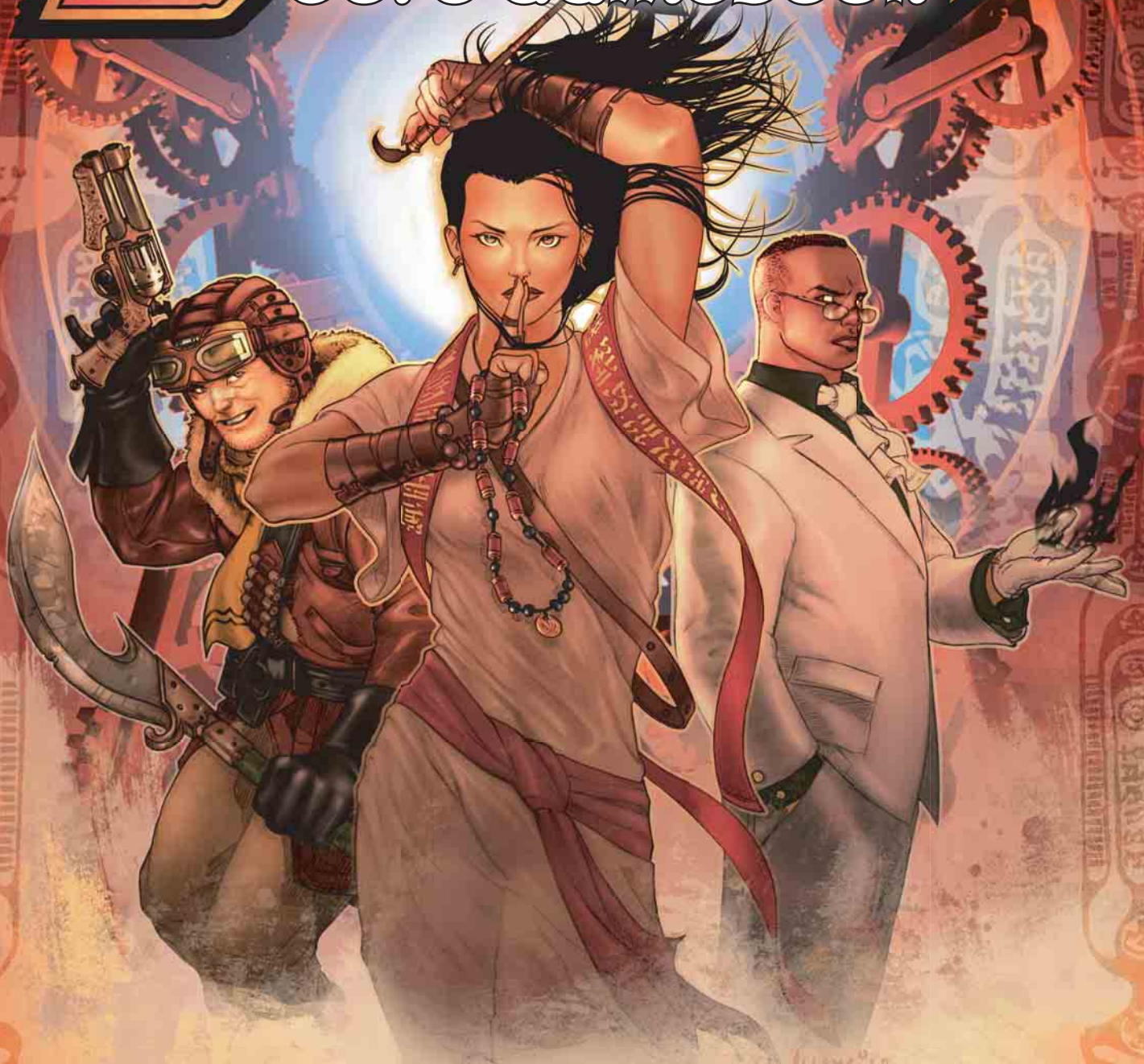
The Secret of Zirkid™

Core Gamebook



Hockabout, Caplan, Gutowski and Flores

Paragon Games™

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Paragon Games
Presents

THE SECRET OF ZIR'AN
CORE GAMEBOOK

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Aram Thanks:

My Mom (Hi!) for indulging me in the Oradell, NJ Toy's 'R Us the summer of '78, and continuing to indulge my imaginary and educational growth. The first gaming crew in SC; Carl and Jorn. Matt and Jesper for that first critical year in Los Altos. Karl and Will for the High School and early college gaming years. Jared, Todd, and Dave for picking up the torch after the HS group went their separate ways. (Last names omitted due to impartial memory and for protection of the innocent) Chris Hockabout for drawing me into the Interface crew (proof that letter writing works sometimes!) and the other characters there; Thaddeus Howze, Barton Bolemen, Kevin DeAntonio, and Peter Christian. Wes Harris, Darek Killian, Darren Layne, and all the relics of the mansion for camaraderie, support, and love. Moses Ferrer, Victor Phillips, Julius Baker, and James Shyun for the instruction over the years. Of course, the brotherhood eternal Chris Hockabout, Marty Caplan, and Marcus Flores. Is this thing really happening? Regardless, if we're not in the old folks home, on another planet, or in the wastelands after the bomb or anywhere else in the bright open future as friends, brothers, and accomplices, there'll be hell to pay!

Chris Thanks:

David A. Hargrave, Mike Ebert, Michael Pondsmith, Thaddeus Howze, Barton Bolemen, Kevin DeAntonio, Tita Grady, Dale McKee, Justin Chin, Dave Ackerman, Michio Okamura, Mark Rein•Hagen, and the kids of the 1992 RPG class at the Berkeley Jewish Community Center… and my parents, of course.

Marcus Thanks:

First and foremost my mother, sister and brother for being my very first gaming group. Temistokle Martinez for rambling with me about a weird dream in a Laundromat. All of the play-testers for having fun with us and making us look at our child with a less then adoring eyes. Kublacon, DunDraCon and ConQuest for supporting us throughout the years. Special thanks to Alex and the others boys who pass the time gaming, keep your head above it all brother. Thanks to all gamers, GMs & Players alike and here's to the tall-tales we can spin; let the meek and strong fight over this floating rock - we'll create a dozen other worlds that we rule… with a flaming sword!

Marty Thanks:

Thanks to Dad for poisoning my first Dwarven Cleric at the Keep on the Borderlands, and to Mom for supporting my creative expression no matter how odd it was. To Eric Marlais, Marco Marlais, Mark Hamilton, Michael Hamilton, Matt Fisher and Bill "Obie" Kauffman for the 72 hour marathons constructing paradise from dice, paper, imagination, Cherry Coke and pepperoni pizza. To Mark Rein•Hagen, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook and Wes Harris for the Mansion and an education in inspired (inebriated?) game design. To Aram Gutowski, Marcus Flores and Chris Hockabout for obvious reasons, my true brothers. And finally to everyone at White Wolf for believing in us enough to bring Zir'An into reality.

ISBN #0-9729052-0-0

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Secret of Zir'An Core Gamebook is the first in a series of role-playing game source materials that detail the future fantasy world of Zir'An. This volume is a complete resource that gaming groups can use to have their own adventures as the Chosen of Fate. Future supplements will provide deeper and broader access to Zir'An, and tell the overarching story of the modern era of the world. Great secrets will be revealed over the coming supplements that we hope will be exciting and inspirational to fans of Zir'an.

The Finesse Game System is meant to provide a game experience that is customizable and narrative oriented.

- The Paragon Games Team



Ruins abound in the sand-swept Periphery.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

"WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF SECRETS..."

Day 1: Arrival. I tried to keep that in mind as I stepped off the rickety Tramp Flyer, but the blast of furnace heat leeched every sensible thought from my head. I knew of the Periphery's reputation for killing heat, but until you've experienced it for yourself the mind boggles to describe it. Bidding the captain a sluggish farewell, I struggled across the air-strip; nothing more, really, than a flat field of sun-baked clay. When one of the natives, an old man with canyon deep wrinkles and skin bronzed a deep brown by the sun, approached with a wave, "hello, hello, you're the tenth plane landing here." "Today?" I ask. "Ever." He said with a grin.

Day 3: I came to find adventurers, and in a place like the Periphery that generally means mercenary treasure-hunters. It did not take me long, since in nearly every cafe you will find small groups of them in whispering huddles. Before long, though, one group attached themselves to me. "We pegged you for a journalist the moment you came in," joked Yoli, a jovial Ballinorian with icy blond hair and pink, sunburned skin. One of them even pulled out a well-worn copy of the Madura Journal, the very publication that had sent me to this hot and inhospitable wasteland of prehistory.

Day 12: When the Endwar reshaped the land three millennia ago, these islands rose from the sea bed, unearthing ruins of a civilization tens of thousands of years old. The ruins that now jutted above the plains of rock-hard clay were a favorite target of treasure hunters. Yoli told me of a group that went missing last month, passing through the same area we traversed now. Krister Herris, a Valluneian antiquities dealer, showed me his shining new Lamako Carbine. "*With* incendiary ammunition," he added gleefully. But the journey passed without incident, and we would have no hint of the horrors to come as we came into sight of the ruins.

Day 17: I'm still not sure exactly how I managed to survive. When we finally crawled from the entrance and into blazing heat of the midday sun, I thought of the three we had lost, their bodies consumed by the things in the ruins. Weary from fright and exhausted to the point of unconsciousness, none of us could bear to close our eyes. We had unleashed something from the deep ruins, something that was now loose in the world, and as we huddled there in silence one thought preoccupied us all. Our ordeal was only just beginning. We'd tempted Fate and she bit back. Hard. Without a word we struggled to our feet and began the long walk back. We'd recovered enough loot to fund our new mission, but it is cold comfort. There is only one concern that drives us now. Find it, kill it, and undo what we have done.

– *Karin Ami - The Madura Journal of the World*

ZIR'AN: A WORLD OF CHANGE

The world of Zir'An is one of change, of destruction and renewal, a world reshaped by war. Countless eras have come and gone, countless empires have risen and fallen, destroying themselves only to be reborn again. The ruins of these ancient conflicts, these forgotten epochs, lie buried and silent in the dim corners of the world. Evidence of the cycle of creation and destruction, of mighty empires that once dominated the globe, laid to waste by their own ambition. For despite all their power they were not immune to the cycle. Zir'An suffers, and Zir'An endures. It has in the past, and it will continue to do so in the future.

"...The customers of the Under the Boughs cafe in Vallunei City had their lunchtime meal interrupted today when a nearby sewerage lid slid open to reveal a bedraggled couple, later described as a husband and wife team of professional adventurers. Though obviously wounded and reeking of offal, the two apparently attempted to warn cafe patrons off, as a creature, now captured by government officials, emerged shortly thereafter. The three then continued their melee until members of the Civil Guard arrived to help dispatch the creature and take the pair in for questioning."

— Radio news report, Treaty Wire Service.

But this epoch differs from all others that have come before, facing challenges that defy all explanation. In past ages the Seven Gods walked openly among their children. The gods gave freely of their council and were a presence in the lives of everyone, but that time is no more. Three millennia past, when the Endwar spread destruction across the globe, the image of **seven empty thrones** flooded the minds of every living being. Its meaning was clear. Abandoned by their gods, the world plunged further into darkness. But while the Seven may have departed, their creations would live on, they would rebuild, and the cycle would continue.

"...the passengers were screaming and running in every direction, it was total chaos. Though it was a cloudy night, through windows I could clearly see the long, sinister outline of the air-pirates' sleek craft, and the cables connecting it to our ponderous luxury airliner. With a shout men in armored jumpsuits crashed through the large windows of the casino deck. One, though, was dressed with outlandish flair, the upper half of his face concealed beneath a porcelain mask, though the mask did not conceal the sparkling, fearless eyes that peered from behind. As his men quickly spread about the room, he shouted in a clear voice. 'Attention! Attention you lucreous rabble! I am Captain Lazarou and these are my Sky Dogs.' In one languid motion, he drew a beautiful gilt pistol from his holster and fired into the air, sending a chandelier crashing into a Pule table. The cries of panic dimmed to stunned silence. 'There, that's better.'"

— *Account of the raid on the airliner 'Lordly Summit.'*

In the Modern Era, the world of Zir'An hangs in an uneasy balance. It has survived countless hardships yet remains plagued by dark powers bent on plunging the world back into the mire of war and the annhilation of a new dark age. Ageless tyrants of godlike power, the **Fane**, stand as a grim reminder of the evils still loose in the world. Their fanatical empires dream of the conquest and the degradation of their enemies. But against them stand an alliance of powerful **Treaty Nations**, who's massed might are the only proven match against the threat of Fane domination.

"...three survivors have been recovered from the former location of the Western Valluneian village of Thusker Dale today. Listeners will remember that Thusker Dale was the small farming village that had reportedly vanished, along with all of its one-hundred and eight inhabitants, over two weeks ago. Though the village has yet to return itself, and the hundred and five now believed missing, the survivors report that the village had apparently been 'swallowed' into the spiritual plane as the result of a runic experiment gone horribly awry. Though authorities are consulting with a number of noted experts on the subject, they do not predict a happy outcome for the village or the hundred and five still missing. Said one, 'The inherent dangers in the spirit plane of that region do not give us much reason to hope for their safe return.'"

— Radio news report, Treaty Wire Service

And this uneasy balance grows more tenuous with each passing year. But in a world of great heroes, as the cycle dawns anew, there is reason to hope. Many believe each cycle is a test set forth by the goddess of Fate, a test to the civilizations that have prospered in that time. Will they endure? Or will they succumb to the evils they have fostered? The forgotten ruins of ancient epochs have testified to the failure of past civilizations, but each holds a secret, a clue to the dangers facing the Modern Era. And from this era will be born heroes, Fate's Chosen, each walking a long and perilous path of discovery. Witnesses to great events, seekers of hidden histories, adventurers. The key to the present lies buried in the past. For their world

to survive, they must discover its secrets.

A ZIR'AN TIMELINE

-2 p.d. (Post-Deity): *The Endwar begins. War spills across all borders as the Dhalman Confederacy and the Triune Empire clash. The conflict spreads and intensifies over the next two years, finally reaching its apex with the departure of the Seven Gods.*

0 p.d.: *The image of Seven Empty Thrones fills the mind of all living beings. The Seven Gods depart this world. The loss of the Seven shatters the spirits of the people, as well as their minds, and the war ends in a final spasm of destruction.*

0 to 100 p.d.: *The Aftermath. Much of this century was a nightmare of chaos and death, as the survivors strove against the years of darkness, the long winter, and the plagues that followed. This era was characterized by great migrations of people. Entire populations relocated.*

100 to 600 p.d.: *The Reconstruction. As the threats of the Aftermath recede, the survivors begin rebuilding their cultures. But this was also an era of conquest, as wars for consolidation swept through the known lands.*

600 to 1001 p.d.: *The Post-War Empires. Civilization has returned to the world and powerful Empires rule over a prosperous and promising era of peace. A time of grand adventure, of famous heroes and villains. Zir'An's "golden age" before the nightmare that was to destroy it all.*

1001 to 1050 p.d.: *The Rise of the Fane. Seemingly normal people suddenly find themselves endowed with incredible power, power that corrupts them to evil. They manifest almost at random, spreading death, destruction, and suffering to all within reach. Nations fall as Fane arise among their populations.*

1050 to 1100 p.d.: *The War of the Fane. Fane battle Fane in the war for domination. The Ianer and Dolonorri become pawns in their battles and toys for their amusement. All civilization is in ruins, the devastated playground of bloodthirsty demigods.*

1100 to 1517 p.d.: *The Second Darkness. The surviving Fane settle into their domains, beginning the four centuries of torment suffered by the survivors of the War of the Fane. Each Fane fashions their domains to fit their twisted desires, crafting empires dedicated to torment.*

1517 to 1624 p.d.: *The Liberation. Many cultures tell of a coming Savior, and that savior was Kah. His war of liberation spread slowly, but grew greatly in strength with the death of each Fane, until the final conflict that birthed the Hegemony and the Treaty Nations.*

1624 to 3020 (present) p.d.: *The Modern Era. The Treaty Nations lead an era of uneasy peace. Though prosperity and the wonders of the modern era promise a bright future, there can be no true peace while the Hegemony exists.*

THE CHOSEN OF FATE

In a world of danger, where powerful forces hold sway, equally formidable powers must arise to maintain balance. The ultimate arbiter of this balance is Fate. The world of Zir'An is the product of seven godlike forces, the final expression of their creative abilities, but the world endures because of the intricate weave of circumstance that is Fate. Though the permutations of Fate may seem complex, they revolve around a very simple principle: to bind together individuals through chance and circumstance. For Fate is only ever about individuals. People do great things, not objects, or places, or even ideas. Ultimately the destruction or renewal of Zir'An will come to rest on the decisions of a few individuals. Such is the burden of Fate's Chosen.

Fate chooses its agents in numerous ways. Like marionettes in a child's theater, people are brought together at the right moment, at the right time, or confronted with a situation where they must make a choice. Thrust into great events by a freak occurrence, or forced to take action when no one else could, it is sometimes said that when Fate comes to choose you, only you make the final decision to accept. But Fate's influence stretches through time, through history; it is very, very patient. Some can be born into Fate's service. Those individuals feel the call of unexplored territories, a need to plumb the depths of the world's hidden histories. Though Fate may call many to the task, only those who actively curry Fate's favor can truly be called Adventurers.

But are all of Fate's Chosen *heroes?* No. Not even half. Becasue Fate serves the Balance, it is not about serving the greater good, but rather preserving the whole indefinitely. Letting it neither crumble in violent destruction nor slowly fade into a stagnant decline. As often as Fate's influence is thanked and prayed for, ten times more is it cursed and reviled. There is no light without dark, no heroes without villains. Fate tests the character of entire cultures through disaster and adversity. Not natural disasters, which are Drandlur's domain, but disasters of their own making, where the outcome rests on the decisions of a few individuals. Fate is patient, however, and her influence stretches through time. When she calls upon you it may only be for the most miniscule purposes, just one tiny link in a chain of circumstance that leads into history, into heroic legend, into ancient mythology.

WELCOME

The Secret of Zir'An was created by gamers for gamers, and is intended to be a unique speculative fantasy world that inspires and entertains. Use it as you will — ultimately it is a resource for your version of the game. Don't let anything in this or future books get in the way of your own creativity. We hope this book provides many game sessions of enjoyment for you and your gaming group. Be on the lookout for supplementary materials like the *Hand of Fate Book*, the *Fate Screen*, the *Secret of Zir'An Professional Adventurer's Guide,* and the *Secret of Zir'An World Atlas: The Treaty Nations*, for expanded secrets, setting and system information.

You can also find more resources for *The Secret of Zir'An* (including free downloads) on the Internet at:

WWW.PARAGONGAMES.US



A squad of Illestani engage Shadekin on the northern Treaty front.

CHAPTER 2

FINESSE GAME SYSTEM

All die rolling in *The Secret of Zir'An* uses a d10 and involves interlacing three fundamental elements of the player character: **Stats, Aptitudes,** and **Skills**. Stats represent the qualities of the character, what nature and family gave them. Aptitudes are those qualities that have been nurtured in the character as they have developed. Finally, a character's Skills represent their experience with their capabilities. A character's skills grow in four separate stages, passing from a **Basic** level of **Finesse** on through **Advanced, Expert,** and **Elite.** A skill's **Finesse Level** determines what sort of feats a character can accomplish. Skills are also rated by Practice, reflecting the hands-on reliability of the skill.

It will often be the case that the player will not need to roll a die in order to succeed in any task attempt. Die rolling is for times of uncertainty and drama, where fate teeters on the edge of a ten-sided die. Or perhaps a player hopes to score big, to press her luck and glean an extraordinary success from potential disaster.

STATS

In The Secret of Zir'An, humanoid characters base abilities are modeled around a general 1–10 range. In a world where the ordinary rubs shoulders with the elite, it is not unknown for exceptional beings to surpass those limitations. Stats that exceed 10 reflect truly advanced development, be it the minds of the Vandalusan scholars or the prodigious bulk of the Gogach peoples of the Fire Reaches.

Physique

Physique is a measure of a character's overall physical conditioning. Not simply dexterity or physical strength, it is a reflection of the whole package.

Mass

Mass is the primary indicator of overall physical presence. High mass could be either a lot of fat, or mounds of honed muscle, depending upon the Physique of the character.

Intelligence

A description of pure intellectual processing power; how thorough, deep, and complex the thought of any individual is.

Acuity

The speed at which thought occurs, and how quickly an individual processes information. Commonly referred to as instinct, common sense, or cunning.

These Stats give your character a skeleton, which you can then flesh out. From these Stats a few more characteristics will be derived. The five **Derived Stats** in *The Secret of Zir'An* are as follows:

Reaction

(PHYSIQUE + INTELLIGENCE + ACUITY)/3

Combat effectiveness of the character, expressed as the average of all their applicable Stats.

Speed

ACUITY + PHYSIQUE - MASS

How fast an individual can act. A character with a Mass greater than their Physique is considered to be more bulk than lean muscle, and while benefiting from a stronger and more rugged frame, they are not as quick as someone who's Physique surpasses their Mass; a body lean and limber.

Perception

(INTELLIGENCE + ACUITY)/2

How well an individual takes in the world outside their heads.

Shadow

(HIGHEST STAT + LOWEST STAT)/2

A measure of the strength of spirit, will, and magical attunement the individual is capable of. The sum of the character's greatest strength offset by their greatest weakness.

Hand-to-Hand Damage

(PHYSIQUE + MASS)/4

This value is both the base amount of damage the character does with punching and kicking and all uses of the Unarmed skill. Half of this value is added to all melee attacks.

Vitality and Lethal Wounds

Damage Points per Lethal Wound: MASS/2

Vitality: (1/2 Physique +5) x (1/2 Mass)

A character's energy and toughness is measured by how much Vitality they have left. Lethal injury subtracts damage points from the character's Lethal Wounds. If characters are damaged to the point that they lose all their Vitality, they are unconscious. If they lose all Lethal Wounds in a body part, they are greviously injured and will die unless they receive healing and medical attention. For more information see Taking Damage, Chapter 10: Combat.

APTITUDES

Aptitudes represent three fundamental areas of expertise. As a Character learns, develops, and grows, their Aptitudes accrue. If age ravages a character's Stats, it fortifies their Aptitudes. Aptitudes have a smaller range compared to those of Stats. Additionally, Aptitudes are not limited or otherwise modified by a character's nationality or race. Everyone has an Aptitude range of 1-5. The value of the character's Aptitude determines the maximum current Finesse Level (q.v.) any skill under the Aptitude may have (see below).

Characters gain points of Aptitude from skill packages. The character's Origin Package will give them their first points of Aptitude. Certain cultures and environments encourage certain Aptitudes over others, but as the character progresses, they can choose to emphasize whichever Aptitudes they prefer by picking a certain series of developmental packages. The Aptitude scores relate to a specific group of skills, becoming the overall value for all the skills included in that group.

Knowledge

Schools and places of learning build up this Aptitude. So long as the character takes the opportunity to broaden their mind, and explore new challenges, this Aptitude will grow stronger.

Personal

Developing one's special talents, gifts, and personal abilities to the fullest. Strengthening this Aptitude requires discipline, dedication, and practice, practice, practice.

Social

Raised to deal intimately with others, characters with a high Social Aptitude never turn down a chance to talk to, interact with, or studiously observe the other living souls who share this world.

SKILLS

All skills are represented by four levels of expertise: Basic, Advanced, Expert, and Elite. These Finesse Levels translate as a character's level of training or simply their sheer gift with the particular skill. As a character's skill rises in Finesse, the feats they are capable of grow in magnitude. In play, a skill's Finesse Level permits the player to confidently narrate their character's actions without ever making any kind of die roll.

There do come times when a character's ability will have to be tested with a die roll. Generally, when characters are in situations where they are unopposed, where there is nothing hindering their actions, they need not roll. They're in their element . . . a Talusian dandy at a high — society ball, or a thief scampering unobserved over a courtyard wall. More often than not, however, characters will find themselves in trying circumstances where their skills are tested. Picture that same Talusian dandy at a ball hosted by a rival family, or the same thief at the same courtyard wall, chased now by enraged guards.

What the character can do with their skill is determined by their Finesse Level. The difficulty of the situation is broken down into the Finesse Levels of Basic, Advanced, Expert and Elite. Difficulty and a Skill's Finesse Level are not directly linked, however. One need not have an Elite level skill to attempt success at an Elite difficulty level. Generally speaking, characters will rarely be confronted with such a high level of difficulty.

Skills are created to allow players to have an effect on their environment, turning situations to their advantage, gaining important clues from the Hand of Fate (HoF), escaping certain peril, or even canceling the skill use of another. Characters gain

certain advantages the higher they range up the Finesse Levels, such as getting to re-roll similar skills, granting bonuses to party members, free attacks, etc. While their skill's Finesse Level defines what exactly a character can do, they may attempt to succeed at a level far above their own. More on this later.

FINESSE LEVELS AND DIFFICULTIES

Skills are grouped under the three Aptitudes: Knowledge, Social, and Personal. Skills are accumulated through skill packages (Origin packages and Developmental packages). The Finesse Level represents the level of ability a character possesses in a particular skill. The Finesse Level is a general narrative indicator of what the character is capable of, their level of training in the skill, or their overall finesse with the skill. Finesse Levels come in four flavors:

Basic

The fundamental starting point of any skill, Basic is what it is and basic is what you get, but do not despair, for in a world of extremes, the vast majority of people in the world of Zir'An get along just fine with a Basic Finesse Level. **A Character may only have skills in Basic if their appropriate Aptitude has a score of 1 or more.**

Advanced

Coming along in their development, the character is now beginning to see other avenues their skill can take them. **A Character may only have skills in Advanced if their appropriate Aptitude has a score of 3 or more.**

Expert

At this stage the character could be called a pro. It often takes many years of diligent practice to achieve this level of ability. Or the character may just be naturally gifted. **A Character may only have skills in Expert if their appropriate Aptitude has a score of 4 or more.**

Elite

Those who possess this level of ability have risen to the loftiest heights of their skill. Bordering on mystical, or sometimes outright embracing it, the Elite level of ability is often the reward of quests or great sacrifice. That mysterious old martial artist standing silhouetted atop a mountain, who stares into your soul as lighting flares around his head. Yeah, he's elite. **A Character may only have skills in Elite if their appropriate Aptitude has a score of 5.**

PRACTICE

Practice is a value ranging from 1-5 that is attached to specific skills during character creation. This represents the amount of use the Character has gotten out of the skill. This bonus is added directly to its relevant Aptitude, representing the Aptitude score specific to that skill.

Example: Milo Jandro the duelist has the skill: Socialize, at Expert, with a Social aptitude score of 4. He also possesses a +2 Practice with Socialize, so his effective Aptitude score with Socialize would be 6. With his Acuity Score of 8, he has a Base Value of 14. Whenever he needs to make an actual Socialize roll, it will be 14+1d10.

Base Value

Each skill has a Base Value, the total of the appropriate Stat, Aptitude, and the Practice value of the individual skill. In some instances, a character's Base Value will come into play, such as when a character is grievously wounded and is not allowed to make skill rolls and must rely on their Base Value.

DIFFICULTIES:

Basic: 10

There is little doubt that the character can pull off the attempt. It is an optimum situation with little hindering the character.

- Climbing a low wall with good hand and footholds
- Picking a common lock
- Intimidating a lowlife for information regarding the location of a gang hangout
- Tracking someone leaving clear tracks

Advanced: 15

There is some doubt as to whether the character can succeed. The situation is not optimum but not hopeless either.

- Picking a typical Dorallian lock
- Scaling a sheer wall
- Seducing a guard from his post
- Spotting a golden locket among tall grasses

Expert: 20

The situation actively works against the character and what she is attempting. Failure could involve dire consequences for the character or her party.

- Identifying ancient or unfamiliar technology
- Scaling a treacherous cliff face without aid
- Bluffing your way past the gruff city guard
- Spotting an ingeniously disguised trap

Elite: 25

Everything is working against the character or what he is trying to do has never been attempted. The chance of failure is very high, regardless of the character's skill level. Anything that, at the outset, seems impossible.

- Attempting to make function unfamiliar and complex technology
- Surviving atop the highest mountain during a blizzard

- Bluffing your way out of an execution
- Peering through a magical disguise by eye contact alone

SKILL TESTS

This is the most common form of skill use. The character is confronted with a situation, the HoF calls a difficulty level, and the Player makes the roll and sees if she's successful at the attempt. The die roll formula is:

Stat + Aptitude (+ Skill Practice) + 1d10

To the right of the Difficulty Level above are the values required to succeed at that given difficulty. If the character's total test value is equal to or exceeds it, the skill attempt is considered a success. They've passed the test. The fast general rule to the die roll is that rolling a 1 is an instant failure, while rolling a 10 is an instant success, regardless of the total score.

Example: Sir Melereton is attempting to discern the control panel of an ancient device. He has Mechanics at Advanced, but the HoF calls this an Expert Difficulty. Sir Melereton will have to score at least a 20 when making his Skill Test. With an Intelligence of 7, a Knowledge Aptitude of 4 (+ the 2 points of Practice he possesses in Mechanics), he needs to roll a "7" or higher on 1d10.

FINESSE LEVELS IN SKILL USE

If the character's Finesse Level is greater than the difficulty they need not make a roll to test for success; they accomplish the feat naturally. The player narrates their character's action as he sees fit or the HoF simply declares it a success. Each skill is described by its Finesse Level and what someone of that Finesse Level could accomplish when in an optimum situation. Allow these entries to guide the narration of your character's actions. As players learn the capabilities of their character, based upon their skills, their need to reference the book will dwindle.

Example: Capthia possesses an Athletics skill of Expert. She is the equivalent of an Olympic gymnast, a master climber, and cat burglar. She needs to get to the roof of the Edyssian Exchange. The walls are sheer brick, but there are runoff pipes, ledges, and windowsills. The HoF decides this is an Advanced difficulty. Being Expert, Capthia doesn't even need to roll; it's naturally assumed that such a situation is no problem for her. She makes her way to the roof.

STRESS

The only exception to this rule is when a character is under **Stress.** A character is **Stressed** any time they are not at optimum condition or forces outside of the situation are making things harder for the character.

Situations of **Stress** include:

- when a character has lost at least 1 Lethal Wound
- had any of their Stats reduced through poison, magic, etc.
- the character is being actively threatened/ currently in combat
- environmental conditions are out of the ordinary (blizzard, hurricane, falling, outnumbered, being chased, etc.)
- the character is in an hostile or dangerous environment (burning or freezing area, natural disaster, in a trap that is going off, inside a damaged vehicle, etc.)

In these situations, the character will be required to make a Skill Test even if their Finesse Level surpasses that of the difficulty.

Example: Taking the previous example, if Capthia were attempting to scale the wall while being chased (thus being actively threatened), she would be required to score at least a 15 in her Athletics Skill Test. Alternatively, she would be forced to pass a Skill Test if she were attempting to scale the wall during a torrential downpour (conditions working against the character), or under the influence of alcohol (stats reduced due to inebriation).

SUPERIOR SUCCESS

If at any time the character makes a skill test that results in a value equal to the next higher Finesse Difficulty (i.e. exceeds it by 6 or more), that success is considered **Superior.** So, for example, a character who is confronted with a Basic difficulty that scores the equivalent of an Advanced difficulty has scored a Superior Success. What a superior success allows a player to do is narrate an additional action or benefit related to the task they were attempting to accomplish.

When speaking of additional actions or secondary benefits, they must be things the character could accomplish with a skill from the same Aptitude or something a character could do that would require a separate skill test to achieve. Superior Successes allow a player to pull off the effect of making more than one skill test with more than one skill, with only a single skill test roll that results in a **Superior** Success.

Every attempt to use a skill is an attempt to succeed at a very specific goal. Superior successes merely allow the player and/or the Hand of Fate, to broaden the definition of that goal to encompass more than one thing.

Example: Dean is playing Gureg, a Ballinorian Journeyman Engineer, who has run afoul of a pack of Gravenwulfs while traveling through Ballinor's high country. To escape them he is going to have to scrabble

to the top of a tall promontory nearby. Laurana, the HoF, declares that for him to climb up the boulder-strewn slope would be an Advanced difficulty. Dean has to score at least a 15 in his Athletics Skill Test to succeed. Making his roll, he actually manages to score a 21, which would be an Expert Difficulty. He makes a Superior attempt. Scrambling to the top of the promontory, the Hand of Fate allows him to pull up one of his companions who had started up the rock-strewn slope before him. Normally, to do that would have required a separate Athletics skill test, but because his skill test in a related activity proved Superior, he was able to accomplish this task as well.

Example: Aram's character Ashiir is attempting to find the hidden ledger containing the names of a group of conspirators. The HoF decides that this would be an Expert Difficulty. He makes an Awareness Skill Test. He manages to roll a 10, giving him a total of 26, equal to an Elite Difficulty. His success is Superior. He not only finds the ledger, but because of his superior success, the HoF also tells him that he finds the secret entrance to the group's hideout behind the bookcase.

In some instances, scoring a Superior Success with a wholly unrelated skill can relieve a **Stress** condition for a subsequent skill test.

Example: Chrys's character Pearl is attempting to pick the pocket of a wary guard. The attempt is considered an Advanced difficulty, and Pearl possesses a Slight of Hand skill of Expert, so normally, he wouldn't have to roll, but because the target is on guard, she is considered to be under Stress. Failing the roll could be disastrous. She instead takes a different route. Approaching him, she attempts to use Seduction. Again this would be an Advanced difficulty (by the HoF's reckoning) and her Skill Test results in a Superior Success. Talking softly and getting the man to put his guard down, she is no longer restricted by Stress and can use her Slight of Hand skill without making a Skill Test.

Example: Marty's character Viktor LaEscrimyr, Arivonnean adventurer, is attempting to repair his crashed Cloudsprinter. Unfortunately he's making the attempt while the autumn rains of central Arivonne pour down upon him. Normally, because of the Finesse Level of his Mechanics skill, he'd be able to fix his plane in no time, without needing to make a skill test. But because of the torrential downpour, he's under a condition of Stress. Instead of risking failure on the important repair of his Cloudsprinter, he instead makes a Survival Skill test, rigging up a shelter that covers the part of his plane he needs to repair. The HoF decides that this would be an Expert Survival skill test. Viktor does well, scoring a 27, a full difficulty level higher than what was needed, a Superior Success. His shelter in place, he eventually repairs his Cloudsprinter. Now, for the piloting skill test to take off, which is still under Stress . . .

UNSKILLED TESTS

There will come times when a character is confronted with a situation that requires a Skill Test for a skill she does not possess. Any character can make an attempt even if she doesn't have the skill required. The HoF calls the difficulty as normal and the player makes the Skill Test roll, which uses the standard formula (sans any points of Practice, naturally) and depending upon the result either passes or fails. Unskilled characters cannot achieve a Superior Success.

CONTESTED SKILL TESTS

Often, a character is forced to make a skill test that is not against a standard Finesse Difficulty, but against the total value of another character's Skill Test. This is a contested skill test, and the most obvious example of such a skill test is combat. In combat, an attacker and defender make skill tests, and whichever is the higher is the victor. But the same system can be applied to non-combat skills in some circumstances.

Such skills as Slight of Hand and Stealth are good candidates for Contested Skill Tests, against the Awareness of the person or people they're targeting for use of their skill. As a general rule, however, Contested Skill Tests should only come into play when the opposing party is actively working against what the character is attempting.

Once the Test totals for both sides have been tallied, the higher of the two is the victor. If the victor manages to beat the contested roll by 6 or more, they've scored a Superior Success.

Example: Creeping along a rooftop, Chris does not want to get noticed by the passersby on the street below. Because the people down below aren't actively keeping a watch out for people passing on the rooftops overhead, the Hand of Fate assigns a standard Finesse Difficulty to the attempt.

Example: Creeping along a rooftop of an enemy compound, Marcus needs to get past the guards who patrol along the inner wall. Since the guards are actively keeping an eye and ear out for trespassers, the player makes a contested Stealth Skill Test against the Awareness Skill Test of the guards.

If the player had made a Superior skill test with Security, watching the pattern of the guard's movements, they could have been allowed a free success with their Stealth skill to get into the compound, provided the Finesse Level of their Stealth skill was higher than the Finesse Level of the guard's Awareness skill.

Some skills can be used to counter the same skill used by someone else. A character with Leadership could attempt to override the commands (Leadership skill use) of a rival, or a pair of seducers could attempt to out-seduce the same quarry.

Common Contested Skills

- Disguise can be contested by Awareness and Intuit.
- Slight of Hand can be contested by Awareness or Slight of Hand.
- Stealth can be contested by Awareness or Tracking.
- Intimidation can be contested by Leadership or Intimidation.
- Persuasion can be contested by Intuit, Persuasion, or Conversation.
- Seduction can be contested by Intuit or Seduction.

KNOWLEDGE FINESSE DIFFICULTIES

BASIC DIFFICULTY (10)

- **The particulars of a recent event.**
- **Administering first aid upon minor injuries.**
- **The proper way to refuel a typical electrical generator.**

ADVANCED DIFFICULTY (15)

- **Recalling obscure information on a well-known topic.**
- **Repairing a common, yet complex, piece of technology (a Dolonorri clock for example)**
- **Treating life-threatening injuries.**

EXPERT DIFFICULTY (20)

- **Recalling information on obscure or publicly forgotten topics.**
- **Operating complex or unfamiliar technology.**
- **Treating a rare disease or performing surgery.**

ELITE DIFFICULTY (25)

- **Attempting seemingly impossible scientific experiments (reverting a Shadekin back to normal).**
- **Any knowledge that requires a fantastic leap of logic from a powerful mind.**
- **Recalling deep knowledge of a completely obscure topic.**

SKILLS LIST

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Area Knowledge (INT)

Adventurers will find themselves traversing Zir'An quite often in search of its many mysteries. Knowing how to get from place to place is not nearly as important as knowing what to expect when you get there. Many groups in society spend a large portion of their lives traveling quite extensively, from the wandering Zhalanti to the Galliosi pilgrims and Vandalusan scholar troupes. Area Knowledge will clue the adventurer in on local customs and laws as well as what places are safe and which swallow the unwary without a trace.

The player decides what area their knowledge skill covers. This can vary in size by their choice, being anything from knowledge of a single city to an entire country. The precision of their knowledge then depends upon the size of the area they wish to have knowledge of. Take two adventurers for example. They both have Area Knowledge skills with a finesse level of Expert. One has Area Knowledge: Vallunei City, the other has Area Knowledge: Kingdom of Vallunei. Where the adventurer with the knowledge of the city would know of most of its private men's clubs and the customs of its street gangs, the adventurer with the broader Area Knowledge: Kingdom of Vallunei would not be so clued in. But the adventurer with knowledge of the Kingdom of Vallunei would know the location of the highly secretive Abbey of the Darkest Light whereas the other adventurer who's knowledge focuses upon Vallunei City would be at a loss. It is recommended that players taking Area Knowledge keep their selection no smaller than a single city or no larger than a single country or region.

Basic: Adventurers who have a basic knowledge of an area will be able to get by reasonably well. They will understand the common customs well enough to keep from making any major faux pas and know where to acquire common goods and services. As long as they keep to established roads they will not get lost and are familiar with (and possibly familiar to) the major organizations or groups operating within their area of knowledge.

Advanced: At this finesse level the adventurer can move confidently through the area with a sense of belonging. If they are fluent in the local language they may even be able to play themselves off as a native, being able to clothe themselves in the standard dress of the area and know enough of the local customs to feel at ease. They can acquire more specialized goods and services in the area, those that perhaps only the locals frequent.

Expert: Adventurers who possess this level of knowledge of an area know as much as any long time native and can easily blend in, moving through the area with little hindrance. They have access to the most specialized of services and frequent those places that perhaps only a few locals know of. If they are fluent in the language of the area they are also capable of miming any associated accent or dialect and if lost can use any available

landmark to reorient themselves.

Elite: This level of knowledge surpasses what any life long native would possess, bordering on an instinctual connection to the area. They can utilize any number of hidden resources the land has to offer, like secluded areas and secret hideouts. If they so desired, they could effortlessly lose themselves in the area to such an extent that anyone would be hard pressed to ever find them.

Healing (INT)

Healing covers a broad field of knowledge that includes everything from first aid to curative chirurgy, surgical techniques and even a little psychology. The adventurer uses known methods without the aid of Rune Magic, though using the skill one could bolster attempts at rune-aided healing.

Basic: The adventurer is knowledgeable in the techniques needed to treat serious injury and diagnose known diseases. Midwives and local healers who serve farming communities and the like would have this level of training.

Advanced: Capable of basic surgical procedures, such as removing a swollen appendix or performing a tracheotomy, they can treat critical injuries and diagnose lesser-known diseases. Able to diagnose the symptoms of poisoning, they are also beginning to understand the workings of the mind, capable of constructing a simple course of treatment for most known mental ailments.

Expert: Entering into the area of advanced surgery, such as repairing damaged organs or reattaching severed limbs, they are also proficient at diagnosing and treating all commonly known and most rare diseases and exposures to toxins. With a growing understanding of the workings of the mind, they can now consider more theoretical treatments for all known mental ailments.

Elite: The adventurer has an intrinsic knowledge of how the body works and can perform surgical techniques considered extremely risky or theoretical (either because they are untried or the ailment they are planning to cure has resisted conventional treatment in the past). They can diagnose nearly any disease at a glance and their skill with healing borders on the miraculous.

Lore (INT)

Lore skills cover a vast field of esoterica, covering everything from ancient poetry to the criminal underground. The adventurer's Lore skill provides them with a body of knowledge dedicated to their chosen field. The depth of their knowledge is proportional to the breadth of the Lore subject they choose. Someone with Lore: Ancient History would know more about the various civilizations of the past than any one civilization in particular, while someone with Lore: Casseonae (an ancient civilization) would have precise knowledge of that ancient society but less about the world in which it existed.

Basic: They understand and can communicate effectively about their chosen field and are able to recognize primary aspects of their Lore, the main players or central ideas.

Advanced: They are able to make basic leaps of insight concerning related fields as well as speak authoritatively concerning their chosen Lore, and are able to construct or know how to acquire all the appropriate materials necessary for their Lore.

Expert: Adventurers with this level of Lore can lead discussions concerning their chosen field and are privy to its deeper theories and applications. They can draw associations between their chosen field and something that may be unrelated on the surface.

Elite: There is little about their Lore that they do not know. Possessing a broad understanding of its fundamental aspects as well as its deeper mysteries, they are an unparalleled authority on the subject. At this point they can formulate theories of their own, turning their Lore in new directions and founding entire new schools of thought heretofore unknown.

Sample Lores:

- **Aircraft** — Identifying types of aircraft produced by all countries of Zir'An. Knowing their capabilities and characteristics.
- **Ancient History** — Knowledge of the ancient lands of Zir'An, the wars and triumphs of the past predating the Endwar.
- **Criminal** — Knowledge of the flow of power and events in the criminal underworld.
- **Current Events** — Knowledge of important people and events of the last five years. This spans nations and cultures, presenting an overall picture of pivotal points in recent history.
- **Herbalism** — The use of roots, leaves, and other flora in mixtures like poultices, teas, and salves to both heal and harm the body.
- **Lost Technology** — Knows bits and pieces about the science and magics that ancient civilizations were capable of, enough to recognize the potential uses of a device when found.
- **Metallurgy** — Information about the various kinds of metals and alloys, how to identify them, and where they might have originated.
- **Modern Technology** — Knowledge of the latest research, the basic principals of modern science, and the personalities behind the development of technology.
- **Naturalism** — The study of how living things, magic, minerals, weather, the elements, etc, fit into a holistic philosophic system.
- **Occult** — The mysteries and personalities of ritual, symbolism, and magic.
- **Poisons** — The art of procuring, handling, and producing poisons as well as identifying their symptoms and uses.

- **Rune Magic —** The history and types of Rune Magic use, as well as knowledge of famous treatises, codices, and rune mages.
- **The Seven Gods —** Knowledge of the countless stories and myths surrounding the creators of Zir'An, their existence, powers, and motivations — the ultimate question still asked being: why did they leave?
- **Shadekin —** Knowledge of the types, characteristics, weaknesses, and organizations of the spawn of Mirkule.

Mechanics (INT)

With the skill of Mechanics, the adventurer has a working understanding of mechanical devices; their function, their design, and the means to both repair and eventually construct mechanical devices. Most, if not all, mechanical constructs follow standards of design that have been established over centuries and most societies have places of learning where such standards are taught. Along with sciences, Mechanics is the skill most often used when working on the invention of technological constructs.

Basic: Those who have received some basic training in Mechanics fundamentals, they are capable of performing simple repairs and can disassemble and reassemble any common mechanical device without too much fear of bungling it.

Advanced: At an advanced level of training, the mechanic can make minor improvements upon any standard mechanical device. They are also capable of achieving a basic understanding of how something works by spending some time inspecting it and can possibly spot flaws in a design

Expert: At this stage they have acquired an instinctual understanding of how mechanical devices work. They can make improvements upon standard designs, repair or rebuild nearly any device given enough time regardless of its state of decay, and can spot flaws or malfunctions after a time spent studying the device.

Elite: There are those who seem to be "of" the machine. They can understand the workings of even an utterly alien piece of technology after studying it for a time. They can make vast improvements upon standard designs, even reshaping them to function in ways no one had even thought possible. They can spot flaws and possible malfunctions nearly at a glance and will know how to prevent them just as fast.

Rune Magic (INT)

The capabilities of the Rune Magic skill, its Finesse Level abilities, rules, etc., can be found in Magic, Chapter 11.

Science (INT)

In the growing technological world of Zir'An, the sciences are driven to the forefront of intellectual pursuits. Unlike Lore, Science focuses primarily on the study and application of technological theory, developing current hypotheses and building toward advances into the future. Science is one of the skills used primarily in research and invention but like mechanics and lore can be used as a spot on base of knowledge in identifying technologies and events that have a scientific explanation. Whatever specific field of science they choose, they will possess the attendant skills necessary to pull it off. It is accepted that they have an understanding of advanced mathematics and are able to use the tools of their trade without having to make any skill rolls.

Basic: Someone just out of university, they are adept at performing the rudimentary methods related to their field but cannot yet fully implement what they have learned into a developmental stage. They understand the basic principals of their science and know their way around a lab.

Advanced: They can now begin to put their training to practical use, turning out experiments and carrying theories to their logical conclusion. They have the ability to take incomplete data and bring it to completion, reassembling fragments of information into a recognizable whole.

Expert: Entering into the area of pure theory, they can improve and expound upon accepted hypotheses into new directions. Wholly qualified to carry out lengthy and detailed experiments; they are masters of their field. With just a brief exposure they could accurately theorize about the possible outcome of any situation or event related to their field of study.

Elite: Beyond the norm, these people are the luminaries of their field, legends who lead the way for others to follow. They can take their field of study beyond what is currently known and are even able to manipulate their scientific knowledge in such a way as to take it in directions never before thought possible.

Sample Sciences:

- **Aeronautics —** Understanding the principles of flight and the application of them to the design of aircraft.
- **Biology —** The study of living systems, organisms, biomes, and micro life.
- **Chemistry —** Knowledge of solids, liquids, and gasses, their mixtures and effects for the purposes of explosives, glues, solvents and other scientific marvels.
- **Engineering —** Planning and design of mechanical devices or large-scale industrial projects, from buildings to bridges.
- **Electromagnetism —** A new area of study that attempts to describe the nature of electrical power.
- **Mathematics —** The study of numbers and physics that is the foundation of all science.
- **Metallurgy —** Identifying, mining, refining, alloying, and forging metals.
- **Zoology —** The study of animal life and behavior,

categorizing into species and phylum.

Tracking Urban/Wilderness (PER)

Two separate skills that must be purchased individually, each skill allows the adventurer to track prey through the chosen environment — through the dense scrub of the wilderness or the maze-like alleys of the city.

Basic: Skilled at tracking their target through reasonably cooperative terrain, if they'd passed within hours. The signs left by the quarry's passage may not be obvious except to a trained tracker.

Advanced: Reaching an almost instinctual level in their ability to track a target, they can also gain certain insights into their prey, from its speed to approximate weight and height.

Expert: A master tracker, they can follow a trail days old and even reestablish a lock if their target has used diversionary tactics to belie their path — using a stream or rooftops to elude capture. They can gain a greater understanding of their quarry, such as its weight, speed, type, and even general physical well being.

Elite: Few can ever evade the tracker for long, almost any length of time can pass and the adventurer can still gain a reasonable trace on the target's path. In addition to knowing precise information about their target they can even postulate as to where the target was headed and how far ahead the prey is. The diligent tracker can follow their target for hundreds, even thousands of miles.

PERSONAL FINESSE DIFFICULTIES

BASIC DIFFICULTY (10)

- **Constructing a simple object (piece of furniture, a plain gold ring).**
- **Picking a simple lock.**
- **Losing oneself in a large crowd.**

ADVANCED DIFFICULTY (15)

- **Vaulting a balcony rail.**
- **Successfully navigating a horse drawn carriage over rough terrain while being chased.**
- **Palming a small object from the top of a table unnoticed.**

EXPERT DIFFICULTY (20)

- **Scampering up a wall with few handholds (circus stunt stuff).**
- **Constructing a shelter in a blizzard.**
- **Performing a complex opera before a critical audience.**

ELITE DIFFICULTY (25)

- **Passing stealthily and unnoticed through a crowd of hostile people.**
- **T**ightrope running.
- Attempting to recall a past life through deep meditation.

PERSONAL SKILLS

Artisan (ACU)

The adventurer is skilled in one of the many areas of artistic expression. This could be everything from poetry to musical ability, painting or sculpture, singing, acting, and prose writing. They may earn a living by creating original works

Basic: Though not yet reaching the full capability of their talent, the adventurer is considered to be certainly more talented than the average person

Advanced: Coming into their talent, they stand out among their peers. Their work is beginning to show a deeper complexity and mastery of their craft.

Expert: Standing at the cutting edge of their craft, the adventurer is blazing new trails in their chosen art. They have mastered their craft and can show an amazing level of complexity and detail, able to evoke emotional responses or engage the intellect. Their shows or performances are well attended and word of their talent has spread.

Elite: All others in the adventurer's chosen craft follow their example and all references to their field will generally feature their name prominently. The adventurer has achieved legendary status that will last long after they are gone. An inspiration to all who view the adventurer's work, loved or hated they always leave an indelible impression. There is little that they cannot accomplish with their talent.

Athletics (PHY)

Covering all manner of physical display, from feats of coordination to running and leaping, Athletics gauges the adventurer's level of physical conditioning.

Basic: With above average coordination, balance, and endurance, the adventurer could climb a tree with relative ease or beat the average person in a foot race. They last longer on less but are not yet capable of any astonishing physical feats.

Advanced: A fast sprinter with excellent coordination, the adventurer could briskly walk across the top of a wall without fear of falling or could make simple acrobatic maneuvers, such as swinging up into a tree from a low branch or leaping nimbly

through a window.

Expert: Capable of astounding physical display, the adventurer seems to have catlike balance, able to walk a tightrope or deftly traverse a narrow wall. Climbing vertical surfaces with few handholds, quickly maneuvering through tight spaces, or working their bodies beyond the breaking point are all achievable at this level of excellence.

Elite: Bordering on the super-human, the adventurer could scale nearly any wall like a spider, make vertical leaps that defy description, or run at full speed across a tightrope. They seem to possess nearly limitless reserves of energy and can endure ungodly amounts of punishment and keep functioning.

Awareness (PER)

Beyond the simple use of one's senses to perceive their surroundings, it allows the adventurer to note details and gain insight through careful observation.

Basic: The simple skill of observation, a successful roll will provide the player with as much information as their character would know based on their skills.

Advanced: A trained observer, the adventurer's senses are heightened beyond the standard. They can distinguish greater details from what they see, are able to immediately identify what they hear regardless of its ambiguity, and track the source of strong odors. Their sense of taste is refined.

Expert: Able to assemble a full range of information from what they see, they can quickly track sounds back to their source, fully identify any odor they come in contact with, and detect poison with a mere cursory taste.

Elite: True master observers, they can compose a blinding array of facts from even a brief inspection. Able to pick out even the most minute of details, they can instantly identify anything they perceive and trace it back to its source.

Disguise (INT)

From the simple, such as altering one's physical appearance, to the extraordinary, such as undergoing a complete identity metamorphosis, Disguise is the skill of changing one's appearance to avoid detection or identification. Though disguises, even convincing ones, can be achieved through improvised means, disguise kits may be necessary for extreme alterations.

Basic: Skilled in the art of make-up and costuming, the adventurer can alter his appearance sufficiently to hide his own identity, but the alteration is only skin-deep. Incapable of convincingly disguising his speech pattern or body language, anyone acquainted with the adventurer would be able to see past the disguise if given a moment to watch the adventurer.

Advanced: Capable of more extreme forms of disguise, they could convincingly adopt the appearance of a different sex, a greater or lesser height, or if given enough time to study, copy someone else's appearance. Again, the alterations are only skin-deep, and while they are able to disguise their own speech and body language to evade identification, they are incapable of copying someone else convincingly.

Expert: The "man of a thousand faces," they can, with the right tools, appear and sound like nearly anyone. Given time enough to study someone, they could effectively impersonate that person with enough skill to pass as the real thing to those not too closely associated with the subject.

Elite: A true chameleon, even with few tools they can alter their appearance in subtle, yet convincing ways. With enough time to study a subject they could convincingly portray that person with such detail that even those intimately associated with the subject would be fooled.

Driving (REAC)

The skill of Driving allows an adventurer the ability to operate any manner of wheeled vehicles, from wagons to powered carriages to military vehicles. What manner of vehicle they are accustomed to is something to be worked out between the player and HoF, but depends strongly upon their background, where they acquired the Driving skill, and the technological level of the land they were raised in. Given time, however, the adventurer can learn to drive nearly any wheeled vehicle.

Basic: Possibly having driven a wheeled vehicle in their line of work, they have driven on a regular basis and know their way around its operation. They are capable of keeping the vehicle under control in normal circumstances.

Advanced: Trained to operate the vehicle under dangerous circumstances, they can push the vehicle beyond its normal capacity, including chases at high speed, navigating narrow muddy tracks, etc.

Expert: A master of the vehicle, they are able to perform stunts thought too dangerous or inconceivable with nearly any vehicle.

Elite: What the adventurer can do with a ground vehicle goes beyond what anyone thinks is capable. They can push it far beyond its standard level of performance and can pull off stunts that would make the most die-hard daredevil blanch.

Meditation (ACU)

Many places teach varying techniques of meditation. They all center around one's ability to focus internally for the purposes of introspection, controlling metabolism, or achieving inner peace. Mastering the arts of Meditation can be a powerful tool, bringing the adventurer great benefits. Most Meditative effects require at least an hour of quiet seclusion, any harsh disturbances bringing them out of their trance.

Basic: The adventurer is capable of delving deeper into her mind, reaching a deeper state of meditative calm. She can remember minute details from their recent memory or use meditation to quickly replenish her mental and physical energy, energy normally restored through sleep.

Advanced: Being able to sink deeper into herself, the adventurer

can recall memories weeks old, review glossed over details in crisp clarity, or mull over riddles and other conundrums with a greater level of accuracy. She can gain a full night's sleep through several hours of meditative rest. She is able to control her breathing and heart rate, almost capable of lapsing into a catatonic state.

Expert: Their minds are highly disciplined, capable of piercing the veil of years to inspect memories and details long forgotten. A handful of hours meditating can be as refreshing as a full night's rest. Perplexities can be solved after a number of hours of meditative thought and their ability to control their metabolic functions is great, stilling their heart and breathing to a point that they may appear dead though they are fully aware of the outside world.

Elite: A true master of the art, their lives are like an endless panoply of images they may peruse at their leisure. An hour or two of meditation is as fulfilling as a full night's rest and their leaps of logic arrived at through meditative contemplation border on the metaphysical. They have a complete control over their metabolic functions and can remain in their meditative trance through any disturbance, breaking the trance only when they wish. They are fully aware of the outside world and may even be hyper aware, their perceptions honed to nearly superhuman levels by the supreme focus and serenity they have achieved.

Melee Short, Medium, Long (REAC)

Skill in armed close combat, when chosen the player must decide on Short (dagger), Medium (longsword), or Long (pole-arm) melee weapons. The finesse level of the skill defines what Battle Arts and Martial Arts finesse effects are available to the adventurer.

Basic: Considered to be on par with preliminary military education in melee arms.

Advanced: More intensive training in specialized attack techniques.

Expert: The character is considered a master in their chosen weapon, reflecting a number of years training and experience.

Elite: Legendary skill, capable of pulling off incredible feats. Few could possibly hope of besting someone of this ability.

Occupation (INT)

Many adventurers will have learned an occupation over their lives, something that can provide them with steady work and income. Occupational Skills cover any mundane field of expertise and all its attendant skills that are not already covered in the Skills list. With the Occupational Skill they are fully capable of performing the tasks required to carry out that occupation, from a Journalist's ability to write a column to a Blacksmith's ability to stoke a furnace or cure a blade. The profession of Doctor, however, would allow the adventurer to run an emergency ward or see to the care of patients, but Healing (*q.v.*) would still be required to perform surgical procedures or proscribe necessary medicines.

Basic: A journeyman or recently released apprentice, the adventurer is competent at his chosen profession. He is reliable but not yet skilled enough to stray outside the standards of his occupation to meet customized or tailor-made requests.

Advanced: A "professional," the adventurer is considered to be highly skilled, capable of improvising to meet customized requests. He is fully knowledgeable of his profession.

Expert: An innovator, the adventurer can turn his occupation in new directions. Often performing beyond the normally accepted methods of his profession, he can meet nearly any conceivable request.

Elite: Beyond peer, the adventurer is an acknowledged leader of the profession. He knows all the ins and outs, all the major and minor players, and can think of new developments others would never consider, and that may soon be adopted by others in the profession. Universally respected, he can essentially name his price.

Pilot (REAC)

With the spread of air travel, more and more people are leaning to pilot these amazing craft. Most training can only be found in the most technologically advanced nations, where development of aircraft is at the forefront. Arivonne, Edyss, Ianu Voss, Ballinor, Illestan, and Vallunei all have major schools that teach piloting skills, for either military or civilian service.

Basic: Possibly having flown aircraft in their line of work, they have flown on a regular basis and know their way around its operation. They are capable of keeping the aircraft under control in nominal circumstances.

Advanced: Trained to operate the craft under dangerous circumstances, they can push it beyond its normal capacity, including chases at high speed, navigating narrow valleys, etc.

Expert: A master of the vehicle, they are able to perform stunts thought too dangerous or inconceivable with nearly any craft.

Elite: What the adventurer can do with aircraft goes beyond what anyone thinks is capable. They can push it far beyond its standard level of performance and can pull off stunts that would make the most die-hard daredevil blanch.

Ranged Weapons Small, Medium, Heavy, Fixed (REAC)

When chosen, the player must pick Small (pistol), Medium (shotgun), Heavy (longrifle) or Fixed (artillery and vehicle mounted) Ranged Weapon skills. The finesse level of the skill defines what Battle Arts and Martial Arts finesse effects are available to the adventurer.

Basic: Your basic gun-training course. Nothing fancy. Police skill level.

Advanced: Military training. From the hip instinct shooters and typical duelists.

Expert: Specialized military troops, assassins, professional mercenaries.

Elite: Legendary, heroic ability.

Riding (REAC)

Even though wheeled vehicles and air craft are becoming increasingly common as a means to get around, there are still few roads and fewer air strips available, forcing the vast majority of people to use beasts of burden to get from place to place.

Basic: The adventurer is a skilled rider, having attained a level of understanding of how to read their animal. They can push it faster and farther but can do nothing fancy.

Advanced: Now able to instinctively understand the animal's mood, its wellness of being, and its capabilities, they can push the animal to peak performance. They can safely ride tame animals that are used to them.

Expert: Instinctively able to communicate commands to their animal, they can tell with a glance just how well it is, its current mood, and its state of being. They can use a wide variety of spoken commands with their animal and are capable of performing some wild stunts. Wild animals will regard the adventurer with some caution but will soon recognize the adventurer for a friend, eventually allowing the adventurer to ride it.

Elite: Their level of communication with their beast borders on empathy, requiring little or no spoken commands to do as instructed, and the loyalty the animal displays is uncanny. The beast will work to the point of death if need be and the adventurer is capable of pushing the beast far beyond its limits. Even wild animals will deign to be ridden by the adventurer.

Security (INT)

While principally used for circumventing locks, alarms, and other such mechanisms, Security is also about observing a target in an attempt to find weak points in their security. Alternately it can be used to erect defenses and safeguards for a place or structure.

Basic: Mechanical locks of a common variety prove to be of little hindrance to the adventurer and they are almost always able to open it without any outward signs of foul play. Their rising level of caution allows them to spot simple alarm systems or traps, generally those released by a trigger line. They can plan a rudimentary security system for a structure that may stop petty burglars, but would be easily circumvented by professionals.

