

FREE LEAGUE

Symbaroun



Quick Start

*“In the ruins of Symbaroum a dream sight revealed
a well, a cauldron, a sinkhole.*

*Out of its depth a blightling came sidling,
filth forged in flesh, cruelty carved in bone,
a decoction of the World Serpent’s marrow.*

*The blight beast ogled me hungrily
and in its burning eyes I saw the death of all.”*

Symbaroum

QUICK START

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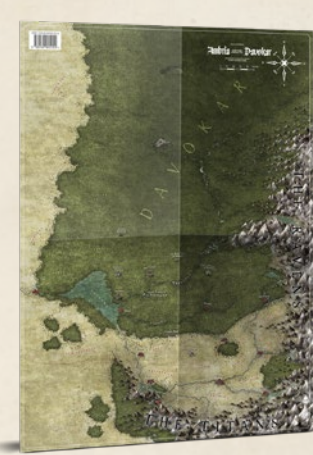
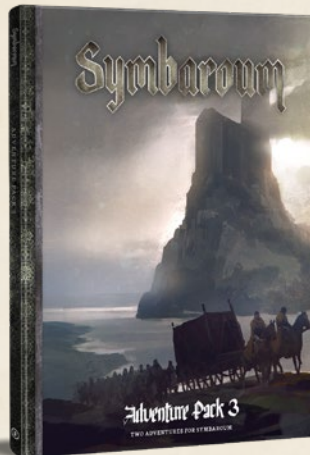
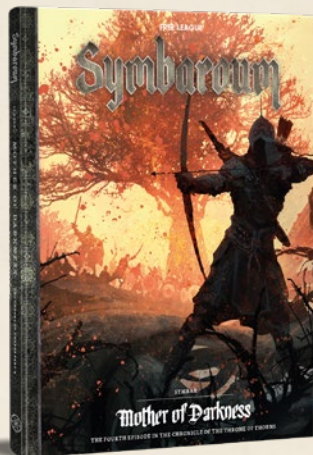
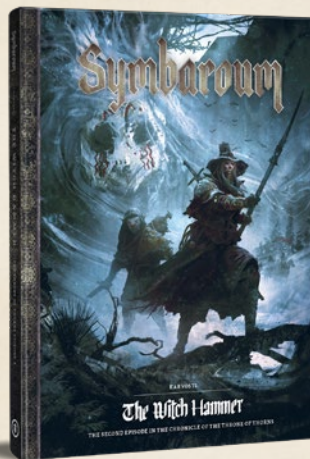
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THE SYMBAROUM CATALOG



Symbatrum is waiting ..

... FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS! This Quick Start is more than mere texts and artwork. It is meant to introduce you to another world; a world where you will get to explore the vast Forest of Davokar in the hunt for treasure, insights and fame; where you may visit one of the eleven barbarian clans to trade or to plunder their treasuries; where you can establish a base of power among princes, guilds or rebellious refugees in the capital city of Yndaros; where you can fight for the honor of Queen Korinthia or ally yourselves with the ancient guardians of the forest. Whichever path you choose to walk, unforgettable adventures are waiting behind every crest and bend.



WHAT YOU WILL find in this thorough introduction is a selection of chapters and paragraphs from the *Symbaroum Core Rulebook*. The idea is that the Quick Start should make it possible for you and your friends to get a glimpse of the game world, and to learn the basics of the game's mechanics.

Regarding the latter, this document includes a one-shot adventure with pre-made characters and also an assortment of creatures, while the selection of featured abilities, powers and other elements of the ruleset has been made with the adventure and creatures in mind. Hence, the Quick Start gives you a chance not only to understand what *Symbaroum* is, but also to actually put it into play.

The final chapter of this text is called *Symbaroum – the Throne of Thorns* and presents the epic, six-part adventure chronicle which could be described as the backbone of the game. Sure, you can build your own adventures using the *Core Rulebook*, the *Advanced Player's Guide* and the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, but the episodes of *The Throne of Thorns* greatly expands on the setting and will offer you hundreds of hours of action, thrills and amazing discoveries at the gaming table. If the game world and ruleset is to your liking, we wholeheartedly suggest that you take a closer look at the chronicle.

Now, you who are already knowledgeable about how roleplaying games operate can probably skip the next two pages, but we hope that all beginners will find their introduction to what a roleplaying game is to be useful. Whatever category you may belong to, you are of course most welcome to walk with us through the halls of Davokar, among the ruins of ancient Symbaroum. We firmly believe that you and your friends will find what you are looking for. And more ...

Narrative Tutorial

On page 33 is a narrative tutorial that describes how the communication between a player and the Game Master may flow while Symbaroum is played. It is recommended that you who are to be players refrain from reading it until you have played through the adventure in the *Core Rulebook*, *The Promised Land*.

Roleplaying Game?

ONE CAN SAY that a roleplaying game consists of two main ingredients: on the one hand, a fantasy world full of places to visit and creatures to meet; on the other hand, rules that dictate what is possible to do in that world and determines the outcome of what happens.

Roleplaying games are played in a group, together with friends, and the goal is primarily to have fun. You do not compete with each other; instead you share a common adventure through the eyes of your player characters. The individual who shoulders the Game Master's responsibility does not have a PC of his own. His or her task is to manage the game, for instance by describing the world and putting the characters to the test with problems and challenges. But the common story, or more accurately, the shared adventure, is something which the players and GM create together.

THE GAME WORLD

The fantasy world where the player characters live both resembles and differs from our own. What differs depends on which roleplaying game you play, but regarding the particular world of Symbaroum you will for instance face laws of nature making magic and blessings real; creatures like elves, trolls and lindworms; a level of development which in most aspects resembles that of late medieval Europe; and societies with steep hierarchies where the weak and the sick have a hard time surviving. The first section of the *Core Rulebook* contains an in-depth description of the game world.

Other similarities between the worlds are that Symbaroum's world, like our own, has been shaped by a long history; that it has nature, cities and villages; and, not least, that it is inhabited by individuals who firmly believe that the world around them is real and that their actions have real

You will find the Character Sheet at the back of this document and you are free to copy, print, and distribute it as much as you like.

consequences. Sure, it is a fantasy world, but that is not something which the player characters and its other inhabitants are aware of.

FREEDOM AND IMMERSION

Just as an encyclopedia or a post on the internet can never provide you with a comprehensive description of Sweden or the US, the kingdom of Ambria and the forest of Davokar contain a multitude of people, places and phenomena which do not fit in the game books. What is written must be understood as a mere point of departure for the adventures you will share with your friends.

If you want to visit a place or a person that is mentioned in the *Core Rulebook* without being thoroughly described, it is up to you to "discover", thereby describing, it together. And remember that even if various supplements and publications expand on the description of Ambria and Davokar, you always have the freedom to travel wherever you want in the game world - including places outside the boundaries of the map.

Tips & Guidance

More information on how roleplaying games operate can be found on various online forums and sites. On the forums you can also post questions to more experienced gamers - questions touching on everything from game rules to the design of adventures.

Free League's own forum can be found by way of our homepage at frialigan.se/en/startpage. You are most welcome to visit us there!

Players

WHEN PLAYING a roleplaying game, each participant (except the Game Master) has his or her own player character, through which he or she experiences and interacts with the game world. The player decides what the character says and does, and rolls dice to determine if his or her character succeeds in what it attempts to do.

THE PLAYER CHARACTER

When creating a character you do so guided by the rules in the Core Book Player's Guide and write down the outcome of your decisions on the character sheet. The character sheet contains the PC's name, what skills it has, what goals it has, what equipment it carries and so on. When the player character learns something, earns a reward, acquires new equipment or alters its ambitions, the player takes out his or her eraser and pencil and makes the required changes on the character sheet.

When it comes to the specific game of Symbaroum the players' characters form a unified group where everyone has different but equally strong reasons for wanting to work together. Conflicts between characters may occur but should not be allowed to get too serious.

The ruleset of Symbaroum is built for collaboration and the principle of consensus is assumed to prevail between players, as well as between players and Game Master. There are other roleplaying games that focus more on disagreements between players or that portray the Game Master as an opponent to the players. Symbaroum is not such a game; at least, it is not designed to be.

DICE ROLLS

When playing Symbaroum all dice rolls are managed by the players, unlike other games where the Game Master also makes some rolls. To see if a character is successful or fails when attempting to perform an action the player rolls a twenty-sided die (1D20).

In order for the character to succeed, the die must land on a number which is equal to or lower than the value specified by the Game Master – a value related to one of the PC's basic Attributes and sometimes also modified by other circumstances. Effect tests, meaning rolls to, for example, determine how much damage is dealt with a weapon or how much a person is healed by a mystical power, are rolled with other dice. These are called D4, D6, D8, D10 or D12 depending on how many sides they have.

Symbaroum's Dice Set



Four-sided (D4)



Six-sided (D6)



Eight-sided (D8)



Ten-sided (D10)



Twelve-sided (D12)



Twenty-sided (D20)

Game Master

SIMPLY PUT, the Game Master is the one who makes the world come alive for the players and who challenges the player characters as they strive for their goals. As something like a real-time director the Game Master must be prepared to improvise if the characters do something unexpected, at other times to help the players on their way – all with the goal that their mutual story will become as thrilling and enjoyable as possible.

Being a Game Master means spending some time on preparations but it is indeed a labor of love, not least when after a session you are rewarded with positive comments from the players.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The individuals and creatures encountered by the players in the game world are called non-player characters (NPCs) and are accordingly portrayed by the Game Master. The NPC may be anything from a jovial servant at an inn to a howling beast in Davokar.

As previously stated, the Game Master does not have to perform any die rolls to see if the NPCs are successful or not. They are instead characterized by fixed values used to modify rolls made by the players. In other words: instead of rolling dice, the GM may focus on describing what happens in the game world and on deciding how different NPCs respond and verbally react to the actions of the player characters.

ADVENTURES

The players have a great impact on what happens during a gaming session, but the Game Master has a special responsibility for the story. It is chiefly the GM who makes preparations before the session, either by creating an adventure of his or her own or by studying and planning for a published adventure created by someone else (for instance by us at Free League).

In the last section of the *Core Rulebook* the Game Master is offered advice for creating two sorts of adventures: the Classical type and the Adventure Landscape. However, there are no fixed rules for how to create adventures and there is nothing that states that the Game Master has to spend lots of hours on large-scale preparations. Sometimes it can be at least as much fun just gathering around the table, starting to play and seeing what happens. For however one may regard roleplaying games in general, you should never forget that they are primarily meant to be an entertaining, thrilling and unifying experience for all!



Welcome to Symbaroum!

OR, TO BE PRECISE, welcome to the region that in ancient times was ruled by the civilization of Symbaroum – an empire that by all accounts was advanced in the areas of architecture, spirituality, magical schooling and the arts; a culture that without doubt suffered a both rapid and brutal downfall.

THIS SECTION OF THE BOOK contains an overview of the region where the roleplaying game Symbaroum is set, a region including the kingdom of Ambria, the vast forest of Davokar, the naked lowlands west of the woods and the mountain ranges marking its southern and eastern borders. What may be found outside this region will become the topic of future modules, although some information has been included here – not least about Alberetor, the land south of the Titans which the Ambrian people have been forced to abandon.

The reason for zooming in on a limited geographical area is that we are aiming for a presentation which is comprehensive rather than shallow, nuanced rather than sweeping. That being said, you will still find blanks and gaps in the text, topics we have been forced to exclude because of space limitations. But we hope and trust that the included material will prove to be enough for you to fill in the blanks yourself.

This opening chapter covers the history, geography and population of the setting, while Chapter 2 presents its most powerful factions. After that comes a chapter that introduces what arguably can be described as the heart of the game world, the forest of Davokar. In the Core Rulebook you will also find three chapters describing the setting's most important population centers: the town of Thistle Hold, Ambria's capital Yndaros and the forest plateau Karvosti where the High Chieftain of the barbarian clans reside. Thistle Hold is the main base of Ambria's explorers and fortune-hunters and is given a more detailed account, while the latter are portrayed in broader strokes pending more exhaustive presentations in upcoming books.

With the texts, images and maps of this section we hope that you will feel welcomed to the setting of Symbaroum. We would also like to invite you to contribute to its expansion. It is when this book reaches its readers that Ambria and Davokar truly

begin to live and breathe, and we hope that you are willing to share your ideas, thoughts and creations with the Symbaroum community. In this way, the improvement and development of the setting can become our joint venture!

The Return of the Queen

THE GREAT WAR, the hungry hordes of the Dark Lords – a nightmare that lasted for two decades and which left little to hearten those who finally woke up. Instead they had all the reasons to grieve: tens of thousands had died; the maimed and broken were beyond count; the land was ravaged by death magic; there was famine and infertility. And even though the young Queen had been rescued from the claws of the enemy, she had returned a shadow of her former self, with a lifeless mask covering her once radiant sunshine smile.

Twenty-one years have passed since the Dark Lords were vanquished and the Queen realized that her realm was dying. She was forced to lead her people to safer grounds, that much was evident. And before long she was able to identify where to start anew. North of the mountain range called the Titans lay the fertile soils which according to legend were the ancestral home of her people. The time had come for Korinthia to claim her birthright.

During the past couple of centuries the region up north had been controlled by warring, barbarian clans and before that by the prosperous city-state of Lindaros. According to legend, Lindaros suffered the wrath of celestial powers, causing a most infectious bleeder's disease to wipe out its entire population. This occurred about two hundred years ago, after which it took more than a century before the nomadic clans of the region dared approach the contaminated ruins.

No more than a couple of months after the decisive battle against the Dark Lords, Korinthia's troops reached the region in the north. At Lindaros they encountered a small barbarian settlement, established by the clan Kadiz that had been evicted from its territory in Davokar fifty years earlier. After a siege that lasted only three days the barbarian chieftain bowed before the superior power and the work of rebuilding Lindaros could commence – a task that mainly was carried out by thousands of prisoners of war and as many so-called volunteers, men and women who were on the run from already dead regions in old Alberetor.

The Queen did not join the refugees until seven years after the war's end. When she did, she declared that her new realm would be called Ambria, "the shining", and the increasingly well-organized



capital was to be named Yndaros in honor of Korinthia's father, the hero king Ynedar. Three years later the Queen's armies also managed to overwhelm the barbarian warlord Haloban and his clan warriors – a triumph giving Korinthia and her people the opportunity to start exploring and harvesting the ample riches of Davokar Forest.

Much has happened over a short period of time, so there has been no room for subtleties. Disobedient barbarians have been killed, banished or imprisoned by Korinthia's experienced and well-equipped soldiers; the obedient ones have been used for labor under slave-like conditions. The latter also holds true for many of Korinthia's own subjects, namely all those who came from the south without personal riches or sought-after skills. If anyone bothered to keep count of how many people have died in the process of building Ambria the final score would be in the thousands. But no one does. To those who are alive nothing counts but the remarkable result. Although the restoration of Yndaros is far from finished the city has grown to enormous proportions, and at the same time Korinthia's knights have conquered all land between the mountains in the south and the

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~  
THUS SPOKE AROALETA

*"... and the day dawned, when the spawn of the Serpent took to arms, when the crimes of countless days must be counted and atoned for, horn by horn, fang by fang. And the sinners wept with blinded eyes, they moaned with severed throats, they fled on fractured limbs. And Symbaroum fell, into dreamless sleep ..."*

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~




woods in the north. Now the nobles of Ambria are starting to plan for new conquests, in the north and in the west.

Seven years ago the uncrowned king of Ambria's treasure-hunters, Lasifor Nightpitch, established the town of Thistle Hold. The construction was largely financed by the reward Lasifor had received for an armful of dried Twilight-Thistle – a rare herb, allegedly powerful enough to aid the gravely

ill Abesina, mother of Queen Korinthia. Ever since then, the walled settlement of Mayor Nightpitch has acted as a safe haven for Ambrians exploring Davokar, a forest full of natural resources and rich remnants of long lost civilizations; also a forest full of rampant abominations, dark-minded creatures of otherworldly origins and a band of wardens most unwilling to welcome the damages done by human explorers.

It was not much chieftain Haloban of the Jezites and his clan warriors could do when Korinthia sent her battle-hardened army to crush them.

The Promised Land

THE REGION KORINTHIA is determined to conquer is dominated by Davokar, a forest that in itself is as varied as a continent. Traversing the woods from Thistle Hold to its northern edge would take weeks, if not months, and on the way one would have to face beasts as well as hostile elves, blight-stricken abominations and treacherous nature.

South of Davokar a rolling landscape of fertile plains stretches out. Where they are not plowed by Ambrian farmers they are covered by pale green grass or small groves where the birds and beasts of the lowlands find shelter. This is Ambria, a kingdom divided into seven duchies encircling a domain

ruled by the Church of Prios, the Sun God and the Giver of Laws. The Grand Duchy of Korinthia is by far the largest, just as the capital city of Yndaros is larger than Thistle Hold, Ravenia and the high seat of the Sun Church, Templewall.

The region is framed on two sides by towering mountains – the wild and majestic Titans to the south and the Ravens to the east, growing taller and steeper the further south one travels. Aside from some mining colonies and the monastery of the Twilight Friars south of Yndaros, the Ambrians are yet to establish any noteworthy settlements in the mountains. Instead they have become a refuge for

Timeline

-500 (approximately)

The clans of Davokar unite under a high chieftain to battle the Spider King. The city-state of Lindaros is founded

-21

The Dark Lords conquer the border city of Berendoria

-10

King Ynedar is killed; Korinthia is crowned the Queen of Alberetor

-2

Korinthia is taken captive by the Dark Lords

0 (autumn)

The barbarian settlement of Kadizar surrenders and becomes Korinthia's foothold in the new land

7

The Queen arrives, the new realm and the capital city are given their names

10

The clan Jezora is slaughtered and its chieftain Haloban executed on the Triumph Plaza

13

Thistle Hold is built

16

The battle of Karvosti results in an agreement according to which the Sun Church is allowed to restore the temple ruin on the plateau

21

Present day

-1000 (approximately)

The civilization of Symbaroum crumbles into oblivion

-200 (approximately)

The population of Lindaros is wiped out by an infectious bleeder's disease

-19

Alberetor strikes back against the Dark Lords and the Great War starts

-5

The sun god Prios is declared to be the One and the provider of Alberetor's laws

0 (winter)

The Queen is rescued, the stronghold of the Dark Lords is stormed and the war is over

5

The duchies of the new realm are established, from the Ravens in the east to the river Eblis in the west

8

The Cathedral of Martyrs in Yndaros is inaugurated

11

The eighth duchy is established and its main town of Sevona founded

15

First Father Jeseebegai ascends to the High Seat of the Sun Church

19

The Queen dictates that all craftsmen must get organized in guilds

robbers, free-thinkers and rebellious barbarians. And as for the dwarven realm of Küam Zamok, its inhabitants appear to be totally indifferent to humans, with the exception of the few families that, for reasons unknown but wildly debated, have settled down in Yndaros.

The climate is colder and more humid compared to what the Ambrians are used to. Damp winds from the southern oceans climb over the Titans and are not the least embarrassed to drown Ambria in heavy rains, especially during the autumn. The winters are cold, with snow covering the streets of Yndaros for a month or two, or even longer during the winters that the barbarians call Istaros, when arctic winds sweep down from the north, so cold that hearths which are allowed to go out can barely be brought back to life and the blood freezes in anyone who dares venture outside for longer than it takes to collect more firewood.

The Ways of Life

SINCE LONG BEFORE the arrival of Korinthia and her subjects, the land north of the Titans was home to a motley array of creatures with diverse customs and an often complicated relationship to one another. The presence of the Ambrians has affected the people of the region in different ways – in part as a result of adaptation, in part as an effect of defiance or at least a need to demonstrate some kind of uniqueness relative to the new lords of the land.

This section offers a portrayal of the more or less cultivated creatures living in the woods and on the plains. The depiction is brief and therefore simplistic – in actuality there are lots of exceptions to what is said below. But if you keep that in mind the text should provide a relatively fair account of the people, culture, traditions and conflicts of the region.

PEOPLE

In broad terms Davokar and its surroundings are inhabited by three distinct groups of people – Ambrians, barbarians and the Elder Folks (for instance elves, goblins and ogres). If you were to ask any single representative of one of those groups about such classifications he would probably feel uncomfortable being lumped in with individuals that to him appear as more or less strange. But that does not alter the fact that there are some shared characteristics within those groups which make the categories justifiable.

The Ambrians all stem from the dead realm Alberetor south of the Titans. The Great War has made them tough but also forced them to become

MAP COVERING THE KNOWN PARTS OF
Ambria & Davokar

DRAWN BY CARTOGRAPHER
TABEO CRANEPLUME

0 100 KM

SCALE 1:4 000 000



disciplined and organized, in terms of military and bureaucracy as well as regarding trade and divisions of labor. In short: the war has civilized the Ambrians as a people, even though it may have brutalized many of its individuals.

The Ambrians are capable and experienced when it comes to waging wars, but they are also characterized by a profound spirituality and an aptitude for refined skills and nuanced knowledge. Other than that you will find a common quality in their ambitions: they are a people bent on conquest and ownership; they always strive for more and better, whatever it concerns. Nature is regarded as a resource, filled with supplies which can make life more comfortable, or in any case more tolerable, and many Ambrians would willingly risk life and limb in the hope of finding treasure, knowledge or rare goods which could secure them a comfortable future.

When it comes to the barbarian clans they actually live in greater harmony since the arrival of the Ambrians. It is commonly accepted that the clan folks are descendants of Symbaroum, the civilization that ruled the region up until a millennia ago. There are of course huge differences between the clans in terms of lifestyle and customs, but in the end they

have much in common. What they share is probably best symbolized by the witches, the spiritual leaders of the clans and advisors to the chieftains. Under the guidance of the witches, the barbarians are fully aware that they are living in and consequently are depending on nature for their safety and survival. And they have all borne witness to what happens when one does not respect the taboos dictated by the Huldra, the head of all witches who lives on Karvosti alongside the High Chieftain.

Finally there is the vague category called the Elder Folks, including elves, dwarves, goblins, trolls, ogres, changelings and others. A majority of the individuals sorted under this label tend to see themselves as nature's children, rather than its owners or rulers. There are of course exceptions, not least among the goblins who have gotten a taste of Ambrian abundance and even more evident among the dwarven families living in Yndaros. But by and large, the Ambrians and the Elder Folks are very dissimilar in this respect.

The disagreement, not to say animosity, is most apparent in the conflicts between Korinthia's subjects and the elves of Davokar. With reference to a treaty that supposedly was signed by many human lords around the time of Symbaroum's fall, the wardens of the woods demand that all Ambrians stay clear of the forest. They even claim that an ancient alliance called the Iron Pact gives them the right to slay any human who violates the terms of the treaty – a claim that Korinthia and her knights scoff at and which no serious treasure-hunter takes seriously.

SPIRITUALITY

Much changed in the wake of the Great War. The most radical change was when the sun god Prios went from being one of many accepted deities to being recognized as the One. Where the Dark Lords represented darkness and death, Prios came to symbolize the light of Alberetor and the life giving power of the sun. Or as Jeseebegai, the current First Father of the Sun Church, has expressed it: *"In the abyss, in absolute darkness, was the spark which gave hope to the world, the spark which in the care of we Ambrians will make Prios blaze as never before."*

Today Prios is recognized as the Giver of Laws or as the One, and almost all Ambrians adhere to His commandments, as conveyed by the priests and theurgs of the Sun Church. Prios is said to be everywhere beneath the heavens and humans are tasked with cultivating His creation. Sadly, man has neglected this duty for a long time, which in turn means that Prios has lost much of His strength, so much in fact that He is dying. But according to the sermons there is still hope. If humans strive to

Colonists and Free Settlers

Of all Ambrians it is the colonists who have most contact with barbarians and the Elder Folks. Today all land between the Titans in the south and Davokar in the north, between the Ravens to the east and the river Eblis to the west is considered to be colonized by Ambria. But Korinthia's ambitions are greater than that. Indeed, a dozen new settlements have been established in places still ruled by other powers. A majority of these can be found up to a day's travel past the tree-line of Davokar, for instance on the southern shore of Lake Volgoma or on the route between Thistle Hold and Karvosti. Others are located in the mountains and at the forest's edge west of River Doudram.

Another group of southern origin that lives near the elves and barbarians are the Free Settlers: refugees from Alberetor who have taken the opportunity to break free and form societies of their own. These settlements are typically made up of ten to thirty families that for some reason have chosen to stick together – in most cases because they profess their loyalty to some other deity than Prios.

In the early days of Ambria the Free Settlers had no trouble finding some corner of the Promised Land they could claim as their own. But with time many have found themselves repressed by the expanding kingdom and some have even been forced to move deeper into Davokar. Freedom from oppression comes at a considerable cost, a cost that gets higher and higher the further Korinthia's domain extends. Even so, there are still about twenty free settlements in forests and mountains that refuse to submit.

The Hordes of Darkness

Despite the fact that more than two decades have passed since the victory, the Dark Lords and the Great War is ever present in the lives of the Ambrians.

Usually people only talk about the triumphs, about the heroic deeds of the lightbringers, about how the armies of Korinthia massacred hordes of undead creatures. All else is repressed – not least

that the Queen's soldiers were often forced to kill the same enemies again and again; enemies that, in addition, had been their brothers and sisters until they fell victim to the murderous magic of the Dark Lords.

The ones who were there remember. Those who have nothing but stories to go on fantasize. But with the exception of ra-

vings caused by nightmares or too much to drink, the Ambrians never talk about the fear and the horrors. No, Korinthia's subjects try their very best to look ahead, no matter how difficult life may seem. They are determined to grow so strong that no one dares attack them ever again.

correct the error of their ways – if they work harder, extract more crops from the soil, harvest more and richer resources from forests and mountains, colonize more of the wilds – then Prios will grow strong again.

In the quest to honor and strengthen the Sun God, Davokar has a vital role to play. The wild, unruly forest is considered to be the perfect example of what happens when humans refrain from doing what they are obliged to do. Davokar must be cleansed, its potency disciplined and its resources cultivated. It is to advance that quest that the Curia, the high council of the Sun Church, sends missionaries as well as explorers to the depth of Davokar, and why they already have established a temple on Karvosti, the age-old Thingstead of the barbarian clans.

In the shadow of Prios the abolished deities live on, gods that actually bear a striking resemblance to the deities of the clans. Concerning the religious beliefs of the barbarian folks, many a theurg and learned master have tried to describe and categorize the gods, spirits and divine beings worshiped in Davokar. So far they have not succeeded. Evidently the clans are very dissimilar when it comes to how they relate to spiritual powers. As mentioned, some worship deities similar to the gods banished by the Ambrians. For instance, the serpent god Uron revered by the Gaoia clan shares features with the Ambrian Earthmother; the Baiaga clan's bloodwolf Arex is clearly related to the Ambrian Pathfinder; and the spider Oroke, who is worshiped by many, has some qualities in common with the Executioner. But among the clans you will also find worship of ancestors, holy grounds, beasts and sheer monstrosities like the bestial Blood-Daughter of the clan Saar-Kahn. Regarding religious rituals there are also great discrepancies between the clans, from collective prayer sessions to downright deadly

customs – as when the members of clan Enoai allow themselves to be bitten by venomous spiders, in order to get closer to Oroke.

The Elder Folks appear to have a more relaxed approach to spiritual matters. Instead of worshipping or praying to divine beings they seem content with showing gratitude towards the spirits which, according to them, inhabit all aspects of nature. They give thanks to the stream for letting them traverse the rapid waters unharmed. They offer their gratitude to the hazel for letting its nuts fall to the ground. They whisper thank you to the deer for allowing itself to get trapped. It is said that Elori, the Elven emissary in Yndaros, was asked about his beliefs during a visit to Queen Korinthia's court. His exact response is obviously only known to those present, but according to rumor he replied with an insult: "It is a vain presumption to think that the world would care about being worshiped or that it would listen to prayers; it is a presumption which mirrors man's own desire to be worshiped and his expectation that he can force his will upon the world."

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Ambrians as well as barbarians are storytellers. The barbarian folk value a good narrator almost as highly as a skilled warrior, and the High Chieftain on Karvosti always has one or two select storytellers living in his fortress. These chroniclers are often chosen from among the participants of the annual contest held during the market days at the autumn equinox, and are considered to have a special responsibility for remembering and recounting historical events.

Aside from the telling of stories, the leisurely activities of the clans tend to involve weapon games and rituals paying homage to nature. It would probably be misguided to describe the clans'

Taboos of the Baiaga Clan

Avoid the slopes of the Crypt Ridge: there Grabando rests in shallow slumber and may not be disturbed.

Do not mention the Whitewater Walker by name: for she will heed your calling and respond with force.

Never devour the spring fruits of the Red Bell: its nectar is tainted, its seeds corrupt.

Never drink of rainbow-colored water: it aggravates the thirst and makes it unhealthy.

Do not listen to singing sprung from unseen throats: that is a warning, not a calling.

relationship to Davokar in terms of worship, but under the guidance of the witches all barbarians are careful to show gratitude towards the forest that feeds them and teaches them humility. In that, as in most other cases, the storytellers play a vital role – especially when it comes to cautionary tales that account for what may happen if one violates the taboos dictated by the Huldra.

Among Ambrians storytelling takes many different forms. The bards and poets who perform in taverns, restaurants and inns are very popular, but the same can be said about prominent actors, dancers and artists. Within all these art forms portrayals of the Great War are common. Tales about individuals who have pleased Prios, so-called Lightbringers or Martyrs, is another popular theme. However, in recent years a new-comer has appeared on the Ambrian stage: tales of Davokar – of fortune-hunters who have found their fortune; of heroic encounters with arch trolls and lindworms; of rich treasure chambers found in overgrown ruins. Additionally, the Ambrian storytellers have made it their business to visit

The Prophecy of Sarkomal

According to rumors circling both Yndaros and Thistle Hold, the Sun Church has recovered a prophecy from an old temple ruin a couple of days' walk east of Karvosti. First Father Jeseebegai firmly denies all knowledge of such a find but that has hardly stopped the rumor mill from grinding. Quite the opposite. In a short time numerous versions of the prophecy have appeared, all reflecting the same basic theme – Ambria is supposed to gain lordship over all land once ruled by ancient Symbaroum and Queen Korinthia will ascend to the throne of the empire's last emperors.

That basic theme aside, the versions differ greatly from each other. When it is supposed to happen, how it will happen and whether or not it will be to the advantage of the Ambrian people depends on which version you choose to trust. There is really only one strophe which recurs in all versions, claimed to be translated by the Curia: "...where night and day are without meaning, where darkness shimmers and light gathers in shadows, there stands the throne that again shall carry a mistress, a regent, a peer of the divine...". But, as previously mentioned, no one has confirmed the authenticity of that passage, nor of any other. And even if someone had, there is likely room for any number of translations and interpretations, as always when prophecies are concerned.



their barbarian colleagues to learn popular stories from them, including the ancient poems attributed to the legendary huldra Aroaleta.

Aside from the Ambrians making use of more forms of storytelling, there is another significant difference between the groups: while almost all barbarians take part in the rites of the witches and listen to tales told around the fire, the Ambrian people are divided into a number of sub-groups. The nobles have their own venues for dance, theatre and music, and love to cover their walls in grandiose tapestries with themes from battles or nature. Merchants and craftsmen often visit the same salons, where they place themselves according to fortune and stature since the prices vary depending on where you sit. Free, laboring Ambrians listen to tales told in the taverns while thralls, serfs and commoners in the countryside have to settle for the tall tales told by their elders as they assemble for the evening meal. Of course there are exceptions, but the principle can hardly be questioned: the subjects of Korinthia are undoubtedly stratified in terms of both assets and interests.

The origin of the hulking Colossi is widely debated. But it is an awesome sight, when one gets to see Davokar's witches being carried by these seemingly gentle monsters.



AREAS OF CONFLICT

Given that the three main populations in the region have such a disparate relationship to Davokar, you would probably conclude that the Ambrians always collide with the Elder Folks, and that the barbarians are caught somewhere in between. Of course it is not as simple as that. There are lots of individuals who do not fit that mold – Ambrians who join the elves in their ambition to keep Davokar in peace as well as single barbarians, elves, changelings and ogres who have made their homes in Ambria.

Nevertheless, the general climate of the region is one of open conflicts, characterized by the Ambrian ambition to explore and exploit Davokar and the Elder Folks' reluctance to let them do so. Presently, Queen Korinthia's people seem to be the unchallenged rulers of the plains between the mountains and the forest, and it would probably take an all-embracing pact of barbarians and elves to change that. But in the woods the balance of power is more even. The Queen's army has a hard time functioning with full efficiency in the forest, while local knowledge and experience provide their counterparts with a great advantage. Furthermore, the Ambrians have a hard time confronting the horrors of Davokar on a unified front. Special interests linked to factions, blood or personal gain are often given priority at the expense of the common good, not least when it comes to managing and distributing information, resources and treasure found in the woods.

The latter also paves the way for joint ventures involving a mixture of Ambrians, barbarians and others. Instead of contacting factions like Ordo Magica or the Queen's Rangers, many dukes and barons have initiated collaborations with barbarian or goblin chieftains. And the wizards, scholars and Rangers tend to act in a similar fashion – better to pay the locals for help than to divide any profit or advances with other Ambrians. The only exception from this is the Sun Church, whose representatives are unwilling to mix with the “creatures of the night”. On the other hand, they engage in missionary campaigns and can in that way utilize the knowledge and skills of converted goblins, barbarians and ogres.

In other words, to give a clear cut and straightforward account of the relationship between the peoples of the region is both difficult and fundamentally misleading. In order to understand how collaborations, quarrels and armed conflicts arise you have to take a large number of factors into account, not least the factions described in the upcoming chapter. Moreover, you must understand that in light of the escalating threat from the corrupt powers of Davokar, basic necessity may require the most unlikely alliances to be forged.

Factions

THIS CHAPTER OFFERS a brief introduction to the most powerful factions of Ambria, along with a similarly short glance at the barbarian clans and the Elves of the Iron Pact. In general terms these groupings can hardly be described as harmonious – power struggles are as frequent within as between the factions, and the goals of individual leaders may both alter with time and be contested by subordinates. But in the end it is fair to say that power and influence are linked to the formations described below, and that one would have to be extremely clever to reach one's goals without having allies among the prominent members of at least one of them.

Houses of Nobility

AMBRIA, AS ALBERETOR before it, is a hierarchal society, for centuries governed by an assembly of noble families, called houses. The families are ranked based on their position in the order of succession, and the rank affects what offices their representatives may hold.

Ambria is divided into seven duchies, in turn divided into smaller domains, called counties or baronies depending on their size. Formally, it is the Queen who appoints dukes, who then appoints counts and barons to manage subjects and land. But there have been lots of exceptions from that order of things. For instance the Queen may nominate individuals to the title Prince of the Realm – a position which gives its owner a duke's power over a smaller piece of land. It is also rumored that the Queen on

a couple of occasions has appointed counts against the will of the concerned duke and that some of the counts command such authority that the people in the region show him more respect than they grant the official ruler of the duchy.

Ranked first among the noble families is the royal House of Kohinoor, personified by Korinthia Nightbane and five of Ambria's six dukes, all of them closely related to the Queen. That may sound like a harmonious affair, but according to gossip and campfire tales there are circumstances which complicate the situation. That the Queen's mother married a new husband, bore him the daughter Esmerelda and then fell gravely ill is one of those; that Korinthia's only living uncle is bitter that he missed his chance at the throne is another.

Queen Korinthia and an escort from the Twilight Friars wander through Yndaros, towards the Cathedral of Martyrs and a memorial service for the victorious dead.





Queen Korinthia

Head held high and with unwavering confidence, Queen Korinthia carries the hope and sorrow of her people. She was not more than twelve years old when King Ynedar died on the battlefield, but she did not hesitate to pick up where he left off. She inherited his mount, the legendary Master; she had his broken lance restored; and she led the forces of light on a ten years long counteroffensive against the armies of the night.

Two years before the end of the war, Master died, gravely wounded by a poisoned spearhead, and Korinthia was taken captive. The enemy celebrated without understanding that he had engineered his own demise. The desire to rescue the captured Queen gave her knights such valor that not even death magic

could make them falter. Korinthia was freed from her prison and commanded a decimated battalion of Templars in the decisive assault on the Dark Lords' fortress.

