functions, although he can sleep inside if he wishes. These chambers cost an additional 200 Vel per Unit.

Exceptional Rune Chambers contain space for food, water and waste removal, allowing the Pilot to remain inside the Stryder for up to a week at a time. Escape hatches allow the Pilot to extricate himself from the Stryder with a single Action. These chambers cost 500 Vel Per Unit.

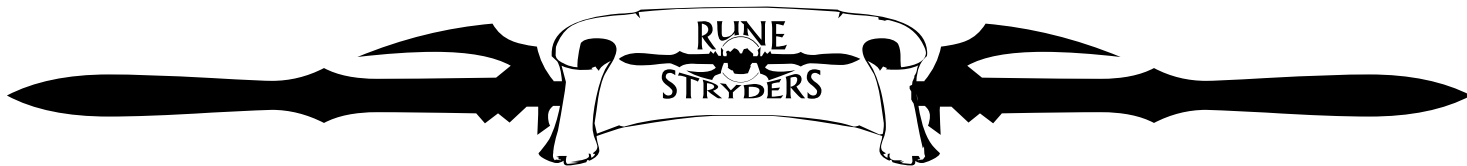
LIMBS

Confederated Nation Stryders Only

While every Stryder comes with four basic limbs, the quality of those limbs can increase the maneuverability and speed of the Stryder. Since improved limbs have more flexible joints, they are limited to Stryders who are not extraordinarily strong. Very strong Stryders will snap the joints and destroy the limbs.

Legs/Locomotion

All Stryders come with legs, but those legs could affect a Stryders speed dramatically. Low-quality legs can hamper movement considerably, and excellent legs can make a Stryder considerably more mobile.



Standard legs have simple functionality, and are essentially designed for little more than keeping the Stryder upright, and allowing it to walk forward and make simple turns. They do not allow for increased speed. However, they are very sturdy, capable of a high degree of physical stress without breaking down. The cost for these limbs is included in the cost of the basic Stryder.

Good legs are more maneuverable, containing extra joints at the hips that allow greater range of motion and easier maneuverability in battle. These limbs cannot be attached to a Stryder with Strength over 9, as the stress placed on the joints would cause them to crumble. Good legs increase movement speed by one step. These legs cost 2500 Vel per pair.

Exceptional legs are built with additional swivel points at the hips, enabling the Stryder to pivot nearly 360 degrees about its waist to attack opponents on all sides. These limbs cannot be attached to a Stryder with Strength over 4, as the stress placed on the joints would cause them to crumble. Exceptional legs increase movement speed by two steps. These legs cost 4000 Vel per pair.

Arms/Manipulation

Most Stryders also feature arms, allowing them to carry items, wield weapons and perform other functions that require more than simple movement. Except for the Black Dog model, all Stryders come with standard arms. One additional pair of arms can be added to any Stryder model, allowing one additional action per round and taking up two modification spaces. Both pairs of arms must be of the same quality. Adding arms increases a Stryders weight, as noted in the table below.

Stryder	Arms Weight
Valley Rat	225 lbs
Meadow Fox	150 lbs
Black Dog	550 lbs
Iron Wolf	825 lbs

Standard arms are little more than simple fixed clubs with limited maneuverability. Weapons can be mounted in the hands of these limbs, but they must be changed out by hand (with the assistance of a Stryder crew, over a period of about an hour) and cannot be swapped in the middle of a combat

situation. These arms come standard with the purchase of a basic Stryder body. If added as supplemental arms, they cost 1200 Vel per pair and will be made of the same material as the body.

Good arms are capable of a greater range of movement, with hands that can grasp objects and manipulate weaponry (allowing the Stryder to drop and pick up other weapons and items by itself). Good arms will offset one point of Agility modifier, but cannot be attached to a Stryder with a Strength over 9. These arms cost 2500 Vel per pair, or, if added as extra arms, cost 4000 Vel for all four.

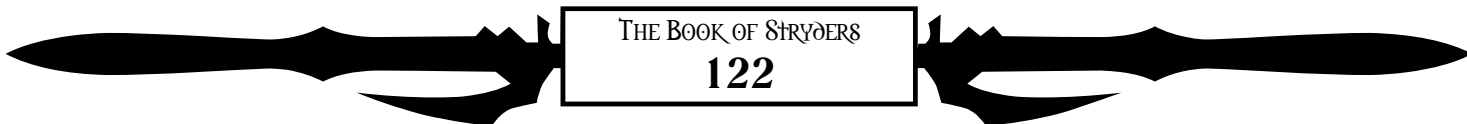
Exceptional arms have additional pivot points at the wrist and shoulder, giving the Stryder much more natural upper body movement. The Pilot may use any Combat Styles he knows without penalty, and may throw items with the arms (as a Siege Weapon). These arms offset two points of Agility modifier, but cannot be attached to a Stryder with a Strength over 4. Such arms cost 5000 Vel per pair, or if added as extra arms, cost 8000 Vel for all four.

HEADS/PERCEPTION

Confederated Nation Stryders Only

When a Pilot is bonded with his Stryder, he can magically perceive the world around him as if he were standing on the field of battle, regardless of whether or not the Stryder itself has a head. Many Stryders, therefore, do not have heads at all, utilizing the space at the neck for other things, such as missile platforms or siege weaponry. In some cases, heads are added for mere decorative effect, and in other cases the head itself can be modified so as to gain additional functionality.

Heads are not included in the base cost of a Stryder. Their weight depends on the Stryders configuration, as noted in the following table.



Stryder	Head Quality	Head Weight
Valley Rat	Good	75 lbs*
	Exceptional	75 lbs
Meadow Fox	Good	50 lbs*
	Exceptional	50 lbs
Black Dog	Good	185 lbs*
	Exceptional	185 lbs
Iron Wolf	Good	275 lbs*
	Exceptional	275 lbs

* The crew or other addition to this head must be added to the weight of the Stryder, and are not accounted for in this table.

Basic heads are nothing more than pieces of wood and leather shaped in the form of a head, fulfilling mere decorative purposes. Heads can, however, be painted or fashioned into rather intimidating shapes, and many have tusks, horns and evil grimaces that can strike fear into foes (particularly the superstitious Draslander). These cost 400 Vel each, add negligible weight, and take up one modification space.

Good heads are hollowed out and reinforced with steel plates, offering space within for up to two individuals to stand. Additional features (a missile platform, weapons, etc.) must be added, or this is merely a hollow shell capable of containing up to two additional people. These heads cost 1,500 Vel each and occupy one modification space.

Exceptional heads have additional Runes added to them that increase the Stryder Pilots perception beyond normal. The Pilot is able to see in the dark as if it were daylight, and has a 360-degree field of vision, making surprise attacks from behind nearly impossible. The head adds +2 to the pilots Perception barrier. However, the additional construction means that crew cannot be stationed within the head. Such heads cost 5,000 Vel each and occupy one modification space.

CREW/PASSENGER SPACE

Confederated Nation Stryders Only

Many Stryders are used exclusively as troop transports, or even commercial transportation. While a Stryder could technically carry passengers perched precariously atop its

shoulders or strapped to its back, the passengers would be highly prone to falling off or taking damage from attacks aimed at the Stryder. Also, any passenger not contained in a designated passenger space takes 1 direct damage every hour as he bounces around atop the moving Stryder.

Basic passenger spaces consist of little more than a bench with a strap to hold the passenger in place. They are extraordinarily uncomfortable, but they are capable of carrying three passengers and a small amount of luggage. The rough ride causes a passenger 1 direct damage every two hours while the Stryder is in motion. Each basic passenger space consumes one modification space and costs 100 Vel.

Good passenger spaces are padded chairs. Straps in the sides of the seat hold passengers firmly in place. Though passengers do not take damage from their ride, the motion is still too much to allow a passenger to sleep, scribe Runes, or anything else which requires a stable platform. A good passenger space can seat two passengers, consumes one modification space, and costs 300 Vel.

Exceptional passenger spaces are padded and supported in a Runed and pressure-stabilized cushion. Passenger in such seats can sleep, scribe Runes, drink wine, and otherwise act as though they were seated at their kitchen tables. The seats take up a large amount of room, and allow considerable leg room for the passenger. Each exceptional passenger space takes up one modification space, seats one passenger, and costs 1000 Vel.

Canopies or armor can be added to any passenger space. A leather canopy can be added to any passenger space at an additional cost of 200 Vel. This is just a leather cover that keeps rain and sun off the passenger, providing some comfort. Armor can be added to cover the passenger space, granting the passenger the same armor Endurance as the Stryder for as long as he remains inside. This additional armor costs 500 Vel and adds weight according to the table below.

Stryder	Armor Weight
Valley Rat	75 lbs
Meadow Fox	50 lbs
Black Dog	185 lbs
Iron Wolf	250 lbs

ARMOR

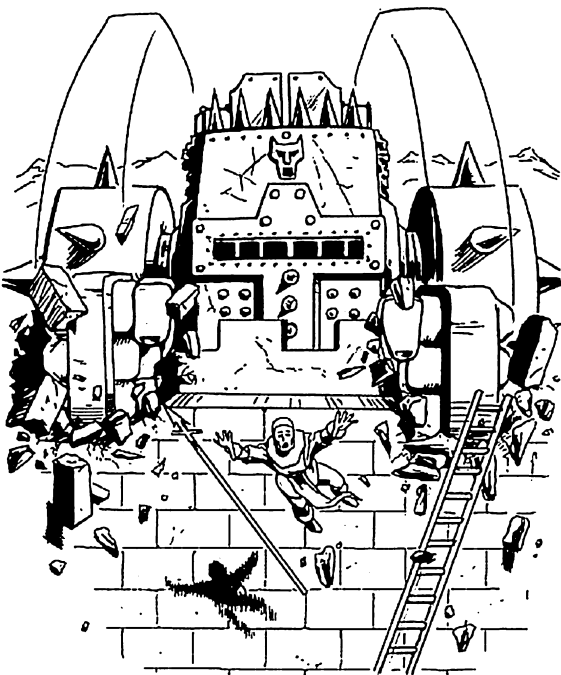
Confederated Nation Stryders Only

One of the primary advantages to piloting a Stryder is increased protection from physical damage. In some cases, a Stryders builder may want to add additional protection, in the form of plates of wood, stone or steel attached to Stryder as armor.

A Stryder may add up to 7 Armor Units. These are based on the area covered by the armor, and the material of which the armor is made is irrelevant in determining Armor Units (AU). Adding armor to a Stryder adds weight and cost, as follows:

Material	Endurance Bonus per AU	Weight per AU	Cost per AU
Wood	1	50 lbs	75 Vel
Stone	2	150 lbs	150 Vel
Steel	3	200 lbs	250 Vel

Each AU of armor must be added to a specific location on the Stryder. When armor is purchased, it must be assigned to either the body, legs, or arms, and the added armor bonus should be noted to apply only to the particular location.



SIEGE WEAPONS

Any Stryder may mount a siege weapon, regardless of nationality. However, weight and space restrictions limit siege weapons to larger Stryders. A mounted siege weapon can make a Stryder a mobile artillery unit, capable of destroying walls or reinforced locations while retaining the ability to relocate in a hurry.

Information on siege weapons is located in the Book of Worlds, and is repeated here for quick reference.

Hurler

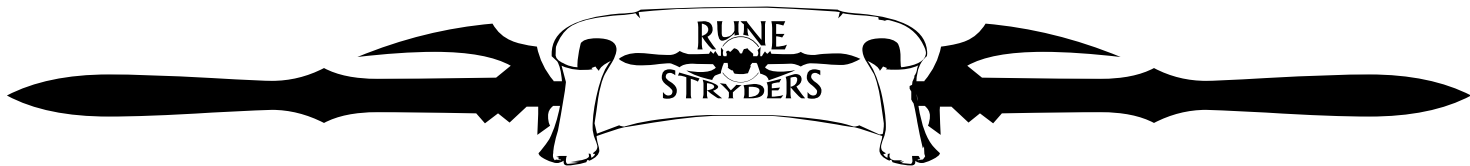
The generic Rhun name for any large device used to hurl large missiles in an arc through the air. Generally this is accomplished by using tension or a counterweight to hurl a boulder or similar object at a fixed structure. Hurlers have the greatest range of any siege weapon, but they are relatively useless against mobile targets, or anything within a minimum range. (Catapult, Manganel, Onager, Trebuchet)

Rune Cannon

The Rune Cannon is a larger, fixed version of the Rune Thrower, and is most often seen in and around the Eastern Desert, almost always as part of the defenses of a Sivtagi fortification. In such cases, they are typically mounted on turrets which allow those operating them to swivel the cannon to aim at any approaching masses of troops or, more commonly, enemy Stryders. Rumor has it that some Rune Stryders have appeared with smaller versions of this device mounted on their bodies.

Siege Bow

Essentially a larger, mounted version of the crossbow, the Siege Bow launches a large bolt at its target in a generally straight path. Aside from the potential for damage, the device can also be used to raise siege ladders or ropes, spread nets over a wide area, or tether a Rune Stryder in place. Creative uses like these are more commonly seen among the Zokili and those dwelling in the southeastern part of the continent. (Arbalest, Ballista)



Class	Weapon	Strength	Toughness	Body	Minimum	Missile Range (Feet)			
						Short	Long	Extreme	Maximum
Siege	Hurler	25	-	100	100	200	400	800	1200
	Rune Cannon	20	-	50	25	100	200	300	500
	Siege Bow	15	-	50	25	50	100	200	300
	Siege Ram	x2	100	25	-	-	-	-	-

Siege Ram

At its simplest, a siege ram is little more than a large piece of wood. At its most complex, it can be an ornately carved construction of metal, wood or bone. In all cases, the ram itself features a sturdy head that is used to batter down large, typically wooden objects. Most often, the target is a large gate or door, but rams have been used with mixed amounts of success against Stryders as well. A ram mounted on a Stryder is typically attached to both arms limbs, limiting them to attacking slow-moving or stationary objects, but doubles the Stryders Strength for purposes of causing damage.

Weapon	Weight	Length	Cost	Availability
Hurler	300 lbs	24 ft	-	0%
Rune Cannon	600 lbs	20 ft	-	0%
Siege Bow	240 lbs	12 ft	40 Vel	0%
Siege Ram	120 lbs	10 ft	-	0%

STRYDER MELEE WEAPON

While there is no reason a Stryder must carry a weapon, a Stryder can be much more effective with some sort of melee weapon. Different nations use different weapons, as illustrated below.

Confederacy Stryder Weapons

Stryder Axe

Generally the heaviest of the Stryder weapons, this axe is made of a stout shaft of heavy wood, banded in steel, with a thick triangular shaped blade on the business end. The entire weapon is generally about half the height of the Stryder itself, with the blade itself generally six across. Depending on the foe, the weapon can be wielded with the broad cutting edge

or the narrow point opposite, designed for piercing thicker armor. Like all Stryder weapons, it is wielded in one hand.

Stryder Mace

Typically the smallest and lightest of the Stryder weapons, the Stryder mace is often found amongst rear-guard Stryders not designed for heavy combat. This is little more than a sturdy shaft of wood, banded in steel, topped with a heavy metal or stone head, often spiked or bladed. Length is generally about one third of the Stryders overall height. Like all Stryder weapons, it is wielded in one hand.

Stryder Sword

Essentially a larger version of a Back Sword (see the Book of the World), this is a broad, heavy, single-edged sword, more blade than handle. The blade itself is generally about half the Stryders overall height in length, with the handle extending several feet further and generally designed to lock into a Stryders fist, to prevent the weapon being dislodged during combat. Like all Stryder weapons, it is wielded in one hand.

Kantarin Stryder Weapons

Shooting Quill

Some Kantarin Stryders carry a particular variety of carnivorous plant that can sense the heat signatures of large warm-blooded creatures. When one of these plants detects such a target, it fires a number of poisonous quills equal to the roll of one die, each about one inch in length. Each quill does only 1 point of Damage, but also has a 10% chance of causing 1 point of Agility Damage, as the poison damages the Nervous System and causes dizziness and loss of muscle control. Any creature reduced to 0 Agility is unable to move. In the wild Kantarin Jungles, the creature would then be slowly devoured by the Quills creeping vines, but on the field of battle the dangers are, of course, much more immediate. Agility thus lost

Class	Weapon	Strength	Toughness	Body	Minimum	Missile Range (Feet)			
						Short	Long	Extreme	Maximum
Confederacy	Stryder Axe	10	59	30	-	-	-	-	-
	Stryder Mace	8	59	40	-	-	-	-	-
	Stryder Sword	12	69	60	-	-	-	-	-
Kantarin	Shooting Quill	4	-	10	0	10	20	40	80
	Thorn Branch	9	59	50	-	-	-	-	-
	Thorn Vine	0	-	25	-	-	-	-	-
	Vine Net	0	15	10	0	10	20	30	40
Sivatagi	Claws	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Digestive Enzymes	5	-	-	1	2	4	8	10
	Mandibles	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Web	1	-	10	0	5	10	20	40
Draslander	Club	7	39	20	-	-	-	-	-

is regained at a rate of 1 point per day. These Quills have no effect on Stryders other than Sivatagi Stryders (which are living animals).

Thorn Branch

This is essentially the same as a Stryder Mace, although it is generally composed entirely of wood, often living, and is wreathed in thorny vines, sharp stones and small bits of metal.

Thorn Vine

A sturdy rope-like vine, quite alive and actually part of the Kantarin Stryder wielding it. This weapon can be wielded much like a whip, and on a successful strike against any opponent, there is a chance equal to 10 times the damage inflicted that the target has been snared by the vines thorns. If this occurs, the Stryder can inflict the maximum damage in the following round against that target by raking the weapon painfully as the thorns are extracted from the victim.

Vine Net

The vine net is composed of vines draped around a Kantarin Stryder, formed into a solid and sturdy net. The Stryder may hurl the net, capturing opponents as in the Book of the World.

Sivatagi Stryder Weapons

Claws

Horlac: None; ShMul: Damage as in chart; Sindle: 1/2 Damage as in chart above

Digestive Enzymes

Horlac: Damage as in chart above; ShMul: None; Sindle: None

Mandibles

Horlac: Damage as in chart; ShMul: 1/2 Damage as in chart above; Sindle: 1/4 Damage as in chart above

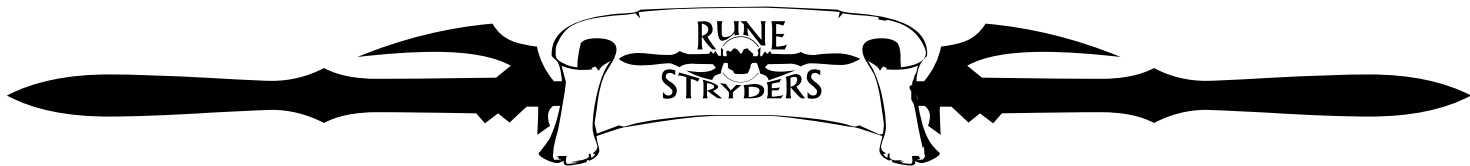
Web

Horlac: None; ShMul: None; Sindle: As in chart above; otherwise as a Net (*see Book of the World*)

Draslander Stryder Weapons

Claw

Draslander Stryders are clumsy affairs, and regardless of what weapon they are wielding, the overall effect is that of a club, crudely pounding away at its foe. This can be surprisingly effective given the proper terrain, tactics and motivation.



Weapon	Weight	Length	Cost	Availability
Stryder Axe	36 lbs	10 ft	30 Vel	10%
Stryder Mace	24 lbs	8 ft	25 Vel	10%
Stryder Sword	30 lbs	12 ft	50 Vel	10%
Shooting Quill	3 lbs	6 ft	-	0%
Thorn Branch	-	-	-	0%
Thorn Vine	-	-	-	0%
Vine Net	-	-	-	0%
Claws	-	-	-	0%
Digestive Enzymes	-	-	-	0%
Mandibles	-	-	-	0%
Web	-	-	-	0%
Club	24 lbs	6 ft	-	100%

Mounted Crew Weapons

These are weapons most often used from additional non-Pilot crew mounted on a Stryder. With the exception of the Sivatagi War Pike, they cannot be used by the Pilot or the Stryder itself, so in all respects are treated as ordinary weapons. For more information, see the Book of the World.

Weapon	Weight	Length	Cost	Availability
Cross Bow	9 lbs	2 ft	10 Vel	25%
Hurler	300 lbs	24 ft	-	0%
Siege Bow	240 lbs	12 ft	-	0%
Sivatagi War Pike	12 lbs	20 ft	-	0%

Additional Stryder Equipment

Much of the equipment that mercenary companies affix to their Stryders is military in nature. Due to the lack of large mounts or beasts of burden, however, Stryders often fill other roles in society, being used to haul materials, excavate mines,

construct large buildings and ferry individuals from place to place. As a result, one will find a wide assortment of gear strapped to Stryders. The list below is just an example.

Weapon Sheaths

Stryder support crews are fond of strapping additional weaponry to the legs of their Stryders, allowing them easy access to needed weapons without the burden of having to tote such materials along with them. Most often found are long spears and polearms, large shields and additional missiles for Cross Bows and the like. Such strapping adds negligible weight and takes up no modification spaces, as the straps can be added to the outside of any attachments.

Basic **Normal** straps and sheaths can be cobbled together from bits of fabric and leather, but such fastenings are 10% likely to snap, spilling their contents, any time the Stryder moves. Removing items from such straps takes two full rounds.

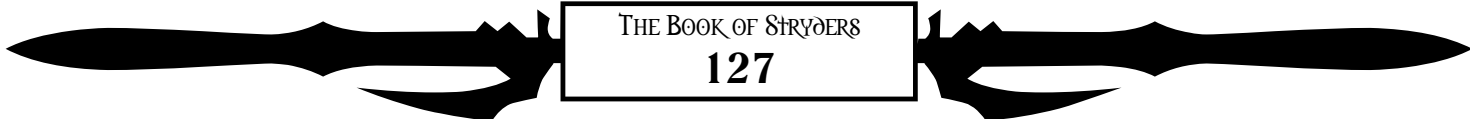
A **good** quality sheath or strap system for any one item costs 1 Vel, and will keep a weapon firmly in place. Such items can be removed from the Stryder by taking a full Turn to do so.

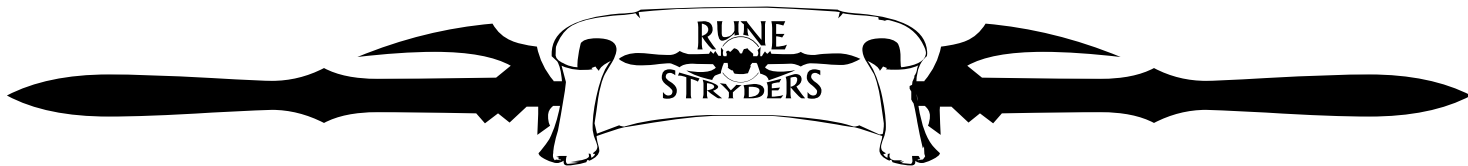
Exceptional strapping costs 2 Vel per item, and enables anyone familiar with the Stryder to remove such an item from its quick-release sheath by spending only a single Action, instead of a full round. Others must spend a full round.

Missile Platforms

The broad backs and shoulders of Stryders are too unstable for troops to maneuver easily, and so special platforms are often constructed and attached to add additional missile support. These generally consist of a two- to four-foot diameter area with railings of some sort to prevent falls, and are suited for a single individual. A Stryder may carry multiple weapons platforms, either for mounting larger weapons or for mounting multiple crew members with multiple weapons.

Class	Weapon	Strength	Toughness	Body	Minimum	Missile Range (Feet)			
						Short	Long	Extreme	Maximum
Crew	Cross Bow	4	-	10	0	80	160	320	480
	Hurler	25	-	100	100	200	400	800	1200
	Siege Bow	15	-	50	25	50	100	200	300
	Sivatagi War Pike	5	44	25	-	-	-	-	-





Normal missile platforms can be cobbled together from planks of wood, branches and bits of rope, but they are heavy (weighing fifty pounds) and extremely unstable. Anyone standing in one during combat suffers a +5 difficulty modifier on any missile combat rolls during a Round in which the Stryder has moved. These platforms can support up to 300 pounds of weight and take up one modification space. Clambering into or out of such platforms generally takes two full rounds.

A **Good** platform costs 10 Vel, weighs twenty-five pounds, consumes one modification space, and can support a single armored individual and equipment weighing up to five-hundred pounds. Getting into or out of the platform takes two full rounds.

Exceptional missile platforms cost 50 Vel, weigh twenty-five pounds, consumes one modification space, and can support up to one-thousand pounds. Such platforms are generally somewhat concave, so that items that are dropped will roll towards the center of the platform for easy recovery, and contain spiked railings (to prevent enemies from easily clambering aboard) and quick-release rope ladders for easy exit (taking a single round).

ENHANCEMENT RUNES

The Runes inscribed into a Stryder determine its Strength, Agility and other statistics. They also give an otherwise inanimate object the ability to interact with humans. The base Runes required for construction are included in the price of the template, but a faster, stronger, or smarter Stryder may be desired beyond what is provided in the base template. These Modify Runes can be added to make the Stryder operate beyond normal capacity.

Strength Runes

The Runes that grant a Stryder strength may be intensified, though maximum Strength depends on the material from which the Stryder is constructed, as illustrated in the table below: Each point of Strength increase through Runes costs 200 Vel. A Stryder may also reduce its Strength by up to two points from that described in the base template. This costs nothing and saves nothing, but it does allow greater Agility penalty offset.

Stryder	Maximum Strength
Meadow Fox	5
Valley Rat	10
Black Dog	15
Iron Wolf	20
Kantarin (any)	15
Rock Beetle	15
White Mantis	12
Shin Spider	9
Swamp Gnat	8

Agility Runes (Not Applicable for Sivatagi Stryders)

The standard Stryder does not bear Agility-enhancing Runes. Agility is typically a factor of the construction and weight of the Stryder, rather than Runes. A high Strength score on a Stryder limits the range of motion that would be safe, and so as Strength increases, Agility drops. However, within a narrow range, the Agility penalty for piloting a Stryder can be offset with Runes. The Agility penalty may be reduced to Ø, but in no case will a Stryder be more agile than its pilot.

The Strength score of the Stryder limits the Agility penalty offset, as illustrated in the following table. Each point of Agility penalty offset using Runes costs 200 Vel.

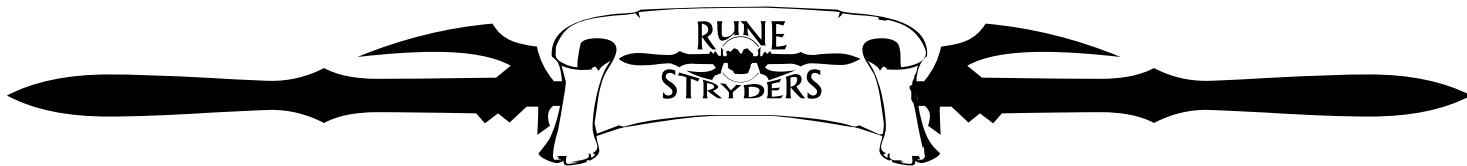
Agility Penalty Offset	Maximum Strength
1	10
2	8
3	4
4	2

Skill Runes

All Stryders can be modified to improve innate skills. Through the inscription of a few select Runes, the Stryder can be made to improve the pilots Willpower and Initiative scores. The cost for improving any of these skills by 1 level is 1000 Vel. These skills cannot be improved more than 1 level.

Battle Runes

In addition to the basic Runes required to make the Stryder function, many choose to adorn their Stryders with additional Runes to enhance their function and extend protection to



support troops. These Battle Runes function in accordance with the specific details as described in the Book of Runes.

Battle Runes are typically scribed so that they can be separated and rejoined to release or contain their effects. Because they are scribed onto a surface that is not entirely inanimate, and yet not entirely living, the effect of such Runes is based on the spoken version of the Rune, with range and effect (but not duration) doubled.

Attack Runes are the most popular Runes scribed onto Stryders. Defense Runes are also used regularly, though they are limited in scope. Use Runes are rarely seen on Stryders, since they are either low-powered or may affect a Stryder beyond utility. For example, Runes that increase attributes are not useful at all, since they generally result in the Stryders eminent destruction as it attempts moves of which it is not physically capable.

Battle Runes can only be released if the pilot knows the Rune. The activation roll for the Rune is based on the pilots Runelore skill. Because the Runes that power a Stryder are so complex, no Stryder may bear more than three Battle Runes. Stryders may also not have more than one Rune from any one Rune school.

The cost of scribing a Battle Rune onto a Stryder is 1,000 Vel. Because of the intensive advanced Rune scribing that goes into creating the Stryder, Battle Runes are limited to two-syllable (effect Rune and control Rune) Rune words.

SAMPLE STRYDERS

On top of these example Stryders, we have provided a convenient worksheet for Stryder design in the back of this book. Simply choose your template and fill in the blanks as you go. Each row is for a different modification. When you finish your Stryder, add the columns for the totals. The following Stryders were created using this worksheet and the rules listed above.

Fleetfoot

This Meadow Fox Stryder is stripped down and fast. It carries no armor or weapons, and is used when time is of the essence. Time-sensitive messages and valuable packages are this Stryders most common cargo. The Fleetfoot will almost

never stand and fight, not even against simple soldiers. With its upgraded arms and legs, the Fleetfoot is the fastest thing on feet, often outpacing even flying birds.

Merc

A very common configuration for the versatile Valley Rat is the Merc, a unit that takes advantage of the speed and strength combined in the Stryder's body type. While this is not the fastest or the strongest Stryder available, it is commonly used in small mercenary companies because of its adaptability.

FLEETFOOT

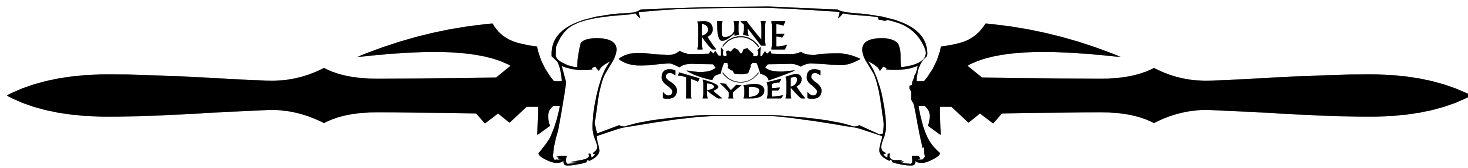
+2 Strength	+0 Agility	20 Body	40 Health	15 Endurance
20,500 Vel Cost			x7 Movement	
Template: Meadow Fox Rune Chamber: Exceptional Legs: Exceptional Arms: Exceptional Head: none		Armor: none Weaponry: none Sheaths: none Battle Runes: lte-ej		

MERC

+5 Strength	-2 Agility	20 Body	40 Health	26 Endurance
23,300 Vel Cost			x3 Movement	
Template: Valley Rat Rune Chamber: Good Legs: Good Arms: Good Head: Exceptional		Armor: Steel Armor (2 AU) Weaponry: Stryder Sword, Good Missile Platform, Siege Bow Sheaths: Stryder Sword Battle Runes: Ull-eq, Zhei-eq, Enn-ess		

Modification	Strength	Movement	Agility	Endurance	Weight	Mod. Spaces	Cost	Notes
Rune Chamber								
Standard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Exit in 2 full turns
Good	-	-	-	-	-	-	200 Vel	Exit in 2 full turns
Exceptional	-	-	-	-	-	-	500 Vel	Exit in 1 action
Legs								
Standard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Good	-	+x1	-	-	-	-	2500 Vel	Max Strength 9
Exceptional	-	+x2	-	-	-	-	4000 Vel	Max Strength 4
Arms (Two)								
Standard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Good	-	-	+1	-	-	-	2500 Vel	Max Strength 9
Exceptional	-	-	+2	-	-	-	5000 Vel	Max Strength 4
Arms (Four)								
Rat	-	-	-	-	+225	-	-	
Fox	-	-	-	-	+150	-	-	
Dog	-	-	-	-	+550	-	-	
Wolf	-	-	-	-	+825	-	-	
Standard	-	-	-	-	-	2	1200 Vel	+1 Action
Good	-	-	+1	-	-	2	4000 Vel	+1 Action, Max ST 9
Exceptional	-	-	+2	-	-	2	8000 Vel	+1 Action, Max ST 4
Head								
Rat	-	-	-	-	+75	-	-	
Fox	-	-	-	-	+50	-	-	
Dog	-	-	-	-	+185	-	-	
Wolf	-	-	-	-	+275	-	-	
Basic	-	-	-	-	-	1	400 Vel	
Good	-	-	-	-	-	1	1500 Vel	Space for 2
Exceptional	-	-	-	-	-	1	5000 Vel	Perception +2 360 vision Dark vision
Passenger Space								
None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 dir dmg/hr
Basic	-	-	-	-	-	1	100 Vel	3 passengers, 1 dir dmg/hr
Good	-	-	-	-	-	1	300 Vel	2 passengers, No dmg
Exceptional	-	-	-	-	-	1	1000 Vel	1 passenger, steady
Canopy	-	-	-	-	-	-	200par	
Armor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Passenger EN = Stryders'
Rat	-	-	-	-	+75	-	-	500/passenger space
Fox	-	-	-	-	+50	-	-	500/passenger space
Dog	-	-	-	-	+185	-	-	500/passenger space
Wolf	-	-	-	-	+250	-	-	500/passenger space
Armor (Per AU)								
Wood	-	-	-	+1	+50	-	75	
Stone	-	-	-	+2	+150	-	150	
Steel	-	-	-	+3	+200	-	250	

Modification	Strength	Movement	Agility	Endurance	Weight	Mod. Spaces	Cost	Notes
Siege Weapons								
Hurler	-	-	-	-	+300	1	300	
Rune Cannon	-	-	-	-	+600	1	1000	
Siege Bow	-	-	-	-	+240	1	500	
Siege Ram	-	-	-	-	+120	-	50	Two hands
Stryder Weapons								
Stryder Axe	-	-	-	-	+36	-	30	
Stryder Mace	-	-	-	-	+24	-	25	
Stryder Sword	-	-	-	-	+30	-	50	
Shot Quill	-	-	-	-	+3	-	-	
Thorn Branch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Thorn Vine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Vine Net	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Crew Weapons								
Cross Bow	-	-	-	-	+9	-	10	
War Pike	-	-	-	-	+12	-	-	
Sheath								
Normal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 turns to draw
Good	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 turn to draw
Exceptional	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1 action to draw
Missile Platform								
Normal	-	-	-	-	+50	-	1	+5 Diff to fire Supports 300 lbs; 2 turns to exit
Good	-	-	-	-	+25	1	10	Supports 500 lbs; 2 turns to exit
Exceptional	-	-	-	-	+25	1	50	Supports 1000 lbs; 1 round to exit
Enhancement Runes								
Strength	+1	-	-	-	-	-	200	Rat Max Strength 10 Fox Max Strength 5 Dog Max Strength 15 Wolf Max Strength 20 Kantarin Max Strength 15 Rock Beetle Max Strength 18 White Mantis Max Strength 12 Shin Spider Max Strength 9 Swamp Gnat Max Strength 8
Agility	-	-	+1	-	-	-	200	Max Strength 10
	-	-	+2	-	-	-	400	Max Strength 8
	-	-	+3	-	-	-	600	Max Strength 4
	-	-	+4	-	-	-	800	Max Strength 2
Willpower	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000	+1 Willpower
Initiative	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000	+1 Initiative
Battle Runes	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000	3 active maximum Maximum 1 from any school None affect attributes Two-syllable Runewords



STRYDER COMBAT

For combat purposes, Stryders are essentially considered characters, with their own Endurance, Body and Health scores. Other attributes and skills are derived from the pilot, creating one single, bonded entity. However, the size of a Stryder and the unique nature of the bond between man and machine means that a few considerations are necessary in combat.

Called Shots

Because of the size of a Stryder, every attack against a Stryder must be called. The Stryder may be wearing armor plating on its body, but have the standard armor on its legs, indicating a much lower Endurance score. Or a powerful blow might be enough to puncture the armor and damage the pilot, but only if the attack was made against the body. The attacker must call the shot to the legs, arms, or body of the Stryder. No penalty is associated with this attack, but different hit locations can result in different damage effects.

Any attack that causes direct damage equal to a Stryders Endurance in a specific location has breached the armor and caused serious damage. If the attack struck the legs, the Stryders movement drops by half. If the damage struck the arms, the Stryders Agility penalty increases by 2. If the attack struck the body, the pilot inside was damaged, and takes half of the direct damage.

Weapon Skill

Stryders wield enormous weapons, and even when they are unarmed, their huge metal fists are stronger than any blow from a steel mace. Using the standard combat rules, any Strength-based weapon in a Stryders fists will hit every target, every time, with the maximum number of successes. For this reason, all Stryder attacks, skilled or not, are rolled using the Stryders modified Agility. Strength is still used to calculate weapon damage.

A Stryder pilot may know a particular fighting style, and if the Stryder is equipped with high-quality arms, the pilot may use those skills to attack or defend. However, if the pilot does not have at least one level of the relevant Stryder Weapon skill,

he loses 1 die from any attacks made with the fighting style. This applies even to unarmed combat styles—the pilot must have at least 1 level of Stryder Weapon: Unarmed to use unarmed combat styles or attacks.

Other Skills

While many skills are not appropriate from inside a Stryder (it is difficult to steeplejack in a two-ton behemoth), several skills may still be relevant, such as Athletics or Perception skills. In such cases, the pilot may apply his skill as normal, using his attributes as modified by the Stryder.

The chart on the next page lists all skills which may be used by Stryders (*see the Book of Roles*). Specific notes on some of these skills are detailed below.

Strength-Based Skills

Armor: Stryders do not require the armor skill to use their armor. However, a mounted Sivatagi Reaver may want to be wearing armor, and should thus possess this skill.

Athletics

Jumping: Only Stryders whose weight are three-quarters their carrying capacity are capable of jumping off the ground.

Strength-based Combat Styles: All combat styles may be used in a Stryder, but they use Agility as their base attribute, not Strength.

Agility-Based Skills

Acrobatics

Riding (*Sivatagi only, or special*)

Heart-Based Skills

Bonding

Spirit Empathy (*Dras only, or special*)

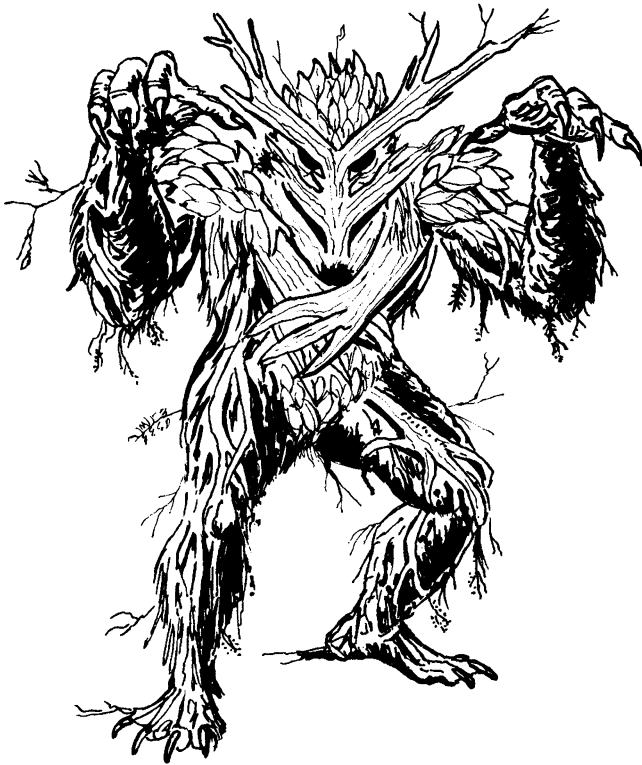
Intellect-Based Skills

Roguary

Forgery: Forgery may be used from inside a Stryder to determine the authenticity of a document, but not forge new ones.

Gambling: Gambling typically requires considerable coordination, even it only involves rolling dice or holding cards. Most Stryders are not capable of this level of manual dexterity. However, if a Gambling check occurs which does not require handling fine objects, the pilot may apply this skill.

Skilled Trade: Any knowledge gained from a skilled trade is still known if inside a Stryder. Physically using the skill may be more difficult, but the gamemaster should make that call and apply modifiers or prohibit the attempt as appropriate.



Intellect-Based Skills

Language
Literacy
Memorization
Runelore
Second Language
Military Tactics
Enlisted
Guerilla
Sabotage
Siege
Small Unit
Stryder Crew

Roguary

Forgery
Gambling

Skilled Trade

Appraiser
Archaeologist
Architect
Carpenter
Cook
Farmer
Healer
Historian
Hunter
Lawkeeper
Miner
Politician
Sailor
Smith (Metal)
Smith (Stone)
Tailor

Strength-Based Skills

Armor
Athletics
Jumping
Throwing
Strength-Based Combat Styles
Divaran Kickwrestling
Myndwar Stonefist
Zokili Nervestrike
Kantarin Skytackle
Sivatagi Bladefist
Draslander Kneebiting

Agility-Based Skills

Acrobatics
Riding
Stryder Weapon Combat
Sword Class
Axe Class
Mace Class
Agility-Based Combat Styles
Divaran Dueling
Myndwar Doublestrike
Zokili Risingsun
Kantarin Deathdancing
Sivatagi Mounted Combat
Draslander Disarmament

Heart-Based Skills

Bonding
Animal Empathy
Plant Empathy
Spirit Empathy
Stryder Pilot
Creativity
Art
Music
Stories
Perception
Alertness
Awareness
Navigation
Observation
Tracking
Socializing
Deception
Diplomacy
Interrogation
Leadership
Orating
Trading
Special
Willpower

AGENDA GAP

The two Zokili dropped easily to the ground beside the Stryder, where they had been riding on its broad shoulders and back until they spotted activity ahead. Things had been clear for the first mile or so, and they initially thought they would get away clean. Apparently that was not to be the case.

“Lotsadem?” asked Nit, the Dras. Thomis had finally managed to extract his name from among the rambling swamp-talk, but the full monosyllabic name was far too much of a mouthful, and apparently even the Dras’ two Zokili compatriots preferred the abbreviated version. They stepped over confidently.

“We can take them,” said Yasyk. He glanced at his sister, Yasmyn, who silently nodded her assent. Both gripped their razor sharp short swords tightly, anticipating a coming battle.

“That wasn’t the qu,” tried Joachim, failing on a harsh syllable. The Mage choked on his words, his throat still gravelly from the wound inflicted just hours ago. As the Mage’s hands were bound behind him, Thomis took it upon himself to step over and wipe a trickle of blood from the wound at his throat. It would heal, if the damn Mage would stop trying to overexert himself. Thomis understood that the Mage, one of Divaros’ most elite mercenaries, had something to prove to himself, and to everyone else. But now was not the time nor the place.

“Seven,” said Yasyk. “There are seven, Divar.”

That didn’t sound so bad . . .

“And a Stryder.”

That did.

“Are you insane?” asked Thomis. He stepped forward as far as the ropes around his ankles would let him, the hemp growing taught as it caught against the steel loops embedded in the Stryder’s waist.

“Irrelevant,” said Yasyk. “They block our way.”

“We can go around.”

“Around will take too long. We will lose the light. We must go now.”

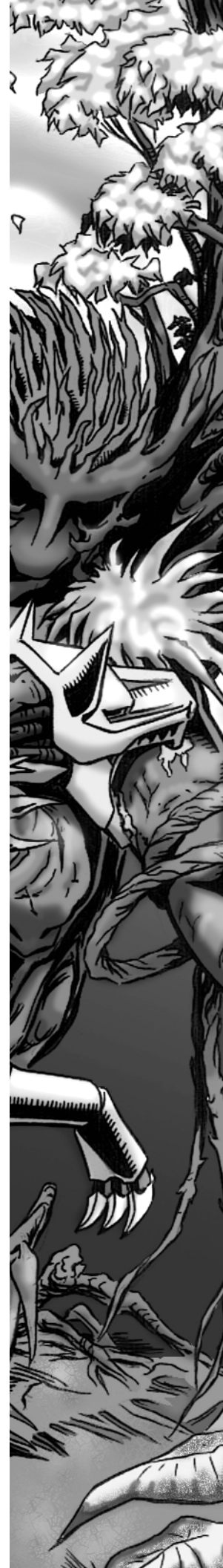
Without another word, Yasyk scrambled back up the Stryder, gripping steel rungs in the back of the beast’s legs to make his way up towards the back, where he could better communicate with the pilyt inside (who had not yet revealed himself). Counting the pilyt, their little group numbered seven as well, but only if they were counting little Jonan, who was busy sleeping, against all logic. They were outnumbered and, this close to the city, likely outmatched. Any Divar patrol that included a Stryder would no doubt be a top-notch mercenary group. And what were they?

This gave Thomis pause. It was a good question.

What they were, if you boiled it down, was this: two Zokili mercenaries, evidently brother and sister; a Mage who was currently incapable of casting Runes, much less speaking in complete sentences; a Draslander whose skill in anything at all was in question; a Stryder that looked as if it would be more at home in a swamp; its mysterious pilyt, who Thomis could only assume was also a Zokili; an infant child; and Thomis, broken arm and all, who knew himself well enough to know that the only conflict of which he wanted a part of was one he was running away from.

Hardly what Thomis could consider a force to be reckoned with. Especially when he considered the fact that nearly half of them were Divaros who were currently being held against their will. Of course, that wasn’t entirely true; it wasn’t like the child was roped to the legs of the Stryder. For all Thomis knew, the baby would be better off with this rabble. Back in the city, he would already have been put to death.

It was that thought which kept Thomis going along with this, instead of bolting. He may have been kept





against his will, but at least his captors were moving in the same direction he would have been heading anyway. Namely, away from town, as quickly as possible.

Through bits and pieces of conversation, mostly gleaned from the Draslander, he and Joachim had put together a fairly plausible explanation for why a group of Zokili was so deep into Divaros territory. About the time he was meeting to plot little Jonan's abduction, Joachim had seen the elder Marle-Thon meeting with a Zokili Ambassador about some matter or other. Not entirely unusual, but it gave the other Zokili a reason to be here. They had thus far denied any knowledge of such a person being with them, just as they had denied knowing anything about any of the other Draslander, who most certainly had come along with them. What was certain is that their presence here had not been friendly. One generally did not lurk outside a city with a Stryder and two well-trained killers while a group of Draslander skulked about in the sewers doing gods knew what.

The loss of the Draslander Thomis knew about, nearly firsthand; Joachim had confirmed that the others were all dead, including the straggler who Thomis had carried on his back for several hours before realizing the little warrior had died. The Maje had also confirmed that he had made his way into the sewers to find Thomis, though he had not yet revealed why. This was perhaps the biggest mystery. If Joachim had truly been with the Majes working for the late Jonan Marle-Thon (and Thomis was not altogether certain this was the case), then why would he still be on the trail? And if he had been determined to kill Thomis a scant few hours ago, why now was he suddenly happy to go along with this flight?

Perhaps he, too, had something to run away from.

The spear that was thrust into Thomis' good hand broke him from his reverie. "What's this for?" he heard himself asking, even though he already knew the answer. Which was just as well; Yasmyn wasn't answering, hadn't spoken a word at all since he'd met her. She merely grabbed another long spear from the Stryder's shin and handed it to the Mage before turning back to unstrap a pair of shields. Oh, yes. Thomis knew exactly what was coming.

It was, in fact, precisely how he had gotten himself into this whole mess in the first place.

Thomis set his spear down and stepped over to help the Mage strap on his shield, tightly binding the leather to his arm to prevent him using it for anything but defense. As he finished and stepped back, he noted that Joachim seemed uncertain about the shield.

"Too tight?" he asked as he strapped his own shield on with some difficulty, wincing as he bound it to the broken arm, hearing the bone grind against the metal. Just as he had done it before, years ago, the first time he served as a member of a mercenary company. Joachim shook his head.

"It's fine. I'm just not used to them. We- I don't go for this sort of thing."

Thomis nodded. Neither did he, though that was a lesson hard learned.

"Here's how it works," he began, moving over to demonstrate to the Mage, but Joachim again shook his head, twirling the spear in his free hand like a shortstaff.

"I know how it works," he said. "But that's not how I work."

There was no time to argue. Without any further preparation, the Stryder shuddered and took a step forward, forcing the two Divaros to move along with it, lest they be dragged behind. Their rope collars gave them about ten feet of leeway in any direction, forcing them to remain near the Stryder, where their job was now to use spear and shield to keep the enemy out from beneath the Stryder, which was its blind spot and therefore its weak point.

RUNE

In the early days, two Stryders would march across the field like giant gladiators and batter at one another with weapons. That ended when the Zokili introduced on-field guerilla tactics, rushing beneath the enemy's Stryder and setting it ablaze with torches and Runes, or clambering aboard and hacking their way into its Rune Chamber. Contrary to popular belief, the great beasts were not made of solid stone or metal; such constructs would be capable of little save sinking into the soft terrain beneath their feet. Rather, Stryders were generally built primarily of wood and leather, with steel armor plates in key places. Certainly, much more powerful than any human enemy. A Stryder could decimate an enemy soldier with a single well-placed strike. But a group of smaller, more maneuverable enemies could easily swarm beneath and over even the largest Stryder. For all the Stryder's strength, it was the smallest foes who posed the greatest danger.

Mercenary companies were quick to adapt to this threat, however, placing small teams of defenders, armed with spear and large shields, beneath the feet of the Stryder. Normally, as in the company Thomis had once been a part of, there were at least four, in turn surrounded and defended by a half dozen or so skirmishers, armed with a variety of weapons, and often backed up by lightly armored crossbowmen, trained to fire their missiles from within the close confines of melee combat. The swordsmen and crossbowmen would engage the enemy's own defenders and try to find a weakness while, above, the Stryders maneuvered to gain an advantage, striking at one another and at the comparatively weak enemies skirmishing below. To the untrained eye, it resembled sheer chaos. But to Thomis, who'd seen it up close, it was a dance. A deadly dance, to be certain, but nevertheless beautiful to watch.

Preferably from a distance, but then, he didn't have much choice here, did he?

Bits of tactics trickled back into his head as they moved up and out of the shallow, heading straight for what they all assumed was an enemy. Thomis found himself plotting his strikes, his lunges, recalling when to plant the spear against a charge, when to risk hurling it. Across the field, he saw the opposing team preparing itself, spearmen strapping on their shields, swordsmen fanning out, preparing to flank them. And then he looked around at his own "team."

"We're doomed," he said aloud.



CHAPTER 5

THE BOOK OF THE WORLD

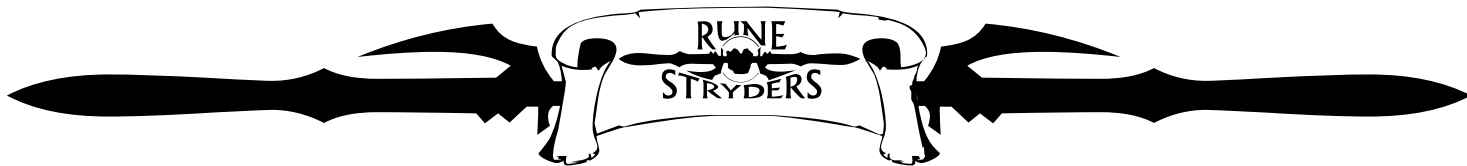
Before life, before time, before anything, there was Xhei, she called Chaos, raw and primal and shapeless, formless and conscious of one thing only--that she was alone. In the supreme act of self-sacrifice, Xhei tore herself asunder, and existence as we know it began in earnest as from the countless came the counted, from infinity came the finite, from the one-who-was-many came one. Hei, he called Order, leapt into existence, becoming the consort of Xhei, and with him came law, and language: "Rhun," the very stuff of creation.

Much enamoured with one another, Hei and Xhei spent millennia in each other's arms, and before long their activities brought forth twin offspring who Hei named Mheta, the daughter called Matter, and Nheta, the son called Energy. Xhei embraced her children and doted on them to the exclusion of all else, occupying their time with games and play, forgetting, for a time, her consort. Hei grew furious, and desperate to regain the attentions of his beloved, he decided to give the twins a playground with which to occupy themselves. So was created the Universe.

The two god-children were quite pleased, and quickly scurried here and there, creating and destroying for their own

amusement. Soon they grew bored, however, and in a desperate attempt to regain the attention of their parents (who had resumed their amorous activities), they engaged in a competition. Mheta took a shapeless sphere that had been a toy ball and created a planet, and Nheta created the sky around it. Mheta created oceans, and Nheta condensed them into clouds. When their game had finished, the god-children disobeyed Order. Eager to demonstrate what they had created, they intruded upon their parents.

Mheta, by far the braver of the twins, boldly strode into her parents' abode, interrupting the two in the middle of their creative couplings. Hei, furious at the intrusion, leapt up with a roar, inadvertently splashing his daughter with the primordial stuff of Creation. He chased her across the Universe, right down to the world that she had created in order to please him. The pursuit was quite long, and by the time they touched down, Mheta was quite pregnant, and gave birth to a son just as Hei reached her side, intent on destroying her. Overcome with compassion at seeing his offspring, however, he instead named the child Lheta, he who brings Life, and left mother and child to fend for themselves as he returned to his beloved.