Advanced: Skilled cat burglars, they can disarm traps and locks of a rising complexity, generally those of the latest non-magical technological design. Through careful observation they can spot the weaknesses in any security system or perimeter patrol guarding a structure or place. They are skilled enough to reset traps or locks they have sprung.

Expert: Few locks can hinder them and only the most carefully hidden traps can escape their detection. They have a full range of knowledge regarding various security systems and how to circumvent them. Traps and locks they disarm can be reset to function in a subtly different way, either unlocking only for them using a new key, or going off only when they wish it. Skilled security experts, they could plan for a nearly foolproof means of defense for nearly any installation.

Elite: There is little on this world that the adventurer cannot unlock or otherwise circumvent. There will never be any evidence of their activities and traps and locks can be reworked to operate under new parameters. Through even a cursory observation, they can detect any weaknesses in any defense and their working knowledge of traps and alarms allows them to bypass them with almost preternatural ease. They could fashion a security system that even hardened pros would have a difficult time avoiding.

Shadow Magic (SHADOW)

You will find all the information regarding Shadow Magic and the Shadow Magic skill in Chapter 11: Magic.

Slight of Hand (ACU)

Generally a companion skill to Security, Slight of Hand focuses primarily on the art of pick pocketing. It also can be used to accomplish parlor tricks and diversionary legerdemain, something a skilled stage magician or card shark would excel at. Most slight of hand tricks require special clothing with hidden pockets and the best pickpocket jobs are done with the help of another, someone to distract the mark while the adventurer is going through their pockets. The skill can be used to compliment other skills, so as to make them avoid notice. An adventurer with Security could unlock handcuffs without anyone noticing or stealthily stab someone in the back without anyone the wiser.

Basic: Coming into the arena of the petty pickpocket, they are adept at hiding things on their person. They could lift objects that are kept even within inside pockets, given a good distraction, that is.

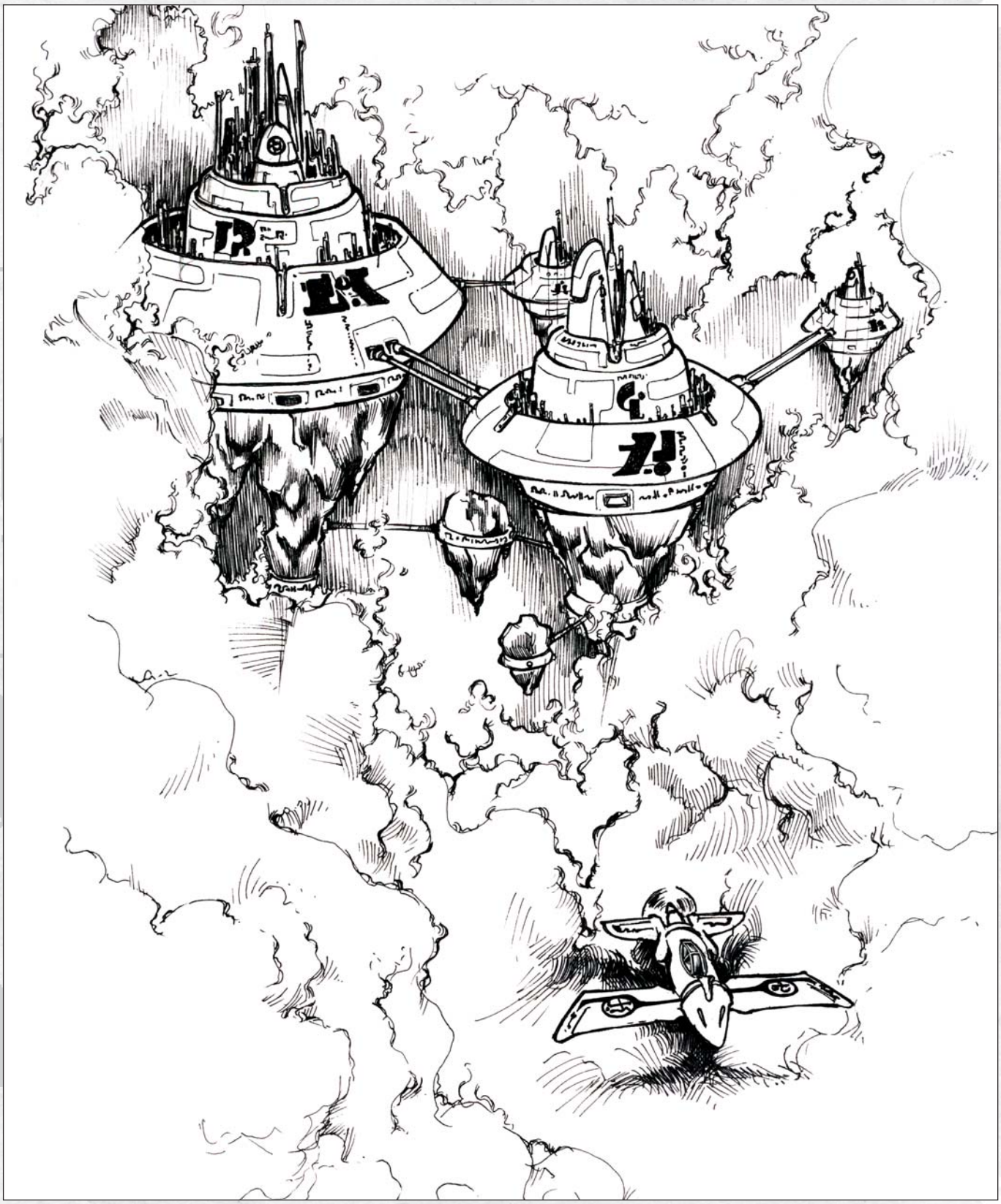
Advanced: Capable of pilfering even cumbersome objects and then hiding them unobtrusively, excellent at making small things disappear virtually in front of someone's nose, they can make even things such as wristwatches vanish with a quick diversionary tactic.

Expert: Coming into the area of the Stage Magician, they can perform very entertaining feats of visual trickery using their hands, a few props, and a clever distraction or two. Nearly anything is possible given enough time and planning. Planning cunning stunts is now within the character's grasp.

Elite: The adventurer is the greatest pickpocket or the most widely respected stage magician. They can make objects disappear in the blink of an eye, even things someone would think impossible to steal such as paintings or articles of clothing. Their hand movements defy observation, allowing them to steal or perform other hand-based actions literally without "lifting a finger."

Stealth (ACU)

The art of moving quietly, unseen, of hiding and avoiding detection, true stealth is best accomplished with light clothing,



A mystery glimpsed, Northern Vallunei

making quiet movement easy.

Basic: Your average cat burglar, the adventurer can move at full speed, silently, across any uncluttered surface. If the shadows are dark enough, the shadows of an alley or the darkness of night, they can remain undetected.

Advanced: Nimble footed, they can avoid making a sound upon even cluttered surfaces provided they do it slowly (about half walking speed). They can hide in even the slimmest of shadows, remaining perfectly still as well as performing other actions very quietly (slitting throats or picking locks).

Expert: Not only are they able to move silently at full speed across cluttered surfaces, they are able to reduce the signs of their passing, making tracking more difficult. They can use any object roughly equivalent to their size to hide behind, from lampposts to crates. Any action they perform can be done quietly.

Elite: Silence personified, they can move at full speed across even the noisiest surface and reduce the signs of their passing to make tracking nearly impossible. Capable of even hiding in plain sight or suddenly vanishing into a shadow, every act they perform is perfectly silent.

Survival (ACU)

Traveling across Zir'An, adventurers will often find themselves lost in the wilds far from civilization. Being able to identify edible plants, build snares to catch prey, or build temporary shelters will greatly increase their chances of survival in unfamiliar and inhospitable environs.

Basic: Reaching the rudimentary level of a wilderness guide, the adventurer can lead himself and others through harsh terrain. He can identify edible plants, build traps and snares, and is rugged enough to cope with the harsh realities of being lost in the wilds.

Advanced: A skilled guide, the adventurer is fully knowledgeable in methods to collect water and food in nearly any harsh environment, from mountains to deserts. With the right building materials, he can construct shelters that can safely protect several people from the elements. He is also able to note changes in the weather, finely tuning his perceptions to coming rains or storms.

Expert: An expert at leading others through even the roughest terrain, he can make do with little equipment or available materials. His rugged nature allows him to get by on less water and less food for longer. He is able to gauge his environment, instinctively knowing where safer ground may lay, where water may be more plentiful.

Elite: There are no environments where the adventurer could not survive. He is attuned to the environment he finds himself in, knowing where water, food, and shelter may be most likely found. He can sense the changes in the weather hours in advance. He knows of every edible plant and animal to be found, and his ability to construct snares and other traps is peerless.

Unarmed (REAC)

Covering everything from bare-knuckle boxing to the mysterious Winter Blossom Eagle Claw style Shree Kat, the nature of the character's fighting style can be worked out between player and HoF, with special abilities available from existing styles described in the Martial Arts section of Chapter 10: Combat.

Basic: This level is basically your typical brawler's level of ability. Though capable of dishing out a serious thumping, there is very little style or finesse here.

Advanced: Intense training with a decent instructor for 6 to 8 months will get you to this level. Your typical young martial arts student eager to show off his moves will be of this level.

Expert: Five to ten years of light training or a dedicated year with a serious master.

Elite: A grandmaster. A legend. A luminary of the art. Mystical martial arts, flying on treetops, punching through steel plates. . . .

SOCIAL FINESSE DIFFICULTIES

BASIC DIFFICULTY (10)

- **Passing off a small believable white lie.**
- **Getting someone trusting to really open up over the course of a conversation.**
- **Sensing who the big time players are at political banquet.**

ADVANCED DIFFICULTY (15)

- **Intimidating the average thug.**
- **Getting your connection to front you some cash.**
- **Leading, and coordinating, a large ambush with a sizeable band of adventurers.**

EXPERT DIFFICULTY (20)

- **Divining the complex social mores of a foreign culture.**
- **Making a really outlandish lie sound completely plausible.**
- **Seducing someone away from their sworn duty.**

ELITE DIFFICULTY (25)

- **Calming a mob.**
- **Getting a bitter enemy to trust you completely.**
- **Leading an army into certain doom.**

SOCIAL SKILLS

Connections (ACU)

In addition to providing a starting adventurer with her initial compliment of gear and other perks, the Connections skill forms the backbone of an adventurer's social existence. How one acquires her Connection is something for the player to decide when choosing them in character creation. Connections can be anything from a single person to an entire organization. The relation to the adventurer's Connection can be through her family, it could be a business relationship where the adventurer contracts work or performs services for her Connection, or an amicable association including such things as close friendships or mutually beneficial partnerships. Connections give the adventurer a safety net she can turn to when things get rough.

To get the benefit of the Connection skill the character must meet with the Connection. Connections are generally fixed in one general location. Some remain within their borders and never move, such as a Talusian Assassin House; others are spread over the face of Zir'An, such as Galliosi Pilgrims. An adventurer can roll Connections to see if they happen to encounter someone they know. How difficult this is is entirely dependant upon how dispersed the Connection is; is it a large organization or a single person? Though chance encounters happen, all Connections should have at least a single city where the Adventurer can be assured she can readily make contact. For the most part, interacting with one's Connection requires no rolls at all but there will come a time when an adventurer needs something from her Connection... an item, a piece of vital information. If the Connection's ability to meet such a request comes into doubt, whether it is beyond their means, the HoF may call for a Connections skill test. Asking your Connections favors, however, should always come at a price. It doesn't have to be immediate, but if an adventurer makes many demands upon her Connection, she should expect to be asked for a similar favor in the future. A reminder to those adventurers who purchase Connections: The Carousel... they **always** collect on past debts.

Connections are perhaps the only skill that can and may drop instead of rise, over time. If the adventurer comes to odds with her Connection the HoF can take off a few points of practice, drop the skill a Finesse Level or even have the adventurer lose it altogether.

Basic: The relationship they have with their Connection is friendly, trustworthy, but with few firm bonds. Do not expect them to go out of their way to help the adventurer but if it is convenient they will happily render aid or assistance.

Advanced: The adventurer is well liked or at least respected by the Connection. They have a good reputation with their Connection and can expect worthwhile assistance, from loans to juicy information, a safe place to hide, or transportation in a pinch.

Expert: "What's mine is yours" is a commonly heard sentiment when an adventurer's bond with their Connection reaches this high. The Connection will give the adventurer preferential treatment and be willing to do nearly anything for them. The adventurer's reputation with the Connection is peerless and often the mere mention of their arrival will see the Connection contacting them.

Elite: At this point it begs the question, who is connected to whom? The adventurer holds a position of high status with their Connection, who may even come to them for help. There is little the adventurer can ask for and not expect to receive. The Connection may even lay down his own life for the adventurer.

Connive (INT)

The ability to lie and convince others of the truth of your sentiment is the function of Connive. More than simply getting people to do what you want, Connive can turn even the most blatant lie into sterling truth. They are convincing and able to convince others that their idea is right and should be believed.

Basic: Practiced liars, they can turn something false yet feasible into apparent truth, willing others to follow along provided it doesn't stretch believability too far.

Advanced: A skilled con man, the adventurer is adept at crafting lies that on the surface are obviously false yet gain credibility the more the adventurer opens his mouth. Even the outlandish can sound reasonable given time and many will be taken in by the adventurer's claims.

Expert: So persuasive is the adventurer that he never needs any actual proof to back up his lies and can turn the most outrageous story into an unassailable truth. Their skill seems to border on the mystical as they are able to get almost anyone to believe almost everything they have to say, regardless of how shamelessly untrue it may initially appear.

Elite: The adventurer could convince someone that the sky is purple when it is blue, that they are their long lost sibling or that they have a picturesque piece of Mikeshi land for sale at a reasonable price. Master liars, they can make anyone believe anything, even if the opposite truth is there, smacking them in the face. The adventurer is totally believable and even the strong willed or keenly observant may fall into their trap.

Conversation (ACU)

Conversation is the adventurer's ability to speak to others in an attempt to put them at ease, making them more open to compromise or willing to divulge information. A successful conversationalist can bring a subject around to his point of view, ease tensions, and convey trust. Conversation is not always calm and collected of course for it also includes the skills of argument and debate. Conversation can also serve to make the adventurer seem interesting, engaging, even charming. They are able to tell a good yarn.

Basic: A good debater, the adventurer could carry on a

convincing if not emotionally engaging conversation. Good at making speeches but lacking in eloquence, he could command a podium at a conference but is not yet quite a dazzling storyteller or orator.

Advanced: The adventurer's voice nearly demands attention, speaking convincingly and unwaveringly. People will listen to what the adventurer has to say. They can engage the emotions of listeners and tell a good story. Those who listen will take what the speaker says with deep consideration.

Expert: A master speaker, his skill in conversation can sway the minds and spark the imagination, convincing nearly all listening that he is trustworthy and truthful. Capable of moving the will of the masses through speeches or enthralling an audience with a rich fable, the adventurer could get a criminal to confess willingly or a good man to turn traitor.

Elite: The adventurer's voice is mesmerizing, capable of swaying entire nations. People hang on his every word, trusting implicitly, convinced in the rightness of the speaker. Approaching a supernatural charisma, there is little he can say that will not be believed.

Intimidation (ACU)

Intimidation is the method of controlling another through the application of threat or force. The victims of intimidation are made to fear the adventurer and either cow to her demands or flee. The adventurer does not necessarily have to be powerful, but through the use of this skill she is able to give the illusion of power. Intimidation succeeds if the victim fully believes the character is capable of carrying out her threat.

Basic: Most people will pause and consider what the adventurer has to say, believing her to be capable of causing pain or injury. The adventurer is "tough" and may even have a reputation to back it up.

Advanced: A pro at getting people to shiver with fear at the slightest growled threat, it does not take much for people to believe the adventurer's intent and many will sooner knuckle under than provoke her further. Those who are obviously weaker may even flee, or cower if cornered.

Expert: Even the powerful will be given pause when confronted with the adventurer's threatening presence. Those subjected to the adventurer's intimidation truly believe her capable of anything, feeling small by comparison. Even those who initially in a position of superiority may balk and turn tail at the adventurer's threats.

Elite: The adventurer need do very little to get others to cow to her will; a glance, a softly uttered command, even her mere presence can cause many to doubt themselves and quail in fear. The mighty shudder and the weak surrender, pledging undying fealty at the adventurer's feet.

Intuit (PER)

Intuit is the skill of reading people, understanding their motivations, perceiving their moods. Those skilled with Intuit can read body language and facial expressions, judging a person's mental state, emotions, and sincerity.

Basic: Able to sense when someone is hiding something, when they are holding back information or hiding their emotions.

Advanced: At this stage, the adventurer is skilled at reading deeper emotional states and makes assumptions as to its cause based upon personal knowledge of the subject in question. Given time, he is able to tell if someone suffers from a subtle form of insanity.

Expert: Gaining insight into what drives the subject, he is able to perceive "what makes them tick," and, based upon his knowledge of the subject, can predict courses of action, reactions to certain situations, and overall mental states. Brief exposure to a subject can indicate to him the subject's sanity.

Elite: Knowing almost at a glance the character of the individual, knowing implicitly what that person's motives and drives are. With enough time he could come to understand that person better than the subject knows himself. No amount of duplicity can escape the adventurer's detection.

Leadership (INT)

Giving the adventurer the skill to coordinate groups of people toward a common goal effectively, it also allows them to gauge a person's capabilities and understand where someone's strengths and weaknesses lie. A good leader can motivate those under his direction and bring order out of chaos, giving people focus and direction.

Basic: Capable of organizing a party or getting a squad to clean their barracks, he is good at getting people motivated but they may only follow the adventurer's direction when things are going well. Once things start turning foul, they will be hard pressed to listen to their "leader's" orders.

Advanced: Equivalent to a drill sergeant or upper level manager, the adventurer is used to handling large groups of people under his command. He is skilled at boosting morale and understanding a person's capabilities, where their skills would be best served toward the task. Those who consider themselves below the adventurer in rank, position, etc, will readily follow his commands.

Expert: A skilled leader who has achieved complete trust from those under his command, the adventurer can hold his group together even when faced with daunting odds. Those under his command will feel motivated to get the job done and the adventurer knows instinctively where each person's strengths and weaknesses lie, utilizing them in the most efficient way possible.

Elite: A true leader, the adventurer could command entire armies or lead nations. The adventurer's capability as a leader is

never questioned and those under his command will follow his orders to the letter even into the jaws of death or certain defeat — and love it. They are able to place each person in a position where his or her skills can be used to the greatest benefit and where his or her weaknesses will least hinder the operation. Their loyalty to the adventurer is unquestioned.

Seduction (ACU)

The adventurer can wind their way into the hearts and minds of those around them, bending them toward their will through flattery, innuendo, and sexual attraction. Though it tends to be used toward the opposite sex (or simply of compatible sexual preference), it can be used to bolster camaraderie with those of the same sex. The adventurer does not need to be beautiful or devastatingly handsome (although it helps); they could be simply witty or mentally engaging (not so much as a conversationalist, see Conversation skill above). Even a Neolli could be Seductive — using its primal animal nature to entice those into its web.

Basic: Capable of ensnaring the attention of their subject, people will find the adventurer alluring, interesting, drawn to them after a few inviting glances or well-spoken words. After a night of this, the adventurer will linger in the subject's mind.

Advanced: Gaining an understanding of sexual politics, the adventurer is honing their skill to a keen edge. Capable of acquiring the attention of any number of people simultaneously, people will find the adventurer irresistible and may go out of their way to get to know them. Subjects will need little incentive to spend time with the adventurer and will think of them often when they are apart.

Expert: By focusing one's wiles on a certain subject, the adventurer will gain their complete attention, inciting their passion and engaging their emotions. The feelings the subject has for the adventurer may border on obsession and they may be willing to do nearly anything to be in their company.

Elite: The adventurer will haunt the dreams of all who fall into their web. They can manipulate people like marionettes, instinctively knowing their deepest desires and playing upon them. To favor someone is to bring them to the heights of exultation, to deny them is to plunge them into the deepest despair. People will fall at their feet, willing slaves.

Socialize (ACU)

More than the simple rules of polite society, adventurers skilled in Socialize flow through social situations with an instinctual ease. It also grants the adventurer a measure of crowd awareness, being able to intuit the mass social dynamics around them. Adventurers with Socialize can sense the general state of a crowd and through interacting with it may be able to even direct it.

Basic: They have some experience with cultured society and have grown up in a social atmosphere. Well mannered or sociable, they have little difficulty fitting in with the crowd as long as they are in familiar surroundings. They still have some difficulty sounding out unfamiliar situations.

Advanced: Truly a social animal, the adventurer can blend into nearly any situation, getting an instinctive feeling of the mood of the crowd. They can feel comfortable even when surrounded by the unfamiliar and quickly pick up the general rules of conduct when confronted with a foreign situation.

Expert: A master of the people, they can get a clear picture of the dynamic of any social gathering. They adapt quickly to any unfamiliar situation and after a short while are able to intimately understand codes of conduct and other prevailing social mores. They also know the best way to alter the mood of any large gathering — be it through the spreading of rumor or by drawing certain people together.

Elite: Moving through any gathering as though they belong there, they seem to instantly understand the motives, moods, and character of any social gathering. Their influence over a crowd borders on the mystical, the adventurer's moods seem to flow through those around them like ripples in a pond. With a glance they see the social web that binds everyone around them.



Even those guided by Fate sometimes lose their way…

CHAPTER 3

CHARACTER CREATION

OVERVIEW

1. Pick Character Race
2. Pick Character Origin
3. Distribute "freebie" points into Primary Stats and Derived Stats based on campaign Power Level
4. Purchase Skill Packages using a number Character Creation Points depending on campaign Power Level (note: Starting characters can only have a maximum of 4 in any Aptitude, and so cannot start play with any skills of Elite)
5. Pick positive and negative Valdreyr, Battle Arts and Martial Arts with remaining CCPs
6. Acquire equipment and resources through Connections
7. Name your character

CAMPAIGN POWER LEVELS

The players and Hand of Fate should decide what style of game they want to play before character creation begins. *The Secret of Zir'An* can be scaled in power depending on how heroic the game is meant to be. Are the characters college students whom Fate has just begun to mold into Adventurers? Or are they experienced professionals with years of adventure already behind them, ready to change the fate of nations? The tone of the campaign that the Hand of Fate is running should also be taken into consideration – are the players meant to kick ass and take names on the Drakani frontline, or is a single Marrow Hound enough to have them running for cover? See the *Secret of Zir'An Hand of Fate Book* for more ideas and resrouces along these lines.

The Secret of Zir'An can be played in three Power Levels that define the starting Stat bonus points and Character Creation Points available to the players for character creation. These are:

Power Level	Stat Bonus	CCPs
Tyroic	+10 Primary/ +2 Derived	50
Heroic	+12 Primary/ +4 Derived	75
Legendary	+15 Primary/ +6 Derived	100

The Tyroic Power Level is appropriate for low fantasy or more gritty and realistic campaigns where the players are young and relatively normal people. This level would include green recruits on the frontline, novice investigators into the unknown, or younger siblings trying to get out of the shadow of their elders. **At the Tyroic Power Level, no skill may have a Finesse Level higher than Advanced.**

The Heroic Power Level represents the players who are a cut above even professional mercenaries or trained scholars.

They have just come into their power and are ready for their first big adventure. Heroic Level players are troubleshooters for an international organization, an officer or commando in the military or police, or a seasoned explorer searching for their first big find. **Characters in a Heroic Campaign may not have any skill with a Finesse Level higher than Expert.**

The Legendary Power Level casts players as major movers and shakers in the world, with some major adventures already behind them that have caused Fate to steer them onto the central stage. They routinely meet the famous, powerful, and noble and are likely to have at least a few enemies. This Power Level is that of protagonists in world-spanning adventures on which the fate of Zir'An depends. **Only Legendary Characters may start out with skills of an Elite Finesse Level.**

CREATING A CHARACTER

Character Creation in *The Secret of Zir'An* is accomplished through the distribution of Stat Points and Character Creation Points (CCPs). Players first pick a race. They then pick an Origin which gives them their base Primary Stats and some initial skills and languages. Stats are then bought up with an amount of "freebie" Stat points to Primary Stats and "freebie" stat points to Derived Stats (players assign Primary Stat freebie points first, calculate Derived stats, then add Derived freebie points). After that, depending on the games Power Level, new characters have 50, 75, or 100 CCPs to spend on Skill Packages, Battle Arts, Martial Arts, and Valdreyr.

CHOOSING A RACE

Most sentient beings in Zir'An are humanoid creatures, though their size, build, the color of hair, eyes, and skin vary widely. Of the five races the most populous by far are the **Ianer,** followed a distant second by the **Dolonorri,** third by **Neolli,** and fourth by the **Gogach.** The population of **Zhalanti** in their homeland is unknown, and those that wander in the other lands are few and far between — some never see a Zhalanti in their entire lifetimes.

Ianer: The most numerous of peoples, adaptable and clever. It is they who have inherited Zir'An after the Endwar and Second Darkness.

Dolonorri: Born from the heart of the world, this race of stout, sturdy mechanics and craftsmen have struggled to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Their spirit remains strong while their numbers dwindle.

Gogach: The children of the volcano have grown huge and strong. For all their great power their minds have paid the price. But while uncomplicated and almost child-like, their souls hide a startling complexity.

Neolli: Hybrids who have gained a nobility in their pure savagery. Their beastlike appearance belies the depth of their wisdom.

Zhalanti: Mysterious immortals who walk Zir'An for enigmatic reasons that even they are unsure of. They are the elegant first race created by the Seven Gods.

For more information on the abilities and culture of each race, see Chapter 4: The Peoples of Zir'An.

CHOOSING AN ORIGIN

The following are quick summaries of the origins available to new characters:

Arivonne: A land of revolutionary aviators, struggling under Ianu Voss's imperial yoke.

Ba-Dur: An ancient and magical land of swirling sands, flashing blades, and courtly intrigue.

Ballinor: The nation of mines and machinery where live a hearty, battle-hardened people.

Bhuket: A mountainous land where rebellious monks fight to free the people from a tyrannical demigod.

Cyroon: A blighted swampland of belching refineries, crowded cities, con-artists, and thieves.

Drakan: Where the Tilandri gypsies plot the downfall of a godlike despot, who holds this land under his iron fist.

Edyss: The vanguard of the future; a land of science, scholarship, and social engineering.

Gallios: Revolutionaries banished to a remote land; warrior monks who seek absolute perfection.

The Fire Reaches: The volcanic homeland of the Gogachi where the Lord of Magma presides.

Harakyr: A beautiful land of pristine forests and magical craftsmen living in tune with nature.

Ianu Voss: The imperialistic, indomitable Empire of the Seas; cultured, noble, and cruel.

Illestan: A desolate land of warriors dedicated to keeping the tides of armageddon at bay.

Klesht: A land of secretive cultists and sinister merchants, where even souls may be bartered.

Merchant Isles: Tropical and dangerous, thousands come to these markets where anything can be had.

Mikesh: A land of mangrove swamps and primitive tribes who are masters of beasts and nature.

Neoll: The Neolli prowl this country of desolate hills and haunted grasslands.

The Periphery: Ancient ruins jut from fields of ash, where hard-bitten tribesmen defend hidden treasures.

Talus: Great families rule this land of romance, mystery, assassins, and mighty Rune Magic.

Thallysia: No one knows what lies inside the hidden homeland of the Zhalanti. And they aren't telling.

Thrayce: Windswept and cold, where rugged sailors and storytellers plot the dawning of a new Epoch.

Vandalusa: A land of scholarly magi who have carved cities of stone from its desert mesas.

Vallunei: A vast Kingdom of diverse cultures, collectively dedicated to peace and prosperity.

DISTRIBUTE STAT POINTS

The character's Origin defines what their beginning Primary Stat values are. These values are what the character could be expected to have had at their age of maturity. Listed in parentheses next to the stat's base values are their maximum value. Half of that maximum value could be considered average to slightly above-average for a fully grown adult of that Origin. The Campaign's Power Level gives the player a pool of points they can use to modify their four Base Stat values. Once they have distributed these points into their base Primary Stats, they figure their five Derived Stats. Derived Stat formulas are displayed on the right, and the character sheet has the formulas for Derived Stats printed on it. Next, the Campaign's Power Level gives the player a small number of points to augment their Derived Stats.

Example: The Hand of Fate and our players decide to start a Heroic Power Level campaign, so each player has 12 Prime Stat points and 4 Derived Stat points to distribute.

Tom's Bhuketi character's starting stats were: Physique: 5; Mass: 4; Intelligence: 4; Acuity: 3.

After distributing his 12 points, his totals read: Physique: 10(+5); Mass: 6(+2); Intelligence: 5(+1); Acuity: 7(+4).

His derived stats look like this: Reaction: 8; Speed: 11; Perception: 7; Shadow: 8; Hand-to-Hand: 4

After distributing his 4 Derived Stat Bonus Points, his derived stat totals read: Reaction: 9 (+1); Speed: 11(+0); Perception: 7(+0); Shadow: 8 (+0); Hand-to-Hand: 7 (+3)

Scott's Illestani character's starting stats are: Physique: 5; Mass: 5; Intelligence: 3; Acuity: 3.

His 12 points spread through these raise them: Physique: 11(+6); Mass: 11(+6); Intelligence: 4(+1); Acuity: 5(+2).

Giving him derived stats of: Reaction: 7; Speed: 5; Perception: 5; Shadow: 8; Hand-to-Hand: 5.

After his 4 points get distributed, they become: Speed: 8(+3); Reaction: 8(+1); Perception: 5(+0); Shadow: 8(+0); Hand-to-Hand: 5(+0).

Chrys' Tilandri character has starting stats of: Physique: 4; Mass: 3; Intelligence: 5; Acuity: 4.

12 points spread through these gives totals of: Physique: 7(+3); Mass: 4(+0); Intelligence: 10(+5); Acuity: 8(+4)

From these her derived stats are: Reaction: 8; Speed: 11; Perception:

DERIVED STATS

Reaction = (Phy+I+A)/3

Speed = A+Phy-M

Perception = (I+A)/2

Shadow = (High Stat + Low Stat)/2

Hand-to-Hand = (Phy+M)/4

Note: Always round up when figuring derived stats



A member of the dreaded Bazhna-Zi secret police in the Dominion of Drakan.

9; Shadow: 7; Hand-to-Hand: 4.

She distributes her 4 points, getting totals of: Speed: 12(+1); Reaction: 7(+0); Perception: 8(+0); Shadow: 10(+3).

CHOOSING SKILL PACKAGES

Out of the points given to players to build their character, a major part of the character will be choosing their Skill Packages. Skill Packages are not merely groupings of skills based around a common thread, they're a means to map out the character's history, where they started, where they went, what happened to them — their lifepath. Your character may have focused on one particular career or they might have meandered through the world picking up skills along the way.

Cost

The number of Character Creation Points the package costs. Packages may be purchased as many times as the player wishes and is able to pay the point cost.

Years Spent

Each package is a portion of the character's past. As packages are purchased, the years add on starting from the character's age of maturity, as listed in the character's Origin Package.

Aptitude

Characters begin with very low Aptitude scores based on their Origin. Buying Skill Packages is how starting characters strengthen their Aptitudes. Points of Aptitude can only be placed in Aptitudes the package offers skills for. If the package does not contain any Knowledge skills, the player cannot spend the package's Aptitude allotment on Knowledge.

VALDREYR

A Vandalusan term that does not lend itself well to translation, *Valdreyr* is that which life has given one that makes you a unique being. It may be you are rugged as the mountains of Bhuket, or have the finest technical mind in Edyss, or weave Runes like a prodigy. Perhaps your will matches the steely one of the Voivodh himself, or you might even be one of the Fane, cursed with limitless power. *Valdreyr* is all of these things and more.

When creating a character, *Valdreyr* defines the talents, abilities and characteristics that single your character out from the majority of Ianer. You may buy beneficial *Valdreyr* with Character Creation Points, or take detrimental *Valdreyr* to add to your Character Creation Point pool. The total number of CCPs that you use, both positive and negative, is limited by your character's age. Your total value of your positive and negative *Valdreyr* must therefore be equal to or less than the Character's starting age.

BATTLE ARTS & MARTIAL ARTS

Battle Arts and Martial Arts are special combat abilities the character can acquire during character creation. Some Skill Packages allow the player to put additional CCPs towards the purchase of Battle Arts and Martial Arts abilities. Battle Arts are paired to a specific Melee or Ranged combat skill, while Martial Arts is related chiefly with the Unarmed Skill. See Chapter 10: Combat, for detailed listings and rules for Battle and Martial Arts.

EQUIPPING A CHARACTER

A character's Connections determines what items such as weapons, armor, and other expensive and hard-to-acquire

LANGUAGE

Some, but not all, skill packages grant the character the opportunity to pick up a new language. The value listed is the amount of points the player can spend on languages. For 1 point the player can either choose a new language (generally one associated with the package it derives from) starting at Basic Finesse Level, or pick a language they already possess to raise its Finesse Level by one. Noted in parentheses next to Language, is a rating from Common to Very Rare. Players may choose a language up to the rating listed. Unlike skills, Languages do not have an Aptitude or Practice associated with them, and no rolls are ever needed to use a known language. Like skills, however, Languages possess a finesse level. Only in cases where the language is a variant to one they already speak or they wish to decipher an old manuscript written in a lost dialect is this taken into consideration.

Basic

Able to speak the language fluently, most natives will speak at this level. If the language is foreign to the adventurer they will speak it with a heavy accent, even if they are able to understand and communicate fluently. Foreign languages that use an alphabet distinctly different from theirs will be indecipherable.

Advanced

At this point the adventurer has managed to hide most of their accent and may even be able to speak a few regional dialects. They can now read and write the language's script if it is entirely dissimilar from their own, though they will make mistakes from time to time. Native speakers with this level of their own language will speak with an advanced, "educated" vocabulary.

Expert

By now the adventurer can speak and read like a native with no noticeable accent. They understand and can speak all the major regional dialects related to that core language and even a few older versions (though not too old).

Elite

Covering every possible variation, those both recent and of core dialect of the distant past, the adventurer has a better command of the language than most native speakers. Of course they can also mime any possible accent and speak with none of their own.

Common Languages

These languages are spoken by a large number of people outside of their country of origin, usually connoting the power of the land they come from, whose influence has spread far across Zir'An. Adventurer's can expect to find someone who understands them in most places in the civilized world.

Empyriar: The native language of Vallunei. Commonly found in Ianu Voss, Edyss, and Ballinor.

Erimani: Covering the language of the Eriman continent — Ianu Voss, Arivonne, and Gallios.

LaVas: The language of Edyss. The language of scholars and science.

Uncommon Languages

Either because of the difficulty of the language or other reasons, foreign speakers will tend to be those who have an interest in the country or who live in a land closely bordering it.

Dorralinath: The native tongue of Ballinor, technicians across Zir'An often learn this language.

Esquador: Talus's musical language, considered by many to be the language of romance.

Il-Sammadi: Ba-Dur's language. Its difficulty sees few but the most studious merchants speaking it.

Pa'Daskret: The ancient language of Bhuket, only in the Inabi States and among foreign slavers is the language found.

Vandasul: Vandalusa's convoluted language, its difficulty often keeps all but the most scholarly from learning it.

Rare Languages

Few people outside of the country of origin have little inclination to use its language. Seldom is it taught anywhere and only those who regularly deal with the land in question generally speak it.

Battlan: Illestan's battle language, it incorporates hand gestures in addition to the spoken language. Seldom heard outside of military circles in Vallunei.

Cyrooni: The clipped, lilting tongue of Cyroon, the Cyrooni people consciously keep others from learning it, though many in the Merchant Isles have.

Drakalian: The Dominion's native language, generally only those in Treaty intelligence or merchants in Thrayce tend to speak it.

Sambi Speech: The Merchant Isles Empyriar patois, but since most Merchant Islanders are fluent in Empyriar, few ever feel the need to learn it.

Savastri: Klesht's complex language, only those who frequently deal with them (i.e., unscrupulous merchants) have an inclination to learn it.

Very Rare Languages

Heard only among its native speakers, virtually no one outside of their country understands, or would even recognize the origin of the language if they heard it spoken. Either due to its complexity or the isolation of its country of origin, only the most esoteric of learning institutions would teach these languages.

Dhansu: Spoken only in the Theocracy of Dharsus.

Estuado: Harakyr's variant of Esquador. Since most Harakyri also speak Empyriar, few outside their land have an opportunity to learn it.

Goucha: The language of the Gogachi of the Fire Reaches, some find it too confusing to learn.

Mikeshi: Never heard outside of its native land of Mikesh, a handful of Edyssian sociologists have learned it.

Riakh: No one outside of Neoll is known to speak this language.

Tasili: Similar to Empyriar, another language never heard outside of the Periphery.

Tilani Ryei: Harking back to the Empire of Casseonae, the Voivodh outlawed this language and so only the Tilandri are known to speak it.

Tondu: Sometimes spoken by a rare few Ballinorian sailors, Thrayce's native tongue has little if any foreign speakers.

Zha Lee Thaal: Extremely complex, the language of the Zhalanti is only found among those Rune Mages who have taken the years necessary to learn it.

equipment they have retained over the years before they became an Adventurer. Every piece of exceptional equipment is rated by its rarity: Common, Uncommon, Rare, and Very Rare. The Finesse Level of the character's Connections skill determines the type and number the character has when they begin.

Basic: 2 Common or 1 Uncommon

Advanced: 4 Common, 2 Uncommon, or 1 Rare

Expert: 4 Common & 2 Uncommon, 2 Rare, or 1 Very Rare

Elite: 8 Common & 4 Uncommon, 2 Rare & 1 Very Rare, or 2 Very Rare

The player can naturally feel free to break down a greater value for a lower one. One very rare essentially becomes 2 rare, 4 uncommon, or 8 common. If a player has an Advanced connection, she can choose 4 common, 2 uncommon, or 1 rare. The player initially chooses to take two uncommon. She pickes one uncommon piece of equipment, but can't find another uncommon piece of eqipment that suits her, so she is free to use that uncommon toward picking two common resources. Note: if the player is at a quandry over what item or resource to pick up, the player may convert any value, common to very rare, into cash. This is listed in Chapter 8: Equipment.

ENCUMBRANCE

All items with significant weight have an Encumbrance Value. An adventurer suffers if they are overloaded, for instance, trying to weild a sword they are too weak to lift, or wear armor that is too heavy for them to move in easily. Add and note the Encumbrance Value of all the items your character is carrying. If this number is greater than THREE TIMES the character's Mass Stat, they lose 1 point of Speed and suffer -1 to all rolls *per point* their Encumbrance exceeds that value.

Use Chapter 8: Equipment to choose your character's starting money, armor, weapons, vehicles, and gear.

Example: Karin Ami's player is ready to pick her starting equipment. Since Karin is an Edyssian Reporter, her connections around Edyss and Zir'An are important enough that she devoted extra skill packages to them, which pays off with high Connections Skills. This also has the added advantage of ensuring that she is well equipped to face whatever tribulations her new Adventuring career may present her with.

Her Connections are: Allies of Edyss: Advanced, Edyssian Institute of Learning: Expert, Zir'Ani Dilettantes: Basic, and Zir'Ani Technologists: Basic. She decides to get a Baschab Repeater with 2 reloads of scatter ammo plus 10 reloads of normal ammo for 2 Rare, using up her Institute Connection (she has a friend in government defense research and figures she'll need some protection). Next, she gets formal, high-class clothing as a gift from her aunts and uncles in society, useful for moving among the influential, using her Dilettantes Medium connection to do so. Her player decides she needs a mount, so Karin has been assigned a horse and tackle from the local Allied militia by pulling some strings, plus a watch and a camping kit (Uncommon and 2 Common). Finally, Karin has a collection of books on the newest advances in science and technology that she keeps for reference and study that her inventor friends have given her as a going away present (1 Uncommon). Karin is ready for anything now.

AGE

An Adventurer's life can be long and profitable, short and painful, or anywhere in between. As a character ages, his Stats change to show the effects of experience and time; these modifiers stack with progression. Each race progresses through different age categories, as outlined below. Apply the stat modifiers for the age at which your character begins after choosing skill packages, then add or subtract as they age during the game.

Age Category	Stat Modifiers
Child	+1 Acuity, –1 Intelligence, –1 Mass, +1 Speed
Youth	+1 Physique, –1 Acuity
Adult	None
Mature	+1 Acuity, –1 Physique, +1 Shadow
Senior	+1 Intelligence, +1 Acuity, –1 Mass, –1 Physique, –1 Speed, +1 Shadow
Elder	+1 Intelligence, –1 Mass, –1 Physique, –1 Speed, +2 Shadow, –1 HtH
Ancient	+1 Intelligence, –1 Mass, –1 Physique, –1 Speed, +4 Shadow, –2 HtH

Race	Child	Youth	Adult	Mature	Senior	Elder	Ancient
Ianer	0–12	13–21	22–38	39–52	53–69	70–100	100–130+
Dolonorri	0–20	21–50	51–80	81–110	111–140	141–180	181–220+
Gogach	0–6	7–13	14–28	29–39	40–49	50–59	60–80+
Neolli	0–2	3–10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–70+
Zhalanti*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

*Zhalanti are never seen to age, and most assume they are immortal.

TALKING OVER CHARACTER

It is likely that when a Hand of Fate sits down with your players for their first Secret of Zir'An game, they are not going to know a great deal about the world. You, as the Hand of Fate, may have described to them the basic history and a rough timeline of events leading up to the game's present, but it would take forever to lay out the intricate tapestry of history, culture, belief, and politics that make up the world of Zir'An. Players only care about one thing: playing. They want to know what kind of characters they can make and how to do it. By listening to the player's desires, you, as the HoF, can guide the creation of a character that is uniquely theirs and uniquely Zir'An.

SHAPING THE CONCEPT

Chances are, your players have played Role-Playing Games in the past and are used to certain aspects of RPGs, such as character classes, moral alignments, and experience levels. Instead of using an archetypal system, the Secret of Zir'An character creation system uses skill packages to build up a character's history. This gives the player the freedom to craft a character based on virtually any concept they can imagine.

When creating their first character, the HoF should ask them what kind of hero (or anti-hero) would they like to play. Is it something as simple as a hard-bitten warrior, a cunning thief, or a crafty Runemage? Or is it something more unconventional, like a big-game hunter, a courageous explorer, or even a journalist? Naturally, as the players become more informed about the world of Zir'An, they'll be able to craft character concepts that incorporate their growing knowledge of the game world. But at the outset, instead of describing every race and origin, and expecting the player to tailor their concept based on that information, let their own imaginations define the concept.

COMBAT CHARACTERS...

The Gogachi are mighty and powerful, capable of wielding weapons that are too large for any other race. The Neolli are swift and dextrous, possessing keen senses and sharp claws. For those who like an armor-plated, weapon-studded fighter, consider the warriors of Illestan, the soldiers of Vallunei's Steel Confederacy, or Ballinor's Militia. Perhaps the player wants a more suave, stylish combatant. In that case how about the fencing blade duellists of Talus, or the whirling-dervish warriors of Ba-Dur? While Ianu Voss's Knights of Arsinor bring an air of refinement and nobility to the battlefield, what if your player is looking for something different? How about a martial-artist rebel from Bhuket, a warrior-monk from Gallios, or a gladiatorial pit-fighter from the Fire Reaches?

The character's race is important in relating to the player's concept, since it defines what origins the player has to choose from. And the origin is what gives the character much of its *flavor.* Helping the player select a race for their character can give the beginning player a handy framework from which to craft their concept.

Ianer: the Humans of Zir'An, they are an easy fit for any concept as they are by far the most diverse. The Ianer character is, moreso than the other races, the most strongly defined by their origin. A good pick for the beginning player.

Dolonorri: the Dwarves of Zir'An, and so naturally they make scrappy fighters, and in Zir'An, the Dolonorri have a special relationship with magic and make good Runemages. Of all the races they have the strongest mechanical background, being good engineers, inventors, and craftsmen.

Gogachi: they're the biggest, strongest, toughest race. They're also simple, unsophisticated, and brutish, so naturally they make good fighter-types.

Neolli: they make excellent unarmed combatants, favor more spiritual, matriarchal, shamanistic magic, and are a good pick for beginning players who like to play misunderstood outsiders.

Zhalanti: the Elves of Zir'An, they start with a magic sword as their racial Valdreyr, so they're naturally adept at combat, but they are also at one with magic, and so are natural Runemages. They are good for a player looking to play something exotic: they're elves from the future!

In helping talk through the character's concept with the player, the HoF doesn't want to prod the player into making a particular character, though she can help frame the concept based on the type of game she is planning to run. Perhaps the game has an underworld feel, where the players are playing characters who are part of a criminal organization. Or maybe the characters are all explorers and feature a diverse, and complimentary, set of concepts. And since Fate is such a strong story element to the Zir'An campaign, the characters could have wildly divergent concepts from each other, being an odd assortment who have been brought together by Fate's design. While the HoF shouldn't dictate what concept a player may devise, he can help *individualize* the concept with the player. If a player simply wants to play a warrior, encourage him or her to add a twist to the concept. A simple warrior could become a wandering mercenary. Once players find they are given a little more room to build their concept from, the HoF may find them extrapolating on their own, adding their own flourishes.

MAGIC CHARACTERS...

Rune magic is everywhere in Zir'An, and the Ianer have devised countless ways to implement it and adapt it into their cultures. Be it the Battlemages of Illestan or the peaceful diviners of Harakyr. Vallunei and Edyss are host to many magical researchers who have devoted their lives to discovering new uses and applications for rune magic, while the magi of Vandalusa plumb its secret, spiritual depths. Simply having a character devote itself to one of the Seven Gods can create interesting concepts, from the energy manipulating Runemages of Arroy, weapon enchanting war priests of Paran, or ghost-hunting Hrond mystics. But all the races have some magical affinity. The Gogachi with their volcano cultists, the Neolli with their shamanesses, the secretive Runemage Societies of the Dolonorri, and of course the Zhalanti, the only race that begins play with Rune Magic as a skill. And then there are Shadowmages. Is the player looking for something starkly different from the spell slinging Runemage? Shadowmages are dark, mysterious, sometimes morally ambiguous, and feature powers that feel more like super-human abilities than actual arcane spells.

As the player solidifies her concept, deciding on a race and origin, the HoF can advise her on what course of skill packages to purchase. Following the player's concept, skill packages specific to the character's origin can give concrete names and backgrounds to the type of hero the player has devised. A player who has come up with a combat-related concept, who has chosen Ballinor as their origin, would benefit from taking the Ballinorian Militia skill package. A player who has chosen an underworld-related concept and the Merchant Isles as their origin might wish to purchase the Merchant Isles Pirate skill package. The HoF should stress, however, the benefits of purchasing Universal Skill Packages. They are generally cheaper, and as they're pretty generic the player can attribute whatever idea she wants to them. That same Ballinorian could take such Universal Skill Packages as Mercenary or Military Service. But also stress to the players that purchasing Skill Packages is more than a means to pick up skills, it is also a roadmap of the character's history. The Ballinorian character may have served in the militia, then been captured (purchasing the Universal Skill Package: Prisoner), escaped, then traveled the world a while (the Universal Skill Package: Travel Abroad), before finally becoming a mercenary.

UNDERWORLD CHARACTERS...

The world of Zir'An is rife with crime and other nefarious enterprises. The nation of Cyroon is a land of cutthroats and thieves, ruled by an immortal Bandit King Fane. In the Merchant Isles, more illicit trade transpires than anywhere else; it is a land of slavers, drug-dealers, conmen, and pirates. The criminal empire known as The Carousel is present in every nation, and so anyone can be counted among its ranks. But not all underworld characters are petty criminals. There are the honorable, but merciless assassins of Talus, hidden rebel groups in Arivonne, Bhuket, Thrayce, and the Dominion of Drakan, and spy networks such as the Voss Hilzmon of Ianu Voss. Piracy is common in many places of Zir'An, and not only on the seas. Air Pirates are a threat in Vallunei, Ballinor, Ianu Voss, and Edyss, preying upon the luxury airships that travel between metropolises of Zir'An. The Neolli make excellent thieves with their stealth, climbing, and heightened senses. The Gogachi are commonly employed by crime bosses as enforcers, hitmen, and bodyguards.

Ultimately the player is limited only by the amount of imagination they invest in their character. While they may initially decide on a simple concept, their concept may change as they begin purchasing skill packages and forming their character's history. The character may have been conceived as an armor-plated warrior, but after purchasing their skill packages, that simple concept may have transformed into an aging veteran, scarred by many hardships, who has reluctantly put down their sword and found religion. Such turns of concept are perfectly feasable with the finesse system skill package concept.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT...

There are adventure journalists from Ballinor, Edyss, and Vallunei. Magical engineers from Ballinor and airbourne rangers from Arivonne. Treasure-hunting madmen in The Periphery, bloody-handed ambassadors from Klesht, and power-behind-the-veil courtesans in Ba-Dur. And the list grows with each new player who adds their own concepts to the tapestry of Zir'An.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

You've created your Adventurer and now you're ready to set off and see what Fate has in store. One of the main pleasures of role-playing games in any genre is earning experience through

daring deeds and subsequently improving your character. You can do this in two ways: earning Experience Points (EXP) and getting Skill Grants from your Hand of Fate.

In Zir'An the experience system is an extension of the character creation process, allowing you to buy up stats, aptitudes, and skills using experience points like Character Creation points. Depending on whether your Hand of Fate is running a high or low-powered campaign, you will receive more or less Experience points, usually from 3–8 per session.

Skill Grants allow the HoF to award a new skill or a Practice point on an ad hoc basis to reward players for role-playing well. As your character interacts with the world, you can try to learn things, develop contacts, speak new languages, and so on. If the HoF notices, they may award a Skill Grant at the end of the session, allowing you to avoid the experience point cost of a new skill, or buying up your practice in an existing skill. In this way, a character builds up a history of what they've done with skills they've picked up on their adventures.

Treasure is one way to acquire resources — money talks. But developing Connections is better because you can continue tapping that relationship for resources. During character creation you chose what equipment you recieved from your Connections, but if you improve your relationship with a Connection by going up Finesse Levels in existing Connections or simply gaining new Connections, your character can request new resources. Your Hand of Fate decides if the contact will help based on your past interactions with them and your Connection skill finesse and practice, and might require a roll, but odds are the NPC will try to help. Just remember the relationship with the Connection is a two-way street, and they might need you character's help someday.

Good stories have characters that change in them — learning, feeling, discovering. Don't let yours be an exception — as your character explores the World of Zir'An they will have experiences that change them, make mistakes they may regret, or achieve victories that bring fame and fortune. Use the tools provided in the Finesse Game System to reflect your character's journey and you'll find the game takes on a whole new meaning.

Improving a Character with EXP

At the end of each session the Hand of Fate should award Experience points to players for things like good role-playing, clever tactics, heroism, and entertaining interaction with the other players. Though a Hand of Fate's style may differ, here are some guidelines for awarding experience

1	Showing Up to Game Session
1	True-to-Character Role-playing
1	Best Role-playing (voted by all participants)
1–2	Heroic Effort or Sacrifice
1–2	Innovative or Clever Strategy
1–2	Quick Thinking
1–3	Danger Level of Game Session
4–10	Conclusion of an Adventure/Campaign

Raising a Skill's Practice

At the end of a session, after experience is awarded, players may improve the Practice of any skill/s they successfully tested (used) during that session. The player must have made a die roll in the skill test for it to qualify for improvement.

Practice may only be improved by 1 point at a time, and costs a number of experience points equal to the value being raised to. So it costs 3 experience points to raise the Practice value of a skill from 2 to 3, 5 experience points to raise the Practice value from 4 to 5. It costs 1 point to grant a point of practice to any skill that doesn't have any Practice bonus already.

Improving Stats

Players declare what Stat they are currently trying to improve. It generally takes one month of adventuring to gain the benefit of the character's self-improvement. At the end of that two-month period the character's Stat improves by 1 point.

Stats can be improved only one point at a time. A Stat point costs a number of EXP equal to the value the Stat is bring raised to. So it costs 8 experience points to raise a Stat from 7 to 8.

Raising Aptitudes

Similar to improving stats, the player declares which Aptitude they are currently trying to improve. Aptitudes require more effort to improve, as they represent the sum total of a character's prowess in a particular group of skills. At the completion of any major goal, be it defeating a powerful foe, the successful exploration of a hidden territory, or the rescue of a countess, the player may improve the Aptitude declared by 1 point.

Improving an Aptitude costs twice the number of experience points equal to the value the Aptitude is being raised to. So it costs 4 points to raise an Aptitude from 1 to 2, or 10 experience points to raise an Aptitude from 4 to 5.

Improving Skill Finesse Level

To improve the Finesse Level of a skill the character has to find someone who can train them. There are several ways a character can go about this. The most obvious way is to have another character from their group train their character. Naturally the character acting as tutor must possess the skill they are teaching, and cannot train another character to a Finesse Level greater than they themselves possess. It is possible to raise a skill's Finesse Level through a few hours a day of training, generally as much as can be fitted into a busy adventuring schedule. Dedicated training however, where the teacher and student devote all their free time to learning the skill, reduces the training time in half.

CHARACTER SHEET GUIDE

Step 1: Photocopy the character record sheets located on pages 252 & 253. Fill out your character's Campaign Type, and Race. You'll come back here once you're almost done.

Step 2: Find your Origin in Chapter 5: Origins and fill out the Language, Base Stats for Physique, Mass, Intelligence, and Acuity, and choose the value of your Base Knowledge, Personal, and Social Aptitudes.

Step 3: Spend Stat Points on Stats based on your Campaign Type. Look in Chapter 4: The Peoples of Zir'An for your race's base stats. You'll fill out the Primary Stats first, add your Stat Points, then use the Primaries to figure out the Derived Stats. Finally, add your Derived Stat Points.

Step 4: Pick your Character's Skill Packages. As you choose each Package, fill out the appropriate CCP Cost, Years, and Aptitude points.

Step 4a: Decide which Aptitudes the Skill Package upgrades and write the total in the appropriate boxes. Starting maximums for Aptitudes are determined by your Campaign Type: 3 for Tyroic, 4 for Heroic, and 5 for Legendary.

Step 4b: Pick the skills you want to gain and improve. Remember to write in the specific skill for those that are variable (Area, Lore, Occupation, etc.). Each Skill Packages allows you to upgrade a Skill by 1 Finess Level OR 1 Point of Practice. You can do this a number of times equal to the Skill Points in the Package. A Skill Finesse Level is limited by the Aptitude under which the Skill operates: 3 is required for Advanced, 4 for Expert and 5 for Elite.

Step 4c: A Package may provide Languages. For each Language point you can upgrade the finesse level of an existing one or choose a new one at Basic Finesse Level.

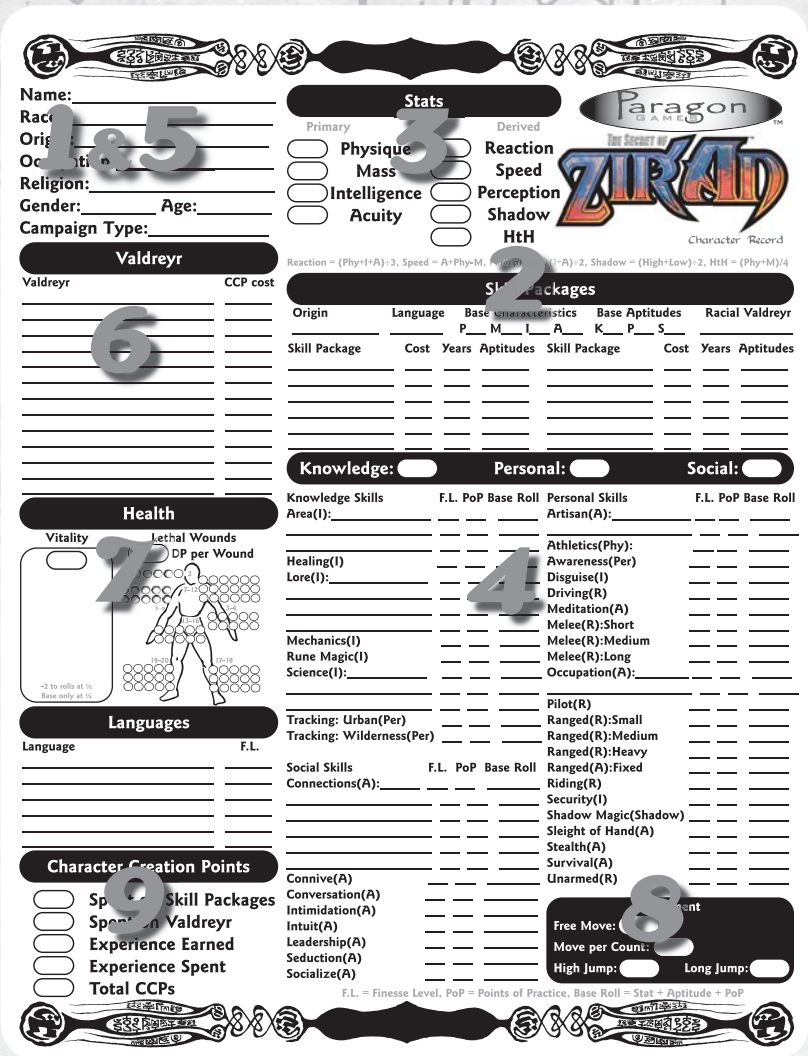
Step 5: Fill out your Age based on your starting age and how many years your Skill Packages took up. Decide what your character's occupation is and write it down. Also determine your character's faith - None, Kah, or one or more of the Seven Gods.

Step 6: Write down your Racial and Origin Valdreyr here first - they don't cost any CCPs. Figure out how many CCPs you have left after your Skill Packages are complete. The points that remain can be used to buy positive Valdryr, Battle Arts, and Martial Arts. You will find Valdreyr in Chapter 7: Valdreyr, Battle Arts and Martial Arts in Chapter 10: Combat. You can also take negative Valdreyr to gain CCPs and spend them on whatever else you like. Remember that you can't have more total positive and negative Valdreyr than your total Age.

Step 7: Fill out the health section according to the instructions in Chapter 10: Combat. Write in your Damage Points per Wound and fill in bubbles for each body area until the Lethal Wounds you have remain as blanks. Write your maximum Vitality in the space provided and track its ebb and flow in the box during the game.

Step 8: Fill out the Movement section based on your Racial Valdreyr and Athletics Skill.

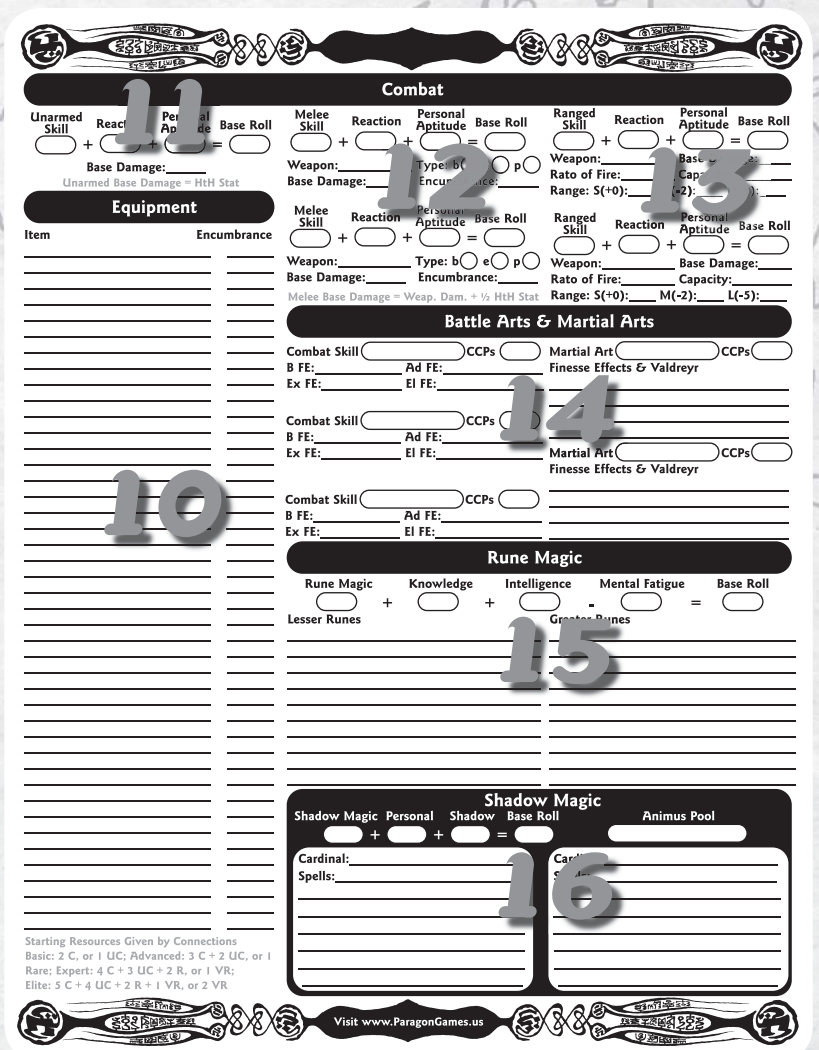
Step 9: Add up all the CCPs you've spent and note it down here. Your total should be as close to your campaign limit as possible without going over. Move on to the second page.