The years in captivity and the death of her homeland have not broken Korinthia's spirit. Sure, her lacerated face is nowadays covered by a mask of glazed porcelain, but she is still the same: a triumphant warrior queen, given the honorary title Nightbane for her victory over the dark.

The rumors claiming her to be weak or even dying, or the ones declaring that she actually died in captivity and that the woman behind the mask is someone else, are never spoken except in wheezing whispers and in the company of very close friends.

The Huldra Yeleta

Although he would hardly admit it, not even Commander Iakobo Vearra, first among the Knights of the Dying Sun, is comfortable looking Yeleta in the eye. Her grotesque masks, her wild manners and thunderous voice are enough to frighten parents as well as children, and the stories told of her cruelty are hugely popular in the taverns of Yndaros.

Yeleta instills fear and fascinates. At the same time most Ambrians cling to the belief that the Huldra – or the Arch Witch as some call her – never leaves her home in the caverns piercing the cliff of Karvosti, and some even claim to know that she in reality is nothing more than a wise old crone, powerful but not at all evil.

That she is connected to the creatures of Davokar is beyond doubt, but whether or not she is actually allied with them is another question. Maybe she is yet to decide which side she is on, the side of the beasts or that of the humans? Maybe she, and thus the barbarian clans, will make a decision before long.

Furthermore, when the Queen's cousins are said to be incompetent bordering on useless and when the other houses long for an opportunity to dethrone the Kohinoors, anyone can see that Korinthia has had to reexamine the situation carefully before appointing the dukes of the Promised Land.

On the other hand, one should not believe everything one hears. Provided that appearances are not tremendously deceiving, the rule of Ambria works as it should. There is steady progress in the development of the regions, the army stands firm in the face of Davokar's abominations and new colonies are established every other month. And even if the rumors contain some small elements of truth, hardly anyone questions Korinthia Nightbane's ability to handle the odd domestic quarrel.

YNDARIEN

The Grand Duchy of Yndarien is Queen Korinthia's domain, rich in rain, fertile fields and not least in people. About forty percent of Ambria's population lives between the mountains and the river Doudram, and new refugees arrive every day. Although most of them are passed on to other provinces, especially to the colonies of New Berendoria, there are many who argue that the mountain passes should be closed off. And maybe they have a point – how much will the Promised Land be worth if buried under a tidal wave of diseased scavengers?

MERVIDUN

Mervidun is officially ruled by Abesina, the seriously ill mother of the Queen. In actuality the domain is governed by Duke Sesario, the man Abesina married during Korinthia's captivity and with whom she has the daughter Esmerelda. From his high seat in Mergile he captains the trade in metals, granite and lumber – products that because of swift transports along the river Noora have made Mervidun one of the richer duchies in Ambria.

NEW BERETOR

New Beretor is ruled by Duke Ynedar, the son of Korinthia's brother Korian who died while trying to free his imprisoned sister. Ynedar, named after his grandfather, is no older than the Ambrian kingdom and governs a region that can boast of having great relations with the barbarians. The duchy also takes pride in the ingenious methods developed to extract fire oils from the wetland called the Marshes.

SERAGON

When the immediate family is not enough to close the ranks you turn to more distant relatives, in the case of Seragon to the son of the former king's younger

brother. The orphaned Duke Gadramei is accused of being a lackey who drinks more than he should, and who neglects his duties towards Queen and country. But even if Seragon is poorer and more unruly than other duchies, its Duke has so far managed to protect the Davokar border with flawless efficiency – despite the fact that his province borders the territory of the aggressive clan Karohar.

KASANDRIEN

The Queen's half-sister, the seventeen-year-old and very spirited Esmerelda, is the Duchess of Kasandrien. The city of Agrella is situated on the shores of Lake Ebel, making it a vital node for transports along the rivers, and the Duchess is also honored by housing the head office of Ordo Magica in her province. Aside from that, Kasandrien is famed for being influenced by Esmeralda's decree: "The victorious dead shall be celebrated and praised, not mourned!" Agrella is a city of eternal jubilations.

NARUGOR

The Duchy of Narugor stretches along Davokar's southern tree line and contains the fortifications Otra Senja and Otra Dorno, underlining that Duke Junio Berakka has been given a special responsibility to stop the darkness of the woods from seeping out over Ambria. The duke himself – a hero of the people whose accomplishments have hoisted him to a position of highest nobility – is an example of how the war's end and the migration have affected the previously rigid structures of the noble houses.

NEW BERENDORIA

The popular belief is that Alesaro Kohinoor has not forgiven his niece, even if it was not her, but a group of military commanders and prominent nobles who prevented him from succeeding his brother. The fact that Korinthia gave him the duchy of New Berendoria is hardly a comfort, since she probably appointed him to that barren and windy outback in order to get rid of him. Be that as it may, current reports from his high seat Sevona state that Alesaro is making new friends among the western clans.

PRIOS DOMAIN

At the heart of Ambria lays Prios Domain, with First Father Jeseebegai functioning as the steward of the Sun God. Where Ambria's largest highroads intersect – the one between Yndaros and Thistle Hold and the one between Kurun and Ravenia – rests Templewall, high seat of the Sun Church, surrounded by rolling plains where the crops sway in the wind and the cattle graze peacefully, assured that they are safe from harm.



This transcript, partly damaged and unreadable, was found in the pocket of an explorer who fell down and died right outside the North Gate of Thistle Hold. It is said that the expedition she was part of aimed to find the fabled city of Symbar at the heart of Davokar.

The Barbarian Clans

WHEN THE AMBRIANS arrived in the region south of Davokar, thirteen barbarian clans were living in the area. Since then thirteen has become eleven, as clan Kadiz was subdued and integrated into the Ambrian civilization and clan Jezora was annihilated by Ambrian steel. Recently there have been rumors circling about a possible twelfth clan, the fiendish brutes of the Beast Clan. But while the existence of such a clan is yet to be confirmed, and especially since the barbarians seem to be equally confounded by the flourishing rumors, Ordo Magica and other authorities are ignoring them, pending more reliable accounts.

Lately the relations between the clans have changed, because of the arrival of the Ambrian people but also because of the slowly but surely escalating threat from the beasts and abominations of Davokar. Reasons aside, the clan chieftains have all declared themselves to be aspiring for peace, and judging by appearance they try to live up to that promise. Sure, it is still turbulent in some borderlands, not least up north as well as between Karits and Vajvods in the east. But at the moment the region is free from outright clan wars.

The barbarian High Chieftain, seated on Karvosti, is elected for life during a gathering at the Thingstead held when the reigning "warlord" is nearing death. But he is not elected to rule. Instead the role of the High Chieftain is to arbitrate or, when necessary, act as a judge in conflicts within and between the clans, and only if requested to do so by the clan chieftains.

The chieftains must of course pay heed to the opinions and wishes of their subjects, but they

have no obligations to obey or even listen to some superior power. So even if there are similarities to be found between them, each clan has its own structure of laws, customs and hierarchies.

What similarities exist can first and foremost be attributed to the witches. The leader of witches is called the Huldra, and just like the High Chieftain she resides on Karvosti. Four times a year (at the winter and summer solstice, and at the spring and autumn equinox), the Huldra assembles the leaders of the clans' hex nodes, called Keepers. It is said that the purpose of these gatherings is to discuss the state of Davokar, but according to rumor much time is also allocated to talks about, and the search for solutions regarding, conflicts that officially are to be dealt with by the High Chieftain. The witches undoubtedly have a huge influence over the High Chieftain as well as over individual clan chiefs; so huge, in fact, that Levia Soleij, a respected Master of the Order, claims that Yeleta, the current Huldra, has a greater hold over her people than Korinthia has over the Ambrians.

GAOIA

The members of clan Gaoia living furthest to the north are regarded as brutal and primitive, even by other barbarians. They are said to be allied with a lindworm, called Grandfather Lint, and are hardly ever seen in the south. The only exceptions are their rugged Wrathguards and the slightly more polished envoys that clan chieftain Rábaiamon sends on a courtesy call to Karvosti every other year.

ENOAI

The Enoais are tree-people, living in tree-tops or in caverns carved out under the roots of giant pines. One example of the latter is the legendary village of Enovak, where clan chieftain Karona resides. The settlement is comprised of about fifty households and a marketplace, all situated under the towering pine which shares its name with the clan.

GODINJA

Many of the masks carried by barbarians are made by the craftsmen of clan Godinja. Its proud people claim to be the descendants of old Symbaroum's ruling elite – a belief that members of other clans question, but without indignation. Instead outsiders point to the fact that the Goeds up until a couple of generations ago were closely associated with the elves of Davokar. And they are happy to echo the rumor stating that Godinja's clan chieftain, the mighty Vikomer, has elf blood coursing through his veins.

High Chieftain Tharaban

The High Chieftain of the barbarians has his seat on the plateau Karvosti, about five days' ride northwest of Thistle Hold. Pilgrims who have visited the sun temple on Karvosti say that the High Chieftain resides in an impressive stronghold, surrounded by a curtain wall and protected by the Guard of the Slumbering Wrath. Tharaban himself is not often seen. Sometimes he can be spotted looking out over Karvosti from a balcony on the stronghold, and on occasion he has been observed walking over the plateau, on his way to meet with the Huldra or walking towards the Thingstead, always surrounded by a dozen Wrathguards.

Rumors describe him in contradictions, as a skilled diplomat or a complete moron; as a mighty warlord or a weak figurehead whose commands are dictated by the Huldra. Whatever the case, backed up by the ninety-nine Wrathguards the fur clad Tharaban is a force to be reckoned with.

YEDESA

Compared to their northern neighbors, the Yedes actually have better reasons for being proud. Of the last ten High Chieftains six have been fostered by clan Yedesa, including the current one. The reason for this may be that the clan long ago abandoned a nomadic lifestyle, in favor of a few permanent settlements. Since the annihilation of clan Jezora, chieftain Leonod's stone fortress is clearly the most impressive construction of the barbarian people.

BAIAGA

Aside from them often being seen on both Karvosti and in Thistle Hold, the Baiags are known for fighting alongside their tame bear beasts, called baiagorns. They live in small groups that roam the clan territory hunting and fishing, but many choose to leave the hunting grounds for varying periods – something which other barbarians tend to regard as a sign of rootlessness or disloyalty.

ZAREK

The Zareks count among the barbarians who seem most willing to accept an Ambrian presence in Davokar. Their main settlements are situated along the northern shore of Lake Volgoma, and it is said that they have developed a close partnership with Alesaro Kohinoor – a partnership which probably was established when Monovar, the chieftain of Zarek, helped the Ambrians to destroy his arch enemy, Haloban of the dead Jezora clan.

First Father Jeseebegai

The man who sits on the Evening Throne at Templewall was born Demeon Soleij. He was a priest in the battalion that liberated Queen Korinthia from the Dark Lord's prison, and was actually the one who made the rescue possible. In a celebrated act of heroism he walked naked through the unholy firewall that held Korinthia captive and carried her out. The Queen escaped with mild burns while Demeon lost his eyes, his hair growth and sustained severe scarring over his whole body.

Even so, nobody has ever heard the faithful Black Cloak complain about his injuries. Unlike Korinthia he has never made an effort to conceal the scars on his face; he has settled for a blindfold, if only to protect his empty eye-sockets from becoming infected. And when the former First Father passed away there was little question who would succeed him. The Curia only needed an hour's time before proclaiming the ascension of Convent Brother Demeon as First Father Jeseebegai. And they could not have made a better choice: No one loves Prios the way he does; no one fights with such resolve to give the Ambrian people courage enough to please Prios and to replenish His might.

ODAIIOVA

The territory of clan Odaiova spans between Karvosti and Thistle Hold, which means that the route between the two settlements traverses their grounds. Hence, one should not be surprised that the Odavs have gotten used to the Ambrian presence and learned to capitalize on it. It is often the people of Odaiova who act as intermediaries in contact and trade between Ambrians and barbarians, which means that the clan chieftain, Embersind, lives a much more comfortable life compared to other barbarian leaders.

KAROHAR

Unlike the Odavs, the warmongering Karits are distrustful, if not hostile, towards the new lords of the realm. This can probably be explained by the fact that Ambrian treasure-hunters have invaded their territory during the past decades, scaring game away and attracting elves. Or could it possibly have something to do with what happened to the former ally of Karohar – Haloban and his Jezites? Regardless, the territory of the Karits is far from safe.

VAJVOD

Southeastern Davokar, particularly the area around the stone fortress Vojvodar and River Doudram, is the home of the Vajvods. The remote location and the relative openness of its inhabitants have made it possible for the Ambrians to gain a firm foothold in the territory, clearly demonstrated by the colony Karo's Fen, the trade ships sailing all the way up to the source of the river and the forward base that the Queen's Rangers have in the area.

SAAR-KAHN

The Saars of clan Saar-Kahn speak in a guttural language, barely comprehensible to other barbarians. They live in self-imposed isolation around an ancient fortress, worshipping the beastly Blood-Daughter and regarding themselves as the true heirs of Symbar. A couple of times a year, Saarian raiders attack other barbarian settlements, but clan chieftain Razameaman places all the blame on rebellious separatists – claims which other clans have opted to believe, until proven otherwise.

VARAKKO

Furthest south, close to the Ambrian border, the Varaks travel the plains in their wagons. They comprise the smallest clan, which to a large extent is due to the fact that they are especially exposed to attacks from "rebellious" Saars. With the express permission of Duke Alesaro, the Varaks nowadays

often keep to the Ambrian side of the border. And it is said that the duke is making efforts to end the blood feud which rages between the Varak chieftain Didramon and Monovar of Zarek.

The Church of Prios

THE CHURCH OF the sun god Prios governs a domain of its own in Ambria, a territory large as a duchy centered around the city of Templewall. The First Father of Prios resides in the city, selected for life by the Curia – the ruling body of the Church, which is comprised of the leaders of its three subdivisions: the Priesthood, the Templars and the Twilight Friars. Jeseebegai who now sits on the Evening Throne at Templewall was elected from among the Twilight Friars six years ago.

The theurgs and liturgs of the Priesthood are responsible for interpreting Prios' commandments and for managing all His temples, from the cathedrals in Yndaros and Templewall to the repaired shrine on Karvosti. Their current representative in the Curia is named Anabela Argona and is the sister of Count Alkantor Argona; a bond that the count is accused of exploiting in the ambition to expand his domain and influence.

The Knights of the Dying Sun, also called Sun Knights or Templars, are the armed wing of the Church. Its well-equipped and highly skilled Templars, who all stem from noble families, played a crucial part at the end of The Great War – a fact which Knight Commander, Iakobo Vearra, never lets anyone forget.

Finally, the Twilight Friars, also called Black Cloaks, is a monastic order with its main seat south of Yndaros, up in the Titans. Aside from a handful of convents in Ambria's larger settlements, the order manages a convent school in Yndaros and is in charge of internal as well as external intelligence activities. The spokesperson of the order, Brother Eumenos, is often heard declaring that whilst the Templars aim their swords towards Ambria's outer enemies, the knife points of the Black Cloaks are aimed at those within.

Ordo Magica

ROUGHLY A YEAR ago Ambria's most prominent order for learned studies and mystical schooling, Ordo Magica, relocated from Yndaros to Agrella on the shores of Lake Ebel. Grand Master Seldonio governs an organization with chapters in all larger settlements as well as a handful of outposts in Davokar. Each chapter is run by a Chapter Master, under which the Masters of the Order are sorted.

Grand Master Seldonio

Many a mighty master fell victim to The Great War. Seldonio survived because he was the head of the order, and therefore was needed at the war council far from the front line. Exactly how old he is, he probably does not know himself, but under the name Seldonio he appears in epics composed nearly two centuries ago. And even if some people blame him for having acted like a coward during the war, there is hardly anyone who doubts that he counts among the mightiest mystics in Ambria.

But most powerful he is not. Three other Masters of the Order made it through the war alive: the stormweaver Variol, Kullinan of the dead House of Furia and, probably mightiest of the all, the mindwarper Elionara Yellowcat. It is said that these three pushed through the relocation of the headquarters to Agrella against Seldonio's will – they wish for peace and quiet and time for studies, and have no sympathy for the Grand Master's interest in Ambria's men and beasts. This has resulted in a situation where Seldonio spends more time at the chapter in Yndaros than he does in his chamber in Agrella. And if one is to believe what is whispered among adepts and novices, this may very well mean that Seldonio's days as the head of the order are numbered.

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THUS SPOKE AROALETA

*"... and the search  
goes on forever, for the  
hidden Ambal Seba,  
where the truth is  
spelled in gold, where  
the keys to the primal  
power are etched in  
circles, round and  
round the thirteen  
pillars. See, the mists  
will never fade.  
Not even Fofar the  
Destroyer can dispel  
the veil over a valley  
that does not exist."*

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~

The latter are experts in their respective areas – for instance Botany, Elf Studies, Beast Lore and Wizardry – and all have a number of novices and adepts working for them.

The primary ambition of Ordo Magica is of an explorative nature: its members seek knowledge for knowledge's sake. They arrange expeditions to both forests and mountains, from which they bring curious artifacts to be studied in search of their properties and applications. Instead of spirituality the members argue that philosophy must be the primary tool for expanding the understanding of the world, and in the end they rely on experience and evidence rather than on faith – something which often causes its members to clash with theurgs and black cloaks.

But the single-minded search for knowledge does not mean that the order is totally cut off from the rest of civilization. Seldonio appears to be fully aware that he is in need of others – for instance, he needs the Queen's blessing to explore Davokar, the silver thalers of the nobles to finance expeditions, and the Rangers to take members of the order along on their patrols. It should also be noted that the order strives to capitalize on knowledge gained and discoveries made, as for instance shown by the Vivisectory in Yndaros where ordinary people can pay entrance to bear witness as the masters carve into everything from farm animals to rage trolls and actual abominations.

The Queen's Army

QUEEN KORINTHIA IS Ambria's Commander in Chief, but most of the day-to-day operation of the army is commanded by the elderly Field Marshal Beremo Herengol. The army is divided into six divisions, paid for and maintained by the duchies, and a seventh one belonging to the Grand Duchy of Yndarien, serving directly under the Queen. Each division includes infantry, cavalry as well as archer and tross units.

Additionally, the army incorporates the Rangers and the Queen's Guard, called the Pansars. The latter is commanded by General Jomilo and is stationed in a newly restored fortress west of the capital. The Rangers are in most regards detached from the army at large, primarily focused on intelligence work and reconnaissance missions in the border regions. Its commander, Colonel Revina Kalfas, is said to be one of the Queen's closest friends and rumors have her pointed out as the next Field Marshal, when the current one is forced into retirement – rumors which makes the blood of the army generals run hot.

Beremo Herengol

Beremo stems from a long line of prominent commanders and is regarded by most as the crown jewel of his house, especially because he was highly responsible for the outcome of The Great War. He has been the realm's Field Marshal for twenty-six years and is closing in on his seventies, which has accelerated the speculation about him stepping down. But so far nothing indicates that he or the Queen have any such plans – as late as during the New Year's celebrations of Year 21 he spearheaded the honor guard and looked to be in great shape; according to some, in an unnaturally great shape.

The rumors surrounding the second most powerful commander in the kingdom are many. There are those who claim that he already is exhausted but that the Queen refrains from dismissing him because of his long and faithful service. Other gossip states that Beremo is allied with dark forces that fill him with youthful vigor, or that the old one has some kind of hold over Korinthia which prevents her from relieving him.





Envoy Elori

The task of negotiating with Queen Korinthia has ever since her arrival been owned by a towering and very stern elf named Elori. Before the migration, the Ambrians had never had contact with the Elven kind, and the unwillingness of the forest people to let them explore Davokar has made them detest the “pointy-ears” as intensely as they hate rage trolls and abominations. Elori himself seems to appreciate the situation. He is seldom seen on the streets of Yndaros, and when it happens he is always on his way to or from the royal palace, escorted by royal guards.

It is said that Elori has come to Yndaros in search of a peaceful solution to the conflicts between men and elves, but no one doubts that that he primarily has been sent to spy. This belief was greatly strengthened the other year when he had a visitor – namely Aloéna, the giant she-being who otherwise resides in a grove on the cliff of Karvosti. What was said between them is not to be known, but since then Elori is sighted more often. The taunts and objects thrown at him bother him as little as ever before.

The Iron Pact

THE ELVES SPEAK of the Iron Pact, but exactly what that is and what function such an alliance would serve is highly debatable. According to legends told at the taverns in Yndaros, the elf wardens of Davokar claim that the human race consented to leaving the forest in their care and swore never to set foot in the depth of Davokar again. This promise is supposed to have been endorsed by a long list of human rulers, including Korinthia’s forefather Argalo and the ancestors of the current clan chiefs Rábaiamon and Razameaman. It is also said that the human rulers gave the elflord Eneáno a gift to seal the treaty – six thousand rings of iron.

Among the barbarians there are some legends which could be interpreted as proof of the existence and legitimacy of the Iron Pact. On the other hand they could as well be based on lies told to the barbarians by devious pointy-ears. Evidently, the Ambrian nobility have opted to put their faith in the latter interpretation, even though the elves every day make good on the threat to seek vengeance on humans who violate the treaty.



Davokar

TO PRODUCE A SUMMARIZED ACCOUNT of Davokar Forest is a challenge – partly because of its varied and changeable character, partly because so much of it is yet to be reliably mapped. For centuries the barbarian clans have kept to the outer areas of the forest, from the edge to about four days' march inwards.

The reason for this is said to be twofold. On the one hand, the outskirts contain all they need in terms of prey and useful plants; on the other hand they abide by a long list of strict taboos that ban them from entering the deep. The witches claim that Davokar is sleeping, that the forest must not be disturbed, that death and destruction will follow if the edicts are violated.

THE STRATEGISTS AND EXPLORERS of Queen Korinthia, including Ordo Magica, generally agree that the witches exaggerate. Instead they cling to the belief that the taboos echo threatening warnings made by elves, and that the edicts primarily are devised to keep peace with the wardens of the forest. But the strategists also call for caution. The Ambrians still know far too little about Davokar's past – about the fallen civilization of Symbaroum and the origin of the abominations – to be able to rule out that the witches' legends contain one or two grains of truth.

Whatever the truth may be Davokar is there, at the threshold of Ambria, the Promised Land

of Korintha Nightbane. It rests there with its enormous riches, in terms of natural resources and treasure-filled ruins. To leave it in peace is completely at odds with the Ambrian disposition.

Maybe that same disposition can account for the Ambrians' obstinate attempts to explain the inexplicable? The description of Davokar found below is based on the Duality Principle, put forth by Mallioanos, a renowned Master of the Order. It is perhaps the simplest and most comprehensible description of Davokar to date. Hence, it is simplistic, in some cases even misleading, but in the end it will give you a hint of what awaits in the shadowy halls beneath Davokar's tree tops.



A wildly debated text, found at the northern entrance to Serand's Pyramid, possibly stating the name of the pyramid's architect.

Bright Davokar

MALLIANOS IS STATIONED as Master of the Order at the Yndaros chapter and is highly religious. The latter is evident in how he describes Davokar as

divided into two main regions, based on whether or not the sunlight can penetrate the leaves to reach the ground. Many of his slanderers argue that he

Explorer's License

Since the autumn of Year 15, the person of Ambrian heritage who wishes to venture into Davokar must obtain an Explorer's License, formally known as "License for travels in and explorations of Davokar Forest". The license can be bought on a monthly or annual basis, at the headquarters of the city watch in Yndaros or at the Queen's Legation in Thistle Hold. The cost varies depending on the number of people it covers: the bigger the group, the higher the cost per individual. In other words, for a company of adventurers encountered by a Ranger patrol in the wilds, it is not enough to present individual licenses.

Adding to the basic price there are a number of costs related to the aim and composition of the expedition. Whether you aim to gather or

harvest some resource or explore an area, there is no escape from paying the base price for those three categories, since the licensor presumes that you at least will gather firewood, harvest some berries and perform explorations in the most general sense of the word. The arbitrariness of the system angers most people, particularly when it comes to the supplementary costs for incompetence and intentions – the former related to the wildlife experience of the group, the latter based on an assessment of to what degree the expedition's aim may be considered disturbing or provoking. But for anyone who wishes to travel the woods without risking hefty fines or the loss of fingers/hands there is no alternative but to come up with the sum dictated by the authorities.

Table 1: The Cost for an Explorer's Licence

| NUMBER OF PERSONS | COST PER MONTH | COST PER YEAR | ADD-ONS |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Single person | 2 thaler | 9 thaler | — |
| 2-5 persons | 10 thaler | 50 thaler | — |
| 6-8 persons | 25 thaler | 90 thaler | — |
| 9-10 persons | 55 thaler | 180 thaler | — |
| Unlimited | — | 450 thaler | — |
| Gathering | — | — | 3-10 thaler |
| Harvesting | — | — | 5-12 thaler |
| Exploring | — | — | 5 thaler/person |
| Wagons | — | — | 5 thaler/wagon |
| Incompetence | — | — | 5-15 thaler |
| Intentions | — | — | 5-50 thaler |
| Other | — | — | 1-50 thaler |

has designed the classification in close partnership with Father Peonio, First Theurg at the Cathedral of Martyrs in the capital.

Mallianos describes, not entirely incorrectly, the outskirts as strikingly beautiful and remarkably lush. During summer, beams of sunlight shimmer in humid air filled with soaring seeds and dancing insects, making the moss and ground blossoms gleam. The fiery splendor of the autumns is even more striking, and the virgin white of the winter calm also has its fair share of admirers.

However, Mallianos utters a word of warning: no matter how beautiful the natural surroundings may seem, you can be sure that they are full of hidden dangers – fruits and berries can be lethal on ingestion, and many inexperienced wanderers have reached their end at the bottom of a marsh that was mistaken for solid ground.

As for its creatures, Mallianos describes Bright Davokar as the domain of barbarians and prey animals. Of course, this implies that it is here predators come to hunt – packs of mare cats, jakaars and etterherds as well as solitary rage trolls

and even famished abominations. Adding to that, the elves must be mentioned. The cautious spring elves apparently love nothing better than to subject human wanderers to all kinds of more or less deadly mischiefs, while the hotheaded summer elves are happy to use the same travelers as targets for their perfectly aimed arrows – not least if they are in, or are traveling toward, areas deemed especially sensitive by the wardens.

Finally some words about the ruins of the outskirts. The southern regions and the area surrounding Karvosti have already been thoroughly explored by the Queen's Rangers, Ordo Magica's expeditions and independent fortune-hunters, leading to the discovery of sites like Serand's Pyramid, the Columns of Haganor and the grand aqueducts of Clearwell. But that does not mean that there is nothing more to unearth. Even today, the lucky and well-prepared may still find untouched ruins close to the southern border. And if one dares to venture further north or to delve deeper down into the soil, the chance of interesting discoveries are multiplied.

Dark Davokar

BEYOND THE ELUSIVE border which Mallianos has established between bright and dark, there are regions that should not be traversed without great care, detailed preparations and a sizable company of sword-wielding companions. In contrast to the outskirts, the depth is riddled with grave dangers and there are neither barbarians, nor Ranger patrols that can come to your rescue. In short: one never ventures into the dark of Davokar without being prepared to risk one's life in the hope of gaining riches, knowledge or fame.

According to Mallianos, Dark Davokar is characterized by a dense and wild vegetation that closes out all light. Here the flaws of the Duality Principle are revealed – the few fortune-hunters who have traveled into the dark and returned with their health and minds intact testify that the sunbeams actually do reach the ground in there. They can also tell you that this certainly does not mean that the horrors go away.

Whatever is true or false when it comes to the many postulates by Mallianos, there are reports speaking of a very devious nature in Davokar's inner regions, a nature whose threats lurk where one would least expect – threats in the form of bottomless streams, tiny but poisonous creatures, overgrown sinkholes and carnivorous or bloodthirsty vines. There is also talk of infections and parasites which make their victims insane,

paralyzed, rabid or undead; of ancient curses with similar effects; even of areas defying all reason, where it snows in the summer, where plants shimmer from some inner glow and where nightmares inexplicably come to life. But neither Mallianos, nor Lukresia, nor some other authority on the nature of Davokar can claim to actually know which of these statements correspond with reality. If any.

The truth is just as uncertain when it comes to the inhabitants of the deep. That there are raving abominations, beastly rage trolls and packs of tricklestings and hunger wolves may be concluded from the stories told by returning explorers. And maybe there is some truth to the rumors about a predatory and bloodthirsty barbarian clan, even if its dwelling is yet to be found. But when there is talk about shapeshifting creatures of otherworldly origins, bone-pale elf warriors, possessed mastodons and cunning dragons, the testimonies are far fewer and less reliable.

The same goes for the barbarian stories about shadowy beings like Lord Bog and the Hawthorn Hag, ancient creatures who, according to legend, are as powerful as they are wrathful. The problem is that those who come across the residents of the forest do not often get the opportunity to return with their tales. And a majority of the lucky ones return in a state which makes it hard to believe what they have to say.

HYMN TO THE LEAFY
DEEP, BY TAUBIO

*Shimmering curtains
of golden rays,
a heavenly scent
in the air,
everything dressed
in a misty haze,
a realm so
remarkably fair.*

*Butterflies soaring
on wings so frail,
a fox cub is
trailing a deer.
That squirrel is
slumbering nose in tail,
so sure there is
nothing to fear.*

*But close by the
squirrel, mere
leaps away,
all beauty is
withered and dead.
There ravenous beings
are stalking their prey,
with cravings too
great to be fed.*

*Murderous creatures
are everywhere
molded like
phantom or beast.
And flowers as deadly
as they are rare,
are welcoming you
to their feast.*

*Oh Davokar, take me
and hold me tight,
I'm yielding my
being to you.
To die in your arms
on some starlit night
is all that I long to do.*



What drives Ambrian explorers to defy the dangers is of course the hope of finding treasures from the days of Symbaroum. Mallianos makes no effort to hide the fact that the further into Davokar you travel, the greater is your chance of finding well-preserved and rich ruins. But he also points out that, first, the ruins of the Dark are often overgrown or hard to find since all that remains is below ground; second, that they always are inhabited by someone or something ready to protect its turf. And even if one should take this “always” with a pinch of salt, reports from both the Rangers and Ordo Magica suggests that his warnings are warranted.

On the other hand, venturing into the Dark may still be worth the risk. Judging by the fortune salvaged by Iasogoi Brigo during one single visit to the ruins of Odaban, one who finds the path to places like Saroklaw, Dakovak or even Symbar will hardly return empty handed. If they but return at all.

Travels in Davokar

AS SOON AS you have acquired an explorer’s license you are free to set foot in the forest. If you keep to the charted route between Thistle Hold and Karvosti, or the one between the forest edge and the outposts established in the woods, you can feel quite safe since they are patrolled by the Queen’s Rangers. But should you divert even slightly you must be prepared for nasty surprises.

In the outskirts it is possible to travel by horse, although not at a very high speed since there are no paved roads. In the long run it is often preferable to walk and lead the animal by the halter. If so, you can cover two to three mile a day, depending on the terrain and the density of the vegetation. You would do well to bring lots of water and dried meat on your journey, since the streams and springs of the forest sometimes are infected and since open fires tend to attract