Unbeknownst to any of them, Nheta had remained behind in his mother's presence, and when the others left, his mother called out for companionship. Nheta, desperate for attention, disguised himself as his father and entered her presence. When he ultimately revealed his true nature to his mother, she feared for his life, knowing that Hei would surely kill him. She urged him to flee where his father would never find him, giving him a handful of his father's Rhun to protect him. And so he fled, hiding himself beneath the surface of the world he and his sister had created, sulking in misery and solitude while on the surface his sister and her son brought Life to the world: plants, animals and other living beings. This was the Twilight age, before the sun, before death, before misery, when the world lived in peace and eternal life.

It was not to last forever, however. The secret tryst of mother and son could not go long hidden, for Xhei soon became pregnant herself, and gave birth to a sickly, squealing baby girl. She attempted to hide the child beneath her bedcovers, but Hei's amorous attentions soon shook the baby from her sleep, and she cried out with great zeal. Hei tore back the bedsheets in a rage, grabbed the infant, named her Dheta (the Dead god), and hurled her down to earth, where she plummeted underground, shattering the hiding place of her father and brother, the wayward son Nheta. Mountains split and spat fire, the earth cracked and shook, and millions died instantly as Death entered the world. The child god wept for his fallen offspring, then left behind his father's stolen Rhun

and leapt skyward, determined to kill his father. His sister Mheta and her child Lheta followed behind, realizing that his assault was in vain, and that he would be destroyed.

Indeed, the battle between father and son, Order and Energy, was brief and brutal, and it was only through the combined intervention of Mheta, Lheta and Xhei that Hei's hand was stopped. Hei allowed himself to be convinced that his children should not be destroyed. Determined to keep them from causing future trouble for anyone, divine or mortal, he set them in place around the world they had created, able to look down but unable to meddle in affairs above or below. Hei, the fiery son, was set in the day, and mother and child were set as guardians of the night, becoming the planet's two moons.

Ceaselessly, they chased each other through the sky, bickering and squabbling with one another, while their children did the same on the surface. And forgotten below the earth, where the dead god called Dheta slumbered eternally amongst her brother's stolen Rhun, lay those who survived the apocalypse that brought her to them. Worshipping her lifeless form, ignorant of the meaning of the powerful Rhun that surrounded her and them, these Deijin, the giant children of Death, built up their strength, and let their anger, impatience and fury fester and boil as they waited for release.

Thus began the Age of Mortals, and the dawn of recorded history.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

-5,000 Divarosfi Reckoning (DR)

The Myndwar inadvertently awaken the giant Deijin who, though they only number in the thousands, enslave the smaller, more peaceful races. Historical records are sparse at best.

-2,300 DR

Amidst thousands of years of slavery and heartache, some among the small races (led by the Myndwar) seek refuge below the earth, and stumble upon the secret writings of Hei known as the Rhun. They are soon able to learn what even the giants cannot. But even the power of the Rhun is not enough. The small races cannot stand up against the large Deijin without an equalizer. They get to work.

-2,250 DR

The smaller races trick the giants by constructing a tribute: large statues arranged around a great stadium, where the lesser races propose to fight and die to amuse the giants. On the *Day of Reckoning*, the giant Deijin gather to watch the smaller races. The statues are unveiled to great fanfare. Suddenly, the smaller races clamber inside the heads and chests of the giant creations, and the statues come to life. Though highly primitive and capable of only limited maneuvers, they are the first true Rune Stryders, having been created in secret by the Divaros, piloted by the Zokili, and powered by the Myndwar Rhun. Although the Deijin win the battle, the smaller races learn from the experience and build better, faster Stryders. The tide gradually shifts in their favor. The Great War has begun.

-2,000 DR

After nearly two-hundred and fifty years of war, the lesser races defeat the last of the giants. From the skies above, they receive a terrible punishment. Nheta, furious that his own Rhun have been used to defeat his giant Deijin children, bakes the earth with heat, bringing forth a great famine and melting the glaciers. The heart of civilization is lost beneath the rising waters of what will become the Inner Sea, and the surviving members of the smaller races are scattered across the land. Knowledge of the Rhun are lost. The sun's fury lasts for only a few months, a single season, but the suffering that ensues lasts for two thousand years.

-175 DR

The races crawl out of a second dark age. Knowledge of the Rhun (now called Runes) begins to resurface. National boundaries are laid. The Old Divarosh Calendar counts this as *year one*, based on the election of their first king, Pietr Jyoldenshire, a brutal warlord who unites the country with the promise of conquering the world and making the Divar the strongest people on earth. He keeps his word.

-150 DR

The Divaros, ever expanding, wage war against the nation of Kator, wiping out most of its people. Under the leadership of the Druid Kantar, who claims to be descended from the god

Lhei himself, the survivors retreat into the jungles to found a new civilization. In the Kantarin calendar, this is *year one*.

1 DR

The Divaros and the Sivatagi struggle for power. The Sivatagi are defeated, driven across the mountains and into the desert wastelands. The Sivatagi count this as *year one* in their calendar. The Modern Divarosh calendar calls this *year one* based on the significance of the defeat. The Myndwar and Zokili also accept this year as *year one* as part of their agreement to form the Confederated Nations with Divar.

-100 DR

After centuries of exploration, ten Runes are finally recovered in some form, including some of the ones that allow Stryders to be rebuilt and reactivated. Using this newfound strength, the Divaros drive the Draslander into the swamps. The Draslander people call this *year one*, and mark the occasion with tears.

-295 DR

The Divaros fight the Myndwar, but are defeated when the Myndwar and Zokili join forces with the Kantarin to keep the Divaros in check. The Confederated Nations nearly fall apart. Many years of war follow. Detailed records from this era are mostly lost, due in part to historical cover-ups, and in part due to the burning and scouring of several prominent libraries and record halls.

335 DR

The Divaros broker a peace deal with the Kantarin. The Zokili and Myndwar vote to include official homelands for Draslander and Sivatagi. The Divaros refuse. Several rebellious Divar countries break out of the union. Struggles for power remain as local politicians are killed and militias formed.

341 DR

The present day. Forty-five runes are known. Many maintain that there are many, many more to be discovered. Parts of the Divaros empire are in open rebellion. War looms on the horizon.

GEOGRAPHY

Our own planet Earth has been roiling and boiling for millions of years, and has had plenty of time for continents to shift, mountains to rise, and oceans to fill. However, the world of Rhun, and the universe in which it exists, is very young. Thus, Rhun's geography does not follow traditional "Earth-based" models.

MOUNTAINS

The mountains of Rhun were not created by two large continental masses colliding, but rather by the whim of the gods. They are relatively small, with broad valleys between them, as befits a younger, single-continent planet. The tallest peaks on Rhun (perhaps a half dozen) are less than ten-thousand feet high. Most of the world's mountains fall within the central Spine that runs down the center of the main continent. Once a rough cross (its southwestern *leg* shattered in the cataclysmic events of the past), the Spine now more or less bisects the world, dividing the most civilized and prosperous societies of the north and west from the frontier lands of the south and east. Smaller ranges can be found on the islands of the southwest.

HIGHLANDS AND HILLS

The high, frigid plateaus of the north are home to the heart of society, split roughly in two between the Divaros to the west and the Zokili to the east. War, fire and civilization have long since cleared most of the greenery away, and the lands are subject to erosion in times of drought. Luckily, their northern placement and several large rivers allow irrigation to keep farmlands fertile enough to grow staple crops. Lower plateaus on the continent's southern tip offer a less bleak lifestyle, as befits a temperate climate.

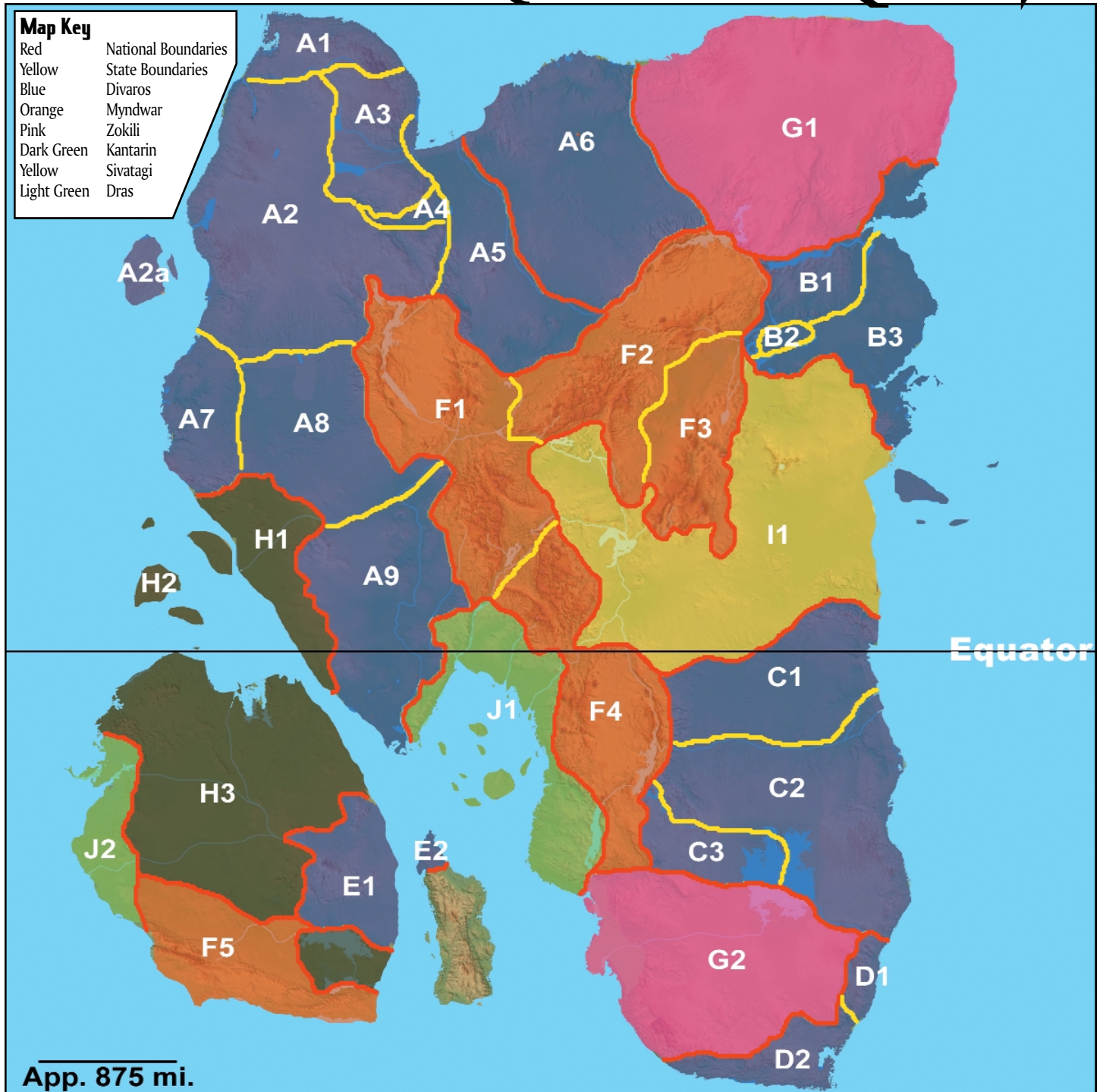
LOWLANDS AND SWAMPS

The lands along the continent's southwestern edge, ringing the Inner Sea, are generally swampy, ever covered by several feet of water, with tidal forces inundating some areas beneath dozens of feet of water several weeks out of the year. Areas further to the north tend to be nearly impassable, filled with all variety of strange plants, biting insects, venomous reptiles and the Draslander. Further south and west, near the Kantarin sub-continent, the waters grow too deep for all but the tallest trees. However, the presence of sand bars and small islands (which prevent ships from sailing in all but a few areas) make it theoretically possible to walk a Stryder straight across the sea.

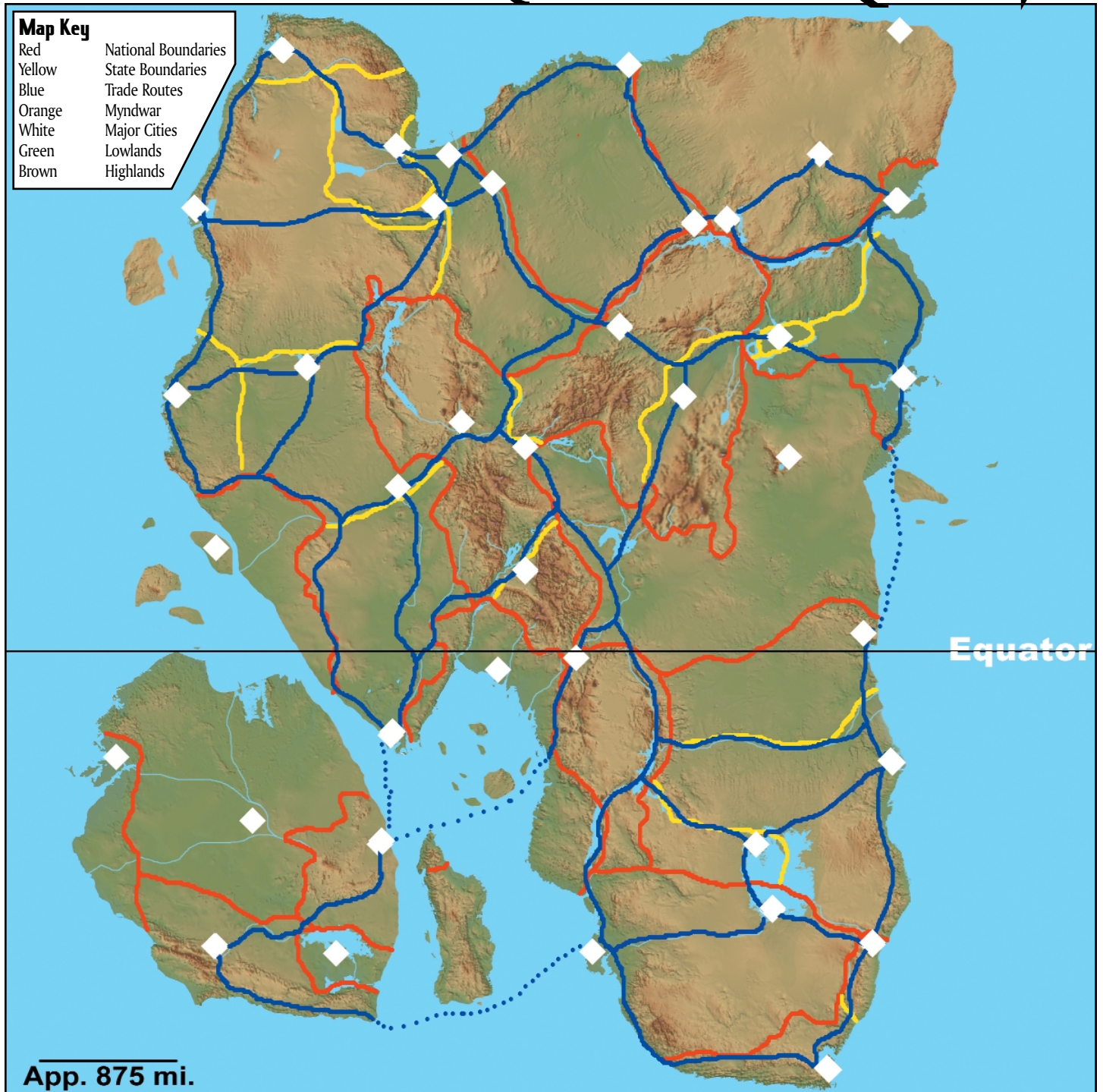
FOREST AND JUNGLE

Vegetation of some sort is present in every part of the continent, ranging from scrub grasses and small hardwoods to the north, to copses of citrus to the southwest and east, to tough cacti and burrowing trees in the Desert. In higher elevations one finds clumps of evergreens (conifers to the north, willows and the like to the south, nearer the swamps). But there is truly only one large forest to be found—the Kantarin Rain Forest. Covering nearly all of the Kantarin sub-continent, the thick canopy of these five-hundred-foot tall trees covers the land below in perpetual darkness and mist. To the east and north, the living forest actually sends roots beneath the Sea, spreading its grasp to the main continent and making shipping a nightmare in some areas. The Kantarin people who live within the forest say that the entire area is one living creature.

THE WORLD OF RHYN



THE WORLD OF RHYN



DESERT

As if balancing the lush vegetation of the Kantarin rain forest, the desert home of the Sivatagi, known only as The Desert by the people of Rhun, is the only true desert on the continent. Covering nearly a third of the eastern continent, it is a dry and harsh realm of venomous creatures and savagery. The northeastern part of the desert is home to several mountainous outcroppings, including the fortress the Sivatagi call home. To the west, ringed by mountains, rivers and lakes turn portions of the desert into oases for much of the year, making the area a prime target for battles waged over resources.

WATERWAYS

On an older planet, rivers and rainwater would have time to erode the land, breaking down minerals and salts that then make their way to the oceans which, over millions of years, become salty. On Rhun, there has not been enough time for this to happen. Thus, the rivers, flowing down to bring salty deposits from the mountains, are rich in minerals (and, in some higher elevations, too salty to drink safely), but the oceans are still mostly fresh and generally safe for drinking. As such, coastal settlements have plenty of fresh water for their people, but inland areas (particularly to the east) tend to be more arid and less densely populated. Irrigation pipelines are just as likely to run inland from the ocean as they are to run downhill from higher elevations.

COSMOLOGY AND TIME

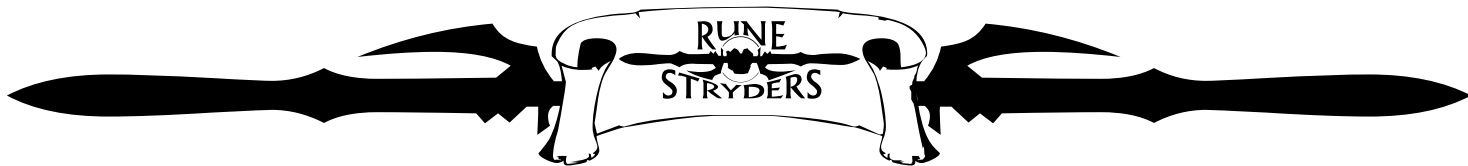
Rhun's solar system consists of a single sun (aka Nheta), around which the lone planet of Rhun revolves. Rhun itself is approximately 5,000 miles (8,000 km) in diameter at the equator, compared to our own solar system's Earth (7,900 miles) and Mars (4,200 miles) in size. The world's sole continent (along with its sub-continent) stretches 3,500 miles from north to south, and 2,500 miles east to west at its widest point.

Rhun has two satellites, or moons: Mheta (the larger) and Lheta (the smaller). These two objects are the only sources of light in the night sky; the gods have not gotten around to creating other solar systems yet, and as such there are no stars in the sky. Needless to say, this makes practices such as astrology entirely unheard of, and navigation a bit trickier (it is still accomplished by observing the positions of the moons relative to one another and prominent landmarks).

Rhun's day and year are approximately the same length as in our own world. The planet completes a revolution of the sun every 350 days, within which are ten months of thirty-five days

each (each month divided into five weeks of seven days). A month is determined based on a complete cycling of the larger moon, Mheta, since the smaller moon has a somewhat erratic cycle not in line with an easy division of day and night. The New Year is observed on the first day of the month Mhetite (literally, Month One), named after the Rhun of the Beginning and the End. Other months are named for various number Runes (Mhetiin, Mhetaan, Mhetawn, Mhetahn, Mhetain, Mheteen, Mhetenn, Mhetoun, and Mhetott).

The day (based on a single rotation of the planet around its axis) is divided up into twenty-five hours, the division of hours into minutes and seconds corresponding to that in our own world (i.e., sixty minutes per hour, sixty seconds per minute) as decreed by Pietr Jyoldenshire, the first Divaran king. Each day begins when the sun rises over the Divaros capital city, and as the hours are counted from that point, which shifts throughout the year, the keeping of time across the world is rather arbitrary and hardly an exact science.



WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Due to the lack of a planetary tilt, there are no seasons as such on Rhun. Northerly climes tend to be cold year round, those near the equator much hotter all the time. Weather patterns and tidal forces do sometimes bring snows further south, or droughts further north, but for the most part weather patterns are predictable.

Snow falls year round in the higher elevations of the northern Spine and across the northern highlands, rarely reaching further south except in rare occasions. Temperate climes are generally found across much of the central continent, growing steadily hotter towards the equator, where the thick forests of the west eat up most of the moisture,

leaving the dry eastern Desert to bake beneath the sun. Southern climes are similar to those of the north, though more temperate and generally more rainy than snowy.

Tidal forces and the rare hurricane bring frequent flooding to the lowlands of the southwest and parts of the southeast, although even these are predictable enough that those living in such areas can prepare for them ahead of time. Rhun is, however, subject to unpredictable earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, particularly in the southernmost parts of the Spine. Such rumblings are often attributed to Deijin, trapped beneath the earth, or the Dead God coming back to life to seek vengeance on the living.

RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY

As the world of Rhun was created and populated only a few thousand years ago by a family of divine beings, history and mythology is essentially the same thing in Rhun. There is no guesswork when it comes to who's who in the heavens, and as such there is no belief in a single deity, nor in a hundred different gods for every aspect of society and nature. There are six gods and goddesses, and everyone knows their names.

Since religion is typically based on faith and belief, and the people of Rhun do not need faith (they know for a fact that the gods exist, because a few generations ago those gods walked the earth), there are no large organized religions. Power is at hand for all people, no matter what they believe, so there is little reason to worship divine powers. This line of somewhat apathetic thinking is exacerbated by the fact that the gods are not the sort of deities who demand attention, respect,

sacrifice and worship. There is little point in asking for favors, begging for forgiveness, or cursing your enemy; the gods are otherwise occupied.

The net result of all this is that there are no real clerics, priests or religious leaders in Rhun, nor any sort of organized state religions. Even the druids, who once emphasized reverence of nature and life, are mostly a part of mythology now. To be certain, there are rogue cults, atheists and other fringe groups who purport to gain power by the worship of the gods anyway (the worshippers of the dead god Dheta in particular), but they are mostly viewed as kooks and troublemakers by the powers that be. Most of these cults are quickly done away with as soon as they crop up, as they often represent a force for dissent in an already chaotic society.

THE NATURE OF WAR

If Rhun has a religion at all, it is the religion of battle. The political and geographical landscapes are littered with the corpses of the warriors who died in the service of their employers, warring over resources, boundaries and many more petty concerns.

These are not the mounted French and English knights of the latter half of the Middle Ages, popularized in film and fantasy fiction. Nor are they the heavily armored spearmen and longbow archers who turned the tide in many battles of that period. A far better analogy for the mercenary companies of Rhun would be the smaller bands of warriors who did battle in the early Middle Ages, before the development of heavy plate armors and more powerful weapons. Here, there were few who called themselves professional warriors, and these relied more on tactics and the element of surprise, and less on heavy armor and weapons. Leather and mail armor was common enough, but to arm oneself head to toe in custom-fitted plate mail would have been beyond the reach of any but the wealthiest lord.

In the true medieval period, these warrior companies evolved technologically to keep pace with their foes, using the developments they had available to wage war more effectively. The presence of horses, and the development of the saddle and stirrup, made cavalry possible. Heavier suits of full plate armor, developed to a great extent in reaction to the dangers posed by ever-stronger crossbow and longbow technology, helped bring the knight as we know him into being. And of course, the presence of a strong, unifying religious force, and the centralization of power and money in the hands of a powerful few, throughout this period cannot be understated.

Rhunic mercenaries, however, lack all of these things. As most of the world lacks suitable large mounts (there are no horses), mounted warriors and cavalry tactics are unheard of. Lance charges, mounted archers and the like are nonexistent, for the most part, as are heavy suits of full plate armor. Certainly, there are dangers on the battlefield, but without the need to wrap oneself in sheets of steel, plate armor

technology has been restricted, for the most part, to wrapping the torso with a breastplate (and even this is quite limited and expensive for most warriors). Large, heavily armored military forces numbering in the thousands are a completely fanciful idea in Rhun.

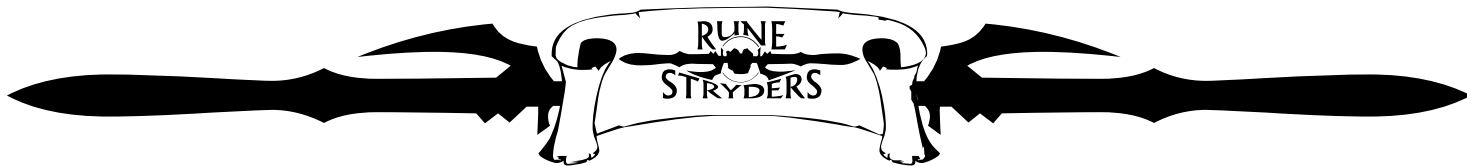
RUNE STRYDER TACTICS

The general availability of Runes to all members of the population acts as a great equalizer, giving power to anyone with the devotion and interest in studying and learning to master its power. Battlefield injuries that might have been crippling or fatal can, in many cases, be cured with the correct application of a Rune at the right time. And the importance of using Runes as part of battle cannot be overemphasized.

At the center of any battle are the Rune Stryders themselves, giant constructs standing, on average, between fifteen and thirty feet in height. Layered with heavy armor, guarded by Runes, and armed with giant weapons of war, they storm across the battlefield to do battle with one another and an opponent's troops.

Surrounding the Stryder, right in the midst of the battle, are the Stryder's support team, typically consisting of between ten and twenty individuals whose job it is to keep enemy troops away from the Stryder, so that the behemoth can do its





damage. Several of these individuals carry massive shields and spears, keeping enemies at bay so that the lightly armored, quick-moving archers with crossbows and war bows can scurry around into position and snipe away at their foes. Along with them are one or more Runescribes, whose job it is to maintain the Runes that adorn the Stryder inside and out, keeping the magic flowing and the Stryder alive. And thrown into the mix are several more heavily-armored (but still quite mobile) warriors with axe, club, and sword, doing their best to destroy the support troops at the feet of the opponent's own Stryder.

An entire mercenary company generally consists of between two-hundred and 500-hundred individuals, with a ratio of 1 Stryder to every fifty men or so. For those troops with fewer Stryders, tactics necessarily shift, with some companies preferring to keep men back to provide missile and siege

engine cover for their front lines, others focusing instead on stealth and trickery, sending cloaked and dangerous Magi behind enemy lines.

Of course, even the most novice mercenary groups realize that sometimes the best way to win the battle is not to be there at all. Many work with saboteurs, spies, and even politicians and diplomats to help wage the war off the battlefield, assaulting the enemy with political machinations, kidnappings, assassinations and sabotage.

Understanding exactly why warfare is fought in this way requires one to have a good overview of the political landscape as it exists at the present time. The following pages lay out the major players, and point out many of the current trouble spots.

THE NATIONS OF RHUN

The world is split into two camps, roughly divided between north and south (with some exceptions) by the mountainous Spine. The Divaros, the Myndwar and the Zokili, collectively known as the *Confederated Nations*, primarily control the northern lands. In the scattered lands to the south, large parts are held by the Kantarin, Sivatagi and Draslander, known as the *Outcast Nations*, so called because their inhabitants were long ago driven from their homelands into lands then deemed uninhabitable.

However, the actual truth of the matter is that things are not nearly as clear-cut. Political machinations, roguery, spying, assassination and unofficial military strikes against neighboring countries mean that the *Confederated Nations* are not nearly as united as their lofty name might suggest. And the *Outcast Nations* are hardly mere victims and refugees, representing a political, economic and military force to be reckoned with, individually and collectively.

National and state borders generally follow natural boundaries (mountains, rivers and coastlines), and in some

cases the lines are more theoretical than realistic. Those living closest to the borders are generally the least concerned with them in times of peace (though most concerned in times of war). One might easily find borders shifting as easily as allegiances do, sometimes as much as hundreds of miles, as fits the whims of the world's leaders and diplomats.

THE DIVAROS

plural, Divaros, also Divarosh, Divarans or Divari; Literally, "City-Dwellers", from Deve (City) and Osen (To Inhabit)

The Divaros are a proud people, with reason to be so. They are the most numerous inhabitants of Rhun, having won their place atop the food chain through clever politicking and, when necessary, open warfare. They are steely-eyed, muscular and narrow-jawed, often cold and harsh in nature and attitude yet quick to defend their families, countries and beliefs. They are imperialistic, driven and hard, their walled cities and powerful armies testament to their capabilities.

The average adult male Divar is approximately six feet in height and one-hundred and eighty pounds in weight. Most (90%) adult females are approximately five feet in height and one-hundred and fifty pounds in weight. This makes them the tallest and strongest of all the peoples of Rhun, giving them a reputation (oft deserved) of being large, loud-mouthed brutes.

Divaros almost always have dark hair, which they keep throughout their lives. Elder Divaros rarely get gray hair. Those that do turn gray are considered in the same vein as blonde Divaros, and said to be blessed. Red-haired Divaros are generally considered bad luck. Fairer hair is more common in those that reside farther to the north. Skin color varies widely; Divaros living farther north tend to have fairer skin and longer hair, while those living near the equator have deeply tanned, brown skin and shorter hair. Divaros tend to favor pale or neutral tones splashed with color rather than bold, broad strokes. White, pale yellow, beige and gray are typical, with blue and gold the most popular accent colors.



The Divaros people are united, at least in name, under a single nation, called Divaros. The nation is in turn divided up into five countries, each in turn divided into a number of separate states. The Prime Chancellor rules the Nation as a whole, chosen by his peers from among the Arch-Chancellors who oversee each country. These Arch-Chancellors in turn are chosen from amongst the Chancellors who oversee each individual state. Divaros society is patriarchal, aristocratic in theory and name but more oligarchic (i.e., ruled by the wealthy) in actual practice. However, Divaros was a monarchy up until a few decades ago, and so the bulk of the nation is still digging itself out from under outdated habits and practices, for better and worse. Exceptions to the norm can be found in the breakaway state of Rorach (democratic), the southernmost country of Tiso (matriarchal monarchy) and the large southeastern state of Neatha, theoretically allied to Divaros but mostly an anarchic state ruled by petty monarchs and dictators.

The flag of Divaros features a golden Nhet rune (symbol of the Sun) centered in a blue-bordered white field. Because of their flag, the Divaros are sometimes called *People of the Sun* by other nations, often disparagingly, despite the fact that most live in northern climes that do not see much sun at all.

A. Divar

The country of Divar is the largest in both population and land area, home to some 75% of Divaros people and more than half of the world's population, mostly settled along the western coast of the continent. It is also arguably the world's preeminent military power, as well as a leader in technological innovation and Runic research. The country is divided into nine states, eight of which fully support the central government, and one of which is currently in a state of open rebellion, having expressed its desire to secede from the country and nation. Divar has not recognized this secession.

I. Jebrun

The northernmost Divaros state, this is a cold, blustery and nearly inhospitable land made livable mainly by the fact that it is home to some of the most important fisheries in the world. Its major city, Llansing, is one of the continent's largest ports, occupying a strategically important position on the country's

west coast in a deep-water port that remains ice-free year round. High on the plateaus along the coast, it is accessible only by difficult to travel roads, and sees more shipping traffic than foot traffic in the cold season. The state imports most of its food and other goods, exporting fish and other seafood as well as shipping materials and some timber.

2. Divar

The largest of the Divar states, from which the country gets its name. This is the most populous state in the world, home to an estimated 20% of all the peoples on the continent. The coastal city of Engedy, located between the sea and Engedy Bay, is the largest city in the known world, larger even than the Nation's capital. Most of the world's main trade routes run through here, and the hefty taxes and tariffs collected from all who pass through represent the single largest source of income for the state as a whole. Having been nearly deforested in years past to accommodate the growing needs of its population, the state is quite heavily dependent upon trade to provide raw goods needed for even the most basic of needs, including timber for housing, clothing and food. The state exports many finished and manufactured goods, including armor and weaponry, and is known as a source for manpower as well, home to many of the world's mercenaries and hired hands.

2a. Sisian

Considered part of the Divar state as a whole, the island of Sisian is mostly uninhabited, notable mostly for the fact that it is of strategic military importance, and is home to the world's largest prison colony. It is said that more politicians, ambassadors and diplomats have visited its shores than any other country in the world. It is also said that they did not visit willingly, and that they were never heard from again. The truth can only be known by those inside its impenetrable stone walls.

3. Kioch

Although less than 20% of its borders touch the Sea, the state of Kioch is one of the Divaros Nation's mightiest naval powers. Its broad rivers and deep inland lakes represent a safe harbor for the Nation's fleet and an easy way to transport men

and materials from deep inland to northern waters in times of need. The capital of Norbay is a bustling port city even though it sits well inland, benefiting from broad, deep waters that remain ice-free year round. The bay into which those waters spill, however, must be kept open through expeditious use of Runed icebreakers, massive steel-hulled ships that keep these most important of waters open to traffic as needed. Like Divar, the state is a manufacturing center rather than a source of raw materials, and it imports most of what it needs to get by, including the raw materials necessary for shipbuilding and smithing.

4. Siene

The capital of the country of Divar and the Nation of Divaros, this city-state is the unofficial center of the known world. This small slice of land is a free state, overseeing the entirety of the Divaros holdings around the world, and technically owes allegiance to no one but itself. Divar, however, tends to disagree, and so the country maintains a standing militia in and around the area in case anyone would choose to force their opinion. All the major northern trade routes converge on this city, making it a true hub of commerce. Surprisingly, although countless armies have marched through it on the way to battle, the city itself has never seen war, and is heralded by its citizens as the safest place on earth (albeit under a heavy police presence with a habit of *disappearing* those who would threaten the peace).

5. Kiar

The state of Kiar is in an uneasy position. Kiar must not only deal with the many travelers passing along the main northern trade routes which run through its narrow environs, but also facing the difficulty of dealing with the breakway Divaros state of Rorach to the northeast, which recently declared its independence from Divar. Though the secession has benefited the area in terms of trade, it has not been altogether pleasant from a military standpoint, as Divar has increased the number of troops stationed along its borders. Somewhat isolated from the general mayhem are the capital of Ravon, which sits along the narrow slice of land that touches the northern sea, and the southeasterly trading hub of Oriva, closely allied with its sister city across the border in Zokili lands. The southern regions of

the state are rich in natural resources, most of which are shipped north and used within the state itself to avoid the heavy tariffs involved with interstate commerce.

6. Rorach

This breakaway Divaros state declared its independence from Divar and is now in an uneasy state of alliance with its neighbors. Rorach tries to play both sides of the fence for all it can get, reducing tariffs and striking military alliances with the Zokili while denying the same to their mother country of Divar. All the while Rorach still attempts to avoid open warfare (which would certainly lead to much bloodshed and almost certain defeat). Divar's interest in the state is obvious, since it represents an important stretch of northern coast, as well as long borders with two of Divar's trading partners, the Zokili and Myndwar homelands. The capital of Kusset sits in a particularly strategic position along the northern coast, through which a major northern trade route passes on its way east to the Zokili homeland. The southern two-thirds of the state is rich in timber and wildlife, the northern reaches scarred and depleted from years of warfare and the ever-expanding needs of human civilization.

7. Glanti

The coastline and southern border of this Divar state are both heavily guarded by both state and national militia on an almost constant basis, due to the ever-present risk of open conflict with the Kantarin to the south. Though the state's capital of Ortens lies rather far from the rain forest's borders, it has seen its fair share of blood over the decades. Troops have fought within and without the city's walls, as its plentiful ports and position along the coast represent key strategic positions well worth fighting for. Modern conflict is mostly over natural resources. The Kantarin want the Divaros to stop their logging and expansion, and the Divaros feel the Kantarin are trying to keep them from doing what comes naturally. Thus far, the best that can be said is that an uneasy truce has been struck, the people of Glanti given limited permission to travel within restricted portions of the Kantarin Forest. The area is rich and fertile, producing many foodstuffs which are exported across Divaran lands.

8. Streland

The only landlocked state in the Nation of Divar, Streland contains numerous important trade routes. Most of these routes run along its borders, keeping the center of the state isolated and even primitive by the standards of other Divaros. The southern portion of the state is covered with thick forests. The central and eastern areas are dominated by farmlands and pastures that provide much of the food for the rest of the Nation. The capital of Strefan, along the northern border, sits at the crux of several important trade routes, and is one of the wealthiest cities in this part of the world despite the fact that most of the State's citizens live in relative poverty, at the level of subsistence farming. Thurn, the state's largest city, is heavily dependent on trade from the east and south, which has been greatly reduced in recent years by the growing threat of war.

9. Chevon

Surrounded by the Kantarin to the west, the Myndwar to the northeast and the Draslander to the southeast, the people of this southern Divar state are a mixed and wild bunch, quick to battle, xenophobic and hostile to outsiders. Much of the land is uninhabited and overgrown, the thick forests to the west giving way to lowlands and swamps to the east where the many waterways from the mountains make their way south to the Sea. The main port city of this area, Shivvy, is a known haven for pirates, who scour the Inner Sea for booty. This rough city is more open to outsiders than the rest of the country, and counts some Draslander and Kantarin among its trading partners. Along with Glanti and Streland, this area is the region formerly known as the nation of Kator, from which the Divaros drove the ancestors of the Kantarin people into exile in years past.

B. Ess

Nominally a part of the nation of Divar, Ess has grown more independent and isolated since the state of Rorach declared its independence, shutting off one of the main lines of communication between Divar and these eastern environs. Settled only a century or so ago, its people have already found that they appreciate being somewhat removed from central authority, while still respecting the military might of their parent nation of Divaros. Close trading partners and allies with

the Zokili to the north and the Myndwar to the west, the three states of this country are more open to outsiders than anywhere else on the continent.

I. Bellin

The northernmost port city of this state is actually shared with the Zokili, and is governed by a consortium of both peoples. However, since the city technically falls within Bellin's borders, the Divaran Chancellor usually gets a final say on most matters. Most of the people of this state reside along the deep, broad river that links the continent's interior with the Sea, and many actually make their homes on the water, living out most of their lives on houseboats as they travel from the inland lakes out to the mouth of the River Bel. Exports include seafood, lumber and finished goods (particularly woodcrafts), with most of the other basic necessities of life imported from the West.

2. Elsa

Though surrounded by forks of the Lensa River, this island city-state is linked to the mainland by so many bridges that the river itself is practically subterranean at some points. Tight control over the flow of water through this area has made dealings with the Myndwar to the west difficult at times, since damming to create artificial bays and sources of power for the island's great mills has caused flooding in some of the nearby valleys. The entire island is densely and evenly populated, the entirety of the state being, in effect, one large city. While the area has a bustling economy, it produces and manufactures little, and in many ways is little more than a giant warehouse, with most goods imported from one area and exported to another (after being purchased, often in mass quantities) shortly thereafter.

3. Essen

This easternmost Divaros state shares its name with the country's capital city, quite possibly the most important port city on the continent due to its importance in the continuance of eastern trade routes. Though the area is commonly besieged by Sivtagi and Divaros pirates, who prey on the richly laden ships that ferry goods almost constantly between Essen and more southern lands, the state itself is on good (if shaky) terms with the Sivtagi along their southern border,

with whom they exchange mostly non-military goods and information. The southern inland portions of the state are rather dry and arid, and though grassy are subject to sandstorms blowing off the dunes not so far to the south. Essen is known as a source for rare minerals and other rarities gleaned from the desert, but is rather food-poor and thus depends a great deal on its northerly neighbors.

C. Celwin

The second largest Divaros country, this southern realm is somewhat independent of the main Divaros conglomerate, through benefit of being mostly cut off from the influence of most of the Nation's politicians. Ranging from arid and hot in the north to comfortable in the southern highlands, the people of this area are a disparate bunch, known for nothing except the fact that they are unpredictable. Three large cities exist in this area, lying along the main trade routes. The rest of the area's people are scattered evenly among smaller villages and towns, many no larger than a dozen small shacks around a temporary well. The interior of the country, surrounding the Celwin Sea, is more hospitable than other areas, benefiting from the broad River Cellis that connects the area to the Inner Sea.

I. Thuss

Technically a part of the broad eastern Desert, which lies just north of its borders, Thuss is a dangerous state, inhospitable, arid and dry, and quite unwelcoming of outsiders. Frequent skirmishes with Sivtagi over territory and goods are common, particularly along the northeastern border, where the state's large port city (and capital) of Fleir connects the eastern trade route with the country of Ess to the north. As such, the city is heavily policed and utterly xenophobic. Non-Divaros are usually restricted to their ships or forced to sleep in the dunes outside the city walls. The area produces little, importing almost everything it needs, being little more than a buffer zone to keep the Sivtagi away from the richer lands to the south.

2. Neatha

Theoretically allied with the Nation of Divaros, Neatha is an anarchic state ruled by an assortment of petty monarchs and dictators, most of whom refuse to acknowledge the rule of

their chosen Chancellor, for whom the country and the state's capital city of Celwin are named. Traversing any of the trade routes which crisscross the state, one is likely to encounter at least a dozen *toll booths* and *check points*, each set up by a different governing body which claims dominion over a particular tract of land. Celwin has repeatedly asked the Nation of Divar for additional military support to help put down these rogue governments, but the Nation has larger military problems closer to home, and as such the state as a whole is slowly sinking into open rebellion. In theory, the region is rich in natural resources, and is more than capable of feeding its own citizens as well as exporting a good deal of goods. Sadly, the complex political situation in the region means that many go hungry, some farmers are paid to destroy their crops, and others are pushed off their lands for arbitrary reasons.

3. Trill

Though landlocked, Trill's largest city of Teos represents the largest Divaros port in the southern hemisphere. Understanding its importance, the Divaros nation keeps a strong naval presence here, only several days sail from reaching any conflict that might erupt in the Inner Sea. The people of Trill are not altogether pleased with this arrangement, preferring to stay as neutral as possible with regards to national affairs (particularly because of their close relationship with the Myndwar and Zokili, with whom they share borders). Luckily for the state's inhabitants, most of the land is rather rugged and steep, and not easily patrolled, meaning that Divar military patrols generally keep to the Sea and leave the rest of the state alone.

D. Tiso

The southernmost country of the continent is a colony of the main Divaros Nation, populated

by wealthy politicians seeking to escape colder northern climes, and maintaining a large garrison that far exceeds its needs. Somewhat hostile to the Zokili to the north, the people of this area tend to feel they are superior to others by virtue of their wonderful lot in life. It is arguably the most beautiful country on the continent, rich in natural resources and wealth and an important stop for all sea-going vessels that must traverse this area. Unlike all other Divaros lands, Tiso is matriarchal, with both of its states overseen by Queens rather than the typical male Chancellors. The region's main exports include rare spices, finished goods and several varieties of citrus fruits.

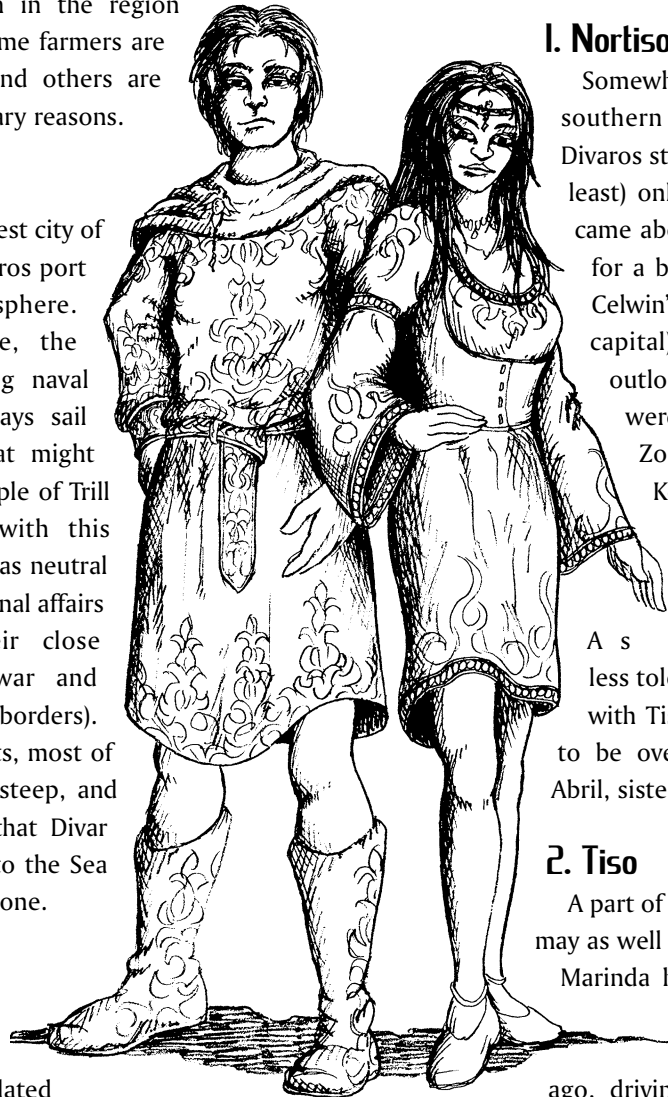
1. Nortiso

Somewhat more liberal in philosophy than its southern neighbor, Nortiso is the newest Divaros state, having been formed (on paper, at least) only a decade or so ago. This division came about partly due to the perceived need for a buffer state (to keep the problems of Celwin's anarchic bickering away from the capital) and partly due to the general outlook of the area's inhabitants, who were somewhat more tolerant of their Zokili neighbors. The state's capital of Koloma sits precariously on the border shared with Celwin, and has already seen incursions by several mercenary groups from the north.

As such, the capital itself is somewhat less tolerant than the rest of the state. Along with Tiso, Nortiso is one of only two states to be overseen by females, ruled by Queen Abril, sister of the Tisan Queen.

2. Tiso

A part of the Divaran Nation in name only, Tiso may as well be an entirely different world. Queen Marinda has ruled the country and the state since she seized power in a bloody coup several decades ago, driving out the corrupt Chancellor who



preceded her. Before she took control, the country was on the verge of economic collapse (its capital city of Tisano a forgotten last stop on a little-needed southern trade route). Under Marinda's rule (tolerated, if not blessed, by the Divaros government), the country has become home to many of the world's richest and most powerful politicians and diplomats. At present, the state is possibly the wealthiest on the planet, as well as one of the most exclusive, as the ruling body is xenophobic and utterly intolerant of non-Divaros. Divaran citizens of wealth and power are treated like royalty. Non-Divaros are refused entry at the border, and persecuted and/or executed if they are found within the state's borders.

E. Kantarin Sub-Continent (colonies)

The Divaros living here are generally seen as unwelcome hostiles by the Kantarin people, which is why they maintain a large naval garrison in the two port cities here, protecting trade interests and policing the Inner Sea. Though mostly independent of the larger Divar state, the politicians here readily kowtow to the main country, and are politically and militarily little more than an extension of Divar. The Divaros interest here is purely economic—they see the area as being rich with natural resources (primarily timber, but also the wide assortment of flora and fauna available nowhere else on the planet), and thus ripe for the picking.

I. Corland

Named after the pompous and weak Chancellor who currently governs this colony, Corland is more of an idea than an actual state. The border here is tentative at best, and the Kantarin do not accept it as viable in any way. Conflicts are common throughout the entire area, and all areas are deemed unsafe save for the most heavily fortified and cleared areas on the coast, and the heavily patrolled trade route with the Myndwar along the subcontinent's southern coast. Recent skirmishes with the Kantarin, and losses to pirate attacks on the Inner Sea, have left Corland somewhat weakened, and there is rumor that the stronghold city on the coast, known as Charliss, is in danger of open rebellion. Its people are beginning to fear for their lives.

2. Coria

Called merely "Dhei" by the Kantarin people (i.e., "Death"), this seismically unstable island is mostly unpopulated, overrun by thick jungle to the east and volcanic mountains to the west. Relatively untouched by habitation, it is a haven for strange animal life. The Divaros maintain a military outpost on the extreme northern tip of the island, though losses to the elements and the island's inhabitants (including some of the more feral among the Kantarin) have kept expansion to a minimum.

THE MYNDWAR

plural, *Mrdnwar*; Literally, "Middle People", from *Myd* (Between) and *Waar* (People)

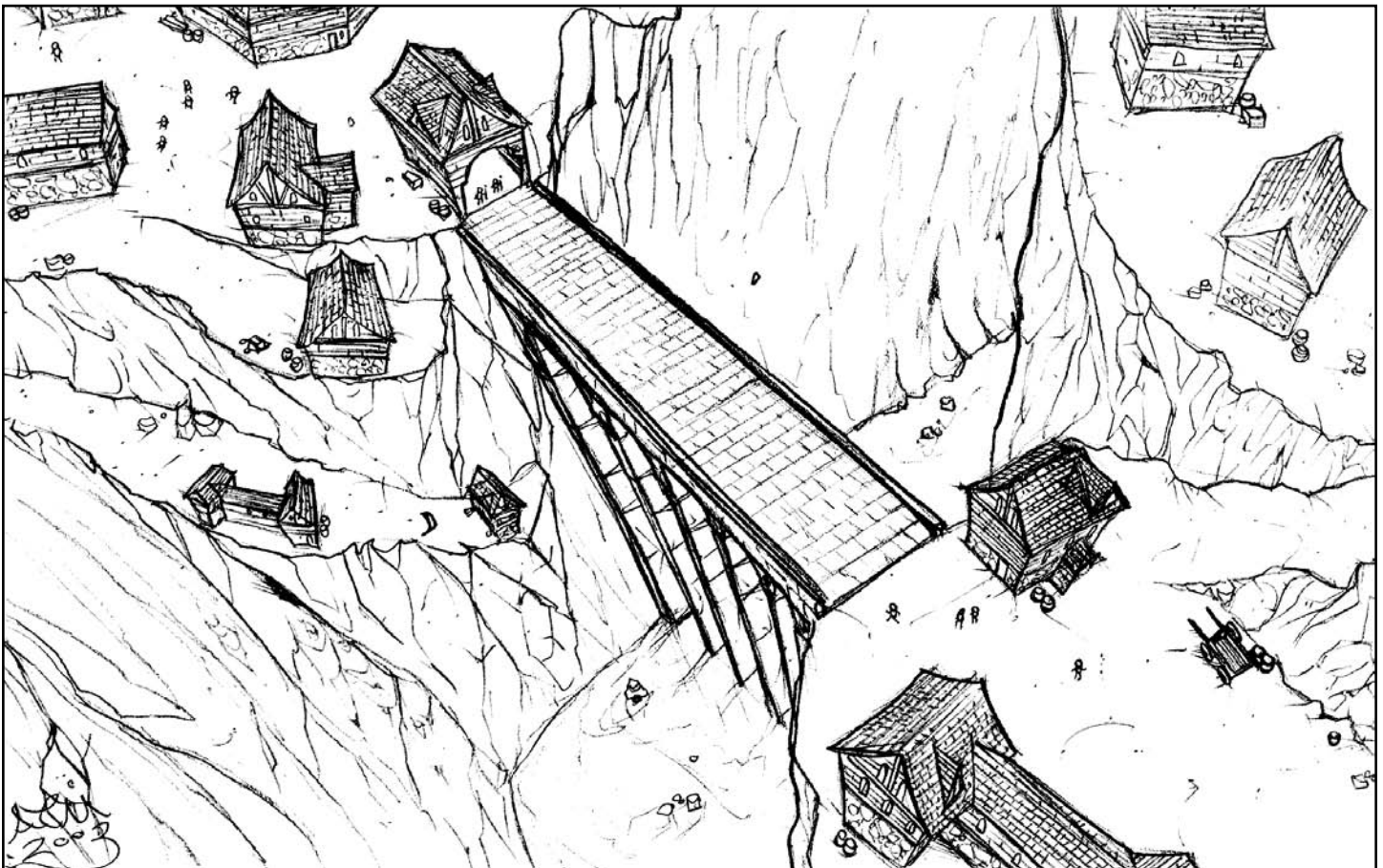
The Myndwar are *centrists* in almost every way that can be imagined, and it is this sense of precarious balance that defines them as a people. Geographically, they mostly live in and control *The Spine*, the central mountain range that splits the continent in two. Physically, they are also in the middle, taller than their close cousins the Zokili, but not nearly as tall as the Divaros. Politically, spiritually, emotionally—in all these things they consciously place themselves right in the center, believing that only through balance can their goals be achieved.

The typical adult Myndwar stands between four and five feet in height and weighs approximately one-hundred and twenty to one-hundred and fifty pounds, males slightly taller and heavier than females. They tend to be dark-haired and dark-eyed, most (90%) having black hair and eyes, with some few tending towards brown or gray, even in youth. In the northern climes, and especially among those who live at higher elevations, long hair is the norm for males as well as females, with the men also tending to wear thick beards. Further south, nearer the equator, the Myndwar wear their hair much shorter, and the men tend towards moustaches and sideburns instead of full beards. Regardless of climate, all Myndwar are dark-skinned, tone varying from a dark tan to nearly black.