Step 10: The Equipment section is where you note the various and sundry things your character gets from their Connections as they start their adventuring careers. Using each of your Connections Skills' Finess Level, determine how many Resouces you have to spend on acquiring the goods and services in Chapter 8: Equipment. What you can get for a given Finesse Level is noted on the sheet at the bottom of the column. Also note in the column the Encumbrance for items. Keep in mind that you suffer -1 to all die rolls per point of Encumbrance greater than your Mass in items that your are carrying and wearing.

If you choose to get armor, note what body areas are protected by what Armor Value - you will find Armor values in Chapter 8: Equipment.

Step 11: Add your Unarmed Skill (if any), Reaction Stat and Personal Aptitude to figure your Unarmed combat base roll. Your Unarmed Base Damage is equal to your HtH Stat.



Step 12: If your character uses a Melee weapon, add your applicable Melee Skill, Reaction Stat and Personal Aptitude to figure the weapon's combat base roll. Note the weapon's name, damage type (Blunt, Edged, or Piercing), Base Damage (add half your HTH to it for your actual damage), and Encumbrance, listed Chapter 8: Equipment.

Step 13: If your character uses a Ranged weapon, add your Ranged Skill, Reaction Stat and Personal Aptitude to figure the weapon's combat base roll. Note the weapon's name, Base Damage, and Rate of Fire, Capacity and Range Increments. These are listed in Chapter 8: Equipment.

Step 14: If you bought any Battle Arts & Martial Arts, write them down here.

Step 14a: Fill in the combat Skill associated with the Battle Art and its cost in CCPs. For each Finesse Level of the Skill, note what Battle Art you picked. Battle Arts are listed in Chapter 10: Combat.

Step 14b: Note each Martial Art you bought, how many CCPs you spent and what Finesse Effects and Valdreyr you are able to use from it. Martial Arts are listed at the end of Chapter 10: Combat.

Step 15: Fill in your Rune Magic Skill, Knowledge Aptitude, Intelligence Stat and any Mental Fatigue from previous casting (see Chapter 11: Magic) to figure your Rune Magic Base Roll. Note the Lesser and Greater runes your character knows on the lines provided.

Step 16: If your character uses Shadow Magic, note your Shadow Magic Skill, Personal Aptitude and Shadow Stat to figure your Shadowmagic Base Roll. Also write your Animus Pool down to track it as you cast spells (See Chapter 11: Magic). Note the Cardinals and spells your character knows in the spaces provided.

Final Step: Go back to the first sheet and give your character a name. Now you're ready for Adventure!

For downloadable PDF versions of these character sheets, go to www.ParagonGames.us.



Mementos from the exciting lives of Victor LaEscrymir, Illana Codrescu and Olivier Sunnier.

CHAPTER 4

THE PEOPLES OF ZIR'AN

THE FIVE PEOPLES OF ZIR'AN

Most sentient beings in Zir'An are humanoid creatures, though their size, build, the color of hair, eyes, and skin vary widely. Of the five races the most populous by far are the **Ianer,** followed a distant second by the **Dolonorri,** third by **Neolli,** and fourth by the **Gogachi.** The population of **Zhalanti** in their homeland is unknown, and those that wander in the other lands are few and far between — some never see a Zhalanti in their entire lifetimes.

The Ianer

The expanding population of the Ianer makes this adaptable race the ones who will likely inherit the future.

Possible Origins: Arivonne. Ba-Dur. Ballinor. Bhuket. Cyroon. The Dominion of Drakan. The Theocracy of Dharsus. Edyss. Harakyr. Ianu Voss. Illestan. Klesht. The Merchant Isles. Mikesh. The Periphery. Talus. Thrayce. Vandalusa. The Kingdom of Vallunei.

Lifespan: 100-120 years.

Racial Valdreyr: Adaptability

Normally, characters are limited to the skill packages of their country of origin, but Ianer characters may choose at *most* one skill package particular to another country. This represents that the character traveled and spent time in that country. Only skill packages from Ianeran homelands may be chosen. Because the Ianer comprise such an endless variety of personalities, occupations, physical forms, and histories, they gain a 4 point Valdreyr free.

The Dolonorri

Though their numbers dwindle they maintain a proud heritage of metal and stone.

Possible Origins: Ballinor. Edyss. The Periphery. The Kingdom of Vallunei.

Lifespan: 150-200 years.

Racial Valdreyr: Spirit of Stone

Though Dolonorri are raised in a small number of different cultures, they do share some qualities in common. Dolonorri can see well in darkness, even where there is no light source at all, out to a distance of 30 feet. Though only the Dolonorri who were raised in Ballinor have the Mechanical Affinity Valdreyr, all Dolonorri receive a +2 bonus to all Mechanics skill tests.

To the stat values they receive from their Origin package, Dolonorri receive a +1 bonus to their Mass and a –1 penalty to their Acuity.

Dolonorri characters add 10 years to the Starting Age of their Origin Package.

The Gogachi

Simple people of great strength that know little of the world outside their volcanic islands.

Possible Origins: Ballinor, The Fire Reaches, The Merchant Isles, The Periphery.

Lifespan: 75-85 years.

Racial Valdreyr: Mree Tiingk

Everyone knows the Gogachi are sub-intelligent when compared with the other races, but the truth is their brains just work differently, specializing in spatial reasoning and nonlinear thought. Though this difference of structure handicaps them in learning languages, common mathematics, and etiquette, they are in fact quite brilliant when working within their special area. Gogachi play a game they call "Mree Tiingk" that is actually a complex mathematical simulation using small gemstones or glass

beads common to the Fire Reaches. If a gogachi can spend ten minutes playing with their 'shiny bits' they can gain +5 to the next roll that involves spatial reasoning, including mathematics, gunnery, visual puzzles, or Runemagic.

To the base stat values they receive from the Ballinorian, Merchant Islander, or Periphery Origin package, the Gogachi receive a +3 bonus to their Mass, a –2 penalty to their Intelligence, and a –1 penalty to their Acuity.

The Neolli

Savage half-monsters who rule jungles and swamps, caught between modern progress and ancient ways.

Possible Origins: The Merchant Isles, Mikesh, Neoll, The Periphery.

Lifespan: 50-65 years.

Racial Valdreyr: Shadow of the Beast

Though the Shadekin taint malformed the early Neolli, these deformations have long since softened to the current physicality of the Neolli. Their bodies are crafted to pursue and take down prey, possessing keen senses, perfect balance, and the claws and teeth of a predator. All Neolli gain a +5 feet to their Free Move, a +2 inherent bonus to all Athletics skill tests (except attempts to use Athletics to climb, in which they get a total bonus of +4), and a +5 bonus to all skill tests involving the Perception stat. They are at -5 to all Awareness skill tests when in cities or other urban areas. Neolli possess normal vision under starlight or other faint light sources, and have an effective Line of Sight (LoS) of 120 feet (a 120 foot wide cone, 120 feet long). Their claws add +2 to their Base Hand-to-Hand (HTH) Damage, and raise the Armor Piercing (AP) value of their HTH attacks to 2. Neolli suffer a –5 to all Social Skill tests with non-Neolli because of the negative reaction their appearance generally engenders.

To the base stat values they receive from the Merchant Islander, Mikeshi, or Periphery Origin package, the Neolli receive a +1 bonus to their Physique, a –1 penalty to their Intelligence, and a +1 bonus to their Acuity.

The Starting Age for all Neolli characters, regardless of their Origin Package, is 8.

The Zhalanti

Immortals who dimly remember the faces of the Seven gods, who wander the Young Lands for purposes unknown even to themselves.

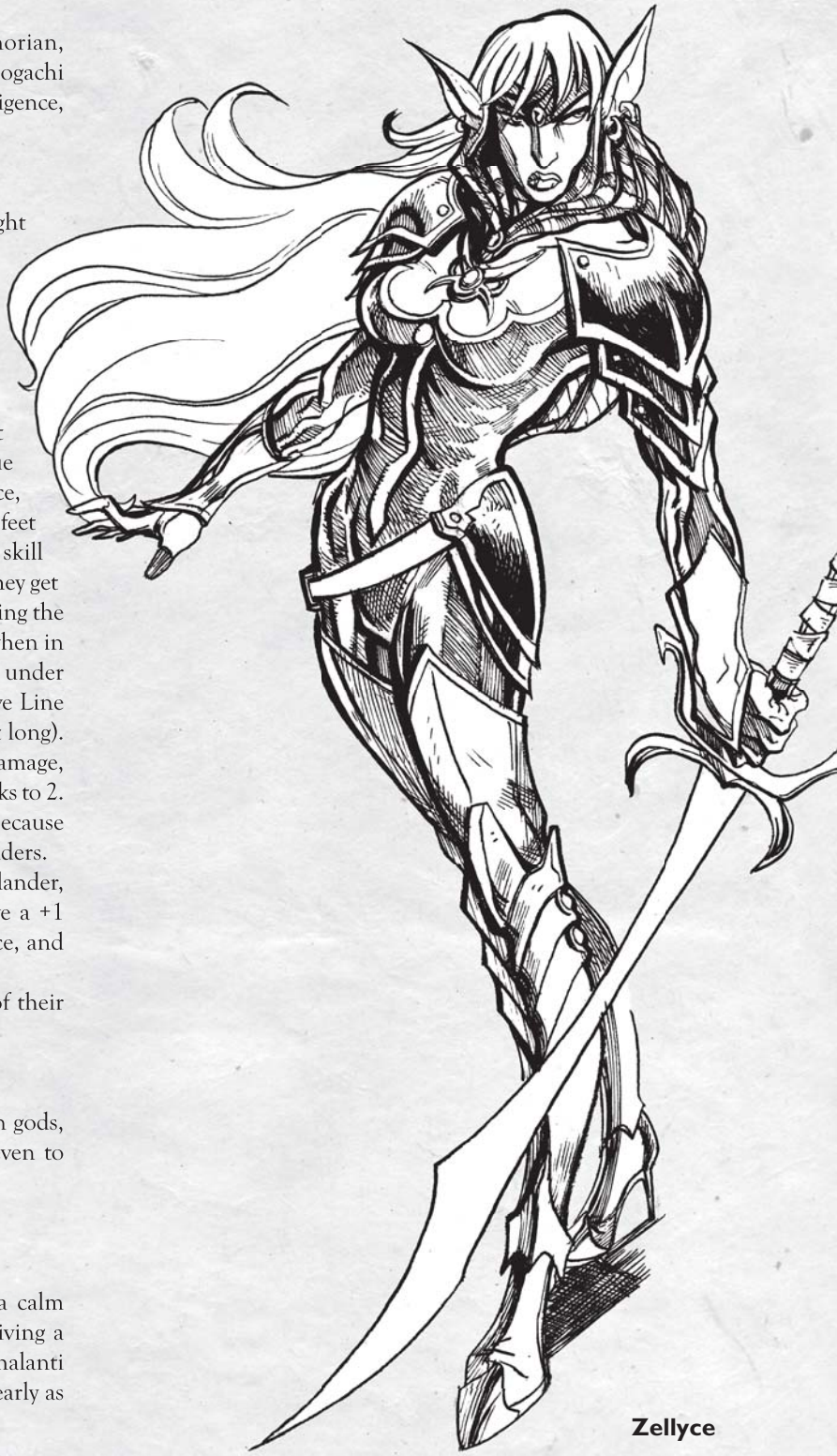
Possible Origins: Thallysia

Lifespan: Immortal

Racial Valdreyr: Immortality

The Zhalanti have the following abilities: When in a calm state they can tap their vast reserves of knowledge, receiving a +2 to any Knowledge skill test when not **Stressed**. All Zhalanti are immune to disease and have the ability to perceive clearly as daylight in starlight or by any faint light.

ZHALANTI



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ZHALANTI: THE FIRST BORN

The Zhalanti are the only living beings that remember the faces of their creators: the Seven Gods. Born into existence even before the World itself had been constructed, the Zhalanti lived alongside the Seven Gods on the first world: Arelas. Tutored by the gods themselves, they were a grand experiment in social engineering. The Ylar, the wellspring of life and the powering force of all magic, was created for the Zhalanti. The Seven Gods did not instruct their children on its use, forcing them to devise their own solutions. Their answer to this test was the creation of Rune Magic. The Zhalanti were the first Runemages. The Zhalanti breathe magic, they are saturated with it, and they are as bound to it as it is to the World itself. The time would come, however, when the children of the Seven Gods would outgrow their need for divine parentage, chafing under their constant supervision. In a show of defiance, they gathered their power together and fashioned a world from the void. It was a small, dead world of ash and stone, but it spoke loudly of their growing powers. Perhaps in answer to this challenge, the Seven Gods crafted the world of Zir'An. This they gifted to their rebellious children, a home they could call their own and upon which they could create a culture of their choosing.

The Zhalanti thrived on this world, creating as perfect a society as anyone could have hoped for. An utopia where no one wanted for anything, all prospered and were free to explore life to its fullest. With their power over the Ylar, all matter and energy could be bent to their will; the world was what they made of it. Such a "perfect" world could only lead to one conclusion—stagnation and decline. The Zhalanti had come so far; there seemed to be nowhere else left to go. Immortal, powerful and at the same time empty and without purpose, the Zhalanti withdrew into their fabulous cities, turning away from their creators and the world that had been created for them.

The arrival of the Ianer upon their world was something of a puzzle to the Zhalanti. They looked on with quiet curiosity at these brutal animals that foraged in the wilds. The Ianer were merely the first sign of changes to come for the Zhalanti. Aeneth, the world created for the Zhalanti, was undergoing a metamorphosis. It was expanding, and these new lands widened the gulf between the enclaves of the First Born. This isolation would come to suit the Zhalanti in the end. Lacking any desire to communicate with those outside their enclaves and with the primitive Ianer population settling new territories, the Zhalanti hid themselves en masse from the world.

This is the common belief, for the Zhalanti themselves reveal scant more about their past. Shielded by their magics and the long distances that separate their homelands from the rest of the world, the Thallysia has never been known to welcome visitors. And so the world has gone on without them, consigning them to the history books and fantastical pulp novels.

Modern Zhalanti are rarely encountered abroad, but a continuous flow of wandering Zhalanti stream from their homeland into the lands of the Ianer. All Zhalanti spend a century or more in the lands of the "young born." Adventuring, settling perhaps for a time, then wandering a long path through the known world leading back to their homeland: Thallysia.

Physical Description:

The Zhalanti are tall, slender beings, possessing a fairness of grace impossible to any other life form, who are typically 5'8" to 7' in height. Many theorize (because the Zhalanti won't speak of it) that their physical appearance is self determined, resulting in the extreme variety in exotic skin tones, eye coloration, and hair compositions. Typically, the Zhalanti encountered will have skins of pale ivory or pink, but those with dusty mauve, pastel green or blue skin have been noted. The eyes of the Zhalanti are captivating to many, being unlike the eyes of any other race: solid shades or startling irises of gold, violet, or lambent green. The hair of the Zhalanti is generally pale: white, ash blond, and sometimes a deep, lustrous black.

The Zhalanti about...

...The Ianer

"Such endless variation. Equal parts brilliance and obstinance, depth of vision and blind predjudice. I think, with the Seven having departed, our younger Kin are finally learning how to survive on their own, as we chose to do so many eons ago. In all the millennia they have tried so many times to destroy themselves... facinating in their irrationality... and yet they fail. They are a paradox borne within itself, and for that I find them beautifully repugnant."

— Theezva Thaarzi

...The Dolonorri

"I look upon the children of Drandlur with some sense of loss. Not adaptable enough to survive the trials of existence, not powerful enough to protect themselves from its dangers, I fear for their future. If they were only to cast aside the feelings of victimization that saddle them, they would find the strength within them to persevere and rebuild their culture, for of all the races of this world, none are more bound to it and the strength it contains than they."

— Sazanas Soranzi

...The Gogachi

"Beautiful... beautiful children of the fires. Strong as a mountain with minds pure and true. Uncomplicated and unassuming... they see the world with the eyes of an innocent. For that reason they are doomed."

— Ellisan Erruzana

...The Neolli

"The Ianer are the Inheritors, as their name implies... but these creatures... these evolved Shadekin, in them I see the true future of sentient species on this world. Were Drandlur present at their dawning, she would have snuffed them for the abberrations they are... but allowed to prosper they have becomes something more... if they are capable of ascending beyond their monstrous beginnings, can it be said that all Shadekin have it within them to do so as well?"

— Feilas Feizal

IANER

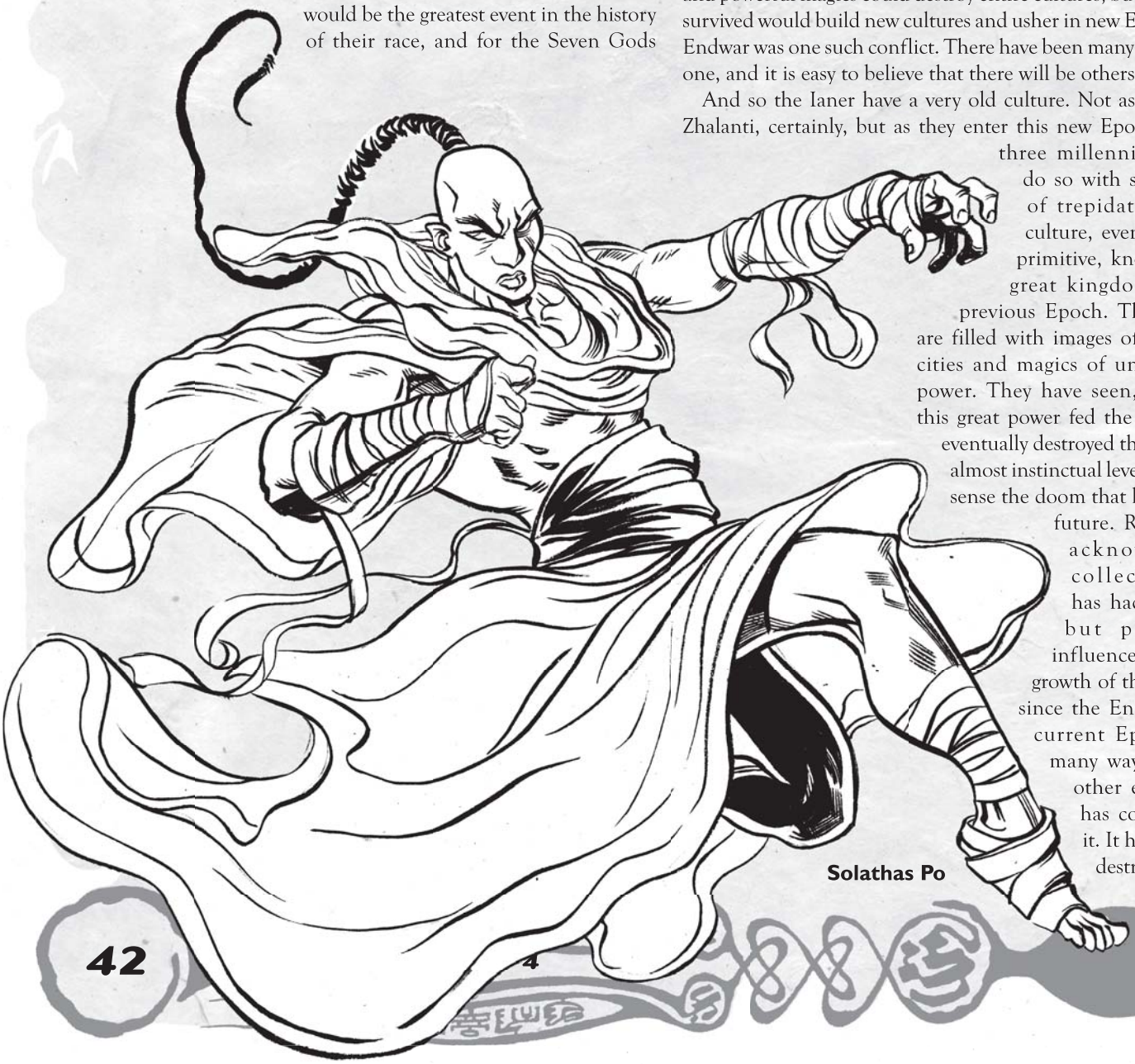
IANER: THE INHERITORS

Long after the Zhalanti secluded themselves from the growing world around them, the Seven Gods crafted from the void a being wholly unlike their first children. Where the Zhalanti were born into the hands of their creators, tutored, and cared for, the Ianer would be born into ignorance and savagery. The Zhalanti had their home gifted to them, while the Inheritors would have to scrawl, scavenge, and survive. The Seven Gods revealed nothing of their presence; the Zhalanti too, hid themselves from the primitive Ianer, and the eons would pass as they flourished, spread, and developed.

The Ianer would grow to accomplish much and rise to prominence, forging powerful empires and even cracking the code of Rune Magic. Through Rune Magic, the Ianer discovered the existence of the Seven Gods. This discovery would be the greatest event in the history of their race, and for the Seven Gods as well. Neither the Zhalanti nor the Seven Gods could have predicted what effect this discovery would have. Once the Ianer had found their creators at last, they re-imagined them into thousands of different shapes. Each culture gave the Seven new forms and new names. To their dismay the Seven found they were mutable, and the Seven became the Forty-Nine became the Two-Thousand Four-Hundred and One. The Seven Gods had opened themselves to their children only to be fundamentally changed by the experience. Change seemed the only constant in the Ianer culture, forever building up and tearing down, and the epochs of the Ianer were punctuated by massive conflict. Nations would rise and then tear each other apart in wars that would wipe away the old, upon which they built the new. The Seven Gods were either unable or unwilling to interfere in these global wars, no matter how close to extinction their young children came.

But extinction never did come. Perhaps their greatest strength is their adaptability, their sheer will to survive. Their weapons and powerful magics could destroy entire cultures, but those who survived would build new cultures and usher in new Epochs. The Endwar was one such conflict. There have been many before that one, and it is easy to believe that there will be others to come.

And so the Ianer have a very old culture. Not as old as the Zhalanti, certainly, but as they enter this new Epoch, already three millennia in, they do so with some sense of trepidation. Each culture, even the most primitive, knows of the great kingdoms of the previous Epoch. Their myths are filled with images of sprawling cities and magics of unbelievable power. They have seen, too, how this great power fed the greed that eventually destroyed them. On an almost instinctual level, the Ianer sense the doom that lies in their future. Rarely even acknowledged, collectively it has had a subtle, but powerful, influence upon the growth of their culture since the Endwar. This current Epoch is in many ways like any other epoch that has come before it. It has survived destruction and



Solathas Po

moves cautiously into the future. But unlike any previous Epoch, this is the first that has had to recover without the guidance of its creators. For the very first time in this race's long history, it is truly on its own.

Nothing can stand in the way of ambition, however. Not everyone has learned the same lesson, and so some rush forward to reclaim the might of the ancient and glorious past. The desire to advance, to improve, to become a *chosen nation,* cannot be denied forever, and why should it be? They are the **Inheritors.**

Physical Description

The Ianer are the most varied of all the races found on Zir'An. Typical adult Ianer are anywhere from 5'5" to 6'3" in height. Physical characteristics vary from culture to culture, region to region.

The Ianer about...

...The Zhalanti

"When I met one for the first time it was like being close to raw magick... the skin tingles, the nose catches exotic scents. I expected her to be haughty and arrogant, as they're depicted in novels and such, but the impression I got was almost as if she wasn't even really there. As though she looked at us from a great distance. Detached... and unconcerned about whether we 'young races' lived or died or suffered or... anything."

— Efran Hoye — Vallunei City

...The Dolonorri

"If I have to hear the Dolonorri complain one more time about how they're 'dying out,' about the injustices and hardships they've had to endure, I'll simply pop. No one holds a monopoly on suffering, but to hear them speak of it, all the world wants nothing more than to see them wiped off the face of Zir'An. I certainly don't, but you can't spend time with them and not have one chime in on the long time, unfair, I-can-barely-lift-a-tankard-of-ale suffering of the Dolonorri peoples."

— Magda Vendalz — Ballinor

...The Gogachi

"Like overgrown children they are. So eager to please, but half the time I can't understand a thing they're saying. They remind me of my neighbor's child, who suffered from a common form of mental retardation. Charming and loving child, surely, but ultimately useless in the larger scheme of things. Don't get me wrong, I'm against wholesale genocide, but if the Fire Reaches were to sink into the ocean and take those hulking freaks with it, no great loss."

— Vries Karnagallo — Ianu Voss

...The Neolli

"So savage and wild they are, like a window into the past. So romantic, the idea of them stalking prey among the tall grasses, howling to Arelas, beating their drums and dancing in the firelight. I saw an exhibition in the capital last year, complete with taxidermied Neolli in various dioramas depicting Neolli life. Facinating. I don't know if I'd like to meet one up close, but maybe the naturalist society can bring some around on tour for us all to see."

— Tia Guillein — Edyss

DOLONORRI: THE ARTIFICERS

It is believed that late in the First Age, the first Epoch that saw the rise of the Ianer upon the world, the Dolonorri were born from the mind of Drandlur, who crafted them from stone and lit within them the spark of life. Through the arteries of the world flows the life-nurturing Ylar and the Dolonorri were to be its caretakers. In those distant ages, the Dolonorri lived beneath the surface, building massive cities, and exploring the hidden beauty of the Deeper World. They mapped the pathways that could take one to the glowing heart of the world, where the Ylar itself resides. They remained hidden from the violent Ianer who ruled the surface above. They watched as their brutish cousins warred with each other, engulfing the world in their madness. But the Dolonorri were safe in their hidden underground domains.

Because of the Ianer's warlike nature, the Dolonorri remained apart from their cousins for many epochs, appearing only seldom to some cultures. With these they traded their crafts and precious metal-works, though to many their existence remained one of fanciful legends.

In time the Dolonorri would open themselves to their cousins above the surface. Expanding populations pushed Dolonorri cities beyond the mouths of the tunnel entrances to their domains. But in joining their surface cousins, they became a part of the cycle, and so would be reshaped along with the Ianer as each new Epoch dawned. But the Dolonorri seemed less equipped for dogged survival than their cousins. They had relied on the safety of their subterranean empires, but now even those failed to provide the security they once did. Dolonorri cities dwindled in number with the coming of each new cycle. In all of the known lands after the Endwar, only one relatively small nation of Dolonorri remained, the Mountain Home, Dorallia.

Forced from this, their last homeland, the Dolonorri left Dorallia as bloodfeuds raged through their halls and the warfare of the Ianer spilled over their borders. The history of Ballinor tells most of what happened next, as it explains why that nation is home to the majority of the surviving Dolonorri. Of this surviving number, an even smaller fraction are those deemed of true blood, undiluted by intermarriage with the Ianer. Even now there grows a movement among the Dolonorri to return to Dorallia and reclaim it, retake their lost homeland. This movement has taken shape among Dolonorri communities in Ballinor, Vallunei, and even Edyss.

Physical Description:

The Dolonorri possess squat, very dense bodies. Their tight, compact frames generally fall within 3'6" to 4'6" in height, though adults can weigh just as much, if not more, than the typical adult Ianer. Their skin color varies little from their origins, commonly being a rich, red-brown, or dark tan. Further east, towards Ballinor, shades of sandy brown and pale ochre are seen. Dolonorri hair is tough and wiry, and can be shaped rather well by the hand. Its color can range from dark blue, brick red,

DOLONORRI

black, or pale blonde. The Dolonorri possess elongated earlobes, which they often adorn with metal pegs or rings. The eyes of the Dolonorri are small and deep-set, commonly dark brown or stone gray in color.



Lurj Hollundkoten

The Dolonorri About...

...The Ianer

"Things move quickly in the world of the Inheritors. Obsessed as they are with their dreams of power. Sure, they rule this world, more or less, but they do so with so little thought to the consequences. I thought the Endwar would be enough of a lesson, but I've seen how they ignore the warnings of the past... or the dangers that are to come. I worry for my people, caught up in the Ianer's blind rush toward the future. Look to the past and see what you shall inherit."

— Korgas Stemvald — Ballinor

...The Zhalanti

"While the world suffers, they hide. People die every day, for no reason... they could have been saved, but the Zhalanti care not a whit. They have the power to shape the world to their whim, they could wipe out hunger, disease, strife, with a wave of their dainty hand, but do they care to lift a finger to help? No. They prefer to sit on the sidelines and watch the world go by without so much as a word of advice. Nuts to them."

— Ulvas Ereshkegal — Vallunei City

...The Gogachi

"I cannot help but feel some sense of kinship with these dull beasts. Like us, they feel bound to the purity of stone and steel. I have never been to the Fire Reaches, but I have met my share of them in the foundries in Ballinor. Nice folk, not great for conversation, but hard workers and even harder drinkers. Some people think it comical to see a Dolonorri palling around with one of them... but we share with them a bond the other races can't really understand."

— Shiri Walleso — Ballinor

...The Neolli

"Eeech, monsters. I can't stand the smell of their musky coats, and their eyes... so dark... they give me the creeps. Can't forge, not great when it comes to metalwork... no sense of stone. If they leave me alone, I'll do the same for them, but you'll not convince me they've 'evolved' or any of that rot. They're Shadekin, they eat people, and they stink. Damn them all."

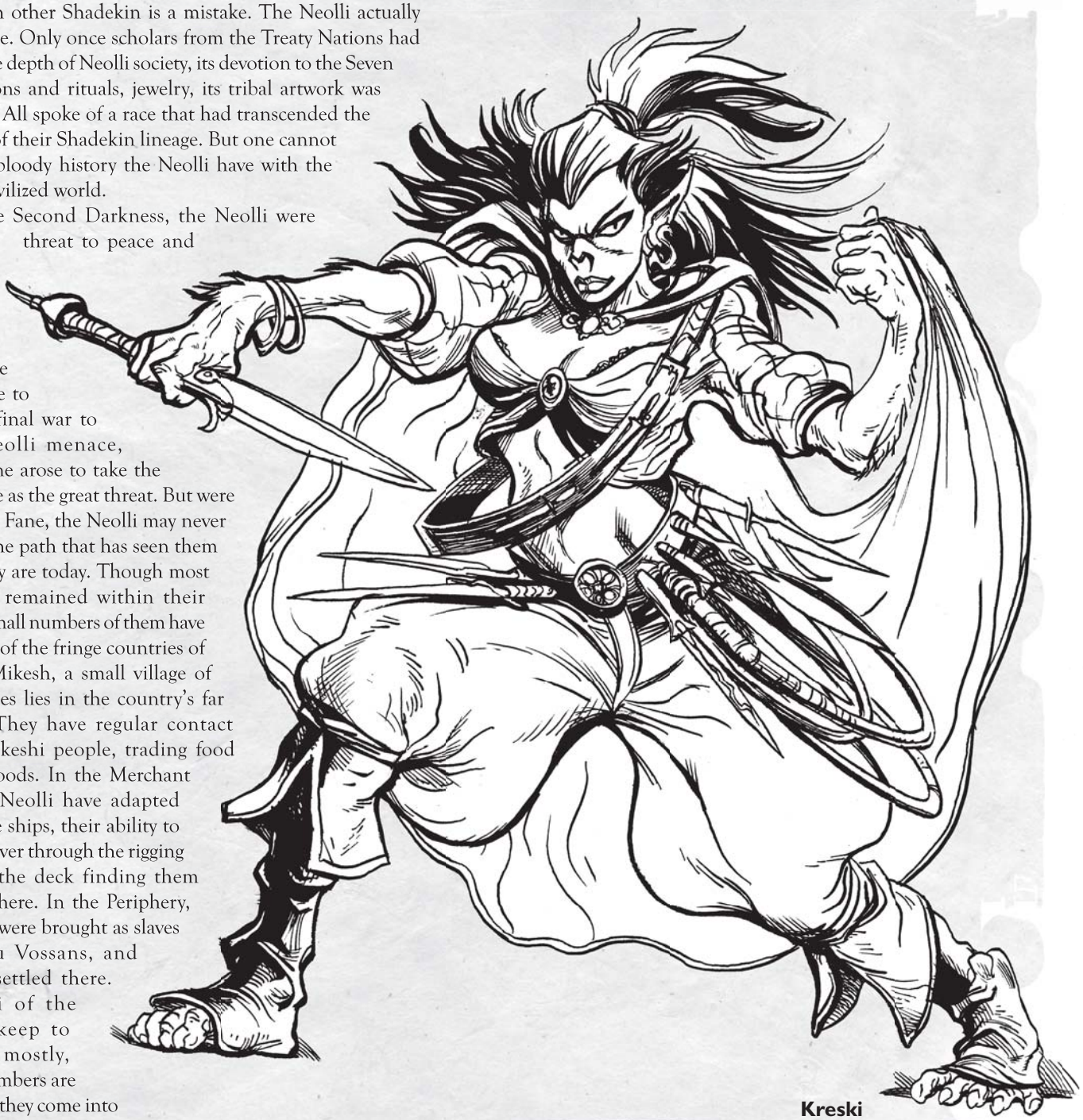
—Wallek Sturm — The Merchant Isles

NEOLLI

NEOLLI: THE BEAST PEOPLE

Of the Young Races that have appeared since the Endwar, the Neolli still elicit fear and prejudice from the intolerant and ignorant. Cannibals they call them; fiends, **Shadekin.** Most of the world views them with distrust, for it is difficult to see past the claws, the body clothed in fur, or the feral gaze and fanged mouth. But anyone who knows the Neolli knows that lumping them in with other Shadekin is a mistake. The Neolli actually have a culture. Only once scholars from the Treaty Nations had witnessed the depth of Neolli society, its devotion to the Seven Gods, its icons and rituals, jewelry, its tribal artwork was this realized. All spoke of a race that had transcended the bloodthirst of their Shadekin lineage. But one cannot dismiss the bloody history the Neolli have with the rest of the civilized world.

Before the Second Darkness, the Neolli were the greatest threat to peace and safety in the world. Very close the nations came to declaring a final war to end the Neolli menace, until the Fane arose to take the Neolli's place as the great threat. But were it not for the Fane, the Neolli may never have taken the path that has seen them to where they are today. Though most Neolli have remained within their homeland, small numbers of them have settled some of the fringe countries of Zir'An. In Mikesh, a small village of Neolli families lies in the country's far northeast. They have regular contact with the Mikeshi people, trading food and other goods. In the Merchant Isles, some Neolli have adapted to life on the ships, their ability to deftly maneuver through the rigging high above the deck finding them acceptance there. In the Periphery, some Neolli were brought as slaves by the Ianu Vossans, and have since settled there. The Neolli of the Periphery keep to themselves mostly, and their numbers are dwindling as they come into



Kreski

conflict with some of the more aggressive Anazoulo tribesmen.

But for the most part the Neolli want to have little to do with the rest of the world. They sense the doom that hangs over the Ianer and are unimpressed with their "great society" and their "great accomplishments." And so long as there are Ianer who refuse to see the Neolli as nothing but the brutal savages they once were, forever shall the two peoples remain divided.

Physical Description

The Neolli most notable characteristic are their fur-covered bodies. The fur is generally short, but grows longer around the shoulders, neck, and head. Typically, the Neolli fur is a medium to dark brown, with ash grays among the forested swamps of western Neoll. Their catlike eyes possess a vertical slit pupil and come in shades ranging from bright gold to emerald green. The nose of the Neolli is flat and fleshy, similar to a vampire bat, with wide nostrils that face forward. Their mouths bristle with fangs and their fingers end in long, ebony claws. The typical adult Neolli stands between 5' and 5'8" in height; their light, limber bodies built for speed and agility.

The Neolli About...

...the Ianer

"We understand them better than they understand us. We have watched them from afar, seen them expand and dominate, as is their nature... to dominate. What they do not have, they covet, what they have, they spoil. Never satisfied. To them, we may be beasts, and let them continue to think this way. We see what they cannot, we know what they choose to forget... that ultimately we are one beast... a single soul housed in a million bodies."

— Shamaness Seska — Neoll

...The Zhalanti

"So curious, these beings. They are here, but they are not. Alive, but at the same time as unliving as a statue. They seek something, answers perhaps, but do they even know the question? And would they know the answer when they saw it? They treat us with respect, do not harrass us, and for that they have our thanks. In our language they are the 'Ushumsh'... the empty ones."

— Ulthekki — Neoll

...The Dolonorri

"Ah, the people of stone. We can sense their connection to to Drandlur as we can sense their sorrow. They are dying, these people... but how can they not see that it is they who willingly lay themselves down on the funeral bier. Within them lies the strength of the whole world... only once they awaken to it will their people be saved."

— Keshkeshk — The Perhiphery

...The Gogachi

"Lurching monsters... dim witted and foul of smell. Why do they spend so much time trying to curry the favor of the Ianer... this I do not understand. They serve a Fane like a dog leashed to its master. Their spirits are deadened."

— Nemuuk — Neoll

GOGACHI: THE STOLID GIANTS

During the time of re-building after the plagues of the Endwar had dissipated, a new race emerged, the Gogachi, a race whose massive bodies, whose language and even mindset were alien to the other races of Zir'An. Before the War of the Fane and subsequent arrival of Valkan the Gogachi were scattered tribes of people living on the various tropical isles of the Fire Reaches. At that time the Fire Reaches were much harder to navigate because there were many more small islands; their jagged shores formed a maze leading to the main island chain, and heavy volcanic mists obscured the safest path. So the Gogachi existed alone and undisturbed, their culture, though primitive, thrived until one day a strange tribe of small men came to their shores in "iron fish."

First contact with the Gogachi was established by an Ianu Vossan vessel, *The Amandia.* Although the ship's crew was intimidated by the Gogachi's grand size they soon found the tribes to be reserved yet curious, almost childlike in their behavior. The development of communication between the Ianu Vossans and the Gogachi was gradual, and the Ianu Vossans were surprised at how the Gogachi retained some information at an incredible rate while some words and concepts they seemed to simply dismiss. The Ianu Vossans had dubbed the Gogachi *Tatsojia,* or "Crumbling Mountain," as there was a large disparity in lifespan between Ianer and Gogachi. Ever privateers at heart, the Ianu Vossans saw it would be easy to exploit the already superstitious Gogachi. So the Ianu Vossans convinced the elders of the tribes that the iron deposits they discovered were the cause of their early demise and promised them that Ianu Voss would supervise the excavation of the blight (in truth the cause is the Gogachi's hereditary form of gigantism). The Gogachi were transported to some of the smaller isles and interned in camps, worked almost to the point of extinction. As their symptoms worsened a Fane rose from their ranks named Valkan. Instead of joining in the petty feuds with his brethren Fane, he swore to save his people. He single-handily annihilated the Ianu Vossan outsiders, freed the Gogachi and has watched over them ever since.

The Fire Reaches is now organized like a trade union where the Gogachi build and operate tireless iron foundries. Their whole culture supports a rigid and fanatic work force that works with the same zeal they keep for the worship of Valkan the Molten King. The sea-lanes are now more open from the Reaches to the rest of Zir'An thanks to Valkan's volcanic rearrangement of the islands. Although their original home is the Fire Reaches, their size and work ethic has served the Gogachi well in building lives of industry in other lands. In Ballinor, for instance, they are a welcome edition to Kraftwerks as well as the fighting force against the Dominion of Drakan. Older Dolonorri even believe the Gogachi descend from the giants in Dorralian legends.

GOGACHI

Physical Description

The first thing anyone notices about the Gogachi is their size. The average adult Gogachi stands anywhere from 6'5" to 7' and are more than half as broad in the shoulder. The Gogachi possess a tough hide that ranges in shades of dull tan to medium brown. All Gogachi men are bald, whereas the women possess thick manes of wiry hair that comes in a set standard of shades: flame red, dark gray, white, and bright yellow. The broad, flat face of the Gogachi bears small eyes of dark shades: brown, gray, or olive green.

The Gogachi on...

...The Ianer

"So smart. They soft and noisy, but they smart. Try to talk to me, but they talk so fast... hard to understand. But they everywhere you look... much more than we Gogachi... they run everything so if you become their friend, do good work for them, they pay you good, give you good food. I like them... most of the time... sometimes I think they make fun of me."

— Piro Bas — The Merchant Isles

...The Zhalanti

"Beautiful skinny... beautiful... their eyes... they talk like a dream...they look at you and you... you see they have lived forever... they know everything... so... so beautiful."

— Suma Chom — The Periphery

...The Dolonorri

"Small, but really, really smart. They do good work, build good things, and they know iron almost as well as we do. Unlike other folk, they seem to like us, not make fun or call us names when they think we cannot hear them. They small, but stronger than they look. Maybe they small Gogachi from long ago. Or maybe we big Dolonorri?"

— Timo Rigs — Ballinor

...The Neolli

"Eufff... they scare me. Small, but move very fast... hard to catch. I hear they eat people. That not good, not good to eat people. Taboo. I met one and dreamed about it that night, dreamed that they chase me and eat me. Do they howl at the moon? Why do they do that? They are monsters and so I try to avoid them."

— Arun Palvo — The Merchant Isles

THE GOGACHI GAMING CHALLENGE

Players who wish to take on a challenging way to play their Gogachi character may wish to try the following:

- Pick 50 words per Intelligence point of your character.
- Use ONLY these words to express yourself during game sessions.

This is meant to reflect not that Gogachi are unintelligent, but rather that their thought processes are so different that they have trouble with languages spoken by the other races. It's also loads of fun for the whole group.

"Gorgeous" Gorga





An Anazulo patrols his warlord's territory in the Periphery.

CHAPTER 5

CHARACTER ORIGINS

A HERO IS BORN...

Where a hero comes from is almost important as where they are going. Their culture largely defines who they are as a person, and sets them on the course they will follow throughout their lifetime. In the Secret of Zir'An, a character's Origin determines their beginning Stat values, Skills, Aptitudes, and gives a special talent or ability: their Origin's Valdreyr. Firstly, however, the race chosen determines what origins the character can draw from. Not all races are as equally distributed throughout the various cutlures. Available origins categorized by race are:

Ianeran Origins:
Arivonne. Ba-Dur. Ballinor. Bhuket. Cyroon. The Dominion of Drakan. Edyss. Harakyr. Ianu Voss. Illestan. Klesht. The Merchant Isles. The Periphery. Talus. Thrayce. Vandalusa. Vallunei.

Dolonorri Origins:
Ballinor. Edyss. The Periphery. Vallunei.

Gogachi Origins:
Ballinor. The Fire Reaches. The Merchant Isles. The Periphery.

Neolli Origins:
The Merchant Isles. Mikesh. Neoll. The Periphery.

Zhalanti Origins:
Thallysia.

The character's origin is the society in which they were raised; accepted or rejected, rich or poor, for better or for worse it is the culture they identify with. It gives their character much of their style and each has its own inherent advantages and disadvantages. Finally, within the SoZ skill package system, the player is free to add his or her own wrinkle to the flavor of that origin, to show an aspect of it made of their own creativity.

PLAYER CHARACTER ORIGINS

Each Origin is defined by several categorical listings. Here are their definitions:

Origin Name

Native Language: The language a character takes as fluent if they choose this Origin.

Base Characteristics (Maximum values in parentheses): Self-Explanatory.

Base Aptitudes: Self-explanatory.

Valdreyr: An adventurer gets a freebie Valdreyr depending on their Origin.

Beginning Age: Self-explanatory. Add the years from Skill Packages taken later to this number.

Beginning Skills: Self-explanatory.

Arivonnean

Native Language: Erimani
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(12)
Mass: 3(10)
Intelligence: 4(12)
Acuity: 5(14)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.
Valdreyr:Weather Sense

Arivonneans all possess an uncanny ability to read and predict weather patterns. They have an instinctual feeling for the wind and can read it to assist in flying. An Advanced (15) Awareness skill test will allow them to predict the weather accurately by 1 day per point of Personal Aptitude. An Arivonnean's Pilot Skill will have a starting Practice of +1.

Beginning Age: 16
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Arivonne. Mechanics. Science: Aeronautics.
(P) Awareness. Melee: Short. Melee: Long. Occupational Skill: choose. Pilot. Survival.
(S) Connections (pick one: Pilots Guild, Underground Resistance Movement, Mechanics Guild, or Trade Guild).

Ba-Durai

Native Language: Il-Sammadi
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(12)
Mass: 4(10)
Intelligence: 4(12)
Acuity: 4(14)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.
Valdreyr: Fires of bin Sa'la

So long as a Ba-Duran has the faith of bin Sa'la, they will never know fear. The Ba-Duran will be immune to magical fear or uses of the skill Intimidation. They are never Stressed when under direct threat, though combat remains a Stressful situation.

Beginning Age: 14
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Ba-Dur. Lore: Ancient History.
(P) Artisan (choose). Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: Medium. Occupation Skill: (choose). Riding.
(S) Connection (choose one: traders, Ben Sha'oud, the Merchant Families (the Umir), the Royal Families (the Sudar).

Ballinorian

Native Language: Dorralinath
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(12)
Mass: 4(12)
Intelligence: 4(12)
Acuity: 4(12)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.
Valdreyr: Mechanical Affinity

Ballinorians have an intuitive understanding of mechanical devices. They can sense flaws or come to understand the function of an unfamiliar piece of technology. By making a Perception + Knowledge + Mechanics skill test (difficulty determined by HoF) they can get a sense of the machinery's inner workings.

Beginning Age: 16
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Ballinor. Mechanics.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: Short. Melee: Medium. Occupational Skill: (choose). Ranged Weapons: Medium. Survival.
(S) Connection (choose one: Rune Mage Society, Militia Party, Engineers' Kraftwerk).

Bhuketi

Native Language: Pa'Daskret
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 5(14)
Mass: 4(10)
Intelligence: 4(12)
Acuity: 3(12)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Personal.
Valdreyr: Lhar's Will

The people of Bhuket are especially resistant to mental control. Lhar's will dominates his people, even those who directly oppose him. This force imbues the bodies of each and every last citizen, granting a +5 bonus to resist the effects of any Rune Magic or Shadow Magic spells that affect the mind. This bonus does NOT work, however, on similar magics cast by Lhar, his disciples, priests, or slavers, in fact becoming a -5 penalty to such attempts.

Beginning Age: 14
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: Short. Occupational Skill: (choose). Riding. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections (choose one: Koba teachers, Shree Kat underground, Slave Traders).

Cyrooni

Native Language: Cyrooni
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 3(12)
Mass: 4(10)
Intelligence: 2(12)
Acuity: 7(14)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.
Valdreyr: Burglar's Nose

From an early age, Cyrooni children are taught to distinguish treasure from trash. Their ability to appraise an objects raw value has become instinctual, telling real gold from fools', diamonds from glass, just at a glance. By succeeding with an Expert (20) Awareness Skill Test, they can literally "smell" precious metals and jewels that are hidden or otherwise out of view.

Beginning Age: 12
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Cyroon. Tracking: Urban.
(P) Awareness. Melee: Short. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth.
(S) Connive. Intuit. Connections (choose one: independent thieves, thief guilds, the Kagda Dovra, street gangs).

Drakani

Native Language: Drakalian
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(14)
Mass: 5(12)
Intelligence: 3(12)
Acuity: 4(10)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.
Valdreyr: Life of Agony

The Drakani are used to a life of hardship, both emotionally and physically. This has hardened the Drakani people. They have a high endurance to discomfort. Inured to physical hardship, they are able to rest comfortably on the hardest surfaces, to stomach the most unpalatable foods. Drakani are never Stressed in a harsh environment.

Beginning Age: 13
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: the Dominion of Drakan.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Mechanics. Melee: Short. Occupational Skill: choose.
(S) Connive. Intuit. Connections (choose one: the Bazhna-Zi, Tilandri Resistance Movement, Doyani employee).

Edyssian

Native Language: LaVas
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 3(10)
Mass: 3(10)
Intelligence: 6(14)
Acuity: 5(14)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.
Valdreyr: Learning Knack

Once per game session the Edyssian character has 4 points of Practice they can add to any of thier skill/s without a finesse level. These points can be added at any time during the session , put into a single skill or distributed over several. These "floating" points of practice represent the Edyssian's ability to pick up new skills quickly through observation, or by recalling a snippet of information they learned years ago. No skill may have practice above 5, and any use of these skills still counts as an "unskilled" skill test, meaning the player cannot score a **Superior** success.

Beginning Age: 16
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Area Knowledge: Edyss. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: choose. Science: choose.
(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose.
(S) Conversation. Connections (choose one: Professors, Adventurers, School or University).

The Fire Reaches

Native Language: Goucha
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 6(12)
Mass: 7(20)
Intelligence: 1(8)
Acuity: 2(10)
Base Aptitudes:
All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.
Valdreyr: Environmental Tolerance

Because of the toxic environment the Gotach have become inured to most toxins, even terminally fatal ones. Their Mass is counted double versus resistance to poisons. Likewise they are able to tolerate great extremes of temperature. They are never Stressed in such situations.

Beginning Age: 12
Beginning Skills:
All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.
(K) Lore: Metallurgy. Mechanics.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose. Melee: short, medium, or long. Survival.
(S) Intimidation. Connections (choose one: Pit Fighters, religious caste, Edyssian Professors).

Harakyri

Native Language: Estuado
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(12)
Mass: 3(10)
Intelligence: 5(14)
Acuity: 4(12)
Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.

Valdreyr: Padam—the Web

The Harakyri connection to Fate gives them the ability to sense the connection between all people. This is instinctual, they do not actually perceive the bonds of fate, per se, but can sense someone of great import, or the Chosen, on sight. Their subconscious understanding of the binds that draw individuals together gives them an uncanny social awareness. When not Stressed, the Finesse Difficulty for any Socialize skill tests is reduced by one level, permitting them a greater chance of scoring a Superior Success.

Beginning Age: 14
Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Harakyr. Lore (choose).

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose. Melee: Small.

(S) Intuit. Socialize. Connections (choose one: Pit Fighters, religious caste, Edyssian sociologists).

Ianu Vossan

Native Language: Erimani
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 4(12)
Mass: 3(10)
Intelligence: 5(14)
Acuity: 4(12)
Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.

Valdreyr: The Art of the Deal

Ianu Vossans are raised with a mind for legalities, contracts and deals. People reveal their innermost desires in the midst of negotiation; Ianu Vossans learn to pick up on these subtle clues. When engaging anyone in any sort of deal, contractual agreement, business proposals, etc, the Ianu Vossan may use their Intuit skill as though it were of the next higher Finesse Level.

Beginning Age: 13
Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: The Southern Empires. Lore (choose).

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose. Melee: medium.

(S) Intuit. Socialize. Connections (choose one: Ianu Vossan nobility, Navy, Ianu Vossan industrialists).

Illestani

Native Language: Battlan
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 5(14)
Mass: 5(12)
Intelligence: 3(10)
Acuity: 3(12)
Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Personal.

Valdreyr: Battle Trance

By making an Advanced (15) Meditation skill test, the Illestani can enter a state of mind where neither the distractions of pain or the fear of impending death can deter them. For the duration of combat they cannot be stunned, incapacitated, or suffer roll penalties from damage taken until they've reached zero Vitality, at which time they are unconscious (or dead) as normal. The Battle Trance lasts for the duration of combat, after which time they will suffer the effects of their wounds until healed.

Beginning Age: 14
Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Lore: Shadekin.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short, medium, or long. Ranged Weapon: small, medium, or heavy. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections (choose one: Infantry, War Priest/Priestesses, Mercenaries).

Kleshti

Native Language: Savastri
Base Characteristics:
Physique: 3(12)
Mass: 3(10)
Intelligence: 5(12)
Acuity: 6(14)
Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.

Valdreyr: The Serpents' Tongue

Kleshti speech is soft and melodious; those who hear it often find it hypnotizing. The Kleshti use this to their advantage, turning words on their ear and creating double meanings and vague innuendo. By making an Elite (25) Conversation or Persuasion skill test, they can convince the person they're talking to that they've told them exactly what they wanted to hear, even if the Kleshti doesn't know the particulars of the subject. The listener creates the context and meaning in their own minds, without even realizing they're doing it.

Beginning Age: 20

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesth. Lore: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connive. Intuit. Connections (choose one: Kleshti cult, Kleshti merchants, Cyrooni/Drakani/Ianu Vossan trading partner). Conversation.

Merchant Islander

Native Language: Sambi Speech

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 4(12)

Mass: 3(10)

Intelligence: 4(12)

Acuity: 5(14)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.

Valdreyr: Eyes to the Heavens

From centuries of relying on the stars and their movements to plot one's course or find one's way, all who grow up in the Merchant Isles are taught from birth the constellations above. With an Awareness skill test, they can estimate their location in Zir'An by looking at the stars and their relative positions. A Basic(10) Awareness skill test is all that is needed to know exactly where they are when in the Merchant Isles. An Expert(20) Awareness skill test is needed to discern their exact location in an unfamiliar land. Use of an appropriate Area Knowledge skill by the Merchant Islander will reduce the Finesse Difficulty by one level.

Beginning Age: 13

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Merchant Isles.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Artisan: choose. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Socialize. Connections (choose one: Merchants from Distant Lands, Criminal Underworlders, Pirates).

Mikeshi

Native Language: Mikeshi

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 3(10)

Mass: 5(10)

Intelligence: 3(14)

Acuity: 5(14)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Personal.

Valdreyr: The Singcall

Though they don't have radios or telephonics, the Mikeshi do have a means of communicating over a long distance. They've developed a simple language that uses a series of high-pitched whistles, warbling cries, chirps and whoops. This way the Mikeshi can send simple messages with a cry that can carry for miles. They are also adept at mimicing natural sounds, from natural phenomena like thunder and rain, to the calls of wild animals. By making an Advanced (15) Lore: Naturalism roll, they succeed in mimicing the desired sound. An Elite (25) Lore: Naturalism roll allows them to successfully communicate simple ideas to animals, such as RUN, DANGER, HELP, etc. How the animal responds is up to the HoF.

Beginning Age: 12

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: Herbalism. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: Small. Melee: short. Survival.

(S) Connections (choose one: Mikeshi shamans, Mikeshi tribal leaders, Visiting foreign adventurers).

Neolli (Neolli Race Only)

Native Language: Riakh

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 6(16)

Mass: 4(10)

Intelligence: 2(8)

Acuity: 6(14)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Personal.

Valdreyr: Roar of the Ancients

The power and the might of the Greater Neolli flow through the veins of its people, or so believe the native Neolli. When angered, the Neolli can release a high-pitched ultrasonic roar, channeling the rage of the ancients. If the Neolli succeeds with a contested Intimidation skill test against all targets within fifteen feet of the Neolli, they suffer the Handicap: Deaf. This is a non-magical effect and can be recovered from as normal.

Beginning Age: 8

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Neoll. Lore: choose. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short, medium *or* long. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections (choose one: Neolli tribes, Neolli shamans, Adventurers).

The Periphery

Native Language: Tasili

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 5(14)

Mass: 3(12)

Intelligence: 3(10)

Acuity: 5(12)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.

Valdreyr: Desert Skin

Natives of the Periphery have adapted their skin to the harsh conditions of their environment. Neither the burning sun nor the scouring dust storms can bother them. Also, their bodies retain water longer, allowing them to go twice as long without it. Their Survival skill is considered one Finesse Level higher when used in desert areas.

Beginning Age: 13

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: The Periphery. Lore: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Melee: choose. Survival.

(S) Conversation. Connections (choose one: Anazoulo tribesmen, foreign explorers/archaeologists, Hantsu traders).

Talusian

Native Language: Esquador

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 4(14)

Mass: 4(10)

Intelligence: 4(12)

Acuity: 4(12)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Personal or Social.

Valdreyr: The Art of Love and War

Love and hate are the two great motivators in the world, or so the Talusians believe. Life is a battle to balance these two fundamental instincts. Talusians can tell after only a short moment's study, if a person is currently motivated purely by love or hate for another person. Any social skills used by the Talusians on people currently motivated by love or hate become Superior Successes, unless they happen to roll a "1," indicating an Instant Failure. They know what buttons to push.

Beginning Age: 14

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Talus.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Melee: medium.

(S) Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Socialize. Connections (choose one: Family Guild, Allied Guild, Talusian socialites).

Thallysian (Zhalanti Race Only)

Native Language: Zha Lee Thall + 1 of their choice.

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 3(14)

Mass: 3(10)

Intelligence: 6(17)

Acuity: 4(12)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 point in Knowledge, Personal, or Social.

Valdreyr: The Szazari

All Zhalanti leaving their country on a wander are given a Kinblade to use as their primary weapon. The Szazari is more than a blade, it is a link between them and their homeland.

Beginning Age: Immortal, 10 for the purpose of maximum Valdreyr

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 3 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Lore: choose (x2). Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Melee: medium. Stealth.

(S) Conversation. Connections (choose two: Wandering Zhalanti, Runemage Colleges, Nobility/Royalty, Foreign Visitors).

Thraycean

Native Language: Tondu

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 5(12)

Mass: 3(12)

Intelligence: 3(10)

Acuity: 5(14)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.

Valdreyr: The Canticle

The Thrayceans are a culture filled with the stories of all Zir'An. Thrayceans gain the skill, Lore: The Canticle at Basic. With this skill the user can gain historical insight into nearly any situation or locale. This insight can occasionally be prophetic, or reveal secrets that have long since been buried. Thraycean storytellers are renowned across Zir'An.

Beginning Age: 12

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Thrayce. Area Knowledge: the Eastern seas.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: choose. Survival.

(S) Conversation. Connections (choose one: Thraycean sailors, Tilandri, Thraycean merchants).

Tilandri

Native Language: Tilani Ryei

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 4(14)

Mass: 3(12)

Intelligence: 5(12)

Acuity: 4(10)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.

Valdreyr: Air of Inscrutability

The Tilandri have an aura of mystery, a powerful allure that many find irresistible. The individual Tilandri character chooses to emphasize either Connive or Seduction, and regardless of the situation, the character is never considered Stressed for the use of the chosen skill. The Tilandri are in complete control of their demeanor, so attempts to read their motives, etc, through the use of the skill Intuit, will result in a false impression dictated by the Tilandri character.

Beginning Age: 13

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: The Dominion. Healing. Lore: choose.

(P) Artisan (choose). Awareness. Melee: Short.

(S) Connive. Intuit. Socialize. Connections (choose one: Underground Resistance, resistance sympathizers, Tilandri Mystics).

Valluneian

Native Language: Empyriar

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 4(12)

Mass: 4(12)

Intelligence: 4(14)

Acuity: 4(12)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge , Personal, or Social.

Valdreyr: Cosmopolitan

Growing up coming in contact with so many different cultures has given Valluneians of the Kingdom Proper 3 points of Language gratis (up to Rare Languages).

Beginning Age: 18

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: choose

(P) Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Conversation. Intuit. Socialize. Connections (choose one: Visiting Foreigners, Valluneian Nobility, Family Ally).

Vandalusan

Native Language: Vandasul +1 other language.

Base Characteristics:

Physique: 3(10)

Mass: 3(10)

Intelligence: 7(14)

Acuity: 6(14)

Base Aptitudes:

All begin at 1, with 1 additional point in Knowledge or Social.

Valdreyr: The Council of Voices

Through the use of Meditation, Vandalusans can tap the collected unconscious of other Vandalusans. While more effective when within their own borders, Vandalusans can hear these "voices" through meditative exercise from anywhere. Vandalusans use this great unseen cacophony of voices as a means to gain answers to questions. The answers are never straightforward but will be in riddles, further questions, or interpretive imagery. Often a Vandalusan will have to spend at least three hours in deep meditation to get any sort of recognizable answer or dialogue. While inside Vandalusa, this is an Advanced (15) Meditation skill test, an Expert (20) Meditation skill test when outside of it. With a Superior Success, the clarity of the answers or information gleaned will be greater (at the Hand of Fate's discretion).

Beginning Age: 12

Beginning Skills:

All start at Basic. Put up to 2 points of Practice in any skill/s.

(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: choose two. Rune Magic.

(P) Artisan (choose). Awareness. Meditation.

(S) Connection (choose one: Vandalusan learning institution, Foreign Runemages/Shadowmages/Scholars), Conversation. Intuit.

Example: *Tom has picked Bhuket as his Character's origin. He likes the idea of playing a rebellious martial artist. He writes down his starting stats, his native language, and the Valdreyr: Rugged, and puts 1 point of Practice in Unarmed, and 1 point in Athletics.*

Scott is going to make an Illestani, since Scott used to be in the military himself and likes to play characters that are "HARDCORE!" He puts a point of practice into Melee: Medium and Ranged Weapon: Heavy.

Chrys decides upon a Tilandri character from the Dominion of Drakan. She already sees the Tilandri Mystic forming in her imagination. She puts a point of Practice into Healing and a point of Practice into Awareness.