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~  
THUS SPOKE AROALETA

*“... and as Eregan foretold: ‘the wise man’s road is long, twice as long through murky woods; the foolish man’s road is short, half as long through murky woods, cut short by folly and bloody bashings.’”*

~~~~~ ◆ ~~~~~




unwelcome guests to your camp site. In Davokar every meal may be your last, if you are not careful to take the right precautions.

Deeper in the woods riding is rarely an option, and having the equipment tied to a pack animal can be a very bad idea – there is a significant risk that the animal will bolt at the first sight or whiff of a rage troll, leaving you to face the horrors of Davokar empty-handed. No, to Dark Davokar you never go without a number of companions, including a skilled guide who knows to avoid dangers and who can find clean water as well as edible plants and prey.

In the *Core Rulebook* on page 183 you will find more, and more detailed, information on travels in Davokar, but simply put: every journey into Davokar is hazardous. Those who are not sufficiently prepared may very well find their first excursion to be their last.

Symbar

It is said that all barbarians in the Davokar region stem from the same civilization; an empire called Symbaroum that supposedly had its high seat located in what today is the center of Davokar. The legends about the fall of Symbaroum are numerous, most of them variations on the theme: that its last emperor angered some form of supreme being and thereby caused the empire's ruin.

Many dream of finding the heart of Symbaroum, called Symbar by witches and barbarians. Many have tried, but as yet no one has succeeded. Or, to be precise, no one has yet returned with credible and publicly announced stories about a successful expedition to Symbar. But that does not deter fortune-hunters from planning and launching new expeditions, led by men and women who all claim to have irrefutable evidence to guide them. Because as long as the tales about Symbar's treasures outweighs the stories about its horrors, the allure of the myth will live on. And claim life after life after life ...

Game Mechanics

THE RULES OF SYMBAROU, are easy to use once you have learned how they operate. Basically, the player character has eight attributes with a value between 5 and 15. When faced with a challenge in the game world, the player must roll a twenty sided dice (D20). In order to overcome the challenge the dice must land on a figure which is equal to or lower than the player character's value in one of the attributes. For instance, if the character tries to do something which requires him to be quiet or cautious the attribute Discreet is used; if he or she searches for something or is on his guard then Vigilant is the active attribute.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE two aspects that add to the complexity. First the Abilities, which represent the particular skills of a player character. Abilities sometimes open up the possibility for the player to use another attribute than the one which seems natural in a certain situation. A common example occurs when it is time for combat. In order for the player character to hit an opponent with his weapon, the player normally rolls the die against the attribute Accurate. But if the character, for example, masters the ability called Iron Fist he can choose to roll against Strong instead. In the same way, the ability Feint makes it possible to role against the character's value in Discreet and the ability Dominate against the value in Persuasive. To be sure of what applies in different situations both the player and the Game Master must study and learn how the various abilities operate.

The other complication has to do with the fact that many challenges become easier or harder depending on who or what the character interacts with. Sneaking past a guard is for instance easier or harder depending on how Vigilant the guard is.

And to hit an enemy with a sword can be more or less difficult depending on how Quick the opponent is. Rule-wise this is achieved by modifying the value that the player must roll against, most often in a way which is directly related to the attribute values of the opponent. In concrete terms: If the aforementioned guard has the mediocre value of 10 in Vigilant, no modification is made (± 0); if the guard is very absentminded and only has 5 in Vigilant, the player gets to add 5 (+5) to the attribute he must roll against; and should the guard be so alert that he has 15 in Vigilant the player must subtract 5 (-5) from the value he must roll against with the D20.

Now, let us accompany the ogre Grumpa, the example character from the Core Book (page 245), as she tries to convince the caravan master Argasto that she should be invited to tag along on the journey over the Titans. She is facing a guard, dressed in a scale mail armor and carrying sword and shield. Grumpa is of course equipped with her leather apron and has armed herself with a long staff:



Narrative Tutorial

FIRST THE TURN order must be determined – that is, which of the two acts first – which is normally decided by looking at the opponent’s value in *Quick*. In this case both combatants have 10 in *Quick*, in which case the order is instead determined by the value in *Vigilant*. Grumpa has 9 in *Vigilant*, the guard 11. Hence, the latter is first to act.

However, the first turn differs somewhat from those to come. Grumpa wields a weapon with the quality *Long*, which means that she first of all gets to make a *Free Attack* on the guard. The Game Master tells Grumpa’s player to role a die against *Accurate*, modified by the opponents *Defense* which is +1. The player picks up a D20 and will try to get a result which is under or equal to 11 (*Accurate* 10, modified by the enemy’s *Defense* +1). The player rolls 14: the guard deflects the staff with his shield and it hits the ground. Time for the adversary to retaliate!

The Game Master tells Grumpa’s player to roll a die against her value in *Defense*, but modified by the enemy’s *Accurate* which is 13 and therefore gives a modification of –3. Ouch, the stout ogre is in trouble since she only has 6 in *Defense*. Because of the skilled opponent the player must roll under

or equal to 3 to avoid being hit (*Defense* 6, modified by the enemy’s *Accurate* –3). The die lands on 7 and Grumpa fails to parry the swing. But that does not necessarily mean that she gets injured...

The Game Master says that the guard’s sword deals 4 in damage. Luckily Grumpa is well prepared to handle that – she has the trait *Robust* which lets her ignore 1D4 damage each time she is hit, and she also has her apron that also protects for 1D4. Grumpa’s player rolls 1 on the first D4 and 4 on the second. When added together (1+4=5) and the result has been subtracted from the damage of 4 it shows that Grumpa is totally unharmed (damage 4, minus Grumpa’s *Armor* 5 = less than 1). And now it is her time to act!

Instead of going for another swing with the staff the player wants Grumpa to make use of the mystical power *Confusion*. The Game Master says that a roll against *Resolute* has to be made, with a –2 modification; sure, the guard has 10 in *Resolute* (±0) but her *Armor* is impeding (–2). Hence, the player must roll under or equal to 13 (Grumpa’s value in *Resolute*). The dice lands on 4 and the confusion takes effect, but two additional rolls must be made. First the player rolls 1D4 to determine how much



THUS SPOKE AROALETA

*“... and king upon king
sent his people to die,
in wave upon wave
over rolling plains;
men and women on
whose broken hulls,
an imposing realm
was built. Such was
the foundation of
Symbaroum: built
with flesh and blood.”*



temporary Corruption Grumpa is afflicted by – she rolls a 3 and makes a note of that on the character sheet. Second, the player rolls 1D6 to determine the effect of the *Confusion* (page 133 in the *Core Rulebook*). The outcome is a 2 which according to the power's description means that the opponent becomes temporarily paralyzed.

Next turn. This time around the length of Grumpa's weapon has no effect, but since the guard is paralyzed it still is the ogre's time to act. First the Game Master says that a roll against *Resolute* must be made (modification –2), to see if the *Confusion* will last for yet another turn. The die lands on 12 which means that she succeeds. With that done, the ogre lifts her staff into the air and bashes down on the enemy.

The guard may be stunned but he gets to defend himself just the same – the *Confusion* only makes him lose his active actions, not the reactive ones such as *Defense*. The Game Master says that the same terms apply as before: the player must roll an 11 or less with the D20. The die lands on a 6. A hit!

The Game Master tells the player of Grumpa that the scale mail armor of the guard absorbs 3 in damage. Grumpa's staff deals 1D6 in damage and the trait *Robust* makes it possible for the ogre to deal 1D4 of additional damage once each turn. Since the fight is to be ended at "first blood", the sum of the two die rolls must be more than 3 for Grumpa to be victorious. The player rolls the D4 and gets a 2. The tension is rising! The D6 lands on a 5. Hence, the total damage is 2+5=7, out of which 4 points (damage 7, minus the opponent's Armor 3) affects the *Toughness* of the guard – a great hit that sends the bold warrior staggering backwards.

Grumpa smiles smugly, looks at Argasto and mumbles: "Sorry, I didn't mean to hit him that hard ...".

A MOMENT LATER...

Later on, Grumpa has been asked to find the thief who has stolen the caravan's vitally important artifact: the Sun Stone. A traveling companion has helped her to track Keler to a ruined watermill but is afraid to escort her all the way – the capturing of the thief is a challenge that she must deal with on her own. Grumpa's player says that the ogre sneaks her way towards the ruin. The Game Master tells her to roll a die against [*Vigilant* –3]; consequently the die must land on a number less than or equal to 6 for Grumpa to succeed, since the ogre has the value 9 in *Vigilant*. The player rolls a 5, and the Game Master informs her that Grumpa notices a leghold trap hidden in her path under a thin layer of undergrowth.

After having sidestepped the trap Grumpa sneaks closer to the watermill ruin. It is located about 20 paces from the forest edge – precisely as far as the

ogre can get in one turn by using both her actions for movement (see page 41). Seeing that Grumpa is really bad at moving quietly (value 5 in *Discreet*), the player decides to make a run for it. The Game Master says that it is time for a roll against [*Discreet*←*Vigilant*] to determine if the person or persons inside the ruin take notice of the onrushing ogre. That is an impossible challenge, since Grumpa only has 5 in *Discreet* and the thief Keler has 15 in *Vigilant*, meaning a modification of –5 (*Discreet* 5, modified by –5 = 0). But Grumpa still makes it to the wall of the ruin; Keler has spotted her but is taken by surprise and unable to react until the start of the next turn.

Just like in the fight against the caravan guard, the values in *Quick* are not enough to determine the turn order, but since the thief has 15 in *Vigilant* he may act first. He leans out through a hole in the ruin's wall and shoots down at Grumpa.

The Game Master tells the player to roll a die against *Defense* with a –2 modification, because Keler has 10 in *Accurate* and also an Advantage over her (see page 44). The player must roll 4 or under to avoid being hit by the crossbow bolt fired by Keler. The dice lands on an 8. The Game Master says that the bolt deals 7 in damage (5, +2 for the Advantage), after which the player rolls 2D4 to determine the value of Grumpa's Armor – one D4 for the leather apron, and one for the trait *Robust*. The result of the die rolls turns out to be 2+4=6. After having subtracted the sum from the damage (7–6=1), it is shown that the ogre takes one point in damage, which is noted on the character sheet before it is Grumpa's turn to act.

From up above she can hear Keler starting to reload the crossbow and how he desperately cries (in the voice of the Game Master): "You will regret this! The undead Mal-Rogan will find you and chop you to pieces. Not even death could beat him; you think you are a match for Mal-Rogan, the Master of Death!?" Since nothing else is stated in the adventure, the Game Master tells the player that it only takes one Movement Action to reach the top of the ladder and thereby Keler. Why hesitate!?

Grumpa storms up and the Game Master decides that the cowardly Keler throws the crossbow to the ground and raises his arms in the air. The ogre searches his clothes and finds the Sun Stone in a pocket inside the tunic. No die roll is required to find the stone, but the Game Master tells the player to roll a dice against *Vigilant* anyway, modified by –5. The player rolls a 12 which means that the ogre fails.

Hence, Grumpa continues to examine the thief's belongings without noticing the sounds from outside – sounds from the robbers that Mal-Rogan has sent to scout the watermill ruin and make sure that the coast is clear ...



Attributes

THE ATTRIBUTES are the backbone of the character, the core of its game mechanics. Simply put: whenever a character attempts to perform an action of dramatic significance, the player has to make a success test – the action is successful if the player rolls less than or equal to the value in one of the character's Attributes. This chapter describes the eight Attributes and how they are used within the game.

The Attributes

ATTRIBUTES ARE USED to determine just how prepared a character is to face different kinds of challenges in the game world. A character's value in an Attribute, such as *Strong* or *Quick*, indicates what kind of life he or she has lived growing up. In other words, the attribute values make out a fairly stable foundation which will not change dramatically but that can be built upon and refined.

Names of Attributes

Any of the Attributes can be renamed by players who wish them to suit his or her character better. *Resolute* might be better referred to as *Faithful*, *Lucky* or *Fanatical*. By the same token, *Discreet* can be *Sneaky*, *Cunning* can be *Learned* and *Vigilant* can be changed into *Paranoid*. The player decides what is best for the character.

ACCURATE

A character's hand-eye coordination, precision and timing are all represented by *Accurate*. This Attribute is for instance used to hit an intended target with punches, strikes, throws or a missile from a ranged weapon. *Accurate* is in most cases opposed by an enemy's *Quick*.

CUNNING

The *Cunning* Attribute represents a character's wit and knowledge, its common sense as well as actual schooling and education. You usually test *Cunning* when trying to remember facts, when solving a logical problem or puzzle, or when doing research in a library. *Cunning* is usually tested against a specific level of Difficulty, decided by the Game Master.

DISCREET

A player character's value in *Discreet* mirrors its aptitude for and training in being silent, agile and, well, discreet. This Attribute can be used to avoid being detected, to hide or smuggle something, to shadow someone or to steal something out of a person's pocket. *Discreet* is often opposed by an enemy's *Vigilant*.

PERSUASIVE

Persuasive reflects how well a player character can influence others by use of words, voice, body language and looks. The Attribute is often used when trying to persuade another person to do (or refrain from doing) something, either verbally, in writing or by song. *Persuasive* is usually opposed by an enemy's *Resolute*.

QUICK

Quick represents a character's reflexes, balance, nimbleness and how fleet-footed he or she is. It determines the order of initiative in combat and is used actively when jumping, avoiding harm and performing similar acrobatic maneuvers. *Quick* is often opposed by an enemy's *Accurate*.

Table 2: Examples of Success Tests

| SITUATION | SYSTEM |
|---|--|
| The character sneaks up on a guard | Test the character's <i>Discreet</i> , modified by the guards <i>Vigilant</i> , written [<i>Discreet</i> ← <i>Vigilant</i>] |
| An enemy is sneaking up on the character | Test the character's <i>Vigilant</i> , modified by the enemy's <i>Discreet</i> , written [<i>Vigilant</i> ← <i>Discreet</i>] |
| The character enchants an enemy | Test the character's <i>Resolute</i> , modified by the enemy's <i>Resolute</i> , written [<i>Resolute</i> ← <i>Resolute</i>] |
| The character gets close to a hidden trap | Test the character's <i>Vigilant</i> , modified by the trap's <i>Difficulty</i> , written [<i>Vigilant</i> -X], where X is the trap's <i>Difficulty</i> |

RESOLUTE

Resolute represents a character's resistance to influence, whether it is social pressure, mind-bending magic or Corruption. *Resolute* is also tied to the use of mystical powers. The Attribute is often opposed by either an enemy's *Resolute* or *Persuasive*. Note that having a very low value in this Attribute is inadvisable, because of the risk for Corruption.

STRONG

Strong mirrors a character's capacity to use its physical strength in order to, for instance, lift something heavy or break down a door. It also covers the capacity to withstand physical damage and to resist poisons and diseases. *Strong* is usually modified by a level of *Difficulty*, sometimes by an enemy's *Strong*.

VIGILANT

Vigilant represents a character's general awareness, the attunement of its senses and its ability to detect the details of its surroundings. *Vigilant* is often opposed by an enemy's *Discreet*.

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

The following statistics are calculated based on the character's Attributes:

- *Toughness* = *Strong* (though never below 10)
- *Pain Threshold* = *Strong*/2 (rounded up)
- *Defense* = [*Quick* -Armor's Impeding value]
- *Corruption Threshold* = *Resolute*/2 (rounded up)

THE MEANING OF LOW ATTRIBUTES

Having a low value in an Attribute is actually a great starting point for deciding a character's appearance and personality. For instance, a character with a low value in *Accurate* can be one-eyed, or generally clumsy and prone to bumping into things. A low *Cunning* value can represent both impulsiveness and a lack of education; a low *Quick* could mean that the character is either indecisive or limping. Someone with a low *Resolute* could be afraid of conflicts or perhaps very superstitious. A loud and careless character probably has a low value in *Discreet*, while a low *Vigilant* value could result in a myopic and absent-minded daydreamer.

Concerning the ←

The arrow pointing leftwards and which is used in the formula for describing challenges means "modified by". Consequently, the formula [*Quick*←*Accurate*] means "*Quick* modified by (the opponent's) *Accurate*"; a modification which can be either positive (+) or negative (-).

Success Test

BETWEEN THEM, the Attributes can be used to undertake any kind of challenge in the game world. Sometimes they are used actively, when the character tries to achieve something; at other times they are used reactively to negate the actions of enemies or avoid being afflicted by environmental hazards. It is always the player who performs the test, whether it is made actively (the character affects the world) or passively (the world affects the character). The Game Master tells the player which Attribute must be tested and what modifications to apply (if any).

A success test is performed by rolling a 20-sided die, called a D20. In the most simple challenges success is only a matter of the die landing on a number which is equal to or lower than the character's attribute value. However, most often the attribute value is first modified according to the opposition or the difficulty of the challenge - for instance, if the character tries to hit someone with a spear, the

relevant attribute value is modified by the target's *Defense*; when trying to open a lock, the attribute value is modified by how difficult the lock is to open.

In the latter case the Game Master determines the modification, typically from +5 (very easy) to -5 (very hard). When it comes to the spear attack, the actual modifier is determined with the formula [*10 -the enemy's defense value*] (see table to the right).

When a challenge is described in the text of this book it is always written with the character's Attribute first, like this: [*Character's Attribute*←*Modifier*]. When the modification originates from passive resistance, as in the case of a lock, it is instead written [*Character's Attribute* -*Modification X*]. Finally, if the test is meant to be performed without any modifications the relevant Attribute is written in plain text with an initial capital letter: *Quick*.

For more details and examples, see the narrative tutorial starting on page 33.

| Attributes and Modifiers | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Value | Modifier |
| 5 | +5 |
| 6 | +4 |
| 7 | +3 |
| 8 | +2 |
| 9 | +1 |
| 10 | ±0 |
| 11 | -1 |
| 12 | -2 |
| 13 | -3 |
| 14 | -4 |
| 15 | -5 |



Player's Rules

THE FOLLOWING SECTION covers the rules that you, as a player, are expected to know: the rules for combat, dying and healing. Problem-solving and social challenges are only discussed briefly, since it is the Game Master's job to handle the rules involving those kinds of situations within the game. Finally, there are rules describing how you as a player can use *Experience* to improve your character.

YOUR CHARACTER is often going to find him- or herself engaged in combat. The rules of combat are more detailed than other aspects of the ruleset since it is your character's life that is on the line. If you are not tactical, committed and brave, then there is a risk that the battle will end with the death of you or your companions.

Combat in Symbaroum should be colorful, and there is a lot of room for you and your friends to describe your actions and to immerse yourself in the combat, the attacks and the escapes. The Game Master is there to decide how to realize your ideas and strategies so do not be afraid to get creative.

Example: *In order to help illustrate specific rules, we will use the example character Grumpa, an ogre that is created by an imagined player in the first part of The Core Rulebook. Grumpa the Ogre is a member of the White Dove, a theater company that travels through Davokar towards the high plateau of Karvosti.*

On their way the company faces a band of brutal brigands, crude thugs who would rather steal the possessions of others than risk their own lives in the forest's blight-infested ruins. The company is not interested in handing over their honestly stolen riches and so combat begins. Let us see how it goes for our ogrely heroine in the brawl...

Time within the game

SINCE THE ADVENTURES of a roleplaying game take place in our imagination, we need a way to simulate the passing of time, both to know how long different effects are active (such as the effects of elixirs or mystical powers), and to keep track of the movements and Actions of individual characters. Symbaroum uses the following divisions to clarify what is happening.

SCENES

Scenes form the basis of gameplay and can be compared to scenes in a movie: one location, a couple of characters and something important that happens (a challenge). The duration of many abilities and powers lasts for an entire scene.

Scenes can be started by both players and Game Masters – a Game Master may introduce the characters to a challenge and the players can have their characters perform actions which make the game world respond in a challenging way.

For a situation to count as a scene, it has to include a challenge and, hence, an element of risk or cost to the player characters. The game mechanic for *Experience* relies on the number of scenes a player character survives.

INTERLUDE

The interlude is a scene without a challenge. It is often an atmospheric scene, where the player characters discuss something important or plan for the future. It can also be a briefly described journey. Interludes differ from scenes in that they do not grant *Experience*. The reason for this is that they lack any challenge or risk for the player characters.

TURNS

When a battle starts, the scene is broken down into turns, where each player character and enemy can perform two Actions in an order decided by Initiative. A turn ends and another begins once everyone has taken their actions.

Turn Order

THE CHARACTER with the highest *Quick* can choose to either act first or to wait. You may choose to place your Initiative later in the turn order, but once the order is established it cannot be changed. If two persons have the same *Quick* value, then compare *Vigilant*. If they still share the same value, roll 1D20: the highest outcome goes first.

COMBAT WITH WEAPONS READY

When combat starts it is important to know whether the combatants have their weapons drawn or not. Also, remember that Long weapons get a Free Attack against one enemy during the first turn of melee combat, provided that the enemy does not have a Long weapon as well.

Example: *The brigand has Quick 10, just like Grumpa, but he has Vigilant 11 against Grumpa's 9, so he has the initiative. Yet, Grumpa is armed with a staff with the Long quality. One of the brigands approaches Grumpa with a drawn sword, but thanks to having the advantage of reach, Grumpa performs her Free Attack and attacks before the brigand. Then the Initiative goes to the brigand, and after that it is Grumpa's usual turn. In the second turn, Grumpa can no longer take advantage of her long staff, and so the brigand attacks first.*

SURPRISE

It usually requires a successful [Discreet←Vigilant] test to surprise someone. If a group tries to surprise another group, instead of individual against individual, use the attackers' lowest Discreet modified by the defenders' highest Vigilant. He or she who surprises an enemy is allowed to make

The Character's Action Economy

DURING A TURN A CHARACTER MAY:

Perform a Combat Action, such as attacking, perform first aid or use an active ability. The Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action.

Perform a Movement Action, such as moving 10 paces, drawing a weapon, reloading a weapon or using an item or an elixir.

Perform an unlimited amount of Reactions, such as defending itself or performing Free Attacks.

Perform an unlimited amount of Free Actions, such as giving an order or calling out a warning.

Stand up from lying on the ground, which either costs a whole turn (two Movement Actions) or one Movement Action if the character succeeds with a Quick test.

one Free Attack against said enemy at the start of the turn. After that, follow the regular turn order, based on the combatants' *Quick* values, as described above.

If any of the combatants are surprised at the start of combat, they must draw their weapons. All Short weapons can be unsheathed as a Free Action, thanks to their small weight and length. To unsheathe a weapon is otherwise considered a Movement Action. Another option is of course to not draw any weapons and instead choose to use punches and kicks; an individual's or creature's natural weapons are always considered ready and do not have to be drawn or unsheathed.

Example: *Another brigand tries to sneak up on Grumpa from behind. Our ogre is in trouble! The sneaking brigand has Discreet 10 and Grumpa has Vigilant 10. Mira rolls 12 and our poor ogre is surprised. This works the same way as with a Long weapon, the enemy can make a Free Attack against Grumpa, and then the turn order continues as usual.*

Actions in Combat

IN COMBAT, your character will kick and fight, slash and stab, parry and dodge. The character does this with his or her two Actions per turn; one Combat Action and one Movement Action. The Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action, and Movement Actions can be replaced by other kinds of Actions.

Besides Combat and Movement Actions, every combatant may perform Reactive Actions, such as performing Free Attacks and *Defense* tests. There are also Free Actions, Actions that are either brief or can be made in parallel with other Actions. All Actions, except Reactions, are performed on the character's Initiative. Reactions are performed as it sounds, as a reaction to an enemy's Action or other circumstances.

COMBAT ACTION

The most important Action that can be performed in a turn is the attack. It is with this Action that you character attacks its enemies and attempts to harm them with its weapon. The attack is preferably performed with an Active ability, if your character masters such a skill. Passive abilities always act together with active ones.

The attack is made with [Accurate←Defense]. Note that some abilities can allow you to attack using other Attributes besides *Accurate*, and calculate *Defense* using something else than *Quick*.



A Combat Action does not have to be an attack. To provide first aid to someone or to use any other active ability also counts as a Combat Action.

A Combat Action can be replaced with an additional Movement Action, but not the opposite: a Movement Action cannot be replaced with an additional Combat Action.

Example: When it is Grumpa's turn to act, she choose to attack using the mystical power Confusion. It's performed with a [Resolute←Resolute] test. The enemy has Resolute 9 (+1) so Grumpa, who has Resolute 15, must roll 16 or lower (15+1) in order to Confuse the enemy. Mira rolls 11 and the enemy stops in his steps, confused. Maybe our ogre has a chance to survive her first combat!

MOVEMENT ACTION

The Movement Action represents a meaningful movement in combat. The Movement Action is done on a character's Initiative. Normally, the exact distance is not of any great importance. What does matter in combat is who can make a melee attack and who can use ranged attacks.

If a more exact distance needs to be calculated, then a Movement Action represents 10 paces (10 meters), but characters who engage an enemy in melee combat naturally stop by the enemy if the distance is shorter than that (in other words, the character does not have to move the full 10 paces).

Movement Actions are used to:

- Reach an enemy and engage it in melee combat.
- Take up a flanking position next to an enemy already fighting an ally.
- Move past an enemy to reach another one that stands further away (enemies that are bypassed may perform a Free Attack).
- Withdraw from melee combat (which allows the enemy to perform a Free Attack against the character). If fighting multiple enemies, then each enemy is allowed a Free Attack.
- Create a clear line of sight to an obscured enemy.

Instead of moving, the Movement Action can be used to perform other kinds of Actions:

- Switch weapons
- Stand up from a prone position (requires a Quick test).
- Drink/apply an elixir to yourself.

Make the Combat Come Alive

How an attack looks depends on the situation and the location where the battle takes place.

Maybe the character is swinging an axe and hits its enemy both in the arm and in the stomach, or a crossbow is being fired from the top of a wall and the bolt slams into the chest of its target. It is important to make the attacks come alive for the battle to be perceived as dramatic.

Example: Our dear ogre is considered flanked, since she is standing between two brigands – meaning that the brigands have an Advantage against the big brute. Grumpa solves this with a Movement Action, which triggers a Free Attack from each of her enemies (lucky that Grumpa confused one of them!). The ogre moves around the confused enemy, and receives a Free Attack from the other brigand. After making her move, the ogre has both the brigands in front of her, and is no longer flanked.

REACTIONS

Reactions are quick responses or follow-ups to other Actions or circumstances. They can be performed at any time during the turn and are not tied to the character's Initiative. The character can perform as many Reactions as is called for per turn, as long as there are triggers to react to. Reactions can use the effect of passive abilities, but not of active ones.

FREE ATTACK

There are situations when your character will have the opportunity to make a Free Attack with his or her weapon. This most commonly happens when the character is armed with a Long weapon, when an enemy tries to flee from an ongoing melee combat or when an opponent tries to run past the character in order to reach someone or something behind it. There are also some abilities which trigger Free Attacks under special circumstances.

Free attacks can use the effect of passive abilities but not of active ones, and normally the character can only gain one Free Attack per triggering factor and turn – if two enemies try to withdraw from melee only 1 Free Attack is gained, but if one withdraws and one runs past, the character gains one Free Attack on each.

Damage & Healing

DAMAGE LOWERS the victim's *Toughness* and a creature dies when its *Toughness* reaches zero – unless it is a player character, in which case he or she is regarded as being dying instead. Damage and wounds can be healed in a number of ways, described in this section.

TOUGHNESS

The character's *Toughness* is equal to his or her value in the *Strong* Attribute. However, it can never be lower than 10.

PAIN THRESHOLD

A player character's *Pain Threshold* is half of its *Strong* value, rounded up. The actual *Strong* value

Example: Let's go back to the Free Attack our ogre Grumpa was allowed to make against one of the brigands at the start of the battle. Grumpa had no abilities that affected her use of the staff, but if she had (like the Polearm Mastery ability) then the passive parts of that ability (e.g. the 1D8 damage at novice level) would have come into play when Grumpa performed her Free Attack.

DEFENSE

You are allowed to attempt to defend yourself against any attacks that your character is aware of. The character's *Defense* is usually based on *Quick*, then modified by such things as armor qualities and whether or not the character carries a shield.

When a character is attacked, defense is tested as [*Defense*←*Accurate*]. If the test is successful the character has avoided the attack by either parrying or dodging it. If this test fails, the attack hits and deals damage if the weapon's damage value is higher than the outcome of the roll for the character's *Armor*.

Example: Our brave ogre heroine is relentlessly attacked by brigands and has to defend herself. Luckily enough, *Defense* is a Reaction, so Grumpa may defend herself an unlimited number of times each turn. Grumpa's *Defense* is 6 [10, −2 for her leather apron and −2 for her Robust trait]. The Game Master tells her that the attacking enemy's *Accurate* is −1: this is bad since it leaves Grumpa with an effective *Defense* of 5 [6−1]. The attack comes and Mira rolls 9 on 1D20 – Grumpa is hit. It is good that Grumpa is an ogre and hence much tougher than most when it comes to withstanding damage.

is used to calculate this figure, even if it is lower than 10.

When a creature suffers damage that exceeds its *Pain Threshold*, from a single attack and after *Armor* has been subtracted from the damage value, one of the following things happens. Note that it is the player who decides between the two, both for the character when it suffers the damage, as well as the enemy if it is the character that inflicts the pain.

- The affected creature is knocked down and has to get up (see *Special Actions*).
- The one who deals the damage is allowed to perform an immediate Free Attack against the affected creature.

Death test (1D20)

1

The character's damage looked much worse than it actually was; the character wakes up with 1D4 *Toughness* left. The character can act the next turn.

2–10

The character remains at death's threshold.

11–19

The character is a step closer to death. The third time the roll has this outcome, the character dies.

20

The character dies, but may say some last harsh words if the player wants to.

Example: Our ogre Grumpa has Strong 11, and therefore Toughness 11 and Pain Threshold 6. Grumpa fights savagely against two brigands and both brigands manage to land a hit on our heroine. The damage, after Armor, is 7 (4+3). Grumpa's Threshold has not been exceeded, since none of these hits dealt 7 damage on its own. It takes a lot for a pair of brigands to bring our robust heroine down. The fight continues!

Later in the adventure, Grumpa encounters a blight-stricken Aboar. Now the danger is for real, since a corrupted behemoth like that is capable of bringing down even the mightiest warrior. Grumpa is hit by an attack and suffers 8 points of damage after her Armor has been subtracted. This surpasses her Pain Threshold value of 7, and Grumpa's player decides that the ogre falls butt-first into the mud as a consequence of such a splendid hit.

DYING CHARACTERS

Monsters and non-player characters die as soon as their Toughness reaches 0, unless the Game Master wants something else to happen. In any case, the rules for player characters are different.

When a character reaches 0 Toughness it collapses and is considered to be dying. At this point, it cannot help itself in any way. Each turn thereafter the player is forced to make a Death Test with 1D20 on the character's Initiative. This test is repeated until someone else either stabilizes the dying character with an herbal cure, the Medicus ability or mystical healing – or until the player rolls a 1 and wakes up, or a 20 and dies.

Special Actions

THE SPECIFIC SITUATION and the weapons of the combatants will affect the course of events. Special rules for line of sight, the use of shields as well as different kinds of advantages are covered here.

BLIND FIGHTING

To fight blinded is hard, and the same goes for fighting under bad lighting conditions such as in darkness, smoke or thick fog. If both parties in a battle are affected, then no adjustments are needed. Otherwise, the affected party gets two chances to fail its success tests – if the character is affected, the player rolls twice and picks the worst result; if only the enemy is affected the player rolls twice and picks the best result.

DISENGAGE FROM MELEE COMBAT

Disengaging from a melee combat is done on the character's Initiative and costs a Movement Action. The enemy is allowed a Free Attack against the

Example: It is not easy for Grumpa when the tainted aboar rams the fallen ogre once more and beats her Toughness down to 0. This looks bad! Grumpa is out of the fight and Mira the player is now forced to make a Death Test each turn to see if Grumpa succumbs to her wounds. The turn after Grumpa was brought down Mira rolls a 3, and so the ogre remains at death's threshold. Mira rolls a 13 in turn two, so Grumpa is one step closer to death. Two more rolls like that and she is gone.

DEAD PLAYER CHARACTERS

Dead player characters may not remain in the game, but the player who creates a new character may do so using all the Experience accumulated by the last character. This way, the new character does not have to start too far behind the others.

HEALING WOUNDS

Healing can happen naturally, by the use of alchemy and medicine or with the help of mystical powers. Performing first aid on a dying person requires the Medicus ability, an herbal cure or powers of healing.

- Natural healing happens at a rate of one (1) point of Toughness per day.
- Alchemical herbal cures heal one (1) point of Toughness immediately.
- The Medicus ability heals 1D4 Toughness, even more when combined with herbal cures.
- Mystical powers, such as Lay on Hands, and the Recovery ability both heal Toughness; see their respective descriptions for details.

character. This also applies to situations when the character is facing multiple opponents, in which case each opponent is allowed a Free Attack against the character when he or she chooses to disengage.

USE/APPLY ELIXIR

To use or apply an elixir on either yourself or your equipment counts as a Movement Action. To use or apply it on somebody else counts as a Combat Action.

FIRST AID

To perform first aid on a wounded person counts as a Combat Action and requires a herbal cure, the Medicus ability or other healing powers. The effect of first aid is described in Damage & Healing.

STAND UP

Fighting while lying down is possible, but not recommended, because each enemy that has engaged

Abilities & Special Actions

Note that there are many abilities that affect the character's capacity to perform Special Actions.

For example, an adept in Acrobatics can get up from lying down as a Free Action, provided that he or she succeeds with a Quick test. And the master level of Sixth Sense removes any negative modifications from Blind Fighting – which can be used when attacking opponents in the dark.

Combat Map

It can help to have a map of the battle-field in order to get a better overview of the combat situation. Draw the surrounding area on a piece of paper and mark where everybody stands with an "X" or simple markers or tokens. Even objects and terrain – such as trees, boulders and buildings – should be drawn on the map. Then it quickly becomes much more obvious where the combatants stand, who can shoot, who is flanked and so on. A combat map is even more recommended for battles with many combatants, such as in combat situations where the characters face the same number of enemies as themselves.

the character in close combat gets an Advantage against a prone character. See rules for Advantage below. If the character makes a successful test against *Quick* it only takes a Movement Action for the character to get back on its feet. Otherwise, it takes an entire turn, meaning that the character cannot perform a Combat Action while getting up.

LINE OF SIGHT

Ranged weapons cannot shoot past other combatants, meaning that the shooter (or the mystic) may need to use Movement Actions to maneuver for them to have line of sight. A rule of thumb is that if a shooter or a mystic stands behind an ally so that the targeted enemy is forced to trigger a Free Attack to reach the shooter, then the target is obscured from view by the shooter's ally.

SHIELD

Anyone can defend themselves with a shield, providing +1 to *Defense*.

The use of a shield makes it impossible to use ranged and Heavy weapons and neutralizes the reach advantage gained from a Long weapon, since the wielder must use it in one hand. The buckler is an exception to this, allowing the use of both hands, as well as giving the user +1 to *Defense*.

FLANKING

To surround the enemy is an effective combat strategy. If two persons flank an enemy, both of them gain an Advantage against the target. A maximum of four persons can surround a person or creature; any combatant beyond that will be unable to reach the target and can only step forward if one of its allies retreats or goes down.

Terrain and the movement of the combatant decide what is possible to achieve. Doors, corridors and narrow passages can be used to prevent enemies from flanking.

Remember that moving past an enemy triggers a Free Attack. The Free Attack can be avoided if the combatant opts to trade its Combat Action that turn for an additional Movement Action, making it possible to go around the enemy without entering into melee.

Shadow & Corruption

ALL BEINGS and objects in the world are surrounded by mystical shadows, whose appearance varies depending on the creature or object's relationship to the great and vast powers of the world. Most people are unaware of the existence of these shadows, and while many might have been told about them, only a few individuals can actually perceive them.

SURPRISED

To sneak up on an enemy or prepare an ambush is an active Action and requires a successful [*Discreet-Vigilant*] test. Attacking an enemy that is unaware of the incoming attack allows the attacker to make a Free Attack in the first turn of combat. Then the combat follows the usual turn order, based on the combatants *Quick*.

ADVANTAGE

Sometimes one side of a melee combat gets an advantage over the other. A character sneaking up on an enemy to attack it from behind has the Advantage. Another situation where you are at an Advantage is when you attack a target lying on the ground or a target that is climbing towards you. To create advantages when fighting on plain and even ground requires the use of Actions, attacks or movements.

If your character has the Advantage in a combat situation, it receives a +2 modification to the relevant Attribute when making a Success test, and its attacks deal 1D4 extra damage.

The following situations provide advantages:

- Attacking an enemy that is unaware of the pending attack. For this situation to occur, a successful [*Discreet-Vigilant*] test is normally required by the attacker.
- All melee attacks against a flanked enemy counts as providing an Advantage. A target is considered flanked if two enemies stand on opposite sides of it. It usually takes a Movement Action to get around an enemy and flank it. In the same way a character can use a Movement Action to get away from a flanked position – but with the consequence of receiving a Free Attack from each enemy.
- All melee attacks against an enemy lying down. Note that ranged attacks do not get any advantage from this.
- All attacks against enemies standing on lower ground than the attacker, such as attacking down from a wall against enemies climbing a ladder. This applies to both melee and ranged attacks.

THE ROLE OF SHADOWS

The ongoing struggle between civilization's desire to tame the wilds, and the corruption born out of over-exploitation, is a fundamental theme in the game of Symbaroum. The primary purpose of the Shadows is to introduce the players to these great forces and the dynamic that exists between them.

Table 3: **Quick Guide for Combat** This guide can be used to keep track of the different phases of a turn.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1 Initiative</p> <p>The Initiative decides the turn order in combat, meaning the order in which the characters and enemies act.</p> | <p>2 Move & Combat Actions</p> <p>Each combatant has two actions: one Movement Action and one Combat Action. These can be used as follows:</p> | <p>3 Defense</p> |
| <p>A. Long weapons: The Long weapon is allowed to make a Free Attack at first contact with one enemy that is not armed with a Long Weapon.</p> | <p>A. Movement Action</p> <p>I. Move into melee: To move towards an enemy in order to attack. This gives an enemy with a Long weapon a Free Attack, but not if the attacker wields a Long weapon as well.</p> | <p>A. Defense: All attacks made during the turn can be met with <i>Defense</i> tests, where the effective defense value is based on <i>[Defense←Accurate]</i>. If the <i>Defense</i> test is successful, then the attack misses completely. Should the attack hit, proceed to Damage.</p> |
| <p>B. Surprised: If there is any possibility of surprise, make a <i>[Discreet←Vigilant]</i> test to see if the target is caught off guard. The one that performs a successful surprise attack can make a Free Attack at the start of the turn against one surprised enemy.</p> | <p>II. To flank an enemy already engaged in melee with a combatant allied to the flanking person. This gives both flanking allies the Advantage against their enemy.</p> | <p>4 Damage</p> |
| <p>C. Quick: The combatant with the highest <i>Quick</i> starts to act when neither Long weapons nor surprise attacks are in play.</p> | <p>III. Move around an enemy: A circular movement in order to reach another enemy combatant standing further away. This gives the bypassed enemy a Free Attack.</p> | <p>A. Weapon damage: The damage dealt by the character is rolled by the player. Their enemies have fixed damage values, announced by the Game Master when a character suffers a hit.</p> |
| <p>D. Vigilant: If two or more combatants have the same <i>Quick</i>, then <i>Vigilant</i> is used as a tie breaker to determine the turn order (highest goes first).</p> | <p>IV. Disengage from melee combat: To withdraw from melee allows every engaged enemy combatant to perform a Free Attack.</p> | <p>B. Protection granted by Armor: The Armor is subtracted from the weapon damage. The character's Armor is rolled by the player; the fixed value of the enemies' Armor is handled by the Game Master.</p> |
| <p>E. 1D20: If two or more combatants also have the same <i>Vigilant</i>, roll 1D20 until one of them rolls higher than the other, and therefore wins the Initiative.</p> | <p>V. Create free line of sight: To Move in order to get an obscured enemy into your line of sight.</p> | <p>C. Actual damage: The target suffers as much damage as <i>[Weapon's damage –Armor]</i></p> |
| <p>F. Delay Action: It is possible to delay one's Initiative and let others act first, but then the combatant must keep this delayed Initiative for the rest of the battle.</p> | <p>VI. Draw weapon</p> | <p>D. Pain Threshold: The attacker determines whether the actual damage is higher than the target's <i>Pain Threshold</i>; if so, the target is either knocked to the ground or the attacker is allowed to perform a Free Attack.</p> |
| | <p>VII. Switch weapons: Sheath one weapon and draw another one.</p> | <p>E. Death test: Should the actual damage suffered be greater than the character's remaining <i>Toughness</i> the character is either incapacitated or dying. The player must make a Death Test each turn to see if the character survives or dies.</p> |
| | <p>VIII. Stand up (requires a successful <i>Quick</i> test): Get back up on your feet after being knocked prone or otherwise falling down.</p> | |
| | <p>IX. Drink/apply elixir: To apply an elixir to either yourself or your equipment.</p> | |
| | <p>B. Combat Action</p> | |
| | <p>I. Attack: An ordinary attack using a weapon.</p> | |
| | <p>II. Active Ability: An attack with, or the use of, an active ability.</p> | |
| | <p>III. First aid: To apply an herbal cure on a wounded or dying companion.</p> | |
| | <p>IV. Additional Movement Action: Replace your Combat Action with another Movement Action.</p> | |
| | <p>V. Pass on elixir: To use an elixir on an ally or its equipment.</p> | |

Table 4: Corruption

| DEGREE OF TAINT | CORRUPTION | EFFECT |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Blight-stricken | Total Corruption 1+ | The corruption can be detected with the <i>Witchsight</i> ability and rituals like <i>Holy Smoke</i> . Temporary Corruption fades away at the end of a scene. |
| Blight-marked | <i>Corruption Threshold</i> (<i>Resolute</i> /2 rounded up) reached. | The player character develops a physical Stigma as a sign of its corruption. A Stigma triggered by temporary Corruption will heal and vanish after a day, while a permanent Stigma remains until permanent Corruption is reduced through rituals. |
| Abomination | <i>Resolute</i> reached.
The creature is thoroughly corrupt. | The player character turns into an abomination and becomes a non-player character. No known ritual can save the character. |

Shadows have two main functions within the game. First, individuals with the *Witchsight* ability can see through deception and deceit by actively using this ability. Second, the Game Master can use this element to infuse the world with both life and soul, and to portray these grand and obvious conflicts in a more personal and spiritual way.

THE POWER OF CORRUPTION

Power corrupts, and in Symbaroum quite literally so. A fundamental principle in Symbaroum is that when nature is cultivated or violated it grows dark and vengeful – and strikes back! The darkness that comes alive in this way feeds off and can continue to infect its surroundings. Since Mystics bend and warp nature according to their will, they are constantly threatened by Corruption. And when looking at the ruleset, this principle is mirrored in the concept of Shadows and in creatures like abominations and the undead.

Corruption starts at zero (0) and grows as the character is tainted. A character is technically transformed into an abomination when its Corruption value exceeds its *Resolute* value. Yet, long before that, the character starts to show physical signs of its growing taint, in the form of Stigmas.

TEMPORARY CORRUPTION

Temporary Corruption is a momentary expression of the world's reluctance to be subdued and controlled. It fades away by itself at the end of the scene but is still dangerous, since it can push a character's Total Corruption over its *Corruption Threshold* (Blight-marked), or past double its *Corruption Threshold*, turning the character into a blight beast.

Actions that give temporary Corruption:

- Using a mystic power or ritual: 1D4

temporary Corruption

- Using tainted artifacts: varies, but mostly 1D4 temporary Corruption
- Damage from certain abominations
- The dark areas of Davokar: The darker areas of Davokar are dangerous; the corruption varies from 1D4 temporary Corruption each day to 1D6 temporary Corruption each hour. It is said that the corruption suffered within the darkest parts of the forest is permanent.

PERMANENT CORRUPTION

Permanent Corruption means a lasting alteration of the character's essence and inner being. When permanent Corruption reaches the character's *Corruption Threshold*, which is half its *Resolute* value rounded up, the character counts as Blight-marked and receives a permanent Stigma (see Table 5). The Stigma disappears if the permanent Corruption is reduced to below the *Corruption Threshold* again.

The character turns into an abomination if its Total Corruption (temporary+permanent) reaches or exceeds its *Resolute* value. Then the character cannot be saved in any way.

Permanent Corruption is suffered when:

- Binding an artifact to oneself to be able to use its powers: 1 Corruption (or *Experience*).
- Learning a mystic power or ritual: 1 permanent Corruption.
- A character's Total Corruption reaches the character's *Corruption Threshold* during a scene: 1D4 permanent Corruption.

CHANGE OF SHADOW

A creature's Shadow reflects its increasing level of Corruption, and the *Witchsight* ability or the *Holy Smoke* ritual can be used reveal

this. Technically, a corrupted creature has two Shadows, one representing its base color and one representing the taint.

The base Shadow is decided by the formula *[Resolute – Corruption]*; if this value is higher than the total Corruption value, then the base Shadow is the strongest and brightest of the two. The Corruption becomes the strongest Shadow when it reaches or exceeds the creature's original Shadow. Should a creature's total Corruption reach or exceed its value in the *Resolute* Attribute the creature is thoroughly corrupted and turned into an abomination.

Other Important Rules

THE GAME MASTER handles most things regarding problem-solving and social challenges, but here follows a description of the basic idea of how those situations are dealt with. This section also describes how to develop your character. Improvements are made using *Experience*, which is gained from partaking in and surviving adventures. The Game Master awards the *Experience*, while the player uses it to improve his or her character.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Problem-solving refers to situations where your character attempts to achieve something that requires dice rolls and Success tests, but which is not a combat-situation: tracking a fleeing enemy, picking a lock, persuading a guard to let you in or researching the answer to a riddle in a library. The Game Master handles most of this; as a player you only have to be ready to describe how your character attempts to solve the problem, and then roll the dice to make the test asked for by the Game Master.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Social challenges consist of important negotiations, often involving the great and powerful personas, groups and monsters of the game world – situations that are unfit for combat and cannot be solved with a mere *Persuasive* test. In short, the social challenge is solved by your and your friends' roleplaying, where you will have to persuade, deceive and bargain your way to a solution. The Game Master handles the parameters for the social challenge, while you portray your character and together with your fellow players try to carry through a successful negotiation around the gaming table.

Social challenges are often preceded by scenes of problem-solving, where the

Table 5: Marks of Corruption

EXAMPLES OF STIGMAS

| |
|---|
| A festering wound that does not heal |
| Discolored skin, blemishes and severe rashes |
| Boils in mouth and throat, that burst at inappropriate times |
| Fangs, or nails in the shape of claws or talons |
| A birthmark that with imagination may look like a dark rune or an evil symbol |
| Eyes that glitter in the dark |
| Eyes that actually blacken with anger, hunger or lust |
| A faint odor of decay follows the person, despite him or her looking healthy |
| Breath that stinks of sulfur |
| Veins that bulge black when experiencing anger or other strong emotions |
| Dark streaks in the blood, visible when the creature bleeds |
| Cold as a corpse or feverishly hot without any signs of sickness or disease |
| Speaks in a unknown evil-sounding language while sleeping |
| Drawn to tainted artifacts and evil places while sleepwalking |
| Degeneration of sight; relying on other senses instead, like smell and touch |
| Taste for cadavers, must feed on something rancid every day to avoid starvation |
| Taste for raw meat, must feed on fresh meat every day to avoid starvation |
| Thirst for warm blood, must drink warm blood every day to not be thirsty |

character gathers information, secrets and rumors that can be used against the one they need to persuade.

IMPROVING YOUR CHARACTER

Experience is awarded by the Game Master after a completed adventure. *Experience* is traded in for higher levels in the character's abilities, or used to purchase new ones. Purchasing a new ability at novice level costs 10 *Experience*, to increase from novice to the adept level costs 20 *Experience* and increasing from adept to master costs 30 *Experience*.

Example: *Grumpa the ogre survives her first adventure and is rewarded with 12 points of Experience. To purchase a new ability at novice level costs 10*

Experience, but Mira decides to save her Experience: she already has five novice abilities and wants to increase one of them to adept level.

After another adventure, Grumpa is awarded with an additional 9 points, to a total of 21 Experience. Mira increases one of her abilities to adept level (at a cost of 20 Experience) after which she only has one (1) point of Experience left.

Special Rules

IN THIS SECTION, we have gathered a number of rules-related phenomena that do not quite fit under any of the headings above, but which nonetheless are central parts of the game rules.

CONFLICTS WITHIN THE GROUP

Symbaroum is made to facilitate cooperation between players, and between the players and the Game Master. The game is based on the premise that the player characters may have their disagreements, but will not start clawing at each other's throats. If this happens, then the spirit of the game is lost.

However, if it comes to combat between player characters, the Game Master should intervene and ask the players how they believe the situation can be solved. It may end in actual fighting, but those fights are best handled as a narration without any die rolls and with no casualties.

There can, on the other hand, emerge situations where the player characters have a fierce disagreement and when they can trick, or in some other way mislead, each other by using the rules. The active player in the situation is then nominated to make the test, while the other acts as resistance. A common situation would be when a player character attempts to trick, steal or place something on another player character. A [Discreet←Vigilant] test is then made, even though both players are, of course, aware of what is happening.

Example: *The players have taken a prisoner. One of the player characters – a human – wants to torture the prisoner for information. But Mira's character Grumpa steps in. The Game Master asks: "how should this end?" and the players agree that Grumpa the ogre easily shoves the smaller human aside.*

Optional Rules

In the *Core Rulebook*, the *Advanced Player's Guide* and other supplements you will find a wide range of optional rules which you can introduce if you and your players find them interesting. There are rules for hit locations, perfect hits and fumbles, distance categories, encumbrance and much more.

Of course, many of these will make the game run slower, so be sure to discuss any options with your gaming group before putting them into play. Trading speed for more detail and tactical depth is not something that all players enjoy and the only thing that really matters is that you and your friends are having a great time around the gaming table!

DAMAGE FROM POISON & ACID

Poison deals damage each turn, and is not affected by Armor once it has begun to take effect. Poison continues to deal damage until its duration ends, or until someone applies an antidote and makes a successful *Cunning* test.

Acid attacks each turn and has to penetrate Armor in order to deal damage. Removing acid from a body or armor requires that someone spends a Combat Action and makes a successful *Cunning* test (washes away the acid with either water, dirt or something similar).

DAMAGE FROM FALLING

A character that falls from a high altitude suffers damage equal to the number of meters fallen. A successful *Quick* roll allows the character to land better, or even manage to break the fall, effectively reducing the damage: subtract 3 meters from the fall.

Water or other soft substances provide some cushioning effect as well, subtracting another 5 meters from the fall. Armor protects as usual.

Example: *The player characters cross a rope bridge that collapses. The fall is 20 meters, but the bottom of the ravine is covered with thick moss and pools of water. The Game Master subtract 5 meters from the fall, which gives an effective fall of 15 meters. One of the characters has Armor 1D6; the player tests Quick and fails. The character therefore suffers 15 – 1D6 points of damage. Had the Quick test been successful the damage would have been 12 – 1D6 instead.*

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS INTERVENE

There are two ways to handle situations where non-player characters fight on the same side as the player characters:

- 1: Give them to a player and let him or her control the NPC(s) for the duration of the scene, or
- 2: handle them yourself, summarily.

The Game Master does not have to roll any dice in the latter case; he or she simply describes what the player character does and what happens. The effect of their attacks can be estimated, just like how well they can withstand hits and so on. The important thing is to not play them actively, since the Game Master's attention should be directed towards the ongoing scene and the story in general.



The Winged Ladle Inn at Thistle Hold. According to a sign posted at the bottom of the spiral stair the guest can look forward to "heavenly dining, divine dinks and beds as soft as clouds at down to earth prices" – the latter being a poetic lie.

Races

THERE ARE LOTS of strange creatures in Ambria, and even stranger life forms in the depths of Davokar. However, when creating a character with the basic ruleset, the player is limited to choosing from the races described in this chapter; races whose representatives are relatively numerous and live in or near Ambria's many towns and settlements.

Human

ACCORDING TO THE SCHOLARS of Ordo Magica, the people of Ambria and Davokar are descendants of the same tribe, although the barbarians and the Queen's Folk hardly consider themselves so closely related. Queen Korinthia's claim to Ambria, the land south of Davokar forest, is motivated by her ancestral connection to the region, and even the most novice of Ambrian linguists can explain in what ways the gibbering speech of the barbarians and the melodious tongue of the Queen's Folk are similar. More disputed are claims saying that the two peoples originate from the same stem, rooted in the old and long forgotten empire of Symbaroum whose ruins are hidden deep within Davokar.

Whatever the case, there are significant differences between the two peoples in a cultural sense. The Ambrians abandoned their blighted homeland Alberetor twenty years ago, to settle down in the well-preserved ruins of Lindaros. On their journey they brought along their architecture, knowledge, economic system and social hierarchies. Thanks to its discipline the Ambrian army outmatches the barbarian clan warriors when they meet in the open fields, but in the woods where the skill of the

individual becomes a decisive factor they are more evenly matched. That, coupled with the advantage of having greater local knowledge, has so far kept the Ambrians from entering very deep into the forest – with the exception of treasure-hunters, religious fanatics searching for lost sun temples and free settlers hoping to escape the Queen's control.

Since the days of old, the barbarians have been ruled by chieftains, but have enjoyed much greater independence and freedom compared to the chastened crofters and peasants in the south. Nor do the barbarian leaders seek to enforce a strict or rigid way of life upon their subjects. The witches, the spiritual leaders among the barbarians, rule with a light hand in the form of taboos and general rules – revere nature, never abuse it and avoid the darker parts of the forest. The clans lead their lives independent from one another, with the occasional exception of skirmishes over resources in the border regions. By tradition, the clan leaders answer to the High Chieftain on the plateau of Karvosti, but he is in reality more of an arbitrator between feuding clans than a strong ruler. However, the High Chieftain is expected to lead the united barbarians to repel





Ambrian surnames

Save the nobles with their houses, the people of Ambria do not use family names. However, especially remarkable or famous individuals can be given a sort of honorary surname, related to that which makes them noteworthy. A couple of examples are Lasifor Nightpitch, Mayor of Thistle Hold, and the treasure-hunter Lysindra Goldengrasp.

any invaders, particularly the Ambrians, if it ever comes to open war.

This possibility, a united barbarian resistance commanded by the High Chieftain, gives the Queen and her advisors nightmares, and would explain why the Ambrians officially are so cautious regarding Davokar. Since the battle in Year 10, when Korinthia's troops attacked and destroyed Haloban and his Jezites, only the Templars serving the Sun Church have made any outright attacks against barbarian settlements. Most infamous is their assault on Karvosti in Year 16 when they attempted to seize the plateau with force of arms – an attempt which ended in a discouraging defeat.

AMBRIAN TRAITS

Characters of the Queen's Folk can choose either the *Contacts* or the *Privileged* trait.

AMBRIAN NAMES

Female Ambrian names usually end with –a while the male names end with –o, but there are many exceptions since their native kingdom was so extensive. One distinct exception is that the names of most Ambrian nobles ends in –gai, –goi or –mei. The use of the letter “x” is uncommon but existing and the letter “j” is replaced by the letter “i” in almost every case. The vowels e and i are used frequently.

- **Male Ambrian names:** Aro, Beremo, Demeon, Edogai, Gadramei, Iasogoi, Jomilo, Karlio, Malliano, Peonio.
- **Female Ambrian names:** Abesina, Elindra, Elionara, Levia, Mehira, Ordedia, Revina, Suria, Variol, Vidina.

BARBARIAN TRAITS

Characters of barbarian heritage can choose either the *Contacts* or the *Bushcraft* trait.

BARBARIAN NAMES

Just like the Ambrians, barbarian female names usually end with –a, while male names tend to end with –mar, –mon or –mer. It is customary that every other letter is a consonant and a vowel; double vowels are common, while double consonants are almost never used. Like the Ambrians, barbarians tend not to use the letter “j”, instead changing it to “y”. The greatest difference between the two people is the barbarians' love for the vowels a, o and u.

- **Male barbarian names:** Adelar, Gadramon, Haloban, Konarad, Lothar, Odaban, Rábaiamon, Taran, Tharaban, Vikomer.
- **Female barbarian names:** Adela, Aloeta, Eferneya, Elmea, Elda, Galoma, Horosa, Karona, Verama, Yagaba.

Changeling

THAT THE ELVES sometimes steal a human child from its crib and place a changeling in its stead has been known amongst the barbarians for as long as the witches can remember. Since the arrival of the Ambrians, changelings have started to emerge among them as well. While a rare occurrence, it is still a traumatic experience for every family affected. It is unknown what exact purpose the elves have for doing this, but Ordo Magica's catalogue of known cases in Ambria implies that children have been taken throughout the entire population, literally from both high and low.

A changeling looks human during childhood and starts to develop more elf-like features in their adolescent years, though without ever becoming an elf in the true sense of the word. A changeling reaches adulthood at approximately the same age as a human; the changeling then continues to live a long life but apparently without taking any further steps in the life cycle of the elves. This has made some scholars develop theories stating that changelings are a race of their own, created by elven magic. Others claim that changelings indeed are elf-spawn but that their natural life cycle has been truncated in some mystical way by growing up among humans.

A changeling's lot in life is usually a hard one, since few of them are allowed to stay with their families when their true nature has been revealed. Changelings are sometimes taken in by witches or wizards to serve as assistants, but most of them end up on the street where they have to fend for themselves as best they can. Exiled from human society, the changeling wanders a long and lonely road, often bitter and dark minded, in other cases frivolous and indifferent to the hardship of others.

CHANGELING TRAITS

All changelings have the *Long-lived* trait and most also have the *Shapeshifter* trait (costs as an ability).

CHANGELING NAMES

Some changelings chose elven names when they are thrown out into the street or left in the forest, maybe in an attempt to reclaim a lost identity. Others – like the infamous gutter mage Grimorio Abramelin in Yndaros – take a new and often bombastic name as a defiant gesture or an expression of independence.

- **Changeling male names:** Aka, Ardri, Eneáno, Feon, Ganderald, Goriol, Ibliglin, Kalfu, Radomaramai, Sinue.
- **Changeling female names:** Bekora, Danive, Yeloéna, Elorinda, Hinéua, Kinlegelana, Riamata, Roha, Seanua, Varaneaia.







Ogre

OGRES ARE SOLITARY and odd creatures that come wandering out of the depths of Davokar, fully grown but devoid of memories and with no sense of identity. It is up to the humans or goblins who eventually take them in to give them a name and teach them the ways of the world.

The tales told of ogres vary from being hilarious through mystical to horrific. What is known is that the witches of Davokar sometimes take ogres under their wings and raise them to be guards and servants. Explorers have also reported that an Ambrian outpost near the Black Pitch Mire has adopted an ogre called Armstout and the soldiers there have the giant dig ditches, lift heavy equipment and draw the plow from time to time. A similar phenomenon is the ogres that are snatched by goblin gangs in the slums of Yndaros to serve as heavy-handed enforcers.

In southern Davokar they tell of the companions Deterior and Vitrona, the latter a skillful scout employed by the witches and the former a huge ogre

and the scout's best friend. Word of the duo has also reached Thistle Hold where they have become the subjects of a series of popular songs, telling about their adventures in the ruins of Symbaroum.

OGRE TRAITS

All ogres have the *Long-lived* and *Pariah* traits. Most have the *Robust* trait as well (costs as an ability).

OGRE NAMES

Ogres seem to lack any given names and are therefore nicknamed by people around them. These nicknames often allude to the ogres' size or the taciturn calm that many mistake for stupidity. Ordo Magica speculates that such lonesome creatures actually have no use for proper names – the ogre knows who it is and that is enough.

- ♦ **Ogre names:** Bauta, Ugly, Angry, Odd, Gawky, Heavy, Big Brute, Roughneck, Freak, Oaf, Ox, Rageor.

Goblin

LITTLE IS KNOWN about the origin of goblins, but their presence in the southern outskirts of Davokar is quite obvious. The tribe that left the darkness of Davokar to settle down close to Thistle Hold swarms and makes such a racket that they have made themselves quite unpopular among the town's human populace. Their fiery temperament and strange ways of socializing have contributed to the disapproval: "Hide the Boot", "Tame the Ogre", "Trim the Thistle", "Tighten the Temple" and "Want a Smack, Molok?" are party games that outsiders are reluctant to even watch.

The life of a goblin is short – a goblin is considered a youngster at the age of five, adult at ten and an elder at the age of twenty. To meet a thirty-year-old goblin is a rarity, as most of them voluntarily return to seek a lonesome death in Davokar before then. Meeting one who is forty is all but unheard of.

The only reason why goblins are tolerated in Thistle Hold is that they are practical when it comes to doing dirty work like draining marshes, emptying latrines and flailing about on scaffoldings. Thanks to that, a gibbering horde of sinewy goblins flows into the town every morning to work hard with a number of heavy, dangerous or thankless tasks. Come nightfall, they are once again driven away, and a bunch of uncharacteristically silent goblins march back to their beds in simple huts of straw and clay.

Some goblins stray from this pattern, mainly treasure-hunters and goblins employed in the

households of wealthy individuals in Thistle Hold. A dozen or so goblin younglings can also be found in the convent school in the capital city, where a handful of extremely patient monks have committed themselves to save whatever soul resides inside the wild whelps. The most renowned goblin to represent both of these phenomena is Garm Wormwiggler, brought up at the convent school to later become a successful treasure-hunter.

GOBLIN TRAITS

All goblins have both the *Short-lived* and *Pariah* traits. Most have the *Survival Instinct* trait as well (costs as an ability).

GOBLIN NAMES

Goblin names are varied and it is hard to see any clear naming conventions. It is also common for goblins to change their names or add a syllable depending on what they experience in life. If one were to attempt to point out something general regarding their names, it would be that the length of the names usually goes hand-in-hand with the bearer's rank – the longer the name, the higher the status within the tribe.

- ♦ **Goblin male names:** Alfbolg, Barra, Goltas, Illefons, Ler, Rosti, Shigg, Tengel, Ul.
- ♦ **Goblin female names:** Aa, Fosa, Guhula, Hugalea, Tulga, Udelia, Ufa, Wamba, Yla, Yppa.

Traits

THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES the different traits that representatives of the playable races either have or can have. Some of the traits only have one level and come automatically with the selection of a race, at no additional cost in creation points. Others function and cost as abilities, aside from the fact that they are tied to a certain race. Such a trait is optional and the player decides whether or not to purchase it when creating the character.

CONTACTS

The character has served in an organization or traveled far and wide, and has therefore spun a wide web of contacts. With a successful roll against *Persuasive*, the character can call to mind a contact that should be able to help with a specific question or in a precarious situation. The contact may not be available directly – that depends on who is included in the web of contacts. Suitable factions and people when it comes to specifying the character's contacts are: the Queen's Army, the Queen's Rangers, Witches, Ordo Magica, the Church of Prios, the Noble Houses and Treasure Hunters.

BUSHCRAFT

The character can survive on meager resources and is used to finding food and shelter in harsh terrain.

With a successful *Vigilant* test, the character can find enough food and water to feed him- or herself while being on the move in the wilderness or among Davokar's ruins. If the character is part of a small group (up to five individuals), food and water can be found for them as well, but that will take much more time. The group cannot be on the move during that time.

LONG-LIVED

Once adulthood is reached, the aging process of the character slows down. The character can live up to two or even three centuries if its life is not shortened by violence, poison or disease. The creature's long lifespan makes it prone to do things at a slow pace, but this is compensated by the attitude that what is worth doing is worth doing well, which over time results in a considerable degree of expertise.

Long-lived has no effect besides what it implies in terms of playing the role.

PARIAH

The character belongs to a race which is ill-reputed among the ruling majority and is more or less openly discriminated against. Lone individuals in society might be less inclined to prejudice, but the character's social interactions are generally hampered. Persecuted groups tend to stand together against the world and provide each other with aid and support.

When taking on a social challenge, the player has to roll twice and pick the worst result to decide the outcome of the test. On the other hand, the character is awarded a second chance to succeed

while interacting with members of its own race, in which case it only has to roll the dice when it strives to accomplish something which is questionable or next to impossible to achieve.

Additionally, the character starts with only five shillings in its purse.

PRIVILEGED

The character belongs to a race of high social standing within its society, and is therefore given advantages that others simply cannot have or must pay for, in either silver or hard work, to obtain.

The character gets a second chance to succeed when taking on social challenges within its own society, and does not have to roll the dice unless it strives to accomplish something which is questionable or that may be next to impossible to achieve.

Additionally, the character starts with 50 thaler in its purse.

ROBUST

The character belongs to a race of creatures that are naturally tall and often continue to grow their entire lives. But there are variations: some grow quickly, others more slowly while some hardly seems to grow at all.

Novice **Special.** The character is close to seven feet tall and very strong. Such a towering body is easier to hit in combat, which is balanced by a greater natural toughness. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick -2]* and it can only use light armor, which must be custom-made and therefore costs twice the normal price. In return, the character naturally ignores 1D4 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Furthermore, it can deal 1D4 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.

Adept **Special.** The character is over eight feet tall, weighs about 500 pounds and has skin as tough as bark. A creature like this packs quite the punch but is also easy to hit. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick -3]* and it can only use light armor, which must be custom-made and costs three times the normal price. In return, the character naturally ignores 1D6 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Furthermore, it can deal 1D6 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.

Master **Special.** The character is close to ten feet tall, weighs about half a ton and crushes lesser creatures while enemy weapons have a hard time penetrating its stone-like skin.



Pariah



Robust

It is very easy to hit a creature of this size, but equally hard to wound it seriously. The character's *Defense* is based on *[Quick -4]* and it can only use light armor (custom-made, costing four times the normal price). In return, the character ignores 1D8 damage from each hit taken, in addition to any armor it wears. Finally, it can deal 1D8 extra damage with one melee attack each turn.

SHAPESHIFTER

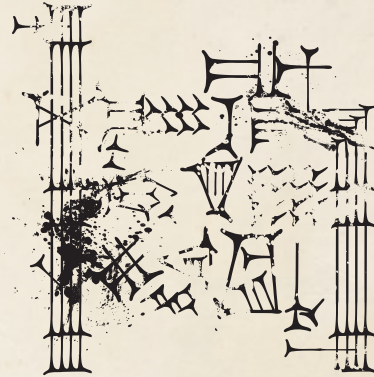
The character has the capability to borrow the appearance of others for a period of time. For young changelings this ability comes naturally, and it can be hard for them not to adopt the appearance and mannerisms of people around them. Mature changelings usually develop greater control over the trait.

Novice **Free.** With a successful die roll against *Resolute*, the character may adopt a false shape; the form, appearance, voice and clothes of another creature, but not that of a specific individual. The changeling can keep up the appearance for the duration of a scene, but then the illusion fades away. Everyone that the character interacts with will see through the illusion, unless the character succeeds with a *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test.

Adept **Free.** The character may, for a short period of time and with a successful *Resolute* test, adopt the form of specific individuals that the character has met, and can include clothes and attributes in the image.

In combat against multiple opponents, the similarity is good enough to make it hard for enemies to hit their mark – there is a 50% chance that enemies attempting to hit the character hit their depicted companion instead. It takes concentration to maintain the illusory form, which means that the character must make a *Resolute* test each turn as well as a successful *[Resolute -Damage]* test each time the changeling suffers damage.

Master **Free.** With a successful *Resolute* test the character may adopt the form of a specific individual and maintain it for the duration of a scene. Anyone who speaks with the character will be able to see through the illusion unless the character succeeds with a *[Discreet←Vigilant]*. For a character to be able to fool people familiar with the depicted person, he or she must succeed with two tests, first at a distance and then another one if they start a conversation.



Writing carved into the stone foundation of Otra Dorno and, though difficult to decipher, believed to contain the symbol for what is presumed to read "massacre" or "blood bath".

SHORT-LIVED

The character's life is short, even under favorable living conditions. All members of its race tend to reach adulthood in a handful of years, after which they start to lose their youthful vigor so that only a few ever live to see the age of forty. On the other hand, they are quick to learn and adapt to new surroundings, and they are often ready to face the world at the age of five.

Short-lived has no effect besides what it implies in terms of playing the role.

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

The character belongs to a race with a powerful life-force and an equally powerful will to survive. For some individuals this energy shows itself in clamorous hollering and an acute restlessness; for others it manifests itself in a more useful survival instinct.

Novice **Free.** Thanks to its explosive survival instinct, the character may perform one extra Movement Action once per scene.

Adept **Reaction.** The character trusts its instincts and has learned that rolling with the punches often saves your life. The character's finely honed survival instinct provides it with a permanent +1D4 to Armor.

Master **Free.** There resides a powerful fighting spirit within each member of the character's race, and that spirit can show itself when the character is backed into a corner. The character has nurtured this hot-tempered aggression and may sacrifice a Movement Action once per scene to perform an extra Combat Action.



Abilities

THE ABILITIES are what really give a character in Symbaroum its distinct role and place in the game world. They represent a person's skill in utilizing his/her basic attributes as efficiently as possible and are graded in three levels from novice to master.



SOME ABILITIES are almost exclusively meant for combat, while others are more focused on problem-solving. Many can be used for both, in which case this is stated in the description of the ability. Also note that many abilities require the player to spend different kinds of Actions – read more about this in the chapter Player's Rules (page 39).

Abilities are rated in three levels: Novice, Adept and Master. An Adept may of course use the ability's Novice level effect, while a Master can make use of all three levels of the ability.

All abilities are described using the same template, with keywords defined as follows:

- **Active Action:** The ability is an attack or similar Combat Action. Some of the active abilities generate extra Actions. These extra Actions may not be used to perform an additional active Action, but they benefit from any passive abilities that the character may have.
- **Free Action:** This Action may be used an unlimited number of times per turn in addition to a character's usual two Actions, for as long as it is allowed by any conditions specified in the description of the ability.
- **Passive Action:** The ability does not require a Combat Action to be activated; in other words, the ability is always active. If a character has two or more passive abilities, then they are all considered active at the same time.
- **Reaction:** The ability is a Reaction to some other Action and therefore doesn't count against the two Actions a character can perform each turn. Reactive Actions work outside the usual order of Initiative, since a Reaction is performed as a consequence of a triggering Action, regardless of Initiative. Reactions can always make use of passive abilities, but never active ones.
- **Special Action:** The ability works in a special way, detailed in its description.

View from within one of the Earth Towers of the Black Leech Rift. There are different estimates on exactly how deep down they reach, but rumors say between three and six hundred feet.

ACROBATICS

The character has learned the art of acrobatic maneuvering, having spent time with a theater company, in one of the fencing schools of Yndaros or climbing the trees of Davokar. The nimbleness of the acrobat provides an advantage when trying to withdraw from close combat or when quickly wanting to reach the center of an enemy formation.

- Novice** **Reaction.** The character may roll against *Quick* to avoid Free Attacks from enemies in melee combat, either when trying to slip past an enemy or when attempting to withdraw from melee. Should the test fail, the player must choose to either remain in its original place or to move anyway and suffer a Free Attack from the opponent.
- Adept** **Free.** If the character is knocked down he or she may attempt to jump back up again as a Free Action by making a *Quick* test. If the test fails the character has to spend a Movement Action to get back on its feet, as usual.
- Master** **Reaction.** The character can utilize its enemies as shields in battle. In combat with more than one opponent, the character may once per turn use an enemy as a shield and have that enemy suffer a successful hit instead of the character. That opponent cannot defend against the attack, but the master acrobat has to make a successful roll against *Quick* for the enemy to take the hit.

Elixirs

NOVICE ELIXIRS

Antidote (Weak)
Herbal Cure
Poison (Weak)
Waybread

ADEPT ELIXIRS

Antidote (Moderate)
Choking Spores
Elemental Essence
Eye Drops
Ghost Candle
Magic Concentrate
Poison (Moderate)
Protective Oil

MASTER ELIXIRS

Antidote (Strong)
Elixir of Life
Poison (Strong)
Spore Bomb
Wraith Dust

- Adept** **Special.** As an acknowledged alchemist the character can roll against *Cunning* to gather herbs and minerals to create one dose of an adept elixir or 1D4 doses of a novice elixir.
- Master** **Special.** The character can, as a widely renowned alchemist, roll against *Cunning* to gather herbs and minerals to create one dose of a master elixir, 1D4 doses of an adept elixir or 1D8 doses of a novice elixir.

BACKSTAB

The palace of Yndaros, the alleys of Thistle Hold and the gloom of Davokar are extremely different surroundings, but they have at least one thing in common: when arguments fail, the blades speak up. The character has learned how to exploit weaknesses in an enemy's defense, and will not let an opportunity go by without making a *Backstab*.

- Novice** **Reaction.** One attack per turn made from Advantage deals +1D4 damage in addition to any damage already inflicted thanks to the Advantage. The character may use *Discreet* instead of *Accurate* when making attacks while at an Advantage. *Backstab* may only be performed once per turn, regardless of other circumstances.