Among those who have never traveled through Myndwar lands (and especially among the more xenophobic Divaros), the typical belief is that they are bizarre mole-people who live underground, literally “in the mountains.” In actual fact, the proper phrase would be “among the mountains,” for while the Myndwar do reside in caves in some areas, the bulk of the population lives in the broad, high valleys that lie between The Spine’s tallest peaks. In these areas, they build stone-walled fortifications and wooden homes, just like the Divaros, the main exception being the Myndwar tendency to use geography to their advantage. Cities are multi-tiered and three-dimensional, some areas built on nearby plateaus and hills, some extending into cavern systems nearby. It is this clever use of the land around them that has allowed the Myndwar to gain control over the key mountain passes and trade routes that run through their countries.

The fact that they wield such tremendous economic and political power with such ease has also given the Myndwar a reputation for being an extremely powerful and militant people. After all, how else would they have gained so much control and influence over their neighbors, if not through outright force of arms? While there is some truth to this, and the Myndwar did field an extremely large military in the past, most of it is propaganda, rumor and outright lie. The truth of the matter is that the Myndwar are a generally peaceable, neutral people who make the best of their lot in life, and their position in the world. They are not opposed to warfare, but neither do they seek it out.

At the same time, however, there is no denying that Myndwar warriors are among the most highly trained, most loyal and best disciplined soldiers in the world. The Myndwar stress quality over quantity, and keep with the Myndwar



philosophy that if you are going to do something, you should do it right. They train their soldiers from a young age, giving them the knowledge and skill necessary to properly defend their homeland. Some even travel to other lands, joining other armies for periods of time, to give them a better, broader understanding of the arts of war. The end result is a numerically small, but highly skilled and efficient army, capable of gathering quickly to repel almost any assault. Efficiency makes the Myndwar military seem larger than it is, and the Myndwar do little to dispel the myth, as the rumors only help to bolster their position.

There is no centralized Myndwar government. The people deal with local politics by means of a rather democratic system of government, without elected leaders of any sort. In dealings with other nations, the Myndwar typically nominate the most wise and experienced among them, typically Seers and Valley Mages, to represent the people as a whole. Such leaders hold no permanent office, however, and this constant shuffling of representation can make dealing with the Myndwar a chore.

The Myndwar favor colors which blend in with their surroundings, clothing thus tending to be a rather drab collection of grays, browns and blacks which only serves as a visual indication of the Myndwar outlook on life. Splashes of color, typically reds and blues, are used when necessary to indicate military rank, on signposts, etc., but even the official Myndwar flag is merely a gray field with a black stripe.

F. Myddn

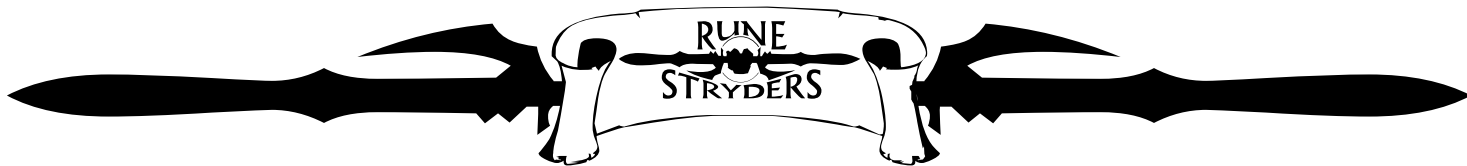
The Myndwar Nation consists almost exclusively of the continent's central mountain range, along with the broad valleys between them and the plentiful highlands that surround them. Taken in total, the area is generally known as Myddn, particularly when dealing with outsiders in political terms (for most Myndwar living there, it is simply called *home*). It is difficult to call the regions within Myddn *states*, as they are generally unconcerned with internal borders. There are nevertheless some geographical and philosophical differences that make divisions more readily noticeable. Names given to these regions are Myndwar-derived, but only out of a need to interact with other peoples. The Myndwar themselves almost never refer to these particular regions themselves. In general, the Myndwar are self-sufficient, importing and exporting little,

tending to grow only what they need. The prevalence of ore, rare minerals and Runic artifacts in the mountains, however, has led the Divaros to increase their interest in the area, both economically and militarily, and in exchange for such goods the Myndwar often trade for favors instead of reciprocal goods.

I. Ouws

This westernmost region of Myddn is generally seen as being politically and militarily aligned with Divaros on most matters. Myndwar residing in this area come in frequent contact with Divaros, as the main pass connecting the northeastern and southern portions of the country of Divar cuts through the main valley of this area. This main valley is many hundreds of miles wide and heavily populated by





Myndwar. The mountains in the northwestern portion of this region are generally low and rolling, with many high, broad valleys and lakes, while those to the southeast are much steeper and higher, some permanently snowcapped. The main pass splits off to the east and leads to the Valley of Tears, presently held by the Sivatagi, and so named because it was through this pass that the Sivatagi were driven into exile by the Divaros many years ago. The largest Myndwar villages in this area lie along the midpoints of these two passes, Ouwston guarding the more western pass, and Teason the east.

2. Nnos

The northeastern region of Myddn is often viewed by the Divaros as a trouble spot, as these Myndwar are more neutral in their outlook towards Divar and thus generally more friendly with the Zokili, non-aligned Divaros states and even the Sivatagi. Many of the Myndwar hailing from this area train and serve among Zokili armies, enhancing their already formidable military prowess. The bulk of the population lives along the single broad valley that bisects the region, creating a valuable pass connecting Divar with the eastern country of Ess. As eastern states are seen as less of a threat, the Myndwar military presence in this area is focused nearer the hot spot along the Divar border in a permanent military enclave known as Tenna.

3. Gfiles

The broad, fertile valley of this region is home to the bulk of the Myndwar people. The main pass through the area travels south into more dangerous Sivatagi-controlled territory, and it is little used by Divaros traders. This keeps the area relatively isolated from outside influences, and as such the people here are relatively apolitical, concerned more with their own families and villages and preferring to avoid external conflict whenever possible. The largest city in the area, Crix, is actually an unpopulated ghost town most of the year. The peoples of the surrounding villages come together here during the first week of every month to exchange news and information, deal with interpersonal matters and discuss political issues as needed, then leave the town afterwards and head back to their homes.

4. Shis

The Myndwar of this region control three key southern passes, connecting various coastal regions around the Inner Sea with the southern regions of the main continent. Though not as heavily trafficked as the more northerly passes, they are nevertheless of strategic importance, and the ability of the militant Myndwar residing in this area to hold them against enemy incursion has swayed the balance of war in the past. Surrounded by the Sivatagi to the northeast and the Draslander to the Southwest, the area is quite dangerous, and those living here are generally suspicious of outsiders, particularly those who are not of Myndwar stock. The key cities of Shisan, along the most northern pass, and Nokil, at the midpoint of the central pass, are veritable fortresses, cleverly channeling traffic through narrow ravines alongside the area's otherwise broad valleys in order to keep caravan movement tightly controlled.

5. Kantarin Sub-Continent (Kant)

At some point in the distant past (perhaps prior to the cataclysm that shattered the continent, creating the Inner Sea and the Kantarin Subcontinent), a group of Myndwar settled in the mountain valleys along the southern coast of this region. Those dwelling in this area are considered somewhat savage, even by other Myndwar, adopting many of the habits and customs of their Kantarin neighbors, with whom they are friendly. All other borders are closed, and incursions by Draslander or Divaros (or even other Myndwar from the continent) usually result in quick, painful (and often fatal) lessons being taught.

THE ZOKILI

plural, Zokili; Literally, "Small Ones", from So (Small, Little); literally, "the little people of Kili"(plural, Zokili)

The last mistake many large folk make is underestimating the capabilities of their smaller cousins, the Zokili. These slight, apparently peaceable people who reside in the hills and plateaus along the continent's coastlines appear to be simple folk, more concerned with making windmills and waterwheels than waging war. But the same skills that give the Zokili their flair for technology give them great skill in warfare, especially when it comes to defending their homeland. Of all the countries on the continent, only the Zokili can boast of never having been subject to invasion by the same force twice. This is because the invading force has not been simply driven out, but hunted down and destroyed, to a man. Zokili take no prisoners.

Zokili tend to be much smaller than their larger Divaros cousins, averaging around three to four feet in height and about ninety pounds in weight. Though small in stature, most Zokili tend to be well muscled for their sizes, though not overly so, with skin darkened and leathered due to their love of long hours of toil under the sun. Zokili hair tends to be brown or black, some few having reddish-brown hair. Eye color tends to match, being brown or black almost all of the time. Exceptions are looked upon with a curious eye, but tolerated and accepted with a shrug (at least in public). Zokili males are naturally rather hirsute—those who can afford it often growing beards that they have to tie around their waists, lest they trip over them. Females follow suit, often growing their hair to twice their height. However, in times of war, Zokili generally rid themselves of all unnecessary encumbrances, including excess clothing and hair. A Zokili with a shaved head and face is not someone you want to cross. He means business.

Business among the Zokili can mean a wide variety of things, all treated with the same degree of devotion, single-mindedness and creativity. At home, Zokili are always concerned with the welfare of their village and state, repairing fences and walls, manufacturing new tools or helping to improve farming techniques. Some become full-fledged inventors or technologists, experimenting with new ways to

improve current techniques. All are required to be members of the militia, many choosing to join the military officially in one capacity or another. For some, this means a life as a Stryder Pylit, a truly exciting way to serve one's people, while others are content to serve in less glorious capacities. The Zokili Elyte are perhaps the deadliest warriors on the continent, feared for brutal efficiency and silent killing techniques.

Yet in all things, including war, Zokili adopt a rather distant, high-level view on the world. To be certain, they are devoted citizens, dedicated inventors and ruthless killers, yet everything they do is done with a detached, selfless view of the world. This comes across to other races as somewhat



pointless and apathetic, but to the Zokili it is more along the lines of modesty. A good example of this is in the Zokili attitude towards magic and runes. Like everyone else, they use both on a regular basis. But ask a Zokili about magical knowledge and he will shrug off the question; certainly, any talents he possesses are no greater than those of anyone else, and hardly worth mentioning. Surely, anyone can achieve the same results, with or without magic, if they merely apply themselves properly to the task at hand.

Understandably, Zokili society thus tends to be rather socialistic, with some areas tending towards communism (*from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs*). Politically, they are represented by those chosen for their wisdom and experience in such matters. These Sages are accepted as speaking not only for a given village, but also for the entirety of Zokili society.

As is appropriate for their outlook on life, the preferred colors of the Zokili are muted and sedated, typically brown, gray and white (their national flag bears equal stripes of these three colors). When color is used, it is typically cool, being either green or blue.

G. Kili

The Nation of the Zokili is split into two countries, lying on opposite ends of the continent, yet united in philosophy and government. A constant flow of information, by way of couriers and messengers (and the occasional Myndwar runner), by land and by sea, keeps both regions in close touch with one another. News makes the journey of several thousand miles in a matter of weeks at times. Much like the Myndwar, the Zokili tend to be self-sufficient and nearly solipsistic in some respects, often dealing with political events around them by merely ignoring them. The Zokili hardly lead a perfect life, however. The theory of treating everyone as equals, and making sure that all citizens get what they need, is not quite the same as the practice, and in truth many Zokili, particularly on the fringes of the country, suffer greatly. Few complain, however, turning their hardship into a reason to strike off on their own, either joining the Zokili military on a permanent basis, or leaving the country to find their way elsewhere in the world. Either journey is looked upon as a fine way to spread the Zokili message to the rest of the continent.

I. Kili

The Zokili homeland lies on the high plateaus and rolling hills of the far north, a beautiful but somewhat blustery and inhospitable area, made livable only through the hard work of the Zokili people. They control an important trade route that runs along the southern border of their lands, through the capital city of Kyar in the nation's center and the nation's largest city of Rikyr in the southwest. The northernmost portion of the region is actually a sort of northern desert, where little grows. This keeps the marauding Divaros from the breakaway state to the west from being much interested in incursions, and has kept the northern port city of Shikyr out of the path of war thus far. The country is not divided into states or regions, as the Zokili trust their National governing body to maintain peace and prosperity.

2. Sokili

The southern-dwelling Zokili are similar to their northern cousins, being slightly more militant and somewhat less studious. Though they share much politically with other Zokili, they tend to be a bit more liberal and self-sufficient, placing greater emphasis on the value of the individual and his contributions to the greater good than is found in Kili. The capital city of Llykis is the largest port on the Celwin Sea, despite the fact that most Zokili in the area are neither sailors nor shipwrights, preferring to serve as hired hands and armed escorts rather than captain their own ships. The western-most part of this southern country is shared with the Draslander. Although the Zokili maintain the semi-permanent city and trading post of Drachyr on the coast, the surrounding marshy area is filled with Draslander, and friendly only to the Dras. Treated as inferiors by neighboring Divaros, the inhabitants of Sokili are somewhat more defensive and quick to anger, particularly towards Divaros, regardless of their country of origin.

THE KANTARIN

plural, Kantarin, Kantarins; Literally, "Kantar's Trees", from Kantar (name of Jungle) and Aan (Woods/Trees)

Official Kantarin history does not record when exactly the Druid Kantar led his followers out of the lands of the Divaros and into the rain forests that would one day carry his name. But then, Kantarin history does not record much of anything at all. Kantarin society acknowledges the present, remembers the past and looks forward to the future, but they have never seen a need to commit any of their nation's memories or history to written record. As such, much of what is known about them comes from one of two camps, both equally biased for their own reasons. One includes the historians of other cultures, who have a tendency to portray the Kantarin people as backwards savages incapable of ever living in an organized society. The other group is that of the Kantarin people themselves, who are not usually forthcoming with those who ask too many questions.

Adult Kantarin (both male and female) stand between five and seven feet in height. Those who reside further south tend to be somewhat taller and heavier than their northern cousins. All are somewhat lanky and thin, weighing between ninety and one-hundred and fifty pounds, their bodies retaining little fat, their muscles fine but strong, like bowstrings. Kantarin wear their hair long, braided with feathers, twigs and other small fetishes and runes twined throughout. Often referred to somewhat derogatorily as *ghost people*, they are pale of skin tone, their hair typically white, blonde or the palest brown. Their eyes tend to be either pale blue or green, either being of a peculiar shade that seems to glow in the moonlight. However, as Kantarin tend to dye their skin and hair with

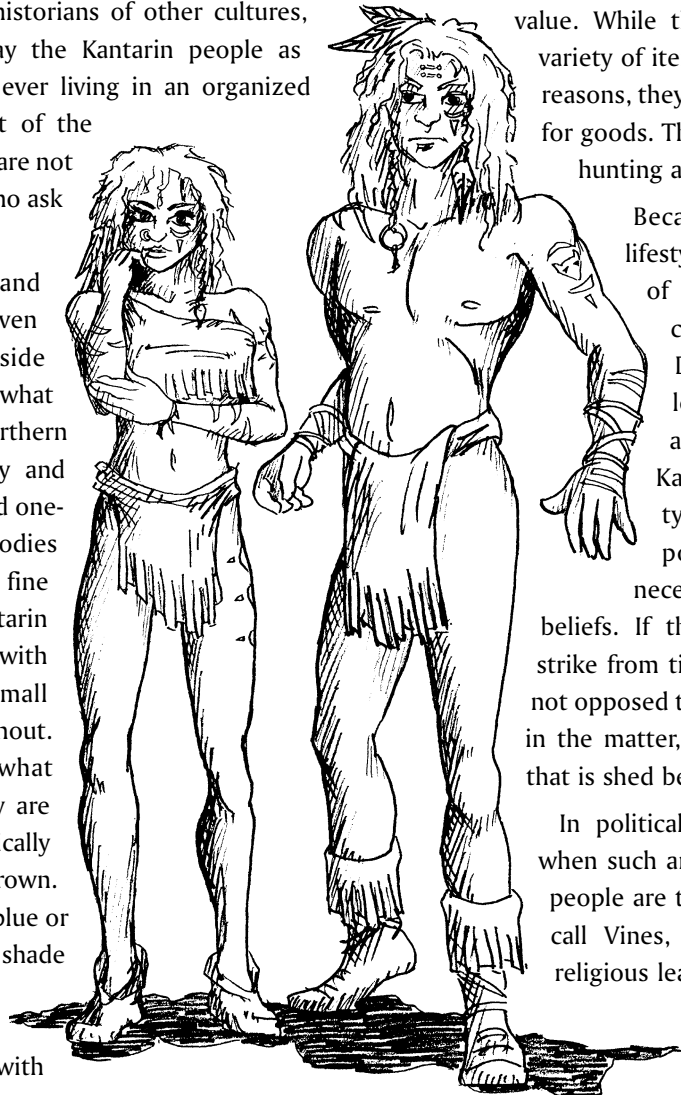
animal and vegetable-based pigments, it may be difficult to tell what color they really are beneath their kaleidoscopic camouflage (if one can see them at all).

Though they are not true natives of the rain forests where they reside, the Kantarin have quickly made it their home, thriving underneath the eternal twilight of the jungle's canopy. Within the confines of their forest, they consider themselves always at home, and while they do erect semi-permanent and permanent structures throughout the jungle, they have little belief in a concept of personal space and property. A family might live in a particular shelter for several days, then move on, while another family moves in right behind them. Neither do Kantarin believe that physical trinkets hold much value. While they do adorn themselves with a variety of items that they treasure for aesthetic reasons, they do not trade shiny rocks and coins for goods. They operate on a barter basis when hunting and gathering fails them.

Because of their somewhat simple lifestyle, the Kantarin are often accused of being savages, manhunters and cannibals, particularly by the Divaros with whom they have a longstanding feud over land rights and natural resources. While the Kantarin are not pacifists, they typically avoid conflict whenever possible, acting out only when necessary to defend their rights and beliefs. If this means making a pre-emptive strike from time to time, so be it. Kantarin are not opposed to bloodshed, and if they have a say in the matter, they much prefer that the blood that is shed be that of someone else.

In political matters (on the rare occasions when such an opportunity arises), the Kantarin people are typically represented by those they call Vines, perhaps the closest thing to a religious leader found anywhere in the world.

Actually more like social workers, the Vines work among their



people, dealing with interpersonal conflicts, offering advice and strategy to those they meet and, when necessary, doing their best to head off conflicts with external forces. To say that Vines truly represent their people, however, is incorrect. They may negotiate a deal with other nations, but following through on such a deal is left to the Kantarin people as a whole to decide for themselves. In most cases, negotiation is an impossibility from the start.

Kantarin clothing is generally drab, selected from the materials of the rain forest, and hence blending in well with the terrain. Greens, browns and grays dominate, with splashes of color throughout for ceremonial or decorative effect. These same colors appear in the dyes that the Kantarin use to tattoo their skin, often permanently. The Kantarin have no national flag, symbol or color, although other nations use a green Aan rune to refer to them as a group.

H. Kantar

The Kantarin people as a whole are often described as being of the Nation of Kantar, though this in itself is a misnomer, as it suggests that the people recognize a centralized government which represents them in the international arena. Geographically, at least, the people reside in the region known as the Kantarin Rain Forest, a broad canopy of towering trees, tangled vines and thick underbrush that covers perhaps a tenth of the entire continent. Like the people themselves, the jungle stretches from the main continent's western shores to cover nearly the entirety of the Kantarin Subcontinent, concealing within its nearly impassable shroud all assortment of villages and towns, each governed as those Kantarin see fit. As they have little use for anything from outside their own realm, the Kantarin are the only group that does not actively participate in trade with other nations (although barter still takes place on an individual basis).

I. Continental Kantar

Much more open to interaction with other societies, the Kantarin who reside in the rain forest on the main continent are still considered by most to be, at best, rude and unfriendly. This is based mostly on the fact that they steadfastly refuse to deal with outsiders on any large-scale basis, turning away all efforts to trade. Trespassers are typically escorted out of the

area; hostile trespassers are killed, no questions asked. This rather xenophobic attitude, however, is not without just cause, for it was the Divaros who, centuries ago, drove the Kantarin people out of Divaros lands in the first place. The fact that the Kantarin people maintain a footing on the main continent is a source of great displeasure to Divaran rulers.

2. The Kantarin Sea

A large portion of the Kantarin Rain Forest is in actuality a vast wetland (not unlike Brazil's Pantanal). It covers thousands of square miles between the main continent and the Kantarin Sub-continent (which is why the latter is properly a portion of the main body of land, and not a true island). A tangled network of vines, roots and submerged plant life links the entire ecosystem together, creating, in essence, one immense living creation. Based on the whims of the tides, and the growth of plants, some areas of the Kantarin Sea may be submerged under dozens of feet of water one month, and left high and dry the next. Needless to say, this makes traveling by ship through the area quite difficult, which is why most shipping routes avoid the area entirely. The Kantarin themselves are more familiar with the area, and use small canoes and rafts to venture between the islands of the area. Four permanent islands remain intact throughout the year, although their shorelines shift from day to day. The largest of these, nearest the main continent, is the home of one of the few permanent Kantarin settlements, called simply "Home" by those who reside in the area.

3. Kantarin Sub-Continent

The true homeland of the Kantarin people is this portion of the rain forest, which covers some seventy-five percent of the Subcontinent. In addition to the Kantarin people themselves, the jungle is home to hundreds of small streams and rivers, an immense variety of plant life, and thousands of species of animals of all shapes and sizes. Being so rich in untamed natural resources, the area is, of course, a prime target for expansion by the more militaristic nations of the northern continent, many of whom have begun attempts to take the area by force. The Kantarin people have done their best to stave off such invasions of their homeland, but are in many ways fighting a losing battle.

The Kantarin people of this area are split into two camps. Those occupying the bulk of the rain forest, to the north, are fairly aloof and xenophobic, keeping to themselves and out of the business of others as much as possible. They get along fairly well with the Myndwar who share the Subcontinent, but dislike the presence of the Divaros and refuse to have any dealings with them aside from bloodshed. Their unofficial capital city, as yet unseen by any non-Kantarin eye, is rumored to be located in the darkest, thickest part of the jungle.

Those Kantarin living on the shores of the broad Lake Emeros (a Divaran name) at the southeastern edge of the

Subcontinent are somewhat more open to dealing with their neighbors. They even engage in trade of sorts with the Divaros to the north of them, and act as guides and navigators for those who wish to explore the rain forest further. Though many other Kantarin see them as traitors, they themselves feel that they are only making the best of a bad situation. Some, being more comfortable on the open seas than their northern cousins, hire on as deckhands for the ships plying the southern trade routes. However, most reside in the area's only permanent village (also bearing the Divaran-given name of Emeros), built on stilts above the surface of the nearby lake.

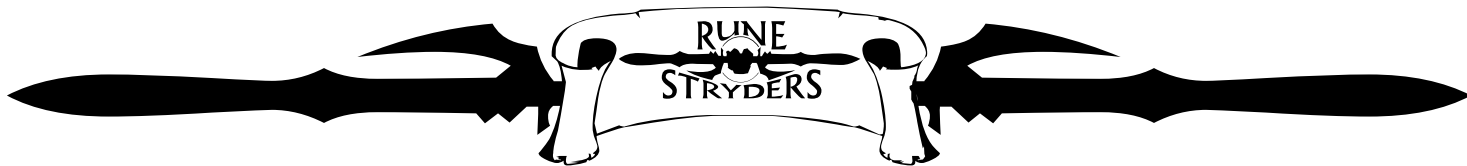
THE SIVATAGI

plural, Sivatagi; Literally, "Homeless Ones", from Siva (Home) and Agi (Without)

Centuries ago, the Sivatagi lived in the high, grassy plains of the north, gradually adopting the customs, and then the rule, of the Divaros, who swept through the area and claimed it all for themselves. Lacking a central government or an army, the Sivatagi were gradually moved aside as the Divaros had their way. Perhaps they should have learned from the lesson of the Kantarin, who had years since been pushed aside and forced to flee into inhospitable jungles. They chose instead to stand up for their people and fight back, guerrilla warfare style. Some gained the support of other nations, as well as many among the Divaros themselves. But to no avail; the greater strength of the Divaros nation won out, and the Sivatagi were forced to flee across the mountains, marching onward until they came to the great eastern desert. There they settled, at first living on the fringes of the wasteland where green still touched the earth, and then gradually spreading out over its entire expanse, from The Spine to the ocean.

The Sivatagi stand about the same height as the Divaros, weighing slightly less on average and thus appearing somewhat gaunt by Divaran standards. Their skin is typically dark brown or black, wrinkled and mottled from the sun and of a leathery feel. Their eyes are typically sunken and morose, of a deep blue or black color, and their white or blonde hair, when worn at all, is typically close-cropped, and often tipped





with dyes of bright, gaudy colors. When riding into battle, or in need of stealth, the Sivatagi dress for the terrain, typically wearing tan or white colored garments that blend in with the sand around them. When dressed for ceremonial occasions, their true colors show, and they are quite fond of deep blues, reds and violets, both on their clothing and on their skin. In all cases, both men and women typically go veiled at all times when out of doors, to protect their faces from the driving sand and blistering heat. Many warriors also top this off with helmets made from the bleached bones and skulls of fallen animals, which has given rise to the rumors that the Sivatagi are fierce, monstrous tusked creatures.

Out of necessity, the Sivatagi frequently raid outlying towns for food and other resources, although whenever possible they will attempt to cooperate and trade with those around them. In any case, they are a people of great honor, and while they take pride in their ability to be brutal, bloodthirsty and savage when engaged in battle, they will never go back on their word. If they say that they wish to parlay a truce, they mean just that, and if they say that they wish to trade for goods, they mean just that. Lately, the Sivatagi have seen the benefit of becoming a seafaring people, and they are no longer merely a scourge to desert travelers, but also to those making voyages by ship as well. Lacking a large supply of wood, however, most of their fleet consists of captured ships, or those purchased from shady dealers.

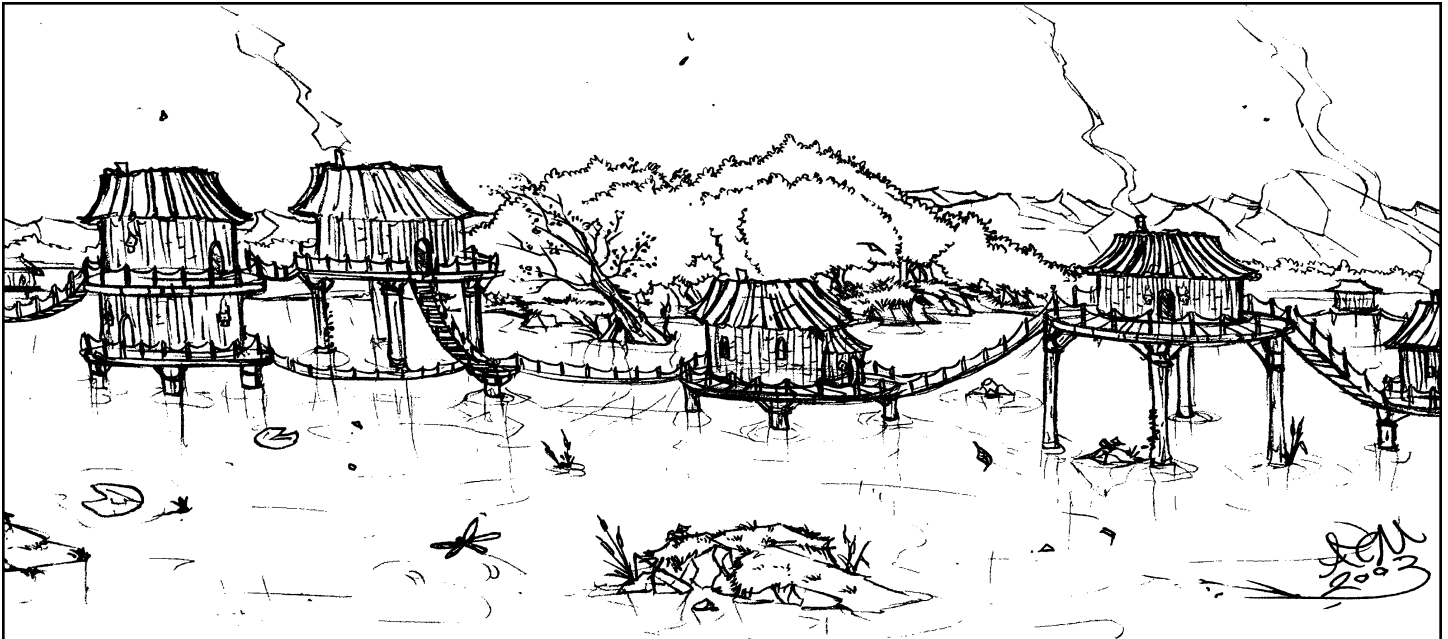
The Sivatagi have no central government or national leaders, relying on the strength of arms and experience of their caravan leaders to keep order amongst their individual tribes. In dealings with other nations, Sivatagi are typically represented by their Traders. However, since non-warlike relations with other countries happen infrequently at best, such opportunities for political discourse are few and far between.

Sivatagi have a habit of referring to people not by proper name, but by their occupation. A Sivatagi Hunter named Ch'hkra might simply be called *Hunter* or *The Hunter*. Were more than one hunter present, he might additionally be pointed to or gestured at, or context would make it clear who was being spoken about. Seldom does conversation involve those who are not present, as it is considered rude to speak about someone else when they are not around to participate

in the conversation. As a corollary to this, Sivatagi do not give their children names at birth, allowing the child to choose his own name when he is old enough to speak (typically two to three years old). Undoubtedly, Sivatagi parents guide their child in this decision-making process, but tradition holds that no one may choose a name but the named himself.

I. The Great Eastern Desert

With some few exceptions, all Sivatagi call the Eastern Desert their home, and although they themselves recognize that they, as a people, form the Nation of the Sivatagi, the actual physical boundaries of that nation tend to shift with whim and wind. The Eastern Desert is immense, encompassing much more than mere sand dunes. In its center, the sand gives way to bare rock, including the immense outcropping known as the Masa, upon which the Sivatagi stronghold (and capital city) of Masasan ("Sha'sakh" in Sivatagi) stands tall. To the west, in the narrow valley ringed by mountains, seasonal streams and runoff from storms creates a verdant land dotted with oases several months out of the year. And along the northern and southern borders, the irrigated lands of the neighboring Divaros countries offer some Sivatagi the chance to grow crops of their own (or at the very least steal from their neighbors). Most Sivatagi are wanderers and nomads, semi-permanent encampments most commonly found along the coast, near other sources of fresh water, and along the trade routes that wind their way through and near the desert.



THE DRASLANDER (OR DRAS)

plural, Draslander, Draslanders, Dras; Literally, "Swamp-dwellers", from Dras (swamp, marsh)

Draslanders are cast-offs, leftovers, the unwanted offspring of ancestors who were defeated by the Divaros long ago, pushed out of habitable lands to certain death in the poisonous swamps that ring the Inner Sea. But some faint flicker of inner courage kept those early Draslanders from perishing, and they quietly and slowly built themselves up from a rag-tag collection of invalids and mutants into a powerful force. Though short of stature and relatively weak, the Draslanders are strong of heart and health, and possess raw cunning that no other race can match. Pushed from civilization into brutal, animal savagery, they took the best qualities of both existences and forged a new life for themselves in the mud and the muck.

The average adult Draslander stands no taller than four feet tall, most averaging between two and three feet in height. Being quite slender and residing in hot, humid climes, they retain little body fat or muscle, and as such typically weigh around sixty to ninety pounds, in general shape akin to young (albeit somewhat malnourished) Divaros children. As Draslanders do not nurse their children like the other races,

males and females appear quite the same from the waist up, in all regards. Their skin is typically mottled with disease and bruise, varying in shade from pale gray to yellowish purple, more often than not covered in some sort of fungus or mold that gives them a greenish cast. Their hair and eyes are always black, the former worn long and braided, tied back until it reaches significant length, then shorn off and used for making rope and clothing. Their teeth are often harvested in like manner, the larger canine tusks in particular serving good use in their weapons. In most other respects the Draslanders resemble sicklier, smaller versions of the taller races.

A persistent rumor about Draslanders is that they were, in antiquity, closely related to the Zokili. Most refuse to believe such nonsense, although it is worth noting that neither the Zokili nor the Dras will entirely deny the possibility. Indeed, while the Dras are scorned by the other races, the Zokili maintain an uneasy truce with them, even going so far as to share territory and trade goods at times. The other races will either attack Draslanders on sight or simply refuse to acknowledge that they exist, seeing them as just one more form of vermin to be eradicated.

Indeed, to a certain extent the comparison is valid. Draslanders do live like other "vermin," building their homes and villages among the rats, snakes and insects of the swamps,

making no attempt to shut nature out as the other races do. This embrace of their situation has had several effects. From a physical perspective, it has made the Dras more capable of living effectively in their environment, toughening their skin as proof against bug bites, giving them immunity to many natural toxins, and allowing them to blend in with their environment to a startling degree. From a societal perspective, such an allegiance with nature has made the Dras much more communal, with several tribal leaders loosely controlling a large area within which extended families basically take care of themselves; again, comparisons to the communal lifestyle of the Zokili are not unwarranted.

When they wear clothing at all, Draslanders tend to favor colors that come from their surroundings: black and gray, green and violet. Cloaked in swamp moss, vines and the bones of their enemies, a Draslander can be a terrifying sight—if you see him coming in time, that is.

J. The Dras

I. Continental Kantar

Most Draslander live in the stagnant swamps that sit where the rivers from the north spill their refuse into the Inner Sea. Many nations claim portions of the area, collectively known merely as *The Dras*, as their own, though only the Draslander are permanent residents in the area. The swampy areas more or less hug the coast, although they delve fairly far inward to the north, where the Myndwar often skirmish with bolder Draslander looking for building materials and scraps, and south into Zokili lands, where they are accepted as trading partners of a sort. Though none of their ramshackle villages and towns qualify as permanent cities of any sort, a fair number of Draslander reside in the shattered ruins of an ancient nameless city on the coast, which they refer to as *Ollun*.

The Inner Sea is dotted with countless small islands, many swampy, vine-covered tangles barely visible above the waves, others higher, rocky outcroppings, lending credence to the legends which say that long ago a great cataclysm shattered the area. Draslander are good swimmers, and many live on and among these islands, posing added danger to sailors willing to risk their cargo by sailing through the area.

2. Kantarin Sub-Continent

Although no one can explain quite how, at some point in the past a group of Draslander found their way to the far western shores of the Kantarin Subcontinent, where they have flourished and lived in relative peace, well removed from the persecution of the Divaros. Much more primitive than their continental cousins, these Draslander get along well with their Kantarin neighbors and share many of their customs, including habits such as body tattooing and a reverence for nature.



LANGUAGES

Language and magic are both based upon the Runes, forty-five basic syllables and sounds that combine in various forms to make up not only powerful incantations, but everyday speech as well. Modern tongues are far enough removed from the specific Runic pronunciations to prevent disastrous mistakes, such as burning down the bakery while buying a loaf of bread, of course, but they are close enough to their roots that people still acknowledge the power of words.

Divaran (the language of the Divaros) is the base tongue spoken by all peoples in Rhun, and the most closely derived from the original Runic, a mix of harsh, clipped syllables and more free-flowing vowel sounds. Since all languages are derived from this base, characters that speak different tongues can usually understand one another. Although there are some slang terms that do not cross cultures easily, for the most part language is not a barrier. For purposes of flavor, however, the following notes on language should be noted.

Myndwar is also the name of the Myndwar tongue, which shares 95% of its lexicon with Divaran. Myndwar tends to be somewhat more guttural and *raw*, sprinkled with older language more closely related to the old Runic tongue, and more than a few words seemingly constructed only of consonants that other peoples have a difficult time conceiving of, much less pronouncing. There are some who believe that Myndwar precedes Divaran as a language, and is itself closely related to the ancient tongue of the giants that once enslaved the smaller races. This could be true in part, since most accept that it was the Myndwar who first discovered the Runes, and helped teach its language to the other races.

The Zokili have some dialectic peculiarities, most notably the Zokili tendency to replace an internal *long I* or *long E* sound with a *Y*, stretching the sound in such a way as to sound out both *I* and *E* at the same time. Those ignorant of this shift often ask Zokili why their name is not *Zokyly*, the response either being a long diatribe on the specifics of the Zokili dialect, or a shrug and a shake of the head. Their choice of words has also led to a general softening of speech, sounds

swallowed or muted. This can give the Zokili the appearance of speaking with a hushed whisper at times, and adds somewhat to their mystique. Zokili are quite fond of language, especially analogy and synonym. In speaking about war, for example, a Zokili can probably find a hundred different ways to say *war* without ever uttering that word itself. Saying what you mean without actually saying it is a mark of pride for some Zokili.

For the most part, the Kantarin simply speak Divaran. On their own, however, they also use a loose collection of hand gestures and animal sounds called Kantarin Signing to communicate. Broad, sweeping gestures and head wiggles are used to communicate over distances, with rapid-fire finger flicks and hand movements used at close range, for more detail. In most cases, even non-speakers can understand the gist of a conversation. For example, the index finger is used to point out the subject being referred to. An index finger pointing at one's own chest represents the concept of self; the same finger pointed at someone else represents that person as subject. All of this is accompanied by a variety of clicks, whistles, grunts and chirps, all mimicking the noises of the jungle. Kantarin Signing is almost never used in mixed company.

The Sivatagi have altered language out of necessity. Since they go most of the time wearing veils, low, guttural sounds can easily be lost. Better heard are the louder clicking and chattering sounds that originated with the Sivatagi Reavers, in attempts to communicate with their insect-like Stryders. For the most part, this is a simple substitution of harsher, louder sounds where muffled, guttural sounds would normally appear. For example, the sounds for *M*, *N*, and *R* all sound remarkably alike through a veil in the middle of a sandstorm, and so these are typically swapped out for *Sh*, *Kh* and *Ch*, respectively, with *Kh* pronounced at the back of the throat and the others pronounced normally. In writing, the second of double vowels are replaced by an apostrophe, and repeated syllables dropped altogether (barbarian becomes *barian*).

Drash (the language of Draslander) is a crude form of Divaran combined with the sounds of the swamp to form a rhythmic bayou language that sounds like gibberish and *baby-talk* to many outsiders. Consonant sounds are run together or slurred, vowel sounds shifted, extra syllables added for no apparent reason. Two Draslanders might pronounce the same sentence differently, yet each would understand the other perfectly. Half of learning to speak Dras is learning what not to listen to, filtering the signal from the swamp noise. Worth noting for those who support the ancestral Zokili theory is the Dras habit of sprinkling their vowels with additional Y sounds.

SAMPLE NAMES

The following names are the most popular among their respective races, and provide a good example of the differences in language. Spelling often varies from city to city and country to country, though pronunciation remains remarkably similar, even amongst different dialects. In other cases, names shift, dropping initial or terminal letters and adding new ones to create similar, but different, names. Examples of such shifting are found amongst the examples below, variations following the most commonly used root.

Names in Rhun are gender-neutral; males and females share all names in common, and while in some areas particular variations are used more often with one or the other, there are no hard and fast rules. A male named Misha and a female named Mitchel is as likely as the opposite combination. For the most part, names are also race-neutral. In some areas, Divaros children are often given Myndwar or Zokili names, and vice-versa. However, those shown below are the most common to each race.

Divaran Names

Adour, Doure, Doir, Benet, Bennet, Bennik, Cadelant, Cadelan, Caterin, Candin, Kendin, Quinton, Coydn, Corlan, Cyrillin, Dalpeth, Dalspeth, Alspeth, Dane, Deni, Denis, Gavin, Gevinn, Kaven, Halder, Helder, Keller, Johan, Jonan, Jonen, Macon, Marin, Marinda, Marlen, Morlen, Marle, Robius, Robian, Romin Rolf, Wolf, Ulf, Thomis, Tomis, Mich

Draslander Names

Brbl, Birbel, Barbl, Dzeni, Xene, Jeni, Grblg, Grbil, Gorbl, Jelnn, Jallin, Gelin, Lillth, Lilt, Lillik, Nittk, Nittik, Nitpik, Nyka, Nika, Nikke, Shlek, Shilk, Shael, Vol, Voyle, Val, Wini, Huinni, Weni

Kantarin Names

Calim, Calin, Carin, Cenai, Cenay, Senay, Ismel, Ismael, Mael, Kemel, Kemet, Kemilt, Misha, Mishel, Mitchel, Oriss, Moris, Morissa, Semmil, Semle, Cemil, Shil, Sill, Syle, Tyler, Tailler, Talle, Uma, Umo, Umich

Myndwar Names

Brun, Brum, Rume, Dmitri, Demi, Mitri, Flohur, Florr, Florin, Gormar, Gorim, Gorbar, Hendel, Handel, Honn, Hoag, Hirg, Heirg, Joachim, Yakim, Yaki, Mikil, Mikel, Mikelt, Vane, Vanir, Vinicent, Xandre, Sandre, Zander

Sivatagi Names

Ca'chish, Ca'chikh, Ca'chikh, Ch'kha, Ch'hkra, Sh'krha, Isshech, Issha'ch, Sha'ch, Keshech, Keshet, Keshicht, Ochiss, Shochis, Shochissa, Sesh'ich, Sesh'che, Cesh'ich, Shich, Sich, S'che, Shisha, Shishech, Sh'tchech, T'chech, Ta'chech, Ta'che, U'sha, U'sho, U'shich

Zokili Names

Abril, Abryl, Abrys, Danil, Daneel, Danyl, Elys, Elyse, Elise, Foirey, Forey, Fyr, Pietr, Piytr, Pytt, Tasryn, Tasryr, Tasyll, Yalith, Yawith, Yowyth, Yasyk, Yasmyn, Yasmynda, Zhim, Zim, Symm

Notes on Surnames

Surnames are generally formed from the name of one's father (or mother, in some cases) along with a root indicating that one is the offspring of that person. Hyphens and articles are often inserted, but are considered optional in most cases. The most common roots include:

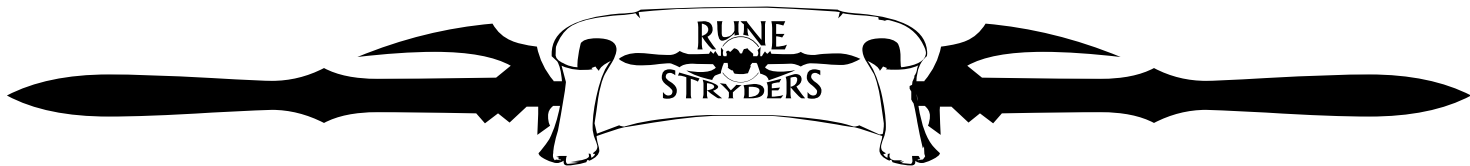
Bin/ban/bane/byn (*Cyrillin Malbin is Cyrillin, Mal's child*)

Kin/kind/kyn/kynn (*Abril Fyrkin is Abril, Fyr's child*)

Son/sinn/shin/shir (*Pietr Jyoldenshire is Pietr, Holden's child*)

Thon/thin/than/thym (*Jonan Marle-Thon is Jonan, Marle's child*)

Van/vin/win/wyn (*Dane the Shadwyn is Dane, Shad's child*)



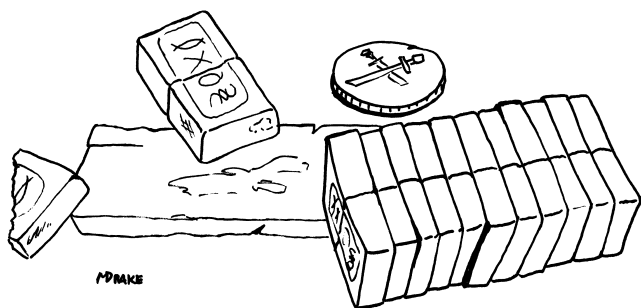
A Note on Titles

Titles vary from place to place, and are as often assumed by oneself as they are bestowed or earned. A Lord may outrank a Baron in one country, but not in another. As such, titles are of somewhat questionable import, except among one's own people. Those often-seen include:

- Baron/Hald-Baron/Barren
- Count/Comte/Viscount
- Dane/Dyn/Wardane
- Duke/Duik/Dyk
- Lord/Overlord/Povitt-Lord

ECONOMY AND MEASUREMENT

In most cases, measurements in Rhun are roughly equivalent to those in our world. Twelve inches equals a foot, three feet equals a yard, and two yards equals a fathom (approximately the height of a full grown man). Rhun also has an intermediary division of measurement, the Enan, which is equal to two feet in length. Most commonly found in Divaros lands, the Enan is also the name for the heavy cudgel carried by law officers, diplomats and judges there. The tool is exactly twenty-four inches in length, weighs six pounds and contains twenty-four notches (one per inch), allowing easy measurement of length as well as weight. The Enan is used in all manner of ways—children who do not measure up to an Enan's proportions (weight equal to ten times height) are considered poor specimens (a notable exception is in choosing Homunculi). And as the tool is also sturdy enough to crack skulls when diplomacy fails, it often serves as a weapon as well.



WEIGHT AND ENCUMBRANCE

The amount of weight a character can carry (in pounds) without difficulty is equal to their Strength score, multiplied by their height (in feet, represented as a decimal notation), multiplied by ten (this number divided by six will give the figure in Enan). The most common heights are indicated in the following table. For simplicity's sake, height can be rounded off to the nearest half-foot before calculation.

Strength	Height (in Feet)							
	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5
1	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
2	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130
3	90	105	120	135	150	165	180	195
4	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260
5	150	175	200	225	250	275	300	325

A character can carry a maximum of twice this amount, after which point he is overburdened and cannot move without setting something down. This includes all weight presently carried, from armor, weapons and other equipment.

This calculation also applies to smaller and larger creatures and constructs, including Rune Stryders and strength-augmented characters.

COINAGE

Although frontier lands have still yet to catch up, within the northwestern Divaros lands minted coin has been circulating with more and more frequency since its official introduction nearly a century ago. Based on traditional methods of payment for mercenaries (see Veile armor), the rectangular steel Divaran coin known as the Vel is the currency most likely to be used as a standard for comparison, even in cultures that have not begun to accept it in exchange for goods and services. The coinage of any particular Vel will bear the stamp of that city's mint. Vel are typically accepted at face value no matter where they are spent in Divaros lands, but outsiders bearing coinage from a distant city are much more likely to be cheated on a deal, their Vel giving them away as outsiders.

The Vel, made of an alloy composed mainly of steel, also contains metals which carry a slight magnetic charge, meaning that the coins can be *stuck together* and stacked into larger ingots, or split into smaller fragments, giving an array of denominations based off the same standard coin:

- A cluster of ten Vel (stacked side by side, forming a bar five inches long) is called an O'Vel.
- A single Vel is a rectangle one-half inch thick by one inch wide by two inches long.
- A half Vel, known as a Ha'Vel, is one inch square. Two Ha'Vel equal one Vel, obviously.
- A quarter Vel is a triangular coin made by slicing a Ha'Vel diagonally. Four Qa'Vel equal one Vel.

The name itself comes from the Veile armor worn by some Divaran mercenaries, which is composed of metal bars similar to the Vel itself. Tradition holds that a mercenary would receive one Vel a week for his service, which he would use to augment his armor. Thus, a warrior's *worth* and *value* could be determined by the current state of his armor, with long-term professional veterans having many Vel. For purposes of comparison, a single Vel will pay for a week's lodging in a sub-par inn or hotel in a typical city, not including any luxuries such as extra security, access to a bath, etc. Additional Vel will pay for a week's worth of rations, or two meals a day for a full week.

Among the Myndwar, the most commonly used and accepted coin is the Slag. A Slag is a brassy-colored rectangular coin of iron, copper, tin, zinc and other trace metals that is approximately twice as long as a Vel, but only half as thick (one-quarter inch thick by one inch wide by four inches long). Literally composed of scrap metal and shavings left over from the forge, it is not widely used except in the largest Myndwar villages, and then only as a convenience when barter negotiations fail. Generally the Slag is used intact, but as with the Vel, it is often split apart with a sharp knife, or even the teeth, to produce smaller denominations of varying size. As it is not minted by any central body, the Slag carries no official seal or stamp.

Northern-dwelling Zokili use a circular coin called the Chi, approximately one inch in diameter and one-quarter inch thick. Though the Chi is coated in steel, the center of the coin is made of wood, making it extremely light for its size. All Chi are minted from the Zokili city of Rikyr, and bear the mark of the Zokili Sheiwin. Chi are distributed to the populace according to need, intended for use as mere tokens for the exchange of food, clothing and other necessities. Because of its relatively low value as raw material, the Chi is not widely accepted outside of Zokili lands, except in those areas directly bordering them.

Inhabitants of other areas (including the Kantarin, the Sivatagi, the Draslander and many frontier peoples dwelling to the south) may or may not accept any or all of the above coins, and in any case do not mint their own coinage.

Due to the erratic and unpredictable political climate, the exchange rate between the coins of different natures can change on a weekly basis. Within the coin's land of origin, one coin will always equal one coin, but when traveling the following chart should be consulted when characters arrive at a new city (or other populated area). Roll one die; the value determined will hold for one week's time, or until the characters leave the city, whichever is sooner.

 For example, I roll one die and get a result of 2. If I am entering a Divaros city, it means that 1 Vel is worth 4 Slag, or 25 Chi. If a result of Ø is shown, that type of coin will not be accepted as currency, due to the political climate, a state of war, etc.

Divaros (Vel)			Myndwar (Slag)		Zokili (Chi)	
Roll	Slag	Chi	CONVERT TO Vel	Chi	Vel	Slag
1	Ø	Ø	Ø	10:1	Ø	1:10
2-3	4:1	25:1	1:4	15:1	1:25	1:15
4	Ø	20:1	Ø	Ø	1:20	Ø
5-6	3:1	15:1	1:3	10:1	1:15	1:10
7	12:1	Ø	1:2	Ø	Ø	Ø
8-9	1:1	10:1	1:1	15:1	11:10	1:15
10	1:2	5:1	2:1	5:1	1:5	1:5

BARTER

At some point, characters will ultimately be forced to haggle, barter and trade their way to what they want, oftentimes by exchanging services for goods, or goods for services rendered. Outside of large cities, the economy of Rhun is still mostly based on trade and barter, rather than the exchange of coin, and as such the science of precise measurement is tied inextricably to things of value, including entertainment and information. It is not uncommon to trade a bag of salt for a sword, or a story for a night's stay in a hotel.

However, it is difficult to put specific values on items. What might be of importance to one individual or community could very well be totally worthless to another, and across most of the land, the Divaran Vel is not yet widely accepted as a standard currency. Thus, in order to provide a baseline for trade, the following list gives some indication of what items and services might be of value to a member of a given community. This is only a guide; ultimate discretion is given to the gamemaster.

Divaros

Average

Goods: Fruits and other foodstuffs; weapons or armor in good condition; furs and animal skins, tanned or untanned; herbs, fresh or dried; small animals; raw ore.

Services: Entertainment (song, poetry); manual labor (cleaning, farm work, etc.).

Wealthy

Goods: Rune-inscribed items; rare hardwoods not available locally; exotic animals and plants (live); captive Draslander (alive or dead).

Services: Information about Myndwar or Zokili technology; military service/law-enforcement.

Draslander

Average

Goods: Preserved meats and foodstuffs; bread; small animals, dead or alive; weapons or armor in any condition; animal skins, tanned; any bits of workable metal or hardwood; pieces of Stryders.

Services: Manual labor (lifting heavy items); assisting in the recovery or reconstruction of Stryders.

Wealthy

None—all Draslander are considered Average, as none possess wealth.

Kantarin

Average

Goods: Bread, sweets; metal or stone weapons or armor; raw ore.

Services: Entertainment (song); information about the surrounding terrain; rare herbs, fresh or dried; information about nearby Divaros military movements.

Wealthy

Goods: Rune-inscribed items; exotic animals and plants (live)

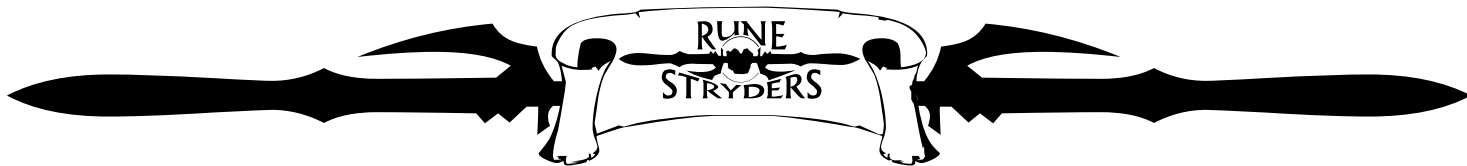
Services: information about the political climate in the Confederated Nations.

Myndwar

Average

Goods: Foreign fruits and vegetables; weapons or armor in excellent condition; furs and animal skins, tanned or untanned; small animals; raw ore.

Services: Entertainment (tales of adventure); manual labor (mining, construction); military service; Information about nearby terrain.



Wealthy

Goods: Rune-inscribed items; wooden items such as furniture.

Services: Military service; manual labor (mining).

Sivatagi

Average

Goods: Fruits, vegetables and other foodstuffs, especially sweets; water (inland only); metal weapons or armor; large quantities of rare stone; animal skins, tanned; herbs, fresh or dried; small animals.