Reflections on a life in the Hand of Fate.

CHAPTER 6

SKILL PACKAGES

CHOOSING SKILL PACKAGES

Out of the Character Creation Points given to players to build their character, a major part will be spent on Skill Packages. Skill Packages are not merely groupings of skills based around a common thread, they're a means to map out your character's history, where they started, where they went, what happened to them — their lifepath. Your character may have focused on one particular career or they might have meandered through the world picking up skills along the way.

Cost

The number of Character Creation Points the package costs. Packages may be purchased as many times as the player wishes and is able to pay the CCP cost.

Years Spent

Each package is a portion of the character's past. As packages are purchased, the years add on starting from the character's age of maturity, as listed in the character's Origin Package.

Aptitude

Characters begin with very low Aptitude scores based on their Origin. Buying Skill Packages is how starting characters strengthen their Aptitudes. Points of Aptitude can only be placed in Aptitudes the package offers skills for. For instance, if the package does not contain any Knowledge skills, the player cannot spend the package's Aptitude allotment on Knowledge.

Language

Some, but not all, skill packages come with a number of points to devote to languages. Languages (listed in Chapter 3: Character Creation) are rated like skills, from Basic to Elite, defining the character's fluency with that language. One point buys a new language at Basic, or raises an existing language one Finesse Level.

Skills

All skill packages contain an allotment of points the player uses to purchase skills. Each time the player purchases a skill package, they must distribute the points allotted into the skills listed in the package. The player must distribute all the skill points given before they can go on to the next skill package. Only a single point per listed skill may be spent to improve a skill with the purchase of each skill package (unless the skill is listed with a multiplier, such as x2. see below). After the player has purchased all their skill packages and distributed all available points into their skills, those points are converted into the final Finesse Level and Points of Practice. Each point is worth:

- 1 Finesse Level (1 point = Basic skill, 2 total points = Advanced skill, 3 total = Expert, and 4 total = Elite)

or

- 1 Point of Practice (to a maximum of 5)

Example: Tom has purchased four skill packages, and in each package he was allowed to spend 1 point on Melee: Medium, so when he's completed his purchases, he has 4 points built up in Melee: Medium. Now its come time to convert those points into Finesse Level and Practice. The power level of the campaign is Heroic, which has an Expert Finesse Level cap for beginning characters. With those four points he could convert his Melee: Medium skill to a Basic skill wtih 3 points of Practice, an Advanced skill with 2 points of Practice, or an Expert skill with one point

of Practice. He chooses Expert, with 1 point of Practice. It is not always a safe bet to shoot for the highest Finesse Level, though. A lower Finesse Level will grant the player a higher Practice, which guarantees the player will score higher with their skill in Skill Tests.

Skills listed with a (x2) next to them means that the player may spend up to 2 skill points on a single skill, instead of the normal 1. Or alternatively they could spread those points among related skills. A Lore skill marked by a (x2) could be used to buy two separate Lore skills, or put 2 skill points into a single one.

NATION-SPECIFIC SKILL PACKAGES

Arivonnean Packages

Arivonnean Pilot

Arivonne is well known for its people's skill as pilots. Due to a combination of necessity, tradition, and natural talent, Arivonne is home to the most skilled pilots in all of the Kingdoms. Many Arivonnean pilots have left their country to receive high paying jobs as pilots for everything from commercial to military aircraft, as well as teaching flying in such places Edyss, Ballinor, and the Kingdom of Vallunei.

Cost: 13
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (common)
Skills: 7
(K) Lore: Aircraft. Mechanics. Science: Aeronautics.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Pilot(x2). Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: fixed. Survival.
(S) Connections: Pilots or Pilot Organizations.

Aibo Maru: Mountain Troopers

Guarding the various patrol booths of Arivonne's mountainsides are the Aibo Maru. Not only acting as the first line of ground defense, they are also snow patrols, rescue teams, and minor law enforcement for some of Arivonne's more remote villages (of which there are plenty).

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: Arivonne. Healing. Lore: Mountains. Mechanics. Tracking: Wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: mountaineer. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Stealth. Survival.
(S) Connections: Aibo Maru. Connections: (choose). Intimidation. Leadership.

Arivonnean Engineer

As important and desired as pilots are the Aeronautical Engineers and Air-ship designers of Arivonne. Often skilled pilots as well, Arivonnean Engineers have secured lucrative positions in many lands, most notably Edyss and Vallunei.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (common)
Skills: 8
(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Ancient Technology. Lore: Aircraft. Mechanics. Pilot. Science: Engineering. Science: Mathematics. Rune Magic. Science: choose.
(P) Awareness. Pilot.
(S) Connections: Engineering Guilds or Organizations. Connections: choose.

Arivonnean Underground

The current generation of Arivonneans is the first to truly grow up in the shadow of Ianu Vossan imperialism. Though generations have come before them who worked to loosen the yoke imposed by its powerful neighbor, the current generation is becoming more involved than any that preceded it. Many organizations exist that run the gamut from militant to merely mediagenic and despite the current crackdown on such organizations by Arivonne's own government, one need not go far to find one. The three most prevalent of these groups are the publicly demonstrative Delru Arivonnis, the secessionist Seddi Kovar, and the highly secretive militant L.A.O.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 12
(K) Area Knowledge: Arivonne. Area Knowledge: Ianu Voss. Lore: Explosives. Lore: Ianu Voss.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Pilot. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Security. Stealth.
(S) Connections: Underground Movement. Connections: Sympathizers. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Ba-Duran Packages

Sh'taaz Fahrouk: Walkers of the Steel Path

The Sha'taaz Fahrouk are the guardian sword-masters of Ba-Dur royalty. While the beliefs of the Walkers of the Steel Path demand that they remain close to the Holy Emperor Orar, they have often been allowed to accompany traveling Sudar as bodyguards. On

rare occasions they will be sent abroad at the behest of the Holy Emperor. Most importantly, they are the guardians of Ba-Dur, patrolling its every acre.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Ba-Dur. Lore: Ba-Dur's secret sites. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: medium (x2). Riding: Horses. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: The Sudar. Connections: The Ben Sha'oud. Intimidation. Leadership.

Umaud A'liid: Brotherhood of the Sapphire

The people of Ba-Dur are determined never to fall under the power of any Fane, ever again. The Brotherhood of the Sapphire is the group of Runemages and Shadowmages who work to protect Ba-Dur from this possibility. They are highly ranked among Ba-Duran society, very often at the side of many important Sudar or Umir, but their true loyalty is to the Brotherhood and Ba-Dur. Pick ei

ther Rune Magic or Shadow Magic when purchasing this skill package.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 8
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (uncommon)
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: Umaud A'liid strongholds. Healing. Lore: Current Events. Lore: Ancient Languages. Lore: Shadow Magic. Lore: The Fane. Lore: Ancient Technology, Lore: Court Intrigue. Rune Magic.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Shadow Magic.

(S) Connections: The Sudar. Connections: The Umir. Connections: The Umaud A'liid. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Socialize.

A'habir: Souls of the Court's Intrigue

The A'habir are the players in the highly intricate game of politics and power in the upper echelon of Ba-Dur. They are courtiers and courtesans; Sudar and Umir rumormongers who know a well-timed whisper or an innuendo of a family secret can be just as effective as an assassin's blade.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (uncommon)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Ba-Dur. Lore: Court Intrigue. Lore: (choose).

(P) Melee: short. Riding: Horses.

(S) Connections: (choose up to three). Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Ben Sha'oud

While they seldom leave their beloved, yet dangerous land, the Ben Sha'oud nomads might journey from time to time as bodyguards for a Ba-Durai merchant caravan, or be out on a vision quest, seeking the deeper truths of the teachings of the Prophet. The Ben Sha'oud are proficient riflemen and horse riders. They are survivors extraordinaire, in any clime. Don't think it doesn't snow in some parts of Ba-Dur.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (must be Il'sammadi)
Skills: 10

(K) Healing. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: choose. Ranged Weapon: heavy. Riding. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: The Sh'taaz Fahrouk. Connections: The Umaud A'liid. Leadership.

Ballinorian Packages

Ballinorian Militia

Every adult Ballinorian citizen, men and women alike, are expected to fight in defense of their country, but some Ballinoreans choose to go the extra step and volunteer for a tour of duty. Most often they are sent to patrol the Volleanu Wall, keeping ready for any possible invasion by the Dominion. The Ballinorian Militiamen are highly revered in Ballinor and well respected beyond their borders, earning their reputation in bloody and victorious combat against the Dominion's forces.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 11

(K) Healing. Mechanics. Tracking: Wilderness. Trancking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Ranged Weapon: heavy. Ranged Weapon: fixed. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Ballinor Militia. Intimidation. Leadership.

Ballinorian Engineer

The spread of ancient Dolonorri engineering sciences through the Ballinorian culture has created a disproportionate number of Engineers and technological craftsmen. There is a complex cycle of apprenticeships, moving from school to school, workshop to workshop, until eventually an engineer sees employment at a Kraftwerk or exploration abroad as a journeyman Engineer.

Cost: 15
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (common)
Skills: 6

(K) Lore: technology. Mechanics. Rune Magic. Science: Engineering. Science: choose (x2).

(P) Awareness. Driving. Occupational Skill: choose. Pilot.

(S) Connections: Engineering Guilds. Connections: Runemages. Connections: Kraftwerks.

Ballinorian Runemage

Following the same origin as Ballinor's technological strengths, old Dolonorri Rune Magic has quietly insinuated itself into the Ballinorian society. And while Ballinor generally uses about as much Rune Magic in daily life as any other developed country, secret schools of Dorallian Rune Magic permeate Ballinor. While the vast majority is not diabolical in any sense of the word, they do guard their secrets and knowledge jealously. Rivalries are common among Dorallian Runic societies and espionage among them is not uncommon. Rune Magic is taught in the greater Ballinorian universities, which often serve as covert recruitment centers and proving grounds for the Societies.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 5
Aptitude: 2
Language: 3 (very rare)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Ballinor. Lore: Rune Magic. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Ancient Texts. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Artisan: choose. Meditation.

(S) Connections: Rune Mages. Connections: Shadow Mages. Conversation. Intuit.

Ballinorian Explorer

Ballinor is heir to a great many famous explorers, independent souls who braved the unknown to return with fabulous stories. They travel the globe looking for mountains to climb, caves to spelunk, and deserts to cross. Museums the world over pay handsomely to fund the exploits of these intrepid adventurers, so naturally the attrition rate is very high. It's a dangerous world out there, but someone has got to map it.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (any except Zha Lee Thaal)
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: choose(x2). Healing. Lore: choose. Science: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: choose. Ranged Weapon: choose. Riding. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: choose (x2). Conversation. Leadership. Socialize.

Bhuketi Packages

Member of the Screaming Fist

Lhar's greatest foes, the members of the Screaming Fist are fanatical in their desire to depose Lhar and return the land to its people. Followers of the great Sahlru Ne, they generally come from Bhuket's most remote villages where the freedom to practice their beliefs is greater. From these hidden villages they strike out in a never-ending campaign to disrupt Lhar's gold, slavery, and drug enterprises, and free dissidents while opening the eyes of the populace to the tyranny of Lhar's rule.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (native language only)
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: Hidden Koba Temples. Lore: Koba. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Security. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed (x2).

(S) Connections: Screaming Fist. Connections: Screaming Fist Sympathizers. Connections: Koba Priests. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Koba Vedic: Lone Philosophers of Koba teaching

While all Screaming Fist members follow the teachings of Koba, not all Screaming Fist are Koba priests, or Vedics. Following the example of their founder, Koba Vedics live an austere lifestyle, abstaining from "false" pleasures while pondering their connection to the land and its people. They see Lhar as a cancer, destroying the people's wills and thus denying them the paths to spiritual truth that all Koba Vedics feel is the sole right of every living being. Pick either Rune Magic or Shadow Magic when purchasing this skill package.

Cost: 22
Years Spent: 8
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (native language only)
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket. Area Knowledge: Hidden Koba Temples. Healing. Lore: Koba. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2).

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Shadow Magic. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Screaming Fist. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership.

B'hai Lhar: Will of Lhar

Forming the basis of Bhuket's police, priests, assassins, and criminal underground, the B'hai Lhar is both a shining example of Lhar's beneficence and his tyranny. The B'hai are characterized by a fanatical zeal regarding their living god, their fealty to the bloated Fane being total. It is the B'hai Lhar who corral and maintain Bhuket's swelling ranks of Ing Sha, rounding up "volunteers" and escorting them to the "Palace of Filial Remuneration" for the conversion process. The B'hai Lhar seldom leave the country except for the times when they are used as guards for one of the many caravans that leave Bhuket on the Hidden Paths of Gold.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket. Lore: the Ing Sha. Lore: Screaming Fist. Rune Magic. Tracking: Urban. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long.

(S) Connections: B'hai Lhar. Connections: Criminal Underground. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Bhuketi Slaver

Forming the basis for Bhuket's illegal trade, the Slavers traverse Zir'An unseen upon the Hadha Da Toh, their "Hidden Paths of Gold." Operating under Lhar's direction, they are a bane to lone travelers everywhere. Not subsisting upon the sale of flesh alone, they also transport much of Bhuket's lucrative drug trade abroad. As official sanction from such lands as Vallunei and Edyss prohibit the sale of their wares within allied lands, much of Bhuket's trade is centered in the Merchant Isles.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Hadha Da Toh. Lore: Locks and Bindings. Rune Magic. Tracking: Urban. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Driving. Awareness. Melee: choose. Riding.



An escaping Tilandri in the Dominion.

(S) Connections: Slavers' Guilds. Connections: Criminal Underground. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Bhuketi Urashi

Many stories exist, all of them different, about when the enmity between Koba and the Urashi began, but they have been bitter enemies since before even the advent of Lhar. The Urashi have devoted themselves to the destruction of the Shree Kat and all Koba teaching. Often covered head to toe in runic script, the Urashi have perfected a technique involving complex physical movements and contortions that turn them into living runes from which they are able to manifest powers heretofore unseen or even attempted by the Shree Kat, who know well the ultimate price the Urashi must pay.

Cost: 15
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (native language only)
Skills: 8

(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket. Lore: Urashi-Do. Lore: the Screaming Fist. Rune Magic.

(P) Athletics. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Meditation. Unarmed (x2).

(S) Connections: B'hai Lhar. Intimidation.

Cyrooni Packages

Cyrooni Grudger

For young Cyrooni, growing up usually means running with the packs of other street hooligans and urchins through Cyroon's murky, smog-choked urban areas. Life was brutal and often very short; those who survive either leave these gangs behind to join with one of the Thief guilds if they're lucky, or even end up running a gang by themselves. These gang leaders are known as Grudgers, commanding anywhere from a few to a few dozen young street toughs. Engaging in mugging, stealing, extortion and all manner of criminal activity with names like the Boghal Road Uglies, the Black Rabbits, and Mubbuh's Mobbers, they terrorize Cyroon's darker streets.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Home city. Tracking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapons: small. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth.

(S) Connections: street gang members. Connections: Criminal Underworld. Connections: Thief Guilds. Disguise. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Kagda Dovra Emissary

Lucky Cyrooni find themselves in the employ of the nation's Ambassadorial arm, the Kagda Dovra. Kagda Dovra emissaries are sent abroad on missions relating to affairs of state, be they formal diplomatic affairs or the management of their nation's criminal exploits. While their membership grants them strong backing and support, life in the Kagda Dovra is cutthroat, with members continually trying to outdo the other as they jockey for position up through the organization's labyrinthine hierarchy.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Kagda Dovra Safe houses. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Criminal. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Security. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: appraiser. Slight of Hand.

(S) Connections: Cyrooni Thief Guilds. Connections: Kagda Dovra. Connections: Criminal Organizations. Connections: Informant Network. Connive. Disguise. Intuit. Socialize.

Cyrooni Guild Thief

Commonly, the average enterprising Cyrooni will become a part of or rise to maturity in one of the nation's many Thief Guilds. Sometimes comprising a large extended family, as in the Talusian guilds, others are extensive cabals of cooperative Cyrooni working for the benefit of their organization. These Guilds often serve dual roles, providing a mundane trade while operating their darker agendas behind closed doors. It is an accepted practice that has the tacit support of the Kagda Dovra.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Cyroon. Area Knowledge: Guild Safe houses. Lore: Wealth and Troves. Lore: Criminal.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: choose. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth.

(S) Connections: Cyrooni Thief Guilds. Connections: Kagda Dovra. Connections: Other Thieves. Disguise. Socialize.

Cyrooni Independent Thief

Whether having served their terms in a Guild or the Kagda Dovra itself, or unable to find employment in either, many Cyrooni take off on their own to seek their own fortune. For many Cyrooni, having grown up on Cyroon's rough streets, their only viable option is through thievery or other illegal pursuits. Independent Cyrooni thieves are most often found abroad, for they receive little respect in their own country, and in fact, risk a

sudden arbitrary death at the hands of one Guild or another.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Wealth and Troves.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapons: small.

(S) Connections: Criminal Underworld. Connections: choose. Connive. Intuit. Security. Seduction. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Socialize.

Dominion of Drakan Packages

Bazhna-zi: The Talons of the Dominion

The Voivodh's elite military, the Talons are soldiers of high order who swear unyielding fealty to the Voivodh and to the Dominion. Unlike the standard Drakani infantry, the Talons serve as elite fighting force, police enforcers, royal guard, and personal fetching hounds of the Voivodh. Drakani citizens shudder in their beds when they hear the crisp marching of the Bazhna-zi at night.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 8

(K) Area Knowledge: Dominion of Drakan. Mechanics. Tracking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Ranged Weapons: heavy. Survival.

(S) Connections: The Talons of the Drakan. Intimidation. Leadership.

Dominion Doyan Bureaucrat

Though the Voivodh commands absolute obedience from his subjects, he cannot be expected to personally carry out every order or enforce every law. Working below him is the governing apparatus known as the Doyan. The Doyan carries out the day-to-day work of running the country. Many end up working in the offices of the Doyan, as they encompass a blistering array of departments and branches. Some believe that working in the chambers of the Doyan will be easier than trying to make a living in the factories or the military, but the life as a Doyan bureaucrat is incredibly cutthroat, with any number of coworkers ready to accuse one of treason if they think it'll get them higher in the Doyan hierarchy.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: The Dominion of Drakan. Lore: Contraband Information. Lore: Dominion Operations. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Occupational Skill: accountant. Occupational Skill: manager.

(S) Connections: The Tzerte Viazhe. Connections: The Doyan. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Tzerte Viazhe: The Violet Circle

The modern remnants of a secret cabal that aided in the downfall of Casseonae, the Tzerte Viazhe now are the terror of the Dominion, the darkest specter of evil in a land of shadowy forces. Distinguished by the ring-like mark of burst blood vessels that adorns their brow, the Violet Circle are the primary ambassadors, inquisitors, advisors, and secret police of the Dominion. Their organization is very loosely run, with constant infighting and assassination diverting much of the Circle's energy. They act unquestioned within the Dominion, so great is the fear of their cruelty, power, and raw malevolence. Only the Voivodh's vigilance and their own disorganization have kept them from successfully usurping the Voivodh's power, something they have attempted twice before since the Dominion was born. For now they wait and consolidate their influence.

Cost: 25
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 3 (very rare)
Skills: 13

(K) Lore: Court Intrigues. Lore: Shadow Magic. Lore: Torture. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Occult. Lore: Shadekin. Science: choose.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Shadow Magic (x2).

(S) Connections: The Tzerte Viazhe. Connections: Drakani Council. Connections: choose. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Vahzduva: Dominion Infantrymen

Most Drakani males drafted into the military either at 16, or starting after their duties to the Statz Doîm are complete they are "graduated" into military service. The common soldier of the Dominion is responsible not only for the frontline but is the border guard and the city police as well, often rotating these duties many times a year... if they live so long.

Cost: 23
Years Spent: 4

Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 12

(K) Healing, Lore: Drakani Military, Lore: Allied countries, Lore: Rival Countries, Mechanics, Tracking: Urban, Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics, Awareness, Driving, Melee: Short, Melee: Medium, Ranged Weapon: Medium, Ranged Weapon: Heavy, Security, Stealth, Survival, Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Drakani Military, Intimidation, Leadership.

Edyssian Packages

Edyssian Expeditionist

From nearly the moment the refugees of LaVansien settled on Edyssian shores, many of them immediately spread off to strike out ahead and explore the new land. Even after three thousand years, there are vast tracts of unexplored territory in Zir'An, some of it even in Edyss, and Edyssian Expeditionists live to seek those new territories out. Often funded by a university or government sponsor, there are still a large number of independent and solo explorers, going alone into the unknown, like their predecessors did in the beginning.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 8

(K) Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area of Knowledge: choose. Lore: Current Events. Lore: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Awareness. Melee: short. Ranged Weapons: small. Survival.

(S) Connections: Institute of Learning. Connections: Adventurers. Connections: choose. Leadership.

Edyssian Journalist

Rivaled only by Vallunei, Edyss has the most advanced communications systems in Zir'An. This has allowed them to create a large number of circulating topical periodicals. The Madura Journal of the World, the DeMentan — these Edyssian publications are known throughout Zir'An, bringing all that is through word and pictures to lands as far-flung as the Periphery.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: current events. Lore: choose. Science: photography.

(P) Awareness. Driving. Occupational Skill: Journalist.

(S) Connections: Edyssian Media Service. Connections: choose (x2). Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Socialize.

Edyssian Technologist

Edyss's technological prowess makes their scientists a valuable commodity all over Zir'An. The possibility of lucrative employment coupled with the Edyssians' natural intellectual drive steers many of Edyssians toward this calling.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 7

(K) Lore: choose (x2). Mechanics. Science: modern technology. Science: choose (x2).

(P) Awareness. Security.

(S) Connections: Allies of Edyss. Connections: Institute of learning. Connections: Other Technologists.

Edyssian Shadowmage

Edyss has one of the smallest populations of Shadowmages in the Known Lands. On this small number, the government keeps close tabs, and so organizes them in close knit groups that remain largely unrecognized by the general populace. Edyss' Shadowmages are used as specialist agents in a variety of operations that carry over from the military, to internal security, to counterintelligence. Edyssian Shadowmages who do not wish to be a part of their Government's plans often leave the country to travel the world, or take up residence in Vandalusa.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (very rare)
Skills: 7

(K) Lore: Shadow Magic. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Shadow Magic. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Edyssian Shadowmages. Connections: Edyssian Government. Connive. Conversation. Socialize.

Gier l'Avonce Nacionall: Edyssian National Defense Soldier

The l'Avonce Nacionall is Edyss's military, though they focus entirely on protecting Edyss's borders and its sovereignty. The l'Avonce Nacionall encompasses every branch of the military: its army, air defense, and navy. The Gier patrol Edyss's borders, its coasts, and its skies, and have in the past moved into Vallunei to support Treaty allied forces. The l'Avonce Nacionall had their origin in the War to Reclaim the North against the Neolli.

Cost: 27

Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (common)
Skills: 14
(K) Area Knowledge: Edyss. Lore: the Military. Lore: Enemy Nations. Tracking: urban or wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Pilot. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Ranged Weapons: heavy. Riding. Security. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Edyssian Military. Intimidation. Leadership.

Universitei d'Yssien
All Edyssians are expected to continue from their childhood schooling into University. The greatest of these schools is the Universitei d'Yssien, located in the capital. Covering over ten thousand acres, the Universitei campus is a city district in itself. A student's life there is grueling but ultimately rewarding, offering arguably the best instruction of any university in Zir'An. People of many diverse lands come to acquire their higher degrees at the Universitei, but only Edyssian citizens can attend the primary course of education. Most Edyssians encountered abroad will be recent graduates, traveling to other countries in search of employment or for the mere experience of it.
Cost: 22
Years Spent: 8
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 11
(K) Area Knowledge: Edyss. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose x3. Mechanics. Rune Magic. Science: choose x3.
(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose.
(S) Connection: Professors and other Learned Types. Connections: choose. Conversation. Socialize.

Fire Reaches Packages

Fire Reaches Factory Worker
Virtually all Gogachi living in the Fire Reaches are Factory Workers. They tend the refineries, the smelters, the kilns, and the various other duties the nation requires in its never ceasing extraction of iron from the lava flows of their land.
Cost: 10
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 5
(K) Mechanics. Science: Engineering. Science: Metallurgy.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: Factory Worker. Unarmed.
(S) Intimidation.

Boucha: Gogacha Gladiatorial Fighter
What little avenues for entertainment there are available for the Gogach, pit fighting is the most popular. Boucha fighters can earn great renown in their homeland if they survive for an entire year or more as a gladiator. The competition is tough, however, and few ever live to see a second or even a third bout, which occur every week like clockwork. It is not uncommon for a Gogach Boucha to leave the Fire Reaches in search of employment upon the mainland, where disreputable types hire them as bodyguards or simple intimidating muscle.
Cost: 10
Years Spent: 1
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 5
(K) None
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Intimidation.

Volka: Factory Foreman.
The Volka are those workers who have demonstrated uncommon skill and resiliency. They have proven themselves a credit to the Gogachi and so are made into Foreman, leaders of work crews who serve multiple roles in Fire Reaches society. Besides supervising labor groups, they are the shop stewards and the head Priests for their residential block's Valkan Temple, performing the rites and adjudicating Valkan's Law. They are also the first ones sacrificed when things go bad.
Cost: 15
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (common or Native Language)
Skills: 8
(K) Area Knowledge: Fire Reaches. Lore: Metallurgy. Lore: Volcanism. Lore: Valkan. Rune Magic.
(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: medium. Survival.
(S) Connections: Valkan. Intimidation. Leadership.

Mamba Brolo: The Brides of Valkan; matriarchal Valkan cult
It surprises many that the only standing army possessed by the Fire Reaches comes from the ranks of the all female Mamba Brolo. Devoting themselves to Valkan and Valkan alone, these Gogacha women adorn themselves in thick armor of wrought iron plates, guarding their land and lord from outsiders.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 8
(K) Area Knowledge: Fire Reaches. Lore: Metallurgy. Lore: Valkan. Tracking: Wilderness. Tracking: Urban.
(P) Athletics. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Survival.
(S) Connections: Brides of Valkan. Connections: Valkan. Intimidation. Leadership.

Galliosi Skill Packages

The Galliosi accept membership from all nations and races, provided they are men. Regardless of what Race or Origin players have chosen, they may purchase as many Galliosi skill packages as they desire, circumventing the Ianer Valdreyr of Adaptability that limits them to 1 skill package from a nation not of their origin. A Dolonorri character from Ballinor is normally required to only purchase Ballinorian and Universal skill packages, but is not limited from purchasing Galliosi packages if he so wishes.

Galliosi Initiate
All Galliosi are from somewhere else. When they first arrive, they are sent to one of the monasteries and instructed in the ways of Omaru and set on the path of enlightenment, toward the state of Gonshim. Once they have finished their four years as initiates, they fashion their own weapon, a Tosh, the signature weapon of the Galliosi. When making a Gallosi character, choose an Origin from elsewhere and then use the skill packages below to round out the character.
Cost: 21
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 11
(K) Area Knowledge: Arivonne. Area Knowledge: Gallios. Lore: Omaru. Rune Magic.
(P) Artisan: engraver. Artisan: weaponsmith. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Arivonnean Underground. Connections: choose. Leadership. Socialize.

Galliosi Pilgrim
Some argue that there are more Galliosi wandering Zir'An than there are back in their homeland. Though this is debatable, quite a large percentage of Galliosi spend their lives wandering the world. Given many names and many explanations, this quest often follows an aimless course directed by whim and Fate, the Galliosi dedication to their beliefs being their sole guide.
Cost: 23
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 12
(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Omaru. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Artisan: engraver. Artisan: weaponsmith. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Security. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Arivonnean Underground. Connections: choose. Leadership. Socialize.

Omaru Monk
Not all Galliosi are monks, most are journeymen initiates on their own quest for truth. A few decide to make service part of their journey, becoming monks, helping others to achieve enlightenment while learning the way themselves. Most monks reside in the scattered villages of Gallios, having set aside the wandering of the pilgrims.
Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: Arivonne. Area Knolwedge: Gallios. Lore: Omaru. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Galliosi. Conversation. Leadership. Socialize.

Harakyri Skill Packages

Fellowship Guild Member
In Harakyr (as in Talus) guilds are the main influence of the land. Young boys and girls are chosen at the age of fourteen by the heads of the guilds (the Wine-makers, the Carpenters, the Woodcrafters, the Ozañao or the Tale-singers, and others) and serve their apprenticeship for six years, then choose the guild or pursue another career.
Cost: 17
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 12
(K) Lore: choose. Mechanics. Rune Magic. Science: Chemistry. Science: Mathematics. Science: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose (x2)**.** Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose (x2).

(S) Connections: other Harakyri Guild Houses. Connections: Guild Employer. Conversation. Socialize.

Padama Pria: Lyissan Runemage of Harakyr

Because the belief in the Padam is universal amongst Harakyri, naturally there are some who decide to devote themselves to its study, and through it the study of Lyiss and her domain. Many of the Padama Pria are female, but there are the occasional male practitioners, the Padama Prio. The Padama operate singly, often taking residence in quaint cottages on the outskirts of Harakiri communities. They offer their services as soothsayers and fortunetellers, but their true purpose is to protect Harakyr by looking into future possibilities for danger and ill fortune.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (very rare)
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Harakyr. Area Knowledge: Talus. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Healing. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Current events. Lore: Rune Magic. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Riding.

(S) Connections: Rune Mages. Connections: Lyissan Runemages/Priests. Connections: choose. Conversation. Socialize.

Tor Vudao: Hands of the Saints

The Tor Vudao act as missionaries who travel across Zir'An to lend aid where they can. Most come from one of the Fellowship guilds. They help rebuild houses lost in a war, refurbish what would be ruined fields, and provide healer duties where needed. There's no limit to where they have traveled, some venturing into forbidden lands like Bhuket and the Dominion. The Tor'Vudao are great survivalists, choosing to travel by foot, roaming over some the harshest climates to get to their destinations.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 1d10
Aptitude: 2
Language: 3 (rare)
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge (x2). Healing. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: the Vudao Mina (Tales of the Saints). Mechanics. Occupational Skill: choose. Rune Magic

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Riding. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections: choose (x2). Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Zabador: Harakyri Duelist

Duelling in Harakyr dates back to the time it was part of Irimor with Talus, which is also well known for its duelists. Unlike Talus, though, Harakyri duels hardly ever end in death. All Harakyri know how to use a Zabados, but the Zabador hones his skill with the blade in many first-blood duels with other Zabadores. Zabados fighting is fluid and graceful, the duelists' bodies contorting in acrobatic dodges to avoid getting cut. It also incorporates some traditional martial arts maneuvers: low and high kicks, leg sweeps, and grapples. Champion Zabadores are famous throughout Harakyr, since it is the country's most popular sport.

Cost: 13
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: Harakyr.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: medium Melee: short.



A Gogach warrior charging into battle.

Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Zabadores. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Seduction. Socialize.

Ianu Vossan Packages

Ianu Vossan Robber Baron

It would seem to many that Ianu Voss's main export is venture capitalists. Traveling across Zir'An in search of lucrative business arrangements, these Robber Barons have been known not to limit their deals to legitimate enterprises, freely associating with everyone from the Carousel to Bhuketi Slavers. Most of these merchant Ianu Vossans work for a Merchant Guild or other corporate body, few having the resources necessary to be able to compete with other industrious robber barons and their deep-pocketed backers.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3 (rare)
Skills: 8

(K) Area Knowledge (choose). Lore: Zir'Ani Trade Laws. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Riding.

(S) Connections: choose. (x2). Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Ianu Vossan Knight: Keeper of the Code of Arsinor

The pride of old Ianu Voss still burns within a few whose hearts and minds have not been clouded by greed. Though not outlaws, the Knights of Arsinor are viewed with some suspicion by the ruling elite. The Code is passed down through the generations with a reverence that borders on the religious, but as the world changes, so must the Knights of Arsinor. Fewer generations are being taught the Code and its true adherents are dwindling.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: Ianu Voss. Lore: Code of Arsinor.

(P) Athletics. Artisan: choose. Awareness. Melee: medium. Riding: Apoli.

(S) Connections: Ianu Vossan Nobles. Connections: Knights of Arsinor. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Ianu Vossan Navy

The pride and the power of modern Ianu Voss is its navy. With strict observation of title and rank, rising up through service in the Navy is often the only route open for many Ianu Vossans of common birth. Though serving as the protector of the Empire, the navy also fills the roles of merchant ships and escorts for Ianu Vossan shipping.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: The Southern Seas. Lore: Naval Craft. Lore: choose. Mechanics.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapon: medium.

(S) Connections: Ianu Vossan Navy. Connections: Ianu Vossan Nobles. Leadership.

Voss Hilzmon: The Prefects of Ianu Voss

Information is a treasured commodity of Ianu Voss and the Prefects gather it through any means, always watching for threats to the state. What constitutes a threat to the state often varies from Prefect to Prefect. On the surface they are the escorts of nobility as well as royal advisors, but once you scratch their esteemed shell you will see a bloody-handed agent lurking within the shadows of the law.

Cost: 25
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 13

(K) Area Knowledge: Ianu Voss. Lore: State Secrets. Lore: choose. Tracking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Ranged Weapon: small. Security. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Voss Hilzmon. Connections: Ianu Vossan Aristocracy. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize. Stealth. Survival.

Illestani Packages

Illestani Soldier

Upon reaching the age of maturity, all Illestani begin a two year tour of duty with the infantry, moving along the northern border from post to post, rotating in squads and occasionally being sent into the Tilerian Empire for hunt and kill training missions. Any soldier can opt to continue on another tour or transfer to one of the other branches.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0

Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Illestan Empire. Area Knowledge: The Fringe (the immediate area inside the Tilerian Empire). Lore: Shadekin. Mechanics. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Ranged Weapon: heavy. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Intimidation.

Illestani Technician

With the caches of Gondolon weaponry dwindling, lost to disrepair and battlefield casualties, the Illestani are only now beginning to investigate the workings of the old Gondolon manufacturing facilities. It is the very zeal of Illestan and its never-ending fight that has kept any real effort at research unsupported. Any Illestani not directly involved in the fight against Mirkule is seen as a waste of effort. Illestani technicians have to constantly justify their efforts and produce results or they are rerouted into the infantry.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 7

(K) Lore: lost technology. Lore: choose. Mechanics. Science: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium.

(S) Connections: Illestani Technicians. Connections: Illestani Military. Connections: foreign scientists/technicians.

Warpriest/ Priestess of Paran: Illestani Battlemages

Illestan's Battlemage Corps is known throughout Zir'An for its skill with destruction and its mastery of Rune Magic. The Battlemage Corps is an elite unit dispatched to the most dangerous of fronts, often sent to augment an already sizable battalion. It also serves as the major religious arm of the Illestani hierarchy, performing the rituals and saying the rites, devoted to the War Bride, Paran. Pick either Rune Magic or Shadow Magic when purchasing this skill package.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Illestan Empire. Area Knowledge: The Fringe. Lore: Shadekin. Lore: The Tilerian Empire. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Shadow Magic. Survival.

(S) Connections: Illestani Military. Connections: Rune Mages. Leadership.

Avasanti: Illestani Priests of Kah

Being a militaristic country locked in an eternal war, there is little time left for religion in Illestani society. What religion there is, centers primarily on the worship of Paran, the War Bride. Surprisingly, however, there is a rather open contingent of Kah worshippers operating, with official sanction, within the military. These are the Avasanti. While there is no specific role they play in the military, a large number of them can be found in the medical and tactical branches. Following the Church of Kah's standard of religious dress, the Avasanti enamel their armor in white and feature the customary shaven head and bleached white goatee for men and the long white scalp lock for women.

Cost: 27
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 14

(K) Area Knowledge: Illestan Empire. Area of Knowledge: The Fringe. Healing. Lore: Shadekin. Lore: Religion of Kah. Lore: Military Tactics. Rune Magic.

(P) Athletics. Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: The Church of Kah. Connections: Illestani Military. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Kleshti Packages

Kazimir: Kleshti Ambassador

Though it is ruled by a Fane who threatens the lives of billions, the Hegemony does have a political presence in the world stage, albeit a limited one. But it has fallen to the Kleshti to act as the Ambassadors of the Hegemony, delivering statements and proclamations from Mirkule to the world. Mirkule seldom makes any statements, and so the Kazimir also negotiate trading rights and other legal matters. Kleshti encountered in the Tready nations are generally of the Kazimir, for only they are allowed to operate in Tready lands. In Kleshti society, the Kazimir fall somewhere below the merchants in importance, but they take their role very seriously, considering the larger stakes of statecraft far more stimulating than the bartering of mere goods.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesht. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: foreign governments. Lore: Law. Lore:

choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: The Carousel. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Kleshti Merchant

The most common occupation in Klesht, the vast majority of Kleshti encountered abroad will be merchants. The naturally mellifluous tones of their voice have been known to sell almost anything and their steady supply of rare items and much sought after contraband nearly ensures their success. Kleshti merchants are not prone to gather in concrete groups or guilds, most of them operating independently, using their accumulated wealth to supplement their solo operation. Thus, competition between Kleshti merchants is fierce and sometimes deadly.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesht. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: Criminal Underground. Lore: The Hadha Da Toh. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: The Carousel. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Kleshti Cultist

While some Kleshti turn their lives toward the rewards of trade, some have devoted their lives to the service of their cult. They could be a part of a huge, world spanning organization or the founder of their own sect, the Kleshti Cultist operates secretly within the society, carrying out enigmatic rituals.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesht. Lore: Kleshti cults. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections: Kleshti cults. Connections: choose cult. Intimidation. Leadership.

Kleshti Shadowmage

Where Rune Magic is common, and even flaunted, in Klesht, its Shadowmages are few. They form a loose knit underground, much like the cults that can be found throughout Klesht, practicing rare Cardinals of shadow magic. Klesht's shadowmages are a powerfully corruptive influence even in their own country, with goals that may run counter to those of their leaders. They are feared greatly throughout Zir'An, rumored to be able to use their powers to gain influence over anyone, at any time.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesht. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Shadow Magic. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Shadow Magic. Stealth.

(S) Connections: Other Shadowmages. Connections: Tzerte Viazhe. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Leadership. Intuit. Socialize.

Asithraan: Kleshti Assassin

Whether part of a cult or acting under the direction of a powerful merchant employer, Kleshti Assassins are known far and wide for their ability to kill without leaving a mark upon their subject. It is believed they are masters at concocting poisons with no known antidotes, which kill in excruciating, yet outwardly unnoticeable ways.

Cost: 28
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (one of which can be a secret Assassin dialect particular to Klesht)
Skills: 14

(K) Area Knowledge: Klesht. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: poisons. Lore: torture. Rune Magic. Tracking: Wilderness. Tracking: Urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapons: small. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections: Kleshti Cults. Connections: Kleshti Merchants. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit.

Merchant Isles Packages

Merchant Isles Skruller

Skrullers are those Merchant Islanders who do not make their living on or by the sea. They get by however they can, be it grifting foreigners, pushing a Jounka (a garishly decorated cart used to sell many kinds of goods), or working for local merchant or underworld concerns. Skrullers tend to be very well connected and very knowledgeable of the island goings-on.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (common, or any languages of the Southern Empires)
Skills: 9
(K) Area Knowledge: Merchant Isles. Lore: Island Myth. Lore: Merchant Isles Scuttlebutt.
(P) Artisan (choose). Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Occupational Skill: sailor, fisherman, etc.
(S) Connections: Merchant Islanders. Connections: Criminal types. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Seduction. Socialize.

Merchant Sailor
The backbone of the trade economy of the Isles, the Merchant Sailors constantly try to find a new item, a new port of call, or a new angle to beat others out of a profitable import or export. Their far-ranging travels and easygoing reputation give them the ability to negotiate with the most inhospitable port authorities.
Cost: 17
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 9
(K) Area Knowledge: The Seas. Lore: choose.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: small. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Merchants. Connections: (choose). Leadership. Intimidation.

Merchant Isles Pirate
With ability to always retreat to the safe anonymity of the thousands of Merchant Isles, the pirates who founded the country have never really died out. Ranging from truly brutal cutthroats to sophisticated idealists who target only particular ships or trades, the pirates all are consummate sailors with a mind for navigating the Isles secret byways.
Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: The Seas. Area Knowledge: forbidden areas of the Merchant Isles. Lore: Piracy.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: Fixed. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Survival.
(S) Connections: Criminal underworld. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation.

Mikeshi Packages

Dasell Essa: Drandlur's Brood
There are precious few Shadowmages in Mikesh. Those who are form a collective who believe themselves to be chosen by Drandlur herself. For the time being, they exist to protect the land of Mikesh and its people from all threats. But to the Mikeshi themselves, the Dasell Essa are mistrusted, their power seemingly independant of Drandlur. And the collective seems to have a deeper purpose, one that remains hidden.
Cost: 25
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (Mikeshi and Riakh)
Skills: 13
(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Area Knowledge: Neoll. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: The Seven Gods. Tracking: Wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Shadow Magic. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Mikeshi Tribes. Connections: Neolli tribes. Intuit. Socialize.

Mikeshi Tribal Member
Most Mikeshi live out their lives as part of their functioning tribe, usually within one of Mikesh's villages or tribehomes: small settlements composed of a single tribe. They hunt, fish, tend their crops, and protect their tribe from Mikesh's more ravenous creatures.
Cost: 21
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 11
(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Artisan: choose. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: choose. Riding: Mek Taludi. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Stealth. Survival.
(S) Connections: Mikeshi Tribes. Socialize.

Moshta Weh: Spiritual Councilor and Healer
The Moshta Weh are not just shamen, they are dream-interpreters, tale keepers; they not only deliver all the children of their tribe, they take into their care all who are orphaned, to train them to be Moshta Weh. Together with the Tribal Chiefs, they form the foundation of the Mikeshi tribal system. It is rare, but some Moshta Weh leave Mikesh, often on a journey to Vandalusa.

Others depart as the result of a prophetic dream, whose answer lies in the distant lands.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Healing. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2). Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Survival.

(S) Connections: Mikeshi Tribes. Connections: foreign magi. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership.

Ong Manug: Swamp Guide

When foreigners were traveling great distances to Mikesh to meet the elusive Mikeshi people, the more industrious Mikeshi were prompted to offer their services as guides through the dangerous land. Ong Manung also serve as go-betweens for native Mikeshi and the rare foreign trader who comes to barter for Mikeshi art and craft items. Each Ong Manung has his own territory, and tries not to trespass on the territory of another. It is common for explorers visiting Mikesh to be guided by a series of Ong Manung, each leading the team through his territory until handing them off to the Ong Manung of another territory.

Cost: 22
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Healing. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: Poisons. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: small. Riding: Mek Taludi. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Mikeshi Tribes. Intuit.

Sung Modun: Devils of the Bog

Mikeshi society is not without its criminal element. The Sung Modun are bands of Mikeshi who operate as highway robbers. Common ruffians, they are a tribe unto themselves, formed from the outcasts and lost orphans of other tribes. Though nowhere near as far reaching as the Carousel or the Kagda Dovra, within Mikesh they are well organized and very dangerous.

Cost: 22
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Area Knowledge: Sung Modun hideouts. Lore: Poisons. Lore: Herbalism. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Riding: Mek Taludi. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Mikeshi Tribes. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit.

Neolli Packages

Neolli Tribal

Most Neolli spend their lives in service to their Tribe. They are its hunters, gatherers, farmers, craftsmen and general laborers.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Neoll. Healing. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: choose. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Artisan: choose. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: choose. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Neolli Tribe. Intimidation. Leadership.

Neolli Warrior

By their nature, all Neolli are warriors, but some devote a portion of their lives to the defense of the Tribes. It is rare that Neolli Tribes go to war against each other, but occasionally they do. They also are occasionally attacked by the dangerous predators of their land. In the more sacred lands, Neolli Warriors prevent the uninvited from making it any further. Warriors of allied Tribes will often form a single war party that patrols the land and performs other duties requested of the Warrior class, who are both male and female Neolli.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Area Knowledge: Neoll. Healing. Lore: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Neolli Tribe. Connections: Neolli Tribal Leaders. Connections: Neolli shamans. Intimidation. Leadership.

Rukhaz: Neolli tribal patriarch

When a Neolli male reaches the age of 30, he may join the ranks of the Rukhaz, the Tribal leaders who make decisions concerning the day-to-day existence of the Tribe. Important issues such as the distribution of food, what to plant and when, plans for expansion

of the community lands, and the execution of tribal laws all fall to the Rukhaz. They gain advice from the tribal elders and are always counseled by the female shamans.

Cost: 23
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: Neoll. Lore: choose. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: choose. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Neolli Elders. Connections: Neolli Tribes. Connections: Neolli Warriors. Connections: Neolli shamans. Connections: Foreign visitors. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Neolli Shamaness

All female Neolli, upon reaching the age of maturity, are guided by the Shamans to learn the skills they will need to become a Tribal spiritual leader. As they grow and learn, their role and status rises until they join the Rukhaz in leadership of the Tribe, but their day-to-day role is as healer and spiritual advisor, seeing to the needs of the tribal members.

Cost: 27
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 14

(K) Area Knowledge: Neoll. Healing. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: choose up to two more. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Neolli Elders. Connections: Neolli Tribes. Connections: Neolli Warriors. Connections: Neolli shamans. Connections: Foreign visitors. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Periphery Packages

Anazoulo: "Desert Rat," Periphery Tribesman

Formed by the slaves and conscripted laborers imported by the Ianu Vossans thirteen centuries ago, the Anazoulo are the tribe and clan groups that call the land's deep deserts their home. They trade with the other Tribes and with the Hantsu in the cities, patrol their tribal lands, and seek out lost treasures to increase the power and security of their clan. The Anazoulo are extremely loyal to their tribe and rivalries between tribes can last for centuries. The Anazoulo are infamous for carrying grudges.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: the Periphery. Lore: Ancient Technology. Lore: choose. Tracking: wilderness.

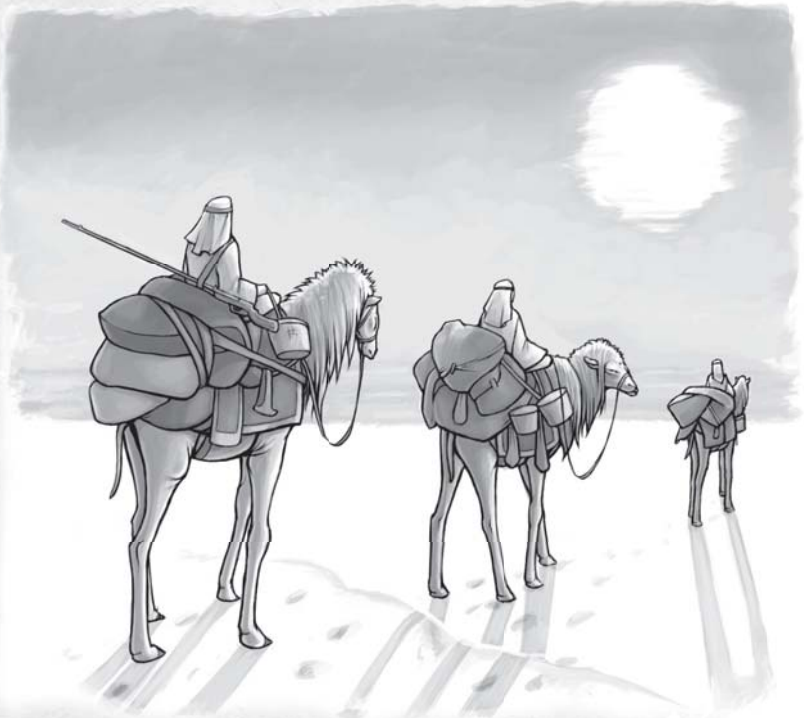
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: Long. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Ranged Weapon: heavy. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections: other Anazoulo tribes. Connections: Hantsu traders. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Desert Scavenger

Sometimes, the quest to uncover the secrets of the Periphery becomes an obsession. Those who are overcome with this desire wander alone through the dangerous wastes, in search of ancient ruins and the mysteries they hide. Some keep what they have found to themselves, a secret. Others make routine visits to the cities to sell off what they have found. Working singly, they are able to avoid the larger Anazoulo clans, for the Anazoulo take very unkindly to poachers in their territories. But few people know the wastes better than these lone scavengers.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1



Ba-duran traders in the Shining Desert.

Language: 0
Skills: 9
(K) Area Knowledge: the Periphery. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Ancient Technology. Lore: Mythology. Mechanics. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapon: small, medium, or heavy. Stealth. Survival.
(S) Connections: Hantsu traders.

Hantsu: Outpost/City Dweller
There are three major cities along the eastern coast of the Periphery: Tekkili, Protekia, and Vitgar Tu Aquir, which was founded by the land's discoverer, Drekin Varulo. Much of city life revolves around commerce: the trading of the Periphery's treasures, either between the Anazoulo and the Hantsu, or with visiting merchants from distant lands. Though they spend their time in the cities, with all the traffic that passes through, the Hantsu are very well informed about the state of their land. They hear all the gossip from all the Anazoulo tribes. Along with all the equipment, lodging, and supplies that the Hantsu provide to visitors, the information they have is worth every flat.
Cost: 29
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language:2
Skills: 15
(K) Area Knowledge: the Periphery. Lore: Ancient Technology. Lore: Current Events. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.
(P) Awareness. Artisan: choose. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: choose. Ranged Weapon: small. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival.
(S) Connections: other Anazoulo tribes. Connections: Hantsu traders. Connections: foreign Merchants. Connections: Explorers/Adventurers. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Seduction. Socialize.

Periphery Marshal
The famous Periphery Marshals are the only recognized legal authority anywhere in the Periphery. Judge, jury, executioner, and sometimes avenger, Marshals are not so much elected by the people of their territory as recruited by existing Marshals. Deputies are tested over a number of years and molded into relentless survivors and inflexible justiciars. People in the Periphery save their greatest respect and fear for these men and women, for it is a Marshal who will save a stranded caravan, who will adjudicate a claim dispute, and who will avenge a wrongful murder.
Cost: 31
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2
Skills: 16
(K) Area Knowledge: The Periphery. Healing. Lore: choose up to two. Rune Magic. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Meditation. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: Medium. Ranged Weapon: heavy. Riding. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Anazoulo Tribes. Connections: Hantsu. Connections: Other Marshals. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Talusian Packages

Fallen House
The Fallen Houses of Talus are Assassin Houses who broke the laws of assassination in their land. Legal assassins are not allowed to pursue a target outside of Talus, assassinate a non-Talusian, or commit any assassination for political or monetary reasons. Fallen Houses, however, make it a business of assassinating anyone for the right price, damn the laws. Some Fallen Houses have so little honor left that they have no desire to redeem their name, others feel they were black-listed unjustly and will work hard to reclaim their lost honor. But regardless, all Fallen Houses are the constant target for elimination by legal Houses, and so operate in strict secrecy, sometimes outside of Talus' borders.
Cost: 28
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 14
(K) Area Knowledge: Talus. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: criminal. Lore: poisons. Tracking: Urban. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapons: small. Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: criminal underworld. Connections: Talusian House or Guild. Connections: choose. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Talusian Dilettante
With a country made up of many rich and powerful Houses and Guilds, many of their family members live lives of leisure, with little concern for money or comfort. Talus is rife with the young and the rich; their daily cares revolve around stimulation and excess. Many of these young dilettantes find their way into other countries, looking for new experiences to feed their appetites. There is little by way of danger that can discourage a wandering Talusian from striding headlong into the unknown, so strong is the desire for anything new and exciting.
Cost: 18

Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 9
(K) Area Knowledge: Talus.
(P) Artisan. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapon: small. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Talusian Social Elite. Connections: Guild of Choice. Connections: Choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Talusian Assassin

Though it is a beautiful and cultured society, Talus is also a society intensely bound to the concepts of honor, face, and justice. When petitioned, the House will consider the grievousness of the case, as it pertains to the subject's injury to their honor and their House. Talusian assassins follow a strict set of laws and guidelines in choosing their contracts, and failure to do so has serious consequences. Assassins may be executed or their entire House disbarred and persecuted if they violate the laws that have governed Talusian assassins for the last two thousand years.

Cost: 25
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 13
(K) Area Knowledge: Talus. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose. Tracking: urban.
(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee: short. Melee: Medium. Melee: long. Slight of Hand. Security. Stealth. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Assassin Guilds. Connections: criminal organizations. Connections: choose. Connive. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Talusian Duelist

Though the average Talusian may find herself facing another in a duel at some point in her life, there are some Talusians who take the role as their occupation. It is legal in Talus to have a proxy take your place in a duel, though to many this is nearly as shameful as the incident that may have sparked the duel in the first place. But Talus is filled with stories of simple folk being unjustly challenged to a duel by someone clearly more deadly with a Xaopana than they, only to have an honorable duelist step forth and volunteer to be their proxy. Some may even take on a specific House or Guild as a client.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: Talus. Healing. Lore: Ancient History. Rune Magic.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium (x2). Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Talusian House or Guild. Connections: duelists. Connections: Choose. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Talusian Runemage

In the ideological schism that split Talus and Harakyr, the alliance between the Assassin Guilds and the Talusian Runemage Societies tipped the civil war heavily in their favor. The Talusian Runemages approach their craft like Talusians approach everything about life, with passion. They are perhaps the most artful Runemages known, seeing in the weavings of magic all that is true and beautiful about the universe.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3 (very rare)
Skills: 9
(K) Area Knowledge: Talus. Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: Rune Magic. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2).
(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: short.
(S) Connections: Vandalusan Rune Mages. Connections: Talusian Rune Mages. Conversation. Socialize.

Thraycean Packages

Thraycean Sailor

Thraycean sailors, mostly working upon merchant vessels, sail up and down the eastern coast, stopping at ports from the Dominion to Ballinor. Due to the recent creation of the Ballinorian Gate, Thraycean merchant ships have finally gained access to the lucrative markets of the central seas. Hard working and hard-bitten, Thraycean sailors are known to be some of the toughest swabs who ever hoisted a main sail.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: The Eastern Seas. Lore: The Canticle. Lore: the seas.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Survival.
(S) Connections: Merchant Seamen. Connections: choose. Intuit. Leadership.

Thraycean Revolutionary

It is very dangerous to be a revolutionary, in any country, but in the mouth of the Drakan, Thraycean revolutionaries must be especially careful; one dangerous mistake could imperil their entire country. Operating through a number of fronts, the Thraycean resistance movement seeks primarily to destabilize Dominion shipping in Thraycean waters. They leave the Dominion garrisons to the Tilandri.

Cost: 26
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (rare)
Skills: 13

(K) Area Knowledge: Thrayce. Area Knowledge: Dominion of Drakan. Lore: The Canticle. Lore: choose.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: choose. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Security.

(S) Connections: Thraycean Underground. Connections: Tilandri. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Socrati Casseonae: Scholar of Casseonae

The Socrati are the primary chroniclers of the new Canticle and its foremost contributors. The Canticle has taught them much about the lost empire of Casseonae, which in its time was a bearer of the Canticle. The Socrati have continued where Casseonae left off, adding much about The Voivodh's rise, the plight of the Tilandri, and the coming cycle of change.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 3 (very rare)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Thrayce. Lore: the Canticle (x2). Lore: Ancient History. Lore: choose. Rune Magic. Science: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation.

(S) Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit.

Tilandri Packages

Tilandri Kulain: Tilandri Clan Member

The Tilandri clans operate in the wild regions of the Dominion, finding homes for their roving caravans in the lush forests or sheltering mountains, away from the predations of the State. Growing up in a Tilandri clan is a dangerous, with the constant threat of Dominion troops descending at any time. Some Clans find a sort of refuge in Thrayce and Ballinor, but their minds are never far from the destiny they are said to have, that of tearing down the walls of the Dominion and laying the Empire bare.

Cost: 28
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 14

(K) Area Knowledge: Tilandri Secret Havens. Area Knowledge: Dominion of Drakan. Lore: Myths and Legends. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: The Seven Gods. Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Artisan: choose. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: choose. Ranged Weapon: small. Riding. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival.

(S) Connections: Tilandri Clans. Connections: Drakani Underground. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Tilandri Dreza: Tilandri Sorceress

From the legend of the Witch Queen Dreza to Tilandri culture's founder, Farsa Canatu, the Tilandri have had a strong matriarchal tradition. Magic runs strong through the Tilandri Women, or Mer Dolzhe as they are respectfully dubbed, particularly in the Dreza, rune mages of a long lineage. Equally revered and vilified throughout the Dominion, the Dreza's ability to see the strings of Fate and manipulate them has sown legends stretching back three thousand years. It is said the Dreza are integral to the eventual defeat of the Voivodh and the return of beloved Casseonae.

Cost: 26
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (very rare)
Skills: 13

(K) Area Knowledge: Tilandri Secret Havens. Area Knowledge: Dominion of Drakan. Healing. Lore: Myths and Legends. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Fate. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2). Science: Chemistry.

(P) Artisan: choose up to two. Awareness. Melee: short. Riding.

(S) Connections: Tilandri Clans. Connections: Other Rune Mages. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit. Seduction.

Tilandri Gallanai: Tilandri Journeyman Lothario

Tilandri men are born with a powerful wanderlust that they often are unable to ignore, leaving on an extended cross-country journey to points within the Dominion and to other lands abroad. Often belittled for merely venturing forth to sow their wild oats, the Gallanai take this sojourn seriously, returning to their Clans with a renewed pride and drive to see the Tilandri destiny fulfilled.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (very rare)

Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Dominion of Drakan. Area Knowledge: Tilandri Secret Havens.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Security. Slight of Hand.

(S) Connections: Tilandri Clans. Connections: Drakani Underground. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Vallunean Packages

Agent of the Seven Princes

The center of power of the largest free nation in the world is crowded with those who earn, broker, and seize power in the complex of state organizations that surround the King. Younger members of a royal family sometimes become agents, couriers and messengers for their House and for the Kingdom. They exist in a rarefied world where force of wit is almost always more powerful and effective than force of arms, and their skill at navigating bureaucracy, making alliances and giving and calling in favors decides how far they rise in power. They say the closer to the King, the greater one's influence, but sometimes Agents must journey far from the Court of Artuan to prove their capability and valor on a dangerous mission.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3 (rare)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Lore: Recent History. Lore: Politics. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Riding.

(S) Connections: Royalty. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize (x2).

Black Knights of the Shade

It is rumored that the members of this elite corps of Shadowmages are exclusively female, but since they are never seen without the intimidating black armor that is their hallmark this has remained unconfirmed. Fanatical worshippers of Kah, they are Vallunei's answer to the Tzerte Viazhe. They are powerful, efficient and feared even by their counterparts in the Valluneian military and domestic police.

Cost: 29
Years Spent: 10
Aptitude: 3
Language: None
Skills: 15

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Shadekin. Lore: choose. Tracking: urban. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: choose. Security. Shadow Magic (x2). Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Valluneian Government. Connections: Valluneian Nobles. Connections: Law Enforcement. Connections: Shadowmages. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Inabi Advisor

Known for their expertise in creating peace by diplomacy or by force, the Magistrates of the Inabi states are specially trained diplomat soldiers who generally advise local warlords or military commanders. All have spent time in Bhuket "encouraging" the mountain tribes, Koba followers, and martial art orders of Bhuket to resist the rule of the Fane Lhar. The Crown sometimes recruits Advisors for military or covert operations that require finesse, and the best may find themselves offered a position as a Special Operative in Secret Section Seven.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Bhuket. Lore: Guerilla Tactics. Rune Magic. Security. Tracking: Wilderness

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Ranged: Small. Riding.



Kleshti merchants exact a terrible price.

(S) Connections: Koba Vedics. Connections: Shree Kat. Connections: Treaty Government. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership.

Priest of Kah

As the primary religion of the Kingdom of Vallunei, the powerful Church of Kah has many full-time practitioners. They are outspoken dispensers of mercy and support for those without, often serving side by side with priests and priestesses of the Seven Gods as well. Many fully ordained Priests of Kah serve other roles in society and work other jobs. It is never surprising to find someone in the judiciary or law enforcement that also happens to be a Priest of Kah.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Kah. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2).

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: Church of Kah. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Spice Lands Alchemist

Something about the Spice Lands enables the people there to grow and mix strange and wonderful substances that approach Rune Magic in their miraculous effects. Famous for its culinary and herbalist arts, some rare individuals go farther, harnessing their own talent and the secret recipes of their land to create miraculous potions and powders. Explosives were first created in the Spice Lands, and the foremost chemists of Edyss still journey there to learn. An Alchemist can find work in their homeland in the spice plantations, though many journey to far off lands in search of the fame, fortune, and prestige that discovering and returning with a new concoction could bring them.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills:8

(K) Area Knowledge: Spice Lands. Healing. Lore: Chemistry. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Explosives. Lore: choose. Rune Magic (x2). Science: Chemistry

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Occupational Skill: Cooking.

(S) Connections: Merchants. Connections: Spice Lands Alchemists.