- Adept** **Reaction.** The character's *Backstab* deals extra damage (as above) and also causes a bleeding wound to the enemy. The attack opens a wound that bleeds heavily, inflicting 1D4 damage each turn following the attack. The enemy continues to bleed until healed by an herbal cure, the *Medicus* ability or in some other way.
- Master** **Reaction.** The character's *Backstab* deals 1D8 extra damage and causes a bleeding wound to the enemy, just like at adept level. There are no longer any limits to how many backstabs a Master can perform each turn. All attacks are backstabs as long as the conditions for Advantage are met (see page 44).

BEAST LORE

The character is schooled in the lore of beasts and knows the secrets of most monsters. Many monsters possess special abilities and unique attacks as well as weaknesses which are good to know about when trying to bring them down. At higher levels the character must pick a specialization – Abominations, Beasts, Cultural Beings or Undead – and receives further advantages against members of that specific category.

A character with *Beast Lore* can identify the tracks of many monsters and beings, and use that

information to draw conclusions regarding the size and general behavior of the creature – is it hunting, on the run or just passing through?

- Novice **Free.** The character has studied monsters and can make a *Cunning* test to recognize or recollect a monster's strengths and weaknesses. The Game Master describes the monster and its statistics to the player.
- Adept **Free.** The character is an acknowledged scholar that has been studying a particular sub-category of monsters (pick Abominations, Beasts, Cultural Beings or Undead). The character now deals 1D4 additional damage to monsters from that category. This extra damage applies to the character's allies as well, if they have been instructed in how best to fight the creature.
- Master **Free.** The character now deals 1D6 extra damage to creatures from the sub-category that the player picked at the adept level. This extra damage applies to the character's allies as well, if they have been instructed in how best to fight the creature.

BERSERKER

The feared barbarian warriors of Davokar have developed the practice of working themselves into a berserker frenzy before battle. By letting the repressed anger of the heart strengthen its limbs, the character can unleash a fuming rage that, if channeled correctly, might determine which side will emerge victorious from the battle.

- Novice **Free.** As a Free Action, the character may enter into a murderous frenzy to solely focus on hurting the enemy, dealing 1D6 extra damage when fighting in melee combat. The downside of this frenzy is that the character cannot defend itself properly. The attribute on which *Defense* is based, is considered to be 5 when calculating *Defense*.
- Adept **Reaction.** The rage is like armor to the character. He or she ignores 1D4 damage from each hit suffered while in a berserker rage.
- Master **Free.** The character has managed to harness its rage without losing any of its power. The character can utilize this capacity to both deal and ignore extra damage, while still being able to defend itself as normal.

DOMINATE

With nothing but presence, gaze and voice, strong personalities can force weaker minds to bend in the

midst of a raging battle. The character is trained in this art of subduing combat. Among the gladiators of Yndaros, this is considered to be a particularly impressive way to win a battle, and it is even regarded as extremely honorable among the barbarian clans to overcome your enemy in such a manner.

In social situations, this ability can also be used to scare someone into obedience and force secrets out of them.

- Novice **Passive.** The character can dominate and outmaneuver an enemy combatant by using its convincing personality. The character may use *Persuasive* instead of *Accurate* in melee combat.
- Adept **Free.** The character can, as a Free Action and with a successful [*Persuasive*←*Resolute*] test, force an enemy to hesitate in melee combat. A hesitating enemy will not attack the character this turn. If possible, it attacks one of the character's allies instead.
- Master **Active.** The character can subdue an enemy with a passed [*Persuasive*←*Resolute*] test. A subdued enemy can be forced to stand down and negotiate, to flee from an ongoing battle (if possible), or surrender if it is impossible to flee. When already in combat, the enemy must first be wounded by the character or by one of the character's allies before it can be subdued.

FEINT

Persons and creatures that lack the will or strength to wield heavy melee weapons have instead developed techniques for feinting. This ability demands a weapon with either the Short or the Precise quality. Thanks to the skill of the character, these weapons can be handled in a both discreet and confusing manner.

- Novice **Passive.** The character can choose to attack with *Discreet* instead of *Accurate* when the attack is made with a melee weapon which is either Short or Precise. Also, every such attack gains the same *Advantage* as if the opponent was surprised.
- Adept **Reaction.** The character presents a false weakness in its defense and tricks the opponent into attacking that weakness. The character can choose to defend itself with *Discreet* instead of *Quick*.
- Master **Active.** With a successful roll against [*Discreet*←*Vigilant*] the character can surprise an enemy in the middle of an ongoing fight. A successful test gives the character a Free Attack against that enemy

Monster categories

ABOMINATIONS

The horrible twisted life forms unique to Davokar.

BEASTS

All animals and creatures that belong to nature, such as wolves, reptiles and spider-like pests.

CULTURAL BEINGS

Humans, elves, changelings, ogres, goblins and trolls, for example.

UNDEAD

All manner of restless dead, such as ghosts and dragouls of any kind.

in addition to its ordinary attack. The character may still perform an ordinary attack even if the attempted *Feint* fails.

IRON FIST

The character is trained to use its strength for maximum effect on a target in melee combat. Knights, members of the barbarian Wrathguard and other heavily armed warriors rely on their strength in combat and leave precision and finesse for others to worry about.

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| Novice | Passive. The character can fully utilize its strength and therefore uses <i>Strong</i> instead of <i>Accurate</i> when making melee attacks. |
| Adept | Passive. The character's melee attacks now deal 1D4 additional damage. |
| Master | Active. The character knows how to truly put its back into an attack. The character can perform a devastating melee attack once per turn that deals +1D8, instead of +1D4, additional damage. |

LEADER

There are many who fight their way to a position of leadership, but there are few who get pointed out as true leaders by the people they are meant to lead. If equipped with this ability the character is an inspiring, charismatic and eloquent person whom others listen to and follow, sometimes to their death.

Outside of combat, the *Leader* ability can be useful to seize command over a group of strangers, organize a militia and the like.

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| Novice | Passive. Due to its strong personality, the character can use <i>Persuasive</i> in place of <i>Resolute</i> , for instance when weaving mystical powers, though not as a basis for the corruption threshold. |
| Adept | Active. The character can nominate a creature or an object to be the focused target of his or her allies for the duration of a scene. All allies who attack that target inflict 1D4 additional damage with each hit. Changing the target requires a new active Action from the <i>Leader</i> . |
| Master | Active. The <i>Leader</i> gives a rousing speech to its allies. This allows them to use his or her <i>Persuasive</i> instead of their own <i>Resolute</i> for the duration of a scene. |

LOREMASTER

The character is educated and well-versed in the ways of the world: its cultures, its history,

languages and artifacts. For centuries heroes, monsters and kingdoms have come and gone and left behind powerful items and secret texts. This ability represents knowledge about such objects. Through extensive studies a character with this ability knows not only the story of an object but also its properties and applications.

The *Loremaster* ability also makes the character skilled at researching records and administrative documents, something which might be very useful when faced with those kinds of problems and puzzles.

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| Novice | Free. With a successful <i>Cunning</i> test, any character who is a <i>Loremaster</i> can figure out the properties of a specific artifact, but not how to activate it. In the same way, the novice can use <i>Cunning</i> to translate a text or understand what is being said in another human language. A character does not need to make a test when uttering simple words and phrases, but a successful roll against <i>Cunning</i> is required when trying to have a proper conversation. |
| Adept | Free. As a cultivated scholar of artifacts, the character can use <i>Cunning</i> instead of <i>Resolute</i> when trying to activate artifacts. With a successful <i>Cunning</i> test, the adept can also read and understand the ungainly tongues of both elves and trolls. To say simple phrases in Elvish or Troll Tongue requires no test, but to initiate a conversation requires a successful roll against <i>Cunning</i> . |
| Master | Free. As an acknowledged interpreter of scrolls, the character may with a successful roll against <i>Cunning</i> activate mystical powers directly from scrolls and parchments. The <i>Loremaster</i> may also use <i>Cunning</i> instead of <i>Resolute</i> to resist mystical effects. Furthermore, the master is familiar with the secrets of Symbaroum. A successful <i>Cunning</i> test is required to be able to read a text written in its ancient and extinct language. It requires no test to utter simple phrases, but to initiate a conversation requires a successful roll against <i>Cunning</i> . |

MARKSMAN

Marksmen have their natural position in every army, scouting party and band of brigands. The character can inflict serious damage on its enemies with a bow or crossbow, hoping to either bring them down or at least make sure that they do not reach

those of the character's allies that are equipped for melee combat.

- Novice **Passive.** Thanks to the character's skill, damage dealt with bows and crossbows is increased to 1D10 and 1D12 respectively, from the usual 1D8 and 1D10.
- Adept **Active.** The character's precision provides his or her projectiles a crippling effect. The attack deals damage as usual and if the target is wounded the character may make an *[Accurate←Strong]* test every time the target attempts to move. A successful test means that the target cannot move and its Movement Action is forfeit. As soon as the target manages to move (the character fails the test), the crippling effect is gone.
- Master **Active.** The master *Marksman's* projectiles become armor piercing. The shot hits a weak spot and completely ignores the target's Armor.

MAN-AT-ARMS

A real warrior wears armor and is trained in how to move and fight while doing so. This is true among Ambrians and barbarians alike, even if the most heavily armored warriors usually are of Ambrian stock. No matter what the armor is made from, be it leather, steel or any other material, the *Man-at-arms* ability gives the character increased protection against hostile strikes and blows.

- Novice **Passive.** The character knows how to use its armor for maximum effect, which increases the armor's Armor tier by one step: light armor protects 1D6, medium armor protects 1D8 and heavy armor protects 1D10.
- Adept **Passive.** The character is used to wearing armor and can adapt his or hers actions to its limitations. The armor no longer has a negative effect on *Quick* or abilities based on *Quick* (including *Defense*). The Impeding quality of the armor still has a negative effect when using mystical powers.
- Master **Reaction.** The character may roll against *Quick* to counteract effects from Abilities or equipment that make enemy attacks ignore or reduce its Armor value; if the test is successful the Armor protects as usual. Mystical powers that ignore Armor may not be blocked this way; they are not affected by the *Man-at-arms* ability.

Table 6: Abilities

| ABILITY | COMMON FOR |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Acrobatics</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Alchemy</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Backstab</i> | Rogue |
| <i>Beast Lore</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Berserker</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Bodyguard</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Dominate</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Equestrian</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Exceptional Attribute</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Feint</i> | Rogue |
| <i>Iron Fist</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Leader</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Loremaster</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Marksman</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Man-at-arms</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Medicus</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Mystical Power</i> | Mystic |
| <i>Natural Warrior</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Poisoner</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Polearm Mastery</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Quick Draw</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Recovery</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Ritualist</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Shield Fighter</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Sixth Sense</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Sorcery</i> | Mystic |
| <i>Steadfast</i> | Warrior, Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Steel Throw</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Strangler</i> | Rogue |
| <i>Tactician</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Theurgy</i> | Mystic |
| <i>Twin Attack</i> | Warrior, Rogue |
| <i>Two-handed Force</i> | Warrior |
| <i>Witchcraft</i> | Mystic |
| <i>Witchsight</i> | Mystic, Rogue |
| <i>Wizardry</i> | Mystic |

MEDICUS

The character is schooled in the art of healing and therefore a greatly coveted asset in its society,

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

“... and he who was called ‘first among equals’ was nevertheless the fastest, the toughest and the most skilled with the spear; he was Maiesticar, the pillager who thrust Spiderbane at the heart of the Spider King, and all the way through.”

whether he or she keeps diseases from spreading, takes care of wounded warriors or tends to the ruling elite. The art of healing has been developed in parallel with alchemy, and many healers are also trained in alchemy for this reason, especially those who operate far from civilization where there are no herbal cures to buy from well-stocked merchants.

A character with the *Medicus* ability can diagnose and cure diseases and identify a poison by its symptoms. *Medicus* also gives the character a coroner’s point of view, which might come in handy when examining a crime scene or a dead body.

- Novice **Active.** As a clever surgeon, the character can make a test against *Cunning* to heal 1D4 of a patient’s *Toughness*, or 1D6 when using an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.
- Adept **Active.** The character is an acknowledged *Medicus*. A successful *Cunning* test heals 1D6 of a patient’s *Toughness*, or 1D8 when using an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.
- Master **Active.** The master *Medicus* has a vast medical knowledge. A successful *Cunning* test now heals 1D8 *Toughness*, or 1D10 when using an herbal cure. Even a failed test heals some of the patient’s *Toughness*; 1D4 when only using *Medicus* or 1D6 when also applying an herbal cure. This ability can only be used once per patient and day.

MYSTICAL POWER

The character has access to one or more mystical powers. These powers have either been obtained as a gift, a curse, through assiduous studies or as a consequence of a deep and dedicated faith. The character’s power may belong to a mystical tradition (*Wizardry*, *Sorcery*, *Theurgy* or *Witchcraft*), which all have their benefits and disadvantages. The character may also be a Mystic without a tradition, with a home-brewed theory as to where these powers come from and what they are meant for. For more information see *Mystical Traditions* (page 70).

Each *Mystical Power* is its own ability and is purchased separately. For a more detailed description of the different mystical powers, see Chapter 19: *Mystical Powers* on page 130 in the *Core Rulebook*.

The character suffers one point (1) of permanent Corruption each time he or she learns a new mystical power. The Corruption can be reduced if the power is part of a mystical tradition that the character belongs to. The character also suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption each time this power is used. Again, the Corruption suffered can be reduced if the power is

considered a part of a tradition that the character belongs to (see *Shadow & Corruption*, page 44).

- Novice **Special.** The character has mastered the power’s novice level.
- Adept **Special.** The character has mastered the power’s adept level.
- Master **Special.** The character has mastered the power’s master level.

NATURAL WARRIOR

A sword or a bow is not always needed to fight. Through long and hard training, the character has become a dangerous opponent even when unarmed. The barbarians of the forests have proud traditions of wrestling and boxing. Another example is the fighting style developed in the gutters of eastern Yndaros, a style that nowadays can be seen at the Dome since a pair of the city’s renowned gladiators have embraced its techniques.

- Novice **Passive.** The character has learned to use its natural-born warrior capabilities with great efficiency. The character’s unarmed attacks now deal 1D6 damage. If the creature has the *Natural Weapons* trait as well, then the damage is further increased according to the level of that monstrous trait.
- Adept **Active.** With the speed of an adept, the character may now perform a double attack against a single target. The two attacks are rolled separately.
- Master **Passive.** By attacking an opponent’s weak points with flawless precision – such as throat and knees – the master’s unarmed strikes are truly devastating. Each attack that hits deals 1D6 extra damage.

POLEARM MASTERY

The character is initiated in the secrets of long-shafted weapons. The spear is a simple weapon and anyone can quickly learn how to make good use of its length. For this reason, the militia armies of the plains and forests are often armed with spears.

The character’s advanced skill with long weapons really shows that a simple shaft of hardened wood can be a fearsome weapon in the hands of a trained warrior.

- Novice **Passive.** The damage dealt by Long weapons is increased one step, to 1D10 for spears and halberds and to 1D8 for staves.
- Adept **Reaction.** The character has truly mastered the long thrust. The character receives a Free Attack against all enemies who come into range of melee combat – whether it is

the enemy who engages the character or vice versa is irrelevant. The only exception is when the enemy also wields a long weapon; in such a situation the character receives no Free Attack.

Master **Reaction.** As a Master of long weapons, the character has the skill to keep his or her enemies at bay. The character can use the Free Attack with a polearm to keep an enemy from coming close enough to attack. For as long as the character succeeds in hitting the enemy, the enemy remains unable to attack the character with melee weapons – whether or not the damage penetrates the enemy's armor.

RITUALIST

The character has learned how mystical powers can be channeled through rituals – powerful but time-consuming magical practices. This knowledge may come from studying under a teacher or from self-studies with a ritual codex.

The character suffers one (1) permanent Corruption from each ritual it learns, except if the ritual belongs to a mystical tradition practiced by the character. In the latter case the character is spared the blight of Corruption.

When it comes to performing rituals, the character suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption if the ritual does not belong to a tradition he or she has mastered. Performing rituals covered by the character's tradition only gives one (1) point of temporary Corruption.

The *Ritualist* ability makes it possible for the character to recognize what ritual has been performed by examining symbols and components remaining on the scene, and also to deduce the effects of the ritual, even if he or she has not mastered it.

Novice **Special.** The character has learned to perform one (1) ritual. The ritual may belong to any mystical tradition, but the character must have access to the ritual in order to learn and memorize it. The knowledge may be gained from a tutor involved in the same organization as the character, from a codex found in the ruins of Symbaroum or from another ritualist who imparts the knowledge as a reward for services rendered.

Adept **Special.** The character has learned to perform up to two additional rituals (three in total), again from any mystical tradition, but bound to the same conditions as those presented at the novice level.

Master **Special.** The character has learned to perform up to three additional rituals (six

rituals in total). Just as before, the Master *Ritualist* is not limited to the rituals of a single mystical tradition, but must have access to the ritual to be able to learn and memorize it.

SIXTH SENSE

When moving through dark forests and underground tunnels, one's eyes are no longer very useful. Lighting a lantern or torch may summon dangers, so the explorer had better learn to rely on his or her other senses. With dedicated training it is possible to awaken these other senses and sharpen them to the brink of eeriness. The *Sixth Sense* ability provides the character with unique capabilities when fighting at a distance or in situations where eyesight can no longer be trusted.

A character with *Sixth Sense* may under calm circumstances navigate unhindered in dim light, as well as maintain a sense of direction in complete darkness, though at a pace of only a quarter of its normal, daytime speed.

Novice **Passive.** The character has a strong intuition, which lets him or her use *Vigilant* instead of *Accurate* when attacking with ranged weapons.

Adept **Passive.** The character's intuition has expanded and the character may now use *Vigilant* instead of *Quick* for Initiative and when calculating his or her *Defense*.

Master **Passive.** The character can move and fight unhindered when blinded or in complete darkness.

TACTICIAN

According to Ambrians, scholarly knowledge is counted as one of the highest virtues. Hence, it is hardly surprising that Ambrian scholars have studied skirmishes meticulously to see if the tactics of battles can work on a lesser scale, among smaller groups and even in duels. The result is a style of combat governed by strict principles and calculations, which over time can out-manuever even the most aggressive attacker. The character is trained in this scholarly warrior tradition.

A schooled tactician may also use this ability to analyze a tactical approach and find both its strengths and weaknesses. This can be done for offensive purposes when facing a hostile group or defensively, to establish a strong defense.

Novice **Passive.** The character has studied the tactics of warfare and grasped its fundamental principles. The character may use

The defensive strength of Polearm Mastery

If you want a strongly defensive character, then Polearm Mastery is not a bad option. The adept level provides Free Attacks against any enemy who attempts to come close, which is very good in a fight against multiple opponents. The master level of Polearm Mastery is one of the most powerful abilities in terms of holding enemies in check. But also note that an enemy armed with a polearm more or less cancels the effect of Polearm Mastery.

Cunning instead of *Quick* when calculating its Initiative.

Adept **Passive.** The character has mastered the art of a good defensive posture, which allows him or her to use *Cunning* instead of *Quick* when calculating *Defense*.

Master **Passive.** The character is a genius when it comes to offensive warfare, which allows the character to use *Cunning* instead of *Accurate* when attacking with anything but heavy weapons.

TWIN ATTACK

Barbarians, Ambrians and goblins all have fighting techniques involving the use of more than one weapon. The character has learned how to fight with two weapons, an advanced but effective technique that gives the warrior an offensive advantage. *Twin Attack* is especially effective against lightly armored targets.

Novice **Active.** The character can safely wield two weapons, one in each hand. The novice can fight with a single-handed weapon in its primary hand and a Short weapon in the other. The character can make two attacks against the same target, dealing 1D8 and 1D6 damage respectively. The enemy must defend itself separately against the attacks. The novice also receives a +1 bonus to its *Defense* as a Passive ability, but only when wielding a weapon in each hand.

Adept **Active.** The adept can use two single-handed weapons, each attack dealing 1D8 damage.

Master **Active.** With the skill of a Master, the damage dealt by the main-hand weapon is 1D10 while the weapon in the other hand deals 1D8.

TWO-HANDED FORCE

The knights of Ambria as well as the Wrathguards of Karvosti dress themselves in steel from head to toe and have realized that with that much armor, they are free to focus on dealing massive amounts of damage.

Heavy two-handed weapons rest comfortably in the character's callused hands and can have an astoundingly destructive effect on all sorts of targets. Heavy weapons are extra effective against heavily armored enemies.

Novice **Passive.** The damage dealt by heavy weapons is increased to 1D12.

Adept **Reaction.** The character has mastered the use of its weapon, so when an attack misses

a target the character may instead use the returning swing in an attempt to hit the target again. The character makes a new attack roll, which deals 1D8 damage if it hits.

Master **Active.** A heavy weapon in the hands of a master is truly a tool of armor-crushing destruction. When the attacks of a master hit the target, they completely ignore the target's Armor.

WIZARDRY

Wizardry is taught by Ordo Magica and is a tradition whose practitioners are well-versed in the mysteries of fire, the will's triumph over matter and the labyrinths of the senses. To wizards of the Order, these phenomena are intimately connected.

Novice **Special.** The wizard no longer suffers permanent Corruption when learning powers at novice level belonging to the tradition of *Wizardry*, nor when learning its rituals. Despite this, the character has no protection against the temporary Corruption that comes from using the powers and rituals of *Wizardry*.

Adept **Special.** The wizard no longer suffers Corruption from learning the adept level of the powers belonging to the tradition of *Wizardry*. The adept has also learned to ground the powers and rituals of *Wizardry* in theories so well that the character now only suffers one (1) temporary Corruption when casting them.

Master **Special.** The master wizard's understanding of linked magic is all but complete and the player character may therefore re-roll one (1) failed test each turn when attempting to establish a Chain of mystical effects (see page 73). The wizard no longer suffers permanent Corruption from learning the master level of the powers belonging to the

More Abilities!

As seen in the table on page 65, this chapter only presents a selection of the abilities covered by the *Core Rulebook*. Also, the *Advanced Player's Guide* provides even more options for creating player characters, as well as the NPCs you need for your homebrew adventures.



Mystical Traditions

IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED that the world does not only consist of matter, and it is obvious to everyone that there are individuals who can manipulate the flows of both material and non-material energies. The use of mystical powers is in no way commonplace, not in Ambria, nor among the barbarians. But it is common enough for many cultures to have formed traditions around it.

THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS answer questions regarding how these powers are to be understood, how they may be taught as well as in what ways they are meant to be used. They have also worked out ways to avoid or at least lessen the dark side-effects of casting mystical powers and rituals. The powers not only manipulate but also violate the fabric of the world, something which makes the world strike back - in the form of Corruption. That effect can be reduced with the help of the traditions.

Player characters need not belong to or practice any of the traditions to be able to use mystical powers. Mystics without connections to a tradition are often called Untamed and are considered dangerous by their traditionally trained colleagues. Schooled mystics sometimes perceive the independent ones as no better than sorcerers, but mostly regard them as their less fortunate and less successful cousins.

Theurgy

THEURGY IS NOWADAYS understood as the teachings of the mystical force that radiates from the sun and which burns at the heart of the human spirit. Its powers are only found among the most loyal worshipers of the light: the chosen champions of Prios. The theurgs are considered the emissaries of Prios in the world of the living, and their burden is truly a great one. They lead the faithful in prayer, thereby guiding the sun through the darkness of the underworld each night. And their passion keeps the heavenly light from fading; without their strenuous work the ailing Sun God would surely die and the world would plunge into The Eternal Night.

Theurgy is an ancient tradition, first developed by the priesthoods devoted to the Old Gods. It is disputed among scholars and the learned whether witchcraft



is older than theurgy or if it is the other way around. Either way, the golden age of theurgy is now. Ever since Prios earned himself the devotion and faith of most Ambrians, the bearers of the tradition have thrived. It is not important to them which of the traditions came first and which is the oldest. As far as the theurgs are concerned, the worshiping of moss and veneration of trees are unworthy of mankind's holy spirit, and most consider witchcraft to be a path that leads only to decay and sorcery. They regard wizardry – the mystical order built on the foundation of older theurgy – in much the same way, as a truly godless and morally questionable practice.

Sorcery

THE LEGENDS ARE teeming with sorcerers: mystics who draw their power from musty wellsprings or gain their corrupt gifts from creatures of evil. It is harder to find them in the real world, but those who know how to read the Shadows can sense their presence or see traces of their tainted work. Korinthia's people faced the undead servants of the Dark Lords during The Great War, and while the Dark Lords perished, their parasitic powers continued to drain the life out of Alberetor, forcing the Ambrians to flee north. There they instead faced the blighted creatures of Davokar, born from another kind of evil that festers in the fallen ruins of Symbaroum.

Sorcery is the mystical tradition that comprises powers and rituals fueled by Corruption and taint, whose usage provides power in the short run, but corrodes the mystic's body and soul in the long run. Theurgs active among the Twilight Friars gather rituals of sorcery as well as blight-stricken artifacts in an attempt to understand this new, dark enemy. Within their monastery in the Titans, it is said that the Black Cloaks hide dark vaults oozing with corruptive energies and echoing with the lamentations of the poor, tainted souls kept there for study.

Witchcraft

THE WITCHES' WORLD is composed of winds, blood and all things growing, together forming the three hazardous paths a witch has to wander: the white path where the wind wails and spirits howl; the red path of the slow-running blood; and the green



path, overgrown by thickets and roots. According to the mythology of the witches, there are places where these three paths converge, such as the cliff of Karvosti deep within Davokar.

Witchcraft is believed to be the oldest and most deeply rooted of the traditions. Some tutors at Ordo Magica even claim that witchcraft – despite its primitive flaws – forms the basis of theurgy, and because of this, both theurgists and wizards have the wise witches of old to thank for understanding the fundamental principles of magic.

Wizardry

THE POWERS OF WIZARDRY come from disciplined studies into the fundamental laws of nature, and from insights regarding how these laws can be used and controlled by sheer will and reason. It is a strenuous education, even without the boring everyday tasks that the novices must perform for their masters. Only half of those who begin their studies with Ordo Magica see them through, but those who prevail are rewarded with a deep understanding of the mysteries of wizardry.

Wizardry grew out of early forms of theurgy, in a time when the people of Alberetor still worshipped a pantheon of gods. Philosophers and scholars started to renounce the metaphysical ideas of the priesthood, instead regarding the laws of nature as independent from the machinations of deities. To the founders of Wizardry, the Old Gods were seen as the creators of the world, but not its shepherds. Instead the world is regarded as being profoundly magical and not in need of any Gods to function. Nor is the world meant to be worshiped, merely understood – and used.

Independent Mystics

PARTICULARLY GIFTED INDIVIDUALS have always been able to bend and break seemingly inescapable laws of nature, and many scholars claim that it was through coalitions of such independent, or untamed, mystics that the traditions first arose. Whether this is true or not, there occasionally are individuals who either choose or are forced to study on their own, or in smaller groups.

Independent Mystics are not burdened with the theories of the traditions, which give them more freedom in their choice of powers. However, they are also much more vulnerable to Corruption. Many untamed mystics tend to evolve their own understanding of the world and come to espouse theories that contradict those of the established traditions.

Mystical Powers

MYSTICAL POWERS ARE a manifestation of mystic energies that have been manipulated and guided by a trained or talented will. For some, these powers come naturally, as a gift of birth, but in most cases the powers are developed through many hard years of working together with a patient master, there to guide and make corrections. Whether the powers are a result of a gift, studies or dedication, they tend to define their users as much as being a tool in their hands.

The following terms and rules are important when using powers in the world of Symbaroum:

Ongoing Effect: The effect of the power is active until the character fails a specific test, detailed in the description of the power. This test is repeated every turn on the character's Initiative. Keeping an ongoing effect running counts as a Free Action.

Ongoing Effect on Group: The power affects each target until the character fails a specific test, detailed in the description of the power. This test is made for each target and repeated every turn on the character's Initiative. Keeping an ongoing effect running counts as a Free Action.

Chain: The power may potentially hit more than one target, but a test has to be made for each target, one at a time, in an order decided by the player. The Chain continues until the player fails a test.

Concentration: If a mystic suffers damage while using a power with a potentially ongoing effect, he or she must make a successful roll against *[Resolute-Damage]* in order to stay focused. A test is made for every attack that hits the mystic and for every power that is ongoing at the moment. If the mystic fails any of these tests, then the ongoing effects of all powers are ended. In this case damage refers to the damage that the mystic suffers after the Armor value has been subtracted.

Corruption: Permanent Corruption is the corruption that eats away at one's soul and cannot be washed away with anything but purging rituals. Temporary Corruption diminishes over time and disappears completely at the end of a scene. A character's Total Corruption is the sum of both its temporary and permanent Corruption. The Total Corruption is used to estimate just how affected the character is by the Corruption.

Material: The description of powers sometimes lists either materials or an object. This is mainly intended to add flavor to the power, rather than being a strict requirement. If a player would rather have his character use another material instead of the suggested one, then he or she is of

course allowed to make a change. An exception to this is powers that operate through the use of a weapon, in which case the weapon has to be available for the power to function. Holy/unholy symbols may be a sun symbol, an evil mark, a witch's medallion or a wizard's staff, for example.

BEND WILL

Material: A silver ring.

Free will is an illusion, but the power of the will is unmistakable. The mystic has come to understand these seemingly contradictory principles and can use the insight to control the will of other creatures.

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- | | |
|--------|--|
| Novice | Active. The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. The control is considered active until the mystic breaks concentration or fails a <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. The controlled creature can only perform one (1) Action each turn and cannot use any active abilities or powers while affected. |
| Adept | Active. The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. The mystic does not have to concentrate to sustain the control; it is ongoing and considered active until the mystic fails a <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. A controlled creature can only perform one (1) Action each turn and cannot use any active abilities or powers while affected. |
| Master | Active. The mystic can seize control of a creature's will by making a successful <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. The mystic does not have to concentrate to sustain the control; it is ongoing and considered active until the mystic fails a <i>[Resolute-Resolute]</i> test. The controlled creature can be forced to perform its two usual Actions each turn. |

BRIMSTONE CASCADE

Material: A fistful of pure brimstone.

The mystic can unleash the rampaging spirit of fire and burn its enemies to cinders, or at least scorch them severely.

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- | | |
|--------|---|
| Novice | Active. The mystic lashes out with fire and brimstone against a target. If the mystic succeeds with a <i>[Resolute-Quick]</i> test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fails the test the cascade deals only 1D6 damage. |
|--------|---|

Table 7: Mystical Powers

| POWER | TRADITION |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Anathema | Wizardry, Theurgy |
| Bend Will | Wizardry, Sorcery, Witchcraft |
| Blessed Shield | Theurgy |
| Brimstone Cascade | Wizardry |
| Confusion | Wizardry |
| Curse | Sorcery, Witchcraft |
| Entangling Vines | Witchcraft |
| Flame Wall | Wizardry |
| Holy Aura | Theurgy |
| Illusory Correction | Wizardry |
| Inherit Wound | Theurgy, Witchcraft |
| Larvae Boils | Sorcery, Witchcraft |
| Lay on Hands | Theurgy, Witchcraft |
| Levitate | Wizardry, Theurgy |
| Maltransformation | Witchcraft |
| Mind-Throw | Wizardry |
| Nature's Embrace | Witchcraft |
| Prios' Burning Glass | Theurgy |
| Revenant Strike | Sorcery |
| Shapeshift | Witchcraft |
| Storm Arrow | Witchcraft |
| True Form | Wizardry, Theurgy |
| Unholy Aura | Sorcery |
| Unnoticeable | Wizardry, Theurgy |
| Witch Hammer | Theurgy |

Adept **Active.** The mystic unleashes a Chain of burning energy. If the mystic succeeds with a *[Resolute←Quick]* test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fails the test the cascade deals only 1D6 damage. If the target suffers the full 1D12 damage, the mystic may try to steer the flaming energy towards an additional target, and so on until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Quick]* test.

Master **Active.** The mystic unleashes a veritable storm of flaming and smoking energies. If the mystic passes a *[Resolute←Quick]* test, the cascade deals 1D12 points of damage. If the mystic fail the test the cascade only deals 1D6 damage. Even if the mystic should fail a test the Chain does not stop; it continues to strike new opponents until a second test is failed.

ENTANGLING VINES

Material: A handful of seeds or a tangle of roots.

The earth is bound by roots, while objects above ground are often covered by vines. All that the mystic does is uses its will to stimulate the already ongoing processes of nature.

Novice **Active.** By rolling a successful *Resolute* test, the mystic calls forth entangling vines or roots from out of the earth and can ensnare an enemy. The ensnared creature cannot move but can use ranged weapons and powers. The creature is ensnared until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test, starting the following turn.

Adept **Active.** The mystic can ensnare a Chain of creatures. If the mystic manages to ensnare a target with a successful *Resolute* test, then he or she can attempt to snare another one, and so on until an attempt fails. Starting the following turn, a *[Resolute←Strong]* test is made for each target to determine how many of them remain ensnared.

Master **Active.** The mystic creates an entangling Chain of thorns. Those ensnared with a *[Resolute←Strong]* test also suffers 1D6 damage per turn from their thorny prison. The sharp thorns find gaps in the targets armor, so any Armor is ignored.

LARVAE BOIL

Material: A handful of larvae.

Drawing from the force of wrath the mystic can infuse an enemy's body with larvae that then start to eat their way out. Although it is loudly refuted by members of the court, persistent rumors say that this is how the hero king Ynedar met his demise.

Novice **Active.** The mystic plants larvae inside the body of its enemy, which then start to eat their way out. The poor target suffers 1D4 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect is automatic the first turn and continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.

Adept **Active.** The larval growth inside the body deals 1D6 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.

Master **Active.** The larvae swarm inside the target's body and deal 1D8 damage each turn, ignoring Armor. The effect continues until the mystic fails a *[Resolute←Strong]* test.

Rituals

RITUALS ARE TIME-CONSUMING spells that take at least one hour to perform. If properly used, a ritual can be a powerful problem-solving tool. Each tradition has developed a variety of distinctive practices and it can be difficult for members of other traditions to acquire the knowledge of specific rituals.

Like powers, rituals can cause Corruption; first when they are learned and then each time they are used. Each tradition has developed their own way of handling Corruption that comes from the use of rituals, just like with the Corruption originating from using powers. Independent mystics lack the appropriate schooling and are therefore in an especially tough spot when it comes to suffering Corruption from all forms of mystical practices.

FAMILIAR

Tradition: Witchcraft