Services: None — Most Sivatagi believe it would be a sign of weakness to have others do work for you.

Wealthy

Goods: Rune-inscribed items; wood of any sort, particularly in large quantities; exotic fabrics, particularly of bright colors.

Services: Information about Divaros, Myndwar or Zokili military movements; information about trade routes, caravan schedules, etc.

Zokili

Average

Goods: Fruits and other foodstuffs not available locally, especially bread and other grains and sweets; weapons or armor in excellent condition; exotic clothing or fabrics.

Services: Entertainment (song, poetry); manual labor (cleaning, farm work, construction, etc.); military service (assassination, sabotage).

Wealthy

None—all Zokili are considered Average, as none possess wealth (at least not publically).

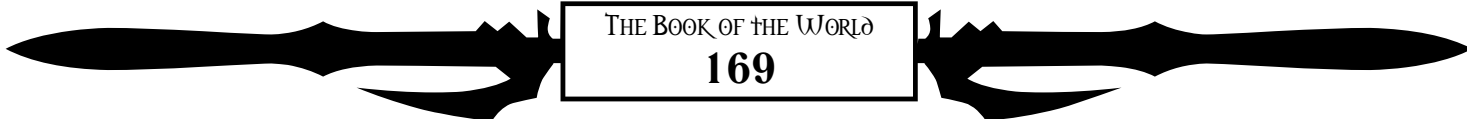
WEAPONS

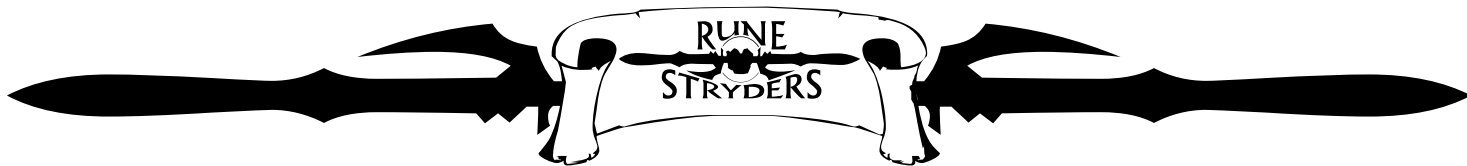
All weapons come with a whetstone and a sheath and/or harness, as appropriate and applicable, and all missile weapons include twenty-four missiles of an appropriate type, and a quiver or pouch to hold them.

Weapons in Rhun have not followed the same evolutionary path as in a typical medieval setting. For one, the inhabitants of Rhun have not gone through a lengthy *Stone Age*, *Bronze Age*, and so on; with hands-on help from their gods, they quickly evolved through primitive weapons such as the axe, spear and club and into new and exciting ways of killing one another. Secondly, since they have not experienced a *Dark Age* or

Renaissance as such, some weapons traditionally associated with the medieval era have not appeared. Thirdly, the lack of horses or other steeds (with some few exceptions) has led to a general lack of development of the sorts of weapons used in mounted combat (and to defend against it). War on Rhun is a brutal, straight-to-the point business, and the weapons used in battle are simple and effective.

Nevertheless, gamers will probably be familiar with the terms used to describe medieval weapons, and so those terms are provided below, where applicable, in parentheses following the Rhun weapon class they most closely fall into.





Axe Class: Strength

Axe

A wedge-shaped blade connected to a stout wooden shaft, sometimes paired with a second blade of equal or lesser size opposite. Shorter than a spear, it is designed for more close-quarters fighting, and is most often between two and three feet in overall length. The wedge shape puts great power behind the swing, allowing it to cleave armor and bone alike.

Long Axe

Essentially an axe blade at the end of a longer shaft, typically six to ten feet in length, used to hack at enemies from a distance. Contrary to what one might think, the blades on such axes tend to be smaller, allowing them to better pierce through armor. The primary blade is often backed up with numerous spikes and knobs, and the opposite end of the shaft often contains a heavy counterweight. (*Glaive, Halberd, Poleaxe, Voulge*)

Throwing Axe

A short, light, relatively small-bladed axe designed for hurling, but relatively useless as a melee weapon due to its impracticality in parrying attacks. Mostly ineffective against an enemy aware of the attacker's presence, best used against an unaware or distracted opponent. (*Francisca*)

War Axe

Generally about four feet in length, distinguished by the fact that the single blade of the weapon typically occupies a full third of the weapon's overall length, giving it a tremendous capacity for damage during close quarters fighting when in the hands of a skilled warrior. (*Bardiche, Lochaber, Sparth*)

Heavy Blade Class: Strength

Back Sword

So called because the blade, generally between two and three feet in length, has only a single, typically straight cutting edge. The back of the blade is somewhat thickened. This imparts greater strength to the weapon as a whole, gives the cutting edge more strength, and allows the wielder to use the blunt (and somewhat softer) edge of the weapon for more effective parries. Designed to be wielded with one hand, the overall length of the weapon is generally between two and a

half and three and a half feet in length. The infamous Zokili Sheiwin is among the swords in this subcategory. (*Falchion, Katana, Reitschwert, Saber*)

Great Sword

A double-edged sword of such great length as to make it impossible to use with a single hand, generally between five and seven feet in length from tip to pommel, with a hilt of a foot or more in length. Though quite capable of cutting and slicing, the great length and weight of such swords means that they are primarily used for piercing and stabbing attacks, defending small areas with spear-like tactics, as opposed to chopping and cleaving. Generally features broad, wide hilts up to a foot across designed to help protect the fingers. (*Claymore, Doplehander, Estoc, Flambard, Two-Handed Sword*)

Sword

The sword is by far the most frequently encountered weapon on any Rhun battlefield, and as such covers a broad array of shapes, designs and sizes. The typical Rhun sword is between four and five feet in length, featuring a long, straight double-edged blade and a simple cross-guard hilt that allows the user to wield the weapon with either one or two hands, as the situation warrants. (*Bastard sword, Hand and a Half sword, Longsword, Spatha*)

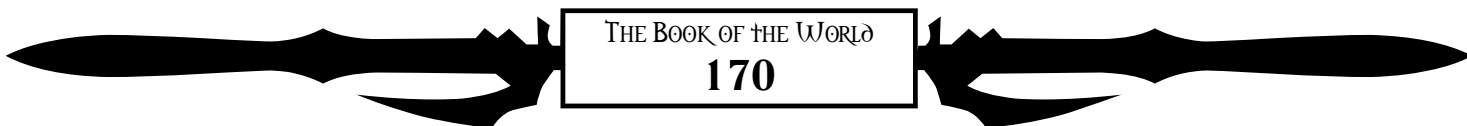
War Sword

Certainly, all swords are used in war, but the War Sword was designed with mass warfare in mind. Generally speaking, a War Sword is a straight-bladed double-edged sword some three to four feet in length with an ornate and protective hilt, consisting of a series of intricate wire loops, that form a basket around the hand. The hilt itself is typically augmented and ornamented with spikes and additional small blades, allowing it to be used to punch and slice at opponents within close range. (*Espadon, Schiavona*)

Mace Class: Strength

Club

Perhaps the simplest of all weapons, consisting of a stout wooden shaft or stick, often (but not always) thickening towards the business end. Varies in length, but typically between one and two feet in length. In a pinch, any stick or stick-like object can be treated as a club. (*Belaying Pin*)



Mace

One step up from a club, at its simplest this is merely a stone or steel head atop a club, added to inflict more damage to an enemy. More often seen are versions that add flanges, studs or spikes to the steel head. Generally between one and three feet in length, on occasion banded with metal down its entire length. (*Morning Star*)

Maul

Essentially a long mace, this heavy-headed weapon consists of a steel ball or block atop a four-to-five foot long shaft, used for crushing stone, or the skulls of enemies. (*Sledgehammer*)

War Club

A mace with a loose steel head (or multiple heads) connected by a hinge, swivel or chain, so that the head can be swung independently of the shaft. The head is often knobbed or spiked, and can consist of anything from a plank of wood with steel bands wrapped around it to several spiked steel balls or rods connected by chains. Generally between three and five feet in overall length. (*Flail*)

Pick Class: Strength

Fork

Like most of the other weapons in this category, the Fork was originally designed as a non-military tool, in this case intended for use in shoveling loose materials around a farm. Two, three or four stiff metal tines up to two feet in length jut forth from a wooden shaft, the overall length of the weapon somewhere between four and five feet. Some versions intended solely for military use lengthen the shaft significantly. (*Pitchfork, Trident*)

Hammer

At its simplest, a hammer is just a metal head on a wooden shaft, designed for pounding nails and fenceposts. Larger hammers, however, can just as easily crack skulls and split armor, and it is these versions of this tool which make up this category. Generally, hammers have a relatively narrow pick-like head, designed more for splitting through armor, though some (much heavier) versions feature a much broader head, of more use against unarmored foes. Overall length is typically between two and four feet long, with broader-headed weapons having shorter shafts.

Pick

Derived from the picks used in mining to dig rocks and gemstones from inside caves, the pick was adapted for military use by the Myndwar. Specifically military picks generally have a longer shaft (up to three or four feet in length) all with a narrow spike-like projection on one side intended to pierce armor and skull alike. (*Crowbill*)

War Pick

This weapon combines the features of the hammer and the pick to create a long-shafted (up to ten feet in length) weapon capable of piercing armor from a great distance, and with great power. The tip of the weapon generally contains at least two pick-like or hammer-like projections, typically opposite from one another, as well as an awl or spike on the top of the weapon to increase its versatility and a counterweight on the other end for balance. (*Bec de Corbin, Bec de Faucon*)

Spear Class: Strength

Spear

A spear is essentially a dagger-shaped blade atop a long pole. Designed primarily for stabbing, thrusting and piercing, some variations with broader, longer blades can also be used for slashing at foes from a safe distance. The generic form of spear here is a weapon between five and ten feet long, topped with a blade between six and twelve inches long and often backed up with a butt spike.

Long Spear

Double the size of a spear, and you have a Long Spear. Typically used in clustered formations to keep an enemy at bay, this weapon is relatively ineffective when used by itself, and can never be thrown. A significant portion of the haft just below the tip is usually shrouded in metal, to prevent the top from being cut off. Of special note in this category is the Sivatagi War Pike, a 20-foot long, broad-bladed weapon used from atop a Sivatagi mount to skewer enemies. (*Awl Pike, Craoseach, Lance, Sarissa*)

Throwing Spear

A long, narrow, barbed steel head connected to a wooden shaft, between four and six feet long overall. Ineffective against an enemy who is aware of the hurler's presence, is best

used in ambush situations from higher ground, or against non-human prey while hunting. The Zokili Boom Spear (named for the sound its hollow tip makes as it flies through the air) falls in this category. (*Angon, Pilum, Javelin*)

War Spear

A long, broad-bladed tip connected to a comparatively short (six to seven feet long) wooden shaft, much of which is banded with metal strips. Designed as more of a melee weapon, the blade often takes up as much as a fourth of the weapon's length, and is typically augmented with an assortment of spikes, hooks and axe-like blades. (*Partisan, Spetum, Ranseur, Trident*)

Bow Class: Agility

Cross Bow

A bow mounted on a thick stock, using mechanical means (winches and cranks) to cock the bow into place. Fires a short arrow called a bolt. Slow compared to other bows, but significantly more powerful over short distances. Can easily pierce thick armor and even wooden structures, splintering bone and piercing organs. While this weapon may be fired with just one action, a full round is required to reload it. (*Arbalest*)

Blowgun

Not properly a bow, as it lacks a string, but included in this broad category because the actual missile involved, and the means of attack, are similar. The blowgun consists of a hollow tube, typically of wood but also potentially of metal, within which a dart (varying in size and shape) is placed. The dart is then expelled towards the target by means of a puff of breath. Incapable of causing great damage, darts are almost always tipped with some form of toxin that causes paralysis, sleep or death in the victim.

Hunting Bow

Generally about half the height of the user, a Hunting Bow is often little more than a flexible stick with a string of vine or sinew tied around each end. Better quality Hunting Bows are available, typically made entirely of wood, but one of the main advantages of this type of bow is that it is easy to piece one together from materials available in nature, and as such it is

popular among the Kantarin and Draslander peoples. As the primary use of such bows is hunting animals for food, it can be relatively ineffective against an armored foe.

War Bow

A powerful bow formed of a composite of wood, bone, horn and sinew, designed for use in combat and skirmish situations against human foes. It is thus much stronger than other bows its size (typically only about two to three feet long) due to its permanent recurve shape and better construction. Rather than being used to hail arrows upon an enemy from a distance, the War Bow is designed for use within skirmish-style combat situations, allowing archers to move quickly about a battlefield offering support fire. It can be fired in confined spaces and is even used from atop mounts by the Sivatagi, many of whom have mastered that art. (*Composite, Compound, Recurve*)

Entanglement Class: Agility

Bolas

From two to four cords, tied together at their centers and fastened to weights (often spiked or hooked) at the ends. The weapon, popular among hunters (and particularly among the Sivatagi) is used by swinging it over the head to gain momentum and then hurling it at the legs of the target (typically a fleeing animal). Rarely capable of killing, it can quickly incapacitate a foe.

Each success on an attack with a Bola reduces the target's Agility by 2, to a minimum of 0. A target with 0 Agility cannot move.

Garrotte

Any cord, wire, rope or other flexible material capable of being formed into a noose, typically about two feet long. The garrotte is a stealth weapon, typically used by sneaking up on an opponent from behind and winding the cord around their throat, then pulling tight enough to choke, suffocate and, in some cases, crush the windpipe. Quite popular among Diplomats and Ambassadors of various countries.

Most garrotte attacks will be uncontested, as the victim will rarely know of the attack. Each success on the attack causes double damage, but if the victim is aware of the attack, the Difficulty of the attack is 15, and the victim is allowed an opposing Dodge or Parry roll as normal.

Net

A tapestry of vine, rope or cord, typically between ten and fifteen feet in diameter, often weighted around the edges. Used in much the same way as Bolas, it is hurled at an enemy with the intent of entangling his limbs in the loose weave of the net, allowing the then-helpless opponent to be more easily dispatched. The addition of small hooks, thorns or shards within the weave itself, however, can easily make the Net itself a potentially deadly weapon in the right hands and circumstances.

Each success on the attack roll reduces a target's Agility by 2. A combatant with an Agility of 0 cannot take actions or defend himself.

Whip

With the general absence of mounts or large beasts of burden in Rhun, the whip instead finds most use in the hands of authority, used for punishing slaves and criminals. Rarely used in warfare due to the fact that it does little damage to an armored foe, it can be deadly when wielded properly. A whip is capable of not only entangling or disarming an enemy, but seriously wounding him if the leather, vine or rope whip has been adorned with shards of metal, thorns or other sharp materials (sometimes laced with poison).

Each success on the attack roll reduces an opponent's Agility by 1 in addition to inflicting damage as normal. The Agility penalty is removed as soon as the attacker recovers the whip.

Light Blade Class: Agility

Dagger

Essentially a knife shaped like a sword, with a straight, double-edged blade (between six to eighteen inches in length) and a hilt fitted with pommel and guard. Designed mostly for stabbing, but also capable of slashing at a foe, albeit within extremely close range. The Zokili Sheitin falls in this category. (*Basilard, Cinqueda, Dirk, Main-gauche, Misericorde, Rondel*)

Knife

Generally describes any small bladed instrument attached to a handle, distinguished from daggers in that a knife generally has only a single cutting edge and tends to be somewhat smaller. Most knives also lack a guard or pommel on their hilt, although there are some exceptions. (*Bowie, Sax*)

Quick Sword

A long (typically around three feet), slender-bladed and double-edged sword, designed for use with a single hand and typically featuring an ornate basket-style hilt to protect the hand from errant thrusts. Though the blade is capable of delivering brutal slashing cuts, most attacks tend to be thrusts and jabs aimed at kinks in armor or particularly vital portions of the anatomy (including the face and chest). The Divaran Rapier falls into this category, distinguished from others of its kind by a wavy-bladed style that offers a slight advantage when parrying an opponent's blade. (*Flamberge, Rapier*)

Short Sword

A shorter and lighter version of a Sword, generally half as long (around two feet in length) but featuring the same double-edged, straight blade, and a hilt with pommel and guard. The line between a Dagger and a Short Sword is a fine one, but generally speaking a Short Sword has a stouter, broader and longer blade designed more for slashing and parrying. (*Arming Sword, Dussack*)

Staff Class: Agility

Enan

Always exactly two feet in length, one inch around and six pounds in weight, the Enan is the tool of the Divaran Judge, used to calculate and measure throughout Divaros. The thick, sturdy tool is also a handy way of dealing out justice when necessary, its polished wooden surface capable of breaking bones in the hands of a trained user. (*Tonfa*)

Staff

A shaft of wood, often as thick around as a man's wrist and between six and nine feet in length. Generally used in combat in one of two ways, either by holding the staff closer to one end and using the other end to poke and strike an opponent (quarter-staffing) or by holding it halfway down its length and using both ends to parry and strike (half-staffing). (*Quarterstaff, Bo*)

Long Staff

As with a staff, though generally at least a third again as large (between nine and twelve feet in length), and always used with the quarter-staffing technique, as it is too cumbersome to use otherwise.

Short Staff

Essentially the same thing as a staff, although typically shorter than its user, averaging between four and six feet in length, and somewhat narrower. *(Jo)*

Stone Class: Agility

Rocks and Stones

Without a doubt, the most basic of all weapons: find a fist-sized stone, pick it up, and throw it at your enemy (especially his head, if you can manage it). However, the same basic skills involved in throwing stones are also used in hurling more advanced weaponry: the Draslander Spell Flingers hurl Rune Stones; the Kantarin toss toxic roots; and the Sivatagi have been known to throw bags full of blinding sand and dust.

Rune Thrower

An advanced weapon, difficult to obtain or use effectively, the Rune Thrower is a development of the Sivatagi nation. A fist-sized disc is engraved with a particular Rune, which is then dropped into a steel cylinder designed to fit it. At the base of the barrel is a second Rune, carved into the barrel itself, the two Runes separated only by a thin layer of flammable wadding. When the wadding is ignited, the two Runes (usually) slide next to one another, forming a Rune Word that (usually) results in an explosion that propels the Rune out of the barrel with enough force to shatter bone, armor or fortress walls.

Sling

Taking stone technology to the next level, the sling places the missile inside a strip of leather or cloth, fastened at both ends with cord. The cords are held tightly as the sling is whirled over the head, and then one cord is released, hurling the missile towards the enemy with great force, flying farther and inflicting more harm. Relatively useless in melee combat, or against an aware and intelligent opponent.

Sling Shot

Similar to the sling, except the two cords are much shorter and more elastic (due to the inclusion of rubberized material from trees found in the Kantarin Rain Forest), and fastened to a forked rod of wood or metal. The pouch is drawn back and released, hurling the missile more or less directly at the target. The Sling Shot has a much shorter range than the Sling, but is capable of being used within melee, as it requires less room to use effectively, and does not require the user to arc the missile.

Class	Weapon	Weight (lbs)	Length (feet)	Cost (Vel)	Avail.
H Axe	Axe	3	2	1	90%
	Long Axe	12	8	2	50%
	Throwing axe	2	1	0.5	75%
	War Axe	12	4	4	45%
H Blade	Back Sword	6	3	5	75%
	Great Sword	15	6	10	50%
	Sword	4	4	4	100%
	War Sword	8	3	5	75%
	Zokili Sheiwin	4	2	-	0%
H Mace	Club	2	2	0	100%
	Mace	3	2	2	75%
	Maul	15	5	3	35%
	War Club	12	4	3	45%
H Pick	Fork	9	5	1	50%
	Hammer	6	3	2	65%
	Pick	6	4	1	45%
	War Pick	12	10	4	35%
H Spear	Spear	6	8	1	60%
	Long Spear	9	16	2	45%
	Sivatagi War Pike	12	20	-	0%
	Throwing Spear	3	5	0.5	35%
	War Spear	19	6	4	25%
	Zokili Boom Spear	3	4	-	0%
L Bow	Cross Bow	9	2	10	25%
	Blowgun	3	2	5	5%
	Hunting Bow	2	4	5	50%
	War Bow	3	3	12	35%
L Entangle	Bolas	2	3	1	10%
	Garrotte	1	2	1	5%
	Net	12	10	5	10%
	Whip	3	15	3	10%
L Blade	Dagger	1	1	1	100%
	Divaran Rapier	2	3	10	25%
	Knife	1	0.5	0.5	90%
	Quick Sword	2	3	4	50%
	Short Sword	3	2	2	90%
	Zokili Sheitin	1	2	-	0%
L Staff	Divaran Enan	6	2	-	0%
	Long Staff	6	12	1	75%
	Short Staff	3	4	1	75%
	Staff	3	8	1	90%
L Stone	Rocks & Stones	1	-	0	100%
	Rune Thrower	15	4	-	0%
	Sling	1	2	1	90%
	Sling Shot	1	1	2	75%

SIEGE WEAPONS

Siege weapons are generally not available on the open market, nor to the sort of small groups that player characters are likely to form. Because they are difficult to construct, move and operate, most are either mounted on Stryders or given permanent placement in critical areas. However, the use of siege engines to assault enemy troops, encampments and walled structures is not unheard of, and as such characters may encounter such devices on either side of the battlefield in the course of a campaign.

Hurler

The generic Rhun name for any large device used to hurl large missiles in an arc through the air. Generally this is accomplished by using tension or a counterweight to hurl a boulder or similar object at a fixed structure. Hurlers have the greatest range of any siege weapon, but they are relatively useless against mobile targets, or anything within a minimum range. (*Catapult, Manganel, Onager, Trebuchet*)

Rune Cannon

The Rune Cannon is a larger, fixed version of the Rune Thrower, and is most often seen in and around the Eastern Desert, almost always as part of the defenses of a Sivatagi fortification. In such cases, they are typically mounted on turrets which allow those operating them to swivel the cannon to aim at any approaching masses of troops or, more commonly, enemy Stryders. Rumor has it that some Rune Stryders have appeared with smaller versions of this device mounted on their bodies.

Siege Bow

Essentially a larger, mounted version of the crossbow, the Siege Bow launches a large bolt at its target in a generally straight path. Aside from the potential for damage, the device can also be used to raise siege ladders or ropes, spread nets over a wide area, or tether a Rune Stryder in place. Creative uses like these are more commonly seen among the Zokili and those dwelling in the southeastern part of the continent. (*Arbalest, Ballista*)

Siege Ram

At its simplest, a siege ram is little more than a large piece of wood. At its most complex, it can be an ornately carved construction of metal, wood or bone. In all cases, the ram itself features a sturdy head that is used to batter down large, typically wooden objects. Most often, the target is a large gate or door, but rams have been used with mixed amounts of success against Stryders as well. The amount of damage a ram can do (i.e., its Strength) is based on the number of people using it, and is determined by adding their Strength scores together (e.g., four users with Strengths of 2, 3, 4 and 5 gives the ram a Strength of 14). Most rams have straps and fastenings enough for use by four to ten people. The minimum Strength required to use any given ram is half the maximum number of users.



Class	Weapon	Weight (lbs)	Length (Feet)	Cost (Vel)	Avail.
Siege	Hurler	300	24	-	0%
	Rune Cannon	600	20	-	0%
	Siege Bow	240	12	40	0%
	Siege Ram	120	10	-	0%

ARMOR

Armor in Rhun varies quite a lot from place to place, each region of the world developing and customizing variations on the same three basic themes. Base is armor composed of leather or fabric, Mail is armor composed of links or scales of a rigid material, and Plate is large pieces of rigid material. Some varieties are heavier than others, and some offer more protection, and the two qualities are not necessarily correlated. In general, though, the following holds true for all types of armor:

- All types listed here imply some form of head protection is being worn. Not wearing such additional protection opens the wearer up to additional damage. A targeted attack that strikes the head ignores all armor in such a case.
- Wherever *metal* is mentioned, one may substitute wood, bone or any other material that could conceivably be made into armor. Likewise, where a specific metal or material is mentioned, one might easily substitute another. Iron, steel, brass, bronze and other materials such as bone or wooden rings are used somewhat interchangeably across the land, just as an undergarment of leather might easily be made of canvas or cotton.
- Armor does not interfere in any way with the vocalization of Runes. However, it is impossible to trace or inscribe Runes while wearing armored gloves or gauntlets. All Mail and Plate armor assumes that one is wearing gloves composed of a similar armor, and these must be removed (1 round action) before inscribing can take place. Shields and weapons may be held provided at least one hand remains free.
- In general, it takes a full minute to put on or remove a piece of Base armor, two minutes for Mail, and four minutes for Plate. With the assistance of a squire or compatriot, the time can be cut in half. In general, though, anyone caught without armor when battle ensues is likely to miss the entirety of the action, as the skirmish style battles that are fought in Rhun do not take very long.

- The dimensions given for various pieces of armor below assume Divaros proportions. These can and should be sized down appropriately for Myndwar, Zokili and Draslander, although Sivatagi and Kantarin are close enough in size that the same figures can be used for them as well.



Base Armor

Headwear

Quilted or leather caps and hoods are typically worn in various combinations with the armors listed in this category, as appropriate and dependent on the weather. Flaps may offer some protection to the ears and neck, but the face is almost always completely exposed, and in any case such features offer little protection against heavy bludgeons or missile attacks.

Boilerplate

Armor constructed primarily of leather, chemically tanned and then boiled in water or oil to stiffen it. The torso, shoulders and upper arms are more heavily protected, with softer, more flexible leather and other fabric protecting the groin and upper legs with skirting or kilting. So named because the most common variety of this armor, used by the Divaros, is often shaped and dyed so as to resemble metal plates. Weighs around ten to fifteen pounds. (*Cuirbouilli, Leather*)

Buff Coat

Unlike other leather armors, the buff coat is composed of supple, flexible leather, relying on the strength of the tanned leather itself to provide protection. The armor covers, at a minimum, the torso and upper arms, with some varieties (particularly in northern climes) featuring longer sleeves that protect the lower arms, as well as skirting or flaps to protect the legs as well. Shorter varieties are often used during Divaran fencing bouts. Weighs three to five pounds.

Jack

A thick quilted short coat (i.e., *jacket*) of linen or canvas, stuffed with cotton and other material to cushion blows to the torso and upper arms. The lower arms and legs are typically bare, although skirting or kilting of leather or thick woolen fabric is typically worn along with it to protect the groin and upper thighs. Weighs ten to twelve pounds. (*Aketon, Gambeson, Padded, Quilted*)

Rawhide

Most often found in more rural areas, this is literally leather hide that has been naturally tanned over a period of months through exposure to the elements. The final product of this

process is a stiff white leather that can be shaped into armor only through great effort, with tufts of hair sometimes left in place for decorative effect. The Kantarin people color their Rawhide armor with vegetable dyes to match the foliage around them, making it more difficult to spot them in their natural terrain. Weighs fifteen to twenty pounds. (*Hide*)

Mail Armor

Headwear

Mail head protection consists of some combination of a loose metal chain hood (coif), worn underneath or attached to a helm or kettle hat of bronze or steel. These are almost always open-faced, many worn above the ears, thus offering protection without hampering vision or hearing. (*Bascinet, Coif*)

Chain. Rings of metal, typically iron, steel or bronze, formed by wrapping wire around a steel rod or punching rings from metal plate and then riveting the loose ends. Quite flexible, the armor is capable of turning aside most slashing and stabbing attacks, with a thick base of padding beneath to offer some cushioning against blunt force trauma. While somewhat costly to manufacture, it wears well and is easily repaired and maintained. Chain armor varies in length and coverage, with weight varying between fifteen and twenty-five pounds, based on material, number of links, and the density of the weave.

Coat. The chain coat is composed of twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand rings, and covers the entire torso. Chain sleeves cover the arms down to the wrists (with some coats having chain mittens that cover the hands as well), and long skirting (split at the sides) covers the legs down to mid-shin. The chain coat is typically belted with leather at the waist to take some of the weight off the shoulders, and worn properly it offers decent mobility. Layers of chain *doubling* often covers the upper torso to add extra protection and, unfortunately, extra weight. (*Hauberk*)

Jacket

The chain jacket consists of ten thousand to twelve thousand rings, covering primarily the torso, groin and upper arms, with the weight carried on the shoulders. The weave tapers off at points just above the elbows and mid-thighs, giving good range of motion while still protecting critical areas. Occasionally plates are added at shins, forearms, elbows

and knees, with additional layers of chain *doubling* at the shoulders, and a kilt of leather and chain at the groin, to provide additional defense against missile attacks. (*Byrnie, Lorica Hamata*)

Scale

Thin discs or *teardrops* of iron, steel or bronze, attached by wire or riveted to one another before being sewn onto a base of canvas or leather. The net result is a thin, fairly light and somewhat flexible suit of scales that will turn aside many slashes and offers good protection against many missile attacks. The armor focuses on protecting the torso, groin and upper arms, with the lower arms and legs left bare (aside from, perhaps, some leather or plate padding in key areas) to allow adequate mobility. Since most suits of scale mail overlap the scales downwards, errant thrusts occasionally find their way up into the armor. A better (and more often seen) solution is to overlap the scales upwards, which makes the armor somewhat more uncomfortable but enhances its protectiveness. Scale is less protective than chain, but is easier to manufacture, and thus cheaper. Weighs around twenty pounds. (*Lorica Squamata*)

Ring Armor

Though technically not mail (which is defined by its loose weave of interconnected metal pieces), ring armor is included in this category as it is essentially constructed of the same basic elements, being a series of small steel rings sewn to a backing of leather or canvas. Often supplemented with a leather kilt sewn with rings, and shoulder epaulets of hardened leather. Less protective than true mail, it is more flexible and somewhat lighter, and quite a bit easier to construct, maintain and repair, thus making it more readily available in most areas, even as it is shunned by many wealthier professional mercenaries as sub-par. Weighs around ten to fifteen pounds.

Veile

Developed and worn almost exclusively by Divaran mercenary forces, this is a variant on scale mail, replacing the thinner, teardrop-shaped scales with three hundred to five hundred bars of iron or steel, which are riveted or tied together vertically with wire and attached to a soft leather or canvas base. Though really a form of transitional plate, Veile is

still quite mail-like in that it is composed of smaller pieces of metal, and as a whole is thus still somewhat flexible. The coat typically covers the entire torso from neck to thigh, with somewhat lighter protection for the upper arms. Somewhat heavier than other types of mail, it makes up for the weight with enhanced protection, significantly reduced manufacturing time, and easier maintenance and repair. The Divaran unit of currency, the Vel, is based upon a standard bar from one of these suits (although in actual practice, the bars on the armor vary in size and shape). Weighs twenty-five to thirty pounds. (*Bronya, Kalantar*)

Plate Armor

Headwear

Head protection in this category consists of a helm covering the entire head. Facial protection varies, but generally consists of added protection for the cheek and nose, with some helmets enclosing the face completely behind narrow slots and/or hinged visors. Chain coifs are often worn beneath some larger helms to offer additional neck protection. Vision and hearing are somewhat hampered with all such helms. A character wearing such headwear loses 2 points of Perception.

Banded Mail

Consists of overlapping bands of layered metal sewn onto a base of mail and soft leather. The armor protects the torso and upper arms, with leather or chain kilting and arm protection covering the rest of the arms and upper legs. The bands almost always run horizontally; older, inferior versions of this armor (no longer made, but possibly around in some areas) have the bands (or splints) running vertically. The bands and plates of metal on the armor offer good protection against slashing and bludgeoning attacks. However, due to the fact that there are small gaps in the armor between the bands, spears and missile weapons may find their way into vulnerable areas. The armor is also somewhat cumbersome and restricts movement. Weighs thirty to thirty-five pounds. (*Banded Mail, Splint Mail*)

Brigandine

So named because of its popularity among outlaws, pirates and thieves (i.e., brigands), this is the lightest and cheapest of the common plate armors. At a glance, it often appears to be merely leather armor filled with studs or rivets. This is because metal plates (either round or rectangular) are riveted to the

inside of the leather or canvas, sandwiched between a second layer of leather, and thus hiding the fact that the armor's primary protective qualities come from plates. The armor covers the torso and upper arms, with chain or leather extensions to cover the lower arms and upper legs to the knees. The plates within are small enough to allow good range of movement, yet strong enough to offer good protection from most types of attacks. Weighs fifteen to twenty pounds. (*Brigantine, Coat of Plates*)

Lamellar

Overlapping rectangular plates of sheet metal (known as *lames*), fitted to follow the contours of the torso, laced together with wire or leather straps and buckles, and commonly worn over an undergarment of soft leather or chain. The armor generally consists of between 40 and 50 such plates, differing in size depending on what part of the torso they cover. Additional protection is added at the neck and shoulders, with a long skirt or kilt of chain or leather to cover the upper legs. Because of the way it is articulated, such armor offers good range of motion and flexibility, the upwardly-overlapping plates moving with the body, yet offering excellent resistance to slashes, thrusts, missile weapons and bludgeoning attacks. Relatively inexpensive to manufacture, easy to maintain and comparatively lightweight, it is favored by many mercenaries. Weighs ten to fifteen pounds. (*Lorica Segmentata*)

Plated Mail

Large sheets of metal, shaped to fit the body of the wearer, are attached to a lattice of chain mail and leather with straps and wire, thus forming a thick carapace of between one and four plates of solid metal around the torso. With fewer gaps between plates, the armor thus offers significantly increased protection, turning aside most slashes and thrusts, and even stopping many bolts and arrows. Additional plates are added to the mail below on the lower arms, about the neck, and on the lower legs, with chain mail filling in the gaps. Thicker plates are used in some areas to afford additional protection from the ever-advancing technology of the crossbow, but in general mobility on the battlefield is more important than encasing oneself in a shell of metal, and so a good balance between protection and movement is usually struck. However,

as the plates must be custom fit to a specific user, this armor is quite expensive and takes a long time to manufacture. Weighs twenty-five to thirty pounds. (*Breastplate, Plate Armor, Field Plate*)

Shields

Skirmish Shield

A light shield preferred by troops in the field for its good balance of maneuverability and protection. Generally between two and three feet in length at its widest point, it takes a variety of shapes, and is made from a variety of materials, depending on the particular part of the world it is used in. Among the Divaros, the *Skirm*, as it is affectionately known, is shaped like a small Tear Shield, with a peaked top and a narrowing, oblong shape, but among the Zokili and Myndwar, a smaller, rounder shield (often of steel) is favored. The shield itself is typically made of wood, with leather or metal covering the edge and/or front surface. Some mercenary companies display their insignia on the front of their shield, others augmenting it with spikes or a mirrored shine to give them an advantage in battle. (*Heater, Pelte, Rondella*)

Target Shield

The lightest of the major shield variations, the Target is so-named because in the course of actual use the wearer must usually actively seek out the weapon of his opponent. Typically only about one-foot in diameter, and generally round, the shield is almost always made of metal-edged wood. The surface is often augmented with bars and hooks to catch an enemy's weapons, the edges and center occasionally spiked or bladed, turning the small shield into an effective off-hand weapon. As it is so small, it is generally not seen on the field of battle, confined mostly to urban battles and duels. (*Buckler, Rondash, Targe*)

Tear Shield

A large, generally teardrop shaped shield (hence the name) averaging over four feet in length, constructed of wood, covered with leather or hide and reinforced with metal strips and plates to augment its strength. It is carried with the point down, giving more protection to the upper body. Somewhat awkward to use in close quarters, it is more commonly seen by those using spears or other pole weapons, allowing the user to

maintain a defensive distance while harassing an enemy. The shield can be spiked and mirrored like others, but cannot be effectively used as a weapon, due to its size. (*Kite, Norman, Thureos*)

War Shield

This massive shield, constructed in a fashion similar to that of a Tear Shield, is more of a movable wall, used by archers and siege crew to advance on a target relatively unscathed. The smallest of the type generally covers the entire body from neck to ankle, allowing the wielder to crouch behind it. Larger varieties can conceal the wielder behind the shield entirely. Due to its bulk, it is rarely used in actual skirmish combat, typically abandoned if the going gets rough. (*Argive, Pavise, Scutum, Tower, Wall*)

Class	Armor	Weight (lbs)	Cost (Vel)	Avail.
Base	Boilerplate	15	5	50%
	Buff Coat	5	3	75%
	Jack	10	1	90%
	Rawhide	20	2	25%
Mail	Chain, Coat	25	25	50%
	Chain, Jacket	15	20	75%
	Scale	20	15	75%
	Ring Armor	15	10	90%
	Veile	30	100	25%
Plate	Banded Mail	35	90	75%
	Brigandine	20	35	75%
	Lamellar	15	50	50%
	Plated Mail	30	150	25%
Shield	Skirmish Shield	10	2	75%
	Target Shield	5	1	25%
	Tear Shield	15	5	50%
	War Shield	20	10	5%



EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

Certainly, it would be impossible to compile a list of every single item and service a character might need during the course of a campaign, and nearly as difficult to try and surmise the situations a character might get into during that period of time. However, characters generally need a fairly small variety of items to get by, and those items most likely needed are presented here. Items not seen here may still be available, taking into account the local economy, the region of the world in which the character is presently, etc.

CLOTHING

Confederated Nations

The average person has between one and three changes of clothing at any given time. Poorer citizens are usually confined to the clothes on their backs, while wealthier citizens have different clothing for each day of the week, and special outfits for specific events. The general outfit across the continent consists of a shirt or tunic, covering the torso and upper arms, and either pants, kilt or skirt, as warranted by climate and local custom. Most utilitarian clothing is unisexual, with both men and women dressing in similar garb. Those who pursue careers that involve a great deal of physical labor typically



outfit themselves in coarser, sturdier fabrics, while those who have a more sedentary lifestyle wear lighter, looser clothing. Just about every color and style can be found somewhere on the continent, those living further north tending towards heavier, warmer, more drab colors, and those to the south favoring lighter, more colorful fabrics.

Outcast Nations

Sivatagi attire is similar to that of other races, with the exception of their preference for large, voluminous robes of a neutral, sandy color (the better to protect them from the desert climate). The Kantarin wear little clothing, as their Rain Forest home offers a climate suited to scant clothing. Kantarin men and women alike typically restrict themselves to wearing simple strips of fabric to protect and bind sensitive areas, along with whatever armor may be necessary for their current situation. Draslander rarely wear clothing at all, although their long hair, patches of fur and mottled skin covered with moss and mold of various sorts can offer just as much coverage and protection. Draslander who venture out of their homeland for some reason are often outfitted in simple breechcloths.

Outfitting oneself in basic subsistence-level clothing can be done for free, but such clothing will be uncomfortable and impermanent (hides will tend to rot, etc.), and those dressed in such a fashion will be treated as outsiders within civilized areas.

A complete set of normal clothing (shirt/tunic/dress, pants/kilt/skirt, undergarments, stockings and simple footwear) has a cost of approximately 1 Vel. Such clothing is fabric-based, made of canvas, cotton, wool and similar fabrics, and is typical of that worn by the average citizen. Outerwear to protect the wearer from cold, rain and other elements (cloaks, coats, etc.) has a value of an additional 1 Vel.

Richer clothing made of pricier fabrics, cut in more impressive styles, or designed for special events typically attended by the *upper crust* of society, costs approximately 10-20 Vel for an outfit, or more. Such clothing will generally not survive the rigors of life on the road.

FOOD AND DRINK

Confederated Nations

Edibles in the Confederacy are generally divided into four groups: grain, meat, produce and spice. Grains include bread (typically rye and wheat, of varying colors and often seasoned with seeds, honey and nuts, which are also included in this group), oatmeal and gruel, and any other product made from grain flours, including various cakes and pies. Fermented, grains are used to produce beer and ale, staples of the Divaros diet in particular. While cattle, horses and other large domesticated animals are non-existent, meat is still prevalent in the diet. Sheep, pigs, lodo and other smaller animals (fish, rabbits, ducks, etc.) provide mutton, pork, milk and other meat products, most of which (including milk) are heated before eating, or salted away for later use. Fermented milk (in the form of a thin sour cream beverage) is also enjoyed in some parts of the north. Fruits and vegetables alike (i.e., produce) are typically cooked as part of a meal, or eaten raw by themselves. Most prevalent are turnips, potatoes, and other root vegetables, an assortment of leafy vegetables like cabbage and lettuce, fruits from trees and berries, all treated similarly in regards to preparation. Apples and pears are popular in the north, while the south provides wine from fermented grapes and citrus fruits, salted to survive shipping to the north. Spices are added to all of the above, with the main difference between the cuisines of various parts of the world being which spices are used. Most prevalent are salt and salt-like minerals (gleaned from inland streambeds, rich in minerals), various forms of pepper, garlic and onions (treated as spices, and never eaten by themselves).

Outcast Nations

The diet of other peoples is similar to that of the Confederacy, with some regional peculiarities worth noting. The Sivtagi use wheat and other grains much less extensively, supplementing that part of their diet with mushrooms and other fungi, nuts and a grainy breadfruit-type cactus found in the desert. They also eat much less meat, instead getting much of their protein via a slightly fermented drink of milk and blood, taken from the bodies of goats kept alive for this

purpose. Produce is particularly sought after in the desert, and Sivatagi will trade for such items whenever possible. The Kantarin diet is much the same as that of the Divaros, save for the fact that much of their food is eaten raw, including meats from jungle animals and fish. Draslander share this habit of eating their food raw, although they do it with a bit less discretion, eating everything from rats to bugs, mushrooms to mold.

Subsistence-level nutrition can be achieved easily in most parts of the world at no cost whatsoever, merely by grazing, fishing and hunting. However, unless several individuals are cooperating, fully half the day may be spent merely looking for food.

Normal quantities of food and drink, sufficient to keep an individual healthy and whole, cost approximately 1 Vel per week. This represents two meals per day (at dawn and dusk), the tradition in Divaros lands, and includes meat, grain and produce at each sitting. This same amount also represents a week's worth of hardtack, dried fruit and other preserved foods, as well as a skin of water, for a mercenary on the go.

Wealthier individuals who can afford to do so eat more, and more often. Meals of this type also include delicacies not found in the local area, such as candied fruits shipped north from the southern part of the continent. A single meal of this sort can cost from 1 to 5 Vel, or more.

FIELD GEAR

Confederated Nations

The types and quantities of equipment that individuals carry into the field on military expeditions away from populated areas vary from area to area, but generally consist of items that make life a little easier. Blankets of wool or cloth, hammocks and tents, torches and oil lanterns are fairly standard, and any mercenary group will generally want to have enough of these items to keep the entire group somewhat comfortable throughout the night.

Outcast Nations

The Kantarin and Draslander tend to operate on a subsistence level, taking what they need from the land, and as

such they tend not to concern themselves with extra gear unless absolutely necessary. The Sivatagi, on the other hand, operate at the other end of the spectrum, preferring to carry as much as they can with them in their journeys across the desert sands.

Light sources are among the items most needed on those nights when the moons are not out (as there are no stars in the sky to provide light), which is about half the time. Cheap (albeit dim and uneven) light can be had by creating torches from tinder, old rags and stout branches. A lantern of metal, complete with oil enough for a week's worth of burning, as well as flint and steel, can be had for 1 Vel. On the expensive side, 24-hour candles made from beeswax (often scented with perfume) can be had for 1 Vel each. These will blow out in anything greater than a gentle breeze.

Sleeping materials are of arguable necessity; in many parts of the world, a dry patch of grass or a stout tree limb is enough to get one by. A pair of warm blankets and a small two-person tent can be had for a single Vel, and serves most mercenary companies quite well. Expensive and comfortable rope and canvas hammocks cost 1 Vel each, and larger tents capable of housing more individuals cost 2 Vel per person, up to a maximum of twenty people (40 Vel).

Cooking gear is commonly found in the camps of Divaros and Zokili soldiers, less often among others. Many get by without it, subsisting on hardtack and other dry rations that do not require heating. For those that choose to cook hot meals, a large cooking pot, metal bowls and utensils enough for five people can be had for 5 Vel. A more extensive set of cooking gear, which includes several pots and pans, metal dishes, drinking cups, costs 10 Vel plus 1 Vel per person to be served.

Fishing and hunting equipment is often carried along on expeditions that will take a party away from civilization for an extended period of time. Basic hunting and gathering, of course, requires no additional equipment, but the addition of some simple snares, fishing line and fishing hooks (costing 2 Vel) will make it much easier to feed the troops. Large nets, suitable for larger snares and for fishing, cost 5 Vel each.

Arrows, bolts and darts for bows and blowguns cost 1 Vel for twenty-four missiles. Such items can also be scrounged from

the surrounding environment, but it takes an entire day to fashion just six such missiles, and these will add a +5 Difficulty modifier to any attack unless the user has skill in making such weapons.

Climbing gear is essential for campaigns heading into uneven terrain (or over the wall of a private residence). With access to strong vines, one can fashion a crude but passable rope for free. Purchasing a stout hemp rope is much easier, and costs 1 Vel per fifty feet. The same amount of silk rope, which is much lighter and more flexible, can be had for 5 Vel in the southern part of the continent, where it is made, or 10 Vel anywhere else. A steel grappling hook can be added to the package for 1 additional Vel.

Containers are handy for transporting goods from one place to another. Since there are no large pack animals or horses, the carting of goods is generally relegated to small lodo-drawn carts. Such carts cannot be very large, as four lodos are required to pull a cart big enough for carrying just one person. Therefore, carting goods is also often done on a character's back. Creating a container from nature is a lengthy process and generally not worth doing. It is much easier to purchase a sack or backpack of leather or canvas for 1 Vel. Larger crates and casks of wicker or wood vary in size, and can be had at a cost of 1 Vel per one-hundred pounds of goods to be carried within. Cages for transporting livestock or captured animals cost 2 Vel per foot diameter. Bottles, vials and flasks of glass are generally 5 Vel each.

JEWELRY

Confederated Nations

Gemstones and precious metals are quite rare on Rhun, as the planet is not old enough to support such items naturally. The gods who created the planet have strewn playthings and baubles across and beneath the surface, however, and these gems and veins of precious metal are very highly valued, especially among the Divarans. Jewelry made from these priceless items is very rare and extraordinarily valuable.

Art objects made of steel, bronze and brass are more common, their intrinsic value coming not from the material from which they are formed, but from the skill with which they are crafted. In addition, some small *gems*, consisting of oddly

colored stones, as well as coral and pearls from the ocean, accent some items, making them slightly more sought after.

Outcast Nations

Outside of the Confederacy, body decoration is much more important than jewelry, and so tattooing, dying of skin and braiding of hair into intricate patterns is more often seen than the simple wearing of a ring or a necklace. There are some exceptions, however. Items found in nature, such as ivory (which comes from the tusks of several large animals) may be worn as trophies, and objects of aesthetic value may very well be carried due to a practical function they also have, such as an ornamental bronze dagger inlaid with pearl.

Cheap jewelry includes things such as steel, brass or bronze earrings, simple copper rings, brass closures, clasps and buckles for cloaks and belts. Such items generally cost between 5 and 15 Vel.

Average jewelry consists of larger and more intricate pieces, requiring more effort to put together: chain necklaces of small bronze links, circlets and tiaras, etc. Cost is between 20 and 50 Vel.

Expensive jewelry includes minerals and materials that are extremely difficult to find. Examples might include pearl earrings, a ring composed of steel and pink coral, or an ivory headband. The value of such items is almost always 100 Vel or more.

Priceless jewelry is made of gems and precious metals, the playthings of the gods, and will cost at least 1000 Vel and as much as 10,000, assuming the current owner is willing to part with it.

SPECIALIZED TOOLS

Certain skills require additional tools to perform effectively. These are listed here, broken up according to the most appropriate skill for those tools. This is not to say that these items are otherwise useless; only that characters are most likely to need them to perform skilled actions.

Juggling can be performed without special equipment, but for 1 Vel a character can acquire a set of balanced juggling balls and/or blunted knives. 5 Vel will also get the character a set of

small steel torches that can be ignited repeatedly as well as a set of small steel hoops.

Steeplejacking, the skill that involves clambering among the towers and spires of tall city buildings, is often done without benefit of ropes or nets. For 20 Vel, a character can purchase a safety harness, one-hundred feet of silk rope and a fifty-foot wide safety net that will make the process safer.

Art requires little save creativity, but for those who truly wish to produce a masterpiece of one sort or another, 15 Vel will get them a complete set of brushes, pencils, inks, pigments, etc.

Disguise can be achieved through the application of completely free materials, such as various clays, muds and, of course, stolen clothing, but the purchase of a disguise kit for 25 Vel will give the character access to an assortment of makeup, wigs and false noses.

Music can be performed a cappella, without accompaniment from instruments and without additional cost. An average quality instrument can be had for 25 Vel. A top-notch instrument of fine quality will cost 100 Vel, and will give the character a -3 Difficulty check on Music rolls.

Navigation can be performed with no special equipment, but the addition of a spyglass (to magnify distant areas twofold) for 50 Vel might aid in spotting distant landmarks. Those navigating by sea might wish to purchase a detailed book of maps for 100 Vel.

Trading and **Appraising** can both benefit from the purchase of an accurate set of scales and weights, costing 75 Vel. Trading, of course, is more about the ability to haggle, but knowing what an object is really worth can be of great benefit during negotiations.

Runelore requires writing or engraving implements if a character wishes to scribe Runes. A set of chalks and charcoals costs 1 Vel. Ink and a Quill pen will cost 10 Vel. Hard steel tools suitable for engraving wood, metal or bone cost 50 Vel.

Forgery requires no special tool but for writing implements (10 Vel) if one is going to forge someone's handwriting or an official document. Forging an official seal, or counterfeiting a specific type of coin, costs 100 Vel to produce a duplicate mold.

Gambling can be done without special equipment, even if one wishes to have an edge by counting or nicking cards. However, the purchase of a deck of cards (regular, 1 Ha'Vel; marked, 3 Vel) or a set of dice (regular, 1 Qa'Vel; loaded, 2 Vel) will give an extra edge.

Locksmithing tools can occasionally be cobbled together from spare wire and metal shavings, but a good set of Lockpicks (50 Vel) will ease things greatly. Without such lockpicks, the Difficulty check for any Lockpicking attempt suffers a +3 penalty.

Trapwork can be practiced with nothing more than access to spare bits of rope, twine and such, but spending 25 Vel for an assortment of springs, snare triggers and the like will make the trap creation process much easier.

Archaeologists, **Historians**, **Lawkeepers** and **Politicians** may find it helpful to purchase access to a library of historical and legal documents (10 Vel/month, 50 Vel/year) in a major city to facilitate them in their work.

Architects can perform most of their duties without additional tools, but purchasing a set of accurate measuring sticks (5 Vel) and writing utensils (10 Vel) will ease the process.

Carpenters could theoretically beg, borrow and steal their tools, but they will find it much easier to perform their duties with tools of their own. A complete set of workable hammers, chisels, saws, and other woodworking tools (unsuitable for use as weapons) is worth 25 Vel.

Cooks will find that in addition to possibly purchasing a set of pots, pans and utensils (20 Vel), the purchase of an assortment of rare spices and flavorings (50 Vel) will be worth the purchase (giving the character a -3 Difficulty on cooking checks).

Farming obviously requires a great deal of time, not to mention property and the resources to start things off. Seed and fertilizer for the first year of a single crop's life costs 50 Vel. A single animal (pig, goat, etc.) costs 5 Vel. An acre of farmland costs 100 Vel, unless the farmer chooses to squat on unclaimed territory, which is cheaper, but also riskier.

Healers can scrounge around for what they need to assist the healing process. However, a set of herbs and ointments (of which only about half will have any real effect) can be had for

50 Vel, and will contain enough material to treat one person for a year, or ten people for a month.

Hunters obviously require materials with which to hunt. In addition to appropriate gear, as listed above under *Field Gear*, appropriate tools for skinning, cleaning and tanning animal skins will come in handy, and can be had for 35 Vel. A trained hunting dog can be purchased for 20 Vel.

Miners will find that having access to light sources (see *Field Gear* above) will be quite helpful. In addition, the purchase of a set of mining picks and shovels (15 Vel) will facilitate matters.

Sailors require little more than their own strength to serve aboard a ship. Should a character become ambitious enough to want to purchase his own vessel, however, the gamemaster should work with the player, within the context of the campaign, to determine a fair price. At the very least, a small fishing boat with a crew of ten to twelve will cost at least 1,000 Vel.

Smiths, both of Metal and Stone, require specialized tools to accomplish their jobs effectively. 50 Vel will set either type of Smith up with the basic tools required to run a field operation, and 150 will provide a large kiln or forge (which requires a permanent location).

Tailors need only needle and thread to perform minor repairs on clothing, both items readily available for negligible amounts. A larger assortment of threads (of various colors and thicknesses), fabric swatches and needles (of various sizes) can be had for 40 Vel.

SERVICES

Characters cannot do everything, and eventually they are going to have to call on the services of a specialist to aid them in one way or another. The costs given below are for standard *Level 1* service, and, where applicable, assume that the expert being called upon has the equivalent of *Level 1* skill in the applicable area. Should characters wish to seek out someone more experienced (which offers a better chance of success, in some cases), multiply the cost shown by the skill level of the expert. Thus, if a service costs 10 Vel, an expert with that skill at fourth Level would charge 40 Vel.