The Steel Batallions of the East

Every child born in the Steel Battalions is expected to take a tour of duty on the line, fighting any encroachment of the Dominion. The Steel Batallions are noted for their ability to use and maintain machines of war, from tanks to artillery. This contrasts with the Dolonorri ability to create implements of war — it is said those of the Confederacy have talent only for destruction. This they take to heart, and apply great strategic intelligence, tactical skill, and personal valor to everything they do.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (uncommon)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Area Knowledge: Volleanu Wall. Lore: Explosives. Lore: Warfare.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapon: Small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Ranged Weapon: Fixed. Ranged Weapon: Heavy. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Treaty Military. Connections: Ballinor Militia. Intimidation. Leadership.

Valluneian Noble

With so many individual countries making up the entire nation, almost a third of the population of Vallunei claims one title or another. An administrative or military position usually accompanies a title; though for many, rising through the ranks of political power is the primary goal.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (common)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Laws. Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Riding.

(S) Connections: Valluneian Nobility. Connections: Foreign Nobility. Connections: Valluneian Government. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership. Seduction. Socialize.

Vermilion Coast Merchant Marine

Pirates and Ianu Vossans threaten the livelihood of the Vermilion Coast, and the Merchant Marine must use their knowledge of the sea and sky to out-maneuver, out-fight and out-sell them all. The vast appetite of the Kingdom of Vallunei depends largely on the skill of the Merchant Marine to satisfy the country's need for exotic items, commodities, and finished goods. In times of war, Merchant Marine galleys and ships become a support fleet for the forces of the Treaty. One can find the red sails and flags of the Vermilion Coast flying everywhere in the southern seas, from the Periphery to the Merchant Isles and the coasts of Ianu Voss and Talus.

Cost: 15
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 8
(K) Area Knowledge: the seas. Lore: choose.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Ranged Weapon: Fixed. Melee: short. Ranged Weapon: small. Occupational Skill: Merchant. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Merchants. Connections: choose. Connive.

Western Province Wildermon

The vast wild lands of the west require a tough individual that may find themselves fighting off a Shadekin or Neolli attack one day and rescuing downed cargo planes the next. Each wildermon is responsible for many square miles of wilderness. The Western Province Wildermon must survive a strenuous 90-day hands-on practical test in the field, in addition to passing the tough General Service exams at the capitol. Some must return to the capitol and play the game of princes to ensure funds are dedicated to the western borders, and politic amongst the lumber, mining, and other interests who want pieces of the Western Provinces. Survival in this entirely different jungle comes hard to the Wildermon.

Cost: 21
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 11
(K) Area Knowledge: Western Vallunei. Area Knowledge: Mikesh. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Tracking: wilderness (x2).
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Ranged Weapon: short. Ranged Weapon: medium. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: Vallunei Westerners. Connections: Wildermon. Connections: Vallunei Government. Intuit.

Yanush Rancher

The Yanush are famous for their skill with livestock and agriculture, and many of that country are born with a special talent for caring for the domesticated flora and fauna, from barley and hops to horses and ponkos. These individuals usually inherit the lands and herds of the family ahead of their older siblings, though some forswear the ranch and farm life to explore the world and discover and catalog new living things, or take jobs caring for commercial and military livestock. The greatest veterinary doctors have all been Yanush, who are in demand in nearly all countries.

Cost: 22
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1
Skills: 11
(K) Area Knowledge: Vallunei. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: Healing. Science: Medicine. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: Agriculture. Occupational Skill: Animal Husbandry. Ranged Weapon: short. Ranged Weapon: medium. Riding. Survival.
(S) Connections: Ranchers. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit.

Vandalusan Packages

Initiate of the Greater Mysteries

Once achieving maturity, young Vandalusans move from being an Acolyte of the Lesser Mysteries, a rank held since the age of four, to becoming an Initiate of the Greater Mysteries, also referred to in Vandasul as a "Metirann." Initiates spend only a minor amount of time locked in a classroom; most of this period is spent as part of a traveling entourage of other Metirain and a single teacher. While traveling for up to five years, the group will explore other lands, visit with learned persons, and engage in a continuing dialogue with their teacher.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3
Skills: 10
(K) Area Knowledge: choose (x2). Lore: choose (x2). Rune Magic. Science: choose (x2).
(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation.
(S) Connections: Vandalusan professors/teachers. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Socialize.

Hermit of the Hinterlands

Quiet, soulful contemplation, alone and far from the comforts of society is a common practice among the Vandalusans. Their deserts are dotted with lone men and women all locked in deep thought. Eventually, they return to their lives, but many still go on to repeat the practice numerous times.

Cost: 12
Years Spent: 1
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 6
(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: (x2). Rune Magic (x2). Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Meditation (x2). Survival.
(S) —

Vandalusan Scholar

It is said that all Vandalusans are scholars, studying a variety of subjects. Cataloguing, researching, archiving, they are the backbone of Vandalusan society. Those who choose to devote themselves to the duties of a scholar serve many purposes, all in the quest for more knowledge to benefit themselves and society as a whole. Occasionally they are teachers, or spend large amounts of time ardently researching an important subject, but they are always at the behest of the Elder Scholars who guide most of the decisions made in Vandalusa.

Cost: 22
Years Spent: 8
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Area Knowledge: Zir'An. Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose (x2). Rune Magic. Science: choose (x2).

(P) Artisan: choose (x2). Awareness. Meditation.

(S) Connections: other scholars. Connections: choose (x2). Connive. Conversation. Intuit.

Vandalusan Shadowmage

The peaceful philosophy that permeates the activities of Vandalusa extends even to the troubled souls who have developed the Shadow Magic taint. Through a program that emphasizes meditation, control, and inner calm, the Vandalusan-trained Shadowmage learns to face his corrupt inner voice and put it to use.

Cost: 20
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 3 (very rare)
Skills: 11

(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: Shadow Magic. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: Religion.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Occupational Skill: Researcher. Shadow Magic (x2).

(S) Connections: Vandalusan Scholars. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit. Socialize.

Vandalusan Custodian

The treasured contents of the Knowledge Fortresses are not without guards — but the Custodians of Knowledge are no force of armed brutes. Highly trained in ways to resolve conflict with the least amount of force and the maximum amount of diplomacy, the Custodians spend years as apprentices patrolling the vast landscape of Vandalusa and confronting those who would seek to disturb the tranquility of the country. They use no weapons but their runes and their bodies, but these have proved to be enough to repel even fledgling Fane when used in concert.

Cost: 18
Years Spent: 10
Aptitude: 1
Language: 3 (uncommon)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: choose. Rune Magic. Security.

(P) Awareness. Athletics. Meditation. Unarmed

(S) Connections: Vandalusan Scholars. Connections: Vandalusan Custodians. Conversation. Intimidate. Intuit

Thallysian Packages (Zhalanti race only)

Iltha'vaas: Zhalanti social observer

The younger races greatly intrigue certian Zhalanti wanderers. Some Zhalanti spend years doing nothing more than studying their ways and learning the complex rules and mores that make up their social interaction. Such Zhalanti choose to involve themselves closely with members of the Ianer, the Dolonorri, and sometimes even the Gogachi and Neolli, though rarely. They take up residence among them and endeavor to speak and come to know as many people as they can.

Cost: 23
Years Spent: 10
Aptitude: 1
Language: 4 (VR)
Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose up to two. Lore: Chose up to two. Rune Magic.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Occupational Skill: Choose up to two. Survival.

(S) Connections: choose (x2). Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Yehv'anesh: Zhalanti Janissary

Loosely translated Yehv'anesh means "Evolving Opponent". These Zhalanti travel Zir'An seeking out all the martial styles they can study and are allowed to document. They keep this document and have created a map of sorts, which connects the martial arts to its root system; being impartial they can approach their studies without the conflict of faith to school or master. Although time spent dedicated to learning a style can be long the Zhalanti have all the time in the world.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 10
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (VR)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Martial art Schools or Temples, Lore:

Chose two.

(P) Athletics, Awareness, Meditation, Melee: Short, Melee: Medium (x2),

Melee: Long, Unarmed (x2).

(S) Connections: The School/Temple, Intimidation, Intuit.

Rritha'vaas: Zhalanti Logian

The Zhalanti are a race that prize knowledge above most else. They travel the lands of their younger kin in order to learn... something. They are not quite sure exactly what. But some devote themselves to the search for knowledge completely. They travel the land seeking repositories for ancient lore, libraries and universities to plumb and plunder, other scholars to debate and share information with. Their hunger for knowledge seems to have no limit or boundary.

Cost: 24

Years Spent: 10

Aptitude: 2

Language: 4 (VR)

Skills: 12

(K) Area Knowledge: choose (x2). Lore: choose (x2). Mechanics. Rune Magic (x2). Science: choose (x2)

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Occupational Skill: choose. Survival.

(S) Connections: scholars. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit.

Kahlith Zhalanti (+10 Valdreyr)

There had not been Kahlith before the arrival of the Shadowmages. The Zhalanti possess a spirit quite different from that of the Ianer. In a sense the Zhalanti share a single spirit, or goes the theory, and this mass spirit is what sustains their immortality. When attacked by Shadow Magic, the effects are much the same as when targeting the spirits of the Ianer, but those Zhalanti who lose their shadow do not lapse into the well of despair that curses their younger kin. They become Kahlith. A Zhalanti does not need their spirit torn away by Shadow Magic to become a Kahlith. Often if he is subjected to a powerful mental or emotional shock, and the powers of Shadow Magic are involved, the synergy of the two causes the Zhalanti to become a Kahlith.

The Kahlith are amoral, unfeeling creatures who are shadows of their former selves. Many of the Kahlith sink themselves into lives of excess, hoping for any minute amount of feeling, but inevitably stop once they realize the futility of it. Many more become mercenaries or join the Carousel or other criminal organizations. They are cast out from Zhalanti society, and any Ianer and Dolonorri immediately senses the aura of gloom that surrounds them. Consequently they prefer endeavors that best suit such outcasts: prowling the underbelly of society.

Kahlith have the following abilities. They no longer need sleep and are unaffected by Shadow Magic spells that specifically target the spirit or Shadow. In fact creatures that target by sensing the Shadow of their prey cannot sense the presence of the Kahlith. Kahlith are invisible to the Shadowmage's Shadow Song ability.

Kahlith have no social drive, and so their Social Aptitude is considered zero (0) and all Social Skill Tests are made as unskilled. But because they are so unfeeling, they are only **Stressed** when injured or when conditions are working against the character. Because of their generally gloomy outlook and lack of drive, all Kahlith are considered Cynical as the Valdreyr (q.v.)

UNIVERSAL SKILL PACKAGES

These skill packages can be taken by the player to fill out the experiences of their character over their years before becoming an Adventurer.

Academic

You have spent some time teaching others in schools, colleges, or universities. Some countries have public education systems that employ teachers for children and adults, while others have mandatory propaganda and indoctrination programs that are staffed by believers and political puppets.

Cost: 10

Years Spent: 2

Aptitude: 1

Language: 2

Skills: 6

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose (x2). Science: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness.

(S) Connections: Government. Connections: Professors and other learned types. Conversation. Socialize.

Artistic Pursuits

Realizing their artistic potential, the character has decided to take time away from other distractions to focus on her craft of calligrapher, painter, poet, sculptor, photographer, etc. This could be time spent in quiet seclusion honing her talent; working for a patron who pays for her work, or under the tutelage of a master.

Cost: 9

Years Spent: 1

Aptitude: 1

Language: 1 (rare)

Skills: 5

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: Artisans. Intuit.

Criminal Life

For whatever reasons, the character has entered into a life of crime. Possibly they could be from an impoverished upbringing where recruitment into a criminal brotherhood or even indoctrination into the Carousel is likely. The character's life during this time is one of danger and questionable morality. While prison is a common result, it is not necessarily the ultimate outcome.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 8

(K) Area Knowledge: business territory. Lore: Criminal. Tracking: urban.

(P) Awareness. Disguise. Melee (any). Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: criminal organizations. Connive. Intimidation. Intuit.

Disciple of the Seven Gods

By no means has the worship of the Seven Gods been relinquished in Zir'An, though the miracles and powers said by legends to be granted by the ancient holy men and women are long lost in the mists of time. In modern times, disciples of the Seven Gods preserve their teachings and their holy places, and try to reconcile the absence of the Seven Gods in their world.

Cost: 19
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Healing. Lore: The Seven Gods. Lore: Ancient History. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.

(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation. Melee: choose. Riding. Survival.

(S) Connections: Other Disciples. Connections: choose. Conversation. Intuit. Leadership.

Edyssian Education

While native Edyssians are automatically given the opportunity to attend the greatest of universities, many people from myriad lands come to learn from the renowned Edyssian educational system. Expensive and arduous, those who come through have received some of the best tutelage available in Zir'An.

Cost: 17
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (one of them being LaVas)
Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Edyss. Lore: choose (x2). Science: choose (x2).

(P) Athletics. Artisan: choose. Awareness.

(S) Connections: Edyssian Institute of Learning. Connections: Professors and other learned types. Connections: choose. Conversation. Socialize.

Entertainer

Unlike artistic pursuits, the character has chosen a life in front of an audience as an actor, circus performer, comedian, musician, stage magician, etc. Adoring the applause and adulation of the crowds, the character has most likely traveled extensively to share his talent with others (as well as make a tidy profit... hopefully).

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (uncommon)
Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Disguise. Occupational Skill: choose. Slight of Hand.

(S) Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intuit. Socialize.

Entrepreneurial Exploits

Starting one's own business can be a trying task, but the character decided to take the plunge. Whether that business became a success is an open question but for two years at least, it became the character's sole interest.

Cost: 10
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 5

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose.

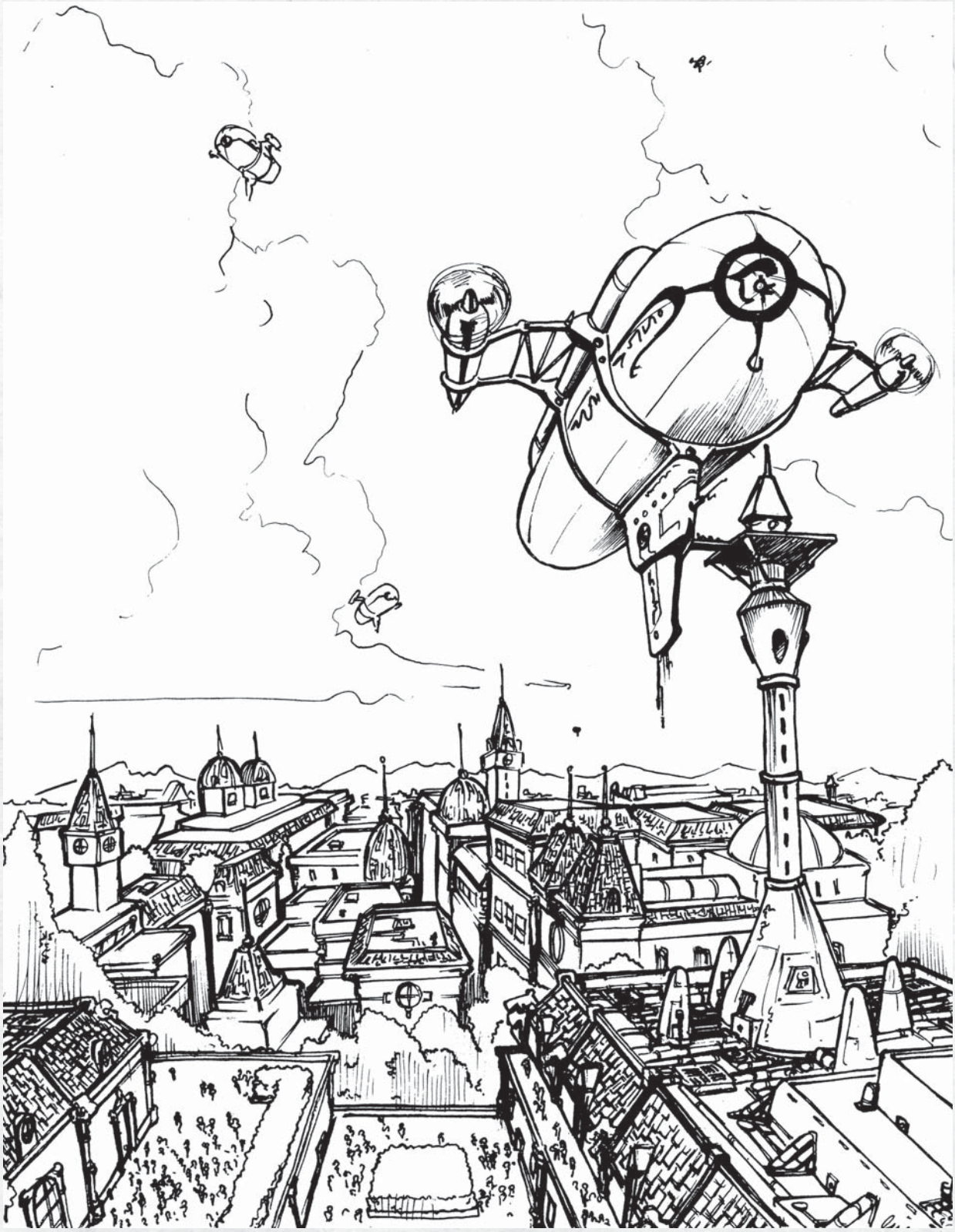
(P) Artisan: choose. Occupational Skill: business of choice.

(S) Connections: Zir'Ani Merchants. Connections: choose. Intuit. Leadership.

Healer

Healers (Chiurgeon, Physician, Herbalist, etc.) are much sought after throughout Zir'An for obvious reasons. In a world that harbors many dangers, knowing how to heal the sick and treat the wounds of the injured is an admirable skill. From Tilandri herbalists to Edyssian surgeons, the skills required to be a healer can be acquired through many different routes. Though their methods differ, their ultimate goal is the same.

Cost: 12
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0



A bustling Valluneian metropolis.

Skills: 6

(K) Healing (x2). Lore: Herbalism. Lore: anatomy. Lore: ailments and diseases. Rune Magic (Lesser Rune Magic only). Science: choose.

(P) Awareness.

(S) Conversation. Intuit.

Higher Education

From the colleges of Vandalusa to Ballinor's technical schools or the Secret Schools of Talus, many people seek to improve on their knowledge through seeking out these places of higher learning. Though expensive, the skills they offer make them invaluable in the long run.

Cost: 13

Years Spent: 4

Aptitude: 2

Language: 1 (very rare)

Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose. Science: choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: academics. Conversation. Socialize.

Laborer

A strong back is needed almost anywhere there is work to do. You bent yours for a time building things, farming land, making goods, or hauling cargo for pay.

Cost: 7

Years Spent: 1

Aptitude: 1

Language: 0

Skills: 5

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose.

(P) Artisan: choose. Athletics. Occupational Skill: choose.

(S) Connections: Employer. Connections: Unions.

Law Enforcement

For a period of time your character served as a member of the civil patrol, municipal police, investigator, etc, of your home country/city.

Cost: 25

Years Spent: 4

Aptitude: 1

Language: 1 (uncommon)

Skills: 13

(K) Area Knowledge: Area of Operation. Lore: Law. Tracking: urban.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Riding. Security. Stealth. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Other Law Enforcement. Connections: criminals. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Leadership. Socialize.

Life of Debauchery

For whatever reason the character has chosen the life of a hedonist during this time. Spending their days and nights in pursuit of pleasure and intoxication, their reasons for this escapism vary, but eventually they must ascend above the fog of their sensualistic lifestyle and move on.

Cost: 7

Years Spent: 1

Aptitude: 1

Language: 0

Skills: 4

(K) Lore (choose).

(P) —

(S) Connections: Zir'Ani hedonists. Connections: choose. Connive. Seduction. Socialize.

Martial Artist

From the acrobatic Kiâo pana in Harakyr to the straightforward Mekoul Deshuük of Illestan, there are many styles of martial arts in Zir'an but so few are open to the general populace. Either because some styles are only taught to the military or in the case of Shree Kat it is considered "illegal" in its homeland of Bhuket. It takes a special someone to make the sacrifices and dedication to seek out a master to teach them.

Cost: 18

Years Spent: 4

Aptitude:1

Language:1

Skills: 9

(K) Area Knowledge: Choose, Healing, Lore: One martial arts style, Lore: Choose.

(P) Athletics, Awareness, Meditation, Melee: Choose (x2), Stealth, Survival, Unarmed (x2).

(S) Connections: School, Intimidation, Intuit

Mercenary

A strong weapon arm is always in demand throughout Zir'An. Possibly hired by Ianu Vossans to protect a merchant vessel or maybe to guard a Bhuketi slave compound, the nature of Zir'An mercenaries is always one on the fringes, dealing with disreputable sorts for questionable circumstances.

Cost: 19

Years Spent: 2

Aptitude: 2

Language: 1 (uncommon)

Skills: 10

(K) Area Knowledge: Theater of Battle. Tracking: Urban.

Tracking: Wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Ranged Weapons: heavy. Riding. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: Mercenaries. Intimidation.

Military Service

Each and every land has an operating military of one kind or another. The Character has opted to serve in the military of their home region or a larger, nationalized force. It can be of any branch of service.

Cost: 24
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 2
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 12

(K) Tracking: Urban. Tracking: wilderness.

(P) Athletics. Awareness. Driving. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Occupational Skill: choose. Pilot. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Ranged Weapons: heavy. Riding. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: military organization. Connections: soldiers. Intimidation. Leadership.

Pirate

Piracy of the seas has been a common factor in Zir'An for thousands of years and even with the current climate of prosperity and peace the practice still goes on. From the Merchant Isles to Ianu Voss, the character served on a pirate ship, harassing sea travelers throughout the five seas.

Cost: 14
Time Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)
Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: particular group of seas and coasts, choose. Lore: Piracy. Lore: choose.

(P) Athletics. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Occupational Skill: Sailor. Ranged Weapon: small. Ranged Weapon: medium. Survival.

(S) Connections: Pirates. Intimidation.

Prisoner

For whatever reason the character has spent time incarcerated in one of many Zir'Ani prisons, or was possibly held captive by an enemy. After a time, they managed to serve their sentence and were freed or managed to escape.

Cost: 8
Years Spent: 1d10
Aptitudes: 1
Languages: 0
Skills: 4

(K) None.

(P) Athletics. Awareness.Melee: short. Occupational Skill: choose. Security.

(S) Connections: Criminal. Intimidation.

Renegade Shadowmage

Renegade may be a harsh term, but it essentially means the player is operating without any link to an established body. Many nations prefer to enlist their Shadowmages in spcial groups or cabals so as to keep a tighter leash on their unsettling abilities. The character may be a newly emergent power, a Shadowmage eluding Cabals wishing to get him under their umbrella, or have a teacher helping them develop their talent.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 1d10
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 7

(K) Lore: choose.

(P) Awareness. Meditation. Melee: choose. Shadow Magic. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.

(S) Connections: other Shadowmages. Connections: choose. Connive. Intuit.

Religious Avocation

The character has found religion. Though not necessarily an actual functionary of the religion in question, the character has otherwise devoted this time to following the particular religion, going to a retreat or commune perhaps, to reflect on its meaning and its ethos.

Cost: 10
Years Spent: 1
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (uncommon)
Skills: 5

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: Religion. Lore: choose.

(P) Artisan (choose). Meditation.

(S) Connections: (Religious Organization). Conversation. Socialize.

Resistance Activist

There are many injustices, real and perceived, in the world of Zir'An. The character has devoted this time to fighting a particular injustice. He may not actually be a member of the oppressed, but he has decided to lend his aid in any way possible, be it from a podium or from a secret HQ.

Cost: 14
Years Spent: 2
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1 (rare)

Skills: 7

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Lore: choose. Tracking: urban.

(P) Awareness. Melee: short. Melee: medium. Melee: long. Ranged Weapons: small. Ranged Weapons: medium. Security. Stealth.

(S) Connections: resistance underground.

Roughing It

It is not uncommon for people to want to get away from it all, to lose themselves in nature, to test themselves against the wilds and the elements.

Cost: 12
Years Spent: 1
Aptitude: 1
Language: 0
Skills: 6

(K) Area Knowledge: choose. Healing. Lore: Naturalism. Lore: Herbalism. Lore: choose. Tracking: Wilderness.

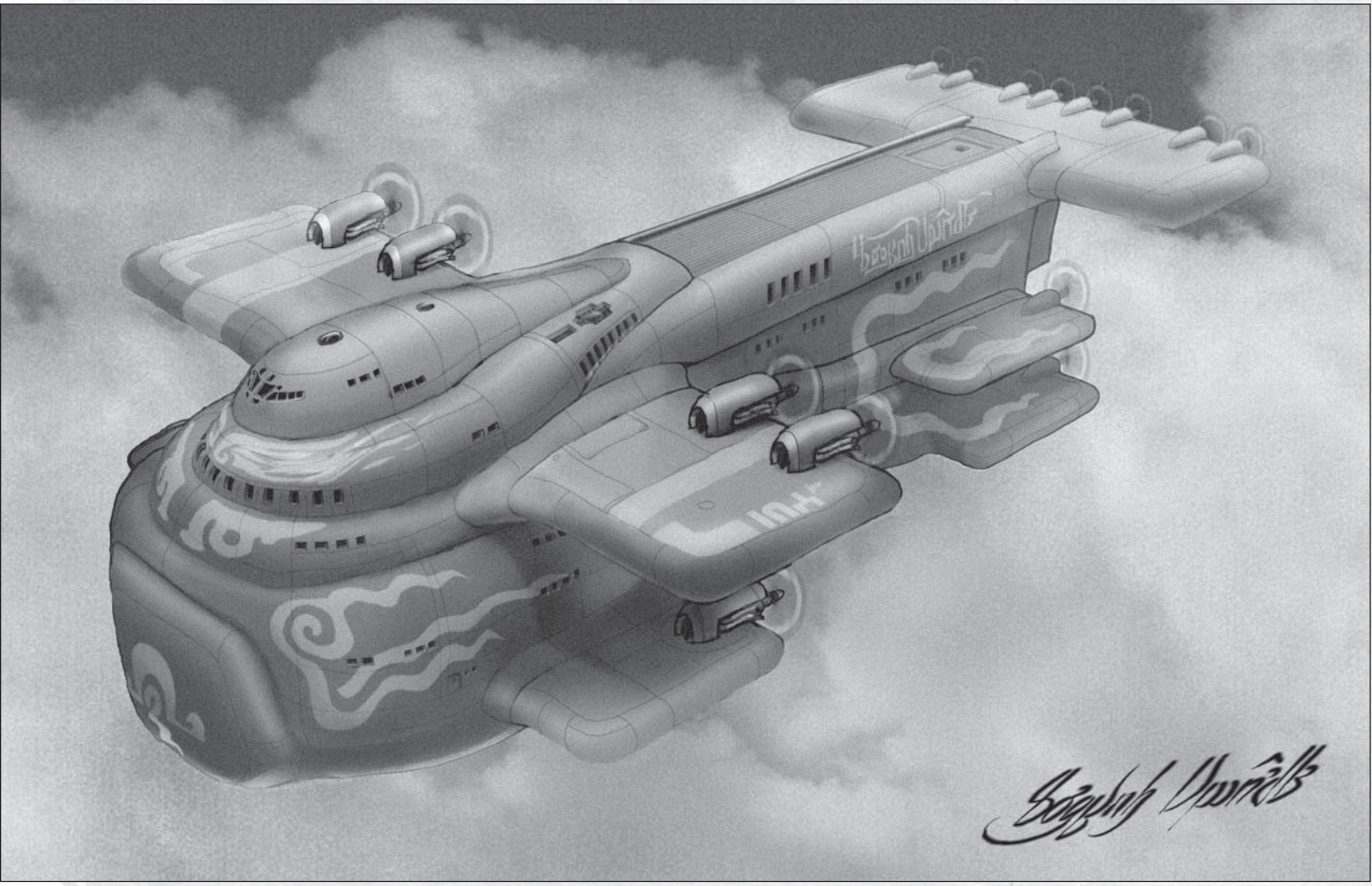
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Melee: Short. Stealth. Survival.

(S) None.

Rumbler

In back alleys and in seedy areas in most cities one can find the illegal fighting tournaments; and feeding on blood, sweat and tears is the Rumbler. Like the Boucha of the Fire Reaches these men and women are fighters, but unlike the Boucha the tournaments are completely unarmed, though no less fatal.

Cost: 11
Years spent: 1
Aptitude: 2
Language: 0
Skills: 6



The Kingmaker, a Valluneian Air Barge

(K) Area Knowledge: Tournament locations, Lore: Criminal.

(P) Athletics, Awareness, Unarmed,

(S) Connections: Criminal, Connections: Rumbler Guilds, Intimidation, Intuit.

Rune Magic Training

Most every civilized country has Runemage Societies running their exclusive colleges. The character has found admittance to one of them.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 4
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2 (one of them being Zha Lee Thaal)
Skills: 4
(K) Lore: Rune Magic. Lore: choose. Rune Magic.
(P) None.
(S) Connections: Runemages. Connections: Runemage Societies.

Slave

As barbaric as it may sound, many so-called "civilized" countries engage in the slave trade. Most notably among them are Bhuket and Ianu Voss. The character has spent part of his life as a slave, and in the end either escaped, was repatriated (rescued), or was simply given his freedom.

Cost: 11
Years Spent: 1d10
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 6
(K) Lore: society enslaved by.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Occupational Skill: choose. Slight of Hand. Security. Survival.
(S) Connive. Intuit.

Spy

Every organizational body, from governments, churches, and companies, to guilds and crime gangs engages in some kind of espionage, targeting rivals and enemies. This can include sabotage, assassination, or simple information gathering through surveillance or infiltration.

Cost: 26
Years Spent: 6
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 13
(K) Area Knowledge (choose). Tracking: urban. Tracking: wilderness.
(P) Athletics. Awareness. Disguise. Melee (short). Occupational Skill: your cover ID. Ranged Weapons (small). Security. Slight of Hand. Stealth. Survival. Unarmed.
(S) Connections: other Spies. Connections: your employer. Connections: choose. Connive. Conversation. Intimidation. Intuit. Seduction. Socialize.

Technical Training

All developed countries offer extensive courses covering a wide variety of technical learning.

Cost: 9
Years Spent: 3
Aptitude: 1
Language: 1
Skills: 5
(K) Lore (choose up to two). Mechanics. Science (choose up to three).
(P) None.
(S) Connections: Zir'Ani Technologists.

Travel Abroad

It's a big world, go out and explore it. The character has decided to explore a region of the world or perhaps settled in one area for an extended stay.

Cost: 10
Years Spent: 1
Aptitude: 1
Language: 2
Skills: 5
(K) Area Knowledge: choose (x2). Lore: choose.
(P) Occupational Skill: native occupation. Survival.
(S) Connections: local organizations/people. Connections: choose. Socialize.

Vandalusan Education

Those who apply and show a willingness to learn, and even more importantly patience, may gain entrance into the world of enlightened scholarship, Vandalusa. Expect to spend eight years of drudgery as a clerk, laborer, and apprentice in order to have access to some of the most renowned scholars of the known world. Many find life in Vandalusa is too much of a hardship to bear, but those who endure come away with knowledge unattainable anywhere else.

Cost: 16
Years Spent: 8
Aptitude: 2
Language: 2 (one of them being Vandasul)
Skills: 8
(K) Area Knowledge: Vandalusa. Lore: choose two. Rune Magic. Science: choose.
(P) Artisan: choose. Awareness. Meditation.
(S) Connections: Institute of Learning. Connections: Vandalusan scholars. Conversation. Intuit.



The dangers of exploring ancient ruins are ever present.

CHAPTER 7

VALDREYR

VALDREYR

A Vandalusan term that does not lend itself well to translation, *Valdreyr* is that which life has given one that makes one a unique being. It may be you are tall and stout as the mountains of the Fire Reaches, or have the finest technical mind in Edyss, or weave Runes like a native scribe of the Seven Gods. Perhaps your will matches the steely one of the Voivodh himself, or you might even be one of the Fane, cursed with limitless power. *Valdreyr* is all of these things and more.

When creating a character, *Valdreyr* defines the talents, abilities and characteristics that single your character out from the majority of Ianer. You may buy beneficial *Valdreyr* with Character Creation Points, or take detrimental *Valdreyr* to add to your Character Creation Point pool. The total number of CCPs that you use, both positive and negative, is limited by your character's age. Your total *Valdreyr* CCPs must therefore be equal to or less than the number of years your character has lived before the start of play.

If the player wishes, he may forego spending Character Creation Points left over from buying skill packages and *Valdreyr* (i.e. if a character has spent less than 100 CCPs at the end of character creation). These left-over CCPs can be saved as Experience Points and spent after the first game session to improve Stats and Skills or to start buying off negative *Valdreyr.*

VALDREYR DESCRIPTIONS

Addiction (variable: –3 to –6): The character has dependency on a particular drug, alcohol or behavior. The character must indulge their addiction at least once a day. Going without causes them to lose a number of Vitality equal to the penalty purchased (-3 to -6 Vitality) every hour after the first 24. This reflects the debilitating effects of withdrawal.

Adopted Homeland (+12): The character has come to truly identify with another culture, fully making it a part of herself. Such characters can purchase the Valdreyr of an Origin available to them based on their Race.

Alacrity (+10): The speed cost for all actions is reduced by 1 (minimum of 1).

Allergy/ minor (–2): Allergic to a common substance. Character suffers –2 to all skill tests when suffering from their allergy. Character is considered under **Stress** when suffering from their allergy.

Allergy/ major (–5): Allergic to a common substance. The allergy is so acute that exposure to the substance causes incapacitation (perhaps even death) if not treated.

Ambidextrous (+7): No penalty on second attack made on the same turn. Normal penalties accrue for any simultaneous attacks after the second. Character gains a +2 bonus to any Athletics skill tests related to hand/eye coordination.

Analytic (+2): The character is a deep thinker and mulls over ideas and quandaries continually. If given an hour or more of time to devote to a single idea or topic, they can turn any single subsequent Lore skill test to a Superior Success if their initial skill test is successful.

Bad Luck (–1 to –6): The inverse of luck, the HoF, over the course of 1 day, can penalize the character's skill tests (including combat rolls) up to the negative cost of the *Valdreyr.*

Beautiful/ Handsome (+2): +2 to all Social skill tests.

Burly (+6): The character is especially stout and sturdy. Normally, characters can only carry up to 2x their Mass in encumburance before they suffer -1 to Personal rolls per point beyond their Encumbrance allotment. A Burly character can carry 3x their Mass before suffering penalties.

Canny (+2): +4 to any Intuit or Awareness skill tests related to uncovering deception (sensing lies or peering through a disguise).

Clumsy (–6): The character is prone to dropping things and breaking fragile objects. When **Stressed**, the character will drop what they're holding; a weapon, a stylus, anything, if they happen to roll a 1 on any skill test, regardless if the test has to do with what happens to be in their hands at the time.

Criminal Mastermind (+5): The character has a mind for subversion and criminal enterprise. The character is never **Stressed** in any situation where they are using their skills towards a nonviolent criminal purpose (breaking into a house, bribing a guard, negotiating the purchase/sale of contraband). Once a week, the character can turn any successful skill test with a relevant skill into a Superior Success.

Curious (+2): +4 to any Awareness skill tests where the character is actively searching or investigating something of interest.

Cursed (–1 to –8): Sickness, magically branded, haunted, evil fate, etc. The value of the Curse is determined by the roll penalty and frequency it occurs. A +1 would be Constant Cough (–1 to Stealth rolls) while a +8 would be something like Living Tatoos of the Souls of Your Victims that occasionally cause rolls to automatically fail at the HoF's discretion.

Cussed (+8): The character does not suffer loss of any Vitality from attacks that fail to cause any loss of Lethal Wounds.

Cynical (–6): The character has an overly cynical worldview that can be off-putting. Characters who are cynical expect the worst out of any situation, and sometimes this can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once per day, the HoF can cancel the successes achieved from a Skill Test.

Daredevil (+4): The character is never **Stressed** by environmental factors, such as adverse weather, hostile environments, or walking a tightrope across a pit of lava. This does not include combat situations.

Debt (–1 to –5): You owe someone a debt that must be repaid, or else. –1 is around 1,000 flats, –5 would be 10,000,000 flats and up.

Deformed/ Minor (–2): Webbed toes, burns, etc. Characters may receive a –2 in social situations.

Deformed/ Major (–6 to –10): Shadekin taint: fangs, scaled skin, pincer appendage. This would result in a major disadvantage in social situations — subtract the value of this *Valdreyr* from all Social rolls. Any combat benefit is left to Hand of Fate discretion.

Diminutive (–3): Character's who are diminutive yet have a high mass are compact and stocky. Diminutive characters have 1 less Chest Lethal Wound as derived by their Physique and suffer a –2 penalty from any blocking defense roll against opponents larger than they. They do gain a +2 bonus to any dodge defense rolls verses attacks made against them from larger opponents.

Dubious (–1): The character gives off a palpable underworld feel. In proper, law-abiding society, they suffer a –2 penalty to all Social skill tests. But when dealing with more disreputable types, they receive a +2 bonus to all Social skill tests.

Exceptional Stat (+6): An exceptional stat is no longer bound by the maximum value cap listed in their Origin. Must be purchased for a specific stat.

Enemy (–5 to –10): The character has an enemy. This person is at least the equal of the character (a –5 enemy) and for some reason spends much of their time trying to figure out how to make the character's life miserable. The higher the enemy's CCP cost, the more powerful the enemy.

Fame/Infamy (+2 to +10): From minor reputation to a legendary existence the character may enjoy certain social perks but a well-known face is dangerous if you're undercover.

Fighting Spirit (+8): Getting them injured just gets them angrier. Whenever they suffer the loss of Lethal Wounds, they gain a +2 bonus to their next attack for each Lethal Wound they lost.

Fleet-Footed (+4): The amount of ground the character can cover in 1 Count is doubled. A character with an Advanced Athletics, capable of moving 10 feet in 1 Count, can move 20 feet in 1 Count. Speed must still be paid for movement, however.

Focused (+8): At any time, the character can attempt an Expert (20) Meditation Skill Test to cancel the effects of being Stressed. If the situation changes where the character would again be put under Stress, a new Meditation Skill Test can be made to remain Focused.

Fragile (–6): The character has 1/2 their normal Vitality.

Gambler (+2): The character is never **Stressed** in situations where anything is "on the line" and subject to chance, be it money, property, or their life. The character gains a +2 bonus to any skill tests related to gambling or any game of chance.

Gigantic (+10): The character is larger than normal, generally 7 feet plus. Depending on their total mass, they could either be gargantuan or merely very tall and gangly. Gigantic characters gain a +2 bonus to their Mass, with the subsequent bonus to their Lethal Wounds. The character can make a 10-foot free move instead of the normal 5. The downside is that gigantic characters suffer a –4 to any dodging defense rolls.

Gullible (-7): The character likes people to like them, and will easily fall for lies, cons, and other social schemes. Anyone who beats them in an opposed Social Skill check automatically gets a Superior Success.

Honor Bound (–2): The character has made a pact or lives by a certain code, which they hold sacred (The player and HoF can decide on the rules and consequences).

Hunted: (–1 to -10): Someone is hunting the character with the intetion of causing serious harm. The character will have to be careful to cover their tracks, never settle in one place for long, and stay under the radar lest their hunter track them down. The range connotes the power of the agency seeking him. -1 could be

a lone person, wronged by the player at some point, -5 could be a powerful criminal syndicate seeking to give the player a hurtin', while -10 might indicate that the player has somehow seriously pissed off the Cult of Mirkule.

Illiterate (–2): Your character does not posses the ability to read or write.

Impoverished (–6): You start the game with no money (cannot use Connections to acquire cash), and cannot count your highest Finesse Level connection towards equipping your character (see Equipping Your Character in Chapter 8, Equipment).

Item of Power (+1 to +20): Consult with your HoF; could be anything from a small light-rune stone (+1) to an ancient Gondolon Golem (+20), which you've acquired.

Keen Hearing (+4): For the purposes of any Awareness skill tests involving hearing, the character's effective finesse level is 1 greater.

Luck (+1 to +6): Over the course of a single day, the character may take a bonus to any skill tests (not combat rolls) to the total cost of the *Valdreyr.* For example, a character with +5 luck could, over the course of a single day, grant a +1 bonus to 5 skill tests, or a +5 bonus to a single skill test.

Military Rank (+1 to +10): Through service, the character has gained a rank in a military organization, and can command lower ranking members of that organization as well as automatically having cachet with other military types and allied governments in accordance to their status. Members of the military can, in their own country or allied region, carry arms legally and may have some powers of arrest and detention. Rank ranges from +1 CCP for Private to +5 for an officer like Captain or Major and +10 for an Admiral or General. Note that actions taken against the interest of the character's superiors may bring dire consequences on the player's head.

Minor Disability (–4) Blind in one eye, deaf in one ear, a minor limp etc. The character finesse level is 1 rank lower for pertinent skills such as Awareness, Athletics, etc.

Monolingual (–6): The character forfeits all foreign languages they have acquired through their skill packages. They have difficulty learning new languages as well, taking twice as long to do so.

Natural Talent (+3): Purchased for a specific skill, the character does not need a teacher to increase that skill's Finesse Level. The time and XP cost for raising the skill's FL remains the same, they just do not need a teacher to accomplish it.

Nightmares (–4): The character needs to sleep 50% longer than normal to gain the benefits of a good night's sleep (unless taking a drug that helps them sleep). Unless they get a decent night's sleep, they suffer a –1 to all skill tests and are considered continually **Stressed**.

Nimble (+4): The character's free move rises from 5 feet to 10 feet. It would then be possible for the character to take two separate 5-foot free moves separately during a Combat Round.

Outcast: (–10): The character has essentially severed all ties with his Origin, distanced himself from his homeland, perhaps even losing all notions of cultural identity, and in the process no longer possesses the Valdreyr granted by his Origin. The character has also severed any legal ties to his country, renouncing his citizenship (or having it revoked by his home origin), nor maintaining ny residence there.

Pacifist (–2): The character refuses to meet challenges with violence, but will defend herself if attacked. On the first round of combat, the character cannot make an initiative bid, relying solely on their Reaction stat.

Passionate (+1): The character receives a +1 on skill checks when attempting to convince a listener of the value of their plan or opinion (Leadership, Conversation, Intimidation, etc).

Prejudice (–2): The character has a dislike for a certain people or subject, they receive –3 to all Social skill tests when dealing with them.

Primitive (–4): The character has an irrational dislike of technology that stems from their lack of understanding. They've had limited exposure to high technology and such things as trains, airships, and modern cities make them **Stressed.**

Prodigy (+2): The character's precocious ability to learn quickly can be a gift but in some social circles which may feel age equals knowledge it can be a detriment. Halve the characters total age after buying their packages and they suffer –2 in social situations.

Psychosis (Variable –1 to –10): Certain circumstances (set by the Player and HoF) trigger psychotic episodes. The frequency of these episodes, or the probability that the character will have an episode determines the total value of the negative *Valdreyr.* A –1 psychosis would be a very rare or seldom encountered trigger (a Phobia of a rare breed of Shadekin), a –5 psychosis would be something that the character may encounter every few days or weeks (character reverts to a borderline personality when defeated in combat), and a –10 psychosis would mean that the character suffers from a chronic psychosis, where relief from its effects comes intermittently (perhaps by a trigger determined by the Player and HoF).

Suggestions:

- Phobia (–1 to –10 depending on frequency): Character is always under **Stress** when suffering from his phobia and suffers a –2 to all skill tests.
- Borderline personality (–8): Drops the character's Social Aptitude to 0 (all social skill tests considered *unskilled* attempts).
- Shell Shock (–1 to –10 depending on frequency and severity of reaction): Player and HoF decide on a situation (gunfire, explosions, being wounded) that causes the character to suffer berserk rages or

catatonic spells.

Quick (+2, +4, or +6): Characters receive +1, +2, or +3 to their total initiative bid.

Rich (+5): Character has access to greater resources than most. The character can increase the Finesse Level of 1 connection and may take 1 medium availability piece of equipment or resource.

Robust (+6): Character's healing rate is doubled. This includes Recovery during combat (1 point of Speed replenishes 2 Vitality instead of the normal 1).

Rune Gift (+6): Reduces the Mental Fatigue of all runes by half.

Scar (–1): Character has a defining scar. This scar is generally visible (on the face) or very large. Typically this scar comes from some pivotal moment in the character's life. It may throb at opportune moments, or enemies may identify the character by their scar, their "fate's mark."

Shadow Gift (+6): Reduces the minimum Animus cost of Shadow Magic spells by 1 (minimum of 0).

Sharp Vision (+4): For the purposes of any Awareness skill tests involving sight, the character's effective finesse level is 1 greater.

Sickly (–5): The character's healing rate is halved.

Stonefaced (+4): The character is capable of maintaining strict composure, not letting a hint of their true feelings show through in their face. The character gains a +2 bonus to Connive and any attempts by other to Intuit the character's thoughts or feelings automatically fail unless they score a Superior Success.

Suspicious (–2): The character does not trust anyone fully. Any Conversation, Intuit, or Socialize skill tests are made at 1 Finesse Difficulty higher. But all Conversation, Connive, and Seduction skill tests against the character are also made at 1 Finesse Difficulty higher.

Superstitious (–2): The character sees omens and bad portents wherever they look. When confronted with the supernatural (undead, Shadowmages, Shadekin, etc.) the character is considered **Stressed** and suffers a –2 to attack rolls in combat situations.

Tainted (–8): Because of some unnatural exposure or acts in their family's past, the character makes people unconfortable and scares children and animals (–2 to all Social Rolls). Also, anti-Shadekin Rune Magic (such as Rebuke the Unnatural) affects the character as if they were a Shadekin.

Terrible Secret (–1 to –10): Depends on how much you suffer to keep the secret, who seeks to know it, and what would happen to you if revealed:

–1 = Incurable disease.

–5 = Ex-Mirkule Cultist

–10 = Spy for the Dominion of Drakan

Possible consequences of having the secret revealed could include the loss of a Connection, persecution by a particular person or group (as a Hunted or Wanted Valdreyr), or possible ostracism from the player's community, home city, or friends.

Tough (+6): The character adds two additional Chest Lethal Wounds to those acquired from their Physique stat.

Vulnerable (–8): The character is cursed with a Vulnerability to magic. The CV of any Rune is considered 5 points higher against the Vulnerable character. Shadow Magic spells have 5 free successes the Shadowmage can used against a Vulnerable target. All beneficial Runes, however, gain a +2 CV bonus when targeting this character, and Shadowmages have 2 extra successes to augment any beneficial Shadow Magic spell.

Wanderer (+4): The character has spent a lot of time on the road, meeting many people and learning the hidden paths of the world. They gain a +2 to any Area Knowledge or Connections skill tests.

Wanted (–1 to –10): The character is being sought for a crime he may or may have not committed. The range connotes the power of the agency persuing him (which often corresponds to the severity of the charge). –1 would be wanted for petty crimes in a small community, –5 could be a serious charge in a powerful nation, while –10 would indicate the player is being sought by the highest authority of a particular country.

Weak (–4): Characters encumbrance capacity is halved.

Weak Willed (–4): Any attempts to intimidate, dominate, or otherwise manipulate the character gain a +4 bonus.

Wealthy (+10): You have a huge business or landed family that gives you access to great amounts of money. The character can raise the Finesse Level of any 2 connections by 1 and may take 1 Rare Availability piece of Equipment or Resource. Naturally there are obligations the character must uphold to keep this wealth, something that should be worked out between HoF and player.

Willful (+4): The character is never *stressed* in situations of powerlessness: where the character is being bullied, intimidated, threatened, or otherwise coerced. The character gains a +2 bonus to any skill tests to resist domination, fear, or intimidation.

Example: *Scott is mulling over what points to spend on Valdreyr for his Illestani Battlemage. Since he wants to make sure he's got a super "HARDCORE" wrecking machine of a fighter, he takes Burly (6 CCPs) for the extra Vitality, and Fighting Spirit (8 CCPs) to make penalties he takes from damage positive instead of negative. Unfortunately, this puts his character as a cost of 108 CCPs, too much for a starting Legendary Character. He has to take some negative Valdreyr or lose one of his skill packages. He decides his Battlemage isn't on the Illestani front due to Shell Shock that activates the Confusion Handicap when he's caught in an explosion or fired on with automatic weapons, a Psychosis worth –4 CCPs. He also has constant Nightmares (–4 CCPs) about his time on the frontlines, yet still strives to prove himself. Now Scott's character costs exactly 100 CCPs.*

POSITIVE VALDREYR BY CCP COST

Passionate	+1
Analytic	+2
Beautiful/Handsome	+2
Canny	+2
Curious	+2
Gambler	+2
Prodigy	+2
Natural Talent	+3
Dardevil	+4
Fleet-Footed	+4
Keen Hearing	+4
Nimble	+4
Sharp Vision	+4
Stonefaced	+4
Wanderer	+4
Willful	+4
Criminal Mastermind	+5
Rich	+5
Burly	+6
Exceptional Stat	+6
Robust	+6
Rune Gift	+6
Shadow Gift	+6
Tough	+6
Ambidextrous	+7
Cussed	+8
Fighting Spirit	+8
Focused	+8
Alacrity	+10
Gigantic	+10
Wealthy	+10
Adopted Homeland	+12
Luck	+1 to +6
Fame/Infamy	+2 to +10
Item of Power	+1 to +20
Military Rank	+1 to +10
Quick	+2/+4/+6

NEGATIVE VALDREYR BY CCP GAIN

Dubious	–1
Scar	–1
Allergy/Minor	–2
Deformed/Minor	–2
Honor Bound	–2
Illiterate	–2
Pacifist	–2
Prejudice	–2
Suspicious	–2
Superstitious	–2
Diminutive	–3
Minor Disability	–4
Nightmares	–4
Primitive	–4
Weak	–4
Weak Willed	–4
Allergy/Major	–5
Sickly	–5
Impoverished	–6
Clumsy	–6
Cynical	–6
Fragile	–6
Monolingual	–6
Gullible	–7
Vulnerable	–8
Tainted	–8
Outcast	-10
Addiction	–3 to –6
Bad Luck	–1 to –6
Cursed	–1 to –8
Debt	–1 to –5
Deformed/Major	–6 to –10
Psychosis	–1 to –10
Enemy	–5 to –10
Terrible Secret	–1 to –10



With the right equipment, an adventurer can live a long life.

CHAPTER 8

EQUIPMENT

"The wealthy know not the sorrow of the poor, yet it is the former who are truly destitute."

— Koba Teaching

RESOURCES

RESOURCE CATEGORIES

The general availability and difficulty of manufacture of an item is reflected in its resource category. A player's Connections determine the number or Resource Categories they have to 'spend' on equipment.

Common: Items of this category are easily found anywhere, usually consisting of household things and basic survival tools.

Uncommon: Requiring a more advanced manufacturing base, these kind of artifacts range from finished artwork to worked metal items and simple mechanical devices.

Rare: Highly trained workers with access to advanced industrial resources create the weapon systems, vehicles, or fine artworks in this category. Alternatively, this may represent a business, venture, or investment the character owns that is self-sustaining.

Very Rare: This category represents the most restricted and hard to build items, including expensive artwork, magical clothing and equipment, and military-grade weapons and vehicles. Ownership of a multinational concern or large amounts of liquid assets are also in this category.

THE FLAT

Vallunei's national coinage, the Flat has been the common currency of the land since its founding in 1627. To circumvent counterfeiters, Vallunei struck a deal with its neighbor to the south, Vandalusa, the land of magi scholars. Vandalusa agreed to mint the coinage of the Kingdom, imbuing it with special runes that grant it certain, unique qualities. Though the sheets of engraved metal are 1/16" thick, it is difficult to bend, and if so, will gradually bend back, returning to shape, and its surface cannot be scratched. Most notable is the ability for Flats to be combined, or broken down, by their denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 25, 50, 100, 500, 1,000, and 10,000. By pressing two or more Flats together, they will seem to "meld" into the appropriate larger denomination. Tapping the Flat breaks it down into smaller denominations. It is said that the Flats do not actually meld into each other or break apart, that they are linked together through a vast network of teleportation runes. When a Flat is "tapped" and broken down into smaller denominations, the larger Flat is teleported to some undisclosed vault (presumably in Vandalusa), while the smaller denominations are teleported in return.

The Flat has so far resisted counterfeiting, or so the Kingdom claims. But for this reason and others, it has found its way into the markets of many other countries. It is a common sight in the Merchant Isles, where it passes into the hands of international trade, from the far-flung Periphery,

to the forbidden markets of Klesht. Though every land has its own currency, only in lands such as the Theocracy of Dharsus and the Dominion of Drakan, is possession of the Flat a crime. Edyss has struck their own deal with Vandalusa to mint an Edyssian Flat. What deal the Kingdom struck with Vandalusa to create this unique coinage remains a closely held secret. The average person earns around 10,000 flats per year.

Profitable Business (R)

The character owns a business that turns a modest profit every year, employing no more than 2–8 people. This business can be anything from a tavern to a caravan to a smithy. Usually the owner needs to check up on it for a total of three months of time per year to keep it going, and it puts 5d10x1,000 flats in his pocket once per year.

Heirloom Jewelry (R)

A set or individual piece of very valuable jewelry of fine manufacture with some history to it involving the character's family or past. The sentimental value of such an item far outweighs its monetary value, and the character would need to be very hard pressed to sell it.



House & Property (U)

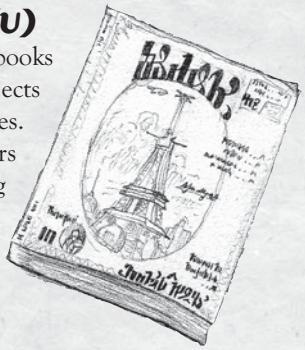
This represents a small patch of land and a small hut or cottage upon it that the character owns title to. This may also be a small apartment in a city.

Land Title (R)

The character owns a large area of farmland or forest (between ten and twenty acres). It is undeveloped and any dwellings on the land must be built separately.

Personal Library (U)

The character has a collection of books and writings on their favorite subjects numbering twenty to forty volumes. One is a rare text while the others are relatively common. Making a Knowledge roll involving the topic covered by the books is done at +5.



Set of Maps (C)

Two scroll tubes with maps depicting the commonly known world of Zir'An. The character may have made notes on them during their travels, with one area being more detailed because of the character's familiarity with it.

Financial Investments (R)

Non-controlling equity is owned by the character in larger business ventures from which he receives a certain amount of money as dividends every year equivalent to 10d10x100 Flats – roll once per game year. This venture may be legal or illegal in the country where it is located, but always involves other investors besides himself.

Money (C)

The equivalent of 2d10x100 Flats in the coinage of the character's choice.

Money (U)

The equivalent of 3d10x500 Flats in the coinage of the character's choice.

Money (R)

The equivalent of 5d10x500 Flats in the coinage of the character's choice.

Money (VR)

The equivalent of 5d10x1,000 Flats in the coinage of the character's choice.

SERVICES

Air Travel Pass (R)

A ticket that allows travel by air amongst a specific aeroconcern's air fleet. Usually good for one month, subject to availability and the country's restrictions on travelers. (1,000 Flats)

Bond-Rune Slave (R)

A porter, servant, concubine, or other type forced to serve by a Slave Rune engraved on their forehead. Illegal in some countries. (500–1,000 Flats)

College Tuition (U)

A semester at a good technical or Runemagic college lasts for 5 months and grants 5 EXP. More prestigous universites cost double ore even 10 times this amount.(1,000 Flats)

Personal Servant (R)

A henchman who acts as a valet or maid and travels with the character. This person has stats and skills equivalent to a City Folk Minor NPC. (12,000–30,000 Flats per year)

Rail Pass (U)

A pass that allows travel within a region's rail system for a certain amount of time, usually 1 month. Note that certain countries do not recognize passes from others and/or restrict movement of individuals within their borders. (500 flats)

Telegram (C)

A form for sending a message from one major city to the next. Once transmitted, the message takes 3d10 hours to reach its target by regular post (40 Flats). This service may not be available to remote locations or towns, and repressive regimes routinely censor mail messages coming in and out of their territories.

Express Telegram (U)

A more expensive message service that includes a courier that hand-delivers the message to its destination (100 Flats).

Mechanical Repair (U)

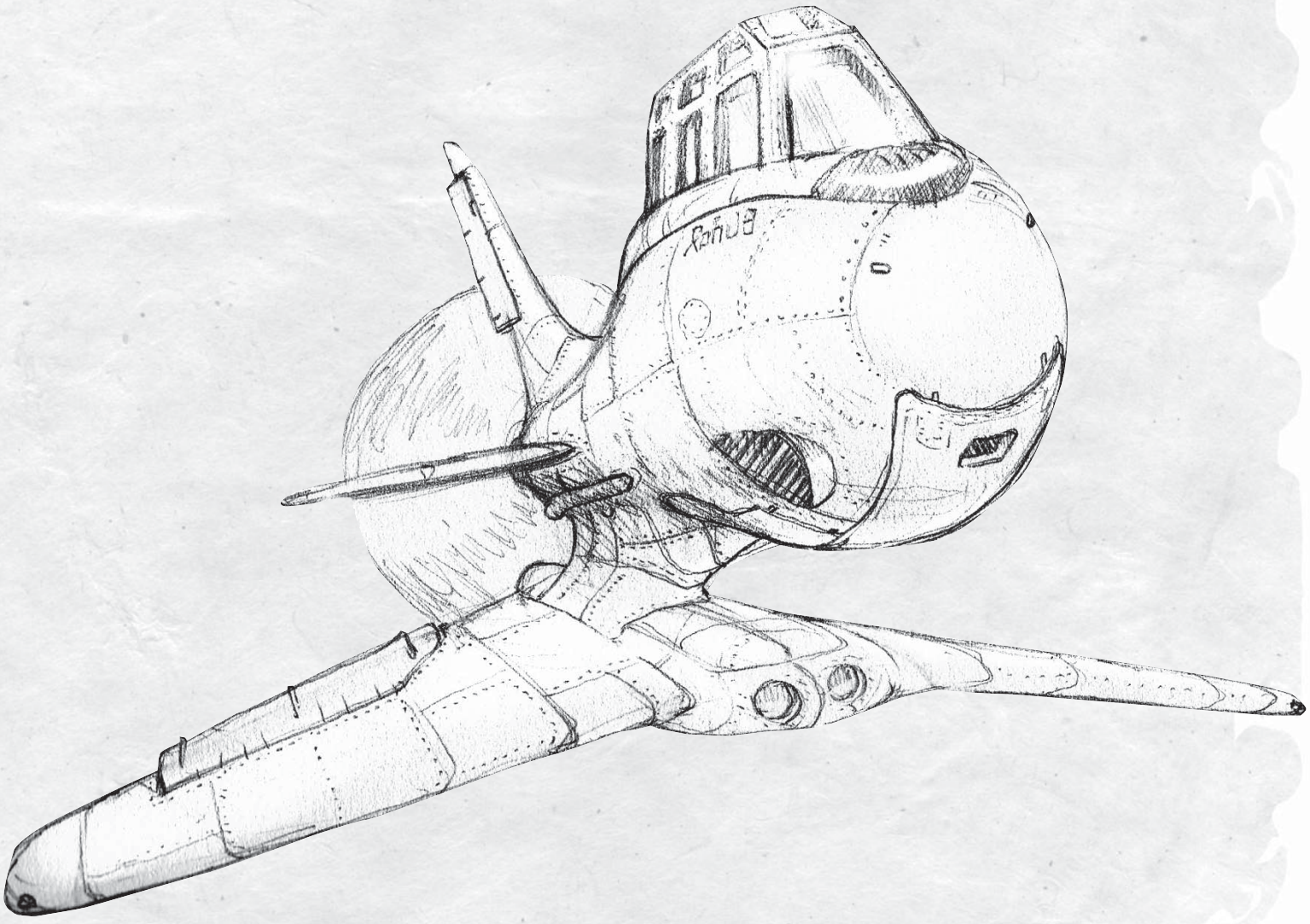
As mechanical devices become widespread, small businesses offering to care for autocarridges and other mechanical equipment have sprung up. A typical breakdown or malfunction requires d10 hours of repair at 100 flats per hour, plus materials to repair the damage at 100 Flats per structure point lost.

Rune Maintenance (U)

All sorts of civic structures, vehicles and household items need their runic enchantments re-applied once every few years. A professional Runemage can charge 100 flats per difficulty point of the Glyph or other Rune Magic form they repair.

Research (R)

A qualified sage or professor can be hired to research a topic of almost any subject, from ancient history to obscure languages to the whereabouts of an item of power. A sage commonly takes 1d10 days to answer a single question and charges 100 Flats per difficulty point per day to issue a report on a topic. He may fail to find anything, of course, but will insist on being paid for his time nonetheless.