The mystic binds itself to a beast. This beast is not much smarter than others of its kind, but is fiercely loyal to the mystic and the bond between them is made up of mystical energies – they are soul mates. The spiritual bond is so strong that the two can communicate telepathically; the mystic can command the familiar from a distance and also experience whatever the familiar perceives with its senses. The depth of this union also makes it possible for the two to share wounds. If the familiar is wounded the mystic can choose to suffer half of the damage, or if the mystic is wounded half of the damage can be transferred to the familiar. The player decides when damage should be shared in this way. There is also a downside to the mystical bond: should the familiar die the mystic suffers 1D8 points of damage, ignoring Armor.

The familiar is managed by the player as if it was an additional character. It gains *Experience* like a player character and loses it if it dies, just like a character.

FAMILIAR

A familiar starts with the following statistics, or something similar depending on what seems suitable for the character's bestial friend:

Traits Armored (1), Natural Weapon (1)

Accurate 11, **Persuasive** 5, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 9, **Quick** 13, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 10

Weapons Tusks 1D6 (short)

Defense 13 (Dodge)

Armor Animal skin 1D4 (flexible)

Toughness 15 **Pain Threshold** 8

Table 8: Rituals

| RITUAL | TRADITION |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Blood Bond</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Borrow Beast</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Break Link</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Clairvoyance</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Command Confession</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Desecrating Rite</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>Enslave</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>Exchange Shadow</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>Exorcism</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>False Terrain</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Familiar</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Flaming Servant</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Fortune-telling</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Heretic's Trail</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Holy Smoke</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Illusion</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Judging Bonds</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Magic Circle</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Nature's Lullaby</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Necromancy</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Oracle</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Patron Saint</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Possess</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>Purging Fire</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Quick Growth</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Sanctifying Rite</i> | Theurgy |
| <i>Sanctum</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Seven-league Stride</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Soul Stone</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Summoning</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Tale of Ashes</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Telepathic Interrogation</i> | Wizardry |
| <i>Turn Weather</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>Witch Circle</i> | Witchcraft |

Equipment

NO CHARACTER IS COMPLETE until he or she is equipped with weapons, supplies and alchemical elixirs. This chapter starts with a description of weapons, armors and their respective qualities, and after that follows a collection of general goods that the characters may need during their adventures. The cost of living is also covered, as well as prices and compensations for common services in Ambria.

Weapons

EACH WEAPON DEALS a certain amount of basic damage to the target's *Toughness*, indicated by a specific die. Some weapons also have qualities that affect how they are used. Furthermore, some abilities can make it possible to use a weapon in other or more refined ways. In these cases, it is important to read the description of the ability thoroughly, to know exactly what the weapon can do in the hands of an experienced character.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Damage: 1D10

Qualities: None. The Bastard Sword is Precise, the Double Axe has the Deep Impact quality, the Heavy Flail is Jointed.

Heavy weapons are distinguished by the fact that they have to be wielded with two hands in order to be used effectively. They have a superior damage effect in melee combat. Pole axe, warhammer and the mighty great sword are all examples of heavy weapons common in the Davokar region.

Bastard Sword: The master smiths of the Pansars forge the finest weapons in Ambria, and the bastard swords of the Queen's Guard are an

exquisite testament to that fact, at least when wielded by the right warrior. The weapon is preferably handled with both hands (as a heavy weapon) but can also be used single-handedly with a shield. When wielded with just one hand, the bastard sword loses the Precise quality and instead deals damage like a single-handed weapon.

Double-axe: The barbarian double-axe (not to be confused with the more common pole axe with its single-edged axe head) is aptly named after its twin axe heads and is presumed to be a legacy from the fallen Symbaroum. In those days the double-axe was a weapon as well as a symbol of status and standing. Even though the knowledge of metallurgy has dwindled since the fall of Symbaroum these powerful weapons can still be forged, often made for particularly prominent warriors. Ambrians consider the double-axe crude and savage, fit for barbarians and few else, but its shape is well known because of its similarity to the royal rune, Labrys.

Heavy Flail: The heavy flail is a Jointed weapon, where a metal ball – often spiked – attached to a two-handed shaft by a chain is swung against the enemy. It is not easy to parry a flail since the metal

ball often strikes around the parrying weapon or shield to find its target.

The heavy flail comes in a number of shapes, like the traditional wooden two-handed shaft attached to a chain that ends in a spiked metal head. There are also variants with spiked pieces of metal that are linked together, as well as models where two or three chains and metal heads share the same shaft. Regardless of design, they all share the weight of the flail and the fact that they are difficult to block.

LONG WEAPONS

Damage: 1D8

Qualities: Long. The Halberd has Deep Impact, the Pike is Precise, and the Quarterstaff is Blunt

Long weapons have the advantage of superior reach and give the user Free Attacks against enemies that are not armed with Long weapons themselves. A Long weapon can be used in one hand, but then loses the Long quality since the user is forced to hold it higher up on the grip to control the weapon. Spear and staff are examples of Long weapons.

Halberd: The halberd, known as the pole axe among barbarians, has elements of both the Long and the Heavy weapon since it is combining the point of a spear with the head of an axe. It cannot thrust as quickly as the spear, but its sweeping chop can have a devastating effect.

Pike: The slender shaft and fire-tempered steel point of the Ambrian pike slides towards the target with great precision.

Quarterstaff: The simpler wooden staff, often made from heavy wood that has been hardened with fire, has the reach of a Long weapon but lacks the effect of steel-tipped weapons.

Table 9: Weapons

| WEAPON | DAMAGE | QUALITY | COST |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| Heavy Weapon | 1D10 | | 10 thaler |
| Bastard Sword, two-handed | | Precise | 50 thaler |
| Double-axe | 1D10+1 | Deep Impact | 50 thaler |
| Heavy Flail | | Jointed | 50 thaler |
| Long Weapon | 1D8 | Long | 3 thaler |
| Halberd | 1D8+1 | Deep Impact | 15 thaler |
| Pike | | Precise | 15 thaler |
| Quarterstaff | 1D6 | Blunt | 1 shilling |
| Projectile Weapon | | | |
| Crossbow | 1D10 | | 8 thaler |
| Arbalest | 1D10+1 | Deep Impact | 40 thaler |
| Bow | 1D8 | | 5 thaler |
| Longbow | | Precise | 25 thaler |
| 10 arrows or bolts | | | 1 thaler |
| Single-Handed Weapon | 1D8 | | 5 thaler |
| Crow's Beak | 1D8+1 | Deep Impact | 25 thaler |
| Fencing Sword | | Precise | 25 thaler |
| Flail | | Jointed | 25 thaler |
| Shield | 1D4 | | 3 thaler |
| Buckler | | Flexible | 15 thaler |
| Steel Shield | | Balanced | 15 thaler |
| Short Weapon | 1D6 | Short | 1 thaler |
| Parrying Dagger | | Balanced | 5 thaler |
| Stiletto | 1D6+1 | Deep Impact | 5 thaler |
| Throwing Weapon | 1D6 | | 2 thaler |
| Spear Sling | 1D6+1 | Deep Impact | 10 thaler |
| Unarmed Attack | 1D4 | Short | — |
| Battle Claw | 1D4+1 | Deep Impact | 1 thaler |



Where Ambrians prefer the sword the barbarian warrior favors the axe.

PROJECTILE WEAPONS

Damage: Crossbow 1D10, bow 1D8, sling 1D6

Qualities: The Arbalest has the Deep Impact quality and the Longbow is Precise.

Projectile weapons are meant to be used over greater distances and need some time to reload.

The crossbow is loaded with bolts, the bows fire arrows and slings throw sharpened rocks. A crossbow requires a Movement Action to be reloaded, while reloading a bow or a sling counts as a Free Action. Bow, crossbow and sling are all examples of projectile weapons.

Arbalest: The arbalest is a heavy Ambrian crossbow with a bow of feather steel, which gives its bolts a bit of extra punch.

Longbow: The longbow is a reliable and proven weapon in the Ambrian army, and since The Great War it is often carried by farmers who make up the backbone of the kingdom's archer companies.

SHIELDS

Armor: Provides +1 in Defense

Qualities: None. Bucklers are Flexible, Steel Shields are Balanced.

Shields make it difficult to hit the wielder with melee, as well as ranged, attacks. They are often combined with a single-handed weapon, or with a single-handed weapon and a number of additional throwing weapons.

Buckler: The buckler is a small shield commonly carried by elite archers and pikemen, since it is agile enough to be strapped to the arm while still allowing the use of both hands to wield a weapon. The Buckler is too light to be used with the *Shield Fighter* ability.

Steel Shield: The steel shield is as strong as the common wooden shields, but both thinner and more easily maneuvered.

SHORT WEAPONS

Damage: 1D6

Qualities: Short. The Parrying Dagger is Balanced and the Stiletto has the Deep Impact quality.

Short weapons can be drawn quickly and are easily hidden. Daggers and short swords are examples of Short weapons.

Parrying Dagger: The parrying dagger, with its wide and v-shaped cross-guard, has become very popular in Yndaros, and is often wielded together with a fencing sword.

Stiletto: The slender and agile stiletto is a dagger whose razor sharp point stabs deeply – the weapon of an assassin.

SINGLE-HANDED WEAPONS

Damage: 1D8

Qualities: None. A Crow's Beak has the Deep Impact quality, a Fencing Sword is Precise, a Flail is Jointed.

The category of Single-handed weapons covers all kinds of weapons that can be wielded in one hand. Axe, saber, sword and war hammer are all examples of single-handed weapons.

Crow's Beak: A less elegant, but just as effective weapon is the Crow's Beak, also known as a Kandorian War Pick after the city in Alberetor where it was first forged. The Crow's Beak is a club whose metal head is fitted with a spike or a beak of steel, in order to punch through armor more easily. After the escape to Yndaros, the smiths of the Kandorian War Pick settled down in the district of Old Kadizar where they have continued to craft their dreaded weapons.

Fencing Sword: In Yndaros, the Ambrian fencing sword is considered to be of the highest fashion, an instrument with superior precision made from strong but flexible steel. It is often combined with the duelist's favorite, the parrying dagger, which gives the lightly armored fighter a stronger defense in combat.

Flail: The single-handed cousin of the heavy flail.

THROWING WEAPONS

Damage: 1D6

Qualities: None. Spear Sling has the Deep Impact quality.

Throwing weapons are hurled single-handedly over short distances. They are usually used before melee combat is initiated, and are therefore often combined with a shield. Throwing axe, throwing knife and throwing spear are all examples of this weapon group.

Spear Sling: The barbarians of eastern Davokar, and especially the members of clan Karohar, prefer the use of spear slings – a throwing arm with a hook that is attached to the end of a short spear in order to throw it with tremendous force.

UNARMED ATTACKS

Damage: 1D4

Qualities: Short. The Battle Claw has the Deep Impact quality.

Unarmed attacks are usually used as the last resort of cultural beings and are less effective than the natural weapons of beasts and abominations in almost all respects. Yet, with the *Natural Warrior* ability even an unarmed character can inflict

considerable amounts of damage to its enemies. An elbow, a bite, a punch, a head-butt, a kick as well as the use of brass knuckles are examples of Unarmed Attacks.

Battle Claw: The clan Karohar in southern Davokar has developed a clawed gauntlet that you wear on your hand and whose long claws simulate those of a mare cat.

Armor

EACH SUIT OF ARMOR provides a certain amount of protection, indicated by a specific die. Some armor also has qualities that affect how the armor works mechanically. Just like weapons, different cultures have developed a number of diverse kinds of armor, all with their respective advantages and disadvantages.

LIGHT ARMOR

Armor: 1D4

Qualities: Impeding (-2). Many kinds of light armor have the Flexible quality, wolf skin armor has the Cumbersome quality.

Light armor is easy to come by and does not limit the wearer's capabilities substantially in acrobatic situations or when performing stealthy maneuvers. Yet it has a negative effect when using mystical powers. Hardened, ring and studded leather are all examples of light armor.

Blessed Robe: The priest robes of the theurgs are blessed and protected by benevolent forces so that the Church's finest can travel safely throughout the kingdom, and beyond.

Order Cloak: Most novice mages of Ordo Magica are given a protective cloak in time for their first

long journey. These cloaks are embroidered with warding runes, which increases the chance of the novice surviving to complete its appointed task.

Witch Gown: Witches bind protective spirits in carved pieces of bone and the skulls of fallen enemies, and attach them to their clothing for effective protection.

Wolf Skin: For poor barbarian scouts the cheap, cumbersome wolf skin armor is a common alternative; skin that has been tanned in the most simple way and sewn together into some kind of passable protection.

Woven Silk: Woven silk is the finest light armor available, since the close weave of its threads withstands stabs and cuts far better than its weight suggests. Woven silk has been used by both barbarians and Ambrians for a long time and some scholars speculate that the technique originally comes from the elves, possibly dating as far back as the days of the Iron Pact.

MEDIUM ARMOR

Armor: 1D6

Qualities: Impeding (-3). Some have the Flexible quality; Crow Armor has the Cumbersome quality.

Medium armor offers better protection than the light versions but at the cost of being more restrictive to the wearer's movements. However, this downside is considered an acceptable trade-off by most melee combatants. Scale- and chainmail are examples of medium armor.

Crow Armor: Medium armor is more expensive than light, which is the reason why many warriors have picked, riveted and bound together a so-called "Crow Armor" of their own. It is cheap, but far more difficult to move around in.

Lacquered Silk Cuirass: Barbarian warriors that have earned their place in the guard of a wealthy clan chieftain can sometimes be seen wearing a cuirass of lacquered silk, an armor that despite its apparent lightness protects like a breast plate. According to legend, the secret of lacquered silk was given to humankind by the elves, in a time when the Iron Pact was still strong and humans battled the parasitic darkness of Symbaroum.

HEAVY ARMOR

Armor: 1D8

Qualities: Impeding (-4). Ambrian Full Plate has the Flexible quality.

Those melee combatants that can afford it usually chose increased protection at the cost of even greater restrictions to their movement. A

Table 10: Armor

| ARMOR | PROTECTION | QUALITY | COST |
|------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Light | 1D4 | Impeding (-2) | 2 thaler |
| Blessed Robe | | Flexible | 10 thaler |
| Order Cloak | | Flexible | 10 thaler |
| Witch Gown | | Flexible | 10 thaler |
| Wolf Skin | | Cumbersome | 1 thaler |
| Woven Silk | | Flexible | 10 thaler |
| Medium | 1D6 | Impeding (-3) | 5 thaler |
| Crow Armor | | Cumbersome | 2 thaler |
| Lacquered Silk Cuirass | | Flexible | 25 thaler |
| Heavy | 1D8 | Impeding (-4) | 10 thaler |
| Full Plate | | Flexible | 50 thaler |

self-respecting knight wears chainmail enforced by shoulder, knee and elbow plates, while those with the means tend to order themselves a personalized set of full plate armor.

Full Plate: Personalized full plate armor is available for those of sufficient means, and offers the best protection available with less restriction than many other kinds of heavy armor.

Qualities

WEAPONS AND ARMOR have different qualities, described in the following. If the description of a quality ever comes into conflict with the rules of an ability, then the ability overrules the quality.

FLEXIBLE

The armor is unusually flexible and is less Impeding than its protective capability would suggest. For this reason a Flexible light armor has no penalty at all on *Defense* tests, sneaking and the use of mystic powers. A Flexible medium armor has a (-1) penalty and a Flexible heavy armor (-2).

A Flexible shield can be carried strapped to the arm, ready to use, while at the same time allowing the bearer to use both hands for wielding a Long or Heavy weapon. Even ranged weapons can be used without problem together with a Flexible shield.

BALANCED

The weapon is so well balanced that it is extra effective when parrying. The weapon provides +1 in *Defense*.

BLUNT

The weapon lacks either cutting or piercing abilities, and therefore uses one (1) Effect Die lower than other weapons of its kind. The quarterstaff, a Long weapon with the Blunt quality, deals 1D6 damage instead of 1D8, which is the usual damage for long weapons.

CUMBERSOME

It is difficult to move around in this armor and its negative effect on *Defense* is therefore one point higher than usual; a Cumbersome light armor has a penalty of (-3), a medium of (-4) and a heavy of (-5).

DEEP IMPACT

The weapon has qualities that makes it even more deadly. Maybe its blade can pierce armor more easily or the weapon itself is so massive that it gets extra crushing power. Either way, the weapon deals +1 extra damage.

IMPEDING

The armor hampers any agile movements and gives a penalty to tests against *Defense*, sneaking and the use of mystic powers. The penalty depends on whether the armor is light (-2), medium (-3) or heavy (-4).

JOINTED

The weapon is jointed, letting the head of the weapon strike past or around blocking weapons or shields, making it harder to parry. The length of the chain also makes the attacks difficult to evade. Even if a parry is successful, the attack hits if the die lands on an odd number; in which case the weapon deals 1D6 damage. This secondary damage is not affected by any abilities – it remains 1D6 regardless of the attacker's other abilities.

Example: Grumpa defends against an attack from an enemy armed with a flail, a Jointed weapon. Her *Defense* is 6 and she rolls a 5, which should have been a successful parry – but Jointed weapons still hit on an odd number. Grumpa takes damage, though less than normal and none of the enemy's abilities can affect the damage, not even the passive ones. In the next turn, Grumpa is defending herself again and rolls 4. This defense is successful, since the die landed on an even number.

LONG

The weapon has the advantage of superior length and reach, giving the wielder one Free Attack each turn against an opponent that comes into range of melee combat, as long as said opponent is not also armed with a Long weapon.

PRECISE

The weapon is designed to be easy to wield and therefore gives +1 to attack tests.

SHORT

The weapon can be drawn as a Free Action and can be used with the *Feint* ability.

What do you get
for a thaler, a
shilling, an orteg?

A THALER

A simple weapon or an even simpler suit of armor, or a common tool such as a scythe, or a cow, a pig, a dozen chickens or half a dozen sheep.

A SHILLING

A meal and the most simple of lodgings in a city or town.

AN ORTEG

A meager meal in a town, a meal and a place on a hayloft in the countryside.

Goods & Services

HERE FOLLOWS EQUIPMENT that the characters may need to survive on the road, as well as goods and services they might seek for a comfortable existence during their travels and in between adventures.

ALCHEMICAL ELIXIRS

The peoples of the Davokar region possess a vast knowledge of how to transform the herbs, fruits and bodily organs of nature into useful elixirs. Among the barbarians it is usually the witches who create

the elixirs, while Ambrian decoctions are often made by specialized craftsmen and artisans.

Antidote (Weak): A weak antidote lowers the effect of a poison by one degree; a strong poison becomes moderate, a moderate poison becomes weak and a weak poison is completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Antidote (Moderate): A moderate antidote lowers the effect of a poison by two degrees; a strong poison becomes weak, while both moderate and weak poisons are completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Antidote (Strong): A strong antidote lowers the effect of a poison by three degrees, which usually means that the poison is completely neutralized. The antidote does not affect any damage that a character has already suffered. Requires a passed *Cunning* test to take effect.

Choking Spores: Choking Spores are produced from Davokar's lichens and mushrooms. The elixir is used specifically with the *Strangler* ability.

Concentrated Magic: A dose of mystical essence, which gives a mystic a second chance to succeed with a *Resolute* test the next time he or she attempts to use a mystical power.

Eye Drops: These drops will immediately return the gift of sight to a temporarily blinded creature.

Elemental Essence: When applying a dose of elemental essence, either one weapon, four throwing weapons or all the arrows/bolts in a quiver deal 1D4 elemental damage for the duration of a scene. The alchemist must choose which element to prepare: fire, cold, acid or lightning.

Elixir of Life: Consuming an Elixir of Life gives the drinker regenerative powers that heal 1D6 points of *Toughness* during 1D6 turns, on the character's initiative. Sadly the character also suffers 1 temporary corruption for each turn the elixir is in effect.

Ghost Candle: The fumes from this candle make invisible things at a location or in a room visible.

Herbal Cure: An herbal cure consists of an alchemical poultice coupled with bandages. It smells vile but heals 1 point of *Toughness*. The herbal cure has greater effect if used by a character with the *Medicus* ability.

Poison (Weak): A weak poison deals 1D4 damage each turn for 1D4 turns.

Poison (Moderate): A moderate poison deals 1D6 damage each turn for 1D6 turns.

Poison (Strong): A strong poison deals 1D8 damage each turn for 1D8 turns.

Table 11: Alchemical elixirs

| ALCHEMICAL ELIXIR | COST |
|--------------------|----------|
| Antidote | |
| Weak | 1 thaler |
| Moderate | 2 thaler |
| Strong | 3 thaler |
| Choking Spores | 2 thaler |
| Concentrated Magic | 1 thaler |
| Eye Drops | 2 thaler |
| Elemental Essence | 2 thaler |
| Elixir of Life | 6 thaler |
| Ghost Candle | 2 thaler |
| Herbal Cure | 1 thaler |
| Poison | |
| Weak | 2 thaler |
| Moderate | 4 thaler |
| Strong | 6 thaler |
| Protective Oil | 2 thaler |
| Spore Bomb | 3 thaler |
| Waybread | 1 thaler |
| Wraith Dust | 2 thaler |

Protective Oil: The alchemical oil protects against elemental damage by providing 1D4 additional Armor against one of the elements for the duration of a scene. The alchemist must choose which of the elements that the oil shields against: fire, cold, acid or lightning.

Spore Bomb: The spore bomb is used together with the *Strangler* ability.

Waybread: One loaf of this rich waybread corresponds to a week's food supply for one person.

Wraith Dust: The wraith dust forces an incorporeal being (a creature with the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*) to take physical form for the duration of a scene. The dust must be thrown with a *[Accurate←Defense]* test; if hit the spirit takes damage as living creatures do.

EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

In the towns and cities of Ambria, a person with money in his or her pocket can purchase almost anything that adventurers and explorers might need. There is also the possibility to pay for numerous services, such as a bath and a shave, having a map drawn or hiring the protection of bodyguards.

Goods and services are described in the *Core Rulebook* and the *Advanced Player's Guide*. You will also find special items in other supplements, such as adventures and sourcebooks.

Monsters & Adversaries

THE RUINS OF SYMBAROUM, the depth of Davokar and the mountain valleys of the Ravens house a variety of creatures and monstrosities. This chapter first describes some general characteristics possessed by these creatures, depending on which monster category they belong to: Beasts, Abominations or Undead. The fourth category Cultural Beings is also described, even though its representatives are not characterized by the monstrous traits that are described in the second section of this chapter.

Monster Categories

A CREATURE'S AFFILIATION to a certain category decides which monstrous traits can be used when the creature is created. The category itself can also have rules related effects, affecting all of its more or less monstrous members.

Monsters and other opponents have the same attributes and attribute values as the player characters: 80 points are to be distributed among the attributes, with the requirements that only one of them can have a value of 15 and none of them can be higher than 15 or lower than 5.

ABOMINATIONS

Abominations are thoroughly corrupted by the darkness of the world. Other abominations perceive such a creature as one of their own, and will not

attack at first. The creature may even use *Persuasive* against other abominations to affect their behavior.

Characters with the *Witchsight* ability can roll [Vigilant←Discreet] to realize that the creature is corrupted by darkness. Also, sensitive senses and minds – like those of children and animals – react with instinctive dislike towards the abomination, even if its appearance is mundane. Others can make a [Vigilant←Discreet] test in order to notice that said children or animals react the way they do.

Holy and unholy effects have a reversed effect on abominations: holy powers harm the creature instead of healing it, while unholy effects heal it instead of harming it. Finally, abominations can see in complete darkness, but they see as little as anyone else if they are actively blinded.



The Abominations category gives the creature access to the monstrous traits *Acidic Attack*, *Acidic Blood*, *Armored*, *Corrupting Attack*, *Natural Weapon*, *Regeneration* and *Robust*.

BEAST

Beasts are closely connected to the wild and untamed nature, be it in the form of the forest of Davokar, the valleys of the Ravens or the courses of the rivers. This category covers wild animals (both predators and herbivores) as well as tamed and human-trained animals. Cunning creatures, like lindworms and spider monsters, are also included in the category of the beasts – while they have an intellect close to that of cultural beings, they are still fundamentally driven by instinct.

Beasts have monstrous traits like *Armored*, *Enthrall*, *Natural Weapon*, *Poisonous*, *Regeneration*, *Robust* and *Wings*. All beasts have the *Bushcraft* trait. Most of them can also see in low light conditions, which means that they are not dependent on light sources in areas with dim light. However, in pitch black darkness they are as helpless as everyone else.

CULTURAL BEINGS

The category Cultural Beings includes the world's more or less intelligent, community-building creatures – for instance humans, elves, changelings, ogres, goblins and trolls. They have few features in common, other than that they organize themselves

socially and develop different cultures depending on where they are located.

Cultural beings do not have access to monstrous traits, other than those named in the descriptions of the playable changeling, ogre and goblin races.

UNDEAD

The Undead category covers both spirits and walking corpses. Spirits are creatures without a physical body, while walking corpses are dead bodies possessed by a living spirit. Player characters with the *Witchsight* ability can make a [Vigilant←Discreet] test to realize that a creature they encounter is undead.

Spirits have the *Spirit Form* monstrous trait and often *Alternative Damage*, *Enthrall*, *Manifestation* and *Terrify* as well, while walking corpses have the *Undead* trait in addition to traits like *Gravely Cold*.

There are some features that all undead have in common. They do not sleep, starve or thirst; they cannot drown, cannot be poisoned by any conventional poison and cannot be afflicted by any ordinary disease. Also, they cannot be touched by corruption since they are all considered to be thoroughly corrupt. Moreover, holy and healing mystical powers are harmful to the undead creature, while unholy energies heal its wounds. All undead can see in complete darkness, but they see as little as everyone else if they are actively blinded. And finally, the undead do not have a *Pain Threshold*.

Monstrous Traits:

Acidic Attack
Acidic Blood
Alternative Damage
Armored
Corrupting Attack
Enthrall
Gravely Cold
Manifestation
Natural Weapon
Poisonous
Poison Spit
Regeneration
Robust
Spirit Form
Swarm
Terrify
Undead
Web
Wings

Monstrous Traits

DIFFERENT RACES VARY from each other in a number of ways, physically as well as socially. This is represented by traits. Traits differ from abilities since access to them is granted when choosing a race – or as a consequence of radical transformations later in the character's career.

Traits are divided into three levels (I, II, III). Also, note that some traits from the playable races are repeated in this section, but are described from the perspective of a non-player character, rather than that of a player character.

ACIDIC BLOOD

The creature's blood is corrosive, and sprays all around when the creature is hit by attacks. Whoever hits the creature in melee combat, and manages to damage it, must make a *Defense* test or be hit by the acidic blood. Removing the acid from either body or armor requires that someone spends an Action and makes a successful *Cunning* test (wash it away with water, dirt, sand or something similar).

- I **Reaction.** The acidic blood is weak and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
- II **Reaction.** The acidic blood is moderately strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.
- III **Reaction.** The acidic blood is strong and deals 5 points of damage for 5 turns.

ALTERNATIVE DAMAGE

The creature's attack harms a specific Attribute instead of *Toughness*, usually *Strong* or *Resolute*. If not specified in the monster description, the Game Master decides which one. This kind of damage affects all rolls made using that Attribute.

Alternative Damage heals, and can be healed, just like ordinary damage. If the Attribute reaches 0, the victim's soul or life force is devoured by the attacker and the victim dies. *Alternative Damage* requires the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*.

- I **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 3 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.
- II **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 4 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.

- III **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 5 alternative damage, ignoring Armor.

ARMORED

The creature either has thick skin, scales or something else making it especially hard to wound. It cannot wear any additional armor over its natural armor, which, on the other hand, is not Impeding like ordinary armor is. However, the Man-at-arms ability enhances the creature's protection even further, in addition to its level in *Armored*.

- I **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 2.
- II **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 3.
- III **Passive.** The creature has a natural protection of 4.

CORRUPTING ATTACK

Those of Davokar's creatures that are most corrupted have the ability to spread the dark taint through their claws and other natural weapons.

- I **Passive.** The creature's attack oozes corruption and taints all who are wounded by its attacks. A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D4 temporary Corruption.
- II **Passive.** A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D6 temporary Corruption.
- III **Passive.** A victim that suffers at least 1 point of damage from the attack also suffers 1D8 temporary Corruption.

ENTHRALL

The creature can hypnotize its victims and make them unable to act until it is too late.

- I **Active.** The creature's gaze forces its victim to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or otherwise lose both its Actions in the upcoming turn.
- II **Active.** The creature's sweet song or its hypnotic sound forces all its victims to make a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test, or otherwise lose both its Actions in the upcoming turn.
- III **Active.** As II, but the victims are enthralled until they make a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test. The enthrallment is broken if a victim is harmed in any way.

NATURAL WEAPON

The creature is gifted with a well-developed natural weapon, such as sharp claws, teeth or a tail stinger. The *Natural Warrior* ability (see page 66) can be used to enhance the creature's *Natural Weapon* even further.

- I **Passive.** The creature is equipped with some kind of natural weapon which deals 3 points of damage, instead of the usual 2 for unarmed attacks.

- II **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 4 points of damage.

- III **Passive.** The creature's natural weapon deals 5 points of damage. The natural weapon now has the quality Long, allowing the creature to perform a Free Attack at the start of a combat against enemies with shorter weapons.

POISONOUS

The creature's unarmed attack or *Natural Weapon* is poisonous and each hit that wounds an enemy will also poison it, unless the victim succeeds with a *[Strong←Cunning]* test. The poison's effect can be cancelled if someone applies an antidote to the wound and succeeds with a *Cunning* test.

- I **Passive.** The poison is weak and deals 2 points of damage for 2 turns.
- II **Passive.** The poison is moderately strong and deals 3 points of damage for 3 turns.
- III **Passive.** The poison is strong and deals 4 points of damage for 4 turns.

REGENERATION

The creature spontaneously heals, without needing to spend either time or power to do so. However, the creature has a weakness, a specific type of damage that it cannot regenerate (which, of course, can be healed in other active ways).

The creature must choose a weakness related to some kind of damage it cannot heal automatically. Choose between magical weapons, elemental energies and damage from either holy or unholy attacks.

- I **Passive.** Regenerates 2 *Toughness* per turn.
- II **Passive.** Regenerates 3 *Toughness* per turn.
- III **Passive.** Regenerates 4 *Toughness* per turn.

ROBUST

The creature is bigger and tougher than usual, and can only wear modified light armor.

- I **Passive.** The creature ignores 2 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear. Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +2 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick-2]*.
- II **Passive.** The creature ignores 3 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear. Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +3 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick-3]*.
- III **Passive.** The creature ignores 4 points of damage from each hit, in addition to any Armor it may wear.

Once per turn, the creature deals an additional +4 points of damage with one of its melee attacks. The creature's *Defense* is calculated from the basis of *[Quick-4]*.

SPIRIT FORM

The creature is immaterial and can neither affect nor be affected by physical effects. A spirit whose *Toughness* is brought down to 0 is banished for a shorter or longer period of time.

- I **Passive.** The creature can pass through barriers without problem, but cannot cross water even by bridges, boat or air. The spirit suffers half damage from weapon attacks. Alchemical effects on weapons and mystical powers deal full damage. Magical weapons deal full damage, as well.
- II **Passive.** The spirit suffers half damage from weapon attacks, alchemical/mystical attacks as well as from magical weapons.
- III **Passive.** Only mystical powers and magical weapons can harm the spirit, and then only with half damage.

SWARM

The creature is a collective, its mind spread among a swarm of bodies. The creature cannot be destroyed unless the entire swarm is obliterated.

- I **Special.** The swarm suffers half damage from all attacks. If the swarm is damaged, and is brought down to below half its *Toughness*, the survival instinct of the separate parts of the swarm takes over and its instincts cause the rest of the swarm to flee. A mental attack (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself) affects the entire swarm.
- II **Special.** The swarm suffers half damage from all attacks. If the swarm suffers damage from a single attack that exceeds its *Pain Threshold*, the survival instinct of the separate parts of the swarm takes over and its instincts cause the rest of the swarm to flee. Also, the swarm may make two attempts to resist mental attacks (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself).
- III **Special.** The collective mind of the swarm controls it, so that it only suffers a quarter of any damage taken from attacks. The swarm's cohesion is complete, and the swarm does not have to flee unless the overall intellect chooses to do so. The swarm may make two attempts to resist mental attacks (where the swarm uses its *Resolute* to defend itself).

TERRIFY

The creature can strike terror into the heart of one or more creatures. *Terrify* requires that the creature has the monstrous trait *Spirit Form*.

- I **Active.** The creature's gaze forces a single victim to make a *[Resolute-Resolute]* test, or automatically spend both of its actions backing away. If the victim cannot back away, it will defend itself in desperation, but cannot compel itself to attack. The victim may make a test each turn, trying to shrug off the fear.
- II **Active.** The creature's horrific shriek forces everyone that is nearby to make a *[Resolute-Resolute]* test, or automatically spend both of their actions backing away. If the victims cannot back away, they will defend themselves in desperation, but cannot compel themselves to attack. The victims may make a test each turn, trying to shrug off the fear.
- III **Free.** As II, but the victims do not defend themselves against attacks, fleeing if possible, cowering in place if not. The victims may make a test each turn in order to shrug off the paralyzing fear.

Elves

Category: Cultural being

ACCORDING TO BARBARIAN MYTHS the elves arrived in the region north of the Titans as late as at the time of Symbaroum's downfall; some even say that it was the elf prince Eneáno who planted the forest of Davokar, hoping to bury the blight-stricken land of the fallen empire. Whatever the truth may be, the elves currently living in Davokar regard themselves as the guardians of the woods. And with reference to ancient treaties they demand that both barbarians and Ambrians must stay clear of Davokar's depth and all of Symbaroum's ruins. Every violation of these treaties is regarded as an act of war.

When the Ambrians arrived in the region they had little knowledge about elves, and the common man still believes that elves in diverse life stages are widely different kinds of creatures. However, conversations with witches and the few elven emissaries that have arrived in Yndaros suggest that the elves live their life in a number of phases, separated by periods of dormancy during which the elf undergoes both physical and mental changes. It is also indicated that only some survive the dormancy, while the majority wither away and die before waking up to the next phase. In other words: even if there are a number of now living elves who were around at the time of Symbaroum's fall, they are for the aforementioned reasons few and almost impossible to communicate with.

This section introduces the first three life phases of the forest people. There also exist older elves, but they are largely unknown to the Ambrians and, additionally, highly disputed. Most authorities agree that the life span of the elves includes at least four, possibly five phases. If so, the fourth phase would consist of the allegedly reclusive Winter Elves; the fifth of an very

small number who survive their fourth dormancy and awaken as extremely powerful beings, for instance the daunting Aloéna on Karvosti. But this theory is far from being regarded as fact. Instead there are those who argue that Aloéna and others like her have no relation to the elves; that they are a separate race of ancient individuals, that they are earth-bound demigods or that they are embodied forces of nature.

ELFLING (SUMMER ELF)

Those who awaken after their first dormancy and enter the life phase of the Summer Elf are a still curious but not nearly as cautious group. The Elflings are known as hot-tempered, aggressive and impulsive, bordering on foolhardy. Up to five-and-a-half-feet tall, nimble as mare cats and with about 150 years to train, they develop into skilled warriors, qualified to take on any human fighter.

The Elflings make up the backbone of Davokar's defense force, weakly armored but equipped with spears and bows. Most often they are led by an Autumn Elf, but sometimes their impatience makes them renounce the guidance of older siblings. Such war bands, consisting of between ten and thirty elven hotheads, always prefer attack over defense and may very well assault villages in the lowlands instead of their normal targets: outposts, caravans and free settlers in the woods.



| EARLY SUMMER ELF | | | |
|---|---|----------------|---|
| Race | Elf | | |
| Resistance | Ordinary | | |
| Traits | Long-lived | | |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (−1), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (−3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 15 (−5) | | | |
| Abilities | Acrobatics (novice), Marksman (adept), Sixth Sense (novice) | | |
| Weapons | Bow 5, | | |
| Vigilant/ Accurate | Spear 4 (long) | | |
| Armor | Woven Silk 2 (flexible) | | |
| Defense | −3 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | Herbal cure, a dozen arrows | | |
| Shadow | Luscious green (corruption: 0) | | |

Tactics: The elves of early summer trust in their bows and only use the spears when absolutely necessary. In close combat they use *Acrobatics* to withdraw from melee, in order to take advantage of the spear's length again and again.

| LATE SUMMER ELF | | | |
|---|--|----------------|---|
| Race | Elf | | |
| Resistance | Challenging | | |
| Traits | Long-lived | | |
| Accurate 15 (−5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (−1), Persuasive 9 (+1), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 13 (−3), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 5 (+5) | | | |
| Abilities | Marksman (master),
Man-at-arms (adept),
Polearm Mastery (master) | | |
| Weapons | Bow 5, | | |
| Vigilant/
Accurate | Spear 5 (long) | | |
| Armor | Lacquered Silk Cuirass 4
(flexible) | | |
| Defense | 0 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | Herbal cure | | |
| Shadow | Deep green (corruption: 0) | | |