Artists will generally expect to be paid a portion of their fee up front, mostly because many of them live day to day, and need the money. In general, hiring someone to do a painting, sculpture, drawing, etc. will cost between 5 and 25 Vel, depending on the project's complexity.

Entertainers will often work for free, expecting to make a great deal on straight tips. However, if tips are uncertain, or the characters' motives are in question, a juggler, musician, dancer, etc. might very well ask 1 Vel for a day's worth of performing.

Innkeepers often charge 1 Vel for a week's room and board, with no discount given for staying fewer nights, knowing full well that most travelers will be in and out within a few nights, allowing the inn to re-rent the room sooner and thus technically *double rent* the room. Those who do offer a discount on the price will often charge a Qa'Vel for a single night's stay. Meals typically cost a Qa'Vel or a Ha'Vel, and include an unlimited supply of a beverage of choice.

Mercenaries (the category into which most characters will fall) have traditionally worked for a fee of 1 Vel per week, plus room and board, and any equipment necessary to complete

the task. Hiring an entire company will increase the cost tenfold (ten times the number of mercenaries in the group).

Porters will generally work for *room and board*, happily carrying equipment around within city limits if they are fed and given a place to stay for the night. Traveling between cities, whether over sea or land, will require a larger payment, typically around 1 Vel per week.

Runescribes are the most highly sought-after service providers, and also the most expensive. Not only is the base price (10 Vel) multiplied by the skill of the Runescribe, but it is then multiplied by the number of successes rolled during the scribing process (*see the Book of Runes*).

Specialists (those with skill in a particular Knowledge skill) generally work for between 1 and 10 Vel per day, as determined by the nature of the service to be provided. In general, the more academic skills tend to be more highly valued in urban areas. Salaries can typically be negotiated

down quite a bit during bartering, as many Specialists will be keen on finding long-term work.

Stryder Pilots for hire are almost always tied to a specific mercenary company, and so in addition to the 5 Vel per day cost of hiring the Pilot and his Stryder, one must typically also pay the mercenary guard that comes along with him. If the Stryder is to be involved in combat at any point, the fee doubles to 10 Vel per day.

Transportation over a long distance must be provided either by a Stryder equipped for such travel (*see above*) or a ship. Most ships are quite shallow-keeled, sticking close to shore when they head out on the ocean and equally capable of plying their trade down most of the continent's deep rivers. A standard fee of 1 Vel per week is usually charged if the character agrees to assist onboard the ship (hoisting ropes, rowing if necessary, fighting off pirates, etc.). Should the character decline, the fee is 1 Vel per day (7 Vel per week).

FAUNA

The animal life of Rhun is shaped not only by what exists, but what does not. As has been mentioned elsewhere, there are no large domesticated herbivores on Rhun, which means an absence of horses, cows and similarly-sized creatures. In this case, humanity as a whole has taken a different path, coming to rely instead on Stryders for transportation of heavy items, and on other animals as sources for materials that would otherwise have come from these creatures. Leather, for example, is taken from a wide assortment of animals that do exist on Rhun, including pigs, goats, sheep, rabbits and many large cats.

Here is a general overview of animal life as it exists on Rhun, along with some examples of particularly interesting fauna most commonly known to people. Although not all are widely found, and some may never be seen during the lifetime of a person, most people have heard of them and both a ten-year old child and an animal specialist would likely be able to describe any of them in detail.

AMPHIBIANS

Amphibians are quite prevalent in Rhun, and among land-dwelling creatures they are arguably the most populous. The Kantarin Subcontinent and the swamps that ring the Inner Sea are filled with a wide assortment of venomous frogs, toads, newts, salamanders, proto-lizards and other, stranger creatures. Some dwell inland along riverbanks, and many have migrated along wide stretches of coast.

Goab

Proliferation: Less Common

Range: Coastal Wetlands and Swamps

Species of these flying amphibians are found among the more inundated areas of Rhun, and generally live off insects or small mammals. Sizes of goab species are comparable to hawks, although goabs tend to hunt by remaining almost completely submerged, then bursting from the water to seize

prey using a cartilage-barbed tongue. Most goabs are poisonous and aggressive, and can inflict painful piercings on larger creatures that stray too close. During mating seasons, goabs will sometimes spontaneously form swarms and actively fly over distances (the goab mates in flight); in these times they are sometimes known to attack large animals as a group, with females temporarily growing teeth to consume the meat as nourishment for reproduction.

For the poison to take effect, the goab must cause more damage than the Endurance value of the target's armor. If this happens, the target takes 10 damage, reduced by Endurance, for five rounds.

1	4	5	6	12
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Tongue] 3		Weapon [Tongue] (strength 1 + poison)		
Dodge 3				
Willpower 1				
Initiative 3				

Creeper

Proliferation: Common

Range: All Regions

These harmless amphibians are found widely and in too many varieties to name, although few are much bigger than a housecat and most are about a finger-length. Most of these odd amphibians have six legs and an articulated tail (which does not detach), and eat insects or plants. As they are amphibians, they tend to congregate in damp areas near ready supplies of water, to which they flee if frightened. The most common species are drab colored, typically gray or brown, but some can be brightly multi-hued. Nearly every species can be eaten, and are a prime source of food amongst the Draslander and Sivatagi populations.

Even the biggest creeper is no threat to anything larger than a mouse, and so statistics for these creatures are largely irrelevant.

Strangler

Proliferation: Extremely Uncommon

Range: Swamps and Deep Lakes

This armored amphibian lurks in murky areas of swamps and the deepest parts of lakes, hunting by means of long and powerful tentacles. Once it ensnares its victim, the strangler crushes its prey to death. Then, it consumes the carcass with an extremely hard, crushing maw that it uses to grind its meal into a digestible form. Though rarely seen, the strangler vaguely resembles a crocodile-skinned nautilus or squid with a lobster-like tail for locomotion; beneath its shell, however, it has the delicate skin of an amphibian, and needs to be submerged most of the time, lest its skin dry out. The strangler is feared by most but sought by elite poachers for its maw, which surpasses even metal in resilience and extremely valuable.

On any successful hit, the strangler begins to drag its target toward its maw while crushing it to death. The victim may attempt to break free once per action by beating the strangler in an opposed Strength check with a Difficulty of 10. The victim receives 18 incoming damage every action in which he is constricted, modified by armor. After four rounds, the strangler will have the victim in its crushing maw, and the attack with the maw is unopposed, since a victim deep underwater and completely restrained by the tentacles is not entirely capable of mounting an adequate defense. The strangler can only attack with its maw after a victim has been dragged into it using its tentacles.

6	5	11	12	24
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Tentacle] 2		Weapon [Tentacle] (strength 2)		
Weapon Skill [Maw] 2		Weapon [Maw] (strength 7)		
Dodge 0		An armored Hide brings the		
Willpower 0		Endurance up to 15		
Initiative 2				

BIRDS

The birds of Rhun are greatly varied, appearing in a wide spectrum of size, shape, and color. The dazzling colors of the birds of the Kantarin Rain Forest contrast starkly with the subdued grays of the Divaran doves in the far north. Very few of the birds of Rhun are much larger than a small hawk, and none are raised as pets or hunting animals. A few varieties may be hunted for food or kept as pets, but none are technically domesticated.

Sandrunner

Proliferation: Uncommon

Range: Deserts

The sandrunner is a small, flightless bird, slightly smaller than a domestic chicken, found mostly in the Desert of the Sivatagi. Its wide feet negotiate the sandy dunes with ease, and its rounded body can hold enough water to maintain the 'runner for up to five days. The sandrunner is remarkably fast, but is still good hunting for the Sivatagi, as its meat is quite tender.

Even the biggest sandrunner is no threat to any living thing, and so statistics for these creatures are largely irrelevant.

Candlebird

Proliferation: Common

Range: Kantarin Rain Forest

These gorgeous and colorful birds are native to the Rain Forests of the Kantarin subcontinent, though they can occasionally be found in the Rain Forest on the main continent. Their feathers exude a brightly phosphorescent essence that makes them glow in a wide gallery of colors. They do not glow at all if killed and their meat is tough and sparse. However, many of the more *civilized* people of Rhun value them highly as pets. They are no larger than a sparrow, and feed primarily on insects and very small mammals or amphibians.

Even the biggest candlebird is no threat to anything larger than a mouse, and so statistics for these creatures are largely irrelevant.

Razorwing

Proliferation: Rare

Range: All Regions

One of the most aggressive birds on Rhun is the razorwing, a carnivorous bird with stiff bony protrusions along its wings and needle-sharp claws and beak. Thankfully, the razorwing is a solitary bird, only sharing a territory in order to mate. Its swooping attacks can tear the flesh from a creature below, and it often rips flesh off a living creature and consumes it, leaving its victim bleeding but usually alive.

The razorwing's attack is only effective against unarmored victims, as its claws will not penetrate any kind of armor. The swooping strike is meant only to tear a strip of flesh from a victim, not kill or incapacitate. Of course, if the strip of flesh is large enough, and the victim small enough, the victim will still die.

1	4	6	7	14
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Claws/Wings] 4		Weapon [Claws/Wings] (strength I)		
Dodge 3				
Willpower 0				
Initiative 3				

REPTILES

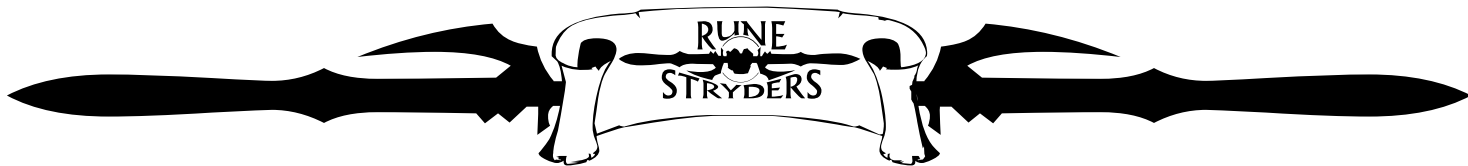
The majority of the reptiles native to Rhun reside in the Kantarin Rain Forest, though they are scattered to a lesser extent through the entirety of the continent. They are, for the most part, analogous to the lizards, snakes and turtles familiar to the reader, though there are a few notable exceptions.

Kroll

Proliferation: Rare

Range: Kantarin Rain Forest

Krolls are savage, violent, and deadly pack lizards that maraud through the Rain Forest. They hunt in packs, employing a variety of group tactics that are nearly always guaranteed to bring down prey. These vicious lizards run



quickly on hind legs or all fours, and have cruel talons on their front legs. Rows of jagged teeth in a long mouth can snap through bone with ease. Roughly three feet tall, krolls rely on disabling attacks to bring prey down, such as biting through leg muscles or slashing tendons. Once their prey is unable to run, it rarely takes more than two krolls to tear a victim to pieces.

A pack of krolls will usually attempt to distract prey, sneak up, or otherwise make their first attack when the victim is unaware of their presence, thus guaranteeing that the prey does not get an opposing roll on the first attack. They ordinarily target a victim's legs, trying to immobilize the victim and get their prey closer to the ground, where their powerful teeth can cause considerably more damage.

3	4	6	8	15
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Claws] 3 (agl)		Weapon [Claws] (strength 1)		
Weapon Skill [Bite] 3 (str)		Weapon [Teeth] (strength 5)		
Dodge 3				
Willpower 2				
Initiative 3				

Chameleon Snake

Proliferation: Uncommon

Range: All Regions

These virulent vipers are masters of disguise, able to resemble clumps of grass, dry twigs, or sprigs of fir trees. The chameleon snake can adapt its colors to match its surroundings, and spiny protrusions along its back can stretch or shrink to resemble blades of grass or pine needles. The snake is only eight to ten inches long, but carries an incredibly powerful poison sac. The chameleon snake is almost completely blind, only able to sense a passing creature if it is within a few inches from its face. This means that while it rarely drops its disguise to strike, it also rarely misses.

Under most circumstances, a victim will not receive a Dodge or Parry roll to oppose a chameleon snake's attack. If the

attack is successful, and strikes an unarmored victim, the snake causes 15 incoming damage every half minute for five minutes. This is usually enough to kill any living thing, though an anti-toxin developed by the Kantarins can counteract the venom if applied within the first two minutes.

1	2	3	4	6
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Fangs] 1 (agl)		Weapon [Fangs] (strength 1 + poison)		
Disguise 4				
Dodge 0				
Willpower 0				
Initiative 2				

FISH

There is little variation in Rhunic fish species' bodies, with differences mostly in color, size, and jaw structure. Most fish bear a long tail similar in cross section to an eel's, with the main body most closely resembling rays or skates. Few are edible, although the more common river and ocean varieties are quite nutritious, and are favored in certain regions. Some tidal and river-dwelling species exhibit remarkable chameleon-like camouflage. Rhun fish populations grow inversely to the species' size, with the largest fish populations being huge schools of tiny bacterium-feeders and the largest being solo-hunting saw toothed predators that eat smaller animals. Sailors often spin stories of multi-jawed predator fish large enough to swallow a person whole.

Leviathan

Proliferation: Rare

Range: Deep Oceans

Thought to be related most closely to amphibians but neither land-dwelling nor air-breathing, the leviathan is a creature of frightening legends amongst sea-going men. Little is known about the leviathan—even its shape is subject to much speculation, though generally agreed to be whale-like—except that it is huge, perhaps up to hundreds of feet long, and

capable of devouring ships. Such tales would hardly be believed were it not for the proof lent by a leviathan skin displayed in the Divaran fortress of Holdenforge, the only such skin known to exist. Legends have it that the leviathan was put in the oceans by the gods to keep men from journeying too far from land.

It is ridiculous to attempt to define, in practical terms, a creature of this magnitude. It can swallow two men whole, crush the mightiest ship with a single blow from its tail, and take hundreds of arrows without feeling a thing. The leviathan should be used as a plot device, not a combat encounter.

INSECTS AND BUGS

Insects occupy the dominant position among Rhunic species, accounting for some 90% of all animal life on the planet. Most of these bugs are analogous to those of other worlds—mosquitoes, gnats, flies, wasps, bees and spiders, all of typical size. However, insects have also achieved remarkable leaps along the evolutionary ladder. In the central Spine, rumors abound of mile long webs created by as-yet-unseen spiders, possibly one single giant species, or possibly a swarm of thousands, working with a hivemind-like unity. Further to the south, where the land becomes marshy, one might very well find fifty-foot tall constructs, the mud and clay creations of colonies of termites and wasps. And to the west, as many are frightfully becoming aware, several species of insect have been cultivated to grow to tremendous size, becoming the Stryder mounts of the Sivtagi. Certainly, insect life is among the strangest, most varied and most deadly that characters might encounter.

Builder Bug

Proliferation: Extremely Common

Range: All Regions

Possibly Rhun's most industrious natural creatures, tiny arachnid builder bugs construct hive mounds from vegetation they collectively cut down and gather. Living together in these nests, Builders Bugs often create fanciful and unique structures, sometimes up to a hundred feet tall depending on species, which many consider beautiful. An infestation of Builders in one's home is quite another matter, however, and many a homemaker has complained about *having Builders*.

As the builder bug is not a threat to any living thing, there is little point in defining its combat statistics.

Cyclops Bug

Proliferation: Common

Range: Arid Regions

Growing as large as a hand, this biting insect is called a cyclops bug for its prominent single eye. Traveling with wings or legs similar to those of mosquitoes and wasps, the bug has large mandibles that inflict a painful sting if provoked. Generally regarded as useful because they prey on smaller bugs, the cyclops bugs are liked by farmers as long as they maintain their distance.

A swift boot heel is enough to kill a cyclops bug, but they do have a potent and painful sting. Anyone stung by a cyclops bug loses 1 point of Agility or Strength (gamemaster's call) for one day, due to swelling and pain.

Copper Dancer

Proliferation: Common

Range: Inland Wetlands

An unusual and graceful insect, especially common near rivers and lakes, the copper dancer is commonly found using its thin but flightless wings and surface tension to glide across the water's surface. The dancer's main food source is water runoff or evaporation-created mineral deposits. The copper dancer extracts these mineral deposits from soil, giving a bronze or coppery hue to the insect's carapace. Large amounts of metal can sometimes draw swarms of dancers, however, which then dissolve entire metal objects in hours; cities are careful to keep dancer populations in check.

As the copper dancer is not a threat to any living thing, there is little point in defining its combat statistics.

Hindwalker

Proliferation: Less Common

Range: Temperate Climates

This wispy and harmless four-legged bug, also called an echo bug, walks upright to about thumb-height and is a favorite among children, especially young boys. Although hindwalkers possess no measurable intelligence, their natural communication involves an uncanny ability to recall and mimic short sounds including bits of human speech. Many a sentry

has been infuriated by a false alarm raised because of the hindwalker's ability.

As the hindwalker is not a threat to any living thing, there is little point in defining its combat statistics.

Rainbow Fly

Proliferation: Infestation

Range: Equatorial Belt to Lower Latitudes

Similar in general appearance to a butterfly, but with a wasp-like, proboscis-tipped head and long tail, this swarming parasite is named for the sheen of its refractive silvery wings but despised as a pest. The species perpetuates itself by laying eggs in virtually any mammal species, including people. It first injects neurotoxic venom into the skin causing an immediate open sore (very painful but rarely lethal), then lays eggs into the site through a probe in its tail. Generally, the victim suffers an infuriatingly itchy rash for a half-day or so, until the skin erupts with a handful of new butterflies from each site. Rainbow fly bites carry a social stigma in several parts of the world, and can cause a person to be ridiculed for days, so people are careful to avoid them.

Aside from the disgusting wound and itchy rash caused by the rainbow fly, they are not a physical threat, and therefore no combat statistics are provided.

MAMMALS

As has been indicated elsewhere, the greatest difference between mammal life on Rhun and in traditional fantasy settings is that there are no large herbivores. The top of the evolutionary ladder undoubtedly belongs to the great cats of the Kantarin jungles, who prey upon small mammals and amphibians, as well as unfortunate human travelers who should happen to cross their paths.

Bats

Proliferation: Extremely Common

Range: All Regions

These mammal fliers are as common and diverse in Rhun as birds are on Earth. Rhun bats, however, are keen-sighted and do not possess echolocation, and are more closely (although distantly) related to Rhunic cats than rodents. Most species are

harmless and welcomed by people. Some few are even naturally friendly and kept as pets. Colors are diverse, ranging from drab to rainbow-toned, and size ranges greatly with the vast majority of species ranging between pigeon- to chicken-sized. The little tiger-striped meekbat, about the size of a golf ball with its wings furled, is the smallest species, while the largest by wide margin is the rare and majestic great stone bat that lives in remote mountains and has a gigantic wingspan reaching fifty-feet.

The great stone bat generally attacks by swooping down on prey and carrying it away. It prefers creatures no larger than a small goat, but is capable of carrying an adult male. A successful attack roll indicates that the bat has grabbed its prey and flown off. It rarely makes more than one attack on a single target, preferring to select another prey if its first attack fails.

3

Strength

3

Agility

6

Body

7

Endurance

14

Health

Weapon Skill [Claws] 2

Weapon [Claw] (strength 1)

Dodge 1

Willpower 1

Initiative 2



Cats

Proliferation: Less Common

Range: All Regions

Rhun cats make up the bulk of Rhun's mammal predators. Species can be found everywhere, and are especially prevalent in temperate or cold regions. Almost all are solitary but not territorial, with mate-pairs ranging out from a burrow or den. Rhunic cats have four eyes, giving them superb vision, and most lack tails. Almost all have lip-less primordial jaws filled with twenty-five to forty razor-sharp interlocking fangs, from which they derive their nickname of *grinners*. Rhunic cats cannot be domesticated and will attack if disturbed. Cats are found from sizes as small as rabbits to the largest species, the forest-dwelling dusk hunter, whose shoulders are a man's height and a half again. Most species have terrain-matching striped or dappled markings in green, beige, grayish blue, brown and/or gray.

The dusk hunter may attack with both claws on every action, or once with its fangs.

4	5	11	13	26
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Claws] 2 Weapon Skill [Fangs] 3 Dodge 4 Willpower 2 Initiative 3		Weapon [Claws] (strength 3) Weapon [Fangs] (strength 5)		

Fowler

Proliferation: Uncommon

Range: Plains and Desert, Certain Mountain Ranges

Agile pack hunters about the size of big jackrabbits, these kangaroo-like predators with canine snouts are small but vicious and dangerous. Living together in feral groups of 30 to fifty animals, they rely on stealth and tactics to capture their prey, which usually consists of bats or Lodo but sometimes includes much larger animals. Fowlers almost always keep their distance around groups of people, but are oft to blame for the disappearance of children or unwary travelers.

2	3	5	6	12
Strength	Agility	Body	Endurance	Health
Weapon Skill [Claws] 2 Weapon Skill [Teeth] 2 Dodge 2 Willpower 1 Initiative 2		Weapon [Claws] (strength 2) Weapon [Teeth] (strength 2)		

Lodo

Proliferation: Extremely Common

Range: All Regions Except Swamplands

A nimble grazing animal, lodo are the predominant mammal herbivore, and all species eat both grass and leaves and need little water. Lodo appear in numerous sizes, although the largest is only four feet at the shoulder. Most have drab, short fur, solid or mottled and ranging from green to gray in most cases. The smallest variety, living on highlands and mountainsides, is the mouse-sized mountain baby that has a cry resembling a human infant's. The largest and most populous is the common lodo, domesticated and used for its velvety gray pelt, meat, and milk. The common lodo is also kept on many farms as a working animal, capable of pulling a small cart or plow.

While lodo can grow to be as large as a small pony, they are incredibly docile. Their only reaction to an attack will be to run or cower, and so no combat statistics are provided for them.



RUNE BREACH

STRYDERS

“Dead,” said Adour, staring in the mirror. He repeated it, liking the sound.

“Jonan Marle-Thon is dead.”

He turned to face the Zokili in the chair across the room, smiling as he walked slowly back over, sipping at his celebratory drink. He raised the glass in a mock toast, dribbling some of the imported wine, heavy, thick, and expensive, on his chest, where it ran like blood onto the floor.

“Lovely wine, Adour. Thank you for bringing it. Unfortunately, it has a tendency to stain.” He wiped it away, smearing it into the weave, smiling. The Zokili grinned back.

It had not gone perfectly, but then, these things never did. There were always mistakes. The first had been entrusting that wretch Thomis and his gaggle of hired hands to make the initial hit. That had nearly been the end of it, half of his crew being taken out in the first few seconds by the town guard, the other half scrambling for cover when it got heavy. Exactly how Thomis had managed to actually snatch the child in the midst of the chaos was a mystery, and was the only reason he had not killed the man outright.

Which, in retrospect, would have been a much better idea. He should never have let Joachim convince him to leave the man in the sewer. He may have deserved a slow death, but it was a loose end, and now with Thomis and the Mage both gone missing, it was getting looser by the second.

But of course, not everything had gone badly. In fact, all things considered, it had gone better than it should have. The child was gone, probably still alive, but out of the picture all the same. That had caused his father to miss the all-important vote, albeit in a different way than had been expected. And quite unexpectedly, the elder Jonan had succeeded in getting himself killed altogether, along with a major portion of his power base. If nothing else, the entire night had been worth it just for that.

But there was something else. The reason behind it all in the first place.

Adour pulled a chair from beneath the table, reversing it to sit in front of the Zokili.

“Jonan is dead, and the vote is cast. And that means the Zokili will get their tariff reduction, as we agreed.” He tossed back the rest of his drink, and threw the empty glass across the room, where it shattered beside the fireplace.

“Unfortunately, Ambassador Danyl, you won’t be one of the beneficiaries of that agreement.”

The Ambassador grinned back. At his side, a half empty mug hung, limply.

“I know you can hear me in there, Danyl. That’s how the Rune works. Taints the wine, which taints the mind. You can’t move, can’t speak, can’t do anything but listen, and grin your stupid grin.”

In a fit of anger, Adour leaned forward and slapped the Zokili in the face. His body fell to one side, striking the armrest of the chair, the mug of wine sloshing onto the floor, spilling its last on the carpet.

“Nothing personal, of course,” said Adour, standing to stagger back towards the wine bottle. “I just can’t have anyone knowing the particulars of our little arrangement. It’s bad enough I’ve got two of my own out there with ideas in their heads. Ideas they can’t prove.”

He paused to select another wine glass, carefully pouring the thick red fluid into the glass, spilling some more in his drunkenness. Unsteadily, he set the bottle back down and lifted the glass to his lips, spilling yet more on himself in the process.

“No, I can’t let you live, Danyl,” he said without turning.

“I’m so sorry to hear that,” said Danyl.

Adour’s eyes widened. In the mirror, he watched the Zokili Ambassador stand up, straightening his coat as he spoke.





“To think, we were such friends too. Oh, wait.” Danyl paused, as if considering. “No we weren’t.” Adour turned, spilling the rest of his wine, forgotten.

“You . . . the . . .”

“Please, Adour. What do you take me for? I may be half your size, but I’m twice your age. Runed wine mug? Please.” Danyl kicked at the mug that lay on the floor, spraying wine across the floor. “All one has to do is scratch the Rune before pouring. Easily done when a drunkard like you has his back turned.

Adour fumbled for words, his lips numb from wine and shock. He took a step forward in confusion and stumbled to his knees, eyes widening as realization set in. He leaned back heavily against the counter, his eyes straining to peer up towards the bottle of Zokili wine which sat on the shelf. How? He had checked it himself. And it was of glass; where was the . . .

“The cork, in case you’re wondering,” said Danyl. “Very tricky. Hard to get right. But I know a young Kantarin fisherman who’s perfected the art. Did you know they actually carve Runes into their flesh down there, Adour? Into trees, animals, fish, probably. Now that would be a sight. Runed fish.”

He grinned. Adour did not; he was beyond being able to move, could only watch dimly, limply, as Danyl spoke, taking his time wandering across the room. He paused beside a wooden table, considered it, and then grabbed it by the legs, flinging it across the room.

“Here’s what happened, since you won’t be around to figure it out. You were drinking, celebrating your success with the vote. And quite unexpectedly, a group of Draslander assassins found their way up through the sewers, into your water closet. Where they came in here, found you drunk, and slit your throat.”

“Like this.”

Slowly at first, throbbing with Adour’s fading heartbeat, the blood came, mingling with the wine on his clothing, pushing out through the razor-thin line on his throat. Adour could do nothing but die, staring at the Zokili standing above him. Ambassador Danyl ignored his plight, considering the dagger.

“Honor to one’s homeland, Adour. Loyalty, tradition, acting for the good of the whole. These are things you Divar know nothing about. Betraying your own kind, killing one another. It’s shortsighted. You fail to see beyond yourself, to the future. A future in which you are no longer dominant.”

Danyl crouched before Adour, lifting the fat man’s throat to let the blood run freely, quickening his death. Then he settled back on his haunches and opened his shirt, baring his chest.

“I’m old, Adour. Old enough to have seen how far things have come over time. You think in years, but my people think in lifetimes. The change may not have come in my lifetime, but it will come with the next. And it will start here.”

Without hesitation, Danyl reversed the dagger in his hand and drew it diagonally across his chest, cutting deep. He winced unconsciously, but committed to the cut. Whether or not Adour was still conscious enough to perceive this was now irrelevant. This was not for Adour. This was not even for Danyl. This was for the Zokili. For the future.

Danyl’s second slash cut across his stomach, deeply, almost too deep, causing him to buckle in pain, nearly losing his grip on the now blood-slickened blade. Before the pain grew too great, he slashed at his own hands, then his face, finally falling on the dagger, piercing his heart and collapsing to the ground. With the last vestiges of his fading strength, he drew the dagger out and hurled it across the room towards the unlatched window, where an assassin might have fled. And then he collapsed.

RUINE

The Draslander had stumbled across not only Adour, but the Zokili Ambassador as well. A battle ensued. Danyl fought bravely, wounding several of the Dras, before his own blade was wrestled from him and used against him. The Dras fled, no doubt heading towards their homeland with a stolen Zokili Stryder, leaving a clear trail to follow. The two Zokili Elyte he'd come with knew what they had to do. And Danyl trusted that they would do it, regardless of this nonsense about a Mage and a missing baby. They would do what was best for the Zokili. And, if necessary, they would give their lives to do so.

As Danyl had given his.

It was several hours before the bodies were discovered, but only minutes from that point until Adour's supporters had gathered their forces, spreading out through the surrounding countryside to find the killers. Mercenary crews were enlisted in numbers never before seen by local residents. Mages broke down doors and interrogated the ignorant, petrified inhabitants. Diplomats quickly enacted new legislation to support the effort. Stryder crews fanned out to look for signs of an enemy Stryder that had been spotted in the area.

And then came the reports of one mercenary team, caught offguard by the killers, the sole survivor being the Stryder pilot himself. The Homonculus was questioned extensively, spilling a story of a powerful Mage, a one-armed monster, and a horde of tiny, slashing, fanged monsters who spilled from within their toad-shaped Stryder to decimate his entire crew in seconds. Dras? He thought so. Yes, but was he certain? Were they Draslander? Yes, they must have been.

A consensus was reached. The trail was hot. The largest mercenary contingent ever seen in the area was put together, to be headed by Judge Dexin himself, a brute of a man who wielded his measuring-staff with ruthless effectiveness. It was said he could split a man's skull with one blow, and he himself was heard to say, as the force moved out of the city, heading south for Dras lands, that he was eager to see how it fared against Draslander heads. Together, they would strike a blow for Adour.

It would be weeks, possibly months before the force would return. And it was within that time that the Zokili would strike their own blow. Not against the Dras, nor against the true prey.

Against an undefended city.



CHAPTER 6

THE BOOK OF ROLES



he various peoples of Rhun all hail from the same root stock. Dividing them up amongst racial categories is thus somewhat arbitrary, based partly on slight size differences and variances in skin color, but mostly on geopolitical differences. Such differences have led to the generally agreed-upon understanding of six racial types, perhaps more appropriately called *nations* even if they are not always separated by political and geographical boundaries.

As they say, history is written by those who win the war, and thus it is from a Divaros point of view that the following distinctions and naming conventions come. Non-Divaros people will often see things in a different light, and those considered *Outcast* almost never refer to themselves in such a way. In all cases, it is important to realize that all of these people are what we in the *real world* would call *human*. The variances in height, weight, skin tone and so on are just as great as among the various races of our own world, and are by no means intended to indicate that any of them are *demi-human* or *sub-human* in any way. They are all different, yes. But they are also all human.

Within each of the six divisions, one will find seven Roles, each roughly corresponding to one another in form, function

and general position within society. These Roles are certainly not meant to cover the entirety of a society's occupations and positions, but are rather meant to portray a good cross section of those sorts who might very well be involved in the life-or-death adventures in which characters tend to find themselves. These are only guides, and players (with the gamemaster's consent) should feel free to develop new Roles if such a deviation would better fit their character concept.

It is possible to roughly align each Nation's roles with specific *classes*, as follows:

- A Stryder pilot
- A warrior/fighter
- An elite special operative
- A rune master/magician
- An artisan/smith
- A wise man/sage
- A rogue/spy

However, the lines are not always so clear cut as that. While each of the seven Roles is roughly analogous to matching Roles found amongst other Nations, some Roles meet more than one of the above broadly-defined archetypal criteria, and some are interpreted in ways that other peoples would find strange.

Each Role description features a basic overview, followed by a list of suggested starting Attributes (*see the Book of Creation*), Skills and Skill levels, and a typical Turf. These are only a guide, but are also useful for getting started quickly, as they provide a good core foundation for a solid, well-balanced character.

A complete list of all skills and turfs, as well as a description of how each functions within the game, follows the list of Roles.

DIVAROS ROLES

Homunculus

plural, *Homunculi*; slang, *Monkey's Uncles*

The Homunculi are the elite pilots who control the steel Stryders of the Divaros armies. They spend years training, and have exceptional reflexes and a degree of magical skill. Despite their skill, they rarely receive acclaim or praise, but most of these diminutive riders are happy to shun the spotlight anyway.

Because the space inside a Divaros Stryder is very tight, Homunculi are typically no larger than five feet. This means that most Divaros pilots are female, because women are generally smaller than men. However, this is not an absolute—men with slight builds are also found in the ranks of the Homunculi.

DIVAROS HOMUNCULUS

3	3	4	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
6	8	20	10	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 1
 Armor 1
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Stryder Weapon Skill [Stryder Sword] 3
 Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 3
 Perception [Navigation] 1
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Socializing [Leadership] 1
 Language [Runelore] 2
 Language [Speak Zokili] 1
 Military Tactics [Stryder Crew] 2

Turf: Flatlands

The Confederated Nations

Divaros

Homunculus
 Warrior
 Magus
 Runescribe
 Artisan
 Judge
 Diplomat

Myndwar

Jacker
 Mercenary
 Cave Jumper
 Valley Mage
 Auger
 Seer
 Spine Runner

Zokili

Pylit
 Elyte
 Saboteur
 Enginyr
 Medic
 Sage
 Ambassador

The Outcast Nations

Kantarin

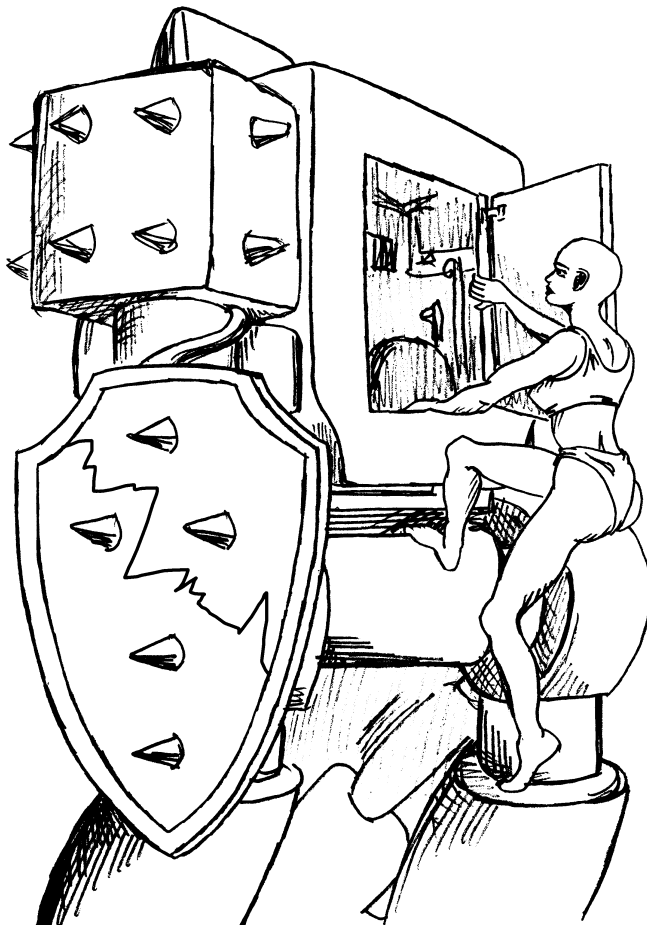
Melded
 Nettle
 Thorn
 Burr
 Vine
 Adorned
 Shaper

Sivatagi

Reaver
 Hunter
 Raider
 Masasan
 Sorcerer
 Trader
 Wanderer

Draslander

Stomper
 Sword Swinger
 Spell Flinger
 Ghost Walker
 Hoodoo Healer
 Tall Talker
 Grub Grower



Almost all Homunculi, regardless of gender, shave their heads for a variety of reasons (*see below*). Due to the tight space constraints inside their Stryders, Homunculi also tend to wear close-fitting garb when piloting, if they wear clothing at all. Various Runic tattoos decorate their bodies, enhancing their ability to control their Stryders with magical discipline and concentration. The Divaros Stryders themselves are built to channel and amplify the magical power of the Homunculi, but she must be capable of casting the spells that the Stryder releases in order to utilize their full potential.

Warriors

The powerful Stryders may get much of the glory, but all are aware that the blood that lubricates the gears of the powerful Divaros war machine comes from the bodies of its warriors.

The fighting men and women of the Divaros have many different designations and purposes, varying from state to state and country to country, and ranging from infantry and

DIVARAN WARRIOR

5	3	2	3	8
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	10	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2
 Armor 4
 Athletics [Running] 1
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade or Spear] 3
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade or Bow] 2
 Strength-Based Combat Style [Divaran Kickwrestling] 1
 Perception [Alertness] 1
 Military Tactics [Enlisted] 2

Turf: Flatlands

artillery to support functions such as scouting, navigation and field medicine. Whatever their specific title, all are known as warriors.

Even if they will likely not actively partake in open warfare, Divaros warriors are trained to be fast, strong and capable in battle—capable often defined as *cruel and merciless*. Whether an officer or front-row cannon fodder, all are trained to fight, and trained to kill. Divaros military leaders may not lead from the front, but neither do they lead from safety miles away. If a Divaros army is on the march, its leader will be among his troops.

Off the field of war, warriors are often assigned as bodyguards to diplomats or judges, or as caravan guards traveling along dangerous trade routes.

In all cases, most warriors shy away from the overt practice of magic, although like all people, most dabble with Runes and minor magics, curses and blessings. Knowing how to cast a healing enchantment can save a warrior's life on the field of battle, after all.

Magus

plural, Magi

Sword and Stryder alone are often not enough to win the battle, particularly when conflict springs up on short notice in distant locales. In cases where a bit more firepower or fleetness of foot is necessary, the Divaros often call on a Magus for assistance.

The Magi are the true masters of lightning quick strikes and powerful assaults, considered elite soldiers by those who call upon them, and ruthless adversaries by the few victims who survive their onslaught. Combining powerful magics with precise military strategies and combat skill, they are used to crack tough enemy resistance, perform rescue missions, sabotage enemy positions or recover stolen artifacts. In short, they perform non-standard, highly dangerous military missions, spending most of their time waiting and watching, readying themselves for the single, decisive action that can turn the tide.

DIVARAN MAGUS

3	4	4	3	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	11	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 2

Armor 1

Stealth [Silent Death] 2 or

Agility-Based Combat Style [Divaran Dueling] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 1

Perception [Observation] 2

Perception [Track] 3

Language [Runelore] 3

Military Tactics [Small Unit] 2

Turf: Forest



As their name suggests, Magi are devoted to the study of magic and Runes, though unlike Runescribes they focus not on perfection and inscription, but clever and devastating use of their knowledge. Magi typically learn through practice, which makes them even more dangerous to some when they are not actually on a mission. Magi do not study magic by reading books in tall towers; they study by finding targets and practicing in live fire exercises.

Runescribe

As is clear from their name, Runescribes are responsible for inscribing runes on things, most notably the massive Divaros Stryders. As such, much of their work is done off the field of battle, preparing the Stryders for action beforehand, and assisting in the initial manufacture and creation of the sub-sentient Stryders. Whether they pore over dusty tomes, perform experiments in dark laboratories or journey the land seeking truth, they are renowned for their expertise and education.

However, Runescribes are not merely inactive recluses scrawling with sticks in the mud. Far from it. Since the Runes on a Stryder are prone to wear and damage, Runescribes often must travel along with a Stryder contingent, ready and capable of quickly fixing damaged Runes to keep Stryders in top shape. In some cases, this means they must strap on armor and wade into the thick of battle, steel stylus and charcoal stick in hand, applying their own brand of field medicine to wounded or incapacitated Stryders.

Stryders are not the only recipients of Runes, either. Enchanted weapons and armor, favored by the elite guard, are

also enchanted by Runescribes after having been forged by artisans. Some also dabble in the Kantarin arts of body Runing, which knowledge they apply to assisting the Homunculi in tattooing their bodies.

DIVARAN RUNESCRIBE

3	2	3	5	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	8	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 1
 Willpower 2
 Armor 1
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 1
 Light Weapon Combat [Staff] 1
 Creativity [Art] 3
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Language [Runelore] 3
 Language [Literacy] 3
 Language [Speak Myndwar] 2
 Skilled Trade [Historian] 1

Turf: Urban

Artisan

Before a Homunculus can bond with a Stryder, and before a Runescribe can inscribe it with Runes, a Divaros Artisan must first create the construct from raw materials. Or, more correctly, a team of Artisans must do so; while all Artisans are by nature generalists of a sort, and while a single Artisan could probably craft a Stryder on his own, in practice teams of a dozen or more work together on a series of Stryders, assembly-line style. This allows each to specialize and further hone his craft, and also makes the entire process more efficient.

DIVARAN ARTISAN

3	3	4	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
6	8	20	10	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 1
 Willpower 2
 Armor 1
 Stealth [Hiding] 1
 Stealth [Sleight of Hand] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 1
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Socializing [Deception] 1
 Socializing [Trading] 2
 Language [Literacy] 2
 Language [Speak Zokili] 2
 Roguery [Gambling] 1
 Skilled Trade [Carpenter] 4

Turf: Urban

The typical Artisan is most skilled in sculpting and/or working with metals and gems, the raw materials that go into crafting Divaros Stryders. With the proper materials at hand, and the proper tools to work with, a team of a dozen Artisans can construct a fully functional Stryder in about a month's time. Assuming all goes well, of course; even a slight mistake in construction can cause the entire Stryder to be corrupted, suitable only for melting down for scrap.

Not every Artisan creates Stryders. Some may instead focus on crafting weapons and armor, or tools and clothing. In general, an Artisan picks a specific type of item when he begins his training as a child, and sticks with it for the rest of his life.

Not all Artisans know much about Runes. Since the items they produce must almost always be in pristine and unmarked

condition, suitable for enchantment in a variety of ways, they have little opportunity to inscribe or use Runes themselves. Small enchantments and basic Runes that suit their particular needs (creating fires, etc.) are not uncommon, but larger magics are unknown to them.

Judge

While high-ranking politicians squabble with the leaders of other countries, making and changing laws as they see fit, it is the responsibility of the Divaros Judges to enforce and interpret the law on a daily basis among the land's people.

With the possible exception of the military, the Divaros Judiciary (the loosely aligned collective of Judges) is the most powerful organization in Divar, not in terms of number but certainly in terms of influence and, some allege, in terms of wealth as well. Judges have their hands in almost all aspects of daily life, trafficking busy wayfares, policing busy markets, chasing down criminals and advising the citizenry on proper behavior. They are not a formal police force, per se; warriors and Stryder contingents do a major part of the policing, even internally. But among the back alleys, inside shops and in most non-military matters, they are a force to be reckoned with.

Because laws and alliances can change on a daily basis (thanks in part to the function of Diplomats), Judges are typically sought after whenever a decision needs to be made on a problem that has no clear solution. In many cases, learned Judges are up to date on current law and regulation, and can give an informed answer, or provide a quick measurement with their Enan. In other cases, wise Judges who do not necessarily know the law will make a quick determination based on the needs of the present time, researching the matter later.

Because of their role, Judges are also called upon to escort military troops, even onto the field of battle. Judges enforce order among the troops, ensure that battles are fought according to the current rules of engagement, and report any any discrepancies found to their superiors. As their duties typically bring them into contact with a wide array of people and situations, many Judges also know a fair share about magic, and can cast at least simple healing and defensive spells when necessary. Most are also trained in arms and armor.

DIVAROS JUDGE

4	3	4	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	11	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2
 Armor 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Staff] 2
 Socializing [Diplomacy/Mediation] 2
 Socializing [Interrogation] 2
 Socializing [Leadership] 2
 Language [Literacy] 2
 Language [Runelore] 1
 Language [Memorization] 2
 Skilled Trade [Lawkeeper] 3

Turf: Urban

Diplomat

In a general sense, diplomats are those men and women who represent their countries in affairs of state. Divaros Diplomats, however, are more closely associated with the term known as *spy*, since their duties include not only discussions with other nations, but the utilization of bribery, deceit and other underhanded tricks to gather information on their states and nations.

Many other nations are aware that Divaros Diplomats are quite roguish in nature, and treat them accordingly, which of course requires that Diplomats resort to even shadier tactics to get their jobs done. Others switch sides at the drop of a hat, knowing full well that if their country of origin truly wants the information they possess, they will be willing to pay a high price to win the Diplomat's allegiance once again. They have no shame in being bought and sold like this; they do it to other people, after all.

Whereas Judges are the public arm of the Divaros government, dedicated to enforcing and interpreting laws, the Diplomats are much more focused on serving the concept of government, and the interests of the state as a whole. Sent along to report on a military squadron's efficiency, they might ignore a slew of minor indiscretions, including treachery, murder and insurrection, reporting *All Clear* if, at the end of the day, the squadron managed to complete its mission effectively.

Importantly, Divaros Diplomats are de facto representatives of their government, and as such they are empowered to enact and interpret law, on the fly, as they see fit and as the situation warrants. The use of this tactic requires great care and tact, of course. Threatening an enemy nation when you are surrounded by a group of their Stryders will have little meaning if they can squash you before anyone else hears what you said. But speaking aloud in a public forum can certainly be

an effective tactic, since thousands of ears can hear what new law you have just enacted, and anyone who breaks that law will suffer the consequences.

Because their name is so slandered by many, most Diplomats will not readily share the nature of their duties with others, including close friends. Their skill at disguise and deceit means that they can pass themselves off as just about anyone else.

DIVARAN DIPLOMAT

3	3	4	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
6	8	20	10	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 1
 Athletics [Running] 1
 Stealth [Hiding] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 1
 Creativity [Disguise] 1
 Socializing [Preaching] 2 or Perception [Alertness] 3
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Socializing [Diplomacy] 3
 Language [Literacy] 2
 Language [Speak Myndwar] 2
 Language [Speak Zokili] 2

Turf: Urban



MYNDWAR ROLES

Jacker

also Jagger, Jigger, Jacke, Jake, plural, Jacks

In other cultures, the term *Jack*, or its more commonly seen incarnation, *Jack-of-all-trades*, is typically used to refer to a person without special rank, standing or specialization. For this reason, it is difficult for non-Myndwar to understand the particular place that their Jackers fit in society. While the name carries the same basic connotations (ie., a person outside of society, a laborer, one of many skills), among Myndwar such a multi-faceted individual is a source of particular pride, especially since their broad skillset makes them the only ones who still know how to construct, maintain and operate the Myndwar Stryders.

Each Stryder is the sole possession and responsibility of a single Jacker, the construct typically either passed down from generation to generation, and thus particularly ancient, or

constructed laboriously from scratch, and a masterpiece of cutting-edge craftsmanship. Unlike other societies that split up duties among those who pilot, those who build, and those who maintain, Myndwar Jackers take on all three responsibilities themselves. They personally assist in the location of raw materials, personally create the Stryder, personally inscribe its runes, and personally pilot it when needed.

Jackers are also named in part because they achieve a more direct connection with their Stryders, *jacking* themselves into it by means of steel protrusions and indentations on the peculiar armor they wear when inside a Stryder. This allows them a greater degree of control over the finer movements of their large creations, making them superior in almost every way to the Stryder pilots of other countries.

In part due to the fact that the Myndwar need fewer troops to defend their territory (thanks to the area's geography), and in part due to the fact that the Myndwar Stryders are so treasured, Jackers are typically not needed on a regular basis. They are often forgotten about until they are needed for something, a situation with which they are only too happy. With plenty of time to themselves, Jackers can place extra attention on their Stryder, running it through tests, researching new Runes, or tracking down raw materials to improve its functionality.

MYNDWAR JACKER

4	3	4	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	11	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2
 Armor 2
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Axe] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 1
 Stryder Weapon Combat [Stryder Axe] 2
 Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 3
 Language [Runelore] 2
 Skilled Trade [Smith; metal, armor] 3
 Skilled Trade [Smith; stones] 2

Turf: Mountains



However, when they are called upon, Jackers are usually able to spring into action with rabbit-quick speed, and so when needed they are typically the first on the scene and ready for action. Such a call-to-arms is not always of a military sort. Since Jackers are broadly skilled in a variety of useful arts, they often serve as blacksmiths, armorers, watch captains, advisors and farmers for the villages they live nearest. Some (particularly those who reside nearest the main trade routes) tend to stick close to the same area for lengthy periods of time, assuming they will be needed. Others are wanderers, casting their shadow over the length of Myndwar territory and beyond, selling their services (and their Stryder) to the highest bidder in exchange for money, materials and experience.

Mercenary

The Myndwar fighting force is composed entirely of mercenaries, a concept that makes most nations wonder how the Myndwar nation can possibly hold itself together. But Myndwar mercenaries are not typical mercenaries. It is true that they are a loosely aligned bunch of warriors, owing direct allegiance only to the leaders of their small squads and groups, or at best a specific village or valley. However, the truth of the matter is that this sort of organizational structure best suits the needs of the Myndwar people.

Since Myndwar territory is somewhat scattered and spread out, running nearly the entire length of the continent along the mountain ranges that make up the central Spine, amassing a centralized army under one command structure would be nearly impossible. Differences in climate, terrain and political situations add to the difficulty in grouping all military structure under one organizing body. As such, individual villages and areas are responsible for raising their own militias, training those troops, and defending their own areas as needed.

Myndwar are among the finest mercenaries on the continent, best suited to performing a wide variety of military tasks with speed, efficiency and skill without asking a whole lot of questions. Their willingness to serve in a variety of ways which helps defend their home territory also means they are readily willing to broker agreements with nearby nations. This often leads to Myndwar Mercenaries serving alongside the armies of the Zokili or the Divaros, in exchange for a variety of

intangible services that ultimately benefit the Myndwar military strategy (peace agreements, preferable trading status, access to better materials, etc.) In short, by providing mercenaries to surrounding, potentially hostile nations, the Myndwar ultimately win many battles by ensuring that they never happen in the first place.

This does not mean that Myndwar Mercenaries are a rag-tag bunch of second-hand fighters who never see action. This could not be further from the truth. Since they are not tied down to a specific area or duty, they often have little *downtime*, and are always bouncing from one hot spot to another, serving as front line troops here, bolstering the city guard there, assisting in the exploration of some cave systems in a third place. No matter what, Myndwar Mercenaries are legendary for their loyalty and devotion to duty. No Myndwar has ever been remembered as having quit a post, failed in his duty, or betrayed an employer. Myndwar serve the terms of their contracts until they are satisfied, or unto death, whichever comes first.

MYNDWAR MERCENARY

4	4	3	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	6	22	11	20
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 3
 Willpower 2
 Armor 2
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade] 3
 Strength-Based Combat Style [Myndwar Stonefist] 1
 Agility-Based Combat Style [Myndwar Doublestrike] 2
 Perception [Alertness] 2
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Military Tactics [Small Unit] 2
 Military Tactics [Stryder Crew] 1

Turf: Mountains

Cave Jumper

Myndwar Cave Jumpers come closest to fitting the stereotypical description of the Myndwar who spends his life living underground in dark, dank passages, miles below the surface. In truth, Cave Jumpers live on the surface like most everyone else. But unlike most Myndwar, they seem to have an unhealthy fascination with the secrets to be discovered beneath the surface, and often they will spend days, weeks, even months without seeing sunlight, all in pursuit of the unknown, jumping from one cave to the next.

The direct ancestors of the earliest Cave Jumpers were rumored to be the Myndwar who found the very first Runes, helping start the chain of events that led to the creation of the Rune Stryders, and the release of the smaller races from beneath the tyrannical enslavement of the Deijin giants. It makes sense, then, that one of the primary tasks the Cave

Jumpers lay out for themselves is the continued search for new Runes, and other ancient secrets long since forgotten in the darkness below. Most claim that all the Runes and secrets have already been found, but Cave Jumpers are having none of that. There are plenty of secrets to be discovered—you just have to look for them.

Cave Jumpers are more than just seekers of Runes, however. Because they have a familiarity with the ancient world that few others can match, they are also among the world's predominant archaeologists and historians, capable not only of telling you how your ancestors lived, but showing you firsthand. If a cave painting is buried somewhere that prophesies the coming of a great king in your nation, they will know where to find it, and if someone lost an artifact a century ago, they have probably stumbled across it somewhere in their journeys.

Even if they have not found your missing item, they have the skills to go looking for it. Cave Jumpers are more than just scholars and diggers. They are also skilled in the arts of the very Runes and magics they seek and study, and so most Cave Jumpers are able to call up the power of the Runes they are most familiar with. This knowledge greatly extends the amount of time they can survive in inhospitable conditions without support. With even just a handful of Runes at their disposal, they can provide themselves with light, food, and water for weeks, not to mention the ability to defend themselves in extreme situations.

Valley Mage

The predominant practitioners of the Runic arts among the Myndwar are known as Valley Mages, a simple enough name that speaks for itself. The mountainous terrain of the Myndwar country is dotted with valleys, large and small, wide and narrow, high and low, within which the bulk of the population lives. And in many of these valleys, a single Myndwar of particular skill will lay claim to his terrain, offering his protection and knowledge to the people of that area in exchange for the exclusive right to call that valley his own.