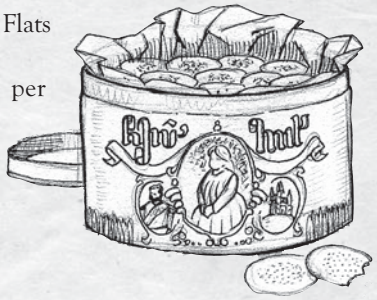


A Gallond Edyssian fast-transit private plane

REGIONAL SERVICES

LANDS OF THE TREATY AND SOUTHERN EMPIRES

Meals



Bread & Cheese (C): 3 Flats per person

Meat Stew (U): 8 Flats per person

5-course meal (R): 100 Flats per person

Banquet (VR): 500 Flats per person

Lodging

Stabling (C): 8 Flats for a night's stay for a mount, including feeding and care.

Traveler's Hostel (C): 5 Flat for a night's stay in a multi-bed common room.

Hotel Room(U): 40 Flats per night in a private hotel room or cottage.

Suite Room (R): 250 Flats per night in a multi-room apartment or small house.

Villa (VR): 1,000 per night in a multi-story penthouse or grounds with servants.

Postage

Stamps (C): Packages cost 1 Flat per lbs. to send to most areas of the civilized world.

TILERIAN HEGEMONY & FORSAKEN LANDS

Meals

Thin gruel (C): 2 Flats per person

Rice and spices (U): 10 Flats per person

Meat haunch (R): 40 Flats per person

3-course meal (VR): 300 Flats per person

Lodging

Stabling (U): 15 Flats for night's stay for a mount, including feeding and care.

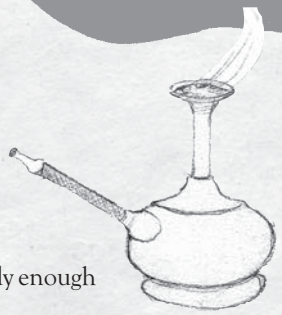
Flophouse (C): 10 Flats for night's stay in a louse-infested common room.

Group Housing (U): 100 flats per night in a hostel with rows of bunks.

Locked Room (R): 400 Flats per night in a one-room apartment with a key.

Secure Suite (VR): 1,200 Flats per night in a multi-room suite with locks, guards and servants.

MUNDANE ITEMS



Bhoonta Weed (U)

60 Flats per bag. (5 doses)

Boots (C)

Military or riding boots that are sturdy enough to last for years of use. (100 flats)

Camouflage Clothing (U)

+5 to Stealth rolls in the environment matching the camo. (180 Flats)

Cold-weather Clothing (C)

No penalties to Survival rolls in cold environs (–5 without). (300 Flats)

Desert Clothing (C)

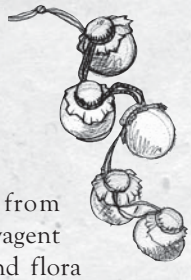
No penalties to Survival rolls in the desert (–5 without proper clothing). (100 Flats)

Designer/Formal Clothing (U)

No penalties to Social rolls in courts or other high-society situations. (500-10,000 Flats)

Explorer Clothing (C)

+1 to Survival rolls. (100 Flats)





Flying Mountain Lager (U)

2 Flats per pint.

Hat (C or U)

Men's and women's hats range from utilitarian fedora or bonnet to extravagent sculptures incorporating live fauna and flora favored by nobility. (1-1,000 Flats)

Island Grog (U)

3 Flats per pint.

Jabbash (R)

300 Flats per dose.

Motion-Picture Camera (VR)

This heavy camera with tripod included, can take up to ten minutes of moving images. It has an Enc. of 8 and is very delicate. (9,000 Flats)

Motion-Picture Projector (VR)

This runemagic-light generating device can play back moving image film. It has an Enc. of 15 and is very delicate. (20,000 Flats)

Musical Instrument (C)

This item represents one of a variety of hand-held, sturdy

instruments that travels well. Examples include drums, harmonica, flute, stringed viola, guitar, pipes, ocarina, or recorder. (10–200 Flats)

Portraiture camera (U)

Large and bulky, this camera (with tripod included) is made to take a single, large, high-definition exposure on photosensitive glass plates. (4,800 Flats)

Power Generator (U)

This is a typical Ballinorian-crafted internal combustion generator. With a full forty-gallon tank of Distillate or kluuzhe, it can provide two hundred and forty hours of electricity for an average, two-story home. They are very bulky, very loud, and weigh about 1.5 tons. (800 Flats).

Professional-grade photographic equipment (R)

A compact, state-of-the-art camera with interchangeable lenses. This kit comes with the camera, three different lenses, and a tripod. The wide, flat film canisters it uses contain 18 exposures. (8,000 Flats)

Schvarzes Bronzbrau (U)

15 Flats per maas.



Shoes (C)

Available in a range of styles and expenses. (10-500 Flats)

Talutian Red Wine (R)

30 Flats per glass.

Tchakka Sticks (C)



1 Flats per stick dose, 15 Flats for roll of 20

Telescope (U)

Arrangement of lenses that magnifies distant objects by a factor of +5. (1,000 Flats)

Underwater Diving Equipment (VR)

Hand-cranked surface air supply with rubber suit, 100' of hose, and airtight, bulky helm. Very heavy and delicate. (2,000 Flats)

Watch/ Timepiece (C)

Sturdy mechanical pocket watch or larger clock. (60 Flats)

Weight Scale (U)

Professional quality scales for weighing small objects like jewelry, gems, and ore. (360 Flats)



ADVENTURING GEAR

Animal Trap (U)

Can be set to trap animals or humans by causing a pressure plate to snap shut spring-loaded metal jaws for 12ap2 damage, the Pain Handicap, and an automatic Grapple finesse maneuver.

Blowtorch (R)

Powered with large, heavy tanks of Distillate, this is used by anyone working with metal. The flame does 5ap4 damage if used as a weapon. (Torch - 10 Flats, Full Tank - 150 Flats)

Breaking/Entering Kit (U)

No penalties to Security rolls when breaking & entering, otherwise –5. Crowbar, bolt cutters, glasscutter, etc. (850 Flats)

Breathing Mask (R)

Necessary for pilots to survive in high-altitude flying, this mask, with rebreather bladders, uses a specialized Rune that supplies its wearer with breathable air for up to sixty hours before it wears out. (800 Flats)

Camping Kit (C)

Sleeping gear and cooking utensils for the wilderness: bedroll, firepot, compass, sewing kit, matches. (275 Flats)

Chain (C)

30 foot length of thick chain capable of supporting 3,000 lbs. (15 Flats)

Disguise Kit (U)

Makeup and facial hair, wax for facial alteration, padding for weight alteration, wigs, etc. (320 Flats)

Filtration Mask (C)

Useful in deserts and other hazardous environments, prevents the inhalation of toxins and other irritants. (60 Flats)

First Aid Kit (U)

Bandages, smelling salts, a splint binding, towel, antiseptic powder. (140 Flats)

Forgery Kit (R)

Pens, ink, and paper, small magnifying glass w/ mount, etching tools, wax and soft clay. (2,250 Flats)

Gas Lantern (C)

This new type of Edyssian lantern can cast up to 10m radius of light for 4 hours before it needs Distillate fuel. (45 Flats)

Hand-cranked electric torch (R)

A pistol-sized incandescent electric light that must be constantly cranked to produce a beam out to 15'. (120 Flats)

Lockpicks (R)

Delicate metal picks and rods in a fabric roll. Locks cannot be opened using Security without this kit. (500 Flats)

Mechanics Toolset (C)

A complete set of wrenches, drivers, drill bits, pliers, pincers, shears, etc. All contained in a handy leather belt (encumbrance value of 4). Required for typical repairs and maintenance.

Mini grappling equipment (VR)

Spy equipment with a collapsible grapple attached to 10m of steel wire wound in a belt harness-winch. Capable of supporting 400 pounds of weight. (950 Flats)

Mountaineer Equipment (U)

Climbing harness, 30m rope, pitons, carabineers, boot crampons. (800 Flats)

Poison Scabbard (VR)

Automatically re-poisons a blade when inserted. Incorporates a reservoir of 10 applications of liquid poison. (5,000 Flats)

Portable Generator (R)

This large, 120-pound generator, made in Ballinor, Edyss, or Vallunei, commonly, is a standard fixture on all well-funded expeditions. With its twelve-gallon fuel tank, it can supply the average camp with twenty hours of electricity. It has an EV of 24 if carried. (1,000 flats)

Rope (U)

A 50-meter length of woven hemp rope that can support 1000 pounds of weight. (25 Flats)

Rune magic Writing/Engraving Kit (U)

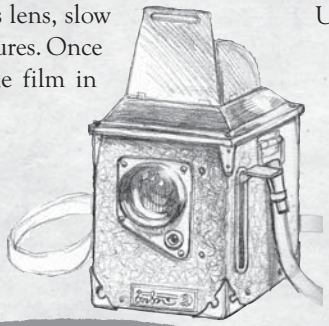
Runing papers with special holder for the Runemage's Stylus. (350 Flats)

Sleeve Holster (R)

Holster for holdout pistol or throwing dagger that can be snapped out into the hand in an instant (no init. cost to draw weapon, only small weapons fit). (450 Flats)

Small Box Camera (C)

Common in the most developed land, this box-shaped camera has a fixed-focus lens, slow shutter speed, and contains 20 exposures. Once finished, local chemists develop the film in about a day. (20 Flats)



Spelunking/Mining Kit (R)

Underground exploration and mining equipment, including a helmet-light, a climbing harness, 100' rope, a small shovel, and a few pitch-cloth hand torches. (650 Flats)

Spyglass (R)

Increases Line of Sight distance by x3, but reduces view angle to 10 degrees. While using it, one is considered Prone. (1500 Flats).

Telegraph Tap Kit (VR)

Suitcase with telegraph system and 5' copper wire w/clips to eavesdrop on telegraph lines. (6,500 Flats)

Tent (C)

Portable structure that folds into a roll and weighs 10 pounds. The tent allows 2 to sleep comfortably, or 3 in a pinch. (80 Flats)

WEAPONS

MELEE WEAPON CHARACTERISTICS

Base Damage

Listed is the amount of damage the weapon does with a single strike. This damage is enhanced by half the character's Base HtH damage.

Encumbrance

This is the value that is figured into the character's overall encumbrance value. See Encumbrance (above). If the character is carrying more than twice their Mass in encumbrance they find themselves heavy and difficult to move. For each point of difference between the character's Mass and their total encumbrance they suffer a –1 to all Personal Aptitude related skill checks.

Skill

This is the skill required to use the weapon. Those who do not possess the skill listed can still attack with the weapon, but may not use any special finesse effects, and must rely on Universal effects alone.

Cost

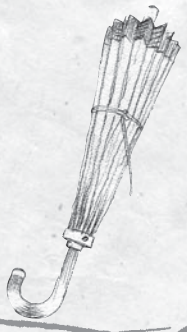
Though gathered by their availability, and chosen based on a character's connections, it is still possible, and perhaps necessary, that the character must buy some of the weapons listed. Those weapons that list no price are weapons that are generally never sold in markets and must either be acquired in a character's home country only, or are so rare that those who have them seldom part with them.

Avl.	Melee Weapons (blunt/edged/piercing)	Cost (flats)	Base Damage	Enc.	Skill
C	Club (b)	5	6ap1	2	Melee: medium
C	Dagger/Knife (e/p)	15	4ap2	2	Melee: short
C	Handaxe (e)	18	7ap2	3	Melee: short
C	Shortsword (e/p)	30	6ap2	3	Melee: short
U	Broadsword (e/p)	55	8ap2	4	Melee: medium
U	Mace (b)	48	12ap1	4	Melee: medium
U	Flail (b)	60	8ap2	4	Melee: medium
U	Heavy Axe (e)	35	12ap1	6	Melee: medium
U	Longsword (e/p)	120	10ap2	5	Melee: medium
R	Two-handed Sword (e)	185	14ap2	7	Melee: long
R	Two-handed axe (e)	125	16ap1	7	Melee: long
R	Maul (b)	80	18ap1	9	Melee: long
C	Spear (p)	75	8ap3	5	Melee: long
R	Pole-axe (e/p)	85	16ap2	8	Melee: long
C	Staff (b)	24	7ap1	4	Melee: long
C	Asam'tar (e)	120	7ap3	4	Melee: medium
C	A'tam Pu (e)	50	9ap2	4	Melee: short
C	Eshuka (e)	180	11ap2	6	Melee: medium
C	Thwitch (p)	30	3ap2	1	Melee: short
U	Dundregash (e)	2,200	8ap2	5	Melee: medium
U	Do-Shang (b/e/p)	200	6ap2	3	Melee: Medium
U	Knab (b)	80	10ap1	5	Melee: medium
U	Lahok	-	4ap2	2	Melee: small
U	Sadjo (e)	45	13ap2	6	Melee: medium
U	Shaioka (e)	875	15ap1	7	Melee: long
U	Tailek (e/p)	320	4ap3	2	Melee: small
U	Zabados (e/p)	230	4ap2	1	Melee: small
U	Xavai (p)	300	6ap3	4	Melee: medium
R	Beh Ta (e)	-	8ap2	3	Melee: small
R	Kishaa-ta	-	3ap3	3	Melee: medium
R	Palagria (e)	560	4ap1	5	Melee: small
R	Ssathlesh weight-tip (b)	-	8ap1	5	Melee: medium
R	Ssathlesh dagger-tip (p)	-	6ap2	4	Melee: medium
R	Tari (e)	-	2ap2	1	Melee: small
R	Tomba (b)	2,000	22ap1	10	Melee: long
R	Tosh (e)	-	15ap3	7	Melee: long
R	Tzepezh (e/p)	1,200	18ap2	10	Melee: long
R	Xaopana	4,500	9ap3	4	Melee: medium
VR	Hronda Bosh blade (e)	-	30ap1	10	Melee: long
VR	Hronda Bosh tip (p)	-	12ap2	10	Melee: long
VR	Leigol	4,200	4ap4	1	Unarmed
n/a	Szazaris	-	11ap3	2	Melee: medium









REGIONAL WEAPONRY

Each country has its own weapon variants. The availability is one level greater if the character is not of the appropriate country of origin or the connection supplying the weapon is not of that region.

Common Melee Weapons

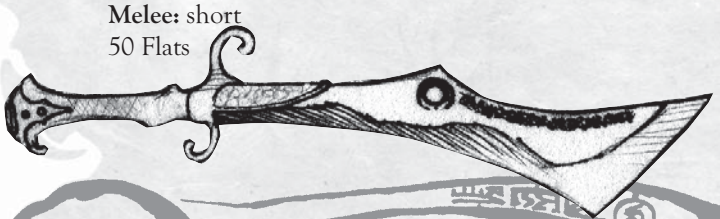
Asam'tar
Ba-Durai crescent blade (e)
The famous crescent-shaped longsword of Ba-Dur, it is favored by the Ben Sha'oud nomads and the Sh'taaz Fahrouk swordsmen, and generally used from horseback. They are revered in their homeland and greatly valued by collectors, but cheap reproductions can be found nearly anywhere.
Base Damage: 7ap3
Encumbrance: 4
Melee: medium
120 Flats

Thwitch
Cyrooni weapon catcher
Renowned for their skill at theft, it's no surpries that Cyrooni fighers are adept at stealing the weapon out of the hands of their opponent. This double-bladed hooked dagger enables the skilled wielder to lock and grab their opponent's weapon.
Base Damage: 3ap2
Encumbrance: 1



Melee: short
30 Flats
Expert: +5 to Disarm
Elite: On a successful disarm weilder may do opponent's weapon damage to opponent instead of removing weapon from their possession.

A'tam Pu
Bhuketi short sword (e)
The a'tam pu is the common, single-edged sword found throughout Bhuket and parts of the Inabi States. It is the sword used to equip Bhuket's foot soldiers and police while the monks of the Shree Kat have used it to great effect.
Base Damage: 9ap2
Encumbrance: 4
Melee: short
50 Flats

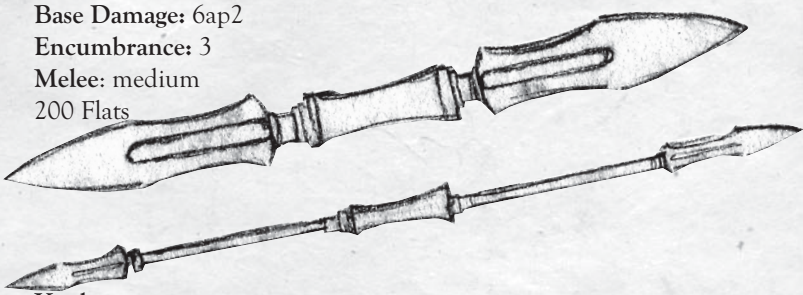


Eshuka
Arivonnean traditional sword (e)
The Eshuka is one of the few hand-and-a-half swords in regular use. Distinguished by its wedge-shaped fluted tip, the Eshuka has been the sword of every Arivonnean fighter since they settled the sheltered valleys of the Arivonnean subcontinent.
Base Damage: 11ap2
Encumbrance: 6
Melee: medium
180 Flats

Uncommon Melee Weapons

Dundregash
Ballinorian Thunder-Head axe (e)
What distinguishes this stout, heavy-bladed axe from normal weaponry is the thunder rune engraved in its side. Though used in normal melee attacks, the true power of this weapon comes from when it is thrown. When striking a target, the axe will explode in a blast of thunder and lightning (10ap4 in a 5' radius from target), damaging nearby foes but consuming itself in the process.
Base Damage: 8ap2
Encumbrance: 5
Melee: medium
Short Range (–0) 0–30 feet
Medium Range (–5) 31–60 feet
Long Range (–10) 61–150 feet
2,200 Flats

Do-Shang
Bhuketi Bladed staves (b/e/p)
Two short staves joined together by rings or a chain and their ends tipped with sharp blades. These weapons require dedication and skill to wield effectively, and so only find adherents among the fighting monks of the Shree Kat or their bitter enemies, the Urashi. Because of their flexible nature, in the hands of someone with an Expert finesse level in Melee: Medium, they can negate a defender's Shield Block.
Base Damage: 6ap2
Encumbrance: 3
Melee: medium
200 Flats



Knab
Cyrooni iron club (b)
A favorite of Cyrooni street gangs, the Knab is a simple weapon, consisting of a slightly tapered piece of iron roughly three feet

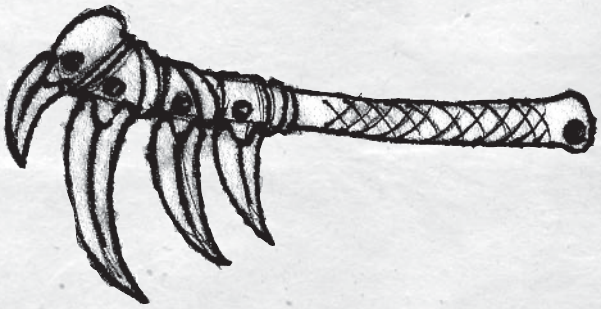
in length. It has a square cross section and the grip tends to be a leather wrap and wrist thong.

Base Damage: 10ap1
Encumbrance: 5
Melee: medium
80 Flats

Lahok
Neolli talon axe

Used by tribal warriors throughout Neoll, this axe is made from the talons of dead Neolli, usually ancestors. Warriors feel their spirits help them hook and rend their enemies with the weapon. Sometimes one is used in each hand, one from the patrilineal line, the other from the matrilineal line.

Base Damage: 4ap2
Encumbrance: 2
Melee: small
(no price)
Expert: No penalty for 2-weapon fighting.



Sadjo
Fire Reaches battle cleaver (e)

The common melee weapon of the Fire Reaches gladiatorial fighter, the Sadjo is a brutal weapon, being simply a large meat cleaver. And cleave it does. In the hands of a powerful fighter, like those in the Fire Reaches, the Sadjo can quickly render an opponent to nothing more than a piece of meat.

Base Damage: 13ap2
Encumbrance: 6
Melee: medium
45 Flats

Shaikoa
Ianu Vossan two-handed sword (e)

Connected possibly to the Arivonnean Eshuka sword, the Shaikoa looks similar to its cousin blade but where the Eshuka has a fluted tip, the Shaikoa has a full crescent tipped blade. The hooked projections of the blade's tip can be used to hook opponents. Scoring at least 6 successes in an attack will allow wielders of the Shaikoa to drag or pull their opponent to them, pull riders from their mounts, or trip an opponent (see rules for tripping in the Combat Finesse Effects section).

Base Damage: 15ap1
Encumbrance: 7
Melee: long
875 Flats

Tailek
Illestani combat knife (e/p)

Many prize the excellent craftsmanship of the Illestani Tailek. Its balance, sharpness, and the quality of its forging have earned it much respect as a truly deadly weapon in the hands of a master.

Base Damage: 4ap3
Encumbrance: 2
Melee: short
320 Flats

Zabados
Harakyri dueling blade (e/p)

The Zabados is a fingerless glove of leather, backed by metal plates or chain mail, where a wide, triangular blade projects beneath and past the fingers from a bolted plate affixed to the palm. This is the weapon of the Zabador duelist. Though Harakyri duels are often to first blood only, a master Zabador with his blade is to be respected. Zabador duelists will often wear one on each hand, or wear one while in the other hand they hold a special buckler crafted solely for Zabados duels.

Base Damage: 4ap2
Encumbrance: 1
Melee: Short
230 Flats

Xavai
Talusian Epee (p)

The weapon of the Talusian dilettante, this is a duelists' weapon, though commonly used to merely scratch the beautiful faces of rivals in fanciful duels meant to take their pride, not their lives. But its triangular cross-section makes its piercing wounds potentially fatal and difficult to heal. It is not uncommon for a first blood duel to turn fatal.

Base Damage: 6ap3
Encumbrance: 4
Melee: medium
300 Flats

Rare Melee Weapons

Beh Ta

Mikeshi quick-throw axe (e)

This small curved axe is carried in a holster worn at the hip by Mikeshi hunters. Masters of this weapon can throw their axe in the same action as they draw it. Thrown axes may even return to the master's hand.

Base Damage: 8ap2

Encumbrance: 3

Melee: short

Short Range (–0) 0–15 feet

Medium Range (–5) 16–30 feet

Long Range (–10) 31–60 feet

Expert: First attack made with the Beh Ta, when drawn, costs 1 speed. Can only be a short-range attack.

Elite: Axe automatically returns to the thrower's hand at the end of their turn.

(no price)



Kishaa-ta

Neolli Sunray Axe (s)

Made from the sharpened bone of unknown predators, this vicous weapon is meant to show the skill of its wielder through the shallow cutting of an enemy untill they collapse from bloodloss.

Base Damage: 3ap3

Encumbrance: 3

Melee: medium

Expert: Increase the Vitality (not Lethal Wound) damage done by +5 per attack.

Elite: Increase the Vitality damage to +10 per attack.

(no price)

Palagria

Talusian lash (e)

Even in an exotic culture as Talus there are those who are considered outside the norm. Some choose the Palagria as their weapon of choice over the more customary Xavai or Xaopana (below). The Palagria is a leather whip reinforced with braided steel threads six to eight feet in length. Some masters of the Palagria remove some of the leather sheathing from the tip, leaving the coiled steel braids exposed.

Base Damage: 4ap1

Encumbrance: 5

Melee: medium

Expert: Instead of throwing a weapon from a target's hand by scoring 10 successes on a Disarm (*q.v.*), they may pull the weapon to them, either to their feet or to a free hand. The character can use the Palagria to Swing (see Dynamic Movement).

Elite: The character may use all unarmed combat effects such as Grapple (throw, and lock) and Trip (*q.v.*) with their Palagria. Instead of crushing, a head strike can yield a choking attack using the same rules as Crush (*q.v.*).

560 Flats

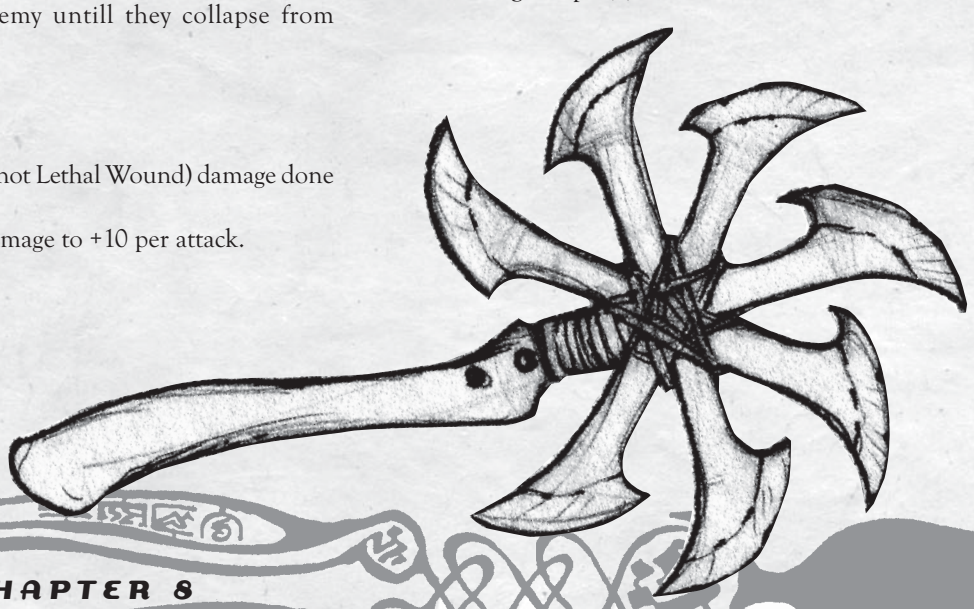
Ssathlesh

Kleshti weighted sash (b/p)

The citizens of Klesht adorn themselves in voluminous robes with many scarves and sashes. These robes often hide many weapons, or in the case of the Ssathlesh, are weapons themselves. Broad sashes of strong silk, generally six feet in length, their ends will be adorned with weights or dagger points that lie hidden while the Ssathlesh is cunningly adopted into their clothing. In an instant they can whip out their sashes to slice, pummel, or entangle a startled foe. Those that possess weights at both ends can be thrown to trip up a foe, as a bola.

Weight-tipped

Base Damage: 8ap1 (b)



Encumbrance: 5
Melee: long
Thrown Ranges:
Short Range (–0) 0–15 feet
Medium Range (–5) 16–30 feet
Long Range (–10) 31–50 feet
Expert: The character may use all unarmed combat effects such as Grapple (throw, and lock) and Trip (*q.v.*) with their Ssathlesh Weighted Ssathlesh can perform a Trip when used at range. Instead of crushing grapples, a head strike can yield a choke, using the same rules as Crush.
Elite: The character can use the above effects when throwing the weapon. Powerful masters of the Ssathlesh have been known to actually smother (crush) their victims with a throw of their weighted sash.

Dagger-tipped
Base Damage: 6ap2 (p)
Encumbrance: 4
Melee: long
Expert: By scoring 6 successes on their attack roll, they may hook and pull their target to them if the target's Mass does not exceed that of the attacker's Mass (+ any points of Practice in Melee: long).
(no price)

Tari
Merchant Isles spinning hand-disc (e)
Easily concealed in the palm of even a child's hand, with a flick of the wrist the Tari flashes outward to strike at unsuspecting foes. Before the target notices what has happened, the Tari has snapped back into the attacker's palm along its elastic tether. The Tari blade is small, and the wounds it inflicts are generally minor, so it is customary to poison its edges. The Merchant Isles are home to many species of plant and animal, that provide a wide variety of toxins.
Base Damage: 2ap2
Encumbrance: 1
Melee: short
Slinging range: 5 feet
Expert: If the character also possesses the skill Slight of Hand of Advanced, the character can make a Surprise attack at any time outside of combat (see Ambushes and Surprise Attacks).
(no price)

Tomba
Fire Reaches war club (b)
This immense club, seven to eight feet in length, bears four solid iron knobs along the last half of its length. Each ball is adorned with two or more spikes. This weapon, wielded with two hands by even the Gogach, is too large to be wielded by anyone with a Mass of less than 8.
Base Damage: 22ap1
Encumbrance: 10
Melee: long
2,000 Flats

Tzepezh
Dominion of Drakan pike arm (e/p)
This odd-looking greatsword is actually wielded similar to a pike, held rigidly forward in a line to impale advancing soldiers and warbeasts. It consists of a long, reinforced blade with a slightly broader, spade-like tip. The hilt is elongated to grant greater leverage while the cross-guard is long and straight. In the hands of the greatest of the Bazhna-Zi, the Tzepezh is wielded as a two-handed sword, sweeping through ranks of soldiers in great arcs.
Base Damage: 18ap2
Encumbrance: 10
Melee: long
1,200 Flats

Xaopana
Talusian rapier (e/p)
Unlike the Xavai, which is a dueling weapon, the Xaopana is the fighting assassin's preferred weapon. Light and agile, the Xaopana is world-renowned for its near perfect balance and incredible sharpness. In keeping with the Talusian culture, no two Xaopana are alike, and all are beautiful to behold. Gilded basket hilts and silvered steel, beautifully lacquered scabbards of deep blue or green, the Xaopana is more than a weapon, it is a work of art.
Base Damage: 9ap3
Encumbrance: 4
Melee: medium
4,500 Flats

Very Rare Melee Weapons

Hronda Bosh
"Death's Friend" Fire Reaches polearm (e/p)
A truly impressive weapon, the Hronda'Bosh is the sacred polearm of the Mamba Brolo (priestesses of Valkan), and as such is seldom seen in the hands of any others. Nearly eight feet in length, the Hronda'Bosh bears a large fan-shaped blade on one end, and a stout thrusting blade at the other. A mass of 10 is required to wield this weapon in combat.
Base Damage: 30ap1 (fan blade), 12ap2 (stabbing tip)
Encumbrance: 10
Melee: long
(no price)

Leigol
Ballinorian Casseonaeum cestus (b)

Forged from the metal named for the lost empire of Casseonae, a metal found mostly now in Ballinor, the Leigol is a remnant of the Leigollier Grufft, a legendary militia band that fought with Dominion troops during the Occupation of 2360, over six centuries ago. Though some of the original Laigol still exist, most of those that are seen today are reproductions, though even these are constructed from the fabled metal of Casseonae.

Base Damage: 4ap4
Encumbrance: 1
Unarmed
4,200 Flats

Szazaris
Kin Blades of the Zhalanti (e, p)

A long-held tradition of the Zhalanti, dating back to the time of the First Age of Creation, is the ritual bonding of a Zhalanti and a sword of milky translucent crystal, the Szazaris.

The Szazaris is a magical, some believe self-aware, long sword. Because of its construction, it is extremely lightweight but retains a strength twice that of tempered steel or Edyssian alloy. When first created, they are semi-translucent milk white, but their most astounding property is that the more they are used, words in Zha Lee Thaal appear along the blade. By studying the writings that appear, the Zhalanti acquires a battle art that applies specifically to attacks made with the Szazaris. They get their first battle art when they achieve an Advanced Finesse Level in Melee: medium. They gain another when it rises to Expert, and one more when it finally rises to Elite.

Base Damage: 11ap3
Encumbrance: 2
Melee: medium
(no price)

Tosh
Traditional Galliosi blade (e)

All Galliosi eventually craft their own weapon, which becomes their symbol of martial power. The traditional weapon crafted is the Tosh. It is a long straight grip, two to three feet in length, that ends with a heavy, single-edged blade three to four feet in length. Because Rune Magic is a part of Galliosi tradition, some combine this knowledge with the blade's construction and inscribe empowering magics along its edge.

Base Damage: 15ap3
Encumbrance: 7
Melee: long
(no price)

RANGED WEAPONS

Ranged Weapon Characteristics

Base Damage
The base damage of the weapon and its armor piercing value are increased using Universal combat effects.

Rate of Fire
Most weapons have a rate of fire of 1. With one shot the character can take advantage of special combat effects (for piercing weapons). Some weapons can fire two or more rounds with a single pull of the trigger. These are called bursts (see Ranged Attacks: autofire bursts). Some weapons have a short burst and a long burst. Follow the rules given for these in the combat section.

Capacity
This number represents how many rounds the weapon holds.

Range
The increments of range and their attendant attack roll penalties. That is if the character can see the target from long ranges.

Encumbrance
This is the value that is figured into the character's overall encumbrance value. If the character is carrying more than twice their Mass in encumbrance they find themselves heavy and difficult to move. For each point of difference between the character's Mass and their total encumbrance they suffer a –1 to all Personal Aptitude related skill checks.

Skill
This is the skill required to use the weapon. Those who do not possess the skill listed can still attack with the weapon, but may not use any special finesse effects, relying on Universal effects alone.



Avl.	Ranged Weapons (all Piercing)	Cost (Flats)	Dam.	ROF	Base Cap.	S(-0)	M(-5)	L(-10)	–Range– Enc.	Skill
C	Standard light revolver	75	7ap2	1	6	0–10’	11–25’	26–50’	1	RW: s
UC	Standard heavy revolver	145	10ap2	1	4	0–30’	31–75’	76–120’	3	RW: s
C	Simple bolt-action rifle	135	12ap3	1	1	0–150’	151–330’	331’-660’	5	RW: m
C	Short bow	120	8ap2	1	–	0–60’	61–120’	121–200’	4	RW: m
UC	Long bow	180	10ap3	1	–	0–75’	76–150’	151–300’	5	RW: m
UC	Composite Bow	245	12ap3	1	–	0–100’	101–250’	251–300’	5	RW: m
R	Compound Bow	345	14ap2	1	–	0–100’	101–300’	301–600’	7	RW: h
UC	Breech-load shotgun	100	12ap1	1	1	0–10’	11–20’	21–50’	6	RW: m
R	Pistol crossbow	75	6ap2	1	–	0–50’	51–75’	76–100’	2	RW: s
C	Crossbow	185	9ap3	1	–	0–100’	101–150’	151–200’	5	RW: m
UC	Heavy crossbow	235	15ap3	1	–	0–100’	101–200’	201–300’	8	RW: h
UC	Asard Bolt-Action	500	16ap3	1	11	0–150’	151–330’	331–660’	5	RW: m
UC	V’tloc Guardian	230	9ap2	1	7	0–30’	31–120’	121–150’	2	RW: s
R	V’tloc Enforcer	830	11ap3	1	7	0–30’	31–130’	131–180’	3	RW: s
UC	Fodorta V9	675	10ap2	1	8	0–30’	31–80’	81–120’	2	RW: s
R	Fodorta V10	900	12ap2	1	12	0–60’	61–90’	91–120’	2	RW: s
UC	Iberta	680	8ap2	2	12	0–20’	31–70’	71–100’	3	RW: s
R	Krutzk sidearm	185	8ap2	12	60	0–20’	21–50’	51–100’	4	RW: s
UC	Pottarson’s Farmer’s Hand	120	12 to 6ap1	2	2	0-10’	11-20’	21–50’	4	RW: m
UC	Roha	830	16 to 6ap1	1	1	0-10’	11-20’	21-30’	6	RW: m
R	Aa’tang	-	10ap3	1	-	0-100’	101-140’	141-300’	5	RW:m
R	Baschab Repeater – Solid	1,850	20ap2	1	7	0-40’	41-90’	91-120’	5	RW: m
R	Baschab Repeater – Shot	1,850	14 to 6ap1	1	7	0-10’	11-20’	21-30’	5	RW: m
VR	Baschab Repeater – Fireball	1,850	12ap1 + 10ap1 in 10’	1	7	0-30’	31-60’	61-80’	5	RW: m
R	Lamako Carbine	1,275	14ap2	1, sb3	20 lb20	0–40’	41–90’	91–130’	5	RW: m
VR	Lamako Carb. – Incen.	1,275	15ap1 + 10ap1 in 10’	1, sb3 lb20	20	0–30’	31–80’	81–110’	5	RW: m
R	Rala Arsinora	8,700	16ap4	1	3	0-15’	16-50’	51-100’	2	RW: s
R	Tisao De RoHun	-	4ap2	1	20	0-15’	16-30’	31-50’	1	RW: s
R	Unst Ploddar	975	12ap3	sb8	32	0-75’	76-150’	151-300’	7	RW: m
VR	Fra Klasta	50,000	8ap4	sb10	80	0-20’	21-50’	51-80’	7	RW: m
VR	Jaseerr	-	3ap4	1	4	0-20’	21-50’	51-75’	2	RW: s
VR	Jaseerr – Triple-barrel	-	3ap4	sb3	12	0-20’	21-50’	51-75’	2	RW: s
VR	Mah’tuad	3,000	33ap2	1	1	0-500’	500-1000’	1001 -1500’	7	RW: h
VR	Makharan	-	18ap3	1	6	0-150’	151-330’	331-660’	6	RW: h
VR	Makharan lance tip	-	14ap3	-	-	-	-	-	6	Melee:L



Common Ranged Weapons

Asard Bolt-Action
Asard Weapon Crafters, Vallunei
The Asard company of the Steel Confederacy, Vallunei, manufactures most of the rifles carried by the Valluneian military and some branches of the police. Well crafted, with simple parts that are easy to disassemble and replace, its ease of use makes it a popular weapon for adventurers who served in the Valluneian military.
Base Damage: 16ap3
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 11
Ranged Weapon: medium
Short Range (–0): 0–125'
Medium Range (–5): 126–300'
Long Range (–10): 301–750'
Encumbrance: 5
500 Flats



V'tloc Guardian
Valluneian revolver
Available for centuries, this sturdily designed handgun has seen use among police forces and adventurers. Its design has remained relatively unchanged in all the time it has been available. It is often copied, but the pistols manufactured by the Armory itself are the finest of their type.
Base Damage: 9ap2
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 7
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–30'
Medium Range (–5): 31–100'
Long Range (–10): 101–300'
Encumbrance: 2
230 Flats

Uncommon Ranged Weapons

Fodorta V9
Ianu Vossan naval sidearm
This is the standard issue sidearm of the Ianu Vossan navy, notable for its tolerance of wet conditions and the corrosive effects of sea water. It is one of the few automatic pistols currently in circulation.
Base Damage: 10ap2
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 8
Ranged Weapon: small

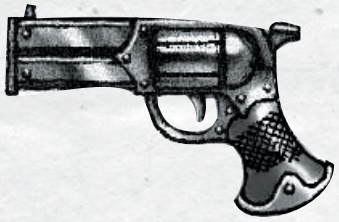


Short Range (–0): 0–30'
Medium Range (–5): 31–100'
Long Range (–10): 101–300'
Encumbrance: 2
675 Flats

Fodorta V10
Ianu Vossan accurized naval sidearm
Often engraved and gilded, this is the sidearm given to officers of the navy; possessing it is a symbol of status, and many are loathe to actually use them in combat. But the V10 was specially crafted for accuracy, and with a longer, rifled barrel and fine balance, it is a marksman's pistol.
Base Damage: 12ap2
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 12
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–60'
Medium Range (–5): 61–150'
Long Range (–10): 151–300'
Encumbrance: 2
900 Flats



Iberta
Edyssian double-revolver
This over-and-under double barreled revolver uses two small counter-rotating drums firing at precisely the same moment. Its special rotary mechanism allows for quick and repeated firing. The Iberta pistol is a favorite of Edyssian adventurers and certain members of the intelligence service.
Base Damage: 8ap2
Rate of Fire: 2
Capacity: 12
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–30'
Medium Range (–5): 31–100'
Long Range: (–10) 101–300'
Encumbrance: 3
680 Flats



Krutzk sidearm
Dominion machine pistol
The Krutzk is well known in military circles as a cruel weapon that is sometimes more harmful to its user than to its intended victim. Without modification, the Krutzk will always fire a twelve-round burst, generating a lot of heat in the process. Its drum magazine carries sixty rounds and has a tendency to overheat, igniting any remaining ammunition. Krutzk side arms that are still in use are often in the hands of mercenaries, and are always heavily jury-rigged to reduce the risk of overheating.
Base Damage: 8ap2



Rate of Fire: 12
Capacity: 60
Ranged: small

If fired on consecutive Combat Rounds (if the character doesn't let the weapon cool down on the next round), an attack roll of "1" causes the weapon to overheat and any remaining ammunition to ignite. This causes 1 point of damage for every round left in the magazine, ap1, to the person carrying the Krutzk.

Short Range (–0): 0–20'
Medium Range (–5): 21–50'
Long Range (–10): 51–100'
Encumbrance: 4
185 Flats

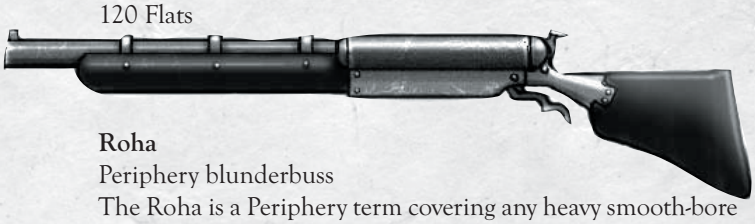
Pottarson's "Farmer's Hand"
Valluneian double-barrel shotgun

This is a commonly produced shotgun found in the rural regions of Vallunei, primarily in the northwest and central regions of the Kingdom.

Base Damage: 12ap1
Rate of Fire: 2
Capacity: 2
Ranged Weapon: medium

When struck, target hit location is rolled twice, with losses of Lethal Wounds divided between the two. If the first location struck is in the upper body, roll 1d10 for the second location struck. If the first location struck is in the lower body, roll 1d10+10 for the second location struck.

Short Range (–0): 0–10' 12ap1
Medium Range (–5): 11–20' 8ap1
Long Range (–10): 21–30' 6ap1
Encumbrance: 4
120 Flats



Roha
Periphery blunderbuss

The Roha is a Periphery term covering any heavy smooth-bore shotgun. A favorite weapon for skirmishes, often between rival tribal groups, its breach load chamber carries only one shell. Out of necessity it has been adapted to fire not only shot shells, but signal flares as well.

Base Damage: 16ap1 to 6ap1
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 1
Ranged Weapon: medium
Short Range (–0): 0–10' 16ap1
Medium Range (–5): 11–20' 10ap1
Long Range (–10): 21–30' 6ap1

The blast extends in a cone, 30' long and 15' wide at its fullest extent. When struck, hit location is rolled twice, with losses of Lethal Wounds divided between the two. If the first location struck is in the upper body, roll 1d10 for the second location struck. If the first location struck is in the lower body, roll 1d10+10 for the second location struck.

Encumbrance: 6
400 Flats

V'tloc Enforcer
Valluneian magnum

Monarch V'tloc's Armory produces this heavy revolver for Vallunei's military. Edyss has also adopted the Enforcer for its homeland defense troops.



Base Damage: 11ap3
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 7
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–30'
Medium Range (–5): 31–100'
Long Range (–10): 101–300'
Encumbrance: 3
830 Flats

Rare Ranged Weapons

Aa'tang
Bhuketi longbow

Lhar has outlawed the use of guns in his land (for the most part, though some slavers carry them). His soldiers are trained with the Aa'tang, a longbow design that predates Lhar's reign.

Base Damage: 10ap3
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: —
Ranged Weapon: medium
Short Range (–0): 0–150'
Medium Range (–5): 151–300'
Long Range (–10): 301–600'
Encumbrance: 5
(no price)

Baschab Repeater
Edyssian carbine

This elaborate weapon has seldom been seen outside of Edyss, as its use is given to the elite members of homeland defense forces. Its long tubular under barrel magazine can accommodate different

types of ammunition, all specially crafted for the Baschab. It can fire solid rounds, shot shells, and the difficult to acquire fireball rounds.



Base Damage: 20ap2 (solid)
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 7
Ranged Weapon: medium

The shot shell ammo does 14ap1/8ap1/6ap1, with range and multiple hit location effects as described in the Roha (above).

The fireball ammo (which counts as a Very Rare availability) does 12ap1 at point of impact in addition to a 10ap1 explosion effect with a 10-foot radius.

Short Range (–0): 0–75'
Medium Range (–5): 76–200'
Long Range (–10): 201–500'
Encumbrance: 5
1,850 Flats

Eshutha Mk III
Ianu Vossan sub-machinegun

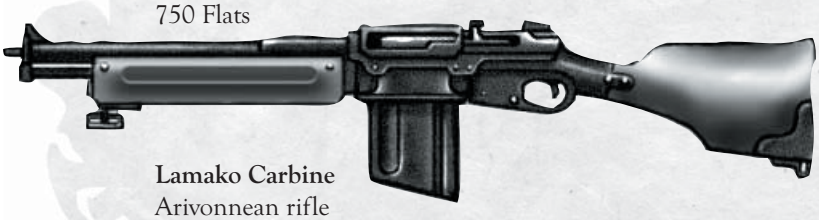
This is the primary weapon of the Ianu Vossan infantry, its boarding and raiding parties. Though considered rather unexceptional, its construction simplistic and prone to failure, it is the only water-cooled hand-held weapon currently in circulation.



Base Damage: 6ap3
Rate of Fire: Short Burst 3
Capacity: 30
Ranged Weapon: medium
Long Burst: 30

On an attack roll of "1" the weapon jams and will not fire until the breach is cleared (a 3 speed action). The weapon will not fire for 2 Combat Rounds after a long burst, giving time for the weapon to cool.

Short Range (–0): 0–30'
Medium Range (–5): 31–60'
Long Range (–10): 61–120'
Encumbrance: 4
750 Flats



Lamako Carbine
Arivonnean rifle

When this weapon was first introduced to Arivonne's armed forces, Ianu Voss took it as an open provocation. When it became the preferred, almost symbolic, weapon of the more militant resistance organizations, Ianu Voss officially condemned the rifle's creator, Edyss. Though Edyss denies this, some believe that the rifle's design came as part of an information trade with Arivonne. Perhaps it is the rifle's ability to fire specially crafted incendiary rounds (harking back to the Baschab repeater's fireball ammo) that gives some reason to think Edyss is responsible for its introduction. Incendiary rounds count as a Very Rare availability item.

Base Damage: 14ap2
Rate of Fire: 1, Short burst 3, Long burst 20
Capacity: 20
Ranged Weapon: medium
Incendiary **Base Damage:** 15ap1
Short Range (–0): 0–50'
Medium Range (–5): 51–100'
Long Range (–10): 101–200'
Encumbrance: 5
1,275 Flats

Rala Arsinora
Ianu Vossan Royal sidearm

This high-caliber revolver is the customary sidearm of the Ianu Vossan aristocracy. Like the Fodorta V10, it is a status symbol and is often gilded and engraved with fanciful designs and motifs. It gets its name from the Knights of Arsinor, but the connection is in name only, as the true Knights prefer swords to firearms.



Base Damage: 16ap4
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 3
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–15'
Medium Range (–5): 16–50'
Long Range (–10): 51–100'
Encumbrance: 2
8,700 Flats

Tisao De RoHun
Talusian air pistol

Though the majority of Talusian assassins prefer to use the Xaopana to perform their kills, some have branched out into firearms, but in true Talusian style. The Tisao De RoHun (translated as "The Final Breath") uses an ingenious set of internal air chambers and vacuum pressure to fire a projectile. Though the velocity is much lower than a typical bullet, and its range limited, it is completely silent and generates no flash or odor of gunpowder. For these reasons, poisoned darts are the most common ammunition used.

Base Damage: 4ap2 (plus poison)
Rate of Fire: 1



Capacity: 20
Ranged Weapon: small
Short Range (–0): 0–15'
Medium Range (–5): 16–30'
Long Range (–10): 31–50'
Encumbrance: 2
(no price)

Unst Ploddar
Ballinorian bolt-thrower

Of all the odd weaponry that has been developed in Ballinor, the Unst Ploddar is possibly the most commonly known outside of its home country. This stout rifle uses compressed air to fire eight to ten-inch long steel spikes. Its ability to fire off volleys, to rain down clouds of steel flechettes, has given it such colorful nicknames as the "scorpion gun" among others.

Base Damage: 12ap3
Rate of Fire: Short Burst 8
Capacity: 32
Ranged Weapon: medium
Short Range (–0): 0–75'
Medium Range (–5): 76–150'
Long Range (–10): 151–300'
Encumbrance: 7
975 Flats



Very Rare Ranged Weapons

Fra Klasta
Ballinorian disk-caster

The Fra Klasta is truly an odd weapon, but no one can deny its effectiveness. Its design has been replicated through the millennia, dating back to the time before the Dolonorri descended from their home mountains of Dorallia to join the refugees. A reinforced wooden box sits affixed to the stock and the long, full-hand trigger. The firing mechanism is of clockwork design and must be wound for it to fire its ammunition. The Fra Klasta fires eight-inch razored disks of Casseonaeum, the super-hard metal found principally in Ballinor. Because of the rarity of this metal and the complexity of the weapon itself, the Fra Klasta is generally found only among those few true-blood Dolonorri left in Ballinor, passed down from generation to generation.

Base Damage: 8ap4
Rate of Fire: Short burst 10
Capacity: 80



Ranged: medium

Each time it is fired, it has to be re-wound to fire again. Rewinding the weapon is a 2 speed action. Because of the nature of its firing mechanism, the character can Spray for half the normal speed cost (3 speed for a 90-degree arc, 4 speed for a 180-degree arc).

Short Range (–0): 0–20'
Medium Range (–5): 21–50'
Long Range (–10): 51–80'
Encumbrance: 7
50,000 Flats

Jaseerr
Kleshti needle gun

Apart from Talus, no other country is more renowned for its assassins than Klesht. The Jaseerr is an assassin's weapon; it has no other purpose. Long barreled and often fashioned from gilded steel, the Jaseerr has either one or three barrels that spring-fire long steel needles. These needles are poisoned, naturally, and travel with such force that they are able to pierce even hard armors, but their range is limited. As it is an assassins' weapon, the Jaseerr is silent.

Base Damage: 3ap4
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 4
Ranged Weapon: small



Triple-barreled version:
Rate of Fire: sb3
Capacity: 12
Short Range (–0): 0–20'
Medium Range (–5): 21–50'
Long Range (–10): 51–75'
Encumbrance: 2
(no price)

Mah'tuad
Ba-Duran long rifle

Famous throughout the realms, the Ba-Duran Long Rifle is renowned for its incredible range and accuracy. This is the traditional weapon of the Ben Sha'oud nomads of Ba-Dur. On the flat desert plains, the rifle's ability to strike a target from nearly a mile away makes it indispensable to the nomads who have to contend with Bhuketi slavers and rival tribes. Though the rifle can only carry a single round in its chamber, in the hands of a Ben Sha'oud rifleman, that single shot is more than enough. Most who fall to the rifle's high caliber round are dead before they even hear the report.

Base Damage: 33ap2
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 1
Ranged Weapon: heavy
Short Range (–0): 0–750'
Medium Range (–5): 751–1500'
Long Range (–10): 1501–3000'
Encumbrance: 7
600 Flats

Makharan
Ianu Vossan royal lance-rifle
The elongated body of this rifle, with its long narrow stock and recessed fittings, is balanced to support the long thrusting blade that projects from beneath the muzzle. This blade is more than half again the length of the rifle itself, giving the Makharan a total length of seven feet. As befits a weapon belonging to the guardians of palaces and aristocrats, the Makharan is always beautifully adorned, even gaudy to many tastes.
Base Damage: 18ap3
Rate of Fire: 1
Capacity: 6
Ranged Weapon: heavy
Short Range (–0): 0–100'
Medium Range (–5): 101–300'
Long Range (–10): 301–600'

Lance tip
Base Damage: 14ap3
Melee: long
Encumbrance: 6
(no price)

ARMOR

Armor Characteristics

Protection
The rules describing the effects of armor on damage taken are listed in the Combat section under the heading Taking Damage.

Encumbrance
This is the value that is figured into the character's overall encumbrance value. If the character is carrying more than twice their Mass in encumbrance they find themselves heavy and difficult to move. For each point of difference between the character's Mass and their total encumbrance they suffer a –1 to all Personal Aptitude related skill checks.

Location
Some types of armor cover only some locations, or have different values for different hit locations.

Limiting Factors
Armor is either flexible or rigid. Flexible armor includes leather or chain armors; rigid is plated or banded mails. Wearing armor restricts the character's movement and limits the use of the following skills: Athletics, Rune Magic, Slight of Hand, and Stealth.
Flexible armors have a –2 penalty to the above skills, rigid armor incurs a –5 penalty. Elite Runemages do not suffer any penalties to their Rune Magic rolls for armor worn. Since Elite Runemages no longer need to use a Stylus to create their Runes, mobility ceases to be a factor.
Helmets limit a character's senses. Light helmets and coifs, or those that only cover the top of the head, do not limit the character's senses. Full helms with an open face, cause a –2 penalty to all Awareness skill tests. Great helms, full faced and heavily armored, cause a –5 penalty.

Custom Fit Armor
By paying double the armor's availabily rank during equipment selection (i.e. 2 C, 2 UC, 2 R, or 2 VR for the one armor), the armor can be specifically fitted for the character. This eases mobility and weight distribution, reducing the encumbrance value of the armor by half. This works only for the character who originally aquired the armor. Helmets and shields cannot be custom fitted.

Built-to-Size
Characters, who possess a mass greater than the encumbrance value of the armor, have the capability to wear armor that takes advantage of their large size and carrying capacity. This increases the encumbrance value of the armor to a value equal to the character's Mass. Each point of additional encumbrance raises the armor's defense value by 2, but not its AV. This doubles the monetary cost of the armor, or increases its availability by one. Shields and Helms cannot be built to size.

REGIONAL ARMORS

Uncommon Armors

Illestani Tactical Tower Shield

This tall shield of strong yet lightweight alloy comes complete with a view-slit and weapon port. This is the standard issue infantry shield.

Protection: 8av2
Encumbrance: 3
Location: Shield block
(80 Flats)

Valluneian Police Armor

This is a jumpsuit of heavy cloth reinforced by leather and armored greaves and bracers. A vest of banded plate, generally sheathed in canvas, covers the torso and abdomen while heavy shoulder pads protect the upper arms. The armor comes included with the standard issue helm composed of layers of laminated cloth over a steel inner shell. Though not customarily worn on a daily basis, times of war force its use as the police are called upon to aid the military and protect against invaders.

Protection: 14av2
Encumbrance: 5
Location: Torso, Ab. Arms, Legs
Helm
Protection: 20av3
Encumbrance: 1
850 Flats

Rare Armors

Ballinorian Plate Mail

More a half suit, this armor consists of a reinforced canvas and leather jumpsuit, over which is worn the breastplate, heavy arm-length plated bracers, overlapping plate skirt, and armored boots to finish. These sets of armor are prized possessions, often passed down along with the family weaponry. If well maintained, they can outlive their owner

Protection: 18av3

Avl.	Armors	Cost (Flats)	Protection	Enc	Locations Protected
C	Primitive heavy pelt armor	50	5av1	3	Torso, Ab.
C	Cured leather hauberk	180	8av1	4	Torso., Ab. Arms.
C	Full leather armor	800	12av1	5	Torso, Ab.
			8av1		Arms, Legs
C	Chainmail vest	325	10av2	4	Torso, Ab.
C	Full chainmail suit	1200	12av2	6	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
C	Reinforced cloth armor	900	14av1	4	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
C	Light plate	1,20	18av2	7	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
C	Breastplate	2,000	20av2	6	Torso, Ab., Arms
C	Full plate armor	5,400	24av2	8	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs, Head
C	Scale mail	600	16av2	6	Torso, Ab., Arms
C	Banded mail	800	18av2	6	Torso, Ab.
C	Light helm	45	8av1	1	Head
C	Chain coif	60	6av2	1	Head
C	Full helm	75	10av2	2	Head
C	Great helm	125	12av2	3	Head
C	Small shield	45	4av2	2	Shield Block
C	Round shield	70	6av2	3	Shield Block
C	Tower shield	100	8av2	5	Shield Block
U	Illestani Tower shield	80	8av2	3	Shield Block
U	Valluneian Police Armor	850	14av2	5	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
			20av3	1	Head
R	Ballinorian Plate Mail	9,000	18av3	6	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs, Head
R	Ianu Vossan Royal Plate	15,500	28av2	9	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs, Head
R	Illestani Battledress	-	18av3	6	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
			25av3	1	Head
R	Talusian Stealth Leathers	-	8av2	4	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
R	Zabador Buckler	-	3av3	1	Shield Block
VR	Ben Sha'oud Carapace	-	16av4	7	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs, Head
VR	Illestani Battlemage Armor	-	32av2	10	Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs, Head
VR	Gogachi Personal Fortress	-	40av1	12	Torso, Ab.
			18av2	2	Head
			12av2	4	Arms, Legs

Encumbrance: 6
Location: all
9,000 Flats

Ianu Vossan Royal Plate

The armor of the Knights of Arsinor, it has also been adopted by the royal guard and other aristocratic, paramilitary forces. Only the finest metals, polished, engraved, and gilded, will do for the armor of a royal soldier. Though its appearance would seem gaudy to some, it is the same armor the Knights of the Code wore into battle when Ianu Voss was first forming, and it is still worn by battlefield commanders. A suit of full plate mail, it comes complete with cape and great plumed helm.

Protection: 28av2
Encumbrance: 9
Location: all
15,500 Flats

Illestani Battledress

This great suit of carapace-like plate armor is made not of metal, but dull-gray ceramic. This makes it lighter and very durable, but the means of its construction is a mystery. All the battledresses that exist today come from the deep armories of the Gondolon fortress cities. Because one may never get his battledress replaced if it is destroyed or lost, Illestani soldiers grant their armor the same reverence and care as they do their weaponry.

Protection: 18av3
Encumbrance: 6
Location: Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
Helm
Protection: 25av3
(no price)

Talusian Stealth Leathers

This suit of specially crafted black leather armor is made in Talus for its assassins. Made specifically for ease of movement, it does not have the normal limiting factors common to all types of armor (see Armor Characteristics above). The armor actually grants the character a +2 bonus to his Stealth skill tests.

Protection: 8av2
Encumbrance: 4
Location: Torso, Ab., Arms, Legs
(no price)

Zabador Dueling Buckler

In instances where a Zabador duelist is not wielding a Zabados in each hand, he will often bear a dueling buckler. This small shield, no more than a foot across, is slightly convex, with a prominent central knob. This buckler is perfect to deflect the Zabados blade, but also to smash and unbalance the opponent.

Protection: 3av3
Encumbrance: 1
Location: Shield Block
Damage: 5ap1
Melee: short
(no price)

Very Rare Armors

Ben Sha'oud Carapace Armor

This suit of plate mail is made from the chitinous shell of the predatory Sh'tam, a large worm-like creature. A Ben Sha'oud mighty enough to defeat one may return with its shell, and have this suit of armor constructed. Backed with a padded robe, the shell's overlapping plates prove highly resistant to damage, capable of even slowing the bullet of a Ba-Duran long rifle. As highly prized as these items are, they are seldom seen out of Ba-Dur, though museums everywhere would love to get a set to display.

Protection: 16av4
Encumbrance: 7
Location: all
(no price)

Illestani Battlemage Armor

This heavy armor is meant to keep the Battlemage safe long enough to cast his combat magics. Beneath the mantle of his station, the Battlemage's armor consists of a heavy overlapping metal plate and leather-backed chainmail.

Protection: 32av2
Encumbrance: 10
Location: all
(no price)

Gogacha personal fortress

This is the armor of the Mamba Brolo. In the case of the Mamba Brolo, the Brides of Valkan, their half-plate armor of two-inch think pig iron is as noteworthy a feature as is their sheer strength and size. Unadorned, simple in construction, this armor is made to fit the large size of the Mamba Brolo, and as such cannot be worn by anyone with a Mass lower than 10, and even then it is a struggle.

Protection: 40av1
Encumbrance: 12
Location: Torso, Ab
Helm
Protection: 18av2
Encumbrance: 2
Location: head
Iron greaves
Protection: 12av2
Encumbrance: 4
Location: arms, legs
(no price)

TRANSPORT

From the humble horse to the newest experimental Edyssian rocket, there are many ways to get around in Zir'An. Vehicles and transports have the following characteristics that describe their capabilities:

Max Speed

This is the top speed the vehicle can achieve. Expert or Elite drivers or pilots can push the vehicle to 120% of its Max speed with a successful Ride or Pilot roll.

Fuel Range

The distance a vehicle may cover before needing to refuel.

Acceleration/Deceleration

The rate at which the vehicle can speed up or slow down per Round.

Maneuver

The degrees a vehicle can turn in one direction per Round, rated as Perfect (hovering 360°), Excellent (180°), Good (90°), Average (60°), Bad (30°).

Load

The maximum weight the vehicle can carry at its maximum speed without taking damage. Overburdened vehicles take 1 Structure point of damage per turn at max speed when overburdened.

Structure

The amount of damage and armor the vehicle has.

Price

The price range of a vehicle given good availability in the area. Rare or customized vehicles can cost two to ten times the listed price.

Mounted Weapons

All mounted weapons are used with the Ranged Weapon: Fixed skill.

Fixed Machinegun: 13ap2, ROF: sb5, lb15, Cap:200, Rng: 100/300/500

Airship Cannon: 30ap2, ROF:1, Cap:1 Rng: 1k/2k/3k. AP round adds +ap2, Explosive round does 60ap1 in 100 ft. radius. Requires 1 gunner and 1 loader.