Tactics: The elves of late summer prefer to use their bows, but if it comes to close combat they do not mind standing in the front line, keeping the enemies in check with their spears.



Writings of unknown origin, which the Order Masters of Thistle Hold have been heard to argue about – is it a map, or possibly an instruction on how to grow Silver Lilies?



Trolls

AMONG AMBRIANS the troll is the epitome of Davokar's many horrors. If you are to believe the stories told at taverns and inns, the trolls are numerous but also a varied bunch of creatures, from human-sized brutes to virtual behemoths. That they are driven by hunger is evident, also that they seem to lack the fears and wariness of humans – two facts which make them prone to attack travelers and caravans in the wilds even if they are outnumbered.

In sharp contrast to the Ambrian experience, barbarian legends speak of civilized trolls; trolls living in organized, underground villages; trolls that tunnel through the ground in search of jewels and metals, that weave magical fabrics and brew healing juices. But the special expert on the topic at Ordo Magica, Chapter Master Argoi in Kurun, maintains that even if that may have been true one or two centuries ago, a majority of today's trolls are too aggressive to obey, compromise and reason – abilities that are a must in all civilized communities.

RAGE TROLL

Rage Troll is the Ambrian name for the most commonly encountered type of this beastly race. In height they are comparable with Ambrians and barbarians, but their bodily constitution is more similar to a bear's, or perhaps even more to the type of grotesque bull that was seen pulling the enemy's wagons during the Great War.

Rage trolls can be encountered individually or in groups. The former are often described as extremely ravenous and aggressive, to the extent that they very well may attack fortified villages singlehanded. The ones living in groups are probably just as hungry and combative as their lone-wandering relatives, but they are not as reckless – maybe because they are wiser, maybe because they have allowed themselves to be disciplined by the group's leader. Irrespective of the reason, there is no doubt that many a colony, outpost and caravan have been massacred by a posse of rage trolls led by some bellowing Liege Troll.

RAGE TROLL, FAMISHED

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Troll |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Long-Lived, Natural Weapon (I), Robust (I)</i> |
| Accurate 13 (–3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 11 (–1), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 15 (–5), Vigilant 9 (+1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Berserker</i> (adept) |
| Weapons | Claws 8 (short)
Accurate |
| Armor | Troll skin 4 |
| Defense | +7 |
| Toughness | 15 Pain Threshold 8 |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Bright red, like arterial blood full of life (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The famished Rage Troll attacks one target at a time, until all of them are dead.

RAGE TROLL, GROUP-LIVING

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Troll |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | <i>Long-Lived, Natural Weapon (I), Regeneration (III), Robust (I)</i> |
| Accurate 13 (–3), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 5 (+5), Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 11 (–1), Strong 15 (–5), Vigilant 9 (+1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Berserker</i> (adept),
<i>Natural Warrior</i> (novice) |
| Weapons | Claws 9 (short)
Accurate |
| Armor | Troll skin 4 (regenerates 4 toughness/turn, except damage from fire or acid) |
| Defense | +7 |
| Toughness | 15 Pain Threshold 8 |
| Equipment | Lucky charm in the form of a human cranium |
| Shadow | Blood red (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The group-living Rage Trolls attack in packs, trying to encircle the target. Then the berserker rage usually does the trick.

Ranger

The one who ventures into Davokar without having the proper Explorer's License needs to be cautious. The Queen's Rangers are tasked with patrolling the forest outskirts and sometimes make detours deeper into the woods. Such detours are most often made by a squad or a platoon of Rangers who have been tasked with investigating the veracity of certain rumors or to track down a particular beast that has attacked Thistle Hold, Kastor or some other border settlement. Irrespective of the purpose of their journey, they travel with the permanent duty to check up on everyone encountered in Davokar; those who do not have their license in order will be shackled, or put to death, if they struggle.

The Rangers are selected from within the regular army; they are resilient, experienced in combat and skilled when it comes to moving silently through the wilds. Some Rangers are specialists in various areas – beast lore, legends or fighting certain types of enemies – and sometimes they travel in the company of experts such as master builders, cartographers or war mages from Ordo Magica. A squad of Rangers, led by some scarred captain, is truly a force to be reckoned with – something which many unlicensed treasure-hunters have had to experience...

QUEEN'S RANGER

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> |
| Accurate 11 (–1), Cunning 13 (–3), Discreet 10 (0), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 7 (+3), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 15 (–5) | |
| Abilities | <i>Loremaster</i> or <i>Medicus</i> or <i>Beast Lore</i> (novice), <i>Tactician</i> (adept), <i>Twin Attack</i> (novice) |
| Weapons
Accurate | Bow 4, Sword 4 and Dagger 3 |
| Armor | Woven silk 2 (flexible) |
| Defense | –4 |
| Toughness 10 | Pain Threshold 5 |
| Equipment | Scrolls (on area of expertise), a dozen arrows, waybread, 1 herbal cure, 1D10 shillings |
| Shadow | Silver-shimmering (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: A Ranger always assesses its target and attacks the weakest spot. They are scouts first and foremost, not warriors, and will refrain from attacking if the odds are stacked against them.

Treasure-Hunter

We make up many names for those we love; the same is true for the ones we detest. Call them treasure-hunters, fortune-hunters, explorers or grave robbers – many are the Ambrians who put their lives at risk in the hope of finding riches in the ruins of old Symbaroum. Nowadays most people have realized the foolishness in challenging Davokar singlehandedly, which is why almost everyone travels with at least four companions. But the composition of the groupings may of course vary considerably, from being made up of a handful of former peasants scratching for precious metals in the forest outskirts to disciplined expeditions led by Ordo Magica or some ambitious nobleman.

The plunderers described below are of the brutish kind – groups of individuals who have managed to scrape together enough coin to buy an Explorer's License and ventured into the woods hoping to find the mother lode. As they have risked everything they own, and maybe even taken loans from some shady moneylender, they are not likely to abandon their dig-site without a fight. For that reason it is probably true that in the outskirts of Davokar treasure-hunters are killed by competitors as often as they are by beasts, elves or local barbarians.

PLUNDERER

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Ogre |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Long-lived</i> , <i>Robust</i> (I) |
| Accurate 5 (+5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 9 (+1), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 13 (–3), Resolute 11 (–1), Strong 15 (–5), Vigilant 7 (+3) | |
| Abilities | <i>Iron Fist</i> (novice), <i>Two-handed force</i> (adept) |
| Weapons
Strong | Two-handed hammer 8 |
| Armor | Tough skin and Leather 4 (Impeding) |
| Defense | +1 |
| Toughness 15 | Pain Threshold 8 |
| Equipment | Sack with putrid food |
| Shadow | Crimson red (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: The plunderer marches straight into battle, hungry for loot and coin.



Spiders

IN THE TALES of the barbarians, the spider comes off as one of Davokar's most noble and powerful beings, at least from a historical perspective. The legend of the Spider King is well-known also among Ambrians – a ruthless warlord who ruled the woods some five centuries ago; member of a monstrous clan of spider-like humanoids and with a host comprised of spiders and various forms of amphibian creatures.

Most stories suggest that it was the threat of the Spider King that motivated the barbarian clans to unite under a High Chieftain, and that their combined forces managed to crush his empire. The legend also implies that the monstrous clan still lives on in the depth of Davokar, and that there still exist giant spiders and toad-monsters descended from the monarch's hordes. Connections have also been made to the skeletal statue in Thistle Hold and to the rumored Predator Clan, but according to Ordo Magica there are no reliable accounts to support such assumptions. Instead, most believe that if there is any truth to the legend, both the clan of the Spider King and all of the larger spider races were eliminated in the campaigns of the first High Chieftains. Certainly, spiders still thrive in Davokar and they are indeed a serious threat, but they are not especially organized or intelligent.

ETTERHERD

The fist-sized Etterherd hunts in packs, poisonous enough to kill a grown man and aggressive enough to actually try. When the pack has made a kill the spiders dig into the corpse to lay their eggs. The carcass is later devoured from the inside and finally

| ETTERHERD | |
|---|--|
| Race | Spider |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | Natural Weapon (I),
Poisonous (I), Swarm (II) |
| Accurate 15 (–5), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 11 (–1),
Persuasive 7 (+3), Quick 13 (–3), Resolute 9 (+1),
Strong 5 (+5), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | None |
| Weapons | Bite 3, poison 2 for 2 turns |
| Accurate | |
| Armor | None |
| Defense | –3 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 3 |
| Equipment | None |
| Shadow | Greenish purple (corruption: 1) |

Tactics: The spider swarm gathers around its prey, biting and biting until it is dead. Then the swarm is off to the next target to repeat the procedure.

erupts when a new generation of etterherds is ready to see the light of day.

The barbarians in the northern clans of Gaoia and Enoai have struggled with these packs for a long time, but the problem is spread throughout all of Davokar. In recent years, attacks on convoys traveling along the Doudram, Eanor and Malgomor rivers have become more and more frequent – the etterherds lay in wait in tree tops that lean out over the water and attack the warm bodies onboard boats passing underneath.



Predators

DAVOKAR IS TEEMING with life, which of course is the primary reason why the barbarians choose to endure its perilous environment. However, accompanying the prey animals are a multitude of predators – beasts that often find themselves transformed into victims in the claws of trolls, abominations and others who happen to be larger than them.

The barbarians have developed a culinary culture that makes them happy to reject a tender deer loin in favor of meat carved from predators – the more dangerous the predator, the finer the meal. It is, for example, said that High Chieftain Maestikar refused to see anything but Hunger Wolves and Aboars on his plate.

ABOAR

Wild boars are not a rare sight for travelers in Davokar, especially not out east in the territory of clan Vajvod where they are hunted for meat and tusks. It is also the vajvods who have fostered the tradition of once a year, during winter when the snow makes tracking an easy task, sending a group of select warriors deep into Davokar, hunting the Aboar.

This mythical giant swine is said to be related to the liege trolls and even outshines them when it comes to both cleverness and brutality. Only on a couple of occasions have there been credible reports of villages, outposts or travelers that have been attacked by an aboar – maybe because all potential witnesses have died in other attacks. On the other hand, it is far from unusual to hear farmers and others who work close to Davokar tell of strange happenings; occasions when they all of a sudden have found themselves being watched by some staring aboar, standing still at the forest edge or somewhere out on their farmlands. And none of the storytellers have the slightest doubt that a calculating and rational intellect hides behind the monstrous hog's wrinkled forehead.

Reptiles

THE QUESTION of whether or not there are dragons in Davokar is much debated. Some pundits claim that barbarian legends, reports from deep-reaching expeditions and, not least, details in Symbaroum's architecture prove that dragons are a reality. On the other hand, their opponents argue that the barbarian tales really are about lindworms, that all self-professed witnesses have lost their minds and that any dragon-like details on the ruins of

| ABOAR | | | |
|---|---|----------------|---|
| Race | Beast | | |
| Resistance | Challenging | | |
| Traits | Armored (II), Natural weapon (II), Robust (III) | | |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 10 (0), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 13 (−3), Resolute 11 (−1), Strong 15 (−5), Vigilant 9 (+1) | | | |
| Abilities | Iron Fist (adept) | | |
| Weapons | Tusks 10 (short) | | |
| Armor | Swine skin 7 | | |
| Defense | +1 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | None | | |
| Shadow | Deep red, with faint streaks of rust in the red (corruption: 3) | | |

Tactics: The Aboar uses diversion attacks to try to scare the enemy away from its territory; if that fails the giant boar trusts that its tusks, reflexes and thick hide are enough to plow down any aggressor.



Symbaroum can hardly be taken as evidence since similar motifs could be seen in Alberetor without any real dragons to inspire the artists.

The debate will likely continue and for the time being the Ambrian artists have smaller and more beastly reptiles to use as models for their dragon motifs. And there are plenty of them around, in the form of serpents and lizards and not least the turtles dwelling in the region's waterways. Many of the reptiles are venomous and almost all of them have been singled out as embodiments of Darvokar's darkness by the Church of Prios – a circumstance explained by First Father Jeseebegai as related to the fact that they are especially sensitive to the natural corruption permeating the grounds and waters of the forest.

LINDWORM

They are few and far between, the Ambrians who can claim to have met or fought a Lindworm and lived to tell about it. They have neither wings nor legs but are said to share some traits with the fabled dragons, in that they are both cunning and capable of utilizing mystical powers. Indeed, the stories show some variations, which could be interpreted as evidence that individual specimens differ from each other in terms of both intelligence and magical abilities.

A widely renowned, if still unconfirmed, example of the intelligent kind is the serpent who is said to act as something of a spiritual guide for the northern clan Gaoia. Chieftain Rábaiamon as well as the keeper of the clan maintain that their decisions are guided by an elderly and infinitely wise lindworm called Grandfather Lint. But despite

a handful of visits with promises of increasingly lavish compensation, the representatives of Ordo Magica have been denied a meeting with the oracle – a fact which has made the more skeptical among the wizards question the existence of the serpent.

LINDWORM

Race Reptiles

Resistance Strong

Traits *Armored (III), Enthrall (III), Long-lived, Robust (III)*

Accurate 7 (+3), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 11 (–1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 15 (–5), **Strong** 13 (–3), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

Abilities *Iron Fist (master), Natural Warrior (master)*

Weapons Strong
Bite 14 (short), or 2 attacks at the same target with damage 12 and 8

Armor Scales 8

Defense +4

Toughness 13 **Pain Threshold** 7

Equipment None

Shadow Emerald green, like the leaves on an ancient oak, hypnotically rustling in the summer breeze (corruption: 0)

Tactics: The lindworm is old and sly and will not fight if it knows it cannot win, or if there is nothing to gain. It prefers to enthrall its victims to learn about them, thereby finding out which one is the strongest. After that, the serpent is not afraid to let its fangs end the discussion.

BLIGHT BORN HUMAN

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Race | Abomination (once human) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | <i>Acidic blood</i> (I), <i>Natural weapon</i> (I), <i>Robust</i> (I) |

Accurate 15 (–5), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 13 (–3), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Abilities | <i>Berserker</i> (novice),
<i>Natural Warrior</i> (novice) |
|------------------|---|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Weapons | Claws 9 (short) |
| Accurate | |

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Armor | Leather apron 4 (Impeding) |
|--------------|----------------------------|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Defense | +9, corrosive blood 3 for 3 turns |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|

| | | | |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|
| Toughness | 11 | Pain Threshold | 6 |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Equipment | Tools and items related to its former occupation, 1D10 ortegs |
|------------------|---|

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Shadow | Fully corroded copper (thoroughly corrupt) |
|---------------|--|

Tactics: The abomination closes in on its victim and attacks with a passionate hunger.

BLIGHT BORN ELK

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Race | Abomination (once beast) |
|-------------|--------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Resistance | Challenging |
|-------------------|-------------|

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Traits | <i>Corrupting Attack</i> (I), <i>Natural Weapon</i> (II), <i>Robust</i> (II) |
|---------------|--|

Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Discreet** 10 (0), **Persuasive** 5 (+5), **Quick** 13 (–3), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 15 (–5), **Vigilant** 10 (0)

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Abilities | <i>Iron Fist</i> (adept),
<i>Natural Warrior</i> (novice) |
|------------------|--|

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Weapons | Antlers 10, +1D4 in temporary corruption. |
| Strong | |

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Armor | Elk Hide 3 |
|--------------|------------|

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Defense | 0 |
|----------------|---|

| | | | |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
|------------------|----|-----------------------|---|

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Equipment | None |
|------------------|------|

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Shadow | Brownish black, like the hide of a decaying animal corpse (thoroughly corrupt) |
|---------------|--|

Tactics: None. The scent of living bodies drives the blight beast to attack, muzzle foaming with corruption.

Abomination

THE AMBRIANS use the term Abomination for what the barbarians call Blight Beasts – creatures in some way associated with the corrupt darkness of Davokar. It is unclear if all abominations are related or if it would be more accurate to speak of different kinds of abominations, but both Ordo Magica and the Twilight Friars do all in their power to learn more about the phenomenon.

In any case, the term covers a varied crowd of beings that seem to have one trait in common: they want to hurt humans; they wish for humans to ache, to suffer, preferably to die. And they wish this with such a passion that nothing else matters. You cannot reason with an abomination, nor compromise with or frighten them; the abomination appears to live for the destruction of mankind, one individual at a time, and it does not hesitate to destroy anything or anyone standing in the way.

BLIGHT BORN

Exactly when it happens is under debate, but at some point it seems as if persons or creatures plagued by corruption lose themselves to the disease. When it has gone that far, the physical appearance of the individual starts to transform. One who has browsed the book *Hordes of the Eternal Night*, written and illustrated by the Black Cloak Almagast, have seen widely different examples of bodily stigmata: extreme dehydration; oozing blisters; horn-like and tail-like outgrowths; bleeding mucosal membranes; withered or twisted limbs; blackened or albino-pale skin; furry hair growth on humans and loss of fur on animals. And when it comes to personality and temper the transformation is absolute – everything that remains is destructive: envy, anger, hunger, hubris and hatred.

Blight born animals and beasts wander alone in the wilds, killing everything that comes in their way, growing bigger and stronger and spreading corruption through bites and scratches. Human abominations seem to hold on to some of their intellectual capacity and can linger in populated areas if they are careful. They keep in hiding, use infected persons as guards and couriers, and can with time surround themselves with a whole court of cultists obeying their every command. Sometimes, as in the notorious case of the widow baroness of the House Elsbet, it can take years before the source of corruption is revealed.



Premade Characters

BELOW YOU WILL FIND six pre-generated player characters to use in your play tests. They all have stats at the starter level, and represent a wide variety of the type cultural beings which can be created using the material featured in the Core Rulebook. For those who later want additional options on the table, the Advanced Player's Guide introduces more playable races, more occupations, abilities, powers and equipment. In general terms, character creation in Symbaroum is very flexible and fun – basically you can build any kind of character you want.

Orlan of the House Daar, Pansar

"You have my word!"

You are the youngest son of a – besides you – extinct house of nobility. The estates and your relatives perished in The Great War; you were accepted into the ranks of the Queen's Pansars, thanks to your skills and your family name. After a time of service you have had enough of patrols and drills, and have resigned from the knights' guard in order to find a purpose in life, perhaps even the strength to rebuild your house from its ruined state.

ORLAN OF THE HOUSE DAAR

Race Human (Ambrian)

Traits *Privileged*

Accurate 11, **Cunning** 7, **Discreet** 5, **Persuasive** 13, **Quick** 10, **Resolute** 10, **Strong** 15, **Vigilant** 9

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| Abilities | <i>Dominate</i> (novice),
<i>Leader</i> (adept),
<i>Two-handed force</i> (novice) | | |
| Weapons
Persuasive | Dagger 1D6 (short), Sword 1D8,
Two-handed sword 1D12 | | |
| Armor | Fortified chainmail 1D8
(Impeding) | | |
| Defense | 6 (dodge) or 7 (shield) | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | Pouch with soil from the family residence in the south, camp equipment, weapon maintenance kit, 1 thaler and 5 shillings | | |
| Shadow | Gleaming silver (corruption: 0) | | |

Rageor, ogre berserker

"Annoy me not!"

Many years ago you came wandering through Davokar nameless and blank, and were taken in

by a witch who taught you to speak and behave. She never gave you a name, aware that you do not need one – after all, you know who you are and that is enough. Instead the servant of the witch named you, with a nickname to suit your temperament. Since then you have been known as Rageor, and when the witch died of old age you left the forest behind.

There seems to be much to learn about the world. Now that that the witch who raised you is dead you are left searching for a purpose in life, and maybe finding out who you are and where you are from is a goal worth pursuing? Or maybe you are on the run, hunted by both witches and Black Cloaks who wish to know more about what the witch was doing or why she died.

| RAGEOR | | | |
|---|--|----------------|---|
| Race | Ogre | | |
| Traits | Long-lived, Pariah, Robust (novice) | | |
| Accurate 10, Cunning 9, Discreet 5, Persuasive 7, Quick 11, Resolute 13, Strong 15, Vigilant 10 | | | |
| Abilities | Berserker (novice), Twin Attack (adept) | | |
| Weapons | Dagger 1D6+1D4 (short), 2 swords 1D8+1D4 | | |
| Armor | Leather apron 1D4 (Impeding) | | |
| Defense | 8 (parry) | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Equipment | Self-made flute that only plays in minor, 4 ortegs | | |
| Shadow | Dark green like moss (corruption: 0) | | |

Bartolom, Wizard of Ordo Magica

"Interesting, this must be scrutinized."

You are a novice in Ordo Magica, Ambria's biggest and most influential order of wizardry. When all others journeyed north you and your master stayed in Alberetor to study the dying earth, although you wanted nothing more than to tag along in search for the truth behind rumors about Davokar's herbs and the magic of barbarian witches. Now that your master is dead it is time to put that plan into action. The first step is to locate your old colleague, Master Vernam who is said to live in Thistle Hold.



| BARTOLOM | | | |
|---|--|----------------|---|
| Race | Human (Ambrian) | | |
| Traits | Privileged | | |
| Accurate 10, Cunning 13, Discreet 5, Persuasive 10, Quick 11, Resolute 15, Strong 9, Vigilant 7 | | | |
| Abilities | Alchemy (novice), Beast Lore (novice), Brimstone Cascade (novice), Medicus (novice), Wizardry (novice) | | |
| Weapons | Dagger 1D6 (short), | | |
| Accurate | Walking staff 1D6 (long, blunt) | | |
| Armor | Blessed robe 1D4 (flexible) | | |
| Defense | 11 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | Camp equipment, aged sherry, 3 herbal cures, 3 thaler and 9 shillings | | |
| Shadow | Fiery copper (corruption: 0) | | |

Gender & Names:

Feel free to change the gender of the premade characters if you wish. Below are suggested names for the example characters with their genders switched: Or-lan becomes Oria, Bartolom becomes Bartala, Niha becomes Niho and Karla becomes Karlas. Both Rageor and Fenya remains unchanged.

Fenya, goblin treasure-hunter

"There you are, my precious treasure!"

You were born and raised in the goblin village of Karabbadokk, where your family settled down when the rest of the tribe joined a band of robbers held up in the forests of Mervidun. When you could not find work in Thistle Hold, the alluring city in which you never got to set foot, you left Karabbadokk in search of a better life. You have to make haste – you have already reached the age of five and life is short!

Shortly after leaving the village you met a grumpy old sow which you ensnared with your goblin magic and named Kverula. By now, the two of you have developed a deep love-hate relationship, and there is no doubt that you will stay loyal to each other for as long as you both shall live.

| FENYA | | | |
|---|---|----------------|---|
| Race | Goblin | | |
| Traits | Pariah, Short-lived, Survival instinct (novice) | | |
| Accurate 10, Cunning 5, Discreet 13, Persuasive 7, Quick 15, Resolute 9, Strong 11, Vigilant 10 | | | |
| Abilities | Polearm mastery (adept), Ritualist (novice, Familiar) | | |
| Weapons | Dagger 1D6 (short), Spear 1D10 (long) | | |
| Armor | Leather gown 1D4 (Impeding) | | |
| Defense | 13 | | |
| Toughness | 11 | Pain Threshold | 6 |
| Equipment | Camp equipment, 3 ortegs | | |
| Shadow | Red as oxygenated blood (corruption: 1) | | |

| KVERULA, THE WILD SOW | | | |
|---|--|----------------|---|
| Race | Beast (sow) | | |
| Traits | Armored (I), Natural weapon (I) | | |
| Accurate 11, Cunning 7, Discreet 9, Persuasive 5, Quick 13, Resolute 10, Strong 15, Vigilant 10 | | | |
| Weapons | Tusks 1D6 (short) | | |
| Accurate | | | |
| Armor | Skin 1D4 (flexible) | | |
| Defense | 13 | | |
| Toughness | 15 | Pain Threshold | 8 |
| Shadow | Yellowish red, like aspen leaves in the fall (corruption: 0) | | |

Niha, changeling con artist

"You won't regret it!"

You were exchanged for your parents' firstborn in a barbarian settlement, and from there it only got worse. "Mother" and "Father" had you work as an apprentice of the village tanner and sent you away as soon as your heritage became apparent. Since then you have learned to manage on your own, but you have always wondered why your elven kin gave you up.

You have traveled the countryside of Ambria hoping to find answers, or at least some other outcasts to form some sort of communion with. If all else fails you have heard of a human named Vernam, who lives in Thistle Hold and is said to know much about elves.

| NIHA | | | |
|---|--|----------------|---|
| Race | Changeling | | |
| Traits | Long-lived, Shapeshifter (novice) | | |
| Accurate 10, Cunning 7, Discreet 15, Persuasive 13, Quick 11, Resolute 9, Strong 5, Vigilant 10 | | | |
| Abilities | Backstab (novice), Feint (adept) | | |
| Weapons
Discreet/
Accurate | Dagger 1D6 (short),
Walking staff 1D6 (long, blunt) | | |
| Armor | Studded leather 1D4 (Impeding) | | |
| Defense | 13 | | |
| Toughness | 10 | Pain Threshold | 3 |
| Equipment | Straw doll found by your crib (presumably left by the elves), camp equipment, 11 shilling and 3 ortegs | | |
| Shadow | Polished brass (corruption: 0) | | |



In a towering grove at the southern edge of Karvosti (the ancient meeting place of the barbarian clans) lives Alöena. The ten feet tall female being, assumed to be related to Davokar's elves, seems to regard humans as if they were nothing more than a passing flock of birds.

Blight Night

DURING A VOYAGE somewhere in Ambria's border regions, the player characters make a stop at the inn Jakad's Heart – a place with a history full of both hope and tragedy. At night the inn is attacked by howling goblins, commanded by the robber baron Nightblade. She is on a desperate hunt for the Water of the Dusk, an artifact said to be able to save a blight-stricken soul from becoming thoroughly corrupt.

BLIGHT NIGHT is a miniature adventure landscape. It presents a setting (Jakad's Heart), a handful of NPCs with their own ambitions (the knight Nightblade among others) and a dramatic incident which sets events in motion (the siege) – then it is up to the players to (re)act!

The legend of the artifact called the Water of the Dusk (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 186) is a key ingredient of the adventure, but the artifact itself does not have to make an appearance if the Game Master doesn't want it to.

Jakad's Heart

AT DAVOKAR'S EDGE lays the solitary inn Jakad's Heart. Jakad was a Black Cloak who felt drawn to the location by dreams and inner voices. When he arrived he found a wellspring flowing with holy Water of the Dusk. Jakad built a shrine by the well, and all who travelled along the forest edge were welcomed to stay there, to rest and heal and enjoy the comfort of the miraculous water. But the fate of the chapel was pre-determined, vulnerable as it was, resting there in the shadow of Davokar. Jakad was killed by an elven war band, and the shrine was razed to the ground to avenge human transgressions deeper into the woods.

The light of the spring dimmed out as soon as Jakad's heart was pierced by an elven arrow. However, that did not stop the energetic adventurer Koldra from monetizing on the legend, by building

an inn near the well. She settled on the name Jakad's Heart and fortified the place with a palisade – in contrast to her precursor, she was not about to trust solely in Prios' mercy for her survival.

MAP OF JAKAD'S HEART

1. Palisade and Gatehouse. On the upper level of the gatehouse there is a bronze bell covered in verdigris, serving as an alarm. The palisade, made of sturdy logs poking up from an embankment, is about 12 feet high. There is a narrow ledge on the inside of the wall, so that a defender can fight with an advantage against anyone trying to scale the wall. To set the palisade on fire is not possible unless you have some kind of alchemical concoction; the goblins (see Varraguldrú, page 102) have no such mixture, but that does not stop them from trying.

2. The Inn. The inn itself is a robust stone building with a slate roof. The house has three levels and a basement where goods are stored. Joists and floors are made of wood. If the goblins make it over the palisade they will try to set the inn on fire, but will not succeed.

3. Stable. The stable is made of wood alone and will start to burn as soon as the goblins have made their way into the courtyard.

4. Garden. The garden is the oasis of the house-ogre Mangold, where he grows vegetables and herbs.

5. Shrine. A small chapel stands next to the wellspring, waiting for travelers who have heard the legend and want to pray in this holy place.



6. Wellspring. A paved pond that also serves as a well for drinking water – pilgrims are kneeling on one side, and on the other the house-ogre Mangold fetches buckets of water for the inn and the garden.

BACKGROUND

A couple of days prior to the arrival of the player characters, a suspicious “pilgrim” was driven away by Koldra as he showed an unhealthy interest in the sacred spring. The obviously drugged man (see Ashfaru below) spoke incoherently about wanting to “*prepare the well-spring for the arrival of his mistress*”, but Koldra refused to let him stay within the palisade.

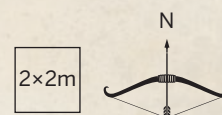
The supposed pilgrim swore that he would return and that he would be much less diplomatic when he did: “*Lady Nightblade will not be forgiving towards those who stand in her way!*” Koldra did not think

twice about it; she had experienced worse during her adventuring days. However, she has made sure that some family member is always on the lookout at night. That way the keeper of the inn, as well as any guests, will get a warning when the pilgrim and his mistress return – which they do, with a vengeance!

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Koldra, innkeeper. Koldra is a charismatic person, with hard hands due to her previous career as a fortune-hunter. Use the values of a Queen’s Ranger (page 90) when called for.

Koldras family. The husband Tandrag and their four children Melga (13), Nefer (11), Sandros (7) and Pegel (5), keep to themselves and manage the inn. During the siege they will help to the best of their abilities, which under the circumstances amounts to not much more than keeping watch and fetching water to quench fires.



JAKAD'S HEART

1. Palisade and Gatehouse
2. Inn
3. Stable
4. Garden
5. Shrine
6. Wellspring

The Location of Jakad's Heart?

This text assumes that Jakad's Heart is located along the southern edge of Davokar, but the inn may easily be relocated to some other place where Ambria borders on the wilds. The place just north of the Titans where – according to legend – Queen Korinthia found holy water suits just as well, but if so the shrine was probably burnt down by robbers instead of by elves. Also, the goblins of Nightblade are probably human robbers instead. This location is a good choice if the GM wants to run *Blight Night* directly after the core book adventure, the *Promised Land*.

Mangold, plant-loving house-ogre. Mangold is an unusually meek ogre, who is happiest when he gets to tend to the well-kept garden of the inn. When the ogre gets agitated – for instance, if Koldra or her family are threatened – you can use the values of a Plunderer (page 90).

Blackhawk, minstrel. The minstrel Blackhawk travels along the edge of Davokar, entertaining others in exchange for shillings and ortegs. The overly genteel bard, “tutored by the elves of Ylhurandy” according to himself, is a heavy drinker but knows much about the region's legends. If no one else has told the legend of Jakad's Heart to the player characters, Blackhawk will. The minstrel has no intention of fighting other than in self-defense, but can be persuaded to grip his spiked club if the player characters can get him to understand that they must stand together in order to survive. If so, use the stats of a Fortune-Hunter (page 215 in the *Core Rulebook*).

Nightblade, robber baron. The tragic figure who calls herself Nightblade would be laughable or pitiful if not for the fact that she is blight-stricken and very desperate: she has lived a long life plagued by corruption and is placing her last hope in the legend of the Water of the Dusk, hoping that it can save her from the darkness gathering within her. With the help of powerful drugs she has been able to keep the madness at bay, but the elixirs do nothing to stop or delay the physical corruption. Nightblade displays a number of visible blight marks – her blood red eyes glow in the dark, there is pus secreting from wounds on her neck, and she brings with her an odor of sulfur and doom.

| | |
|---|---|
| Race | Human (Ambrian) |
| Resistance | Challenging |
| Traits | <i>Privileged</i> |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 5 (+5), Discreet 7 (+3), Persuasive 15 (–5), Quick 11 (–1), Resolute 9 (+1), Strong 13 (–3), Vigilant 10 (0) | |
| Abilities | <i>Dominare</i> (adept), <i>Man-at-arms</i> (master), <i>Two-Handed Force</i> (master) |
| Weapons
Persuasive | The two-handed sword Black Gift 6 (see the artifact on page 105) |
| Armor | Fortified chainmail 4 (Impeding) |
| Defense | 0 |
| Toughness | 13 |
| Pain Threshold | 7 |
| Equipment | Soothing drugs (a mixture of Dream Snuff and Blue Drops, see the textbox Goblin Drugs), 1D10 thaler |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Shadow | Dark purple with bobbing flakes of silver, slowly sinking into darkness (corruption: 6) |
|---------------|---|

Tactics: The goal of Nightblade is clear: to conquer Jakad's Heart and take control of its wellspring. She trusts the goblins to breach the palisade, then she walks onto the battlefield to the sound of the blood thirsty signing of her black sword.

Varraguldru, Nightblade's goblin tribe. The remnants of what was once the proud goblin tribe Varraguldru is a sad sight. The leader of the tribe joined up with Nightblade as she promised him gold and honor, a promise on which she initially delivered as they were pillaging ruins. They found gold as well as terrors enough to drive them into abusing the drugs offered by the knight. Since then Nightblade has ruthlessly exploited them for her dark cause; the remains of the tribe now serve her with drug-instilled loyalty. The drugs make the goblins stronger, but at the cost of emotional instability.

Insight with a successful *Vigilant*: Many goblins scratch their arms, laugh or cry hysterically, foam at the mouth or stare into nothingness with almost dead eyes as they go about their business. Something is clearly not right ...

Insight with a successful *Vigilant* and *Alchemy* or *Medicus*: The goblins are obviously drugged!

The following statistics take the effect of the drugs into account:

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Goblin |
| Resistance | Weak |
| Traits | <i>Bushcraft</i> , <i>Short-lived</i> , <i>Survival instinct</i> (I, because of the drugs) |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 13 (–3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 15 (–5), Resolute 7 (+3), Strong 10 (0), Vigilant 11 (–1) | |
| Abilities | <i>Berserker</i> (novice, because of the drugs) |
| Weapons
Accurate | Rusty one-handed weapons 6 |
| Armor | Crow Armor 3 (Cumbersome) |
| Defense | +9 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 5 |
| Equipment | Tobacco pouch with sticky Wild Chew (see textbox on drugs), 1D10 ortegs |
| Shadow | Various colors with spots of drug-sick blackness (corruption: 3) |

Tactics: The warriors of tribe Varraguldru are drunkenly wild. They swarm around their enemies, trying to engage them all in melee at once.

The Survival instinct ability is used to bypass the front line, and reach archers and mystics further back. Inspired by the drugs, the frothing goblins will fight to the death.

Shuggludd, rebellious goblin. The tribe of Varraguldru no longer has a leader, but is instead commanded by Nightblade, constantly dreaming about the poison maker Ashfaru's drugs – with one exception: the goblin Shuggludd. By studying Ashfaru at work, Shuggludd has learned enough to be able to concoct Blue Drops of his own, thereby negating the corrupting power of the Wild Chew. Sadly, he has instead become addicted to the seductive comfort of the Blue Drops. They make him docile, but at least they will not kill him.

Shuggludd has the same values as his tribesmen, with the addition of the ability Alchemy at the novice level. Shuggludd also has an alchemy set in his backpack, with which he makes Blue Drops that he consumes every time he has been force fed Wild Chew. This has saved him from its negative effects, both the short-term and the long-term ones.

Insight with a successful [Vigilant -3]: This goblin appears to behave like the rest, but acts rationally and with an evident will to survive.

Insight with a successful [Vigilant -3] and Alchemy or Medicus: The goblin lacks the physical symptoms of drug-sickness – his intoxication is an act!

| | |
|---|--|
| Race | Goblin |
| Resistance | Weak |
| Traits | Bushcraft, Short-lived |
| Accurate 10 (0), Cunning 9 (+1), Discreet 13 (-3), Persuasive 5 (+5), Quick 15 (-5), Resolute 10 (0), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 11 (-1) | |
| Abilities | Alchemy (novice) |
| Weapons
Accurate | Rusty one-handed weapon 4, throwing knives 3 |
| Armor | Crow Armor 3 (Cumbersome) |
| Defense | -1 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | 1D6 throwing knives, basic alchemy set, 1D4 doses of Blue Drops, 1D10 ortegs |
| Shadow | Healthy green colors (corruption: 0) |

Tactics: Shuggludd acts drugged but stays away from combat if possible. Instead, he tries to reach out to the player characters hoping to come to an agreement – if they attack Ashfaru and his cauldron the goblins can be freed from their addictions. If that happens, Nightblade and Ashfaru can be fought without them huddling behind a hoard of minions.

Ashfaru, the Poison-Maker of Nightblade. Ashfaru is a renegade man-witch who left his clan and the witches circle after having poisoned a rival in love. Nightblade saved the alchemist from the jaws of a rage troll, and since then they have traveled together. Nowadays Ashfaru's primary task is to provide the goblins of Varraguldru with drugs, to make them serve Nightblade as loyal slaves. He also provides Nightblade with an elixir which stabilizes the fragile mind of the blight-stricken knight. He has not been able to do anything about the physical condition of his mistress – for that stronger fluids are needed, as for instance the Water of the Dusk. Ashfaru has become addicted to his own drugs, which is evident when looking into his bloodshot eyes or at his pale lips and quivering hands. You can often see dusty traces of Dream Snuff around the old mystic's nostrils.

| | |
|---|---|
| Race | Human (barbarian) |
| Resistance | Ordinary |
| Traits | Bushcraft |
| Accurate 9 (+1), Cunning 15 (-5), Discreet 13 (-3), Persuasive 10 (0), Quick 10 (0), Resolute 11 (-1), Strong 7 (+3), Vigilant 5 (+5) | |
| Abilities | Alchemy (adept), Entangling Vines (novice), Pole-arm Mastery (novice) |
| Weapons
Accurate | Spear 5 |
| Armor | Witch Gown 2 (Flexible) |
| Defense | 0 |
| Toughness | 10 |
| Pain Threshold | 4 |
| Equipment | The artifact Barrvalg's Cauldron (see the artifact on page 105), recipes for Wild Chew, Dream Snuff and Blue Drops, 1D10 doses of Wild Chew, 1D10 doses of Dream Snuff, 1D10 doses of Blue Drops, 1 dose strong poison, 1D10 shilling |
| Shadow | Greenish grey, as mold on a decaying tree (corruption: 4) |

Tactics: Ashfaru huddles behind the goblins by his cauldron. If severely threatened he boils a dose of strong poison in the cauldron, which then affects everyone in the area but him. After that he will try to run for the forest with his artifact.

Shuggludd Takes Action

The freedom-loving goblin Shuggludd will try to contact the player characters as soon as possible – for example by surrendering in combat or sneaking in over the palisade – hoping to gain allies against the real enemy: Ashfaru and his damned cauldron!

Artifacts?