From time to time, two or more Mages will appear in the same Valley, but inevitably all but one are driven away. Valley Mages may all work for the same ultimate goal, but they do

MYNDWAR CAVE JUMPER

3	5	2	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	10	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2

Willpower I

General Combat [Initiative] I

Armor 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Pick] 3

Athletics [Climbing] 3

Acrobatics [Contortion] 2

Acrobatics [Gymnastics] 2

Acrobatics [Steeplejacking] I

Light Weapon Combat [Stone] I

Perception [Navigation] 2

Language [Runelore] 2

Thievery/Roguary [Trapwork] 3

Turf: Subterranean

not work well with others of their kind. This is based in part out of practicality, and few fault the Mages for their attitudes. Not only are there many valleys in need of protection and assistance, necessitating the spreading out of magical talent, but since Valley Mages often serve as leaders of the community they serve, two Mages is often one too many when quick decisions need to be made. There is too little room for disagreement or debate, and certainly no time for squabbling or competition when lives are on the line. Thus, the Valley Mages' somewhat self-centered outlook on life is embraced and accepted as a necessity, and their hostility towards one another is overlooked as an idiosyncrasy amongst the wealth of benefits they bring to a community.

Valley Mages make no secret of the fact that they are constantly in search of greater power and knowledge. The fact that this power allows them to better protect their community is an obvious benefit, and so the people they serve are all too

willing to assist the Mage in his efforts. In particular, Valley mages will often Contract with Cave Jumpers and Augers to seek out new magics for them to master, gratefully trading some of their community's wealth for access to such secrets. Most communities are perfectly willing to assist in this way, and those that are not are typically too afraid to say anything. There is no record of a Valley Mage ever harming his own people for disagreeing with him, but since Valley Mages tend to teeter on the fine edge of sanity, most will agree that there is a first time for anything, and they would rather not set the precedent.

There are more than a few Valley Mages without permanent homes, wandering from valley to valley and town to town, never settling down in any one place. Even more than the others, these Mages are feared by the Myndwar people as dangerous outcasts and loners; not because they are any more powerful, but because they are unpredictable.

MYNDWAR VALLEY MAGE

2	3	3	5	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	8	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2
 Armor 1
 Strength-Based Combat Style [Myndwar Stonefist] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Staff] 2
 Perception [Alertness] 2
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Socializing [Deception] 2
 Socializing [Leadership] 2
 Language [Literacy] 2
 Language [Runelore] 3
 Language [Speak Draslander] 1

Turf: Flatlands

Auger

Augers are the backbone of Myndwar society, providing the raw materials needed to construct everything from weapons to Stryders, from farms to fortresses. Obvious materials thus provided include stone, metal, gemstones and the hardwood of the trees that grow on the steep slopes of The Spine, but also included are the Augers themselves. They do not just find and recover the materials, they also play an active role in every part of its design and construction. Take any wall along a Myndwar border, and there is an Auger who can tell you where he found the stones, how well they fit together, and how heavy they were to carry.

Augers are quite happy to work in teams to drill new mines, clear areas of forest, dam rivers and perform all of the other tasks necessary to get their jobs done. They respect solitude as much as other Myndwar, but see definite advantage in sharing tasks with others, as the scale of the tasks they are set to are often far greater than could ever be handled by one individual.

Unlike Cave Jumpers, Augers typically avoid the existing cave structures of the Myndwar territory, since those tunnels and caverns are for the most part already wiped clean of useful raw materials. Augers are responsible for new construction

and excavation, and if they should happen, in their digging, to come across an older tunnel or natural cavern, they will typically stop digging and turn the area over to the Jumpers. They have no interest in the past, only the present.

However, their constant manual labor means that Augers are typically in fine physical shape. Their knowledge of underground structures means that it is not uncommon for a team of Augers to accompany a Cave Jumper on an occasional jaunt, long spears in hand to assist in skewering any strange beasts that might wish to waylay underground travelers. Cave Jumpers bring the brains, Augers bring the brawn, and everyone gets out in one piece.

Augers are also sought after by neighboring countries for their skills, not only in mining and the construction of defensive fortifications, but in demolition and destruction as well. It is not unheard of for one group of Augers to be hired to reinforce a fortress, and another group to be hired by an opposing army to knock the same fortress to the ground. Augers placed in such a situation will typically do their jobs as best they can while trying to minimize Myndwar casualties in the process. Should they all survive, they never hold a grudge; they were all just doing their job, and now that the job is done, everyone can laugh about it and get back to other work.



MYNDWAR AUGER

4	3	3	4	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	10	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 1

Armor 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Pick] 3

Athletics [Climbing] 3

Acrobatics [Contortion] 1

Light Weapon Combat [Stone] 2

Perception [Awareness] 2

Language [Runelore] 1

Military Tactics [Siege] 1

Skilled Trade [Miner] 2

Skill Trade [Architect] 2

Turf: Subterranean

Seer

The term *Seer* is used somewhat ubiquitously among many races, referring to those peculiar sorts of individuals who claim the ability to see into the future. Among the Myndwar, Seers are revered more than reviled, and looked up to as valuable sources of information, practical and tangible as well as mystical. Myndwar Seers do not claim to be able to see the future. They do, however, have an uncanny knack for predicting future events, based not on strange visions but on intellect, observation and meditation on the interplay between order and chaos, pattern and unpredictability.

At a most basic level, Seers are lookouts, manning the tall towers that perch near the top of the higher peaks of the Myndwar mountain ranges. Chosen for their keen eyesight and observational skills, they are often the first to spot the

movements of anyone encroaching on Myndwar territory, and as such serve as a sort of first line of defense. Thus positioned, Seers also serve as an extremely fast means of communication across the vast Myndwar territory, using flashes of light and other signals to quickly relay coded information from one tower to the next. In such a fashion, messages can be sent over hundreds of miles in just a few minutes.

As they are given to spending long stretches of time alone, Seers also tend to be rather quiet, meditative and sedate. They have plenty of time to think about life and their place in it, and are all too happy to share their thoughts with others when they do have the opportunity to spend time with others. Myndwar leaders also respect the fact that the Seers have plenty of time on their hands, in secure locations, to put their powerful minds and creativity to work, and so Seers are often given battle plans and strategies to ponder over, and codes to break. Though often somewhat unorthodox, the solutions

they often come up with work startlingly well in many instances, helping the Myndwar military retain its reputation for being unpredictable and deadly. Seldom will the Myndwar prepare for an assault without first consulting a Seer, or even bringing one along with them if possible.

Seers are also very adept in Runic magic, as they have plenty of time to practice and meditate on the meaning of the ancient language. They have been known to venture forth from their towers from time to time in search of more knowledge of this sort, happy to trade what they know in exchange for yet more knowledge.

Spine Runner

While Myndwar Seers are often capable of sending messages among their towers with great speed, their reach is limited, both in range as well as in dispersion. When messages need to be carried between mercenary groups, or when important news needs to be transmitted among the entire populace, Spine Runners are called into action.

Spine, of course, refers to the common name for the massive series of interconnected mountain ranges that divide the continent in two. Since this is where the Myndwar dwell, for the most part, most of the *running* that these Spine Runners do is along the length of this Spine. However, Runners are also used for other functions, accompanying armies on excursions out of Myndwar territory, or sent to deliver urgent personal messages to foreign governments. In all cases, the Runners always work on foot, and are capable of incredible endurance. Tales tell of Runners who ran for four days and nights without food, water or sleep, only to collapse and die after delivering their message.

Not trained extensively in the combat arts, Spine Runners are often accused of lacking courage, as they will often be seen running away from attack, or ducking and hiding until the coast is clear. The flipside of the story is that *Spine* also refers to the Runners' remarkable courage and determination. They are perhaps more fearless than any other Myndwar, heedless of danger as they clamber down sheer cliffs, plunge into dank caves, or scurry across bloody, chaotic battlefields in order to complete their assigned tasks. If they choose to avoid conflict or danger in a particular instance, it is only because they are

MYNDWAR SEER

2	2	4	5	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
4	9	17	8	23
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 0
 Willpower 2
 Athletics [Climbing] 2
 Acrobatics [Steeplejacking] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Stone] 2
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Socializing [Diplomacy] 2
 Socializing [Teaching] 2
 Socializing [Leadership] 2
 Language [Runelore] 3
 Language [Speak Zokili] 2
 Military Tactics [General] 1

Turf: Mountains

doing their best to complete their assigned task. If they are dead, after all, they cannot deliver the message.

Aside from carrying messages, Spine Runners also serve an assortment of related functions. Many carry small packages from place to place, serving as quick, efficient couriers and thus giving the Myndwar some semblance of a centralized mail service. Being familiar with the lay of the land, they also serve as scouts and trailblazers, either passing information to others as needed or leading parties on excursions through Myndwar territory.

MYNDWAR SPINE RUNNER

3	5	3	2	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	6	21	11	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 3
 General Combat [Initiative] 0
 Willpower 0
 Athletics [Climbing] 2
 Athletics [Running] 3
 Acrobatics [Gymnastics] 2
 Acrobatics [Steeplejacking] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Perception [Alertness] 2
 Perception [Navigation] 2
 Language [Literacy] 1
 Language [Memorization] 2

Turf: Mountains

ZOKILI ROLES

Pilyt

All Zokili join the military at some point in their lives, but only a chosen few (typically the smallest of the bunch) are chosen to become Pilyts. Once chosen, often at a very young age, Pilyts train for years to manipulate the complex controls inside a Stryder, either perfecting the skill quickly or quickly falling out of the program and returning to normal military duty.

Zokili Stryders are smaller than those of almost all other races, including the diminutive Draslander. This has several obvious effects. First, it improves the agility and speed of the Stryder, allowing combat maneuvers that other, larger Stryders simply cannot handle. Secondly, it improves control, since the Stryder's extremities are much closer to the Pilyt inside. Thirdly, a direct extension of this last, it opens the Pilyt up to more serious injury, both from his own Stryder and from without. Pilyts are typically suited up in padded, flameproof



ZOKILI PILYT

2	5	2	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	6	21	9	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 1

Armor 2

Athletics [Jumping] 1

Athletics [Swimming] 1

Acrobatics [Contortion] 2

Acrobatics [Gymnastics] 2

Acrobatics [Steeplejacking] 1

Stryder Weapon Combat [Stryder Spear] 2

Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 3

Language [Runelore] 2

Military Tactics [Stryder Crew] 3

Turf: Highlands

armor, as their compartments are often pierced in one way or another during combat, and many tend to carry weapons and tools in case they are forced to abandon their Stryders to fight on foot.

Some few Pilyts work in teams of two, both operating the same Stryder from within. In these cases, the Stryder in question typically features an extra set of limbs, either doubling the offensive capability (in the case of a simple extra pair of arms) or altering the Stryder altogether. Common variants include variations on the arachnid or crustacean theme, with six legs and two claw-like appendages, or eight legs, offering unmatched speed and agility on the field of battle. For these more complex machines, most highly sought after are Zokili twins, who appear once in every thousand or so births. Twins working together inside the same Stryder achieve such a degree of mastery that the two are often

treated as one being, sharing a name and an identity (and a life; when one dies, the other typically dies as well, often by his own hand.)

Elyte

Many among the taller races snicker when they see a Zokili Elyte contingent march by in formation, the little men dressed in their beige uniforms carrying weapons nearly as large as themselves. Those few lucky enough to see the Elyte in action know the truth of the matter. Despite appearances, the Zokili Elyte are possibly the finest and most savage warriors on the face of the continent.

Drafted from amongst the tallest and strongest Zokili children, the Elyte are trained in combat and tactics from the time they can walk. Since strength and size are to some degree genetic, there is a good chance that if a father was an Elyte, his sons and daughters will also be Elyte, but the ranks are open to all who qualify, regardless of parentage. Those who fail to perform up to standards are usually pushed into normal military service instead, but since being an Elyte is such an honor, and failing is such a disappointment, many who fail either take their own lives or plunge themselves into self-exile, unable to face their families.

Those who succeed are trained, via secret techniques and indoctrination, in the art of quickly and ferociously killing their opponents in battle. This is a significant departure from the training techniques used by most armies. Most ordinary warriors are taught how to win a battle, how to defend a city, how to assault an outpost. The Elyte are taught only to kill. Their single-minded devotion to this task is what makes them so feared, although the body of mythology that has built up around them because of it also plays a major role in this attitude.

Among those who see them in action, however, there can be no doubt that much of the rumors are true. One story relates a contingent of Zokili Stryders unable to retreat from deep within enemy territory, with support miles away, too far to be of any use. Fearlessly, a dozen Zokili Elyte walked over to their razor-sharp angled Sheiwin, and without a thought, they charged, en masse, into the midst of the enemy, shouting "Iyi Zokili!" the entire way. The enemy did not expect a charge, and

was taken aback. Those too dumbfounded to get out of the way were cut down in their place, many neatly decapitated. Those foolish enough to actually react did not last much longer. In the end, nine of the twelve Elyte lost their lives in the charge, but they took fifty enemies with them, and managed to break a hole in the line that enabled their Stryders to escape.

ZOKILI PILYT

4	4	4	1	9
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	12	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 0

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 2

Armor 2

Athletics [Running] 1

Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade] 3

Strength-Based Combat Style [Zokili Nervestrike] 3

Stealth [Silent Death] 2

Agility-Based Combat Style [Zokili Risingsun] 3

Perception [Alertness] 2

Perception [Tracking] 1

Military Tactics [Small Unit] 1

Turf: Highlands

The Sheiwin of the Elyte are large angled knives with razor-sharp double-edged blades, varying in length but typically a full Enan or more in length, and often as long as the Zokili wielding it is tall. Kept razor sharp at all times, they are capable of cutting through steel, and have even been known to slice through the heavy armor of enemy Stryders. The name *Sheiwin* translates as *Whisper*, literally meaning *Secret Breath*, from the runes Shei (breath) and Whin (secret).

Saboteur

Zokili warriors are brilliant strategists and honorable opponents on the field of battle, but they are also pragmatists at heart, and they will use whatever advantages they can to achieve their objectives. They thus make no secret about the fact that their military forces include a large number of specially trained Saboteurs, whose mission it is to infiltrate enemy territory and sabotage their equipment, plans and Stryders.

Saboteurs are not well-liked or trusted by other races, as they are seen as an affront to the normal business of war. Since it is easy to postulate how the Zokili might gain from the sabotage of anything, the open presence of a Saboteur anywhere in public is often met with overreaction. Zokili acting suspicious around important equipment are often rounded up and shuffled off, and those who might dare possess hand tools within a stone's throw of a Stryder might even be thrown in jail as a precautionary measure. Arrest first, and let the Diplomats handle it later, is often the credo.

ZOKILI SABOTEUR

3	4	3	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	10	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Armor 1

Stealth [Hiding] 2

Stealth [Sneaking] 2

Acrobatics [Contortion] 1

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Perception [Alertness] 1

Socializing [Deception] 3

Language [Runelore] 2

Military Tactics [Sabotage] 3

Roguary [Trapwork] 2

Turf: Urban

The truth of the matter, alas, is that any Zokili seen in such a situation is almost certainly not a Saboteur (or at least, not a very good one). Saboteurs are trained not only to efficiently sabotage equipment and battle plans, but to do so secretly. They are capable of silently infiltrating guarded areas, spying upon enemy positions, doing their damage and then getting back out, all without being seen or heard. As the saying goes, if you can see a Zokili Saboteur, it probably means he's dead. And even then, you cannot be too sure; more than one Saboteur has been known to feign death in order to make good his escape at a later time.

Since Zokili often need to mingle with enemy troops and manipulate heavy equipment, they are typically amongst the tallest members of their society. Of course, that could be just a rumor, too, to throw unsuspecting opponents off their guard. Only the Zokili know for sure.

Enginyr

Zokili are not naive enough to disbelieve in the real existence of magic and runes. They have seen enough of the world to recognize that magic exists, and since they played a major role in the creation of the very first Stryders, they know all too well how vital a part runes play in their function. And yet despite this, outside of Stryder Pilyts, very few Zokili will openly admit to using runes or runic technology. Among the masses, this might not seem surprising, but among the Enginyrs who construct and maintain the Zokili Stryders, the thought is somewhat surprising.

At a basic level, the bulk of an Enginyr's work goes into gathering raw materials, researching, and then constructing the body of a Stryder. Since this can take months, if not years for particularly complex models, to an Enginyr it simply makes sense that this is where the emphasis should lie. Why then do the other races place so much importance on runes? Runes are simply little carvings that are placed on the Stryder after it has been built. It takes a few days, perhaps a week, and then it is done. It is important, to be sure, but more important than all the rest? Enginyrs do not think so.

Part of the reason they feel this way is that they alone, among all the races, control the creation and maintenance of a Stryder from start to finish. Among other races, there are typically two or three types of individuals involved: someone

ZOKILI ENGINYR

2	3	3	5	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	8	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 2

Armor [Base] 1

Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2

Acrobatics [Contortion] 1

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Perception [Observation] 3

Language [Literacy] 2

Language [Runelore] 2

Military Tactics [Stryder Crew] 2

Roguary [Locksmithing] 1

Skilled Trade [Smith; metal, armor] 3

Turf: Urban

to gather the material, someone to construct the Stryder, and someone else to inscribe the runes. The Zokili Enginyr does not trust anyone else to get involved, so he just does it all himself.

Zokili Enginyrs are experts in metallurgy and smithing, and can be called upon for a wide variety of tasks, thanks to their knowledge of all aspects of a creative effort. They can forge a weapon, sharpen the blade, and inscribe runes on its hilt. They take a special pride in their work, the pride of the craftsman, but they are not particularly proud of any one aspect of that work. After all, it took them a great deal longer to gather the steel and forge the blade, then shape and sharpen it, than it did to trace the rune into the metal.

It should come as no surprise that Zokili Enginyrs name all of their Stryders, though it might seem surprising to hear them tell you that the Stryders know their own names, and answer when called. Perhaps there is something to that *mad scientist* rumor after all.

Medic

Zokili medics are among the most efficient healers on the continent, partly because they train amongst the rest of the soldiers and can thus understand tactics on a deeper level. And like other Zokili, they have applied the lessons of technology to the old runic magic, in order to improve their methodology.

Anyone can mumble a simple healing spell to dull the pain of a twisted ankle, or lessen the swelling from a bug bite. More skilled wielders of magical power can repair a broken bone or halt bleeding with a word and a rune traced onto the skin. But the Zokili medic heals more indirectly, instead using runic magic to imbue various bandages, poultices and concoctions with healing power beforehand, and then using those items as needed over the days and weeks that follow the preparation. The simple transfer of power from rune to a new medium falls well within the laws of magic as accepted by most people, but outside of the Zokili few see the need to do so. If magic can be applied directly, they argue, how can anything be improved by adding indirection?

Among the Zokili, however, the desire to share knowledge and benefit among the community is a driving force, and by imbuing items with healing power, a Medic can thereby share those items with others around him, allowing them to heal

while he prepares yet more items. This is not to say that a Zokili Medic is little more than a pharmacist, doling out drugs. Many a Zokili Medic follows his troops onto the field of battle, bandaging wounds as the swords clash overhead and the blood sprays just a few feet away. But that same Medic knows in his heart that should he lose his life, the materials and knowledge he leaves behind can be used by others to continue his work.

Zokili Medics are not above trading their goods to other people for profit, although any such transactions are usually accompanied by the usual warning—using items imbued with runes is always risky and unpredictable, especially if the user does not know what he or she is using. Knowledge of power is always essential when trying to use that power safely. And for this reason, Zokili Medics are as prized as the materials they imbue.



ZOKILI MEDIC

1	4	4	4	12
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	9	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 0
 Armor 2
 Athletics [Running] 1
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Agility-Based Combat Style [Draslander Disarmament] 2
 Perception [Alertness] 3
 Perception [Tracking] 2
 Language [Runelore] 2
 Military Tactics [Enlisted] 1
 Skilled Trade [Healer] 3

Turf: Highlands

Sage

Zokili Sages are widely accepted among their own people as the wisest individuals around, and yet in spite of that fact (or perhaps because of it), Sages are never among the leaders of Zokili society. Instead, these wise teachers choose to wander among their people, and the world, spreading what they know and ever seeking out new knowledge that they can then share with others, to the benefit of all.

Zokili Sages rarely carry weapons of any sort, and generally shy away from battle altogether when possible. They are not pacifists, recognizing that battle and warfare is an essential part of society. Neither are they cowards; many a Zokili Sage has stood his ground under insurmountable odds, giving his life to prove his determination to a cause. Rather, Sages avoid conflict and battle because they feel that life is preferable to death, and violent combat brings the possibility of death much closer to reality.

ZOKILI SAGE

2	2	5	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
4	9	17	9	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 2

Atletics [Running] 2

Strength-Based Combat Style [Zokili Nervestrike] 2

Agility-Based Combat Style [Zokili Risingsun] 2

Creativity [Stories] 2

Perception [Observation] 3

Socializing [Leadership] 2

Socializing [Diplomacy] 2

Socializing [Preaching] 2

Language [Runelore] 2

Turf: Highlands

This is not to say that Sages shy away from conflict. On the contrary, they seem to delight in placing themselves in and around situations where conflict is a certainty, hoping to learn from the situation and offer their own views on the situation to help resolve matters if they can. Because they see so much in their travels around the world, and are careful observers and great students of life, they often have much to offer, and many a Sage can quietly defuse a situation with a gentle, wise assessment of the situation before things devolve into violence.

Of course, like all Zokili, Sages are great pragmatists, and they recognize that not all violent situations can be avoided. As such, placed into the midst of violence, they are quite ready and willing to defend themselves if need be, preferring not to kill their opponents but ready to do so if they need to in order to protect themselves or others. They value life, including their own, and will take life if it means protecting that which they cherish. Because they choose not to carry weapons (since weapons provoke violence, which is best avoided), they often learn to fight without weapons at all, or are skilled in acquiring weapons quickly if things get bad.

Their devotion in life has a noticeable effect on those around them, and Zokili Sages are often sent along with troops to raise morale and spirits. The tales they can tell of journeys undertaken and lessons learned can lighten the mood around a tense campfire better than any quantity of liquor.

Ambassador

Whereas the Divaros Diplomats are generally seen by the outside world as manipulating, double-dealing weasels, Zokili Ambassadors are often sought after as being wise, fair and just in their dealings with all races and in all situations. For the most part, this estimation is true. The Zokili are certainly fair and even-handed, and their Ambassadors are trained to uphold these attitudes and beliefs at all times. But what many fail to appreciate is the fact that the Zokili always put their own well-being first and foremost, and the non-violent way in which they are able to manipulate others in order to achieve their goals is through their Ambassadorial staff.

Ambassadors are trained in the arts of manipulation as well as law and etiquette. They know not only the proper way to

act in a situation, and the proper statute to quote at the appropriate time, but how to carefully word their phrases to get others to react in a way that favors their situation. They are always full of good cheer and a willingness to attend social gatherings and official functions where they can shake hands, smile and nod. They are also more than willing to attend less social gatherings in the dark of night, in back alleys or secret passages, if brokering such deals is in the best interests of their people.

Ambassadors are not fools, however. Like all in their society, they are trained in the arts of war for part of their life, and this gives them an advantage over many in both of the aforementioned situations. In official gatherings, Ambassadors bring to the table not only a wealth of knowledge, but a warrior's attitude, an unwavering devotion to winning a piece

of the pie for themselves, no matter what it takes. In shadier dealings, they are always wary of danger and double-dealing, know when to lie and when they are being lied to, and always know the way to the quickest exit if things go bad.

Ambassadors are also trained in less publicly acceptable tactics and practices as well, in keeping with Zokili philosophy. Just as Saboteurs are trained to destroy enemy equipment in order to help win battles in the future, so are Ambassadors trained to manipulate deals in order to get things to go their way. Sometimes a lie or a threat is enough to get the other side's man to sign the deal, and when that does not work, there are always more violent ways to make people see the Ambassador's point of view. It is all part of the overall effort to help Zokili society.



ZOKILI AMBASSADOR

3	3	4	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
6	8	20	10	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 1
 Willpower 2
 Armor [Base] 2
 Stealth [Sneaking] 1
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Perception [Awareness] 3
 Socializing [Diplomacy] 3
 Socializing [Preaching] 2
 Language [Literacy] 1
 Language [Speak Divaros] 2
 Language [Speak Myndwar] 2

Turf: Urban

KANTARIN ROLES

Melded

Other peoples build their Stryders; Kantarins grow theirs. As such, the Kantarin attitude towards their Stryders is reverential and respectful, and the constructs are treated in the same way as the Kantarins treat the plants and trees around them. Stryders are tended, silently revered, and mourned when they are lost. In part, this is because the Kantarins respect the life of the rain forest. It is also because of the Melded.

Those who pilot the Kantarin Stryders, known as Melded, achieve a unique bond with their construct, one which goes far beyond that attained by any other race. The bond begins when a Kantarin chooses to raise a Stryder from a seedling, nurturing the sprout, working with Shapers to see that it grows tall and strong, finally severing it from its roots and taking it into his personal care for the rest of his life.

KANTARIN MELDED

3	4	4	3	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	11	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 2

Athletics [Climbing] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Stryder Weapon Combat 2

Bonding [Planary Empathy] 3

Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 3

Perception [Alertness] 2

Perception [Navigation] 2

Language [Runelore] 1

Turf: Jungle

Throughout the process, the Melded takes the responsibility as seriously as a mother protecting her child, and often when a Stryder is lost for one reason or another, the despondent Melded will take his own life, ceremonially and with the support of his people. For the Melded, the possibility of such a sacrifice is but a minor concern, considering the benefits gained from being thus bonded with a Stryder.

Many others see only pain, witnessing the tiny scars and blisters that often crisscross a Melded's entire body. Among Kantarins, however, such scars are a badge of honor, replicated by the ritual scarification and tattooing in which all Kantarin participate. None can truly replicate the Melded's marks however, since they are inflicted in a unique way.

When a Kantarin Melded climbs into his Stryder and settles in, small roots crawl out from the walls around him, piercing his skin as they seek direct connection with his mind and body. Often, a mossy down grows over his arms as he literally becomes one with the construct, his blood mingling with the lifesap that flows through the Stryder. The process is, of course, intensely painful, but the pleasure the Melded feels from being linked in this way with a greater living being quickly drowns out any painful memories. It also means that Kantarin Stryders are the fastest and most agile Stryders, since they respond directly to the mental commands and desires of the Melded inside.

Of course, since the two are bonded, pain felt by one is felt by the other while they are bonded, and so in battle the Melded has a lot at stake. He cannot just rush in, take his lumps and rush home for repairs. Removal from the machine is also painful, both because of the scarring and because it means leaving the close bond behind. After heavy bonding with their Stryders, some Melded actually go too far, permanently fusing with their Stryders as treelike beings who wander into the jungle, often never to be seen again. Such beings are at once feared and revered by the Kantarin people.

Nettle

The primary source of food and protection among the Kantarin are the Nettles, quick, precise and silent hunters who are trained from a young age to silently track down their prey and kill it quickly, often with a single stroke from one of their wickedly barbed, broad-bladed spears. A small group of



Nettles can typically feed ten times their number in Kantarin citizens, making their skills as hunters highly prized and cherished by all.

Although they master their arts by hunting animals in the jungle, and fishing in the ocean, the skills of a Nettle obviously apply equally well to prey of a more humanoid sort. Nettles often trail strange visitors, ambush unsuspecting enemies and kill those who pose a threat, typically before the stranger ever knows what hit him. If there are survivors left alive after a Nettle strike, they are typically left incapacitated or dazed, often slowly suffering from one of the many vegetable poisons commonly used by the Kantarin on their blades.

Nettles also serve as the first line of defense should larger conflicts arise. They form an invisible wall of defenders around the perimeter of the Kantarin rain forest, making it seem as if their homelands are left completely undefended. Woe to the unsuspecting warriors who wander in with swords sheathed, expecting an easy conquest.

Of course, Nettles are not trained as heavy infantry, and when faced with overwhelming odds or other less than optimal situations, they are not afraid or ashamed to bolt for cover so they can alert other Kantarin to the danger. In many cases, this will allow Kantarin families time to pick up and move before the threat arrives on their doorstep. If necessary, however, Nettles will remain behind to buy time for other Kantarin. Many have laid down their lives in this manner, the few sacrificing themselves so that the many may live.

Like most Kantarin, the Nettles are fond of tattooing their skin and braiding foreign objects into their hair. Some have a tradition of adorning themselves with trophies from their kills, taking teeth, bones, feathers and hair from fallen prey, and some even go so far as to scar themselves with runes drawn by piercing their skin with needles dipped in the blood of their foes.

KANTARIN NETTLE

3

Strength

5

Agility

3

Heart

2

Intellect

10

Perception

8

Body

5

Mind

21

Health

11

Endurance

18

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 1

Armor 1

Acrobatics [Running] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Spear] 2

Acrobatics [Steeplejacking] 2

Stealth [Hiding] 2

Stealth [Sneaking] 2

Stealth [Silent Death] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 3

Perception [Alertness] 1

Perception [Tracking] 2

Language [Kantarin Signing] 1

Turf: Jungle

Thorn

Where Nettles are known for their subtlety and speed, the Kantarin Thorns are known for their power. The Thorns are not trained to hunt. They are trained to kill known threats to the Kantarin community, be they of the humanoid sort or otherwise. Since killing is not necessarily a full time duty, Thorns also serve as second tier guards and watchmen, serving as elite guards for Kantarin of higher standing, and acting as unofficial police for larger Kantarin villages throughout the jungle.

Thorns are typically amongst the largest and heaviest members of their society, some standing well over six feet in height. Due to the slender, lean physique shared by all Kantarin, they hide their strength well, weighing less than many Divaran warriors of equal height yet capable of greater feats of strength. Wiry muscles rippling like steel cable, a single Kantarin Thorn is easily capable of holding his own against several enemies at once. In part, this is due to their great strength and size. But it also has a lot to do with the way they fight.

KANTARIN THORN

5	4	2	2	8
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
9	4	22	11	17
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 0

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower I

Armor I

Heavy Weapon Combat [Spear] 3

Strength-Based Combat Style [Kantarin Skytackle] 3

Ligfit Weapon Combat [Bow] 2

Agility-Based Combat Style [Kantarin Deatfidancing] 3

Perception [Alertness] 2

Language [Kantarin Signing] I

Turf: Jungle

Kantarin Thorns do not believe in the concept of honor, especially when it comes to an enemy who is trying to kill you, and who you are trying to kill in turn. As such, Thorns are often called *dirty fighters* by those who have faced them in combat. They will roll on the ground, flip in the air, throw weapons, furniture, debris, dirt and more at their enemies to serve as a distraction, kicking and striking with a flurry of blows before moving in for the kill with any of an assortment of wickedly bladed weapons, usually coated with a toxin of one sort or another. Combat is almost always to the death, for Thorns do not believe in the taking prisoners or showing mercy.

Part of the Thorns' skill and power comes from the many Runes tattooed across their bodies, often taken to such an extreme that little of their flesh shows anywhere from head to toe. Carving themselves with Runes of power, strength, death, pain and more, they mentally and physically prepare themselves for death, both their own and of their enemies. They do not fear pain or death. They live, train and exist only to kill those who need to be killed. A more bloodthirsty sort of warrior does not likely exist on the continent.

Burr

Kantarin Burrs are the eyes and ears of the Kantarin people, serving as spies, scouts, navigators and forward observers in all facets of life. Since stealth is of primary importance to them, they are typically among the smallest of their people, with some being mere children when they are first asked to join the ranks of the Burrs.

Most of the time, the Burrs roam about semi-independently, sometimes in small groups but often alone, simply scouting out the jungle and reporting their findings to any Kantarin villages they happen to come across. Most of the time, such reports are fairly mundane, but no less useful for being ordinary—Burrs tell of animal movement and activity, potential sources of vegetable sustenance, good campsites, changes in the weather, and other happenings that the average Kantarin is all too happy to know more about.

Their skills also make the Burrs invaluable when it comes to situations where the Kantarin are threatened from without. Small, stealthy and more silent than even the Nettles, the Burrs

are capable of observing enemy armies, slipping behind enemy lines to lay traps, or simply tailing strangers through the jungle to keep a closer eye on them. Preferring to avoid direct combat, Burrs become skilled in the art of snares and ambush, able to quickly dig pits, lay spike traps, and distill poisons from plants in order to effectively disable enemies without needing to be present.

Since they spend so much time alone, in silent solitude and hiding, many Burrs adopt somewhat antisocial and animal tendencies, shirking concepts such as language and clothing and giving themselves over entirely to the jungle in which they live, alone, like an animal. They still interact with other Kantarin, and are still capable of communication and the exchange of information, but Burrs who have allowed themselves to *go feral* like this are often treated like pets rather than humanoids by other Kantarin. Since the Kantarin respect and revere all life within the jungle, this is not much of a change, but given a choice between saving the life of a Burr gone feral, or another Kantarin, most would choose to let the Burr fend for himself.



KANTARIN BURR

2	5	4	2	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	6	20	11	19
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2
 General Combat [Initiative] 1
 Willpower 1
 Athletics [Running] 2
 Stealth [Hiding] 2
 Stealth [Sneaking] 3
 Acrobatics [Steeplefacking] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2
 Perception [Alertness] 2
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Perception [Tracking] 1
 Language [Kantarin Signing] 2
 Language [Speak Draslander] 1
 Language [Speak Myndwar] 1

Turf: Jungle

Vine

Tales tell of the day when Kantar, the last of the Druids, made his final stand with the people of Kator. Badly outmatched in battle, and facing certain annihilation, Kantar led them to the outskirts of the thick and deadly jungles that bordered the civilized world. They could go no further. The Divaran army closed in, and made their demands. Those who resisted would be slaughtered. Those who surrendered would be sent into permanent exile, just as the Sivtagi and Draslander had been exiled years before. Kantar liked neither option, and moving among his people through the night, came up with a third.

When dawn broke, the Katorians had vanished. The jungle had swallowed them whole. The people put their faith in Kantar, and he in turn promised to teach them what they

needed to know in order to survive. He led them south across the forested islands that lay on the equator, teaching them to hunt, and to hide, and to swim. And then he led them further south, into the thickest parts of the jungle, where the canopy was so thick that the sun never shone and the vines wept rain. And there, Kantar turned, and smiled, and died.

Initially, there was panic and doubt, but this soon gave way to the understanding that Kantar had taught them the one final lesson they so desperately needed to learn: that they must make their own destiny. And so they buried Kantar beneath the thick white vines that would come to be known as Kantar's Tears, and they began rebuilding their lives.

The teachings and lessons taught by Kantar are remembered by those the Kantarin call Vines, a descriptive term that explains how they move throughout the community, always connected to their past, yet always looking forward, and always in need of support from below in order to maintain shape and strength. They are the leaders of the Kantarin

people, always in motion, always circulating among the masses, spreading their teachings, maintaining order, but never dwelling in any one area for too long, lest the people forget Kantar's final lesson: that they must think for themselves.

The Vines are given to wandering, with no particular mission in the rain forest other than to teach and lead others (as little as possible, of course, in keeping with Kantar's wishes). They spend much of the time by themselves, learning yet more secrets of the forest, always eager to share what they discover with others. Of all the Kantarins, they are the most skilled and gifted in the arts of healing, knowing which herbs can cure, and which can kill with just a taste. They are also skilled in Runic lore, often visiting the borders of their lands in order to mark the ground and the trees there with fresh Runes that the trees have begun to heal.

Thanks to their ceaseless wandering, the Vines are also in fine physical form, and since they hunt their own food, and defend themselves from wild beasts, they are more than capable of defending themselves in violent situations. When the Kantarin people are in danger, the Vines often lead the warriors in charge from the front lines.

Adorned

Most Kantarin people live within the rain forest, moving among the trees, interacting with the beasts, and generally acting as if they were a part of one, immense living organism. For most, this is as close as they ever get, and they are quite content to live out their relatively ordinary lives in such a manner. For the select few Adorned who actually become a physical extension of the living, breathing jungle, life is different.

Many a Kantarin mother weeps when she glimpses the Rune upon her newborn child's forehead, half in joy because her child has been chosen by Kantar himself, and half in despair, because she knows that her child will one day leave her, and all the Kantarin people, to wander endlessly, serving the jungle's needs. This is in part for their own good; when young, the Adorned cannot fully comprehend or control the magics inside, but upon nearing adulthood, the young one soon discovers that it is safest for all concerned if the choice to wander is taken up as soon as possible.

KANTARIN VINE

3

Strength

3

Agility

4

Heart

4

Intellect

11

Perception

6

Body

8

Mind

20

Health

10

Endurance

22

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 3

Athletics [Climbing] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Axe] 2

Agility-Based Combat Style [Kantarin Deathdancing] 2

Creativity [Stories] 3

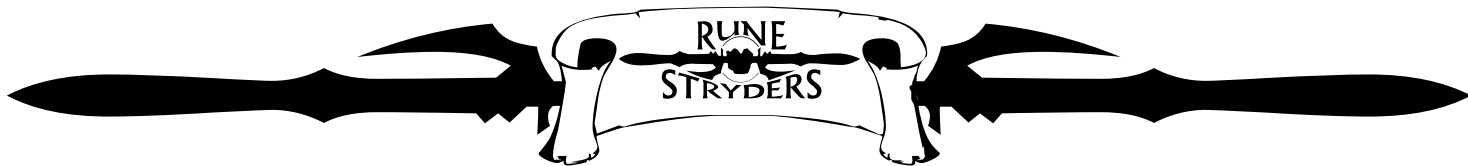
Perception [Observation] 2

Socializing [Leadership] 2

Language [Runelore] 2

Language [Kantarin Signing] 2

Turf: Jungle



The Adorned have the full power of the rain forest at their disposal, learning to master a variety of Runes that draw directly on the jungle's own energy. The obvious forces of earth, wood and water are often quick at hand, but as it nearly always storms somewhere over the rain forest, and the fire always flows beneath, these, too, are at the command of the skilled Adorned.

The Adorned is peculiarly limited in that his spells must always relate in some way to the Rune with which he was marked at birth. If marked with Fire, all his magics must involve fire, even if in combination with other Runes; for this reason, no two Adorned ever cast quite the same spell. The tradeoff for such a limitation, however, is that the Adorned can never be affected by the Rune with which he is marked, neither by his own hand nor by another's, neither for good or for ill intent. Those marked with Healing runes can heal others with ease, but can never benefit from the same; those marked with Death runes are often feared by even other Kantarin, for they are seen as deathless bringers of doom. Some few are marked with Runes yet unnamed, and none know what powers they wield.

KANTARIN ADORNED

1	4	4	4	12
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	9	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 0
General Combat [Initiative] 2
Willpower 2
Atletics [Climbing] 2
Atletics [Swimming] 2
Light Weapon Combat [Staff] 1
Bonding [Animal Empathy] 2
Bonding [Plant Empathy] 3
Perception [Navigation] 2
Language [Runelore] 4

Turf: Jungle

In all cases, the powers of the Adorned are often at the whim of the rain forest, and most never travel far, or for long, away from their homeland unless they are specifically called to do so. The constant flux of energy between their bodies and minds, and that of the jungle, also takes a serious toll on them, mentally and physically, and many find themselves drained, pained and suffering from early deaths, all in service to a greater power. Most are happy to do so, knowing that they have contributed, in some small way, to the life of the jungle.

Shaper

The armies of other nations rely on their blacksmiths and stoneworkers to craft immense machines of steel and rock, suits of chain and plate armor, and hardened weapons of destruction. The Kantarin know that the most durable materials are not to be dug from the ground, but to be shaped and harvested from above it. A tree can resist the blow of an axe better than most metal armors, and even a blade of grass, over time, can burrow through solid stone. All Kantarin are aware of this, but only the Shapers among them have truly mastered the arts of harvesting such power for general use.

Shapers are always growing, tending, planting and harvesting, most of their work done while the item they are working with is still a living part of the jungle, rooted to the ground in one form or another. In a variety of ways (Runes, bamboo poles, ropes, clever watering cycles), they carefully, over weeks, months and years, manipulate the growth and development of those items to form the desired shape.

Knowledge of what plants grow in what ways is also key, for if the Shaper does not start with the correct material, she will not wind up with the correct end product. Kantarin bows, powerful, flexible and hard as steel, can be grown, fully formed, in a matter of weeks from the stalks of one variety of plant that grows deep in the heart of the Kantar rain forest. Kantarin shields and armor are formed from the thick, spiny leaves of a certain tree, which, when layered properly, can turn aside sword and spear alike. Less powerful and resilient weapons and implements can even be grown overnight with the proper seeds and herbal fertilizers, allowing a Shaper to arm an entire squadron in a matter of days.

While the rain forests of the Kantarin are filled with natural resources, and there are no great quantities of metal or stone,

skilled Shapers are adept at not only finding the traces of these materials, but cleverly incorporating them into the objects they tend, grow and shape. Many Kantarin arrows appear to be made of nothing but wood and feathers, but are actually lined with razor sharp fragments of stone and steel, grown into the wood itself by the Shapers. Likewise, the Kantarin Stryders, carefully worked over many years with the assistance of the Melded, are not mere living trees, but conglomerations of wood, bone, rock, metal, and all the elements of the jungle combined. In many cases, the joints between different elements are so fine that no one other than a Shaper can discern where one truly becomes another.

Shapers are great thinkers, and when they are not tied down to their shapings, they are often on the move, wandering and searching for new plants and other natural items that they can shape in new ways. Some even venture far beyond the limits of the rain forest, recognizing that a whole world of strange new plants exists beyond, just waiting to be discovered and shaped.

KANTARIN SHAPER

2	2	5	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
4	9	17	9	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 0

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 2

Athletics [Climbing] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Axe] 1

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Bonding [Plant Empathy] 4

Creativity [Art; tattooing] 1

Perception [Alertness] 1

Perception [Observation] 1

Language [Runelore] 1

Skilled Trade [Farmer] 2

Skilled Trade [Healer] 2

Turf: Jungle

SIVATAGI ROLES

Reaver

Che've'ch in Sivatagi

Stryders are traditionally created from inanimate material, be it stone, wood or steel, and with only two exceptions this holds true across the continent. Among the Kantarin, the line between life and death blurs a bit, since they use living wood to shape their creations, and believe that their entire ecosystem is one immense living being. But the Sivatagi are unique in that they use the living creatures of the desert as their Stryders, tending and taming, but neither creating nor growing the beasts.

The vast majority of the Sivatagi flock consists of giant arachnids and beetles, some of which are natural desert creatures, and some of which are subterranean or mountain-dwelling animals that the Sivatagi have bred desirable traits into. Collectively known as Pei'kh, these creatures are used by the Sivatagi for everything: some serve as pack animals, others as livestock, and still others as mounts and guard beasts. The largest of these latter are those chosen by the Sivatagi as their Stryders.

Reavers are those who break the spirit of these great beasts, depriving them of freedom and taking control of their movements. This is done in a variety of ways, the simplest being basic animal husbandry, and an understanding of the drives and desires of the Pei'ki. Subterranean varieties can be steered quite adeptly merely by covering up the eye(s) on one side of the creature, its instinctive desire to seek darkness causing it to veer instantly in that direction. Other tricks involve other forms of sensory manipulation, leashes and collars, and, of course, Runes, used mostly on those creatures with thick, chitinous carapaces that can better withstand the inscribing process.

Other nations do not consider the Reavers to be true Stryder Pilots, since they ride atop or even walk alongside the Pei'ki they control. However, the strong bond formed between a Reaver and his mount is just as strong and powerful as that formed between any other Stryder and the individual within. In addition, it is important to note that the Reavers often augment the capabilities of their mounts not only with Runes,

SIVATAGI REAVER

4	4	4	1	9
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	12	19
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 1
 Armor 2
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Spear] 2
 Acrobatics [Riding] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 2
 Agility-Based Combat Style [Sivatagi Mounted Combat] 2
 Bonding [Animal Empathy] 2
 Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 2
 Perception [Navigation] 2
 Perception [Observation] 2
 Language [Runelore] 2

Turf: Desert

but with additional armor, spikes and other deadly weapons, in much the same way as other nations modify their own Stryder contingents.

Reavers are most often seen riding at the edge of a particular tribe's domain, ensuring that the beasts within stay within, and those without keep their distance. As such, they seldom wander far, but at least once in every Reaver's life he undergoes a ritual of manhood, traveling far by himself to capture a beast, tame it and make it his personal Stryder. While Reavers can and often do ride many different Pei'ki as the times require, this first bond is stronger than any others, and given a choice a Reaver will always choose to remain with his own Stryder.

Hunter

Hukh'tech in Sivatagi

Although portions of the land inhabited by the Sivatagi are lush and fertile (particularly the Great Valley to the west), most reside and move throughout the bleak landscape of the Eastern Desert. Such harsh terrain makes life difficult, but not impossible, for there are those among the Sivatagi people trained to track down and draw out resources from beneath the sand, salt and stone, including water, food and more.

Sivatagi Hunters are quick and smart, their skills based as much on acquired knowledge and experience as raw instinct. Chosen from among their peers for their quickness and willingness to learn, much of their youth is spent among other Hunters, in the desert, removed from the rest of their people. This crash course means that the new Hunters must learn quickly, as death is often being the price for failure. They also quickly learn to bond with their fellow Hunters in *Packs*, learning to work as a unit with their trusted fellows. Even

SIVATAGI HUNTER

3	5	3	2	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	11	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1
 General Combat [Initiative] 3
 Willpower 1
 Armor 2
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Spear] 2
 Stealth [Silent Death] 2
 Stealth [Sneaking] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 2
 Light Weapon Combat [Entanglement] 3
 Creativity [Mimicry] 2
 Perception [Tracking] 2

Turf: Desert

when among other Sivatagi, Hunters rarely exchange pleasantries, preferring only the company of other Pack members. Often lots must be drawn to determine which of them will actually deal with others when such conversation is needed.

The duties of a Hunter are varied. The most obvious task is hunting down animals and insects, to be killed and used for food, shelter and clothing, or captured for use as mounts or livestock. However, Hunters also hunt down most everything else the Sivatagi need. They track down oases and can find water reserves beneath the sands, they gather fruits and berries from the scattered shrubs around the desert's edges, and they collect scraps of stone, metal and wood for use in building weapons, armor and larger structures.

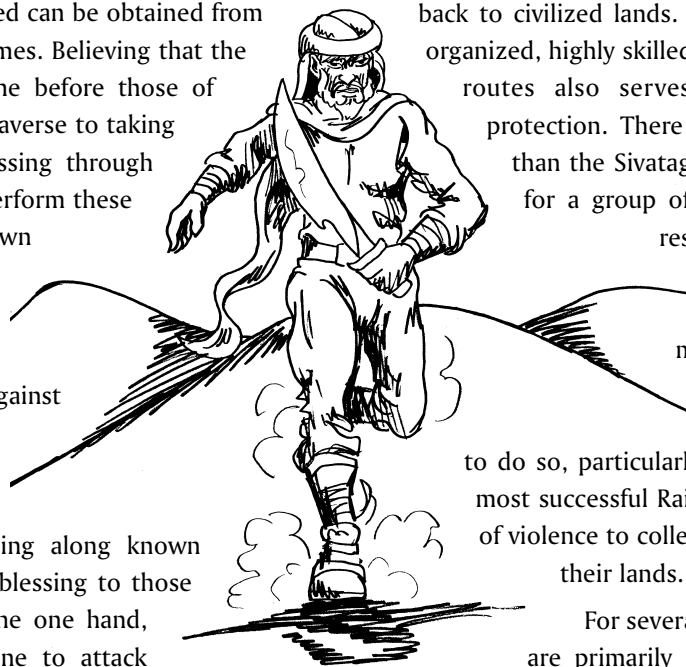
As Hunters are often solely responsible for keeping a particular group of Sivatagi alive, they take their jobs seriously, and will go to extreme lengths to ensure that their hunts are successful. Coming back empty handed could mean the difference between life and death for dozens or hundreds of other people. Failure is never an option.

Raider

Cha'dech in Sivatagi

Not everything the Sivatagi need can be obtained from the desert, particularly in lean times. Believing that the needs of their own people come before those of others, the Sivatagi are thus not averse to taking what they need from those passing through their area. Those Sivatagi who perform these rather unseemly duties are known among their people, and the rest of the world, as Raiders.

Strong and proud, yet willing to flee from battle if it goes against them, Sivatagi Raiders operate independent of any outside direction, roving the desert to look for easy prey and patrolling along known caravan routes. This is a mixed blessing to those who traverse such routes. On the one hand, the Raiders are sometimes prone to attack



such caravans to steal needed goods, leaving the caravan masters with just enough food and water to make their way back to civilized lands. However, the presence of a semi-organized, highly skilled fighting force patrolling the trade routes also serves as a means of security and protection. There are worse dangers in the desert than the Sivatagi Raiders, and it is not unheard of for a group of Raiders to actually come to the rescue of a caravan under attack by the giant beasts that roam the desert. Of course, Raiders might be much more open to assisting if they are given financial and material incentive to do so, particularly on a regular basis. Some of the most successful Raiders are those who use the threat of violence to collect *tolls* from those passing through their lands.

For several obvious reasons, Sivatagi Raiders are primarily encountered along the fringes of

SIVATAGI RAIDER

4	4	3	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	6	22	11	20
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower 2

Armor 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade or Spear] 3

Strength-Based Combat Style [Sivatagi BladeFist] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 2

Perception [Alertness] 2

Perception [Tracking] 2

Military Tactics [Small Unit] 2

Turf: Desert

their territory, where their lands border those of others. There would be little point to raiding their own towns, after all. Because they live and operate on the outskirts of the deserts, Raiders thus tend to be somewhat more open to new ideas and customs. Many learn to speak the languages of others, or adopt unusual habits of dress and mannerisms. In some cases, this is a sign of a particular Raider's willingness to deal with those outside of his own kind. In other cases, it is merely one more way a cunning Raider can lure outsiders close enough for the rest of his crew to assault them.

While Raiders do keep some of their booty for themselves, most of what they gather is either given to the Sivatagi they meet in their journeys, or carried back to the main Sivatagi stronghold at the heart of the desert. Once there, the loot can be sorted and then distributed more evenly across Sivatagi lands, usually with the assistance of other Raiders.

Masasan

Sha'sakh in Sivatagi

It is from the term *Masasan* that the Divaros derive their word *assassin*, meaning one who kills other individuals for money. In the Sivatagi tongue, however, the word refers to the immense stone plateau that, by itself, rises up out of the heart of the Eastern Desert. It was this great rock, known as the Masa (a variant of the Divaran word *mesa*), upon which the Sivatagi built the fortress known as the Masasan (from Mesa + Sen, *Soul*), a towering palace of stone, sand and glass symbolizing the spirit of the people who lived within. Early on, most of the Sivatagi fled to the Masasan to escape the pursuit of the Divaros, but over time, as they spread out across the surrounding desert, the fortress became more of a symbol, and less of a place of refuge.

Now, as then, those who guard and protect the Masasan bear its name for themselves, the individuals being considered an extension of the fortress, an extension of the rock, an extension of the very desert itself, and thus a symbol of everything the Sivatagi stand for. Throughout its history, the Masasan has been assaulted at least a dozen times, but it has never fallen, its sturdy, multi-layered walls, steep rock face and remote location making it difficult to assault.

The strength of the fortress also has much to do with the skills of the Masasan themselves, trained from youth in the

arts of both siege and defense, the argument being that one must know how to break in before one can know how to prevent entry. The Masasan architect and maintain the fortress's outer walls, as well as the labyrinth of trapped tunnels that lie beneath it, with defenses changed on a weekly basis to keep potential spies from learning its secrets. Because of the nature of their devices, Masasan are also experts in the art of trapmaking, the intricacies of poison, and the use of a variety of weapons.

Their reputation as silent killers is not entirely unfounded, although it is certainly overstated. Since the Masasan are well-versed in how to keep intruders out of a fortified area, they are equally skilled in breaking into such areas, and this, coupled with their skill with weapons and venoms of all sorts, means that they are, from time to time, called upon to remove high-ranking enemy officials from power, permanently.

Somewhat paradoxically, the Masasan are also widely sought-after, both among their own kind and among other nations, for their skill with stonework (the term *mason* being a

SIVATAGI MASASAN

3	4	3	4	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	10	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Armor [Mail] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade] 2

Strength-Based Combat Style [Sivatagi Blade] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Bow] 2

Perception [Alertness] 2

Socializing [Interrogation] 2

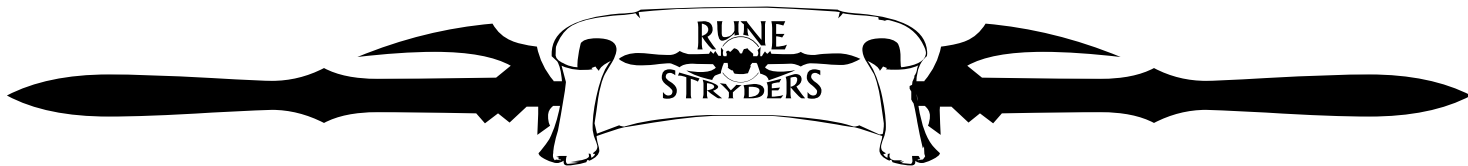
Language [Runelore] 2

Military Tactics [Siege] 2

Rogues [Trapwork] 2

Skilled Trade [Smith; stone] 2

Turf: Urban



derivation of their name). Often, a Masasan will assist in the planning and construction of someone else's stronghold. This is a risky proposition for both employer and employee; the Masasan, after all, would then have knowledge of how to enter an enemy stronghold, putting that employer at risk. Likewise, the Masasan himself might be at risk of *accidental* death, since his employer might seek to bury his secrets with him, beneath tons of stone. Woe to the person who attempts such betrayal, and fails in the attempt. A Masasan never forgets.