Airship Antiaircraft Gun: 10av3, ROF: sb10, lb30, Cap:500, Rng: 200/500/800.

Airship Runemagic Bomb: 100av2 in 150 ft. radius.

REGIONAL AIRCRAFT

Vallunean Air Barge

While Vallunei may not lead its contemporary nations in airship design, it is the world leader in airship production. Many of the largest airships plying the skyways, whether they sport an Edyssian, Ba-Duran, or Illestani registry, were designed and built in Vallunei (commonly in the Seven Princes). The Air Barge is a catchall term used to describe any large, rigid hulled airship that features multiple decks capable of accommodating several hundred passengers and crew. Industrial rune magic alleviates weight and adds strength to the superstructure, internal gas bladders provide lift, while 24 prop engines generate the force needed to propel these mammoth machines through the air. Commercial Air Barges ferry passengers to all the major metropolises in the Known Lands, with plentiful lounges, dining rooms, and other amenities to make the leisurely trip a pleasure. Military Air Barges act as vast mobile staging platforms, with internal bays capable of storing dozens of fighter craft and hulls that bristle with weaponry.

Avl. VR

Structure: 1200 (military versions have armored hulls of 45av3)

Fuel Range (mi.): 18,000

Max Speed (mph): 120

Acceleration/Deceleration (mph): 1/10

Maneuver Class: Bad

Load (lbs.): 200,000

Price (flats): 10 to 20 million

Edyssian Fast Transport

Moreso than any of its partners, Edyss values information and the speedy transfer of information has always been a driving force. This has translated into the Edyssian designed Fast Transport planes, which carry parcels and post to distant corners of the Known Lands and back to Edyss. These sleek planes have advanced greatly since the adoption of Arivonnean aerodynamics and now they are a common sight in airfields throughout the Known Lands. Their speed and sleek lines make them a popular choice of personal aircraft for the world's elite and they may be further modified with pontoons for water landings.

Avl. R

Structure: 80

Fuel Range (mi.): 2600

Max Speed (mph): 375

Acceleration/Deceleration (mph): 40/40

Maneuver Class: Good

Load (lbs.): 3000

Price (flats): 1.2 million

Ianu Vossan Sky Cruiser

While Ianu Voss is world renowned for its navy, and justly so, it is easy to overlook that it also possesses one of the largest and most advanced fleets of aircraft in the Known Lands. The most common sight in the skies above Ianu Voss are the gaudily

ornamented airships known as Sky Cruisers. While nominally part of the Ianu Vossan air corps, the Sky Cruisers are more often used as flying pleasure palaces of the aristocracy. Sky Cruisers resemble in many ways the water craft Ianu Voss is known for, with long prows jutting conspicuously forward. Some even have sails and crows nests. They are surprisingly fast, despite their size, and capable of storing smaller aircraft in its bays, the Sky Cruiser has come to represent Ianu Voss' determination to counter the threat posed by Arivonne's aerial revolutionaries.

Avl. 2xVR
Structure: 1000
Fuel Range (mi.): 4000
Max Speed (mph): 400
Acceleration/Deceleration (mph): 50/70
Maneuver Class: Average
Load (lbs.): 180,000
Price (flats): 10-20 million

Ballinorian Tramp Flyer

Many aviation purists look at each individual Ballinorian Tramp Flyer as a jury-rigged eyesore. But to the Ballinorians, each one is a triumph of individual innovation in areonautical design. Like Arivonne, where tall mountains make travel over land sometimes difficult, the Ballinorians have been building aircraft for many centuries. In keeping with their spirit of individuality and technological innovation, each Tramp Flyer is essentially unique, featuring scores of modifications made by the craft's owner/s. Though each Tramp Flyer can look very different from each other, they all follow a similar profile. Tramp Flyers are medium-sized transport aircraft featuring two, three, or four high-power prop engines. Highly customizable, they can easily adopt ski-slats for snow landings, pontoons for water landings, extra armor plating, and even weapon hardpoints. But generally all the modifications made to it will be under the hood, increasing its range speed, fuel efficiency, altitude, maneuverability, etc. Naturally, the proud owners of Tramp Flyers jealously guard the techniques they've used to augment their craft's performance, but are just as boastful of their Flyer's capabilities. For the owner of a Tramp Flyer, each Finesse Level they possess above Basic in their Mechanics Skill allows them to choose one of the values in parentheses listed below.

Avl. R
Structure: 140 (armored: 20av3, +35 structure for 175 total)
Fuel Range (mi.): 3200 (5000)
Max Speed (mph): 100 (180)
Acceleration/Deceleration (mph): 20/40 (60/60)
Maneuver Class: Bad (Good)
Load (lbs.): 10,000 (20,000)
Price (flats): starting package, without modifications: 45,000

Arivonnean Glidewing

Arivonneans like purity in their aircraft, simple designs that allow the pilot to come as close to the wind as they can and still fly fast and sure. The Glidewing is the ultimate expression of this ideal, consisting as it does of nothing more than a 20' wide wing and a small platform sling that suspends the pilot above it. Runes in the wing provide about half of the lift and small burst-jets fueled with Distillate allow for quick take-offs and sudden acceleration. Almost all Arivonneans learn to fly a Glidewing, and these small craft are the workhorses of trade and transport between the isolated mountain towns of Arivonne.

Avl.: U
Structure: 35
Fuel Range (mi.): 60
Max Speed (mph): 30
Acceleration/Deceleration (mph): 5/5
Maneuver Class: Excellent
Load (lbs.): 200
Price (flats): 12,000 (on the international market)

Pilot Expert: An experienced pilot can keep the Glidewing in the air almost forever by riding thermals and conserving their burst-jet fuel. Fuel Range is the equivalent of 3,000 miles.

Pilot Elite: Maneuver Class becomes Perfect (hovering). Fuel Range is the equivalent of 10,000 miles.

TREASURE

Treasure is the bread and butter of the Adventurer's trade. Part of the natural inclination towards adventure is reaping the material rewards of delving into the world's hidden past. Over the centuries, most minor finds have already been made, forcing modern adventurers to strike deeper into dangerous territories to find their rewards. Gold and other precious metals, gemstones and objects of historical value (if not material value) are all awaiting the adventurer daring enough to find them.

Other items are worth less for their monetary value than the power or utility they provide to the adventurer. These are the so-called "Items of Power." But not all such items are only found in faraway ruins, some can be purchased on the open market, or received from patrons or churches to assist an adventurer supporting the organization's aims.

PRECIOUS METALS

Three metals, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, are considered hard currency on the international open market, and many countries make their coinage out of metals that are inherently valuable. Metals are sometimes melted down and formed into ingots and bars by financial institutions and governments and stored to support an economy of paper notes. Jewelry, ornaments, statues, culinary service and any number of other objects are fashioned from these metals as well, making them inherently valuable on top of their utilitarian and aesthetic elements.

Avl.	Vehicle	Structure	Fuel Rng (mi.)	Max Speed (mph)	Acc/Dec (mph per sec.)	Maneuver Class	Load (lbs)	Price (Flats)	Description
VR	Autocarriage	200av1	120	40/10*	5/10	Bad	3,000	18k–32k	An Edyssian or Valluneian model powered by Distillate. Slow but sturdy. Full tank: 300 Flats.
R	Autocycle	40av1	50	50/15	10/5	Average	300	10k	One-rider Distillate powered 2-wheel motocycle. Full tank: 150 Flats.
R	Carriage & team	160av2	n/a	35	5/15	Average	800	12k	A wagon or carriage with 2 horses or apolai.
C	Pack Animal	n/a	n/a	25	10/15	Average	1,500	200	A hardy animal like the ponko or shabi.
U	Riding Mount	n/a	n/a	40	15/25	Good	500	800–1k	Either an apolai or a horse, depending on if mount is from the Kingdoms or the Treaty.
U	River/Island Ship	200av2	200	35	5/10	Good	8,000	150k	The character owns a river ship, though it may just be a business investment.
R	Sea Ship	500av2	10000	60	10/20	Average	50,000	100k–1M	A medium-sized wind-powered oceangoing vessel, either a merchant or pirate ship.
VR	Small Aircraft	30av1	n/a	60	30/30	Excellent		200	20k–65k A 1-person man-powered aircraft, like the Arivonnean Glidewing. Sometimes uses flight or levitation runes to assist in maintaining lift.
R	War Mount	n/a	n/a	n/a	Var.	Var.	Var.	15k	Mount with barding of appropriate type for its Connections source.
VR	Transport Airship	1200av2	8000	80	5/10	Bad	40k	800k–1.5M	A typical airship is a metal-hulled craft with a dozen rotor blades, that uses runes to assist in lift and maneuverability. Features up to six decks, with dining halls, lounges, staterooms and storage for up to 300 passengers and crew.
VR	Destroyer Airship	3000av3	6000	100	10/20	Average	20k	100M	Air Destroyers are the predators of the skies, usually engaged in warfare or piracy. A typical crew includes 12 individuals, with room for another 12 infantry or cargo. Armed with worked bombs, 2 antiaircraft guns, and 1 main cannon, they also have 2 air fighters that can launch and land from the topdeck.
VR	Fighter Airship	800av3	500	120	15/20	Good	2k	1M	Each air power has one or more models of fighter aircraft, armed with antiaircraft guns and worked bombs. Some replace the guns with a cannon. A fighter crew is a pilot and perhaps a gunner, depending on configuration. Sometimes outfitted with a levitation-rune platform that is towed behind the plane to transport more personnel or goods.

*road/off-road

Metal	Value
Silver	15–20 Flats/oz.
Gold	300–400 Flats/oz.
Platinum	500–600 Flats/oz.

Gems

Class	Value (Flats)	Example
Ornamental	10–20	Agate; hematite; lapis lazuli; moonstone; onyx; peridot; turquoise.
Semi-Precious	100–800	Amber; amethyst; chrysoberyl; garnet; opal; spinal; topaz; tourmaline.
Precious	800–2,000	Aquamarine; emerald; black or fire opal; sapphire; ruby
Gemstones	2,000–100k+	Diamond; jacinth; star ruby; star sapphire.

The size of the gem in question determines its final worth, rated in weight by Carats (0.006 oz., based on the uniform weight of the Chara Bean found in the Southern lands). Each size has an

attached multiplier, which can reduce the gem's starting value by a tenth (for a tiny gem), up to 10 times its starting value (for a gigantic gem).

Size	Multiplier	Carat Weight
Tiny	x0.1	(1/5 to 1/2 Ct.).
Small	x0.5	(1/2 to 1 Ct.).
Medium	x1	(1 to 1.5 Ct.).
Large	x2–5	(1.5 to 5 Ct.).
Huge	x5–8	(5 to 10 Ct.).
Gigantic	x10+	(10+ Ct.)

WORKED OBJECTS

In a world where magic is common in many lands, it is possible to possess objects powered by runes (called 'worked') without actually being a Runemage. In lands where Rune Magic is relatively common, such as Klesht or Talus, Talismans and minor runic objects can be purchased with relative ease, though none are cheap. Worked objects can also be supplied by a Connection. It is not uncommon for a Runemage connection (a church, a Runemage school, or a Runemage associate) to supply the character with a Talisman or two. Worked objects can also be considered Items of Power, and be purchased as Valdreyr.

Talismans

As a resource, all Talismans are considered **Uncommon,** and have a CV of 15 (the maximum of the Talisman's Primary and Secondary Effects). **Rare** availability Talismans have a CV of 20 and can have up to an Expert level Primary Effect. **Very Rare** Talismans have a CV of 25 and can have up to an Elite level Primary Effect. The Talisman's attributes (number of uses, ranges, etc.) are equal to the Finesse Level required to have created it, with specific values determined by the HoF.

Example: A player decides to use one of her connections to supply herself with a Rare availability piece of equipment, in this case a 20 CV Talisman. Normally she can get up to an Expert level Primary Effect, but she chooses Sun Flare, with a 10 CV Primary Effect and a +10CV Secondary Effect: Blinding Flare. The rune Sun Flare has the attributes Zone and Instantaneous. Because the Rare Talisman can have up to a CV of 20, the Talisman's attributes are considered to be Expert. The Talisman has a number of uses equal to the creator Runemage's total Base Value with Rune Magic, in this case 15. The Zone effect of the Sun Flare extends 10 feet from the talisman (also, the character can choose not to be affected by her own Sun Flare).

Talismans can be purchased from purveyors of the magical, but as Talismans can be very powerful devices, few Runemages are willing to sell them to just *anybody.* Among Runemages of a less scrupulous bent, the typical Talisman can fetch 1,000 Flats per CV. This shouldn't be taken as license for the player character Runemage to print money. Certainly, if the player chose to, she could have her Runemage make a brisk trade in Talismans, even growing wealthy in the process, but the HoF should factor in where the character is selling her Talismans, what runes she is imparting, and to *whom* she is selling them. All things can and should have consequences. The business of trade in Talismans is cutthroat, just as it is with any high-priced commodity. Charge too little and expect to anger other Runemages, charge just enough and still face potential competition and even reprisals if the character poaches the market of another merchant. Police authorities in civilized lands will prosecute the creator of any rune that facilitates a crime with aiding and abetting the criminal, even if the Runemage had no idea it would be put to such use.

If acquired as an Item of Power Valdreyr, Talismans have a value equal to the CV–15. So a 25 CV Talisman is a +10 point Item of Power.

Common Worked Objects

Though dubbed "common" worked objects, this is not entirely true. These objects are common in that they are produced by nearly every culture, in one form or another, and can be created with modern methods. Each item will have listed next to its name its availability as a resource (to be provided by a connection), its Valdreyr value as an Item of Power, and its possible purchase price.

Folding Glyph

(Very Rare. +10. 1,500 Flats per CV of glyph rune)

These small tablets are made of a sturdy material, generally metal or marble, and are generally no larger than a Flat. But with the proper command, the tablet will "unfold" into its full size, 3 to 5 feet square. Upon its surface can be inscribed a Glyph of Standard size, with a CV of 20 to 25. Typically the finesse level of the Primary Effect will be Expert, but Elite level Folding Glyphs are certainly possible. Elite Folding Glyphs will be Very Rare, and have a +15 value as an Item of Power. A Folding Glyph must remain stationary for its rune to function, and will continue to function for the limit of its duration or number of uses, after which the tablet becomes blank. A new Glyph, of up to Standard size, can be inscribed upon its surface.

Portable Campfire

(Uncommon. +2. 500 Flats)

This is a simple worked item commonly made of iron that measures a foot to three feet across. By rotating the inner ring, thus aligning the shape of the rune, it begins to generate heat, glowing a hot orange in a matter of seconds. This magically generated heat will cause dry substances (paper, wood, etc), to combust, but by itself can radiate enough heat to warm a small room. If touched it does damage equal to a campfire (see Burning, in Chapter 2: System). It requires a special tong to move the inner ring out of alignment again, deactivating its heat-generating abilities. It becomes cool and safe to the touch in a few seconds.

This runic device has a long life and can be left to generate heat continually for years.

Rune Lanterns
(Uncommon. +2. 1,000 Flats)
These are easily found items in Talus and Harakyr, where the creation of runecrafted lanterns is taken to the realm of art, and lanterns of intricate gold filigree and colored glass can fetch sums in the tens of thousands. But common Rune Lanterns can be found as far as the Periphery and Ballinor, composed of light metal frames housing panes of glass or crystal. In its center glows the rune itself. But more than simply generating light, a Rune Lantern will float close by its owner, following him a couple feet above and behind, radiating its light in a 15-foot radius. Though they can last for years, they are very fragile and will break if struck by a weapon or otherwise subjected to a hard blow or impact with a hard object (1 structure, av1).

Rune Keys
(Rare. +5. 3,000+ Flats)
Customarily, Rune Keys are created to open a specific runic lock. But there are Rune Keys crafted to open not a specific lock, but any lock. When employed against a non-magical lock, the bearer can make a Security skill test, and unless the test results in an Instant Failure, the lock is opened. Simple, common locks open instantly but the more complex the locking mechanism, the longer the process takes. Complex combination locks or standard Dolonorri-keyed locks take 3 Security skill tests to open, rolling once every minute. Rune Keys have no such affect on Runecrafted Locks.

Worked Locks
(Common. +2. 300 Flats)
Using runes to create unbreakable locks is one of the oldest uses Ianer have put them to. Without the proper companion Rune Key, nothing will force the lock to budge. Runemages can attempt to unbind the rune of the lock itself, but this is an Elite (25) Rune Magic skill test made after at least 1 hour of studying the worked lock. Runecrafted locks can be augmented with Rune Magic traps. The runic lock as listed can hold a single Target/Instantaneous Rune with a CV of up to 15. Those with a CV of 20 are Uncommon. +3. 500 Flats. Those with a 25 CV are Rare. +4. 1,200 Flats. Worked locks are not bound by mechanics and so can appear as fanciful or mundane as its creator wishes. Its companion key needn't even look like a key. The key only needs to come in contact with the Runecrafted Lock to open it.

Slave Harness
(Rare. +6. varies)
A typical Slave Harness is a buckled set of leather headgear that fits over the entire head and neck. Affixed to it in several places are slave runes, generally etched upon metal or ceramic disks. Once a slave harness is placed over the head of an intelligent being, they is inescapably under the effects of the Slave Rune (see Lesser Runes). Slave harnesses are used to keep slaves docile in transit, but are not generally used day-to-day, except as punishment. Every slaver uses them, purchasing the majority of them from Kleshti merchants. In the Nations of the Treaty, possession of a slave harness is highly illegal, with prison sentences of up to ten years, plus time for slavery and kidnapping offences.

ITEMS OF POWER

An adventurer will be very lucky to come across two or three artifacts, armor, weapons, tools, and mechanisms of magical nature in his career. These things are generally the product of ancient civilizations, powerful modern Runemages or Shadowmages, or even more ancient beings like the Zhalanti, the Ushonu, or the Seven Gods themselves. Those who possess them are ever loath to part with them. Powerful items such as these have a subtle energy that feels good to their users, a sensation that can become addictive.

Items of power are not resources and cannot be acquired in the equipping phase of Character Creation. Purchased as Valdreyr, they have a CCP cost of +1 to +20. Buying Items of Power is difficult for two reasons: they are so rare that any who possess them usually don't want to give them up, and even if they do the cost is never less than 500,000 flats per Valdreyr point value of the item.

Anima Devices (+5)

These have only come recently been designed and developed by Runemages who were also Shadowmages. Anima Devices come in many forms, but all are designed to be easily carried, so canes, staves, rings, amulets, and the like are commonly crafted into Anima Devices. What these devices do is store points of Animus for their Shadowmage owners to use as batteries to empower their magics. An Anima Device can contain up to ten points of Animus. These points must be donated by their Shadowmage owners, who expend them as they would for a spell. The stored points of Animus can only be used to augment spells *after* the Shadowmage has made her Shadowmagic skill test and paid the spell's minimum amount from her own pool of Animus.

Clockwork Rune Engine (+10)

Some of these rare devices have been recovered and reproduced in Ba-Dur under the utmost secrecy, but Bhuketi thieves managed to smuggle a few out of the country. They found their way into the world via the Merchant Isles, and Ba-Dur has been attempting to get them back ever since. These items appear as delicate metal boxes, roughly eight inches tall and three inches deep. Their casing is chased in gold and intricately engraved. Numerous knobs lie inset at various points on the body, and when turned in very



The Shawl of the Daughters.



A Merkulian Dagger.

specific movements, the clockwork mechanisms inside whirr and click as they configure themselves into one of several built-in runes. Typically, the Rune Engine will possess the capacity to create three runes of the same Domain. The runes in the Rune Engine have 30 CV (Maximum Primary Effect of Expert) to draw from, and so one can have more than one Rune active at once. So two runes can operate at the same time with 15 CV each (or 20/10), or all three can operate with 10 CV (if the contained rune has a minimum possible CC of 10). Runes that have continuous effects must be wound first, a 4 speed action, and will have a 15 minute duration and can be activated once per day. Runes with instantaneous effects can be used once per day. Zone effects are a 30 foot radius from the Rune Engine, and Target effects are any single target in the wielder's LoS. These Rune Engines are very delicate (3 structure, av2), and if damaged can only be repaired by a select few found in Ba-Dur and Vandalusa.

Crafted Armor (+1 to +10)

Helm: 20av3(+2)
Arm:15av3(+1 per arm)
Chest & Abdomen: 15av3 (+4)
Leg: 15av3 (+1 per leg)
Complete Set (+10)

Made in a variety of styles and materials, armor that has been enchanted with permanent runes to strenghen and preserve it is rarely found in complete sets outside of noble and military circles. Even in bits and pieces, this armor is highly coveted by Adventurers and mercenaries for its effective protection. Runecrafted Armor has a 3 encumbrance no matter how many pieces are worn..

Crafted Blade (+3 to +6)

Dagger: 4ap3 (+3)
Longsword: 8ap3 (+5)
Halberd: 12ap3 (+6)

With permanently etched Runemagic all over the metal, wood, lether, and precious gems that make up these melee weapons, all provide a bonus of +3 to their weilder's attack rolls. They can also damage immaterial things like Shadekin and undead normally immune from such things. These weapons are always named, and are considered highly regarded heirlooms that will be sought after by their original owners and/or their kin. Runecrafted Blades have half the normal Encumbrance of their type.

Crafted Pistol (+5)

10ap3, capacity 6, range — s:0–60 m:61–90 l:91–200, +2 to hit

This handgun is of an exquisite quality, silver-plated with powerful runic enchantments that enhance its range and accuracy. It can withstand firing rune-enhanced ammunition, of which four different types can be found. Rune-enhanced ammunition can be bought with CCPs at the below cost for one reload (6 shots) of the ammo type.

- **Piercing Ammunition (+2):** Adds +2 AP value to the attack.
- **Exploding Ammunition (+3):** Damage is done in a 10' radius to the target.
- **Seeker Bullets (+4):** Allows the user to pick the location of a successful shot without requiring an expenditure of Successes.
- **Ghost Bullets (+5):** These bullets must be loaded while the user has the target in their LoS. For the rest of the combat scene, these bullets will ignore cover, passing through any non-magical substance to hit that target only, including armor, walls, concrete, etc. The user must still roll to hit normally, though they will certainly gain bonuses for surprise if the target thinks they are safe.

This pistol has Encumbrance 1.

Drandlur's Poultice (+2)

Appearing across Zir'An in a variety of ways, this Item of Power is usually a salve, ointment or oil that heals a wound when applied to it. The Poultice recovers all Vitality when applied and restores 1d10 Lethal Wounds to a single location but cannot restore severed limbs or regenerate tissue.

Elixir of Ylar (+1)

A Zhalanti concoction that looks like a shimmering liquid that seems to have runes floating about in it that eliminates any Rune Magic Fatigue a Runemage currently suffers when consumed.

The Fists of Xu (+5)

This Item of Power is actually 10 large gold rings that fit over the knuckles and finger-joints of the wearer. Crawling with miniscule runes, a martial artist gains +2ap2 to their Unarmed attacks when wearing them. They are heavy, however, counting for 3 Encumbrance. It is said that the many sets of the Fists were made by a crew of rebellious gold miners in the mountians of Bhuket who were enslaved by Lahr's forces. They used them to beat their guards to death and escape, and the Fists were scattered across Zir'an when the escapees returned to their homes.

Sevenstone objects

(+6 for small weapons or light armor to +12 for large weapons and plate armors)

Sevenstone is a glistening white stone similar in appearance to the palest marble. It is originally of Zhalanti origin, but over the millennia, numbers of objects made from Sevenstone have fallen into the hands of the Ianer. And since Sevenstone never ages, some objects can be a hundred-thousand years old if not

older. Sevenstone is very light weight, and will float on water, but it is also nearly indestructible and highly resistant to magic. Normally, Sevenstone is fashioned into weapons or armor. Weapons made from Sevenstone have their AP value increased by 2, while armor will have its AV increased by 2. Such weapons and armor cannot be broken save by another Sevenstone object, and so are immune to the Special Combat Finesse Effects: Destroy Weapon and Destroy Armor. The Encumbrance of such objects is a third of normal.

Light Rod

(+3. +5 for Weapon Grade)

These remnants of ancient technology have been found scattered throughout Zir'An, implying that nearly all the pre-Endwar civilizations made use of them. The Light Rod appears as a short cylinder of a metallic material with complex runes etched into the surface. In most cases one end will emit a powerful beam of light when the rod is twisted slightly. Some Light Rods are more powerful, however, and the item can be adjusted so that the light becomes focused to the point that it will set burnable objects afire or even cut through them completely, even at a great distance. If used often, however, these weapon-like Light Rods soon cease to function, and if any researchers have discovered a way to recharge them, it has not become public knowledge.

Lesser Light Rods will throw bright light in a 10-degree cone to 60 feet for a number of continuous years. Greater Light Rods can do this, plus have the following weapon stats:

DapPV: 5ap5
Rof: 1
Cap: d10+3
Rng: 1,000
Avl: n/a
Skl: Ranged: Small

Once the capacity in the Greater Light Rod is used up, it ceases to function.

Mandala Stones

(+5 each)

Holy relics of ancient make, many have survived to the present day, guarded by their respective churches or in the possession of powerful Runemages and priests. The stones are polished spheres of a milky translucency. Dimly glowing in their centers is the name of one of the Seven. They magically attach themselves to any simple cord and so are often found accompanying other, non-magical, prayer beads that adorn the necks and shoulders of priests of every stripe. When active, they detach themselves and take position in the air above their wielder. Were one to possess all seven, they would form a perfect Mandala, a halo of divinity framing the Chosen who wields them.

Each stone has a different effect, but one they all share in common is granting a +2 CV bonus to any rune scribed by the stone's owner. This bonus is cumulative with each stone possessed.

- **Arroy:** Grants an automatic +5 CV bonus to any Arroy rune cast, but this bonus can only be used to purchase a Secondary Effect. This bonus Secondary Effect does not increase the Mental Fatigue of the rune. This bonus can be used once per day.
- **Drandlur:** This stone is said to contain a spark of life that it donates to its owner in case of near-death. Once the possessor has been reduced to zero Vitality, and has lost all the Lethal Wounds to a critical location (head, torso, abdomen), this stone raises the character's Vitality to 1, giving him time to receive proper healing. It will do this once per month.
- **Hrond:** When spirits, the undead, and even Shadowmages are near, this stone glows with a pale flame. The more powerful the Shadow or spirit, the brighter the glow. This detection ability extends in a 75-foot radius from the stone. The flame will pulse in approximation to the undead or Shadowmage it is sensing, the closer to the stone, the faster the flame pulses.
- **Lyiss:** The stone of Lyiss acts as a continuous Charmed Life rune (q.v.).
- **Paran:** The mandala stone of Paran reacts to the presence of violent thought, especially when it is directed toward the stone's possessor. When someone is planning to do violent harm to the stone's possessor, the stone suddenly glows with a brilliant golden flame, effectively negating the effects of Ambush and Surprise attacks. But even if the thoughts of violence are not acted upon, the stone will still register the presence, though the stone's possessor may not know exactly who is plotting her death.
- **Talse:** This stone is an incredibly powerful aid to meditation. Any Meditation skill test that results in a standard success is automatically converted into a Superior Success.
- **Va'an:** When in the presence of any kind of Rune Magic, this stone begins to emit a soft hum. The more powerful the Rune, the louder the hum. What domain the rune belongs to elicits a different tone in the hum, and an Advanced (15) Lore: Rune Magic skill test will name the domain. The range of this sensory ability is a 30-foot radius from the stone and the closer to the rune the louder the hum will get.

Merkulian Blades

(+8 Dagger. +10 Sword)

Weapons that are encountered as either daggers or swords, the Merkulian Blades were created thousands of years ago in the dreaded Society of Merkulian by their warrior-priest class, the Kuuln. The blades are a glowing green, shedding a dim light that is painful to look at. The blades were created to wound the shadow of a victim, not the flesh. Merkulian blades are very rare as they are prized by those who possess them (most are powerful people and organizations). It is thought that more exist, waiting to be found in the dangerous wastelands of Darkfall.

Attacks are made against the shadow of the opponent, cutting visible swaths through their blackness. The blades pass through flesh without harming it. Much care must be made when wielding these weapons lest one inadvertently wound her own shadow. Merkulian Blades do double damage to Shadekin as well as damaging their flesh (these weapons are one of the only things that Hungering Shadows cannot ingest). The dagger-sized versions are 4ap0, sword-sized Merkulian Blades have a base damage of 6ap0. This damage is done directly to the target's Shadow Derived Stat, ignoring any armor protection.

Those with an Expert Finesse Level in Melee: short, can throw a dagger-sized Merkulian blade and impale a target's shadow, rooting the target in place if they score an Expert (20) Melee: short skill test. This attack has a range of 30 feet. The target suffers 4 damage to Shadow and is immobilized. If the target attempts to move, he must make a difficulty 20 Shadow+Personal+d10 roll. If he fails, he loses the resolve (the pain and terror is felt to the very soul) to tear free. If he succeeds, he is freed, but suffers Shadow damage equal to the original pinning strike.

Portable Room (+6)

A 1-ft. by 1-ft. by 1-in. square made of an unidentifiable rune-covered metal can be unfolded to create a door 5 ft. high and 3 ft. wide that opens into a featureless 10 ft. by 10 ft. by 10 ft. room. The door has a lock and rune-key the size of a playing card. The square can be folded or unfolded only when the lock is locked. The room is airtight with the door closed, though those within never run out of breathble air.

Shadow Prism (+4)

The genesis of these items is much debated among certain circles, but several dozen are known to be scattered through the known lands. They appear as hazy, indistinct prism-shaped crystals, seemingly composed of dark smoke or mist. Their sole ability is to act as receptors for Spirit Bridges. Once a Bridge is established, the Shadowmage can channel his power through the Prism (cast spells, sense the prism's surrounds through a Shadow Song, etc.). Not of much use while the Prism is in the Shadowmage's possession, the Spirit Bridge would allow him to cast spells or travel through the Bridge wherever the Prism happens to be, regardless of the distance that separates them. Nothing, save the destruction of the Prism itself (20 structure av5), can annul, break, or hinder this connection.

Shawl of the Daughters (+7)

This silk & human hair black shawl protects the wearer by emitting a shadowy shield to block physical and magical attacks. It is said that female Tzerte Viazhe make these shawls from the hair of their children, who they sacrifice in blasphemous rituals. Endows 15av5 armor value when worn.

Talsean Incense (+1)

These silvery cones of incense often come in small censers on the ends of silver chains. The incense burns steadily for three hours and while inhaling the fumes of the incense, the memory of those three hours will be stored perfectly within the subject's mind. To recall the stored memories, the subject merely sets another set of incense alight. Inhaling the fumes releases the stored memories with perfect clarity. Such memories can only be retrieved once, so the third time one were to burn the incense, a new set of memories would be stored. Talsean Incense typically comes in pouches of twenty cones.

The Veil of Va'an (+8)

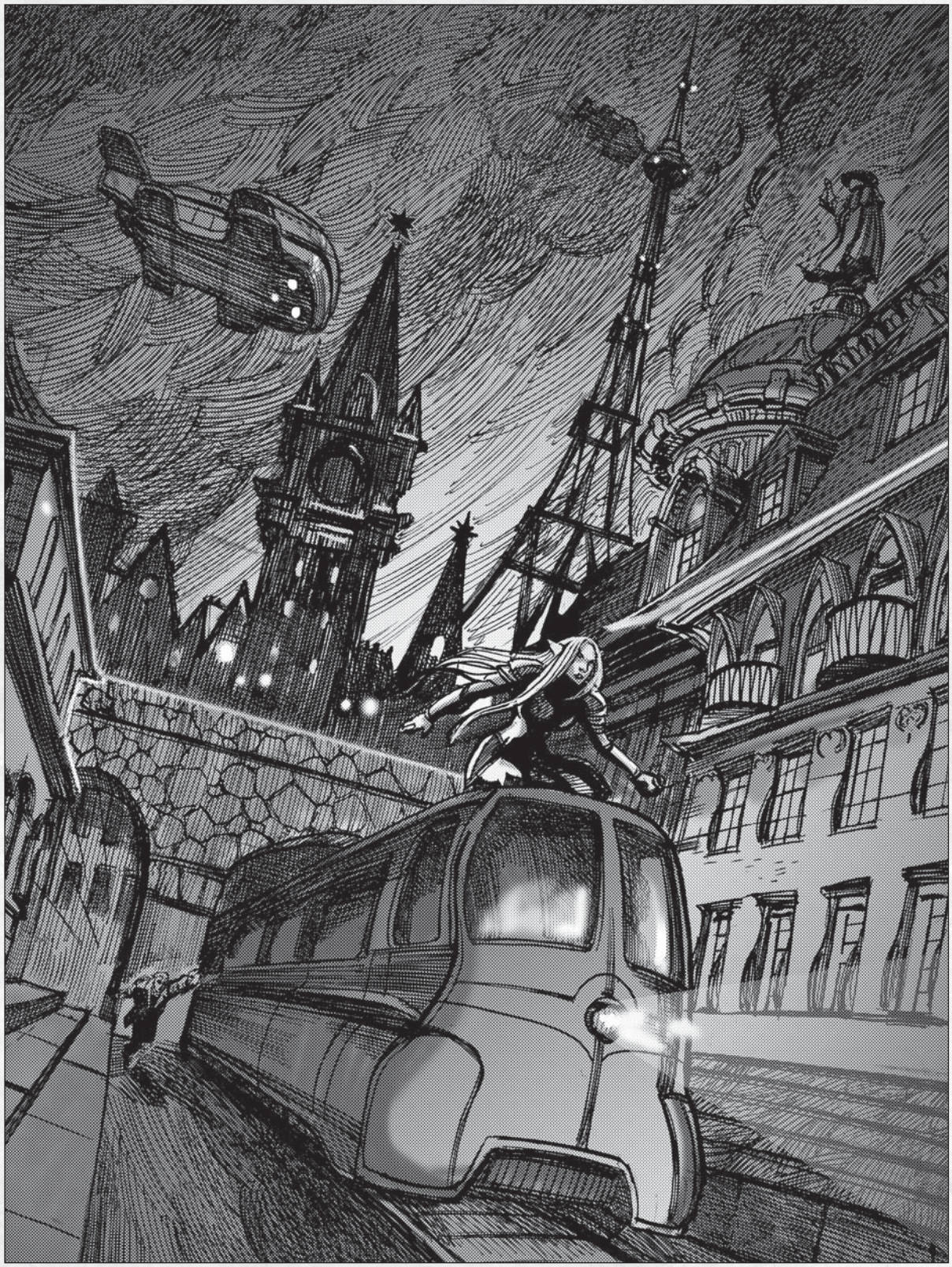
This long strip of silvery fabric is a powerful tool for any Va'anist Rune Mage. When wrapped about the eyes, the wearer is able to see the flow of Ylar through living beings and in Rune Magic constructions. This allows them to see any operating magic with a Basic Awareness roll, and gives +5 to any Rune Magic rolls made by the wearer. Unfortunately the Veil blocks normal vision, so no Runes requiring Line of Sight will work. The Veil makes disrupting existing runes particularly easy, giving +10 to rolls of this nature. Viewing the alien landscape revealed by the Veil taxes the wearer, however, causing -1 Mental Fatigue per hour worn.

Vial of Distilled Soul (+3)

A black, viscous substance that stains the teeth, the Distilled Soul will restore 1d10 Animus when drunk. It is said to come from the tortured victims of the Tzerte Viazhe. The substance is contained in small steel vials.

The White Robe of Talse (+4)

Talsean cultists created this protective robe for use when traveling. A silken garment with long sleeves and a wide belt, it grants +2 to all defensive rolls and 4av5 armor to all locations but the wearer's head.The Robe has Encumbrance 1.



A daring escape by Zellyce from Edyss via the Tevalei Express.

CHAPTER 9

SETTING

THE SEVEN GODS OF ZIR'AN

Arroy, Drandlur, Hrond, Lyiss, Paran, Talse and Va'an. Though The Seven Gods have left, their work is everywhere. Legend tells of the care they took in creating the world, of the aeons of time spent crafting and shaping it. How then could they have gone? The Zhalanti do not speak of their parents, nor why they departed. Only the world of Zir'An and three moons are left to know them by...



ARROY

Arroy is the goddess of Creation. It was Arroy who gave birth to existence, it is from her that all things originate. Arroy is the Goddess of Primal Forces, the energy and matter that compose all of existence. Arroy embodies reality. But Arroy at her most accessible is the goddess of the creative act: art, science, all the crafts and techniques intelligent beings have developed in order to create things in their own lives, in their own fashion.

Common Aspects

Arroy is generally depicted as woman clothed in flowing gowns. Her colors are often white and gold. Because she is associated with Rune Magic, many of her aspects will bear the tools of a Runemage: styli, runing papers, talismans, etc. Because of her role as the goddess of creation and energy, her aspects will often be depicted radiating great fans of blinding light. In some images, her face is obscured by a bright sunlight pouring from her eyes. Others show her with almost common features, with eyes that look down upon her creation in either pride or worry.

Core Beliefs

All things have their birth in Arroy. All things are one within Arroy. All are equal under the eyes of Arroy. Arroy's influence permeates all existence. All things must eventually return to Arroy, to be created anew as a part of the cycle of existence. Nothing can halt the power of Creation. Without Arroy there is nothing. Without Arroy there is oblivion. Arroy is the beginning and the ending of all life, all matter, all creation. The Cycle begins and ends with Arroy.

Churches and Organizations

Many of her worshippers are those who create in their daily lives: Chemists studying the materials she has given us to invent distillate and kluuzhe; Artists who often have small shrines to Arroy in their studios, usually right beside their latest and greatest endeavors. **The Order of Envisagement** are Runemage theorists spending most of their time slightly inebriated in social clubs analyzing the hidden meanings in the adjuncts and nexi of runes, as Arroy is the creator of the Y'lar's dialogue. The **Church of the All-Mother** can be found throughout Vallunei, Southern Edyss and most of the southern empires. Most of the outside religious services provided by the Church are in teaching parochial schools and orphanages. It is rumored that The Church of the All-Mother has come under the protective eye of the infamous criminal empire **the Carousel,** although concrete evidence has never been brought to light.

She is called **Arrouna** in Talus and Harakyr, and although she is pictured as most describe, in Talus she is also seen as a female Meiku panther, of rare silver coat with many kittens nursing at her teats while the red moon of Palligur rests under one paw. Painted on the huts of many Neolli tribal queens is **Oolkug the beginning**, an imposing greater Neolli with a bright fiery mane wreathed in bones and precious stones, her tusks engraved with ancient runes. Bellowing, she casts about the very stars. As suited, the matriarchal culture of the Neolli holds Arroy a step above Va'an. For Thrayceans, the worship of the Seven is heavily rooted in the Canticle. Within that great poem, Arroy is called **Lagovona**, the beautiful queen of the **Vavi**, roguish spirits seen only by starlight. Her skin is like the moon of Arelas and her hair is like spun platinum. She created Rune Magic by transcribing the powerful grumbling of her husband, the ill-tempered giant **Bzyador (Va'an)**, as he slept.

Holidays

The **"Matron's Morn"** is a dedication to mothers and caregivers, celebrated in the Lands of the Treaty and in the Southern Empires. Very similar to Va'an's holiday of **"In Father's Honor,"** the duties of the matriarch of each household are assumed by the father and the children from sunrise to sunset. The **"Carnival of Bright-omen"** is a gathering of bohemians, street performers and other artists which takes place for one week once a year in the Sky-oak Valley of Western Vallunei, although most think of this event merely as an excuse for drug-addled revelry. In Vandalusa, at their Knowledge Vaults, the grand professors hold an awards ceremony called **"Arroy's Light,"** celebrating students who have shown promise in the field of rune and shadow magic. The nominees who win in various categories are given medallions engraved with a portrait of Arroy.



DRANDLUR

Arroy's sister, the power of growth. She who bestows. She who gives Form to creation and Life to all things that live. It is with her guidance that all things flourish. Drandlur gives purpose to the primal energies of Arroy. It is her power that enriches the soil to grow vegetation to feed the stag which in turn becomes the meal on Ianaeran tables. Her breath is the warm vitustide breeze, her voice the calls of animals, her skin the moss and bark of trees, and her anger the typhoon and the thunderstorm. To drink from a cool clear river is to drink from her life's blood.

Common Aspects

Drandlur is one with the forests and the living world and so is often depicted as a being composed of wood or intertwined greenery: a powerful antler-crowned forest spirit. Oftimes her form will incorporate animal features, such as a mass of varied wings, or expressive, watery eyes. Other cultures depict her in an animal form entirely: great magical beasts with clearly godlike appearances. But others treat Drandlur as a bodiless god, or one whose body is all around them.

Core Beliefs

Drandlur's power flows through the veins of all living things. Drandlur exists in every rock, tree, and blade of grass. Drandlur lives within the rivers, the lakes, and the very air itself. All life is sacred to Drandlur. All must exist in natural harmony: the land and those that dwell upon it. Nothing must be allowed to subvert the natural order. All life is interconnected. All that is living must die: the cycle of life above all else.

Churches and Cults

Drandlur does not have buildings erected for the single purpose of worshipping her; she is usually paid tribute by **A'Vanists** as part of the seven as a whole. Drandlur's "churches" are a collection of sects committed to the philosophy of living alongside nature. **The Wishing Tree Society** is a naturalist's collective whose main hub is located in the Kingdom Proper of Vallunei, they hold the Wishing Tree as one of Zir'An's great wonders and pay tribute to Drandlur by exploring the world, sighting and cataloging all species of flora and fauna. They take great pains to study and protect rare or endangered animal species.

The Dasell Essa or "The Children of Dasell" are Rune Mages originating in Mikesh but now found in The Periphery, Northern Edyss, and even, in the case of one hermit, living in the Biasra valley in Ba-Dur. They roam the land mostly protecting frontier outposts from Shadekin raids and other more natural occurrences. Others of note are **Virrda teZembra** "The Evergreen" of Harakyr, the hedonists of **The Wild Ring,** and the ever-entertaining **Mudd Nation Theatre.**

And in Ballinor on tapestries, vases, and on the stain glass on many taverns she is **Viguth Hymuld "Viguth the Wild Blood,"** a behemoth white doe. Although never in pain she is always shown with a perpetual arrow in her right flank, and from her spilt blood arise lush green forests and fields of wheat and hops.

Holidays

Vy'Shin days or loosely translated from LaVas, "Fruits of Our Labor days," is a three-day food festival starting on the 30th of Epistide. Various agricultural guilds pay tribute to Drandlur as cooks, both famous and of amateur standing, show off their culinary crafts. Although vy'Shin is usually held in Edyss, with the local contestants tending to win the over-all competitions, recently there have been quite a few contenders coming from the Vermillion Coast. A gathering of fringe cultures assemble for a week to hold the **"Gala of Enchantment"** near the ruins of Vathalos in the Spice Lands. It is more of a large campout than a carnival, most say, though many nights you can hear the music from many of Zir'An's more experimental performers.



HROND

The Guardian of those who Pass, Hrond is the God of Death and the After-life, Son of Drandlur. Lord of the Secrets, he marks the Death of all things, seeing all of Creation to its natural End. But while he brings all things to their conclusion, he also carries the energy of that cessation to the next life, where That Which is No More can serve a greater purpose. When Drandlur gave form and growth to the living things of Aeneth, Va'an decreed all things must come to their certain end. There can be no progress without completion, no new growth without the old passing away. The Gods assigned the task of death to Drandlur's son Hrond. He was to become the Watcher at the End. He stands ever vigilant at what many refer to as the "Doorway Beyond." Although there are a myriad of cultures on Zir'An and many interpretations of the after-life, most contain some passage of meeting the soft-spoken God of Secrets at the end.

Common Aspects

There are many symbols in common among most, if not all, aspects of Hrond. Ebony skinned, a crown tops his head. Often the crown is of black iron or stone, but sometimes it is a craggy crown of horns... seven horns to be precise. Some say his crown symbolizes secret knowledge, while the beard he is often depicted with symbolizes secrets unspoken. Another consistent features of Hrond is the presence of black hail. Old scriptures describe the falling of black hail preceding the arrival of Hrond's aspect. Some images show him as a robed man forever surrounded in a cloud of black hail.

Core Beliefs

Secrets are meant to be kept. Secrets are meant to be discovered. There will always be secrets. Knowledge that is not learned is secret knowledge. All must strive to learn secret knowledge. Existence after death is the ultimate secret. Only death rewards this final secret. All living beings will die, and their spirits must return to the cycle of creation. To usurp this is to defy Hrond's will. Even knowledge dies, when it is forgotten. When it is forgotten it is a secret once more, someday to be discovered. Even knowledge itself cannot resist the cycle of existence.

There are many churches whose focus is on Hrond. Some pay tribute to the esoteric ideals of the after-life and other to the pursuit of the "secrets" he holds. Even in Klesht, where outright worship of the Seven is forbidden, there is a bastardized persona of Hrond worshipped by many death-cults. One such cult, **The Wayfarers of Last Passage,** is a congregation of Hrondim whose members include priests who work as executioners, funeral directors and ossuary personnel. They often take it upon themselves to counsel families to deal with the loss of a loved one, to perform the last rights, and oftentimes, for those families who are less fortunate, to assist with the burial payments. Some folks whisper of a secret order who reside in the **"Abbey of Darkest Light"** somewhere in Vallunei, although tales of their existence and exploits seem greatly exaggerated.

Many cultures describe Hrond as a guide who accompanies spirits on their journey to the afterlife. The passage is different from culture to culture, but Hrond is always by their side. In Illestan the passage involves being submerged in a pool: those that break the surface find their spirits cleansed of all pain. Those who sink know only the oblivion of non-existence. In Ba-Dur, it is a maze-like olive garden where one meets with their ancestors, friends, and enemies. This journey ends with the spirit's return to Zir'An, where they are reincarnated into a newborn body.

Holidays

Although certain churches of Hrond have quite a few holidays most are not recognized on a universal calendar. **Chuvass** or "Cold Sun Day" on the first Arroy of Veritus is one of the few, as farmers and many shop-keepers in the Treaty nations prepare for the downtime of winter. There is also Hrond's Day during the week when all the seven are celebrated, starting on 19th of Veritus. Hrond's Day is usually a time to spend with loved ones sharing stories of those who have passed. In Ianu Voss, knights who still follow the code of Arsinor shed their armor for leather jerkins as they clean and landscape the cemetery grounds of the common people.



LYISS

Goddess of Fate, Sister of Va'an, she who is Guardian of the Eons. Lyiss is the mistress of the Cycle of All Things. It is her decision when and where all things occur, and when all things must end. Her decision influences all. From where we go when we wake, to whom we kiss goodnight when we go to sleep, she is the weaver of our life. There are many who play their petty political games in the courts of royalty but she is the true kingmaker; not only the ruling king but also those before him and for the generations after him. Everything in Zir'An has a purpose, its influence perhaps as small as shabi grazing in an overgrown field to cultivate the land, or as great as the shepherdess of the shabi finding a baby in that field who will one day claim the abandoned throne of Thrayce. Lyiss tends the ever-growing web of life, adding new threads, disconnecting and reconnecting them by bringing people and events into fate's perspective. It is said that after the dead pass through the Great Hall and their soul is split into seven parts, Lyiss will take three of those parts. One is used to strengthen the web and other two are to be reincarnated into two new lives, unaware of the life they had before.

Common Aspects

Generally depicted as female, her role as the goddess of Fate often sees her carrying the tools of a weaver: spindles, knitting wheels, or even odd thimbles with hooks, and small cutting devices she uses to weave her threads of Fate. As she is the goddess of the moons, the circle is a common feature of her aspects. The circle also symbolizes the cycle of existence. But because of the bonds of Fate resembling a web, it is not uncommon to see Lyiss depicted as a spider, or as a multi-armed woman whose hands reach out to all corners of the web.

Core Beliefs

All are connected. The actions of one can affect many. Everything has its place and purpose. Nothing happens that was not meant to happen. Everything happens for a reason. At the center of all existence is Lyiss. Fate is the lattice upon which all existence rests. One can deny Fate, but in the end her plan will be fulfilled.

Churches and Cults

It is to be expected that Lyiss' faithful are Tilandri fortunetellers, Vandalusan diviners and fatalists of every kind. Considering the fact that she is the avatar of fortune, most gamblers hold her in high esteem. Sailors, pilots and wise adventures say a quick prayer to Lyiss before any journey. **The Archivists of Fate** are a collection of journalists and other literary types who study and record happenings as well as heroes of note. It was they who coined the term, "Fate's Chosen," those "Chosen by Fate.". She also has a strong following in Ianu Voss amongst the Voss Hilzmon who are the premiere influence in the affairs of royal policy. A new guild gaining ground in the Nations of the Treaty are the "Bondmakers," a group of matchmakers. Besides matchmaking they are also relationship counselors, who see Lyiss as their inspiration and figurehead. The Harakyri, with their pacifistic philosophy of the "Web" or Padam, see Lyiss as a small delicate spider named **Xyliaminna,** living in center of the universe with her massive web reaching out to infinity.

Holidays

To the Talusians the gods can be "channeled" by a select few individuals called **Xantos.** One such example was the ravishing **Naris Julliahtta DeGuizmona.** During a nasty civil war, she appeared out of nowhere in the heavily guarded keep of **Grandee Armand Victorio Busao III.** She showed him how to court the four countesses of four feuding families thus uniting the people once more. **Xantoa DeGuizmona Day** then became a day of courting and the celebration of love. A festival of adventurers is becoming the new gathering craze in Edyss simply called the "Progeny," where the adventurers and storytellers come from all around to share tales, true or not, in a weekend long festival. The Madura Journal of Edyss funds the festival and offers many prizes to the most compelling story as well as dedicating an entire issue to profiles of the surviving Adventurers. Lyiss shares the equinox and solstice celebrations with Arroy. Many of Lyiss' soothsayers are seen celebrating under the moonlight hand in hand with the priestesses from Arroy's "Church of the Mother" in groves and mountaintops across Zir'An.



PARAN

The War Bride, the Balance of Strife, The Harbinger of Chaos and the Lover of Disorder. It is Paran who eliminates stagnation, She Who Brings Change, and She Who Tempers Destruction Through War. The Berserker, Daughter of Lyiss. Paran is the spearhead; she is the revolutionary spirit in the hearts of every peasant who would take arms against tyrannical overlords. Behind every hand that grasps for a weapon, Paran is there. She lives in the beating heart of every warrior, lover, and destroyer, speaking through every warcry and scream of battle-lust. It is Paran who emboldens, she who sparks the flames of passion, who drives us to strive, to conquer, to survive.

Common Aspects

As befits a goddess of War, Paran is almost always depicted as a woman armed with a variety of weapons, commonly a spear, adorned either in segmented armor, or whose body is in fact the armor itself. Always towering, always grimacing or bearing curved tusks, she is wreathed in all the symbols of war and strife. Other cultures attribute a more noble aspect to her persona, granting her the form of a glorious, honorable warrior-woman who leads the armies of just causes.

Core Beliefs

Existence is change. Chaos is the harbinger of change. Life cannot exist without change or it will stagnate. Any meaningful change is not without hardship or strife. Violence is the most effective tool of change. To deny your violent nature is to deny your true self. Passivity is a sin. It is our emotions that compel us to fight for change and so they are our most important gift. Nothing propels change more powerfully than the emotion of desire. Peace is the absence of desire and so Paran abhors peace.

Churches and Cults

With the many skirmishes and feuds that litter the face of Zir'An, it is a given that a soldier or war-priest will offer up a prayer to Paran. But churches dedicated to the Berserker queen exclusively are somewhat rare. In Illestan is the **Duguth hos Mogda,** "the Blood of the War Bride," who worship Paran alongside Kah the Avenger, who they believe is the only Ianer child born from Paran. The fringe group: the L.A.O. of Arivonne, often make reference to **Paradannia,** the Erimani name for Paran. Several of their revolutionaries carry talismans of Paran when going on clandestine raids against the Ianu Vossan government. The Galliosi Canonicals say that it was Paradannia who taught the first Galliosi monks to make their sacred blade, the Tosh. According to the Koba pantheon of Bhuket, Paran is not the chaotic warrior of others' legends. She is a slight maiden called **Chui Woon Yin,** who is always seen wrapped in the voluminous embroidered robes of royalty. Sitting upon the head of a mountainous golem made of bamboo, she sings "The Serenade of Warfare," an aria of great legend. It is said that those warriors who can recite it will receive a blessing from the maiden of Yin.

Holidays

Paran does not have many recognized holidays, but the churches of the Seven and the people in mass hold her in celebration during days of independence and historic battles. One such holiday is the 32nd of Mittach or "fall of the brothers Galrudai" and 10th of Beltine, which marks the end of the Fane Wars. Of course there is Paran's day during the international Seven Gods celebration, which typically holds an all day and night martial tournament. The festival changes location all across the Treaty nations. People speak of underground vigils in Cyroon centered on Paran's fighting spirit. Called "*Gup Doonk*" or "Just Desserts" it is held once a month with the hopes that Lord Cyroon will one day beat Mirkule about the head and the Cyrooni will take their rightful place as rulers of the world. So far they haven't had much cause to celebrate.



TALSE

Brother of Paran, the Bringer of Peace, the Settler of Souls. Talse is the Calm Waters, the Banishing Power of Unity, Trust, and Peace. Talse is the Balance of Paran, seeing that All of Creation does not fall to disorder. Where Talse would build and see order through to Stagnation, Paran undoes to create Chaos. Where Paran would destroy all and leave nothing, Talse undoes to create Balance. Although the ideology of Talse is that of pacifism, being Paran's brother lends to a bit of aggression to his methods. If Paran is the warrior's sword stroke, then Talse is the mind guiding the blade. In Talsean philosophy, should conflict fall to violence it can always be dissolved with diplomacy or, if need be, cunning. Even during times of strife the Talsean mindset that an open hand pushes open all doors, is appealing to quite a few Ianer, especially to the Vandalusans. Their security seems to have perfected Talse's "Offensive Pacification" runes, keeping at bay those who wish to plunder instead of learn at their magic institutes.

Common Aspects

Talse is often pictured as a bald, comely young man with a large sea opal embedded on his forehead. His soothing voice and slight smile have been said to be the only thing to calm his sister during one of her many destructive moments. Out of all the Seven he is the one most illustrated wearing an average man's clothing and stature, conveying a sense of equality between the divine and the disciple.

Core Beliefs

It is the duty of all to seek enlightenment. To not do so is to waste the gift of intellect that Talse has given. Strive to perfect your talents. To not endeavor is a sin. Without peace there can be no enlightenment. Peace cannot be achieved without enlightenment. Strive to discover truth in all things, to create order from chaos. The reasoning mind is our greatest gift. Seek to live in harmony with others. Avoid conflict when possible and seek a peaceful resolution to all situations.

Churches and Cults

The **Tor Vudao of Harakyr** honor Talse, they spread his message across Zir'An by healing whomever needs it. Choosing to be politically neutral, they are found in the Nations of the Treaty as well as small towns in Ianu Voss. Traveling alone, the Tor Vudao believe the peaceful words and runes of Talse will see them through the bleakest of situations. Even on the Merchant Isles, which a good portion of Zir'An view as an unorganized group of cutthroats, they show a genuine affection for Talse. Offerings are made to the Calm-Bringer in order to insure productive meetings between the Pirate Princes. A group that, although not altogether religious, credit Talse's ideals as the reason for their existence, is called the **Founding.** Kindred souls, they are ambassadors, translators, and culturalists, an international union of treaty makers. They spend part of their time studying and analyzing civilizations past and present, and Founding members had a hand in formulating the pact that forged the Treaty Nations. In that pinnacle of civilization Edyss, there is the **"***Dupol Mon***"** or "Of Subconscious Attainments," a society of Runemages that studies the powers of the mind as governed by Talse's domain. To date they have made tenuous but determined strides to further the domain's power. Although they do refer to each other as monks they do not follow the stereotype of the secluded men in a monastery. Instead the Dupol Mon have a luxurious and well-appointed learning center located within the Universitei d'Yssien.

Holidays

The holidays of Talse are days of peace and introspection. He shares the 10th of Beltine with his sister Paran. Though the end of the Fane wars were achieved through use of force the day also signifies a time of peace and freedom. The *Hichdwyn Brun* or "Watchmen in Green" are a famous sect of wandering Talsean peacemakers. They gather once a year in the Western Provinces of Vallunei and hold a small festival. They invite all churches of every order to the meeting as a way to instill unity between all faiths.



VA'AN

Father of all, Husband of Arroy. Va'an is the Shaper, the Creator of All Things. It is Va'an's duty to dictate the Order of Creation, the Law of Creation, and be the Judge of Creation. He is the King of the Celestial Court. Where it was Arroy from whom All Things Sprung, it was Va'an who Created the Boundary. Va'an who created the Laws which all must Obey: his power over Drandlur being How Much Things May Flourish; his power over Hrond being How Things Must End and the Duties of All Entering the Afterlife; his power over Lyiss being the writing of the Laws she must Obey in the setting of the Cycle; his power over Paran being the Method of her Chaos; his power over Talse being the Method of his Order.

Common Aspects

Va'an, the king of the Celestial Court, is always depicted in impressive forms. Often of titanic proportions, with skin made of segmented bronze, gold-veined stone, or other improbable compositions, he bears the crown of his station and the mantle of a king. Many cultures have depicted him with four arms, each of which bears a tool, such as a scale or a stylus. As Va'an crafted the rules of existence, scrolls that symbolize the rules are a large part of his aspect. Often the scroll will be held in one of his four arms. Va'an will sometimes be shown accompanied by retainers, both of Ianeran form and mythical animals. A menagerie of different fabulous beasts has been a part of Va'an's aspects since long Epochs past.

Core Beliefs

There can be no existence without order. Existence has rules that all must obey. There is no escaping from Va'an's influence. All must be willing to take responsibility for their actions. To act when no one else can. To never allow something to remain undone. We are the stewards of what we create.

Churches and Cults

Va'an is not only the Patriarch of creation but also the supreme judge of the Seven. He is quite popular amongst barristers, judges and other public officials. Almost every one will have a small shrine to him in their office, for although an official should have the ability to weigh cases presented to them, a little divine guidance doesn't hurt. The tradition of passing skills from father to son is no more prevalent than in Ballinor where the **Church of the All-Father** is its religious mainstay. Besides Ballinor, the church is also popular in Western Vallunei, the Steel Confederacy, Northern Edyss and even Ba-Dur. A dreadfully unfortunate offshoot of the all-father church is being incorporated in Bhuket and some areas of the Inabi States. Called the **Sunlit Mountain,** they seemed to be nothing more than a misguided cult substituting the tumid Fane Lhar for Va'an. They are given their freedom of worship within Kalishan, within reason, for they seem about as thick-witted and harmless as the Drakenwatch.

Holidays

Most every major holiday has some reverence to Va'an in one way or another. "In Father's Honor" is a day of rest for fathers in most countries. It is quite popular with men whose occupation is manual labor, as the families take over the jobs to experience the father's daily duties (a variation on Matron's Morn). **Ludo niPepios,** or "Celebration of the Benefactor," in Harakyr and Talus is a four day gala to honor the heads of all the guilds.



KAH

Kah the Liberator. Kah the Defender. Kah the Avenger. Kah is the newest god with large numbers of worshippers. He is not one of the Seven and represents a departure from the old religions and their reliance on Runemagic as a way to commune with the divine.

By many different aspects is he known throughout the Nations of the Treaty. Kah, the only Fane of noble heart and actions, is the sworn protector of the Treaty. It is by threat of his return that the Hegemony and the other Fane lords have remained hidden behind their borders. And so the people of Vallunei praise the name of their savior and guardian, and pledge their faith to his might.

Common Aspects

How Kah is envisaged differs depending upon what branch of Kah faith one is following. Sometimes shown as a simple, kind man adorned with nothing but a smile and a monk's robe, other images of him portray the warrior side of Kah's legend. Armored and wielding his famous blade, Foe Binder, Kah will be pictured vanquishing Mirkule with the blue flame of his blade. In all his aspects, however, he is shown as a bald man bearing snow-white facial hair.

Core Beliefs

Safeguard the lives of the innocent. Protect those who cannot protect themselves. Champion the cause of freedom. All deserve the right to forge their own destiny. Aid those in need. Never let an injustice go unchallenged. Value loyalty, honesty, honor, and fellowship.

Churches and Cults

Each church of Kah reflects a particular aspect of him. In Vallunei, the Church of Kah the Peacebringer renders aid to the homeless and needy, donates its time to worthy causes, and renders healing to the sick and injured. In Illestan, the Avasanti worship Kah the Avenger, the warlike slayer of the Fane aspect of Kah. But the majority of people worship Kah in his more gentler forms: Kah the Guardian, Kah the Merciful, Kah the Liberator. The worship of Kah is most prevalent in Vallunei, but is slowly finding adherents in Arivonne, Talus, and even among the Galliosi, who can easily relate to much of the Kahian philosophy.