Two mystical artifacts are introduced in this one-shot adventure. How player characters can understand, bind themselves to and use such coveted items is described in the *Core Rulebook*. There you may also read about Water of the Dusk – the artifact coveted by Nightblade.

The Siege

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS wake up in the middle of the night as a black-feathered arrow hits the shutters: the inn is under attack! Koldra's eldest, Melga, sounds the alarm bell, and moments later the fortified inn is in an uproar.

Nightblade is back, and this time she is not asking for permission – the inn shall fall and all witnesses must die, so that she can enjoy the legendary water of the wellspring in peace and quiet.

Outside the palisade some thirty goblins are running around, trying to get the gate open (requires a battering ram that they do not have) or climb the walls (requires ladders). The goblins only have one ladder, which they put to good use – they will soon join Melga atop the gatehouse. If she is killed the gates will swing open and the roaring goblins pour into the courtyard, followed by Nightblade herself.

If Melga is saved and the gatehouse secured the goblins retreat. They surround the inn and start chopping wood to make more ladders and a battering ram.

This gives the defenders a chance to prepare and it is up to the player characters to decide if – and in that case how – the inn should be defended against the next wave.

Further out, on the field south of the inn, out of range from projectiles, a larger group of goblins are dancing around a lone, towering figure (Nightblade). The robed shape stands absolutely still, until the time has come to order the goblins to attack.

How many goblins are there?

The exact number of goblins is not set in stone. The important thing is that they swarm, and that they appear to be so many that the players realize that they cannot win this battle by meeting them on the open field.

- Combat in/on the gatehouse, on the palisade and so on are best handled as isolated events against [PC +2] goblins.
- If the gates are breached a wave of [PC ×5] goblins come storming through, but they are broken up into smaller groups made up of [PC +2] goblins, that scatter over the courtyard in the hunt for loot and easy targets.

A successful test against Vigilant reveals that another tall person stands in the midst of the goblins, crouching over a cauldron from which a red mist rises to shroud those around. The goblins that inhale the red mist seem to become even more agitated.

EXPERIENCE

The experience gained from an adventure landscape is based on what scenes emerge: each scene which is a challenge in the form of combat, problem-solving or a social dilemma gives 1 experience point.

DEVELOPMENT

This one-shot adventure may be developed in a number of ways, depending on what the GM wants and the players do.

- Maybe there is some of the holy water left, a couple of drops in a bottle hidden in the basement? The player characters may find the bottle, or someone (Koldra, Mangold?) knows it exists and asks the player characters to take it to safety. This will require a dramatic escape from the burning inn, and a wild hunt towards the nearest fortress or temple where the artifact can be properly defended.
- The goblins of Varraguldru are fed up with the bully Nightblade and her poison-maker. Sadly, they are severely addicted to the Wild Chew and the addiction must be broken if the tribe members are to be spared from insanity and death. Player characters who promise the freedom fighter Shuggludd to aid the tribe will get a group of loyal goblins as allies – allies that first must be helped in ridding themselves of the addiction, before they succumb to or run amok due to withdrawal symptoms.
- If the player characters get a hold of Barrvalg's Cauldron, it can be used to liberate the Varraguldru goblins, but it will also attract the attention of Davokar's witches. According to them, the cauldron is theirs, and they need it in the fight against the horrors that are currently haunting their clan territories in alarming numbers. If the player characters are reluctant to hand it over they are willing to trade for the cauldron, in exchange for another artifact or a serious favor/service. If the PCs still refuse a smaller group of witches may – driven by the desperate situation – try to win back the cauldron through sneaky maneuvers or more violent methods ...

Artifacts

THE SWORD BLACK GIFT

A night-black sword, forged in Symbaroum on the altar of dark gods and found by Nightblade in a flooded temple a decade ago. When she was disowned by her family, the knight renamed herself after the weapon. The blackened steel hums a blood-thirsty melody, which in the midst of combat turns into a murderous hymn that spurs the wielder and intimidates the enemy.

Villainous Stab

When the master so wishes, the blade is licked by a black flames dealing +1D4 of burning damage with each attack.

Action: Free

Corruption: 1D4

Shackles of Battle

To a wielder with the ability Dominate the sword has even greater powers. Each time an enemy falls (o in *Toughness*), the master of Black Gift can let the cold winds of death sweep across the battlefield. All enemies in the area must make a test against [*Resolute*←*Resolute*] or lose the next combat action. When in Nightblade's hands the test is [*Resolute* +1].

Action: Reactive

Corruption: 1D4

BARRVALG'S CAULDRON

The witch Barrvalg forged this powerful cauldron, whose rim is decorated with thorns and winding vines of iron. With the cauldron the master alchemist Barrvalg could protect his people by cooking invigorating elixir mists for the village warriors.

The cauldron was handed down from witch to apprentice for generations – until it was stolen by Ashfaru. The artifact is of little value to non-alchemists, but in the hands of an alchemist it is a powerful tool.

Mist of Elixirs

If the master of the cauldron knows alchemy, he or she can cook a mist of an already existing elixir. The mist then affects all who stand close to the cauldron, with the same effect as if they had swallowed a dose. Player characters who wish to stay unaffected by the mist must succeed with a test against [*Resolute*←*Resolute*]. The master of the cauldron may always exempt itself from the effect, without needing to make a die roll.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Goblin drugs

Through Nightblade's companion Ashfaru, the goblins have access to – and are addicted to – a number of potent drugs. Ashfaru harvests ingredients at secret locations in Davokar, which he then combines into three different concoctions. All of these can be crafted by someone with the ability *Alchemy* (novice).

WILD CHEW

The red chew is a strong stimulant, making the chewer more spirited, less careful and very aggressive. Wild Chew is what the goblins of Varraguldru are on during the scenario, which is reflected in their statistics.

RULES: One dose of Wild Chew transfers 2 points from *Discreet*, *Cunning* and *Resolute* to *Quick*, *Strong* and *Accurate*. The effect lasts for a scene. The scene thereafter the user feels empty and weak, –2 on all attributes. The elixir Blue Drops aborts the effect of Wild Chew, both the positive and the negative ones.

With time Wild Chew is very addictive and severe withdrawal symptoms will occur unless the user consumes one dose each week, with the risk of permanent madness or death. No known drugs can counteract this. All goblins (save Shuggludd) have consumed enough Wild Chew for such serious side-effects to set in if the drug ceases to flow from Ashfaru's cauldron.

DREAM SNUFF

The white powder is inhaled and induces a comatose state with very real and often strikingly beautiful hallucinations. To the goblins the Dream Snuff is a reward for a job well done. The drug is treacherous in the sense that he who has tried it always wants more of the wonderful dreams. When living a life without any other pleasures, the risk is great that the user gets caught up in the dreams and fades away. It is only thanks to the restricted access, controlled by Ashfaru, that the whole Varraguldru tribe has not died a collective and peaceful dream death.

RULES: The Dream Snuff also has the effect of a Magic Concentrate, for mystics who want to use it as such. In that case the hallucinatory effect becomes negligible.

BLUE DROPS

The Blue Drops are used to bring down a drug-addled goblin and negates both Wild Chew and Dream Snuff. Sometimes it is force-fed to goblins that have overdosed on Wild Chew; then half a dozen goblins hold down the rabid warrior and force him or her to swallow the drops. The drug makes the goblins calm and wistful, although the latter may have less to do with the drops and more to do with them realizing that they are living a degrading existence as the slaves of evil humans.

RULES: Blue Drops work as a weak antidote and also takes the edge off Wild Chew and Dream Snuff.



The Throne of Thorns

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Version 2, 2019

SPOILER ALERT!

This document contains numerous revelations regarding the Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns and is written for Game Masters only. If you plan to experience the chronicle as a player you really shouldn't continue past this sentence.

Symbaroum



FRIA LIGAN



THUS SPOKE AROALETA

*"... and at the dawn of days was Wyrhta, the power that creates.
Where Nothing had reigned supreme, Wyrhta gave life to All;
shaped here and there, spawned now and then,
formed the one and in chorus the other.
And where attraction arose,
the wild thrived and multiplied ...*

*... but out of the untamed Wielda appeared, the power that rules:
the power of willful violence, that bends here and there,
that curves now and then according to ideals and cravings;
that harvests the one and rejects the other.
With time, Wielda's appetite grew,
and the birth was inevitable ...*

*... because violence begets hate begets Wrath, the power that reacts.
Born of Wielda's hunger for Wyrhta's design, Wrath is everywhere and nowhere,
always close where mother meets mother,
always mounting in strength with the force of the violence.
The arrival of the black fruit is fated,
as inescapable as terrible ...*

*... and it happens, has happened, will happen again,
that Wrath grows boundless, furious, blind in her hunger.
It happens that the blackness grows flesh and spirit and the sharpest of claws,
that the fruit sheds seeds that poison the first,
in the aim to suppress the second.
Then dies All ..."*



THE BARBARIAN LEGEND recounted above gives voice to an allegory describing the basic design of the world. The clanfolds have borne witness to battles between the three principles of the legend, and have again and again been victimized by the aftereffects of such conflicts. Wyrhta represents Creation, Wielda the willful cultivation of Creation and Wrath the furious force with which Creation reacts when cultivation extends into exploitation – a phenomenon known as Corruption among Ambrians.

In reality, these principles have no names, no more than they are bound to some bodies or physical forms – they are not gods. But the principles are none the less real, and over the years countless individuals and creatures have acted as their more or less distinct representations.

The Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns is set in a time and place where the power called Wielda is growing in strength, threatening to stir its age-old antagonist, Wrath, into action. What happens in Ambria and Davokar has happened before, in ancient Symbaroum but also in the citystate Lindaros and in the realm of the Dark Lords, once known as Lyastra. One who

can gaze even further back in time will find more examples of regions where Wrath has been fed to the extent that its rage has affected not only the agents Wielda but also Wyrhta's creation, resulting in widespread death and destruction.

All episodes of the chronicle will touch upon what happens as Wielda (and thereby Wrath) mounts in strength, but it will take some time before the player characters understand how to interpret the signs. Even if a majority of the scenarios deal with situations related to the grander scale of events, the players will most likely perceive them as being rooted in conflicts about resources, knowledge or fame and glory – in short: in the quest for power. It is only during the final episode that they will realize what is at stake and are given an opportunity to influence the course of history.

Another guideline when designing the chronicle has been that the episodes should be created as independent from each other, meaning that the players will not have to play the same characters from start to finish, and also that each episode will have radical but local consequences. Regarding

the latter, the individual episodes will only have a marginal effect on the game world at large, so that existing campaign material will not become obsolete but may be of continued use after some small modifications.

This text introduces the most important factions that are active during the course of the chronicle's adventures, and also provides short descriptions of the episodes themselves. Our hope is that this will provide Game Masters with a basic understanding of the chronicle as a whole, so that you may prepare gaming sessions and plan upcoming intermissions with some knowledge of what is to come.

Clarification

Please understand that many book titles and names mentioned in this document are placeholders. Also, we hope you understand that some adjustments may be made regarding the factions' composition/strategies and the content of the episodes. This is simply unavoidable in a project as massive as the Throne of Thorns.

The Factions

THE THRONE OF THORNS features an interesting mix of powerful factions. Aside from the ones described in this section, other organizations, groups and individuals will appear in single episodes, but the ones listed below have a crucial role to play in all or most of the adventures.

A majority of the factions can be said to act in line with Wiolda, and it is the actions of these groups that propel the developing events. Initially, they will also come off as the most powerful factions, but never forget that they are competing with each other, and also that their actions contribute to making the factions of Wrathia grow stronger. Finally, it should be noted that the Iron Pact and the Witches (in other words, the factions fighting for Wyrhta) have a defensive and reactive stance – their primary objective is to overthrow the plans of the others.

Below, every important faction is described based the following characteristics:

Role: The faction's part in the story at large. Depending on what decisions the players make, this role may come to vary.

Figureheads: Individuals/creatures who act as leaders of the faction, for a longer or shorter period of time. The leaders of smaller groupings within the faction take orders from and are accountable to the figureheads.

Principle: States which principle is represented by the agents of the faction, in some cases more than one. Note that defectors and infiltrators can be found within all major organizations.

Goal: The vision or dream that explains the actions of the faction. However, single agents who appear in the episodes can be totally unaware of its faction's "higher purpose" or have goals of their own.

Strength: That which speaks in favor of the faction and is its most important weapon in the competition with others.

Weakness: That which speaks against the faction and is a liability that others can exploit.

Relations: The overall relationship between the faction and other groupings – often closely tied to the principle it represents but not solely.

HOUSE KOHINOOR

Role: House Kohinoor and its representatives embody the ambition to cultivate nature, to bring order to the wilds and to extract as much resources as possible from the world and its nature. As the story moves forward, Queen Korinthia will evolve into a full-fledged representative of the principle known as Wiolda.

Figureheads: Queen Korinthia is obviously the brightest shining star of House Kohinoor. Field Marshal Beremo Herengol is unswervingly loyal to the Queen and the army is devoted to both of them. Ordo Magica's Grand Master Seldonio should also be counted among the figureheads, while other wizards may have more ambivalent feelings towards the Queen and her allies.

Principle: House Kohinoor represents Wiolda, regard Wyrhta's creation as a resource and Wrathia as the source of evil.

Goal: The ambition is that Ambria will grow so rich and powerful that future enemies can quickly be vanquished, or preferably deterred from attacking at all.

Strength: The soldiers of Ambria idolize both the Queen and the Field Marshal, because of the victory over the Dark Lords and all triumphant battles north of the Titans. Large parts of Ordo Magica also stand firmly with the Queen, and, initially, the same can be said about an overwhelming majority of the Ambrian people. Even among those living in the deepest misery, most of the discontent is aimed at others than House Kohinoor – at the Dark Lords



Deseba has served Prios since long before the Dark Lords' aggressions turned her loving and forgiving god into a cold, condemning and ruthless Giver of Laws.



According to Sarvola, the only way to combat darkness is to literally be the Light. That said, it isn't always easy even for him to think of the First Father, the Templars or murderous Iron Pact members with love and forgiveness.

who murdered Alberetor, but also at barbarians, rebels, elves and the wild dark of Davokar.

Weakness: House Kohinoor displays few weaknesses, but their unwillingness to compromise and tendency to let the aim justify the means make them prone to create enemies. The schism found between the Queen and some of her relatives must also be mentioned. Duke Alesaro may have the same ambitions as Korinthia, but naturally he wants to climb the Ambrian throne himself. Duke Ynedar, the Queen's nephew, is also starting to grow a mind of his own. In time, Korinthia's popularity will start to dwindle, mainly because of the aforementioned reasons. By the end of the fourth episode, she will have turned large parts of the population against herself.

Relations: Initially, House Kohinoor is officially allied with the Priesthood and the Templars, but both these factions will develop into its enemies. It should also be mentioned that the Queen worries about First Father Jeseebegai's ambitions right from the start, and therefore secretly supports his adversaries within the Church – something she will come to regret before the end. The Witches' faction will indeed never actively oppose the Queen; on the other hand, they will never count among her loyal allies. The Iron Pact and the Sovereign's Oath are and remain antagonists of House Kohinoor.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Role: During the course of the chronicle, the Sun Church will undergo a reformation. The interpretation of Prios championed by First Father Jeseebegai, according to which the god is named the Lawgiver, will be challenged by the Lifegiver – an older, gentler and more loving interpretation, emphasizing man's responsibility to care for and take care of Creation.

Figureheads: Initially the Sun Church is governed by the First Father and the spokesperson of the Twilight Friars, Brother Eumenos – two men of God with the same take on both Prios'

commandments and the current state of Ambria. However, in the shadows the living Lightbringer Deseba the Old is working. Later in the chronicle she will orchestrate a coup (together with the Queen), leading to the imprisonment of Jeseebegai and Sarvola's elevation to First Father.

Principle: At the start, the Priesthood represents Wiolda; after the reformation they work more in line with Wyrhta.

Goal: Jeseebegai's goal is to turn Ambria into a theocracy of the Sun and to please Prios by driving the evil from Davokar. Following the reformation, the Sun Church and its agents will become a force fighting to put an end to mankind's uninhibited exploitation, meaning that they will want to see a new Kohinoor on the throne – namely the young Duke Ynedar.

Strength: The Sun Church has its theurgs – a considerable force in their own right. However, after the reformation, many theurgs will be excommunicated since they refuse to accept the new interpretation of Prios' commands. On the other hand, the faction will attract larger and larger parts of the Ambrian population and can count on the support of many veterans from the Great War, convinced that Korinthia's strategy is at risk of reawakening the realm of the Dark Lords in Ambria.

Weakness: The faction is suffering from a lack of warriors, especially when the Templars leave the Curia during the second episode. They are also plagued by internal struggles that to some extent stop them from acting with full force.

Relations: In the beginning, the Sun Church is officially allied to Korinthia, although the latter secretly conspires with Deseba the Old. The Templars leave the Curia but will not grow into enemies until after episode four – they leave the Priesthood to gain greater independence for fighting evil, but will not become real antagonists until they lose all hope in humanity. And regarding the Iron Pact and most of the witches, the trend is the



Leohan Mekele is the Templars most prominent agent in the first two episodes – one of three brothers who have devoted their lives to serving the Lawgiver with sword, shield and burning devotion.



Alisabeta Vearra starts as the Templars' leader on Karvosti, then becomes a commander in the Church of Dead Prios. Too young to have experienced the Great War, she has instead proved her qualities in Ambria, many times over.

opposite: they move from being the factions appointed enemies to becoming its allies.

THE TEMPLARS

Role: The Templars start off as fanatical combatants of Evil, in other words of the wilderness and its agents. Later they will reach the conclusion that Prios is dead and that the world is descending into The Eternal Night. Thus, the Church of Dead Prios is founded, tasked to seek revenge on the murderers – elves, witches and heretical humans who from ignorance or greed are responsible for the doom of the Lawgiver. Before the end, their beliefs are so profound and extreme that they willingly suffer corruption to serve their quest for vengeance. The Templars is the faction that “in the name of Light, wanders deeper and deeper into the valley in the shadow of death”.

Figureheads: The Knights of Prios are blindly loyal to Commander Iakobo Vearra. Later, his son Ervano and daughter Alisabeta take charge of one corps each, and as the chronicle closes in on its grand finale they also join forces with the bonepale warriors of the night elf Gidim.

Principle: The Knights of the Dying Sun start off as the most tenacious champions of Wielda but will eventually embark on the bloody road of revenge, thereby becoming uncompromising agents of Wrath.

Goal: At the start, the Templar's aim is to save the dying Sun God by combatting His enemies, but as soon as the Church of Dead Prios is founded, the goal changes into the quest for vengeance – first on the enemies, later on everybody, humans in particular.

Strength: The Templars rely on their weapons and their faith. The faction's cavalry is a force to be reckoned with and many knights have “gifts from Prios” in the form of mystical powers. Close to the end they will also gain allies among others who regard humankind as the root of evil.

Weakness: At the start of the chronicle, the faction includes about two hundred Sun Knights

and about as many followers (squires, laborers, stable hands and so on). Hence, the faction is not large in numbers and is also isolated from others because of their fanatical tendencies.

Relations: Before Iakobo Vearra reaches the conclusion that humankind must be eliminated, cooperation with factions like House Kohinoor and the Priesthood is possible to some degree. All other factions are right from the get-go painted out as Prios' murderers and therefore as deadly enemies to the Sun Knights.

THE SOVEREIGN'S OATH

Role: The Sovereign's Oath is the “threat in the north” that grows ever stronger with time.

Figureheads: The obvious figurehead of the faction is the Sovereign herself: the teenage girl who goes by no other name than the Blood-Daughter, and who is drenched in blood whenever she makes an appearance. However, the true leaders are her father, Clan Chieftain Razameaman of Saar-Kahn, and maybe even more so the informal ruler of Gaoia, the lindworm Odralintos (Grandfather Lint).

Principle: The Sovereign's Oath is and remains a champion of Wielda, like House Kohinoor.

Goal: To reestablish Symbaroum with the Ambrians as subjugated slaves.

Strength: The faction grows larger as more and more clans swear the oath. Its warriors are fearless, often pumped full of powerful elixirs, and the warlords can also make use of the special elite units of the subdued clans. Finally, Odralintos should not be forgotten – with the help of the lindworm, the faction can call other power hungry beasts of the forest to its aid.

Weakness: The greatest weakness of the Sovereign's Oath is their lack of mystical powers – they ban all practice of witchcraft at an early stage. Adding to that are the escalating number of internal conflicts, caused by rebels within the subdued clans.



Relations: The Sovereign's Oath is purely and simply at war with everyone, even with the witches after having banned the use of mystical powers.

THE WITCHES

Role: In many situations the witches will stand out as likely allies of the player characters, as they are desperately trying to get both Ambrians and barbarians to understand their role in the impending catastrophe.

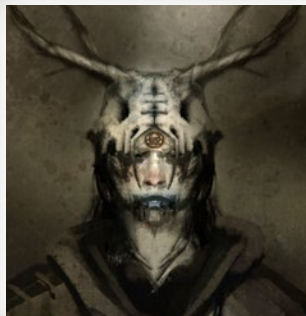
Figureheads: The Huldra Yeleta will not abandon her mission. From the tunnels of Karvosti and later on from where she is hiding in the wilds, it is she who dictates the words spoken by witches sent to advise the leaders of other factions. Her closest friends and helpers, Gadramon and Eferneya (see image above), often take the lead when there are more serious tasks to handle.

Principle: The witches are convinced that a balance between Wyrhta and Wielda can be maintained – a conviction supported by how the clans have lived and survived in Davokar.

Goal: Most witches have taken it upon themselves to ease the effects of Wratha's awakening; they want to put an end to the rampage of the Ambrians and the Blood-Daughter, and also do what they can to keep Wratha dormant. When the latter is unsuccessful, the Huldra is quick to send witches to the site trying to limit the damage.

Strength: The witches have their mystical powers, an unsurpassed local knowledge and can reach temporary agreements with mighty beings who share their ambition to keep Wratha asleep. In addition, when they are forced to leave Karvosti, about halfway through the chronicle, they will be accompanied by parts of the Wrath Guard.

Weakness: Aside from being small in numbers, the witches are divided between many different tasks. Some are always traveling, hoping to talk sense into the leaders of other factions. The rest do their best to “quench fires” – that is, journey to locations where Wratha threatens to awake and prevent that from happening; alternately try to sing the already awakened aspect of Wratha back to sleep.



Even members of the clans can sometimes be heard referring to the Huldra Yeleta as the true ruler of Davokar. Read more about her on page 26 in the Core Rulebook.



Adreanea is not the most unreasonable warrior of the Iron Pact, but not far from it. According to her, humankind is a disease from which the world must be cured – by any and all means possible.

Relations: The witches are the most neutral faction of all – they are no one’s enemy, yet no one’s friend. The exception is, of course, the groups fighting with the conviction of Wrath, yet even they are not regarded as pure enemies. Instead, Yeleta, as well as most of her followers, feels sorry for the “Tools of Wrath”.

THE IRON PACT

Role: During the chronicle, the Iron Pact will wage a desperate and ultimately hopeless battle ending in their near annihilation.

Figureheads: At the beginning, the Yndaros-based Elori and Prince Eneáno in the Halls of a Thousand Tears are foremost among the Iron Pact members seeking a diplomatic solution. The latter grows sicker and more erratic as time goes by, and he ultimately meets his death during episode four, in Symbar. Elori will then be exalted in his stead, and deepen the already established collaborations with the Sun Church Reformists, especially Duke Ynedar, Father Sarvola and Deseba the Old.

Principle: The Iron Pact fights for Wyrhta, always in opposition to Wielda and Wrath.

Goal: The elves and their allies want to put an end to humankind’s continuously growing dominance over, primarily, Davokar – through diplomacy or acts of violence.

Strength: Aside from an unsurpassed knowledge about historical events and Davokar’s nature, the pact members possess powerful magic and have warbands that are both fleet-footed and accurate in their aim.

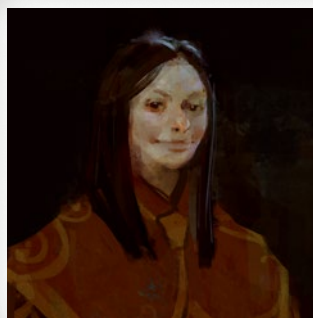
Weakness: The members of the Iron Pact are too few in numbers to wage an open war against the region’s other factions. They also have a hard time keeping up with events and acting in unison, primarily because elves in different life stages tend to perceive the world very differently – that which appears as an acute and serious problem to a summer elf may to a winter elf seem like a gentle ripple on the ocean of time.

Relations: It is hard to describe the faction’s relations to other groupings in an unambiguous way, since the pact is made up of many divisions with different ideas when it comes to goals and methods. Elori is one example showing that the pact members can cooperate, and many witches can testify about having friends among the elves. But basically, the members of the pact refuse to compromise in the defense of Wyrhta’s creation and they have no sympathy for the agents of Wrath.

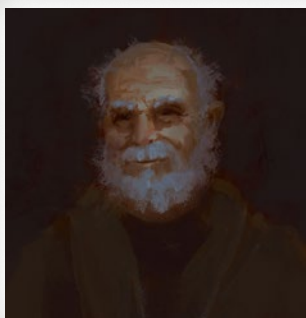
SACRED OF THE OLD BLOOD

Role: The Sacred of the Old Blood is “the power in the shadows” who appears when one least expects it, using lies and manipulation to make life difficult for everyone else. In time, the cult will become depraved and turn into one of Wrath’s most powerful tools.

Figureheads: The cult was established by Duke Sesario, but that fact is only known to his daughter, Duchess Esmeralda. She represents the duo when meeting with new recruits; recruits who during the first half of the chronicle neither know about each other’s identities or who their true leader is. Other important individuals are Agramai Kalfas, known as the Prince, and the lady-in-waiting Junia Dardall, which both have prominent roles to play in a couple of the episodes.



It may be difficult to believe that Duchess Esmeralda – loved and admired by all – is the leader of one of Ambria’s most callous and ravenous blood cults.



Already as a kid, Agramai Kalfas was taught to cherish his noble blood and regard his privileges as godsent. The idea that there exist forces of nature which are beyond the control of him and his peers is downright ludicrous.

Principle: Initially the Sacred of the Old Blood sides with Wielda, but later on the followers and leaders will become more and more corrupt, filling them with the desire to serve Wratha.

Goal: Sesarior and Esmerelda have two main aims – partly to tame the dark powers of Davokar in order to ennoble the already noble bloodlines of Ambria; partly to use this power in order to restore the undead queen mother Abesina to life. Other members of the cult focus on the former, convinced that their fundamentally noble blood cannot be corrupted. But that is, of course, erroneous and before the end the cult will have as its main aim to wake Wratha – primarily by using lies and deceit to seduce the members of other factions.

Strength: The biggest strength of the cult is that it acts in secrecy and that the members have lots

of contacts in, and access to, the halls of power. It should also be mentioned that they will grow more and more powerful as sorcerers – giving them access to ever increasing numbers of undead warriors and enslaved forest beasts.

Weakness: The cult's greatest weakness, not least at the start of the chronicle, is that its members primarily serve their own self-interest. Up until the very end, the leader duo will never be fully confident that their agents will do what they are told.

Relations: At the start, none of the other factions know of the cult's existence. Near the end, they emerge from the shadows to become a powerful adversary to everyone else – most notably the Knights of Dead Priors who will regard "the Sacred" as their main enemies.

The Episodes of the Chronicle

THIS SECTION AIMS to provide a general and concise description of the chronicle as a whole. The portrayal of the episodes is based on three main components: setting, theme and factions.

Even if it may be considered self-evident, it should be mentioned that all episodes leave it to the Game Master to tweak, add, subtract and by other means adapt the adventures to the preferences of his or her gaming group. Furthermore, all episodes will invite the players and their characters to take ownership of events, which in the end may mean that different gaming groups will play them in very different ways.

You are of course welcome to bring any questions and thoughts inspired by this overview to debate on various social forums. But please remember to offer fair warning, so that all those who plan to experience the chronicle as players may do so without the burden of having "unwanted and vexatious insights".

COMPOSITION OF THE EPISODES

First a few words on the composition of the books in the series. Aside from the episodes of the adventure chronicle, each book will have two more sections. The idea is that all books will begin with a segment meant to be read by both players and Game Masters, depicting the facade (or surface) of the main setting, such as it appears to people in general – including noteworthy historical events, establishments, conflicts, individuals and so on. This way, the players (and their characters) can navigate the setting and will have a greater capacity to take initiative and solve problems without the Game Master guiding their steps. This part of the books will also be made available as standalone eBooks.

After that comes a section exclusively meant for the Game Master's eyes, delving deep below the

surface. Here you will learn the truth behind the popular version of historical events, and get glimpses of what hides behind the counters, in the backrooms and cellars of the setting's establishments. The section also includes a long list of plot hooks for you to develop into adventures, and tools or guides on how to design different types of scenarios. Finally, the Game Master's section contains new rules, powers, creatures, elixirs and so on – related to the featured adventure or to the main setting at large.

The third section will be the adventure, and together the three sections will number about 130–170 pages. So, that said, let us take a closer look at the adventures.

THISTLE HOLD: WRATH OF THE WARDEN

The first episode of the Throne of Thorns will mainly be played in Thistle Hold. A couple of detours into Davokar and down into the Underworld will be made, but other than that the characters will meet their challenges in the town of Mayor Nightpitch.

The main theme of the adventure is about introducing the players and their characters to the basic conflicts of the game world; they are meant to get acquainted with the chronicle's main factions, and learn a thing or two about their goals, methods and internal as well as external struggles. The quest and its challenges deals with identifying and combatting a cult of darkness worshippers which threaten to bring great suffering down on Thistle Hold and its residents. No matter if the characters act on their own initiative or are employed by a quest-giver, they will confront representatives from House Kohinoor, the Iron Pact, the various divisions of the Sun Church and so on.

Yes, all factions will have agents or representatives in Thistle Hold that the characters can



encounter. The only exception is the Sacred of the Old Blood, whose agent in town is the root of the adventure's plot but without stepping out from the shadows other than in the form of fleeting rumors.

KARVOSTI: THE WITCH HAMMER

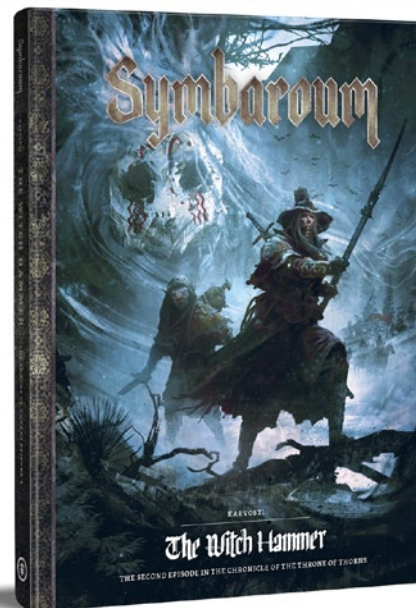
The second book focuses on the cliff of Karvosti and its surroundings. The player characters will enter the labyrinthine caverns inside the rock, and will also travel to several sites located in the outer regions of the Forest of Davokar.

The main theme of the adventure deals with the escalating conflict between various Ambrian factions, especially between House Kohinoor and the Church of Prios. Another important theme is about establishing the importance of the legendary city of Symbar and is equally mythical Throne of Thorns – a theme expressed in the adventure's story, designed as the hunt for a person who claims to know where the lost capital city of Symbaroum can be found. The characters may become involved in the hunt for several reasons, and will learn a great deal about the history and structure of the ancient empire, including what finally made it crumble into ruin.

Aside from the factions mentioned above, an Iron Pact warband and a group of assassins from the Sovereign's Oath will feature in the adventure. The latter's attempt to infiltrate the stronghold of the High Chieftain leads to the player characters' (and the players') first serious confrontation with the followers of the Blood-Daughter.

YNDAROS: THE DARKEST STAR

The third episode of the chronicle is mainly set in Ambria's capital Yndaros. Aside from adventures in the city and a trip to a noble estate in the Yndarian



countryside, the player characters will visit Lindaros' sunken ruins and, by mystical means, the corrupted waste in the Yonderworld where the funeral ship of Symbaroum's last emperor has stranded.

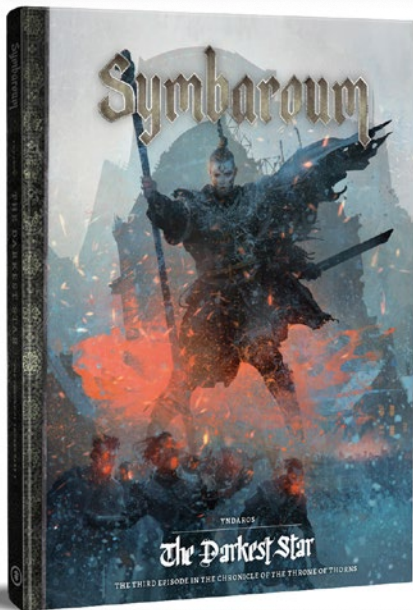
The main theme revolves around the historical connections between Symbaroum, Lindaros and the realm of the Dark Lords, connections that also lead to present-day Ambria. Another important component is the commencing war between Ambria and the Sovereign's Oath, which in part is used by the adventure's primary antagonist – a powerful and vindictive mage who threatens to devastate major parts of Yndaros in his hunt for Symbar and the Throne of Thorns.

Obviously, in Yndaros all important factions are represented, and all conflicts within and between them will come into play. The player characters will confront and (possibly) cooperate with representatives from all major groups, and for the first time stand eye-to-eye with some of the higher leadership of, for instance, the Sun Church, Ordo Magica and the Sacred of the Old Blood.

SYMBAR: MOTHER OF DARKNESS

The turning point of the chronicle is set deep inside Davokar, where Symbaroum's last emperor once had his seat. Besides the adventure setting itself, a large part of the adventure will involve a journey to the deeper, darker parts of the woods, as well as the preparations made in Thistle Hold before the hazardous expedition.

In the ruined city that was once called Symbar, the player characters will gain a deeper understanding of the regions' and mankind's older history. However, most importantly, they will have to take a stand in the aggressions between Ambria's and Davokar's factions, or actively opt to not enter into any alliance, maybe in the hope of claiming the



treasure, knowledge and powers of the ruins for themselves. If they choose the latter, they will have a tough road ahead, because they are far from alone in trying to unveil the secrets of the ancient capital...

In this episode all major factions clash for the first time, and this happens in a remote location from which no one but the victors will return with tales of what actually transpired. However, we are not talking about large armies here, but of smaller groups of capable explorers, reduced in numbers on their way to the site.

ALBERETOR: THE HAUNTED WASTE

Alberetor, the once so beautiful, now blackened homeland of the Ambrians, sets the stage for the fifth episode; the adventure will also take the player characters into Lyastra, the devastated domain of the Dark Lords. Important adventure sites are the fortress where Korinthia was imprisoned by the Dark Lords, an old monastery with its archives filled with valuable knowledge, and also the resting place of a powerful artifact – an oasis of life in the midst of death.

Ambria is plagued by civil war, waged between a faction loyal to Queen Korinthia and another spearheaded by Duke Ynedar. The player characters leave for the south, partially in the hope of finding something which can bring the hate and the fighting to an end. During the trip they discover further information regarding the joint fate of Symbaroum, Lindaros and the Dark Lords, and are able to draw disturbing parallels to what is happening in Ambria. It also becomes clear that the Dark Lords are not alone in carrying the blame for the destruction of Alberetor.

The main antagonist of the adventure is the Sacred of the Old Blood, who have sent their agents to the fatherland hunting the same insights that

the player characters are after. Agents of House Kohinoor will also play a part, tasked to stop others from digging up the past.

SAROKLAW: BATTLE FOR THE THRONE

The sixth and final episode of the chronicle will bring the player characters along to many legendary sites. Ambal Seba, the flooded vale which was mankind's first settlement west of the Ravens, will be exposed; Landfall, where the myth of the pure Arch Magic is kept alive, will be visited; the subterranean Saroklaw, once the second city of Symbaroum, is revealed to hide a passageway to humanity's ancient home in the Yonderworld. And last, but certainly not least, the characters must return to Symbar – now restored to its former glory and waiting to again become the high seat of the region's ultimate ruler.

The question to answer is who will succeed Symbar as Symbaroum's emperor. There are three main candidates, one representative of each of the primal principles, most likely Queen Korinthia (Wielda), Esmerelda (Wratha) and Aluin, the bastard son of Father Sarvola (Wyrhta). Depending on what has happened during previous adventures, and primarily who has gained access to the secrets of Arch Magic, the relative strengths of these faction can vary. Furthermore, there is a definite risk that there are other pretenders who wish to represent one principle or another, for instance the Blood-Daughter (Wielda).

The player characters will of course have an influence over who gets crowned, or can join and support the factions that would rather see the throne remain empty. Irrespective of which, we dare promise lots of negotiations, sneaky maneuvers and battles taking place in abysmal canyons, lava-lit cave halls and blight-stricken ash deserts!

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|------------|----------------------|--|-------------------------|---------|
| PLAYER | PAIN THRESHOLD | | SHADOW | |
| NAME | TOUGHNESS
MAXIMUM | | CORRUPTION
PERMANENT | |
| RACE | | | EXPERIENCE | UNSPENT |
| OCCUPATION | CORRUPTION THRESHOLD | | QUOTE | |

ACCURATE

CUNNING

DISCREET

PERSUASIVE

QUICK

RESOLUTE

STRONG

VIGILANT

ABILITIES & POWERS

| | | |
|--------|--------|--------|
| NAME | NAME | NAME |
| EFFECT | EFFECT | EFFECT |
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| NAME | NAME | NAME |
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WEAPONS & ARMOR

| | | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|
| WEAPON | DAMAGE | QUALITY | ATTRIBUTE | ARMOR | ARMOR |
| WEAPON | DAMAGE | QUALITY | ATTRIBUTE | PROTECTION | PROTECTION |
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| WEAPON | DAMAGE | QUALITY | ATTRIBUTE | DEFENSE | DEFENSE |

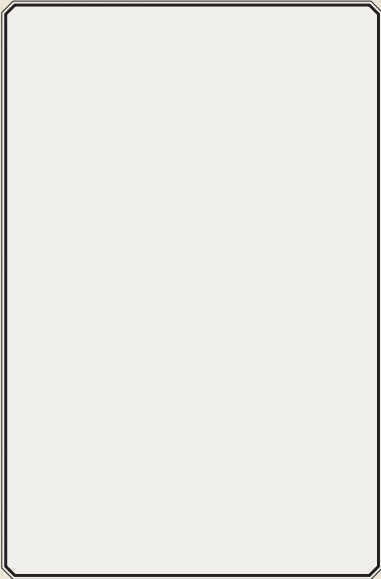


AGE HEIGHT WEIGHT

APPEARANCE

BACKGROUND

PERSONAL GOAL



EQUIPMENT

FRIENDS & COMPANIONS

NAME RACE OCCUPATION PLAYER

NAME RACE OCCUPATION PLAYER

NAME RACE OCCUPATION PLAYER

NAME RACE OCCUPATION PLAYER

NAME RACE OCCUPATION PLAYER

GROUP NAME

GROUP GOAL

ARTIFACTS & MYSTICAL TREASURES

NAME POWERS CORRUPTION

NAME POWERS CORRUPTION

NAME POWERS CORRUPTION

NAME POWERS CORRUPTION

MONEY

OTHER ASSETS