Sorcerer

Soch'ech in Sivatagi

The shifting sands of the Eastern Desert are not a place one often finds Runes or Runic magic. While the Sivatagi recognize the power of Runes, and know how to use them, there is simply not much cause to do so, the desert itself serving as ample defense in most situations. For some few Sivatagi, however, the call of the Runes is powerful, and they cannot ignore it. These Sorcerers will spend their lives searching the desert for secrets, answering the call of the magic within by seeking the magic without.

Sorcerers are dark, powerful and dangerous, to themselves as well as their enemies. The Runic magic they wield is as wild and unpredictable as the shifting sands they walk upon, the power coming on like a sandstorm and vanishing like a mirage thereafter. The unpredictable nature of the Runes is coupled by the fact that the Sivatagi intentionally shift the sounds of their language to better meet the needs of their anatomy and their surroundings. Since Runes are based on sounds, shifting the sounds in this manner can result in dangerous changes in the way the Runes function. At times, they will not work at all; at others, they will work with such potency as to threaten the life of the Sorcerer wielding the power.

As the Sivatagi are not keen on a written language, and since the desert sand is not a good place to inscribe magical carvings, Sorcerers never truly master the art of writing Runes. There are two notable exceptions. The first is in the case of Stryders, where Reavers and Sorcerers often work together to inscribe Runes into the thick carapaces of their mounts, giving them additional powers. The second is in the case of the Sivatagi stronghold at Masasan, where the guardians of that

SIVATAGI SORCERER

2	2	4	5	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
4	9	17	9	22
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

Atletics [Running] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Stone] 2

Perception [Observation] 2

Socializing [Deception] 3

Socializing [Preaching] 2

Language [Literacy] 2

Language [Runelore] 3

Turf: Desert

fortress labor constantly to inscribe immense runes in the sheer face of their citadel. In both cases, the Sorcerer requires the assistance of more patient hands to get things right. Many do not know how to write at all, and others are so enraptured by their magic that they have difficulty holding their hands still enough to inscribe properly.

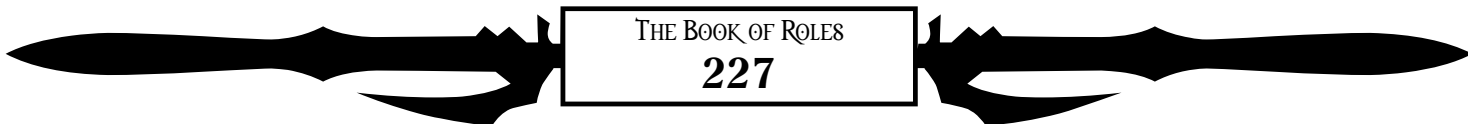
Despite the fact that they are often seen as dangerous loners, Sorcerers are often the leaders of their particular tribes, as the Sivatagi recognize that with great power comes great intelligence, even if it also tends to breed insanity. In any case, such leaders are often absent from the day-to-day affairs of their tribe, being more concerned with trackless wandering in the desert in search of Runes.

Note: Sorcerers gain one extra success on any spoken Rune as long as the attempt is successful, but lose one success on any attempt to scribe a Rune.

Trader

T'chadech in Sivatagi

Filling the broad gap between the Hunters (who find food and materials) and the Raiders (who steal it from others) are





the Sivatagi Traders. Their primary task in life is to trade for the goods and resources that the Sivatagi need to survive, but as a direct result of this they must always have on hand goods that others are willing to trade for. Thus, these wily, conniving, manipulative merchants have become known across the continent for two things: the unmatched ability to barter and the nearly magical power to always manage to find whatever it is others are looking for.

Traders travel in caravans, their retinue ranging in size from just a few assistants and bodyguards up to several hundred Sivatagi. The smaller caravans are most likely to make the frequent journeys to and from the Masasan, dropping off goods for distribution throughout the desert, and picking up stores of goods that they can trade to others along the edges of the desert. The largest caravans are the most often seen outside of the desert, often traveling for days into other countries in order to set up outside of major cities. In these places, the Sivatagi are seen as somewhat of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, they have attained a reputation as being thieves and scoundrels, dragging rogues, fortunetellers, pickpockets and other debauchery in their wake. On the other

SIVATAGI TRADER

1	4	4	4	12
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
5	8	18	9	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 3
 General Combat [Initiative] 2
 Willpower 2
 Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2
 Perception [Navigation] 2
 Socializing [Deception] 2
 Socializing [Trading] 3
 Language [Literacy] 2
 Language [Speak Zokili] 2
 Language [Speak Divaran] 1
 Roguery [Forgery] 1

Turf: Flatlands

hand, a Sivatagi caravan always seems to give a boost to the economy when it arrives, laden with precious materials that the Traders are all too willing to let go in exchange for food, clothing and other mundane items.

The truth of the arrangement, as most Sivatagi and some others are aware, is that the Traders are often merely selling back goods that Raiders and other Sivatagi have taken by force and guile in the past. Steal the king's crown and then sell it back in exchange for food, in other words. Even those who know what is going on tend to overlook it, however, for the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. Far better to deal with Traders than to try and track down Raiders, who can vanish into the desert like a stray breeze.

Because they are fond of color, noise, companionship and dealings with non-Sivatagi, the Traders are often looked down upon by others of their kind. They prefer not to use violence or power to get what they need, and this makes them weak in the eyes of some. For those who truly know what a skilled

Trader can do, however, there are no such accusations. These wiser men know that the Traders are the lifeblood of the Sivatagi people. The desert cannot provide everything that the people need, and the Traders are there to fill in the gaps.

Wanderer

Vakh'dech in Sivatagi

The Sivatagi Sorcerers often venture out into the desert in search of magic and power, and return wreathed in chaos and insanity. The Wanderers also seek power and wisdom in the desert, but they walk in the opposite direction. Or, as a Wanderer would say, "The Sorcerer walks along the path to find wisdom; the Wanderer sits and lets the path walk beside him."

Wanderers are far from mere slogan-spouting mystics, however. They are powerful ascetics, made strong in mind, body and spirit from their deep, lengthy meditations and exercises among the sand. A Wanderer might vanish into the desert wearing nothing but a loincloth, and return two months later, having not only survived by eating nothing but scorpions and beetles, but having learned from the experience. Such wisdom is not the same sort that the Sorcerer seeks—quite the opposite. Where the Sorcerer seeks power and magic that he can wield, the Wanderer seeks union with the world, allowing the power to work through him, allowing the desert winds to wield him.

The origins of such deep spirituality among such Sivatagi are unknown, but the effects of such a deep, heartfelt union with nature cannot be denied. Sivatagi Wanderers have powerful minds and spirits, and can withstand immense amounts of pain and physical abuse, going for weeks without eating or drinking, and even shaking off sword thrusts or severe burns that would incapacitate or kill others. They are also capable of great physical feats, moving with the speed of the desert wind, and acting with the strength and power of blasting sand.

Sivatagi Wanderers are not, however, prone to rash actions or quick decisions. They do not believe in revenge or retribution as most see it, preferring to think about the ramifications of their actions before they go through with them. If attacked, they will certainly defend themselves, but if they have the chance to meditate on the choices that lie before

them, they will always do so. One story tells of a young female Wanderer who watches her entire family killed before her eyes before she herself was violated by Divaros soldiers. Left to die, she wandered into the desert to meditate on life. Five years later, she reappeared, quietly tracked down the soldiers, one by one, and killed them all with a small twig she had stumbled across among the sand.

Wanderers are greatly respected by other Sivatagi, even if their actions are not entirely understood. In part, they are treated thusly because they do not preach, do not lead by sermon or parable. They lead by example, believing that the path to wisdom can only be found inside, by those who choose for themselves. Though those who choose to follow are welcome to tag along, though all must learn for themselves, and ultimately, all must walk alone in life.

Suggested Runes

Control Runes: *Ej* and *Ess*

Effect Runes: *Nhet* (energy), *Lhei* (life), *Enn* (hard), *Pei* (power), *Fas* (speed), *Thurn* (pain)

SIVATAGI WANDERER

4	3	4	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	11	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower 3

Atletics [Running] 2

Strength-Based Combat Style [Sivatagi BladeFist] 3

Light Weapon Combat [Staff] 3

Perception [Alertness] 2

Perception [Awareness] 2

Perception [Observation] 2

Language [Runelore] 2

Turf: Desert

DRASLANDER ROLES

Stomper

Styompah in Dras

Draslanders have access to a plethora of natural resources, but not of the sort that enables them to make good Stryders; vines, hair and snakeskin only hold together until the core materials rot and decay, after all. For this reason, the Dras are almost entirely dependent on scavenging, theft and trade (the latter quite infrequent) to gather the raw materials they require to make Stryders.

Since the materials to which they have access come from the Stryders of other nations and peoples, the most immediate and obvious problem is one of size. Draslanders are quite a bit smaller and skinnier than any other race, and as such most of them are, in fact, too small to effectively operate a Stryder. For this reason, in exactly the opposite fashion of other races, those chosen to man the Draslander Stryders are the largest and strongest of their kind. Topping the scales at over ninety pounds in weight and up to four feet in height, they are so massively proportioned when compared to other Dras that they have been given the only appropriate moniker—Styompah (or Stomper).

Though they are quite large and strong for their kind, Styompahs are still typically a bit undersized for the Stryders they are given to ride, many dug out of swampy pits into which lost pilots have wandered and drowned. Though the piecemeal captured machines are often sized down, extra padding is usually needed to keep the poor Styompah from rattling around in the cockpit (rumor has it that the deceased former pilots of the Stryders make excellent padding). Coupled with the fact that the Stryders, rusting and molding, are often held together with second-hand parts, vines, ropes and twigs, the lifespan of a captured Stryder is usually quite short. As such, the machines are usually put into use the moment they are captured, sent on raids and suicidal missions as suits the times.

This particular combination of circumstances puts the Styompahs in an uneasy situation. On the one hand, they are forced to plunge into battles in Stryders with little training or practice, hoping that the machine holds together long enough

DRASLANDER STOMPER

4	4	4	1	9
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	5	21	12	18
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower 1

Armor 2

Athletics [Running] 2

Athletics [Swimming] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2

Strength-Based Combat Style [Draslander Kneebiting] 2

Acrobatics [Gymnastics] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Stone] 3

Stryder Weapon Combat [Club] 2

Bonding [Stryder Pilot] 2

Turf: Swamp

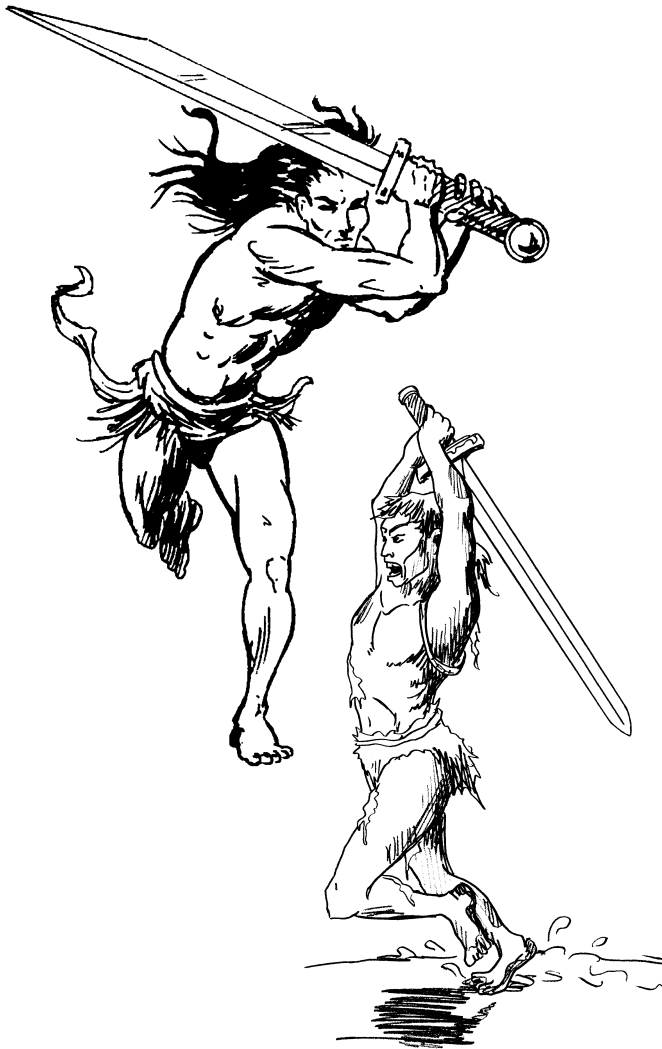
to make it to and from the target. On the other hand, should their Stryder seize up or fall apart, the strong, capable Styompahs are the best suited to defending themselves deep within enemy territory.

Because of all this, Styompahs are excellent warriors as well, typically suited with heavy armor and an assortment of weapons, both homegrown and captured. Taking out a Styompah's Stryder is only half the battle—the easy half, in many cases.

Sword Swinger

Syowd Wingah in Dras

Draslanders have no easy access to metal of any sort, or even wood or stone. Many of the weapons with which they have the most practice are natural ones—tooth and claw, both their own and those stolen from the slower, dumber inhabitants of the swamp. In addition, most Draslander prefer



The armor and weapons the Syowd Wingahs are forced to use are woefully oversized, of course. Small daggers and axes look like broadswords and polearms in the hands of the slender, undersized Draslanders, and larger swords are often taller than the Dras wielding them. At first glance, the pitiful little Syowd Wingah lurching out of the swamp wielding a sword twice his own size seems a laughable sight, but when that Draslander wields the sword with a degree of skill and splits your skull in half, who gets the last laugh? Probably no one; the Syowd Wingah will not have time to laugh, since he will be happily pilfering your corpse for new weapons.

Syowd Wingahs are no match for the better-trained, better armed, better armored fighters of other armies, and they will be the first to admit it. They prefer to run away rather than charge into battle, to dodge and hide instead of attack, to lead their pursuers into a swampy morass and then chop at their heads when the playing field has been leveled. To other races, they are *dirty little fighters*. Among their own kind they are heroes.

to resort to trickery and guerrilla-style fighting, using hit-and-run tactics, toxins and poisons and cunning to win the day and then run away.

But these sorts of weapons and tactics are no match for a full-fledged assault on the enemy, nor a last-stand defense of their home environment. When necessary, there are always a few Draslanders around who have spent extra time practicing with the stolen and pilfered weapons of their enemies, or crafting and shaping their own devices from the pebbles and driftwood that wash up on their swampy shores. Known as Syowd Wingahs (Sword Swingers), they are often the difference between total defeat and a chance for the future.

DRASLANDER SWORD SWINGER

4	4	3	3	10
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
8	6	22	11	20
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 3

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower 1

Armor [Mail] 2

Strength-Based Combat Style [Draslander Kneebiting] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Agility-Based Combat Style [Draslander Disarmament] 2

Perception [Alertness] 1

Military tactics [Small Unit] 2

Turf: Swamp

Spell Flinger

Spyef Lingah in Dras

The Draslanders are known for being illiterate, baby-talking primitives. Most people would not consider them capable of using Runes, as their language and speech impediments prevent their forming even simple words.

Most people would be mistaken. While it is true that the Dras have a very twisted dialect and are nearly incomprehensible to members of the other races, a rare few of the outcast swamp-dwellers have studied Runes, and can be quite dangerous. They pore over texts and scrolls stolen in raids or provided by Tall Talkers, copying these texts onto wood planks and stone tablets to store their knowledge for future generations. The sons and daughters of Spyef Lingahs are often the most likely candidates to study the Runic arts, carefully shaping the words of power and scrawling them on tree bark or bone.

DRASLANDER SPELL FLINGER

3	4	3	4	11
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	Perception
7	7	21	10	21
Body	Mind	Health	Endurance	Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 1

Armor 1

Athletics [Running] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Spear] 3

Stealth [Hiding] 2

Stealth [Sneaking] 2

Acrobatics [Gymnastics] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Stone] 3

Perception [Observation] 1

Language [Runelore] 2

Military Tactics [Guerilla] 1

Turf: Swamp

It should be noted, however, that Spyef Lingahs still speak in the stunted slang of the Dras. They just know how to pronounce the Runes properly, having trained relentlessly to carefully speak these few powerful phrases.

Learning new Runes can be very difficult for a Spyef Lingah. The Runes to which they have access are limited by what they can steal or glean from teachers. The Runes scrawled onto wood or bark quickly deteriorate in the swamp, and the general disorganization of the Draslanders as a whole makes it difficult to retain even the stone tablets used to store this knowledge for the future.

The role of any particular Spyef Lingahs depends entirely on the Runes he knows. Those with a preponderance of attack Runes may accompany Sword Swingers or Stompers on raids, while those with more utilitarian Runes may service their tribes in a support capacity, keeping fires burning or healing the sick.

A few Spyef Lingahs are turned out by their tribes to learn more Runes and bring their knowledge back to the Dras. These roving adventurers may be found in mercenary companies, bandit gangs, or simply running and hiding and stealing knowledge wherever they can find it. These roving Spyef Lingahs must possess a range of abilities that ensure their survival outside their native swamps, and are therefore generally very well rounded (for a Draslander).

Ghost Walker

Gos Walkah in Dras

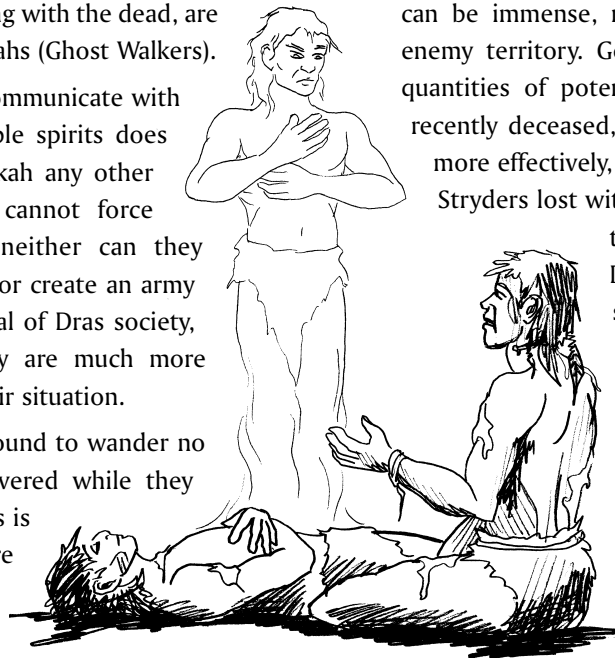
That the Draslanders do not bury their dead is a fact known to all the *superior* races, serving as yet one more reason to scorn and despise the lowly beasts. That the Draslanders eat their own dead is a nasty, untrue rumor. In fact, the Dras would bury their dead if they could, but residing in the swamp, it is simply more efficient to let the body sink into the morass to rejoin with nature.

Despite their somewhat too-practical view on the relative unimportance of the physical body, Draslanders, like the other races, do believe in and respect the presence of a spiritual body within the physical shell. Some few Draslanders even claim to be able to see, and to communicate with, their deceased brethren. Those who wander amongst the

decomposing bodies, communing with the dead, are appropriately dubbed Gos Walkahs (Ghost Walkers).

Being able to thus see and communicate with otherwise invisible and inaudible spirits does not bestow upon the Gos Walkah any other special magical power. They cannot force spirits to do their bidding; neither can they summon the dead back to life, or create an army of undead shadows. As is typical of Dras society, the advantages of their ability are much more practical and appropriate to their situation.

The spirits of the dead are bound to wander no further than the area they covered while they lived. For most Draslanders, this is an area of a few hundred square yards of swampland, but for some the distance covered



can be immense, ranging to distant shores and deep into enemy territory. Gos Walkahs are thus able to gather vast quantities of potentially useful information from even the recently deceased, coordinating the attacks of warrior Dras more effectively, hunting down materials, runes and enemy Stryders lost within the swamps, and moving their people to safety when necessary; as the Draslanders say, “When danger teems, the swamp screams.” Gos Walkahs know this is literally true.

Because of their ability to organize and direct based on exclusive information, and because they tend to be wanderers, moving around the swamp to commune with their dead brethren, the Gos Walkahs are often among the unofficial leaders of Dras society. The dead share what they know, and the living are all too eager to

listen and follow orders from those who know more than they do. Non-Draslanders often assume that the Gos Walkahs are mere tricksters and con artists, but the Draslanders themselves believe when they are told that danger is near. Because a Gos Walkah is almost always right.

DRASLANDER GHOST WALKER

3

Strength

3

Agility

5

Heart

2

Intellect

10

Perception

6

Body

7

Mind

19

Health

11

Endurance

20

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 2

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 2

Athletics [Running] 2

Athletics [Swimming] 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2

Stealth [Hiding] 1

Bonding [Spirit Empathy] 3

Perception [Alertness] 2

Perception [Observation] 2

Perception [Track] 2

Socializing [Leadership] 2

Turf: Swamp

Hoodoo Healer

Hodo Heeyah in Dras

When a Draslander is wounded, he is often left for dead. Nearby Draslander are typically not in a position to carry their wounded comrades to safety, being busy fleeing for their lives, and at any rate few possess the healing knowledge or ability to mend bones and bind wounds. For a slight, small Draslander, even a relatively minor wound such as a broken limb can be fatal. But for the lucky few within reach of a Hodo Heeyah (Hoodoo Healer), there is hope for a slightly longer life, and a second chance.

Like Spyef Lingahs, Hodo Heeyahs are rare in their knowledge of Runes. But where a Spyef Lingah learns a wide variety of Runes, and voraciously hunts new ones, the Hodo Heeyah focuses his talents in a particular field—healing.

Hodo Heeyahs learn their magical power from their teachers, who in turn got it from a Draslander before them,

and so on back to the days long ago when Draslanders walked among the taller races, and knew the secrets of all the Runes. Since the knowledge would have invariably been lost to a people who possess no true written language, the ancient Dras chose instead to inscribe the secrets of the Runes in the one place that they knew would not rot, or be lost, or be forgotten: in the flesh of their students.

Many races are known for tattooing runes upon their bodies in various inks, but only among the Dras has this devolved into ritual scarification and self-mutilation. With a sharp implement, an elder Hodo Heeyah literally traces the Runes from his own body onto that of his student. The student knows only a small handful of Runes, and will never learn more, but they are extraordinarily good at the few they know.

Since the teaching requires actual physical tracing and bloodletting, it can be a quite uncomfortable and painful

process for the Hodo Heeyah's student, and many Draslanders would thus prefer to take up another occupation rather than be subject to the carving and hacking of a Hodo Heeyah. However, Draslander society provides considerable benefits for a Dras marked with the obvious Runes of a Hodo Heeyah, for there is almost always someone suffering from fevers, snake-bites, or infections in the swamp.

A Hodo Heeyah may be kept by a single tribe, with no responsibilities outside the physical well-being of their benefactors. All meals and lodging are provided, and all in the village give respect and honor to the person who could mean the difference between life or death for themselves or their families. Though they are not generally required to do so, a Hodo Heeyah assigned to a single tribe often shares with a Taw Talkah the responsibility for teaching the tribe's children.

Many Hodo Heeyahs are assigned to raiding parties or defensive groups, providing their abilities to keep their soldiers fighting. Some few, rare Hodo Heeyahs may even wander the swamps, providing their unique gift to any living creature they find.

A Hodo Heeyah starts with the ability to release any seven of the following Rune phrases, and may not learn any more:

Xhei-ej (Defend Chaos), Nhet-ess (Use Energy), Lhei-ess (Use Life), Dhei-ej (Defend Death), Ain-ess (Use Air), Ull-ess (Use Fire), Un-ess (Use Water), Shei-ess (Use Scent), Chei-ess (Use Taste), Enn-ess (Use Hard), Ngei-eq (Attack Blessing), Thurn-ej (Defend Pain), Thurn-ess (Use Pain), Yon-ess (Use Pleasure)

He may increase his Runelore skill, but this does not provide anything more than an additional die on Runelore skill checks.

Tall Talker

Taw Talkah in Dras

Contrary to popular belief, not all Draslander are content to spend their entire lives in the fetid swamps they call home. Some choose to wander the lands of the larger races, either for self-gratification or for the benefit of Dras society. They are the Taw Talkahs (Tall Talkers), those who bring back stories of the taller races to their people. Half of what they bring back is valuable information. Half is pure bunk and fantasy, tall tales to entertain the young Draslanders. Both sorts of information are highly prized.

DRASLANDER HOODOO HEALER

3

Strength

3

Agility

4

Heart

4

Intellect

11

Perception

6

Body

8

Mind

20

Health

10

Endurance

22

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 3

Athletics [Running] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Entanglement] 2

Bonding [Animal Empathy] 2

Creativity [Art; tattooing] 1

Perception [Tracking] 2

Socializing [Teaching] 2

Socializing [Diplomacy] 1

Language [Runelore] 3

Skilled Trade [Healer] 2

Turf: Swamp

These few who leave to wander the outside world are typically among the tallest and most *normal* looking of their kind, able to pass for a Divaros child or a tall Zokili citizen through benefit of normal skin tones (or the ability to disguise themselves more effectively). More than a few Taw Talkahs are known to those they walk amongst as Draslanders, either having been captured for entertainment or torture, captured and used as a slave, or, rarely, befriended by those more tolerant than society at large.

Taw Talkahs are much more skilled at language than normal Dras, and are able to learn and mimic the languages of others quite effectively. Some few are even able to learn to write, and thus to inscribe and use Runes; such knowledge is more highly prized than anything, and is typically brought back to those who can better use it, such as Spyef Lingahs and Hoodoo Healers.

DRASLANDER TALL TALKER

3

Strength

4

Agility

3

Heart

4

Intellect

11

Perception

7

Body

7

Mind

21

Health

10

Endurance

21

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 2

Armor 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Mace] 2

Stealth [Sleight of Hand] 2

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 2

Creativity [Stories] 3

Socializing [Deception] 2

Language [Literacy] 2

Language [Speak Divaran] 1

Skilled Trade [any] 2

Turf: Urban

Taw Talkahs also learn a lot more from those they live amongst, picking up the habits and skills of those they observe, for good and ill. Since they tend to skulk in the shadows, more than a few learn to become thieves and criminals of all sorts. Those who live in more hospitable conditions might learn a wide assortment of other skills, from farming to forgery, from Stryder construction to castle construction. They have a voracious appetite for information and knowledge, and will never turn away from an opportunity to learn more about the world from which they have so long been excluded.

Grub Grower

Gub Gowah in Dras

Other races have stonemiths and metalsmiths, each specializing in the construction and formation of equipment and devices that are of use by other members of their societies. Since Draslanders lack a steady supply of natural resources, relying instead on scavenging for spare parts, they have no need for such an artisan in their society. Filling such a niche are those who can provide the one thing that Draslanders truly need more than anything else—food. They are the Gub Gowahs (Grub Growers).

Despite the name, Gub Gowahs do not necessarily grow anything, and neither do they necessarily cultivate grub (or grubs; in the case of the Draslanders, grubs are often good grub). Being natural pragmatists, many areas of Dras society are intermingled, and so providing food goes hand in hand with providing many of the other needs that a Dras village might have.

For example, a Gub Gowah might tend a group of giant lizards, raised not only for their meat and eggs, but for their thick, scaly hides, used for shelter and clothing, and for their tough teeth and nails, used as weapons and building materials. Another Gub Gowah, or perhaps the very same, might also choose to cultivate a patch of mushrooms or glowing fungus, providing not only food but a source of healing or light (respectively). Others might specialize in capturing and milking snakes for their venom, to be used on weapons, or in attracting swarms of insects, used to provide protein as well as to attract larger beasts who feed on the bugs, and who in turn are fed on by the Dras.

The truth of the matter is that many Dras do not really understand how their Gub Gowahs come by the products they provide to the village, and most do not care. Gub Gowahs use their innate cunning and skill to do what needs to be done, and to think up new ways to do it when the old ways fail. They are the first to explore new territories, and thus often the first to come across dangerous situations that need to be reported. Considered strange even amongst their own people, typically covered in strange fungi or surrounded by a swarm of biting insects, they are often able to escape from danger simply because they are so unpredictable and unusual.



DRASLANDER GRUB GROWER

2

Strength

3

Agility

5

Heart

2

Intellect

10

Perception

5

Body

7

Mind

17

Health

10

Endurance

19

Soul

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 3

Armor 1

Athletics [Swimming] 2

Athletics [Climbing] 1

Heavy Weapon Combat [Axe] 2

Stealth [Hiding] 1

Stealth [Sneaking] 1

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 1

Bonding [Animal Empathy] 2

Bonding [Plant Empathy] 2

Creativity [Mimicry] 2

Perception [Observation] 1

Skilled Trade [Farmer] 2

Skilled Trade [Hunter] 2

Turf: Swamp

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Strength-Based Skills

Armor

Wearing armor involves more than just strapping a piece of metal to your chest. Armor worn incorrectly can be worse than wearing none at all, and so skill in knowing how to don, remove, repair and maintain protective gear is essential. Armor skill is used to offset the penalties of wearing armor, as detailed in *The Book of War*.

Athletics

Everyone can participate in athletic activities, but not all are as well trained or prepared for the extra exertion and danger that can accompany such tasks. While anyone can perform these actions, those skilled in a particular type of athletics are generally better prepared to react in unusual situations.

Climbing: Increased ability to climb everything from rock faces to ropes, using sheer muscle power to hang on. (NB. Different from Agility-based Steeplejacking.)

Jumping: The ability to perform long and high jumps above and beyond the norm.

Running: Skill at running, both for distance and for speed (not necessarily both).

Swimming: As most cities and towns are built near water, just about everyone knows how to swim, but extra skill helps when the weather gets rough, or when combat in water takes place.

Throwing: The ability to throw objects hard and far.

Heavy Weapon Combat

Heavy weapons are generally those that require greater Strength to wield effectively, often (but not always) weighing more than four pounds. This is an approximation; long, thin weapons might weigh more, but since they are wielded differently, their effective weight is less.

Axe Class: Wedge-shaped blades on shafts, used for bashing and slicing.

Heavy Blade Class: Weapons that are mostly blade (e.g., swords), used for slashing.

Mace Class: Typically blunt weapons on shorter shafts, used for crushing and smashing.

Pick Class: Specialized weapons with narrow, sharp projections used to pierce armor and bone.

Spear Class: Essentially daggers at the end of long shafts, used for stabbing and piercing.

Strength-Based Combat Styles

The following martial arts rely mostly on strength, power, leverage and offensive maneuvering. The goal in using such arts is to overwhelm and incapacitate an opponent through a strong offense. Most are typically used unarmed, though some allow for armed maneuvers as well. The description of the style is followed by the maneuvers associated with it. Also see *the Combat Styles* section in *The Book of War*.

Divaran Kickwrestling: More of an idea than a style, this style combines kicks and sweeps with grappling, holding and throwing maneuvers to quickly cripple an opponent. It is a brutal and often deadly form of brawling, commonly seen in less reputable bars and taverns. Special Maneuvers: *Grapple, Kick, Offensive Focus, Presence of Mind, Tackle, Trip*

Myndwar Stonefist: The Myndwar are an even-tempered race, but when it comes to making war they are not naive, and will resort to low blows and kicks, painful incapacitating and blinding maneuvers and more. The name comes from the tactic of concealing a stone in a closed fist. Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Feint, Offensive Focus, Prone Fighting, Stun, Trip*

Zokili Nervestrike: Some Zokili have become students of pain, learning precisely where and how to strike certain pressure points in order to quickly take down their opponents. Students learn hands-on, experiencing pain firsthand so they can better understand how to inflict it on others. Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Catch Missile, Defensive Focus, Disarm, Presence of Mind, Stun*

Kantarin Skytackle: The art of the Kantarin Skytackle began with hunters jumping out of trees upon prey. In combat, some Kantarin fling their bodies through the air, adding surprise, weight and momentum to their attacks, with the goal of quickly taking an opponent to the ground. Special Maneuvers: *Disarm, Feint, Grapple, Kick, Stun, Tackle*

Sivatagi Bladefist: The name of this style comes from the shape of the hand, which is not balled up but held flat. Highly targeted strikes are made with the fingertips or the edge of the hand to the face, throat and neck, to crush the throat or otherwise incapacitate a foe. Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Blindfighting, Catch Missile, Defensive Focus, Presence of Mind, Prone Fighting*

Draslander Kneebiting: Actual kneebiting does play a major role in this rather dirty, undisciplined, wild style of fighting, which also incorporates kicks, strikes and bites to other soft targets below the waist of their opponents (knees, shins, groin, etc.). Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Feint, Kick, Stun, Tackle, Trip*

Agility-Based Skills

Acrobatics

Whereas Athletics tend to focus on exertion, strength and endurance, Acrobatics focus instead on overall agility and maneuverability. These skills tend to be favored by smaller, lighter individuals, but larger characters can also learn how to move their bodies more efficiently.

Contortion: The narrow confines of a Stryder or a cramped cave can be a real pain in the neck unless you are skilled at popping joints, twisting limbs and otherwise getting in and out of a pinch.

Gymnastics: This skill focuses on maintaining one's balance whenever possible, and when not possible, falling down in creative ways (tumbles, flips and the like).

Juggling: More than just a party trick, those skilled with their hands can not only keep multiple objects falling through the air, but are less likely to drop held objects, and better at catching things.

Riding: Animals large enough to ride upon are few and far between, but some, such as the Sivatagi, have mastered the art. (*Sivatagi only, or special*)

Steeplejacking: Skilled acrobatic climbers are needed to repair the tall steeples found in Divar, and this is named for them (though it applies to any such acrobatic climbing).

Light Weapon Combat

Light weapons are roughly defined as those weighing four pounds or less, and which rely on Agility more than Strength to use effectively.

Bow Class: Devices used to launch sharp, narrow missiles at enemies from a distance.

Entanglement Class: Weapons consisting of rope or cord used to entangle or strangle.

Light Blade Class: Shorter, lighter, narrower blades used for quick slashes and stabbing.

Staff Class: Long, narrow, blunt weapons used for bashing foes with great speed.

Stone Class: Devices used to hurl blunt objects at enemies from a distance.

General Combat

These combat-related skills dictate a character's ability to avoid damage, either by leaping away from danger or by hurting an opponent before the opponent can hurt the character.

Dodge: While this skill is generally used to avoid being hit in combat, it more generally represents a character's ability to avoid damage from any physical strike.

Initiative: This skill is used whenever there is any dispute over who acts first.

Stealth

Skills geared towards secretive or hidden movements, emphasizing speed and dexterity over brawn. Often practiced by criminals, such skills are often frowned upon by law-abiding individuals.

Hiding: Involves knowledge of concealing oneself, whether within areas of shadow, behind larger objects, or, in some cases, in the open (as in a large crowd).

Silent Death: Combat is typically brutal, bloody and above all noisy. Those trained in the arts of silent killing know how to strike an opponent in such a way as to keep him quiet while he dies. This skill is applied as a combat skill when an victim is unaware of the attacker's presence.

Sleight of Hand: Clever manipulation of the hands and fingers in plain sight to make objects appear and disappear. Called larceny when it involves lifting objects from other persons.

Sneaking: Whereas hiding involves attempts to remain concealed from sight, sneaking generally involves attempts to conceal auditory evidence, allowing the character to move less noisily.

Stryder Weapon Combat

Technically, Stryder weapons are not light. However, in the hands of a Stryder, a fifty pound sword is just not that heavy.

Agility-Based Combat Styles

The following arts rely mostly on agility, speed, quickness and guile. The goal in using such arts is to catch an opponent off guard, using surprise and lightning quick maneuvers to defeat him. Most are typically used armed, though some variations allow for unarmed maneuvers as well.

Divaran Dueling: Popularized among the Homunculus-borne Stryder Pilots of Divar, this style of semi-ritualized dueling with light, fast rapier-like weapons has caught on among the masses. Beautiful to watch in its own way, it is quite deadly, emphasizing slashes to the face and hands. Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Disarm, Duel-wield, Feint, Parry, Pierce*

Myndwar Doublestrike: Although many lands now teach their soldiers the art of wielding two weapons at once, the practice is still most widespread among its originators, the Myndwar, who prefer two shorter weapons (such as axes or hammers) as opposed to swords. Special Maneuvers: *Disarm, Double-wield, Feint, Offensive Focus, Parry, Whirlwind*

Zokili Risingsun: Being of shorter stature, some Zokili have taken a potential flaw and turned it into an advantage, training their warriors to strike blows upwards from lower, often crouched positions to take advantage of flaws in armor, which are usually layered from the top down. Special Maneuvers: *Blindfighting, Duel-wield, Feint, Parry, Pierce, Stun*

Kantaran Deathdancing: Thanks to this style, it is when you have a Kantaran warrior flat on his back beneath your sword that he's most dangerous. Resembling dancing in theory, this style encompasses flat-backed rotation, prone kicks and head spins to catch opponents offguard. Special Maneuvers: *Defensive Focus, Grapple, Kick, Prone Fighting, Tackle, Whirlwind*

Sivatagi Mounted Combat: Many among their people having mastered riding the desert's immense insects and arachnids, some have learned to use height and speed to their advantage, spreading terror by charging opponents with longer weapons. (*Sivatagi only, or special*). Special Maneuvers: *Blindfighting, Disarm, Kick, Pierce, Tackle, Whirlwind*

Draslander Disarmament: Outsized, out-manned and often out-equipped, the Draslanders quickly learned how to even the score. This style emphasizes weapon-catch techniques, trips and entrapment maneuvers designed to take an opponent's weapons away from him. Special Maneuvers: *Blind, Catch Missile, Disarm, Kick, Stun, Tackle*

Heart-Based Skills

Bonding

Characters who are skilled in the various arts of bonding are adept at achieving a deep, close understanding with another living thing, to the point where they can influence that other entity's actions and decisions. Such bonding takes place on many levels, including mental, emotional and, at times, physical.

Animal Empathy: Mostly learned in "Outcast" Nations, such skill allows one to understand the actions and desires of animals, and to communicate on a very basic level.

Plant Empathy: Some Draslander and Kantaran treat plants as green animals with roots. Among those who hold this belief, empathy with plants can be achieved in the same way as with animals.

Spirit Empathy: The Draslander mystics were the first to believe that the dead can be spoken with, but such belief has slowly begun to spread to other nations. (*Draslander only, or special*)

Stryder Pilot: Stryders are more than just machines or beasts, being an extension of their pilots and sentient beings in their own rights. Knowing how to pilot them is only half the battle. Extreme maneuvers and creative strategies are just as important as bonding with the Stryder.

Creativity

The more creative arts have a variety of applications outside of their obvious artistic uses, ranging from the mimicry and



camouflage used by many hunters, to the sculpting and tattooing arts practiced by some Runic craftsmen and artisans.

Art: Although possessing creative skill in general, most artists pick a specific trade (such as painting, sculpting, tattooing, etc.) and specialize in it.

Disguise: Those skilled in the arts of disguise are experts at using clothing, padding, makeup and other accouterments to convince others that they are something other than they appear.

Mimicry: Skilled mimics can precisely replicate other sounds, and produce variations on that theme. This allows them to mimic everything from birdcall to other voices.

Music: Musical talent encompasses a broad range of skills and knowledge, though most musicians tend to specialize in one particular area (such as singing, playing an instrument, etc.)

Stories: In a world where history and mythology is the same thing, those skilled in telling stories are both sought after and feared for their ability to make fiction sound believable.

Perception

On Rhun, all living things share a common bond to some degree, and being perceptive involves more than mere intellectual acuity. Those skilled in the arts of perception are able to tap into the world around them in order to glean greater knowledge and foresight. Or so the mystics say.

Alertness: Those with enhanced alertness are more acutely tuned in to fine changes in their environments, allowing them to pick up on sudden movement, looming danger and the like.

Awareness: Whereas Alertness is tuned in to fine changes, this broader skill gives a more general knowledge and perception of one's surroundings, even in total darkness or silence.

Navigation: Without stars in the sky or stable geography, the ability to navigate across land and water alike by literally knowing one's place in the world is a highly valuable skill.

Observation: Unlike Alertness and Awareness, Observation is much more an active skill, allowing characters to focus, explore and search their surroundings to gather more information.

Tracking: By following scent, footprints and other signs, a skilled tracker can follow his prey halfway around the world and back again.

Socializing

As with Perception-focused skills, the ability to socialize and interact with others involves much more than intellectual footwork. Rather, these skills represent an ability to reach people on a deeper level, be that emotional or spiritual, for honest purposes or to deceive.

Deception: Those skilled in the arts of deception can bluff their way out of difficult situations, and manipulate others with carefully constructed lies and half-truths.

Diplomacy: In a world eternally on the brink of war, the ability to mediate one's way out of tough situations in a diplomatic fashion is often the difference between life and death.

Interrogation: Much more than verbal and physical abuse in order to extract the truth, this describes the more broad ability to glean the truth from others, regardless of the means used.

Leadership: Many are willing to lead, but few are actually able to inspire others to follow. Those truly capable of leadership have mastered quite a valuable skill.

Teaching: Being able to convince others that your thoughts and beliefs are correct is quite a valuable skill, whether the audience is one person or a thousand.

Trading: The ability to haggle and barter is key in a world where coin is uncommon.

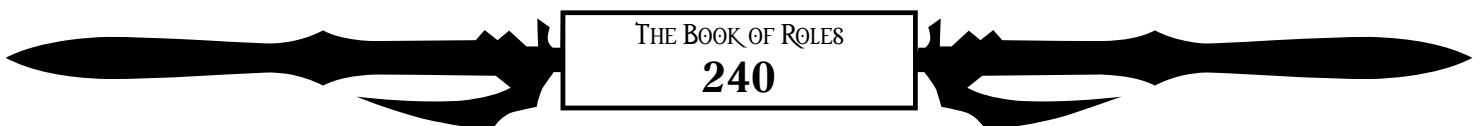
Special

Willpower: This skill is primarily used to resist the effect of Runes, but also represents a character's inner strength and will.

Intellect-Based Skills

Language

Magic comes from Runes, which represent sounds, which make up language. Thus, one might describe Language as Magic. Everyone is capable of speech, and thus magic, but not all are truly skilled.



Literacy: While all can speak the primary language of their choice, literacy is not assumed. Those who know how to write and read the sounds of words possess a powerful skill.

Memorization: Many who lack the ability to read or write are skilled in the art of remembering what they have seen and heard, and repeating it back, verbatim, for others to hear at a later time.

Runelore: Anyone scribbling or babbling at random is likely to eventually stumble across a Rune and release magical energy. Those who study language, and the magic within, are able to control such forces, bending it to their will and even bringing life to the powerful Stryders. Each level of Runelore allows a character to add one control Rune to his Runic vocabulary (*see the Book of Runes*), and a fourth level of Runelore allows a character to create advanced, multiple-Rune Runewords.

[Speak] Second Language: As all languages on Rhun are based on a common, living tongue, learning a second or third language is relatively easy to master, and many take the time to do so. Languages available include Divaran, Myndwar, Zokili, Sivatagi, Draslander and Kantarin Signspeak.

Military Tactics

In the highly militarized world of Rhun, most citizens have experienced warfare firsthand at some point. Among the many who've served in their country's army, some take the extra time to learn additional skills, in order to give themselves a tactical advantage in certain situations.

Enlisted: Being officially enlisted in a specific army gives one additional insight into large troop movements, fighting in groups, advancing and retreating appropriately, and the like.

Guerilla: Tactics used by those trained in such a manner involve lightning-quick strikes from cover, harassment of troops and baggage trains, ambush and so on.

Sabotage: Being able to sneak behind enemy lines to damage weapons, armor and equipment is not looked down upon in a world where *honor* is a foreign concept.

Siege: Those skilled in siege warfare are familiar with both sides of the battle, able to withstand and defend against siege engines and to use them to break such defenses.

Small Unit: Operating independently of (yet still working to

support) their army or government, these small crack teams develop and employ their own unique tactics.

Stryder Crew: A trained Pilot is nothing without a devoted team of individuals to help him maintain, repair and defend his semi-sentient Stryder.

General: Many strategists and tacticians do not specialize in a particular segment of tactics, and instead gain a broad knowledge of all tactics. This skill allows a character to make rolls on any of the other Tactics skills as if he had one level less than he has in this skill.

For Example, if I have Military Tactics [General] 3, I could roll on Tactics [Siege] as if I had that skill at level 2.

Roguary

One could easily find legal applications for the skills in this category, but the simple fact is that they are most often learned by outlaws and criminals, who use such skills to take advantage of others.

Forgery: Skill in counterfeiting everything from handwriting to Divaran coins.

Gambling: The only way to win at gambling is to get lucky or cheat. And luck is just not cutting it.

Locksmithing: Those who know how to make locks also know how to break into them.

Trapwork: Includes the ability to search for, detect, set, disarm and remove traps of all sorts.

Skilled Trade

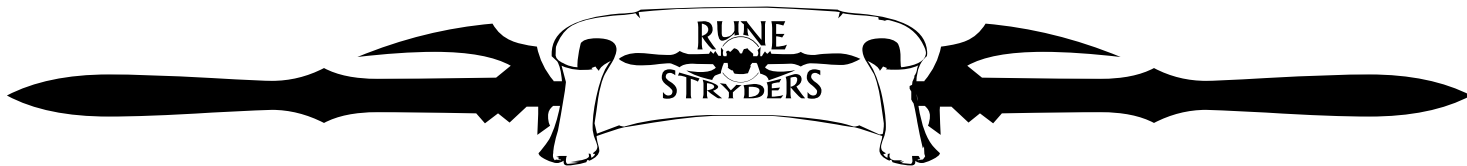
Aside from exploring, making war and trying to survive, many actually find the time to practice a legitimate trade, picking up further valuable skills with applications elsewhere in life.

Appraiser: Skill in determining the value of goods, services, gems, coins, etc.

Archaeologist: Skill in researching, tracking down and retrieving runes and other artifacts.

Architect: Skill in planning and overseeing the construction of buildings and devices.

Carpenter: Skill in working with wood, typically with specialization in ships, houses, tools, etc.



Cook: Skill in preparing and serving food and drink, be it butcher, baker, bartender or brewer.

Farmer: Skill in growing food, be it tending livestock, or growing fruits and vegetables.

Healer: Skill in the healing arts. Called by many names (herbalist, midwife, doctor, leech, etc.).

Historian: Skill in the study of history and mythology (one and the same in this world).

Hunter: Skill in tracking down, killing and dressing game of all sorts, from wild beasts to fish.

Lawkeeper: Skill in enforcing the law, be that as a judge, town watchman or executioner.

Miner: Skill in tunneling, quarrying and digging deep into the earth to extract resources.

Politician: Skill in creating and debating the laws of one's own nation, and those of others.

Sailor: Skill in sailing ships on the open seas, lakes, and the world's few navigable rivers.

Smith; Metal: Skill in shaping metal; typical specializations include armor, weapons and tools.

Smith; Stone: Skill in working stone or brick; also called masonry (especially among Sivatagi).

Tailor: Skill in crafting and repairing clothing, soft armors and other fabrics.

TURFS

As explained in the Book of War, there are potential applications during combat or the performing of any task that might depend upon the knowledge of one's surroundings. When in familiar surroundings, things tend to be somewhat easier. When in unfamiliar terrain, tasks become harder. The choice of a *home turf* is meant to convey this difference in an easy fashion.

For the most part, a character's *turf* is merely a matter of idle conjecture. Characters are free to move in and out of various *turfs*, and will almost certainly encounter one or more during the course of a particular adventure. However, each also carries with it potential role-playing applications. Characters accustomed to a particular turf will almost always be able to locate sufficient food and water for themselves, and may be able, given time, to provide the same for their compatriots. Knowledge of a particular turf also carries with it the ability to better find shelter, clothing, weapons and other materials, as well as any other applications, as deemed appropriate by the gamemaster.

Desert

Little water or vegetation, rocky or sandy terrain mostly devoid of civilization or large life forms. In Rhun, almost

entirely limited to the Mideast portion of the continent, inhabited mostly by the Sivatagi but also by some Divaros and Zokili.

Flatlands

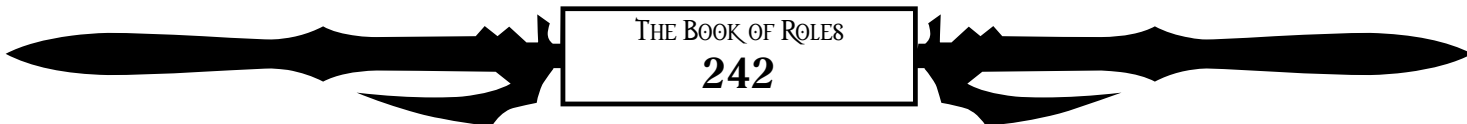
Wide, open green lands and pastures, whether cultivated farmland, open prairie or plains. Mostly found in the Midwest and Mideast (south of the desert) portions of the continent, and populated mostly by Divaros and Zokili.

Forest

Temperate woodlands characterized by a prevalence of tall trees and little ground cover. Typically found in the Northwestern portions of the continent, with smaller forested areas to the Southeast. Populated mostly by Divaros and Zokili, along with some few Kantarin.

Highlands

High plains and plateaus, vegetation usually consisting of scrub brush and dry grass. Generally found in the Northeast continent, populated mostly by Zokili, with some Highland areas populated by Divaros and Myndwar found along the Southern shoreline as well.



Jungle

Tropical woodlands characterized by high trees, a thick canopy and often heavy ground cover. Almost entirely limited to the Kantarin Jungles of the Southwest continent, with some areas spread out across other Southern areas. Also home to some few Myndwar and Draslander.

Mountains

Not just the peaks of these high areas, but also the valleys and uneven terrain between them. Though some areas are found to the Southwest, typically refers the Spine, which runs down the middle of the continent from North to South. Typically populated by Myndwar, with some Divaros and Zokili.

Sea

The open ocean, or any broad body of water that requires significant time and effort to cross. Surrounds the entire continent. Permanent home to no Nation, the Divaros have come closest to mastering the waves, with the Kantarin also at home, mostly closer to shore.

Subterranean

Underground caves and caverns, man-made and natural. Found everywhere, though particularly beneath the mountainous areas of the Spine and below older urban areas. Most at home in such areas are Draslander and Myndwar.

Swamp

Marsh and mire, quicksand and vine, low, broad trees and heavy, tangled ground cover. Found everywhere in low-lying areas, most often associated with the large swamps of the Draslander, found in the South-Central portion of the continent.

Urban

Civilized, built-up areas, even amongst areas listed above, with roads, walls and other structures. Most typically identified with the Divaros and the larger cities of the Northwest continent, but found everywhere and in all cultures to some degree.



RUINE

Ends

Thomis found Yasyk by the stream, washing blood from his sister's face. He approached tentatively, stopping a respectful distance away. For several minutes, he just watched, listening to the babble of the water over pebbles, watching the water downstream cloud with blood, then clear.

"I'm sorry," he said at last.

There was no reply. Just silence, the wind and the birds and too much blood. He turned to leave.

"Why?" He turned back, confused. Yasyk had moved away from his sister, and stood staring at him. "Why are you sorry?" he clarified. "She was not under your protection. Her role was to protect you."

"She died for me."

"No!" said Yasyk sharply, stepping forward. Far too short to look Thomis in the eye, he settled for staring up at him. It was no less imposing. "She did not die for you," he continued. "She did not die for me, or for the Zokili, or for anyone else. She died. That is all. That is enough."

Thomis was taken aback. "I . . ." he began, but Yasyk waved him off, turning back towards his sister. Sensing that the exchange was well over, Thomis turned and headed back towards the others, who were grouped around the fire. He walked up to young Jonan and smiled down on the boy.

"How's the shoulder healing?" he asked.

"I think I'll live," said Jonan. He smirked, reaching across to rub at the bandages. A scrape, but it was the boy's first blood, and it meant a lot.

"You sure?" asked Thomis, sitting heavily on his own bedroll. "I can't have you guarding left flank with a bad shoulder. No, until you're fully healed, I can't let you back into action."

"It's fine," said the boy, attempting to sit up. He put his weight on the bad arm, and winced in pain. Thomis raised an eyebrow.

"How will you hold a shield?"

"You can strap it to my arm," said Jonan. "I'll spear with one arm."

"Will you?" Thomis leaned back, trying to let sleep grab hold of him, recalling a day, long since forgotten, when he'd done the same, fighting a battle they should have lost. Fifteen years. Had it been so long? It must have been. So much had changed since then. And so few left now. Of the seven who set out that day, all that remained were Thomis, Jonan, and Yasyk. It seemed a miracle that the three of them could have made it alive through even half of what the past decade had thrown at them.

He lay there remembering for a while, listening to the boy gently snore, then gave up on sleep and stood, stretching. He moved his way through the encampment, past the Mages, seemingly always awake, eying him suspiciously, heading towards the Stryders, arrayed in a semicircle facing north, the most vulnerable approach. Crossbowmen stood in armored cupolas atop the tallest of these, Runes enhancing their sight, allowing them to keep an eye out for anyone approaching from the field. The field on which so many had fought, on which Yasmyn had died yesterday, taking a mace blow to her head that would, should have caved in Thomis' skull. He should be dead, not her.

He quickly dismissed this line of thought. He had gone down that road countless times already, every time he lost a man, one of those who served willingly under his leadership. It had been hard won, but ultimately it had been the fact that he respected them all as individuals, and trusted that each would do the right thing, that had led them to nominate him as their leader so long ago.

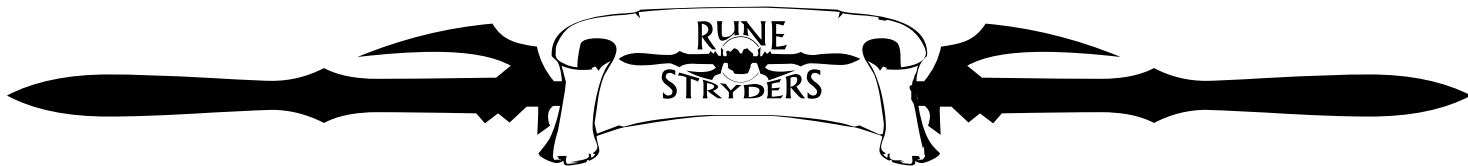
What now? Would the next few years hold more of the same? A flurry of battles, moving from one town to another, picking up odd jobs, trying to hold together the pieces of a continent that was slowly fraying at the edges? Would the Kantarin Melded stay beyond tomorrow morning, or would they and their Stryders head back to Kantar? Would the Mydnwar remain, or would they be called home to defend their villages from the incursions of Divar? He was never sure. He always doubted. And still, they remained.

Certainly, a few had left his employ for one reason or another, but the great majority had never left of their own accord. They had given their lives for Thomis and their fellow crew. How many more would die, he wondered, staring up at the darkness above, the two moons peering back at him from the inky blackness. How many more? And for how long? Would this ever end?

He stood there for a long while, until finally sleep crept up on him, and he wisely gave in, heading back to his bedroll for a few hours of shuteye before the battle began. And for those few hours, he stopped worrying about the future, about tomorrow.

There would be time enough for that in the morning.





CHAPTER 7

THE BOOK OF DESTINY

WHAT LIES AHEAD

The most likely path for a typical group of characters to take in the world of Rune Stryders is that of a group of mercenaries, either a small military company unto themselves, or a small part of a larger whole. Even if they never officially acknowledge this themselves, any group of individuals who wander the countryside selling their swords and talents to others are, in fact, mercenary in nature. Calling a spade a spade merely helps push things along down a road that makes sense in the world of Rhun.

There are no large standing armies in Rhun. Countries and city-states hire mercenary armies of professional soldiers to do their dirty work. At this moment in time, with the Confederacy trying to hold itself together, the Sivatagi massing in the Desert, and breaks from within tearing the Divaros nation apart, mercenary companies are needed more than ever. Some would have them try to hold the pieces together. Others would

have them further widen the rifts to push things over the edge into open war. The path the characters take is up to them.

INTRODUCTION

The Players' characters need not have met before the start of any of their adventures. Assuming that they are all members of a larger mercenary company, it is quite conceivable that they may simple have been picked from among the troops for a specific duty assignment. This allows the characters to already have a common goal when they meet, but still affords the group the opportunity to go through the paces as their characters meet one another, talk about themselves, and get to know one another.

Characters who are from nations outside the Confederacy are also more likely to be welcomed as members of a mercenary company than anywhere else. Since most

mercenary groups operate without permanent allegiance to any one Nation, they are quite open to accepting people from other cultures within their ranks. However, characters who are Draslander, Kantarin or Sivatagi should be careful not to openly flaunt their national origin too much; not all members of a company may be as open as others, and outside of the group, those of *Outcast* status will face severe persecution in some areas. An alternate solution is for gamemasters to restrict the choice of characters to those hailing from the Confederated Nations, at least until later in the gaming session, when it may become somewhat easier to introduce such characters.

Scenarios

The following seven adventure scenarios are provided in a somewhat unique format, without specific statistics or descriptions, and without numbered encounters leading characters along a path to an inevitable end. The nature of war in Rhun means that many different outcomes are possible, and the gamemaster should do his best to allow the players a great opportunity to truly shape events. These scenarios need not play out in any specific way, nor do they need not happen in the order they are presented.

Each of these scenarios features the following information:

Situation

This lays out the events and circumstances that have led to the current situation at hand, and the reason for the characters getting involved at all. This is information that the characters may very well be given before they actually arrive.

Mission

What the characters have been sent in to accomplish. Depending on the actions of the various participants, the actual outcome may change, of course.

Background and Nuances

A list of items detailing bits of information the characters may discover, suggesting possible motives for the actions of non-player characters involved in the Scenario, and offering several different possibilities for outcomes that may result from the characters' involvement.

Specific statistics for involved parties, lists of weapons and armor, etc. are not provided in these scenarios because the intent is to offer the gamemaster the most flexibility in crafting the Scenario in the direction he wishes to take it. Non-player characters in these scenarios should be adjusted to match the capabilities of the party. Likewise, with the exception of Scenario Three (*The Prison*), the scenarios are not given any specific geographical locations; this allows a gamemaster to place the events wherever he feels would be most appropriate for the particular campaign he's running.

For your reference, statistics for several generic non-player characters can be found after the scenarios. For more specific or skilled opponents, select an appropriate role from the Book of Roles.

THE IRON MINE

Situation

The Ryversyde Iron Mine is an important regional industry and is the root source of income for most of the surrounding settlements. The mine property includes the mine excavation itself, an ore-refining furnace facility (called a bloomery), and a small village that houses and supports the workers.

However, this key resource is the subject of conflict. Recently, a scourge of raids began, conducted by armed and organized men whose identities have yet to surface. Initially, the raids just resulted in some pilfering from the mine's precious wrought iron production. Recently, a critical rise in the size of thefts and even the deaths of several workers at the raiders' hands signaled the crisis is only intensifying. A serious labor dispute, underway before the raids began, has flared in the midst of the increasing danger.

The local authorities, a small handful of company-employed men and the Country Magister's tiny force of troops, are not combat professionals and are unable or unwilling to deal with the raider mercenaries.

The owner of the mine, the wealthy landholder Povitt-Lord Dane the Shadwyn, has posted notice seeking hired men to protect the mine from the raiders. A significant financial reward is offered.

Mission

The players' stated mission is to protect the mine property, the workers, and the raw refined wrought iron it produces from further attacks. Lord Dane suggests that if the raiders faced armed opposition they will likely abandon their raids and move on to other lands in search of easier prey.

Background and Nuances

The mine's laborers are quite vocal about their demands for higher wages, and though not exceptionally organized, they are a thorn in Lord Dane's side. They will share their grievances with anyone who cares to listen, and their demands are quite well known and sympathized with throughout the region. Direct force against them would only result in losing his labor pool and as a result the collapse of the Mine, so Lord Dane has so far had no choice but to deal with them.

The raiders are mercenary men-at-arms, lightly armored but armed with quality weapons and professionally trained. They should present a serious challenge to the players if ever directly challenged. However, they will try to avoid direct conflict. Neither Lord Dane nor the laborers will admit to knowing who the raiders are, although both parties in fact do know.

The laborers and raiders are co-conspirators in a scam targeted at Lord Dane. The labor ringleaders, which include the company men supposedly acting as law enforcement officials, are using the raids as leverage to get higher wages from Lord Dane, and are taking a cut of the proceeds from the stolen iron. The laborers already enjoyed higher-than-average wages prior to the raids and have been given generous increases since, as Lord Dane still makes enormous profits from the mine. However, both the miners and raiders are getting greedy, and Lord Dane is no longer willing to concede to their demands.

All but a limited number of miners are aware of the arrangement and are motivated to keep quiet as it directly profits them. However, there are honest men among them who believe too many lines have been crossed. Unfortunately for them, the ringleaders and raiders are more than willing to kill any dissenters; anyone presenting such a risk to the scheme has been *coincidentally* killed during the raids.

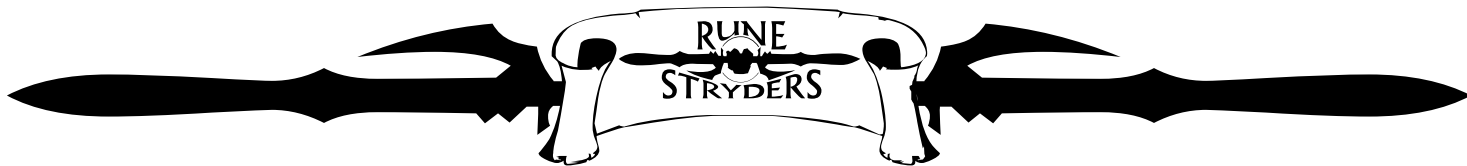
The raiders themselves are being paid by a third party, Lord Cadelant Vinicent of Erwayne. Lord Vinicent has financial interests which compete with the mine, and struck the original bargain which brought the raiders there. Though it was largely through luck that he happened to approach the very group of mercenaries about to set the scheme above in motion, the raiders made Lord Vinicent's choice easier by deeply underbidding all competition. Of course, Lord Vinicent was and is completely unaware of the scam, and had no idea the raiders were going to do the same thing he was hiring them to do anyway.

A final involved party, Lord Jeln Heldervan, has laid formal claims to land near and above the mine, with strong historical credentials, that place most of the mine's choicest veins within his holdings. Lord Dane and Lord Jeln have publicly and bitterly contested this on many occasions, and most everyone is quite aware of their conflict. Lord Jeln plans to quietly approach the players with a lucrative offer to compensate them should they be less than successful in protecting Lord Dane's mine. The deal will be doctored to appear to originate from Lord Vinicent, though Lord Dane will assure the players that this is merely a precaution.

Though unaware of the scheme between the miners and raiders, Lord Dane is quite aware of Lord Vinicent's hiring the raiders, having been informed by another group of mercenaries who were bitter about being undercut. Lord Dane is working to twist this information toward his own favor. If he proves Lord Vinicent's involvement before the County Magister, then Lord Vinicent will be stripped of his holdings, wealth, and title and jailed for piracy. Of course, Lord Dane would receive the lion's share of that fortune as compensation, which would be no small windfall.

Secretly, Lord Dane and Lord Jeln are blood relatives and have intertwining fortunes that are more valuable if kept separate. They work hard to conceal this secret and staging public battles has thus far been a very successful tactic.

Having been unable to connect the raiders to Lord Vinicent (or even get close enough to the raiders to invent the proof), Lord Dane has actually hired the players to take the blame and draw in Lord Vinicent. Lord Jeln's offer is calculated to make the players appear to be in conspiracy with the raiders and



Lord Vinicent. If Lord Jeln is accused, he could easily deny his involvement because the obvious outcome (transfer of Lord Vinicent's fortune to Lord Dane) would hardly be believed to be in Lord Jeln's interest as Lord Dane's *bitter opponent*. Furthermore, by taking Lord Vinicent's wealth for himself, Lord Dane believes he will be drying up the real raider's source of payment.

Should the players not take up Lord Jeln's offer, Lord Dane will eventually seize upon the player's success as an excuse to blame them as conspirators.

Any connection of the players to Lord Vinicent will make them party to piracy as well, with similar consequences.

The laborers would be more than happy to have the players take the blame for the raids; after all, any outside intervention only cuts their profits and influence. Several laborers would swear to the player's cooperation with the raiders given the opportunity.

If captured, the raiders would even fall in line, becoming especially cooperative and quite willing to point to the players as the masterminds behind the whole scheme, especially if it meant lighter punishment. Aside from the obvious danger involved, it is for this reason that the raiders will be unwilling to attack the players directly.

If the players are ever put on trial, all parties will point out how coincidental it was that the players showed up to offer *assistance* just as the scheme was growing more dangerous.

THE HEIRLOOM

Situation

The Star of Duandor is an exquisitely crafted family heirloom in the possession of Cyrillin Malbin, Esquire, and Municipal Secretary of the Exchequer.

Malbin's family line was once nobility of some importance but lost standing through the mismanagement, betrayal, and excesses of successive generations. Malbin is now the last of his line and heirless, struggling in a relatively lowly post as a civil administrator, and barely holding on to what little social standing he has left.

The Star of Duandor is a broach, rich in jewels and charged with Runic magic, which has been passed from generation to

generation in Malbin's family. Weighing more than half an Enan in precious stones and metals, the Star is very valuable as an art piece alone. But due to the powerful Runes engraved in the face of the jewels, the value of the Star is even greater. The Runic inscriptions are intended to be used with a set of long-lost command words, the effects of which, though now unknown, are supposedly very potent and favorable for the Star's possessor.

The Star of Duandor is the last extraneous possession in Malbin's estate with any value, and with creditors knocking he has decided to sell it to keep the end at bay for a little while longer. Malbin arranged the sale of the Star of Duandor to the County Regent, Viscount Morlen Slestreven IV. The Regent is well-versed in Runic history and is known as an eccentric collector of runic artifacts.

Unbeknownst to Malbin, the Regent, while away on travel, heard the legend of a Runic charm, lavished with jewels and said to have the power to ensnare another person's affections. According to the legend, the power of this charm was so overwhelming that person would even face death rather than risk the love of the charm's wielder. While the account the Regent heard was vague, the Star of Duandor certainly might fit the description of the legendary charm.

The potential value of such an item to a Regent is so great that Slestreven could not bear to miss the chance to obtain it, however slim. Upon hearing Malbin intended to sell the Star, the Regent placed a bid that most might consider ludicrous. Strapped for currency, Malbin was more than eager to close the deal without considering any other offers. He arranged a secret deal with Slestreven and is preparing to make the transfer.

Mission

Macon Baddleport, a local merchant with some skill at dislodging secrets, has learned of the transfer through a well-placed informant in Malbin's estate. Having also learned of the connection to the charm legend, Baddleport has decided to lay hands on the Star and has even arranged a buyer. Baddleport has hired the players for an impressive sum of money (no doubt less than the Star's negotiated price) to obtain the Star for him. The players are to be paid on delivery.

Background and Nuances

The Star of Duandor is supposedly being transferred from the city to one of the Regent's manors in the nearby countryside, about two days' journey. Malbin's trusted men are said to be moving the Star by strongbox. Baddleport believes that the escort will be light, since Malbin cannot afford a large complement. Besides, the whole deal is supposed to be a secret.

Unfortunately for the players and the merchant, Baddleport's informant has been doubled—Malbin discovered him passing information and threatened to have him executed unless he agreed to help Malbin. Having no loyalties other than financial gain, the informant quickly agreed. Malbin is therefore aware the merchant is after the Star, and has taken some precautions. Although the escort will be light, Malbin will send the strongbox with a rock inside. Having been the victim of Baddleport's theft before, (as have most persons of any kind of wealth in the region) Malbin has included a well-concealed and lethal trap in the strongbox, in hopes that the merchant will open the box and be done away with for good.

Malbin is cautiously awaiting the outcome of the strongbox delivery before he turns over the real Star of Duandor to the Regent.

Having little shame and plenty of greed, Baddleport's informant is also under the employ of the Regent. Since the Regent has the most money to keep him quiet with, the informant has so far kept this fact from Baddleport and Malbin. Even though Malbin knows the informant has access to his secrets, he has not learned how yet; the informant may still be able to supply the Regent (and even Baddleport) with useful information.

The Regent's bid is large, although within his financial means, but he does not intend to actually pay it. The bid is intended to allay suspicion if the Star is stolen.

The Regent knows Baddleport is planning to steal the Star, and that Malbin is arranging alternate transportation for it. This information has created quite the opportunity for him; having Baddleport to blame for the theft is the perfect cover for his own people to steal the Star. In order to prevent the players from falling into Malbin's trap and losing Baddleport as

a scapegoat before the Star is exposed, the Regent will probably slip the players a warning about the strongbox switch.

If the strongbox goes through unscathed, Malbin may lose faith in his informant. Realizing this, the informant will try to find something of use. If the players are not cautious, the informant may discover their involvement and offer this information up to save his own skin. Even so, the informant is likely to learn of the real delivery and that information should get to the players.

Malbin's security will never be adequate everywhere at once, since he cannot afford to pay for it. He has to choose between mediocre everywhere or strong in one place at a time. If they discover this, the players should be able to pick and choose a way to get access to the Star. If they do not pay attention, however, the players could face stiff resistance.

Strongly believing that the Star is the legendary charm, the Regent will be very persistent about getting it. Even if the players do manage to obtain the Star from Malbin, the Regent might end up taking it from them in some way. The Regent's resources are expansive, although he cannot do anything too overt without drawing suspicion. The Regent plans to get someone else to take the blame in any case, so will be very cautious about how he goes about getting the Star.

Once the Star is taken, the only safe way to get rid of it will be through Baddleport's buyer. If the players try to do it anywhere else in the region, the Regent will find out. The players should be able to realize the danger through some kind of warning. However, getting the Star there should be a more difficult problem.

Anyone other than the Regent caught stealing the Star will be tried—by the Regent. Conducting court as the local authority, the Regent will certainly find in his own favor, whatever that may be. If the Regent is discovered, he will try to shift the blame to whoever is most convenient. Meanwhile, the Star might happen to disappear.

The Star of Duandor may or may not be the legendary charm. And, even if it is, the proper command words may never be discovered. Or maybe they will. In any case, the Star's Runes are very strong since they are engraved in precious stones.

THE PRISON

Situation

The Isle of Sisian (See-shin) is a relatively uninhabited and extremely unfriendly piece of real estate far from the coast of the main continent. Known largely for the impenetrable and deadly wilderness covering nearly every part of it, the island is generally regarded as a place to avoid at all costs. It is often said that no one who has ever set foot there has ever returned alive. The few that others say have been there refuse to talk about it.

That is why a maximum security prison has been constructed on Sisian. The Fortress of Balin, a place where the unwanted and unredeemable are sent to be forgotten, has for many years been kept a total secret. The only people free men who know of the prison are the powerful elite with the ability to condemn men there and the guards who are quietly recruited to preside over that hell made of stone.

One month ago, however, the secret ship that delivers Balin's prisoners and carries communication between the island and the mainland left and did not return. A second ship sent to investigate met with the same fate. The players have been discreetly hired by the few who know of Sisian's skeletons to go to Sisian and discover what happened. Those few powerful men want to be certain that the existence of Balin remain a secret.

Mission

If possible, the players are to restore order. If they are not successful, an invasion force is mounting to bury Balin's secrets forever.

Background and Nuances

The Isle of Sisian is every bit as deadly as the rumors suggest. Vicious and lethal creatures, plants, and terrain cover most of the island. Straying too far from the fortress is a good way to meet a quick death.

The Fortress of Balin is cut into the side of a rocky cliff, and from the outside has no visible outworks, just a handful of narrow arrow slits that look like pitting. The only distinguishing feature is a jagged rock just offshore that

conceals a cave that is above water only for a few hours at low tide. The cave contains a landing and the main entrance to the fortress. It was the custom of the fortress guards to set a bonfire in the cliff above to signal the communications ship. However, when the players arrive they will find the smashed and charred wreck of the second ship at the base of the cliff instead.

Balin contains numerous twisting corridors, stairwells, chambers, and of course, prison cells, all tunneled from the rock. There are two entrances, one on the top of the cliff, and one in the sea cave landing. The guards knew other secret passages in and out, but they are no longer talking.

The prisoners of Balin are divided into two categories: heinous villains too dangerous to keep elsewhere, and people who have not committed any real crimes but are political liabilities. The former are responsible for the current situation in the prison—a complete takeover of the fortress by the prisoners—and have slaughtered the guards to a man.

The two classes of prisoner were kept separately and even prior to the prison break were aware of the differing reasons for their confinement. The political prisoners were also able to escape during the takeover, but the two groups have now split into hostile factions and are warily living in and around the fortress plotting escape from the island. Both sides are armed with light armor and weaponry taken from the fortress' stores.

The fortress itself has become just as dangerous as the outlying wilderness because of the fighting between the two sides, and both sides have dwindled to small groups of roughly twenty men each. Their fighting has turned to a slow battle of attrition and stalking.

When the players arrive at the boat landing, the prisoners will stop fighting until they learn what the players want. The landing (which contains the only truly feasible means of escape, the boats) has become a no man's land to both sides, who each control half of the passages leading to it. As the water below the landing is teeming with predator fish, the bodies left after several skirmishes to secure the landing are now washed away and devoured.

Both factions have become paranoid that should they escape, the other would betray them once order inevitably became restored. Both sides have decided that they must

eliminate the other before they can successfully leave. Neither side knows the true strength of the other, but both are convinced they are dealing with a small handful of survivors.

Both parties will recognize that the players are a relief force for the powers that be, and may try to convince them that they are the guard force trying to recover the fortress after the prison uprising. Since they all have the guards' weapons and equipment, it should be hard to discern the truth, or even tell whose side anyone is really on. The corpses of the guards have been thrown into the ocean never to be seen again.

If they are discovered to be prisoners, the two parties will use different tactics. The criminal prisoners will try to divide the party up through distractions and seemingly logical suggestions to kill them off one at a time. The political prisoners, on the other hand, will try to convince the players (truthfully) that they were unjustly imprisoned and will try to convince the players to help them, especially since they were not the ones who killed the guards.

If the players help either faction, they will probably be enough to tip the scales against the other side, but it will be a hard fight for either faction.

If either side wins, the invasion force of which the players were told will just be arriving. The invasion force has overwhelming strength and orders to leave no one alive. The powers-that-be have decided that the fortress has been a liability too long, and are shutting it down for good.

If the players try, some of them might escape, although they should rapidly be made to realize that the arriving force has no plans to spare their lives either. Any prisoners left in the player's faction will probably be killed in the ensuing battle.

If the players do not join either side, they will probably become a mutual target, although the political prisoners may still give them quarter in hopes of winning them as allies. In any event, the invasion force will still arrive eventually with the same orders as above, and the players' efforts to fight the prisoners will not matter to them.

LIBERATION

Situation

Ten years ago, the small independent province of Antwryn was the scene of a political coup by Duke Robius II and mercenary forces loyal to him. Using deft military action, Robius staged a bloodless takeover of power from the three members of the Antwryn Republican Council who had ruled the province, ordered them into permanent exile, and established a hereditary throne. Since then, the members of the Council have been planning a counter-coup, establishing an underground movement in the countryside, and preparing for their return to power.

In the last four years, misfortune has fallen over Antwryn. A succession of crop failures, trade problems, and other financial troubles has sapped much of the province's prosperity and people are beginning to suffer. The Council places the blame directly on the head of Duke Robius, and feels that if nothing is done to stop the Duke, the people will face ruin.

The councilors have finally built up a solid resistance organization within the province that they feel is ready to begin direct action against the Duke's forces. The force is small but highly motivated. The Council believes if they succeed using hit and run tactics, they can gain enough support and volunteers to win.

The Duke's men are all professional men-at-arms, numbering a few hundred across the whole province. The largest garrison is located at the Duke's palace, about one-hundred and fifty picked men, but most garrisons are much smaller and oriented toward maintaining the peace as the town guard. The Duke's men are heavily dependent on their supply chain, largely consisting of a depot system at four of the largest towns and one more at the palace. Overall, the Duke's forces are well kept and in excellent fighting order.

Mission

The players have been hired to train the resistance forces in armed combat skills and help them widen the network to overthrow the tyrannical Duke. The players will receive a small stipend while aiding the resistance, and a large reward if the resistance succeeds.

Background and Nuances

The resistance movement presently consists of only a dozen men, but all of them are loyal to the Council and true believers in the former Republic. Outside the core group, there are a number of sympathizers who will either support the resistance with food, shelter, or supplies, and many more who will simply look the other way. The resistance is concentrated in the important town of Ybern, and is not yet widely known.

The players will need to use caution in approaching the resistance; until the players gain the trust of the resistance, they will be treated as potential spies for the Duke. The Duke is already aware of the formation of the resistance, but does not know where or who they are yet. The Council will provide the players with a contact in Ybern, but the players must be discreet.

The resistance will initially be uncooperative and perhaps even hostile until the players can establish rapport and trust. The resistance fighters are accepting the Council's aid (via the players) only out of their loyalty to the council, because they already believe they are capable fighters. They are not well-trained, however, and when the players are able to provide them with useful expertise they will begin to open up. On the other hand, the resistance members are resourceful, despite their lack of real training, and are in no way hapless bystanders. The resistance leadership will accept the players' suggestions for operations they should undertake, but will quickly veto anything too stupid or risky.

The Duke will respond to attacks against the guard or his holdings with increasing levels of curfews, stronger force and reprisals against any persons or towns that he believes are supporting the resistance. This will make the people cautious, but spark sympathy and earn volunteers for the resistance, especially from among the most supportive members of the population. His primary motivation is the stability of the regime, not outright revenge, although the resistance will certainly spin any type of action as another example of the Duke's thuggery.

The recent misfortunes of Antwryn are generally not the fault of the Duke, but are instead the result of outside influences beyond anyone's control gradually building up. Some factors in the troubles are actually the responsibility of

the Council's meddling from when they were in charge and during their exile. Deeper investigation into these problems should uncover this, although the resistance is unlikely to appreciate anything that undermines their cause.

The Duke's leadership of the province is actually fairly moderate by Rhun standards and the Duke himself is relatively just. In truth, the Council was once known to be corrupt and petty, part of the reason the Duke chose to overthrow them. Again, the resistance will never acknowledge any of this, firmly believing in an imagined utopian past; the players may discover this on their own through the course of events.

The Duke will attempt to send informants into the resistance, although if an effort is made to find them, with some common sense such men will be easily found out. However, no matter how successful the players are, some portion of the population will still be loyal to the Duke and the resistance may be betrayed without informants in their midst.

As (and if) the players and resistance become more successful, they will have to keep an increasingly low profile to prevent capture. The Duke is not in a position to hire additional forces, but he should have enough to keep the heat on the resistance if they are not careful.

If captured, the players will probably be exiled and resistance members jailed. The Duke will certainly attempt to turn anyone in his custody toward becoming an informant in exchange for leniency.

The resistance should slowly move from hit-and-run to overt actions, but will never adopt the stand-and-fight-to-the-last mentality of a regular army. Whenever possible, they will use surprise, cover, darkness, or whatever resources they have to tilt the odds in their favor.

The players should eventually be able to get enough fighters after a series of successful actions to assault the Duke's palace. If cornered, the Duke will volunteer to leave the province with his men. Afterward, the Council may resume power. Whether the players are actually paid is another story. The Duke may be interested in their services later on, however.



THE BRIDGE

Situation

A key pass crossing the lower mountains has become the main area of fighting between two local warring factions, placing a stranglehold on regional trade. The lynchpin is a bridge spanning the wide and unnavigable Stonegauntlet River, the only such crossing suitable for moving goods within a great distance in any direction. Since the leaders of the two sides are unwilling to either negotiate with each other or halt their attacks, no end is in sight, and the greater economy is in jeopardy.

The region, supposedly under the jurisdiction of the Confederated Nations, has a history of dispute going back eleven-hundred years and is in practice subordinate to no one. The Confederated Nations do not have the military or political reach to keep order here. In reality there are at least seven separate parties with power aspirations in the area, and at present all seven parties are aligned with one of the two main factions. Each faction is led by a high chieftain. Overlord Hoag Armigand holds the north side of the pass, and Hald-Baron Gevelan Semmilbane is on the south.

The Great Bridge of Nathare as it is known, stretches across a wide chasm with a fierce and rocky river below at the crux of the Cogswallow Pass. It is a massive and ancient stone arch bridge said to have been built in the time of giants, and has withstood numerous attempts to destroy it. In better times

the bridge was frequently visited for its breathtaking and dramatically beautiful view.

Now the two factions stand off in armed camps some distance from each of the two shores. Smoke and char have replaced all beauty. The area around the bridge is strewn with debris and corpses, and has become a wasted no-man's of nightmarish proportions. Any exposed person approaching the bridge is liable to catch an expertly aimed arrow from an unseen sniper. Any mass assault will draw a rain of naphtha and stone from the opposing faction's war engines.

Mission

The Regional Council of Merchants met recently to discuss solutions to the situation and decided to hire the players to break the stalemate. The Council, well informed through its extensive network of informants, can provide a great deal of information about the warring parties, but has decided to leave the choice of which course of action to take for the players to decide.

Background and Nuances

The leader from the south, Hald-Baron Semmilbane has three loyal factions behind him and controls all villages in the area surrounding the southern half of the pass. Beneath him are warrior-chiefs from each of the three factions, who have outwardly agreed to support him, but who individually have their own agendas. Each of these warrior-chiefs in turn has the loyalty of up to a thousand fighters including a mix of professional ex-soldiers and militia volunteers. The key advantage of this faction is its control of most of the nearby freshwater sources and most of the archaic but functional siege engines left behind by long-departed conquest armies.

The northern leader, Overlord Armigand, has four factions behind him, but in an even more tenuous alliance. Their fielded numbers are greater but are composed almost entirely of militia and conscripts. However, they control the wooded areas on the northern side of the pass, and the value of the wood supplies in them cannot be understated.

Both sides are engaged in brutal, total warfare, engaging in black earth tactics and the wanton slaughter of their enemies. Most of the nearby villages have been reduced to burnt husks and unburied or spike-impaled corpses are scattered across

the countryside. The surviving villagers are scarcely seen anywhere within miles of the fighting because of the random violence likely to be visited upon them.

Overlord Armigand lives in a stronghold surrounded by well-armed bodyguards. He does not see anyone and has standing orders to send any volunteers directly to the front. He lives lavishly and operates on protection money extorted from areas under his control, with trusted lieutenants sent out to carry out his orders.

The southern chieftain moves from residence to residence, his actual location masked by no less than four look-alikes also moving from place to place. He operates clandestinely, using a web of spies and assassins to maintain order in his forces. His warrior-chiefs direct their own men and raise troops, but do so under the seemingly omnipotent watch of Hald-Baron Semmilbane.

While trade is not possible, there are other crossings across the Stonegauntlet River that can be used to traverse the bridge. However, most are guarded by the forces of one faction or the other, who extort tolls made up at whim. A local guide may be useful in finding one of the less apparent (and possibly unguarded) routes across. All routes across are risky in some way, however.

Eliminating the head of either faction will result in the disintegration of that force as a coherent entity. The other side will almost certainly be able to take the bridge with its opponent divided, and will probably win the conflict. If that happens, trade may be able to commence, although violence is certain to continue given the length of the conflict.

Eliminating the heads of both factions will create utter chaos. The sub-factions will most likely begin fighting each other, since each of them has different aspirations and are unlikely to just throw down their weapons after all that has transpired. If the forces divide, the stalemate at the bridge will be broken, but nowhere in the region will likely be completely safe.

THE DISCOVERY

Situation

A Myndwar cave jumper named Vorg exploring previously unexplored lands stumbled upon a lost Rune, but was unable to bring it back to civilization with him. Rumors of the newly discovered Rune have reached a wealthy politician, who invites the cave jumper to his home to learn more. The politician is Lord Tandin Quickbreath, a Divaran ambassador with a thirst for power. He wants to be the only person with knowledge of this new Rune.

Vorg found the Rune while exploring a previously uncharted valley deep in the Spine. He stumbled across a band of forgotten Mydwar barbarians living in the wilds of the valley, high above the rest of the world and all but inaccessible without a map. Only Vorg's curiosity and skill allowed him to find the tribe at all.

For a few days, Vorg was able to simply observe the barbarians, and noted their use of a strange Rune with which he was unfamiliar. Its effects were strange, but as he is not a Runic scholar, he had no idea that he was seeing an unknown Rune at work. Before he could investigate further, he was discovered. The barbarians hunted him like a wild animal, attempting to kill him before he could betray them to the outside world. Vorg barely escaped with his life, much to the chagrin of the barbarians.

Vorg reported the strange effects to his friends back in his home town, and was overheard by one of Tandin's spies. The spy brought Vorg back to Tandin's home with an invitation and the promise of a considerable payment.

The Mission

Lord Tandin hires the players to retrieve the Rune. He realizes that it will be a difficult task, and provides them with Vorg's map of the area. He promises them a sizeable financial reward for the return of the Rune, but makes it clear that he wants the mission to remain secret and that he wants no one else to learn the secret of the Rune. While the players are meeting with Tandin, Vorg is not mentioned, and he is kept out of sight.

Background and Nuances

The cave jumper, Vorg, was made very comfortable upon his arrival at Tandin's home and was well paid to boot. However, Lord Tandin has no desire to allow others to learn more of the Rune, and is keeping Vorg prisoner. Vorg is allowed free reign within Tandin's home, but the guards will not allow him to leave under any circumstances. Tandin has told Vorg that he may go once the Rune is in Tandin's library.

Tandin does not trust the players, and has hired a second mercenary team to trail them. The second company is to ambush the players as they leave the valley (presumably with the Rune) and kill all but one, bringing the captive back to Lord Tandin. The second mercenary team is composed of highly-trained assassins and trackers, and Tandin has not told them about the Rune. He has told them to bind and gag the prisoner, ostensibly to prevent him from casting Runes. Tandin's real purpose behind gagging the prisoner, however, is to prevent him from relating his secret to the assassins.

Unfortunately for Tandin, his spy was not the only person to hear Vorg's story. A library in Siene has also hired a team of mercenaries to procure the Rune. Unlike Tandin, the purpose of the library is to impart the knowledge of the new Rune to any who would ask for it. The rival group is not interested in stopping the players, and is more than willing to help them recover the Rune as long as both groups gain knowledge of the Rune. Such cooperation is outside the mandate of the players' mission, however, and if they wish to remain true to their employer, these mercenaries are rivals or enemies.

Lord Tandin is incautious about his meeting with the team of assassins. Vorg overhears enough of Tandin's plan to figure out that the players are in significant danger. He also figures out that the Rune he saw is new, and understands its value. Finally, he has decided that Tandin will more than likely have him killed once the diplomat has the Rune. A few days after the players leave on their mission, Vorg engineers an escape and sets out after them.

The mercenaries hired by the library in Siene are competent and well trained; they see no reason to make enemies of the players unless provoked. The two groups will most likely have some contact before they reach the valley, especially in the Myndwar villages and cities in the mountains.

The barbarians of the valley have been residing in their hidden valley for hundreds of years, since they fled to escape the Deijin. They do not know that the Deijin are gone, and wish to protect their valley against intrusion and detection at all costs. When Vorg escaped, they were distraught. They have slain the dozen or so explorers who found their valley in the past, and will continue to defend their secret to the best of their abilities.

The barbarians have mastered the use of the Khet Rune, which they discovered deep within a cave upon their arrival in the hidden valley. They have a rudimentary knowledge of other elemental Runes, but are particularly skilled with Khet-eq, Khet-ej, and Khet-ess. Because of their affinity for the shadow Rune, they call themselves the Shadow Warriors. They have a barbaric and violent culture, a result of their isolation and the harsh conditions in their icy mountain home.

The valley itself is located among some of the highest peaks of the Spine. The floor of the valley is higher in elevation than nearly any other location in civilized lands, and is covered in snow nearly year round. A sparse evergreen forest grows in the valley, and is home to the indigenous animals the tribe hunts for food. The barbarians carve their homes into the walls of the valley, living deep within caves in the mountains surrounding the valley.

The valley is all but inaccessible except for a series of natural caverns that run beneath the towering monoliths surrounding the valley. Passage over the mountains is nearly impossible, with vertical cliffs and bone-chilling storms. As long as the players have Vorg's map, they should have little trouble navigating through the caves, but the mercenary company hired by the library in Siene is not as well-equipped. The players may be forced to decide whether or not to save the rival mercenaries if they decide to head over the mountains.

The Khet Rune is only written in two places in the valley. The Rune is still inscribed in the wall of the cave in which it was discovered. The Shadow Warriors take it upon themselves to maintain the Rune from time to time to make sure that it does not fade with time and erosion. The cave is surrounded by the homes of many barbarians, and is under constant guard.

The other written Khet Rune is kept on a small sheet of steel carried by the head shaman, a powerful Runecaster

responsible for training the tribe in the use of the Rune. He will not willingly deliver his secret under any circumstances, but if he is captured and searched, the players will easily find the Rune hanging from a leather strap around his neck.

In order to ascertain the spoken pronunciation of the Khet Rune, players will have to hear it spoken. They can do this by spying on Shadow Warriors or by engaging them in combat. When in a combat situation, the Shadow Warriors will almost always invoke the Khet Rune in some form. Combat may actually be unavoidable, unless the players are incredibly adept at sneaking and hiding, since the barbarians are intimately familiar with every inch of their ancestral home.

If the players are in serious danger, the gamemaster can have Vorg join them in the valley to apprise them of the presence of the assassins hired by Tandin. Vorg knows an alternate exit from the valley that was not on the players' map, and if he trusts the players, may lead them out to avoid the ambush.

THE ARMORER

Situation

Jyngo the Armorer is a famous smith capable of producing the highest quality Runic weapons and armor. He has done a brisk business with the Confederated nations, supplying magical armament to the armies holding back the tide of outcast nations attempting to secure their freedom.

A wealthy merchant, Adelton, has just purchased a sizeable order of Jyngo's Runed armor. The order cost several hundred thousand Vel, and Adelton needs an escort for the caravan that will carry the armor to his buyer.

The Mission

The players are hired by Adelton to escort the caravan, and will be paid upon the arrival of the armor at its final destination.

Backgrounds and Nuances

Jyngo has been working for years with a group of raiders from an outcast nation. Depending on the geography of the game, this group could be Sivitagi, Kantarin, or even Draslander. Jyngo has been selling failed or weak Runes to his

contacts in the Confederated nations, in small enough quantities to prevent his exposure.

As with any adventure involving players guarding a caravan, the wagons will be attacked. The bandits will pose a serious threat, and Adelton will offer the players use of some of the buff coats he has just purchased. After all, it is better to lose one or two suits of armor than all of them. Unfortunately, the armor is not completely functional. It may operate for a few rounds before failing, or it may not work at all. The armor itself is sturdy and as protective as it should be, but the Runes adorning the armor are inadequate. The players will have a tough time defending the caravan, especially when their magical armor fails them.

Assuming he survives, Adelton is furious with Jyngo for providing him with substandard armor. He pays off the players' contract and hires them to return with him to Jyngo for a reckoning.

Jyngo is not totally unprepared for an angry customer. He is ready with his usual group of excuses about variations in quality, and is prepared to buy back any armor that is not functioning as desired. He is not willing to pay full price for armor that has already been worn, however, and Adelton may be difficult to pacify without a full refund.

If Jyngo feels particularly threatened, he will call upon his several layers of defense. First, he lives and works within a virtual fortress, and can retreat deep inside his home, protected by traps both mundane and Runed. Second, he employs a handful of highly trained and very loyal bodyguards, all wearing excellent Runed armor and wielding powerful Runed weapons.

Finally, Jyngo has a small Ote wafer given to him by the raiders. The raiders recognize the smith's value, and would be loathe to lose him should his double-dealing be exposed. The Ote wafer will not transport Jyngo, but it will teleport itself to the raiders, alerting them that Jyngo is in trouble. They will make all haste in traveling to Jyngo's home to help him.

If Jyngo escapes, he will almost certainly have to go live with the raiders, where he will most likely continue to make Runed armor, this time depriving the Confederated nations of his considerable expertise.

COMBAT TIPS

The gamemaster has the unenviable task of tracking the combat readiness of several combatants at once, while the players need only concern themselves with their own characters. Some of the following tips may help to speed combat and reduce complex accounting.

Average Characters

There will almost certainly come a time when the players will encounter a non-player character that the gamemaster has not generated ahead of time. In these cases, if the included non-player characters are not appropriate, the gamemaster can assume that non-player characters have a skill score of 2 in relevant skills and base attributes of 3.

For example, my players have stumbled across a dive bar where they are to meet their contact. However, instead of crossing to their contacts' table, they question the bartender, and attempt to negotiate for a free room. The bartender may be assumed to have Heart of 3 and Socializing: Trading of 2, since I had not even considered using him before now.

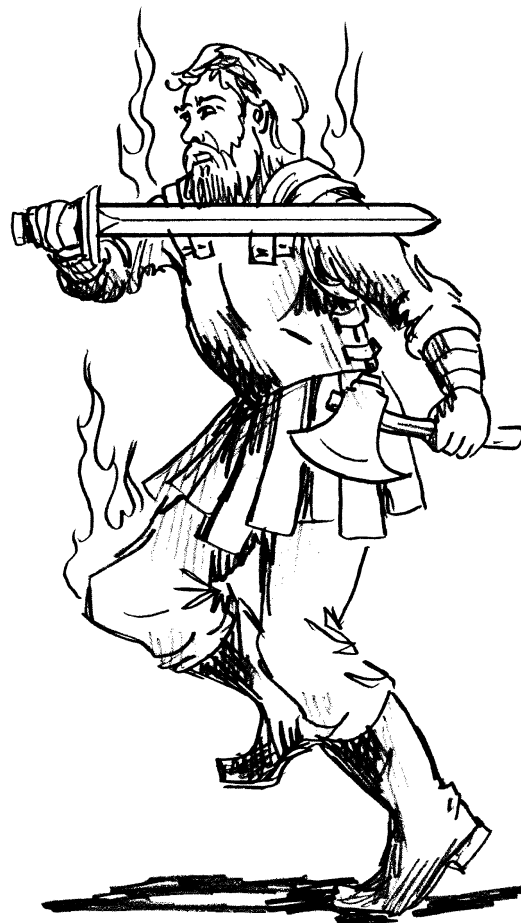
The wound penalty suffered by the opponent is equal to the number showing on the die, and when the combatant flips to 3 on the die, he is dead, unconscious or otherwise removed from the combat.

For example, five opponents are attacking my players. In the first round, opponent #1 takes a hit equal to triple his Endurance, opponent #2 takes a hit just over his Endurance, opponent #3 takes a hit less than his Endurance, and opponents #4 and #5 take no damage at all. Opponent #1 is out of the fight. I place a die with a '1' showing next to the listing for opponent #2. Opponents #3-5 are relatively unharmed.

Group Combats

It can be very tedious to track every hit in a large combat. Below are two alternatives.

1. Give every *grunt* a damage threshold equal to twice their Endurance. If an attacker causes this much damage or more in one blow, the grunt goes down. He may not be dead, but he is out of the fight. If the attack does less damage than this, the grunt is unharmed. The gamemaster may be free to describe bloody noses or scrapes, but the grunt stays up until someone causes more than double their Endurance in one blow. This rule is really only appropriate for weak combatants, because stronger or better armored fighters will be able to withstand more than one heavy blow.
2. For smaller or better-trained opponents, the gamemaster may track hits using dice. Each time a combatant takes a hit greater than his or her Endurance, add 1 to the die.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

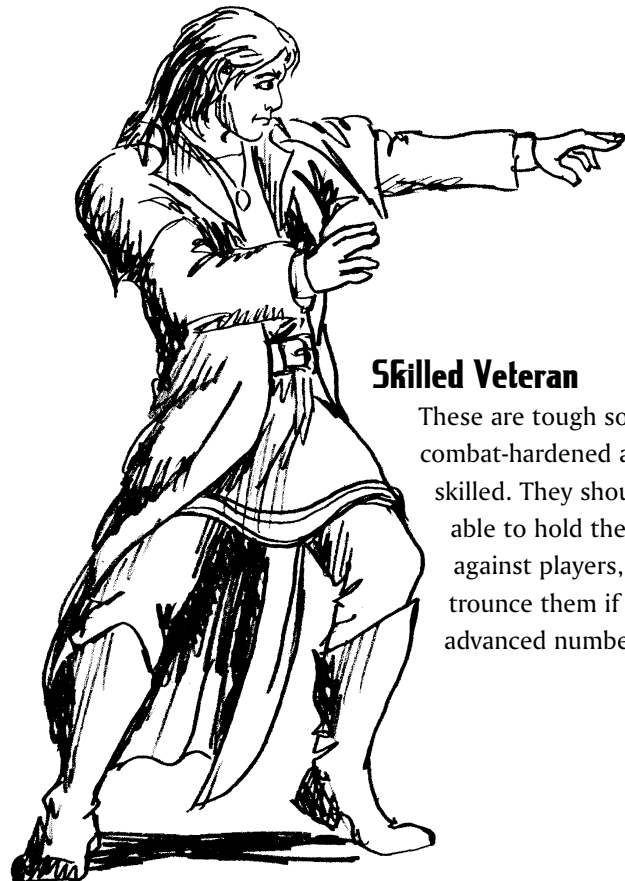
From time to time, the gamemaster will want to produce characters who are, for the most part, faceless fodder. These may be allies backing the players or they may be opposing armies. The following non-player characters do not include full stats, though there are enough here to manage a standard combat encounter.

Poorly-Trained Fighter

This is the average person with no combat training who should present little danger to players except in large groups. Examples are conscripted peasants or rioting thugs.

Average Footsoldier

The character generation rules assume that the characters are better-trained than the average citizen, elite members of their society. The average footsoldier does not share that privilege, however. Examples of the average footsoldier include members of organized gangs or town guards.



Skilled Veteran

These are tough soldiers, combat-hardened and skilled. They should be able to hold their own against players, and trounce them if enjoying advanced numbers.

POORLY-TRAINED FIGHTER

2

Strength

3

Agility

5

Body

8

Endurance

15

Health

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 1

Willpower 1

Light Weapon Combat [Light Blade] 1

Armor: none

Weapon: Short Sword (Strength 3)

AVERAGE FOOTSOLDIER

3

Strength

3

Agility

6

Body

14

Endurance

18

Health

General Combat [Dodge] 1

General Combat [Initiative] 2

Willpower 1

Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade] 2

Armor 2

Armor: Scale (Endurance 5)

Weapon: Sword (Strength 4)

SKILLED VETERAN

4

Strength

4

Agility

8

Body

23

Endurance

21

Health

General Combat [Dodge] 2

General Combat [Initiative] 3

Willpower 2

Heavy Weapon Combat [Heavy Blade] 3

Armor 4

Armor: Veile (Endurance 8), Shield (Endurance 4)

Weapon: Back Sword (Strength 4)

Conflict Resolution Procedure

Step	Description
Base Difficulty	A number representing the initial complexity of the challenge at hand.
Target	Base Difficulty - Attribute $\pm$ Modifiers.
Roll	0 to 5 dice rolled, results compared to the Target.
Success	Result equal to or greater than the Target.
Failure	Result lower than the Target.

Base Difficulty Numbers

Difficulty	Target Number	Rune Target
Easy	7	The Caster himself
Average	10	Any object or willing creature
Hard	12	
Challenging	14	

Targeted Attacks Difficulty

Location	Success Required
Chest	2
Head	3
Arm or Leg	3
Hand or Foot	4
Eye or Heart	5

Success Outcome

Successes	Result	Damage Multiplier (if applicable)	Max Rune Range
0	Failure	x0	—
1	Minor Success	x1	5 feet
2	Success	x2	10 feet
3	Major Success	x3	25 feet
4	Outstanding Success	x4	50 feet
5	Critical Success	x5	100 feet

Rune Durability and Casting Time

Material	Durability	Casting Time
Spoken	Instantaneous	2 actions
Drawings		
Sketch (chalk, charcoal)	1 hour	10 rounds (30 seconds)
Drawing (ink, blood)	5 hours	20 rounds (1 minute)
Tattoo (ink in flesh)	1 year	1 hour
Inscriptions		
Flesh or Leather	1 day (25 hours)	10 minutes
Clay or Soft Stone	1 week (7 days)	30 minutes
Bone	1 week (7 days)	2 hours
Brick or Hard Stone	2 weeks (14 days)	4 hours
Soft Metal	3 months	3 hours
Hard Metal	6 months	12 hours
Chitin	1 year	2 hours
Living Wood	1 year	60 minutes

Encumbrance

	Height (in feet)							
Strength	3	3.5	4	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5
1	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
2	60	70	80	90	100	110	120	130
3	90	105	120	135	150	165	180	195
4	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260
5	150	175	200	225	250	275	300	325

Currency Exchange Rates

	Divaros (Vel)		Myndwar (Slag)		Zokili (Chi)	
	CONVERT TO					
Roll	Slag	Chi	Vel	Chi	Vel	Slag
1	Ø	Ø	Ø	10:1	Ø	1:10
2-3	4:1	25:1	1:4	15:1	1:25	1:15
4	Ø	20:1	Ø	Ø	1:20	Ø
5-6	3:1	15:1	1:3	10:1	1:15	1:10
7	12:1	Ø	1:2	Ø	Ø	Ø
8-9	1:1	10:1	1:1	15:1	11:10	1:15
10	1:2	5:1	2:1	5:1	1:5	1:5

Rune Modifiers

Modifier	Cause
+2	per each additional known Rune in a Runix phrase
+5	for the addition of any Rune with which the Caster does not have skill

Attribute Checks

Attribute	Type of Check
Strength	Attempt to lift a heavy stone.
Heart	Convince a crowd you are telling the truth.
Agility	Run between swinging blades.
Intellect	Perform complex calculations.
Body	Withstand a powerful physical attack.
Mind	Withstand a powerful mental attack.

Barrier Checks

Barrier	Type of Check
Perception	Character may or may not notice something important.
Endurance	Character is in a strenuous situation, or needs to withstand damage.
Health	Character is confronted with damage, disease, poison or plague.
Soul	Character is confronted with spiritual assault or mental torment.

CHARACTER NAME:

PLAYER NAME:

NATIONALITY:

TURF:



BASIC CHARACTER SHEET

BACKGROUND, GEAR, & NOTES:

ATTRIBUTES				BARRIERS				CURRENCY	
Strength	Agility	Heart	Intellect	(Body + Heart) Endurance	(Mind + Agility) Perception				
(Strength + Agility) Body	(Heart + Intellect) Mind	Endurance + Strength + Agility + Intellect Health	2x Mind + Strength + Agility Soul						

SKILLS				WEAPONS				
				Description	Strength	Tougness	Body	Range (M/S/L/E)

ARMOR			
Description	Endurance	Tougness	Body

RUNES		
Description	Translation	Effect

ATTRIBUTES

Strength

Agility

Heart

Intellect

(Strength + Agility)

Body

(Heart + Intellect)

Mind

BARRIERS

(Body + Heart)

Endurance

(Mind + Agility)

Perception

Endurance + Strength + Agility + Intellect

Health

2x Mind + Strength + Agility

Soul

CURRENCY

SKILLS			

PRIMARY WEAPONS			
Description	Strength	Toughness	Body

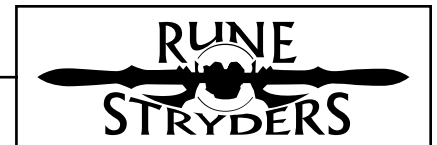
RQ1 | E8

[illegible]

ARMOR		
Description	Endurance	Toughness

STRYDER NAME:

STRYDER TEMPLATE:



STRYDER SHEET

Pilot:

Cost:

Notes:

ATTRIBUTES / BARRIERS

Strength	Agility	Endurance	Body
Health	Movement	Mod Spaces	
Weight	Capacity		

BATTLE RUNES

Description	Effect

STANDARD MODIFICATIONS

Rune Chamber	
Head	
Arms	
Legs	
Passenger Space	
Crew Space	

MOUNTED / CARRIED WEAPONS

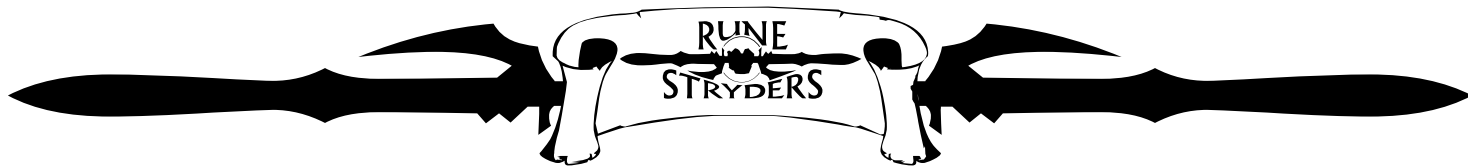
Description	Strength	Toughness	Body	Range (M/S/L/E)

OTHER MODIFICATIONS

Description	Bonus

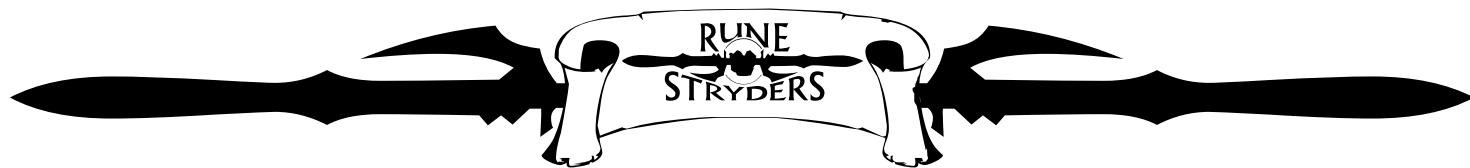
ARMOR

Description	Endurance Bonus	Location



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