Holidays

In the Nations of the Treaty, the month of Kahthas is devoted to giving thanks and praising the name of the great savior, Kah. For the entire month, various nation-states, cities, and other organizations, formulate their own cultural celebrations in the name of Kah. In Vallunei City, the entire last week of Kahthas becomes one massive carnival, where the city streets are festooned with colorful banners, music and the sounds of the revelers fill the streets until the wee hours, and the Wishing Tree is lit up with colored lights.


The Boundary Waters
The Tilerian Empire
The Anamshar Ocean
The Duchy of Barren Moor
Darkfall
Dorallia
Klesht
Illestan
Thrayce
The Dominion of Drakan
Nëoll
Cyrbon
Mikesh
The Kingdom of Vallunei
Vandalusa
Bhuket
Edyss
Ba-Dur
Talus
Ballimor
Thallysia
Dharsus
The Merchant Isles
Sea of Anjur
Sea of the Seven Gods
Harakyr
The Fire Reaches
Ianu
Voss
Arivonne
Gallios
The Sea of Dreams
The Periphery
Map Key
500 miles
1000 miles
1500 miles
National Capital
International Border
Nation-State Boundary
Main Rail Line
(with secondary rail hub)

ZIR'AN GEOPOLITICA

PEACE AFTER THE FALL

The current political situation in Zir'An has stabilized over the thirteen centuries following Kah's crusade against the Fane. Only a few of these beings remain, and the nations controlled by them form the most generally aggressive and hostile forces in the international landscape, mostly in the far North and East. Keeping the Nations of the Fane in check are a collection of states who fight constantly to maintain their borders against Fane military incursions. Nations located to the south of this constant conflict, buffered from direct contact, fall into a mixed bag of Treaty allies, neutrals, or colonial powers. Scattered everywhere are nations with no formal government that, due to isolation, dangerous inhabitants or unnaturally hazardous environments, are not claimed by any power.

THE NATIONS OF THE TREATY

The Treaty of Vallunei united some of the greatest nations of Zir'An, forming the most powerful alliance in the known world. The Treaty may have never been created had it not been for the benevolent Fane savior Kah. In the terror of the War of the Fane, Kah arose to defeat Fane after Fane, freeing lands held under their control. Those freed joined Kah in his pursuit to destroy the Fane menace forever. Through modern day Vallunei, Kah and his growing legions pushed the Voivodh back beyond his borders, chased Lhar's forces all the way to the Mantu Mountains, and returned peace to the land. Kah consolidated the leaders of Ballinor, Edyss, and Illestan to form the Treaty of Vallunei. The pact was signed beneath the Wishing Tree, which now stands as the centerpiece of the Valluneian capital and as a living testament to the unbreakable bond of the Treaty.

The Treaty exists to this day as a force meant to keep the tides of war at bay, its chief nemesis being the Tilerian Hegemony, led by Mirkul's Tilerian Empire. There have been few disputes within the Treaty, but these have been growing in the past few decades. Within the Kingdom of Vallunei itself, a growing desire for sovereignty by some of the Kingdom's states has caused some to worry over the Kingdom's future, if not the future of the Treaty itself. Illestan, while having seceded from the Kingdom, still maintains its part of the Treaty, and Arivonne may soon join in the Treaty's ranks, so the power of the alliance may still be strong.

Ballinor

"We found a land of high cliffs, deep trench valleys filled with a terrible chill and boulders the size of houses. Hardly a place to make a home. But we knew the cliffs could keep us safe from our enemies. So it is a good place to live. And the valleys are deep to trap our foes. So that too, is good. And the enemies do come… to fall from our mountains and drown in our pits. This is our land that we found, and fought, and labored and died for. Every Ballinorean will fight 'till their last breath to protect their homeland… our mountains, our blood. Den ruek zhu vehin, ourm lestetz mas farhrer zehin — *"The mountains do laugh, for a small man goes among them."*

— Olaus Kleist, Farmer, Douchtal District, southern Ballinor

History

This land of mighty mountain ranges and deep sheltered valleys was inherited by survivors cast adrift by the Endwar. Ianer from the west would come to encounter a similar group of Dolonorri, fleeing their own devastated homeland, and together they would combine their strengths, fighting dearly to survive the years of darkness.

But survive they did. Their ordeals had created a resilient people, who forged a great nation from the inhospitable granite peaks of their adopted homeland. The cultures of the Dolonorri and the Ianer would merge to create a nation of hearty individualists, proud and stubborn, with a knack for mining and machinery. But the years of the Fane were especially hard for them and even in the centuries since the Treaty's founding, the Dominion of Drakan has continually been a grim, and often violent, shadow from the north that forever clouds their future.

Culture

In response to the centuries of Dominion aggression, all Ballinorians, of all ages and sexes, are determined to keep their country safe. To this they feel honor bound. Every Ballinorian, at some point in their life, will contribute to the security of their nation, be it in the military, or in the industrial sector, strengthening Ballinor's economy or its defenses from invasion.

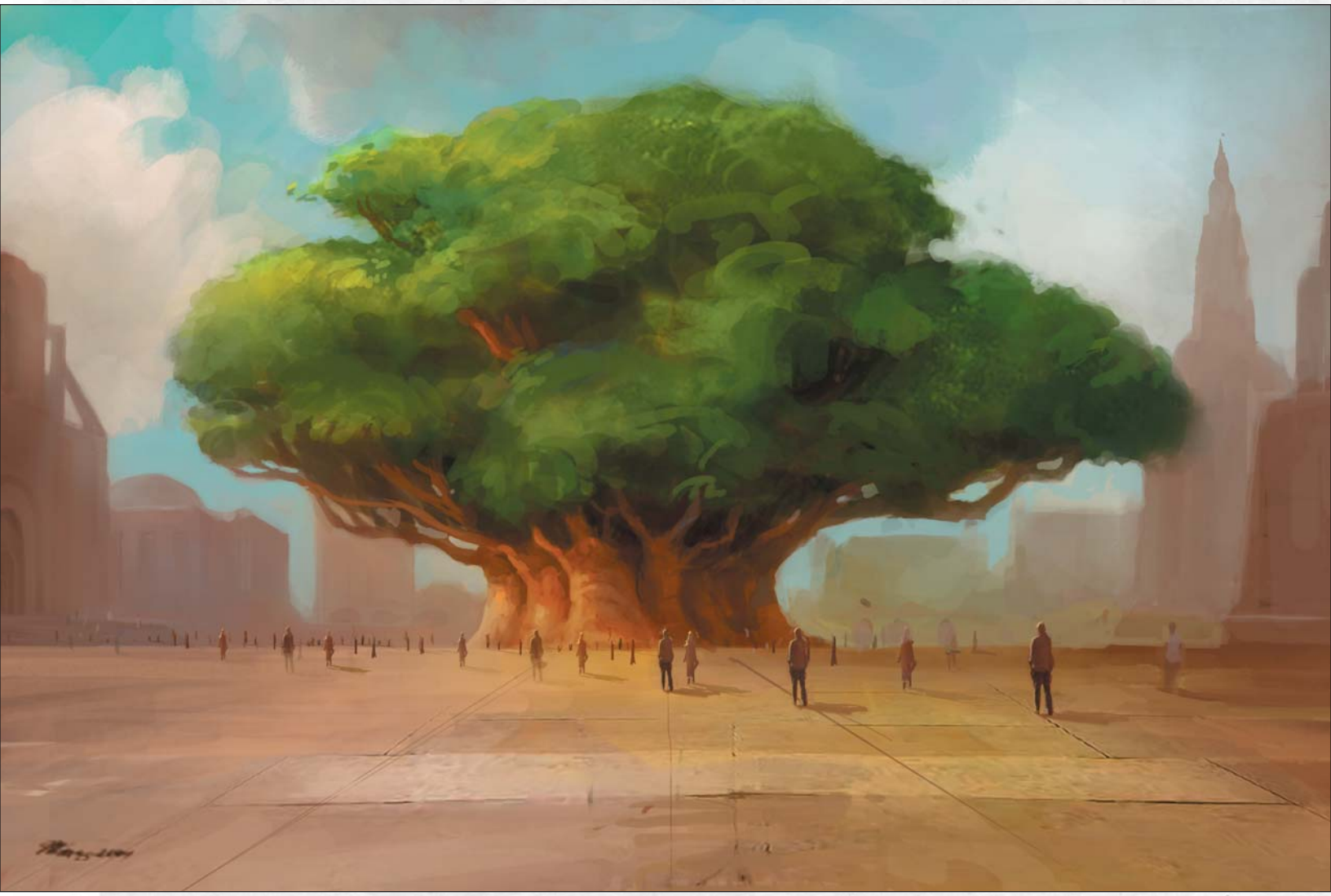
Nowhere else on Zir'An are the Dolonorri and Ianer peoples more integrated. Truly, nowhere else on Zir'An are Dolonorri found in such numbers. Among the few remaining communities of full-blooded Dolonorri, a movement is growing to start a pilgrimage to Dorallia. To some it is a dream of reclaiming the lost homeland of their Dolonorri forefathers; to others it is a quest to discover the nature of their existence and their place in the world.

Religion

Most Ballinorians have shrines in their homes devoted to the Seven Gods. Large-scale public worship is not part of the Ballinorian culture. Churches devoted to the Seven Gods are often small and quiet, offering solace to individuals looking for a proper place to stop and ruminate or pray.

Geography

Ballinor is known for its high mountains and pristine forests. The weather is harsh in Ballinor, with few days that are neither cold nor rainy, but hearty Ballinorian folk greatly relish the crisp clean air of snowy nights and the contemplative gloom of the hard fall rains. The mountains gradually slope to the northern



The Wishing Tree in Vallunei.

Ballinorian plain bordering the Dominion.

Ballinor's capital, Gravenwald, lies in its center, on the Anchor River, which feeds into the Ananshar Ocean to the East. Gravenwald is the largest, most heavily populated city in Ballinor, which unlike most of Ballinor's cliff hugging towns deeper in country, lies sprawled out upon a vast fertile valley, nestled between the high Valdschtaal Mountains. It is Ballinor's cultural, political, and economical center, where the King, Woulvan Remus, presides.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in. – 5ft. 9in./ 150- 185lbs.

Eye Color: Blue & Teal Green.

Hair Color: Dirty Blonde to Light Blonde.

Skin Color: White to Light Tan.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Average Descriptions for Dorralians can be found in the Races, Chapter 4.

Edyss

"There is a unity of purpose in all Edyssians that is hard to express to those not of our country. The Endwar showed us that those beliefs that our ancestors fought for, those ideals of community and direction were true. We as a people struggled together to rebuild… time and again, to create the society that survives to this day… that may survive long into our future. Is it not the goal of all Ianer to work toward a world united in peace? Then why are so many resistant to such a goal? I do not know… in Edyss, things are simpler, you do what your heart and mind tell you, and if you listen close they will tell you to embrace your brethren and put down your weapons, to look forward to a future free of strife. That is a profound need within us all."

— Anonymous yet enthusiastic student on the Edyssian Capital Line train to Villeanesband

History

From across the Boundary Waters came the people of the lost nation of LaVansien. In a vast rag-tag fleet they came to settle lands shorn of life by the Endwar. Carrying with them the greatest visionaries of their culture, they crafted a nation unlike any other, where a communal spirit shared by all propelled them into a prosperous future. But then the Neolli came. Vast hordes cut bloody swaths through Edyss, laying to waste their glorious nation. They fought long to reclaim their lands, only to lose them again when the Fane arose to terrorize the world. But this Nation of Thinkers came to be instrumental in Kah's Liberation; their visionary ideals laying the foundation for the Treaty.

Culture

The culture of Edyss is fashioned around the philosophies put forth over three thousand years ago by their founder. Edyss is highly adept at social engineering. From the moment they are born, Edyssians are closely tutored and their development thoroughly monitored to ensure that the child will grow into a highly functioning member of society. They stress the need for social responsibility and dedication to the principals of the state.

The pursuit of knowledge is a major driving force in Edyssian society. "Our Eyes to the Future" is a common, if clichéd, expression that is heard far too often. But one cannot deny the results. Edyss has secured its position as a world superpower: powerful, peaceful, and prosperous.

Religion

Though Edyssians seldom speak of their ancestral homeland LaVansien that lies far across the Boundary Waters, it is known that the civil war that sent the settlers east came from a rift between the secular and religious elements in their society. Edyssians do pay homage to the Creators, but their true religion is *Socialete d'Yssien*, a brand of philosophy that emphasizes devotion to the mass cultural ethic of social responsibility, self-improvement, and the rule of law.

Geography

Edyss is a land of rolling low mountains and lush green forests. Its high average yearly rainfall makes it green most of the year. Edyss is also considered one of the most beautiful lands. The cities of Edyss are clean and large, accommodating huge parklands and inner-city forests. In the north, where Edyss borders Neoll, the great Vramarg swamps begin; the home of a more robust breed of Edyssian. Mysterious and mystical, tough and independent, the denizens of the Vramarg differ greatly from their cousins to the south. Though they still share the same technological thirst for knowledge, their proximity to the hostile land of Neoll to the north, across the swamps has made them a bit more connected to the present moment whereas most Edyssians are always "looking to the future."

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 7in. – 6ft. / 135 to 185 lbs.

Eye Color: Hazel and Light to Dark Brown.

Skin Color: Light Tan, Brown to Ebony.

Hair Color: Reddish Brown, Light to Dark Brown to Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Although hairstyles are relatively individual, those of the military tend to keep their hair in long woven locks.

Illestan

"War in our blood now. We cannot do much but keep fighting. Without us, Mirkule would be standing before the Wishing Tree with an army of gibbering monsters. Kleshti cults would spread from Darkfall to the Periphery. Yes, we die so that the tender flesh of the Treaty remains untouched. So that the nobles and merchants can rest easy in their comfortable beds. Pah! The Kingdom of Vallunei can't face the Tilearian threat without their 'great protector.' They know

nothing; they have no concept of how close they are to annihilation, how close they are to Mirkule's grasp. If we fail, then it's over. Once the lands of the south wake up and realize this, then and only then will victory be assured."

— Captain Umsauva Letche, speaking in the commissary of the Illestani airship **Anvor's Hammer.**

History

When refugees from the Endwar entered into Illestan, they discovered a massive structure left abandoned: huge cities in a single monolith. These were the Arcologies of Ancient Gondolon. As they expanded, they warred with each other over possession of their secrets. Then the Fane arose amongst them. Kah would have his hardest struggle helping the Illestani unite to overthrow the Fane in their land. Even harder still was the task of convincing the nation to join the Kingdom of Vallunei.

Illestan was to be the wall that would keep Mirkule contained, so that the civilized world could live in peace. But when Illestan could no longer stomach taking orders from bureaucrats from both the Kingdom Proper and the Treaty, they seceded from the Kingdom. They remain a part of the Treaty, but they will contain Mirkule in their own way.

Culture

The culture of Illestan is based solely around the military. Each and every citizen is required to take part in defense of the northern border. The Illestani accept their fate as their duty to the peace of the Treaty Nations. They are dedicated to keeping Mirkule contained.

Their society is built around a military hierarchy. They have learned to look at their entire nation as their family, for it is said that all Illestani are orphans, and with an average life expectancy of 36 to 40 years that is not far from the truth.

Religion

First and foremost among the Illestani is the worship of Paran, the goddess of war. Supporting the actions of the infantry there is a large organization of Warpriests and Priestesses of Paran. It is their duty to enchant the weapons of the infantry and also oversee the rites and rituals that govern Illestani religious life. It falls to the Warpriests to maintain the runic defenses of the border, including massive Rune Magic Glyphs of Rebuke the Unnatural that keep the hordes of Shadekin at bay. Should an enemy skilled in Rune Magic shatter these runic defenses enough to create a breach, the Warpriests are always waiting for them.

Geography

Illestan is a barren land. During the Endwar, great tectonic upheavals thrust much of Ancient Gondolon upward, forming a vast cliff face along its southern border that is two miles high in some places. The air is thin and cold and a chill wind blasts across the broken plains of Illestan. Once the fabled Starspear Forest covered much of Ancient Gondolon, but the change in climate killed these towering trees and so nothing green grows now in this scarred land. To build the Fortress Cities, the people of Ancient Gondolon quarried deep trenches into the bedrock. These long, needle sharp rents in the landscape stretch for hundreds of miles, and are often a mile or more across. Many have filled with water, but their sides are sheer and their spans unbridged. They have formed a second line of defense against incursions to the south. With no way across them, any invading enemy would be channeled between them on a long winding course. The Illestani have carefully planned strategies built around where an enemy force would have to move to make it around these deep trenches.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 8in. – 6ft. 2in. / 170 to 210 lbs.

Eye Color: Dark brown to black.

Skin Color: Pallid white.

Hair Color: Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

The Kingdom of Vallunei

"We address you, good folk of the Kingdom, with an open heart and pure spirit.This day we call upon the inner light of Kah that burns within all right-minded Ianer for an important task. We, the rightful King of Vallunei, Artuan the Thirty-Eighth, mandate the immediate liberation of all slaves and declare illegal and unlawful the activities of slavery! We as a people will march into the third millennium after the Endwar with a clear conscience and the knowledge that we are the most civilized nation in Zir'An. In this, the second century after the signing of the… "

— His Majesty King Artuan XXXVIII, Sire of the Kingdom, Light of Kah, Grand Knight of the Wall

History

Where the single, unified Kingdom of Vallunei now stands, there once were dozens of disparate and warring Nation States. Some naturally sought peaceful relations with their neighbors, but many more still had dreams of expansion into new territories. The bloody history of Vallunei still reverberates in the relations among the Nation-States to this day. Vallunei had the unenviable position as host of the greatest number of Fane to arise during the Second Darkness. In the modern era, these reviled names live on in countless stories, but it is the name of a single Fane that carries the greatest weight in Vallunei, that of Kah, the Liberator who destroyed the Fane who had ruled for nearly six centuries. Because Kah first arose in Vallunei and it was he who gathered the surviving leaders together under the Wishing Tree to write out the framework for the Treaty, the worship of Kah is most prevalent here. It has defined the culture of the Kingdom as a whole and been the guiding force behind its vision of a peaceful world, free from the threat posed by the Tilerian Hegemony. Its

mission and enlightened social attitude has put it at odds with Ianu Voss. On many fundamental moral issues, the two cultures differ. Ianu Voss' trading relationships with such rogue nations as Cyroon, Bhuket, Klesht, and the Theocracy of Dharsus have only furthered the ideological divide between it and the Treaty Nations.

Culture

As one would expect, Vallunei's freedom at the hands of Kah has colored the culture that grew up in the post-Fane world. Kah's principles of honor and protection of the innocent underlies the policies of the Prime Chancellery and the Treaty as a whole. There will never be peace while the threat of the Tilerian Hegemony persists, and it falls to Vallunei to ensure that Mirkule never has an opportunity to reclaim his lost territory. The people of Vallunei are justifiably proud of their accomplishments, their prosperity, and their position as the shining beacon of freedom in a world beset on all sides by the forces of evil. A strong feeling of optimism propels the citizens of Vallunei to spread the notion of freedom for all peoples, freedom from Fane tyranny and a strong stance against slavery. But not all in Vallunei is as it seems. Deep rifts are developing between the various Nation States. Many in the south, the Inabi States, the Vermillion Coast, and the Yanush Lands, feel that the more affluent northern Nation States have a disproportionate influence in the Prime Chancellery

Religion

As stated previously, Vallunei is the center of Kah worship. He is their mythical savior and an entire month is devoted to celebrating all that he had done for the Kingdom of Vallunei. But his worship varies widely from Nation State to Nation State. The farther north one gets in Vallunei, the stronger the devotion to Kah. In the south, primarily in the Inabi States, belief in Kah is slowly being eroded; reverting to worship of ancient manifestations of the Seven Gods, such as it was in the days before Lhar's rise to power. But the Valluneians have not forgotten the Seven Gods altogether. While worship of one or more of the Seven can be found throughout the Nation States of Vallunei, they seldom are held in higher esteem than Vallunei's savior. Kah and the Seven are often celebrated in the same ceremonies, the churches of Kah and the Seven sharing the same temple.

Geography

The Kingdom of Vallunei encompasses a huge amount of land. Apart from the Tilerian Hegemony and Thallysia, whose true dimensions can only be guessed at, the Kingdom if the largest nation in the Known Lands. Through central Vallunei, stretching south into Bhuket, there lay the Mantu Mountains. Where the mountains rise to their greatest heights, the land of Bhuket rules. Through the central and eastern parts of the land, verdant forests stretch to the horizon, broken only by gently rolling hills. As one progresses west, the grassy hillsides give way to scrub plain. South and into Vandalusa, the scrub plains turn into the barren stone deserts that characterize the landscape of that magical country. As one approaches the Dominion of Drakan from the east, they must first cross the Shield Wall, a mountain chain that runs the length of the nation, from its northern border with Klesht and Illestan, down south through the Yanush Lands and the Spice Lands. So large is the Kingdom, that there are still areas that have not felt the trodding feet of an explorer or adventurer since before the Endwar.

The Nine Nation-States of Vallunei

The Kingdom Proper: The location of the Wishing Tree and the capital of the Kingdom and the Treaty Nations: Vallunei City. Vallunei City, resting at the very center of the Kingdom Proper, is the true hub around which all Treaty politics revolve.

The Seven Princes: Surrounding the Kingdom Proper in a vast ring, this nation-state was founded by the seven sons of the first Artuan King. Rich and powerful, each of the seven princedoms has since continued as a monarchy ruled by the families sired by those first seven princes. Ambition rules in the Seven Princes, each vying for advantage, both political and economical.

The Glories (of Kah): Purported to be the birthplace of Kah, powerful noble families rule this wealthy industrial Nation-State, the largest in the Kingdom. Once a land of nomadic bandit tribes who ranged across the Glories' vast steppe lands, the people of the Glories are proud and outspoken, still possessing some of the warlike tendencies of their bandit ancestors.

The Inabi States: When the Second Darkness struck, the land of Vanassi was busy conquering its neighbors, consolidating them into a single nation, Inabi. They aggressively subjugated all who came under their power. Only the arrival of the Fane and the subsequent liberation by Kah put a halt to their expansion. But those same territorial desires have begun to fire once again. Once a part of Tchan-Tun, there is a growing dissident movement in Kalishan, the smallest Inabi State bordering Bhuket. A movement to unify with Bhuket and Lhar is sparking concern throughout the Treaty Nations. Vanassi is quick to quash any imminent rebellion, but their violent tactics have brought harsh criticism from its fellow Valluneian Nation-States.

The Steel Confederacy: What Illestan is to Mirkule, the provinces of the Steel Confederacy are to the Dominion of Drakan. Bordering the domain of the Voivodh, the states that make up the Steel Confederacy are committed to keeping the Dominion at bay. The land is harsh and in many places barren, forming a buffer between the Dominion and the shining heart of the Kingdom. The loyal citizens of the Confederacy will give their lives to protect every inch of it.

The Vermilion Coast: Culturally related to its neighbors in the south, Talus and Harakyr, it too had a history of piracy. Named for the bright red cliffs and ruddy beaches that line its coast, it is the center of shipping for most of the Kingdom. The beauty of the land has also made it the primary vacation spot for people from across all of Vallunei.

The Western Provinces: Long before the war of the Fane,

this motley collection of states joined together for the purposes of mutual protection. Covering all of western Vallunei, their proximity to Neoll made them the target of Shadekin attack for centuries following the Endwar. It is a land of mystery, where strange creatures wander the vast open grasslands of the Western Provinces. Many outside the Western Provinces have dubbed this strange land "The Haunted West." Since becoming a part of the Kingdom, the Western Provinces are considered one of its most loyal supporters.

The Spice Lands: Peaceful and pastoral, the Spice Lands gain their name from the preponderance of spice bearing plants that grow in the region. Many see the mostly agrarian lifestyle of the states of the Spice Lands as backward and lacking in refinement, but those of a more positive outlook see the Spice Lands as a window into a past that was more innocent and simple. Scholars have difficulty pinpointing when exactly that might have been.

The Yanush Lands: This major agrarian state is owned totally by the Dynasties; huge families dating back more than a thousand years who have neatly divided up the state into private domains. Much of the land is used for large-scale farming and grazing land for Pokno and other livestock. The two-dozen Dynasties are some of the wealthiest families in the Known Lands.

Average Description

Because of its position of being a country made of Nation-states people of Vallunei have a varied appearance depending on the region. With the advent of relocation between the various states a homogenizing effect will eventually occur.

The Kingdom Proper

Probably the most varied of the Nation-states the Kingdom Proper is home to people from all over Vallunei as well as delegates



An Adventurer faces a Shadekin.

and émigré from the other Treaty nations.

The Seven Princes
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in. – 5ft. 10in./ 155 to 180 lbs.
Eye Color: Brown, grey and steel blue.
Skin Color: White.
Hair Color: Flaxen to dirty blonde and brown.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

The Glories
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in. – 5ft. 8in./ 150 to 170 lbs.
Eye Color: Brown, hazel and green.
Skin Color: White.
Hair Color: Light to dark brown and black.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

The Inabi states
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 5in. – 5ft.7in./ 135 to 160 lbs.
Eye Color: Brown.
Skin Color: Light tan to golden brown.
Hair Color: Dark brown to black.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: The people of the Inabi states wear a variety of hairstyles modeled loosely to their neighbors of Bhuket.

The Steel Confederacy
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 8in. – 6ft. / 165 to 200 lbs.
Eye Color: Icy blue, green and brown.
Skin Color: White.
Hair Color: Dirty Blonde, brown and black.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Vermillion Coast
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in. – 5ft. 9in./ 160 to 170 lbs.
Eye Color: Hazel, brown, green, and blue.
Skin Color: White to a light tan.
Hair Color: Black, reddish brown and dark brown.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Western Provinces
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 7in. – 5ft. 10in./ 160 to 200 lbs
Eye Color: Brown, grey and green.
Skin Color: Pallid white.
Hair Color: Stark red, ginger brown and black.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: The men of the Provinces tend to wear clannish tattoos of almost runic design surrounding their necks and peaking on the clavicles; while women are tattooed on their flanks.

Spice lands
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 5in. – 5ft. 9in./ 145 to 170 lbs.
Eye Color: Light or dark brown.
Skin Color: Tanned yellow.
Hair Color: Black or dark brown.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Yanush lands
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 145 to 160 lbs.
Eye Color: Light or dark brown.
Skin Color: Yellow to auburn brown.
Hair Color: Rusty to dark brown and black.
Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Vandalusa

"It is an unfortunate element of our nature, an intrinsic part of our collective heritage that we, the Ianer, are a violent and destructive race. Our endless cycles of destruction have an origin in the dawn of our creation. Countless texts from long ago describe a conflict between us and our siblings; the Zhalanti. Could it have been they who instilled this destructive urge in us? I can see that you almost want to believe that, you want to believe that we are not responsible for our actions, for our many attempts to destroy ourselves. I cannot give you the easy answer you seek and do not look for satisfaction in my explanation, for the true reasons are undoubtedly more complex. It is who we are and for that reason alone we must constantly strive to overcome our weaknesses and embrace a better way. Expansion of consciousness, abandonment of our baser natures, contemplate the darkness that hides within you and you will gain the minute fragment of knowledge you need to take the next step… "

— Terekazio, scholar and professor, Vandalusan Knowledge Vault Tialekilaal

History

The unexplainable, mythical energy that courses through the rocks and mesas of Vandalusa was like a siren song to the first Shadowmage known: a young Ben Sha'oud from Ba-Dur, driven from her tribe for fear of her growing powers. Other Shadowmages would join her, meditating on their power and the power around them. As the centuries progressed a society of magi, masters of Runes and Shadow, would come to rule Vandalusa. But they became corrupt, and nearly destroyed themselves in civil war. Instead they used their great power to isolate themselves for more than a millennia, turning inward to tame their great power with an ideology of pacifism and abject neutrality. Isolated, yet welcoming all who wished to come to their land and partake in their tutelage, many questions still remain as to why the most neutral of all countries applied for, and recieved, Treaty membership.

Culture

Vandalusa's pacifistic ideology is an attempt to turn its back on the corrupt caste system that nearly destroyed them more than a thousand years ago. They have come to reject violence in all its forms, refusing to be the cause of injury, to themselves and others, seeing it as an injury to existence itself. To the Vandalusans, life is seen as a journey towards complete understanding; of life, the world, everything, to the benefit of everyone. Where they were once ruled by an unjust caste system, Vandalusans today believe in unequivocal acceptance and openness. They are welcomming to all, regardless of differing ideology, national loyalty, moral or ethical bent. All one needs is to show a desire to learn. But this openness belies the fact that the Vandalusans are fanatic about guarding the many secrets contained deep in its cities of carven stone.



A Rune Magic class in Vandalusa.

Religion

Vandalusa is famous for its devotional diversity. It does not espouse any single religion. Some do not even see the need for religion at all. Every god and goddess finds itself worshipped somewhere among the Vandalusans, even Kah and the evil Fane such as Lhar and Mirkule have their advocates here. Only the strongly held principles of the native Vandalusans keeps these disparate groups from doing anything more than argue and debate.

Geography

The Deremvedu Desert (as Vandalusa was originally known) is a land composed of weathered stone, where towering buttes and mesas dot the landscape. Out of each butte and mesa the Vandalusans have carved their cities, similar in function but nowhere near in size of the arcologies of Ancient Gondolon. To the southeast lie the Vedu Sefrha Mountains, where the country borders Ba-Dur and Bhuket. These peaks have challenged even experienced mountaineers. To the west, where the nation borders with Edyss, the Peaks of the Pellanine rise. Seldom do travelers dare these mountains, for many report sighting monstrous creatures prowling its rubble-strewn valleys. Some who have made the attempt vanish without a trace, prey perhaps to the creatures that haunt the Pellanine.

Average Description

Due to its open borders Vandalusa is the most cosmopolitan country in Zir'An, even more so than Vallunei. The natives tend to display average characteristics from Edyss, Ballinor and even Bhuket.

THE TILERIAN HEGEMONY

The greatest threat faced by the rest of Zir'An arises from the unity of power led by Mirkule and the Tilerian Empire. During the War of the Fane, Mirkule's influence spread through Cyroon, Klesht, Illestan, and beyond. Only the timely arrival of Kah managed to halt and turn back Mirkule's advance. As the Tilerian Empire expanded it subjugated the lands it conquered, turning their might toward his own goals. Cyroon, once a huge, if sparsely populated country, had most of its lands captured by Mirkule, leaving only a fraction of its former size. Cyroon, a cowardly and selfish Fane, was easily cowed by Mirkule's might. Klesht, once a land of desperate nomadic clans, entered into a dark pact with Mirkule for the power and influence they now wield. Through obligation and perhaps a little gratitude, the Kleshti have become the Tilerian Empire's most loyal subjects. Mirkule's relationship with the mighty Fane known only as the Voivodh, ruler of the Dominion of Drakan, is still a mystery. No records exist of the two meeting, nor of any time when the two formed the pact that now binds them. Their alliance seems to be one of convenience, leading to the suspicion that it is most likely an impermanent one.

Each of the active members of the Hegemony: Cyroon, Klesht,

and the Dominion of Drakan, serves some overall purpose to Mirkule's plans. Cyroon act as the Hegemony's spies, Klesht its diplomats, and the Dominion (along with the naval resources of Thrayce) its military, with the Tilerian Empire's Shadekin hordes apparently serving as Mirkule's personal engine of destruction. While its relation to the Lands of the Treaty is a hostile one, a peace has been held in place for a thousand years, with only minor "misunderstandings" spotting an otherwise uneventful millennia. It is commonly accepted, however, that Mirkule will not stop until all of Zir'An is brought under his heel, that this spate of peace is merely the prelude to a coming war, when the Tilerian Empire spills over its borders in a final grab for power.

Cyroon

"Cyroon was once powerful nation. It will be again. King Cyroon, he's a cunning one, he is. He's a harsh yet fair King. He's only killed so many because so many were against him. He gave into Mirkule's demands so's he could lull him into a false sense of security, right? Yeeehh, pretty soon we'll rise up to crush Mirkule and take the lands that were once ours and Cyroon will be great again. Then we'll see how MeeeerKoool likes living in a chiggid infested swamp. But for now we play at being the faithful little toadies to the Hegemony, but I'm telling you… no one gets one over on a Cyooni without getting some payback, if you know what I mean. Oy, that'll be sixteen Sidoons for the pint, ya plok."

— Mulerk Dougga, proprietor of the Miggi Bosh tavern, Gozumguz, Cyroon

History

Some scholars believe that Cyroon was actually the first Fane to appear on Zir'An. He arose among the brutal nomadic tribes of the Solda Nosh swamps, a vast tundra mire that stretches from eastern Neoll, through Cyroon, and along the western border of Illestan. Supremely powerful and unopposed, Cyroon would end up seizing all of the tribes of the Solda Nosh, forming an empire that rivaled Illestan in size. It was an empire stretched far too thin, however, and it was impossible for Cyroon to keep it from all falling apart. When Mirkule appeared, Cyroon was powerless to halt his advance. Instead of killing him, though, Mirkule allowed Cyroon to keep a minute fraction of his once mighty empire and become his vassal. With his only other option being obliteration, Cyroon agreed. The true end of the Fane's rule over Zir'An ended in Cyroon, when Mirkule and Kah faced each other in a battle in Cyroon's palace. Cowering in a corner, the legends describe, Cyroon watched powerless as Kah defeated Mirkule and routed his forces back to the Tilerian Empire.

Culture

There is much validity to the perception that most Cyrooni would sell their grandmother for a Flat. Centuries under the Fane rule of Cyroon have made the people as selfish and mean spirited as their ruler, who perpetuates the air of distrust and dishonesty that plagues the country to this day. The Cyrooni are taught at an early age to be completely self-reliant, with their own welfare being paramount. Unfortunately this leads them to hold little if any trust for others. Cyroon is a poor country, and King Cyroon's greed extends through his people. In the corrupt social structure of Cyroon, everyone is required to grift, bribe, and steal just to survive, lest they fall victim to someone more ruthless than they. Cyroon is a dangerous and violent place, and growing up on its streets creates a hardened and cynical people. They feel resentment toward Mirkule, who stole their glory from them, and the Treaty Nations who they see as self-righteous *ploks* who don't know what real hardship is.

Religion

King Cyroon, even though being a tyrant and a dictator, holds great sway over his people. The citizenry are continually given dreams of Cyroon's past glory, now over two thousand years gone; a past the people constantly wish for, fantasizing about the day their glorious King breaks from Mirkule and throws the Tilerian Empire out of the Solda Nosh. The people don't quite worship King Cyroon as a god, but they do pay homage to him through numerous yearly celebrations. Cyroon is often the main character of radio plays and cheap novels, portrayed as a hero who humiliates, and sometimes brutally kills his foes through trickery and guile. Cyroon's image adorns billboards, beer bottles, cereal boxes, and of course the nation's currency. There is nowhere one can escape the fattened, acne-scarred cheeks and sinister grin of their lord. But love him or hate him (sometimes both), all Cyrooni respect him, for he is one of their own and is the ideal many Cyrooni wish to emulate.

Geography

Cyroon lies in the most inhospitable region of the Solda Nosh swamp. Cold and wet throughout most of the year, nothing remains dry when in Cyroon for long. Great pains have been made to dry portions of the land so that roads can be maintained, though in most cases this proved to be a short-term solution at best. The land is infested by all manner of parasites and predatory animals; many Cyrooni succumb to one pestilence or another (virulent brain fungi being one of the more infamous). Every urban center is built around the Kluuzhe refineries that are the land's main source of income. With little thought given to safety or pollution, Cyrooni cities generally are clouded with a permanent haze of swamp fog and refinery fumes.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 135 to 150 lbs.

Eye Color: Ice Blue, Green, and Black.

Skin Color: Pasty White.

Hair Color: Pale to Dirty Blonde, Brown, and Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Just like their Lord Cyroon, Cyrooni have pronounced noses. Whether rat-like and pointy or hooked they are almost always large.

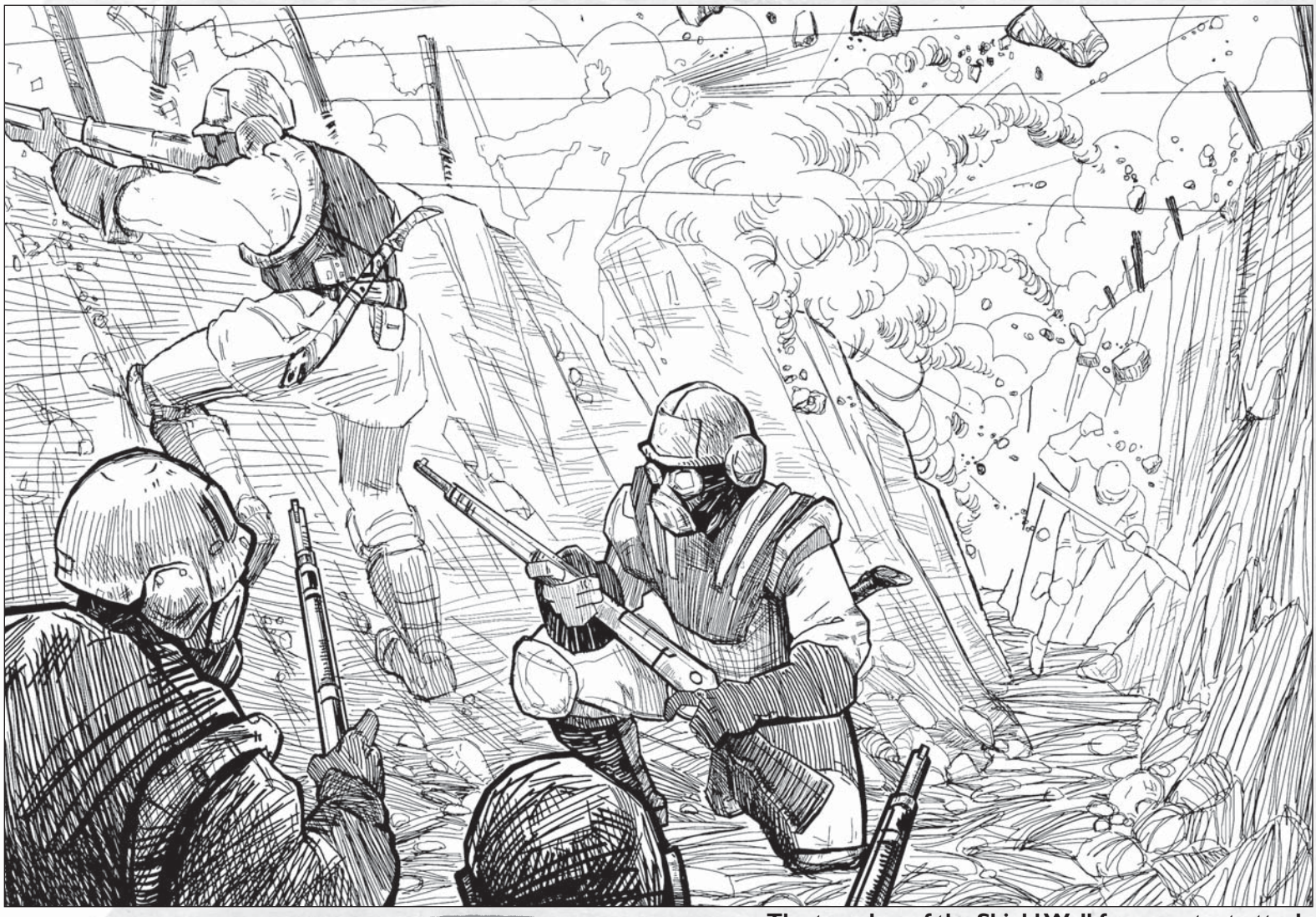
The Dominion of Drakan

"From the windows of my home I can see the impalement spikes and the still living screaming upon them, begging mercy that does not come. This is the way of the Dominion. We have many enemies. The Voivodh, the Immortal Iron General, destroys them before they are a threat. The Wadu River runs red with the blood of prisoners. You may call us barbarians, but in Valchaea, our capital, there is no crime in the streets, it is safe to walk after dark. The man that commits a crime against another is the next man on the pike. I know that once this land was part of the decadent nation called Casseonae. The Tilandri, those thieving gypsies, are our enemies, infecting our children with the Evil Eye and cavorting with Shadekin. I know our King is an ally with the Dark One, but once the Voivodh has fulfilled his Holy Order, all who do not vow faith to the Voivodh, even Mirkule and his Shadekin, will be put to the spike."

— anonymous street sweeper, Valchaea, Dominion of Drakan

"Pah! There is a darkness upon this land, and it comes from the corrupt body of that bloody Butcher King. We were once a happy people. When this was all part of lost Casseonae, we were revered for our healing powers, our ability to foretell the future, our music and culture. We were the pride of all Casseonae. And then he came: the Iron General, leader of the Casseonaean armies. He hid his Fane powers well and used them later to subvert the entire military. The bureaucrats, fearing for their lives, cowards all, were either kissing his ring or screaming from a spike by the time he was done. It was the people, and the Tilandri who rose up against him… and we failed. From the ruins of this came the Dominion and Voivodh's glorious new empire. Casseonae was but a memory, a dream to be cherished but never forgotten. For us Tilandri, the war against the Voivodh has never ended."

— Xzander Bollenu, Tilandri revolutionary, Kavratha Mountain camp



The trenches of the Shield Wall face constant attack.

History

In the east, in the centuries of Reconstruction after the Endwar, a grand and banevolent Empire would rise. Casseonae, the Golden Empire of the East, became the dominant power, bringing stability as the Endwar receded into the dim and distant past. A beacon of prosperity and justice that all other nations should emulate, its position was unrivaled. But fear would touch this land and its sophisticated populace as strange stories of devastating entities reached them from far away countries. As reports of the Fane terrors spread, panic gripped the Golden Empire, and they searched for a saviour. They found it in a charismatic General in whose hands was placed the safety of all Casseonae. But some in this still glorious nation questioned their chosen saviour. The Tilandri, the poets of Casseonae, predicted a dire future for the Empire of Empires, should they let the General guide its course. And then the first Fane came to Cassoneae to slaughter and destroy, and the General met it with his vast legions. The battle was waged until only a raging Fane and the lone General remained alive and on that blood-mired battlefield the General's true nature emerged. From this victory rose the Voivodh, who clad his nation in iron to protect it from the evils rampaging outside. He drove his nation to war against its neighbors, all to save them from a world determined to destroy them. He would teach them to curse the name of Kah, the Despoiler, who sought to rob them of their land and their lives. The Voivodh's will reshaped his nation and its people, built on an economy of abject obediance into a fortress and a prison. Now, having ruled his Dominion for more than a thousand years, a new epoch may be dawning. The long prophesied rise of the Tilandri draws close, for the poets of Casseonae are destined to rise up and cast off the iron shackles of the Voivodh's rule and free the descendants of Casseonae.

Culture

The people of the Dominion have been led to believe that the world beyond their borders is still at war with the Fane. Vallunei is an empire of evil where Kah continues to plot his takeover of the Dominion and the world. The people are constantly reminded that the war to keep the Dominion safe has never ended, that only the might of the Voivodh protects them from the evils ravaging the world. To speak, or even think otherwise is treason. The Voivodh demands complete obedience from his people, controlling everything they read, see, and hear. Possessing, or even claiming to possess information from the outside is treason. The people have little choice but to live by the rigid codes enforced by the Doyan: the bureaucratic office that disseminates the edicts of the Voivodh. Work hard for the prosperity of the Dominion. Never tolerate treason in your home, residential block, or place of work. Report all incidents of questionable behavior to a superior immediately.

Living in the remote parts of the Dominion are the lost children of Casseonae, the Tilandri. Surviving in nomadic bands that move from one hidden encampment to another, they wage a constant guerrilla war against the Voivodh, undermining his influence whenever and wherever possible. It is through their acts that a few of the Dominion's citizens have been awakened to the truth. Many of them in turn risk their lives to aid the Tilandri cause, for it is their cause as well. But many Drakani have given their hearts over totally to the dream of a victorious Dominion. Growing up to the State's relentless indoctrination natrually leads many to embrace the Voivodh with a near manic zeal. They think nothing of turning in a family member they suspect has committed treason, and that the Tilandri are a poison that is weakening the Dominion from within.

Religion

All the Dominion's citizens are required to pledge their fealty to the Voivodh at least once every day. Every home must feature a framed picture of the Voivodh, displayed prominently. Though every city has numerous assembly halls where the citizenry are required to gather to hear official news and edicts from the Doyan, there are no churches in the Dominion. Some still cling to the old religions, however. Though they know the Seven Gods are gone, many hide small shrines in their homes. These shrines are always cleverly hidden or disguised, for even mentioning the name of the Seven Gods can get one hauled away in the dead of night.

Geography

The Dominion is a large country with a varied topography. The first thing one encounters when approaching the Dominion is the Volleanu Wall. This barbican defense rings the nation in eighty feet of stone, closing it off from Ballinor, Vallunei, Klesht, and Darkfal. Running the entire length of the western Dominion are the Skoskivoi Mountains. Snowcapped year-round, they are forbidden territory to the citizenry. In fact, no settlements exist west of the foothills, save the occasional military base or border station. It is said that deep in the Skoskivoi there lies the ruin of Ushonun-Dei, an abandoned city once belonging to the Ushonu. Much of the Dominion is a rolling landscape covered with impressive pine forests. For all the terror found in this country, many find it quite beautiful, with pristine lakes and long winding rivers. But the capital, Valchaea, is a place so terrible it has haunted the dreams of many who have visited it. It is a city built entirely out of black iron and at its center lurks the palace of the Voivodh. Thrusting high into the smoke-clouded sky, it is a cluster of needle-sharp spires, their sides bristling with thorns of iron. Those who have fallen from favor are often impaled there, their cries echoing down upon the city.

Average Description

Drakani

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 7in. – 6ft. / 150 to 190 lbs

Eye Color: Pale Green, Blue, Dark Brown and Black.

Skin Color: White.

Hair Color: Stark Blonde, Brown, and Jet Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Drakani all have deeply set eyes and rather sharp features.

Tilandri

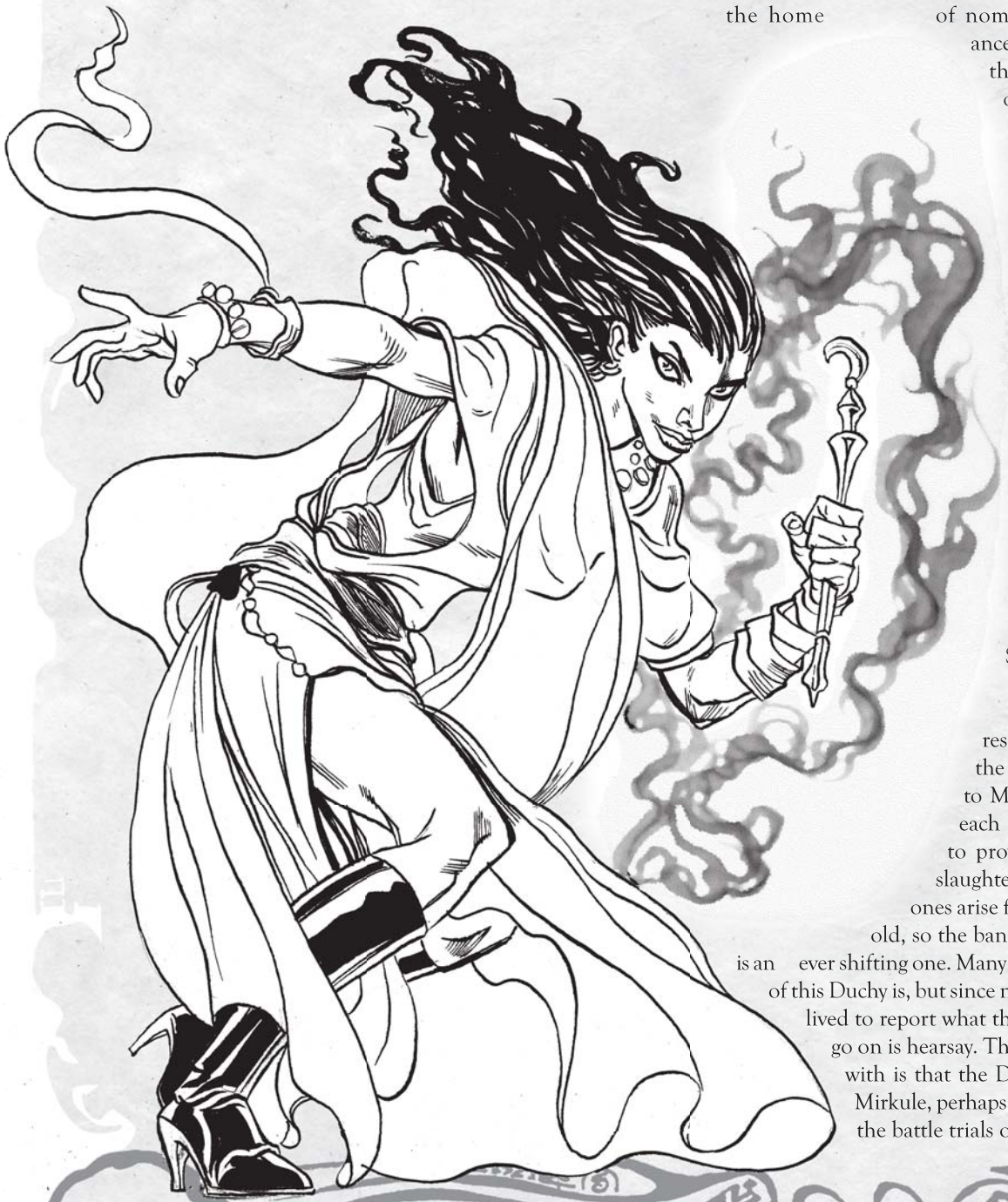
Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 9in. / 140 to 175 lbs.

Eye Color: Light to Dark Brown, hazel and in extremely rare cases, deep forest green.

Skin Color: Fawn to a swarthy tan.

Hair Color: Ginger blonde, red, dark brown and black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Tales of the Tilandri being born from trees are pure superstition but most will say they have a very rustic or earthy aura about them.



Duchy of Barren Moor

"From the Duchy there blows a stench of evil. A land populated and run by self-minded Shadekin, the land is cursed. The thought of the millions of Shadekin living there, loyal to Mirkule, keeps me awake at night."

— Ebara Meilor, UrDuke of Perudan province, Pashan State, The Glories, Kingdom of Vallunei

History

The land, now known as the Duchy of Barren Moor, was once the home of nomadic tribesmen related to the ancestors of modern Klesht. During the Endwar, many of them died or were driven to neighboring lands, while the land that is now known as the Duchy remained abandoned. When Mirkule arose in the north, he added this empty parcel of land to his empire, and has given it over to the legions of Shadekin known as the Garrall. The Garrall have taken this land as their own, and upon it wage continuous battles with each other, to prove to their lord and to themselves who is the strongest among them.

No sane person ever travels to the Duchy, for there is nothing there but tundra plains, frigid peat bogs, and millions upon millions of murderous Garralli Shadekin.

Culture

Many bands of Garralli Shadekin reside in the Duchy. Each claims to the other that they are more devoted to Mirkule and so wage wars against each other to practice for battle and to prove their worthiness. Bands are slaughtered by stronger bands, and new ones arise from the tattered remnants of the old, so the band/tribal structure of the Garralli is an ever shifting one. Many scholars wonder who the "Duke" of this Duchy is, but since no one has entered the Duchy and lived to report what they have found, all anyone has to go on is hearsay. The best guess anyone can come up with is that the Duke is a Shadekin lieutenant of Mirkule, perhaps a powerful Garralli, who oversees the battle trials of the Garrall.

Illana Codrescu

Religion

The Garrall have but one god, and that is Mirkule. It is unknown exactly what rites are performed by the Garrall in honor of Mirkule, but it can be expected that they are terribly inhuman and that they differ from band to band.

Geography

The Duchy is just as its name implies, a barren moor. Low rolling hills and weather worn valleys mark the vast expanse of tundra, frozen continually by the harsh winds that blow from the north. Very little grows in the Duchy, all of it either killed by the extreme cold or by the Garrall themselves.

Average Description

Bestial humanoids, twisted beyond recognition of their former selves by Mirkule's magicks.

Klesht

"Everyone knows that everything has its price… there is nothing so esoteric that it cannot be had through some sort of… transaction. You pay for a million things in a million ways just by stepping out the door… and you are not even aware of it. Money is just one part… money cannot compare to a more intimate… investment. How much does your loyalty cost, your love? How much would you wager on your soul? To what price would your body bend to the will of another? Wait! Do not answer… I think I know… "

—Veider Kezzsk, Kleshti Silk Merchant, Dominion merchant ship ***Domadraka***, Ananshar Ocean

History

The Children of Silas Tyr, rugged survivors of the Endwar, were forced to take up the nomad's way of life in order to hide from Mirkule's legions when he arose in the War of the Fane. One by one, the Tyran tribes were destroyed or enslaved by Mirkule until only two remained, the Duburai and the Kezzikh. The needs of survival and community brought the last two tribes together but disagreements over how to cope under the threat of Mirkule's aggression divided them. The Duburai vowed to resist Mirkule to the bitter last: better dead than a Fane's slave. The Kezzikh longed to reach some kind of accord with Mirkule; so desperate were they to preserve their culture and heritage. Unable to reach a consensus, the two tribes parted to pursue their own agendas. Years would pass before the Duburai saw the return of their Kezzikh allies. They welcomed them with open arms, but recoiled in horror at the twisted vestiges their countrymen had become. Backed by Mirkule's might, the Kezzikh captured and enslaved the Duburai in Mirkule's name. Their twisted offspring were the founders of Klesht.

Culture

The Shadekin taint that twisted the bodies and souls of the early Kleshti has faded by the modern era. This makes the Kleshti role as the Hegemony's ambassadors much easier. Klesht is not known for its military the way the Dominion is — the Kleshti are merchants at heart, dealing in everything from silks to souls. Though Klesht has cities, many of its people still prefer a nomadic existence, which compliments their role as merchants. They travel the breadth of the Hegemony, and even regions south. Kleshti can always be found in the Merchant Isles. The Kleshti have a great appreciation for the finer things, dressing in voluminous silks and bejeweled turbans of bright oranges, startling blues, and fiery reds. They abhor green, considering it very bad luck. Though sinister in their dealings, Kleshti are bound to honor any agreement or contract. Naturally they are keen to notice any loopholes and will take every advantage they can. It is like a sport to them. There is little family unity in Klesht. Ambition is the dominant personality trait, and as each Kleshti seeks to fulfill their own ambitions, such concepts as family loyalty fall to the wayside.

Religion

Faith is paramount in the life of every Kleshti and no other god is greater than Mirkule. There are countless cults in Klesht, some with a million or more followers, some with only a handful, sometimes there are even cults of one. Cults clash over differences in dogma and smaller, weaker cults often fall prey to larger, more established cults who happen to disagree with their views. Some cults worship money, carrying out commerce with all the ritual trappings of religion. Others wish to fulfill Mirkule's plan to destroy the Treaty, and so relish in ritual killing, sabotage, and assassination. Self-Mutilation cults, Shadekin cults, cults of Law and Vengeance, the list goes on and on. Seldom do Kleshti change their religious identity, dedicating themselves to a single Cult for life. Of the Seven Gods, the Kleshti have little regard. They are the Dead Gods, the Old Gods. Mirkule is here and now. He walks the world, and the Kleshti are his loyal supplicants.

Geography

Klesht is a cold country hidden among craggy hills of broken shale. A near perpetual overcast darkens much of their country year-round, though it seldom rains. Dirt roads cross the land in a chaotic web, continually plied by the various merchant caravans that wander from settlement to settlement. The land's northern regions remain unpopulated; its proximity to the Duchy of Barren Moor seeing Garrall Shadekin and other grim beasts wandering freely into Klesht. The land is rich with natural treasures; much of the Hegemony's gold and precious gems come from the deep tunnels of Klesht. In addition, many of the world's most valuable gemstones are unique to Klesht, bringing great wealth to this small country.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. — 5ft. 7in. / 135 to 165 lbs

Eye Color: Hazel, Icy green, red.

Skin Color: Olive to deep tan.

Hair Color: Dark brown, black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Although mostly hidden the Kleshti have some physical deformity because of their Shadekin heredity. A Kleshti player must pick the Deformity -4 (Shadekin Contagion) Valdreyr in Chapter 7: Valdreyr.

The Tilerian Empire

"Rhaaa! Guahhh!! Mirkuuuule!"
— Gaunt One Shadekin tribe member

History

Mirkule arose in the Solda Nosh some nine hundred years after the Endwar. It is believed that he was a member of one of the many nomadic tribes that roamed the tundra of the far north. The first accounts of Mirkule's rise and subsequent expansion come from Cyroon's own history. No other Fane seemed able to match Mirkule's power and so his empire expanded until at its height it reached as far south as Vandalusa and east through half of Vallunei.

Most Fane used the Ianer as toys made for their amusement. Millions upon millions of people were slaughtered to appease the twisted desires of the Fane. Mirkule was different. Survivors were corralled, sorted, and later used as fodder for the creation of new Shadekin, the monstrous abominations that formed Mirkule's army. When Kah pushed Mirkule back behind his current borders, what was left of Mirkule's Shadekin legions went with him. The primary concern of the Treaty nations is exactly how many Shadekin Mirkule has under his control, waiting deep in the Tilerian Empire to come swarming southward to complete what Kah interrupted fourteen centuries ago.

Culture

Under Mirkule's guidance, his Shadekin legions patiently await the day they will be allowed to strike south in a swath of destruction not seen since the Endwar. What occupies their daily existence is an open question. Few have ever gone into the Tilerian Empire to study them. Covert Illestani forays into the Tilerian Empire have recorded many strange sights: massive battles between thousands of Shadekin of many different shapes and sizes; silent Shadekin processions stretching from horizon to horizon, their destination uncertain; thousands of Shadekin sitting upon the ground in apparent meditation or prayer, their low groaning echoing for miles. Their motivations and desires can only be guessed, but anyone they find within their borders is not allowed to live for long.

Religion

What religion there is would naturally be centered around Mirkule. Of the thousands of different types of Shadekin known to inhabit the Empire, all unwaveringly serve the will of Mirkule. If they pay him tribute or carry out any rituals in his name it is unknown.

Geography

Where the Tilerian Empire meets Illestan, the landscape is of low rolling hills of packed earth and the grey bogs of the Solda Nosh in the west. The farther north one gets, the more desolate the land becomes. But most of all, it is flat. There are no known mountains in the Empire, and though no one has penetrated more than a hundred miles or more into it, it is believed that the desolate plains eventually become cloaked in snow and ice becoming the Frigid Waste as described in myth and legend.

Average Description

Unknown at this time.

Thrayce

"It's not that bad, really. I mean, we don't have Drakani pulling people out of their houses and executing them on the street… like some people would have you believe. I've got work to do, and they don't keep me from doing it, so what's the bother? It's hard enough in this world to make ends meet, keep a family in food and clothing… so I've had to keep my boat in harbor because of Dominion ship traffic… I mean, it's not like they're telling us what to do. I've got enough problems… "
— Anonymous Thraycean fisherman, Telumokolos village

History

Along the cold, windswept coasts of the far northeast, there lays a land locked in time. Sequestered by the Dominion, little in Thrayce has changed in over two thousand years. The people of Thrayce live simply, farming and tending livestock, just as they did when Casseonae was first rising to prominence. It is believed by many that Thrayce is the birthplace of the Tilandri culture, that Casseonae's thriving culture drew many Thraycean artists and performers. Out of the many artist enclaves and communes started by these expatriates would grow the Tilandri culture. With history being made just beyond the border, Thrayce continued on as it had for centuries. Isolated as they were, the fall of Casseonae and the rise of the Voivodh brought fear to Thrayce for the first time. Dominion tanks and troops poured into the cold rocky land of Thrayce, establishing garrisons and executing all who objected. The people waited for the full absorption into the Dominion, but it never came. Though they still live with the presence of the Dominion all around them, their daily lives continue on as they have for millennia.

Culture

Though the Thrayceans continue to go on as they have for centuries, they do not stand by meekly while the Dominion still holds their nation hostage. They know they're no match for the Dominion, and don't expect to ever remove its presence by force. But they can offer aid to those destined to destroy the Voivodh: the Tilandri. Despite the presence of Dominion garrisons, some Thrayceans have been able to maintain a well-organized underground resistance. The resistance provides havens and transportation for the Tilandri and their allies as well as recording Drakani navel and troop movements inside their country. Not every Thraycean supports the resistance; most simply wish to live their lives in relative safety. So long as no one does anything to incite the Dominion, what is there to fear? The rise of the Canticle in their culture has caused the ranks of the resistance

to grow, perhaps more than is healthy, for so far they have been able to escape notice because of their small number. But a sense of destiny is growing among some Thrayceans as each new verse of the Canticle is written.

Religion

The Thrayceans pay homage to all the Seven, but they give Drandlur special reverence. Their lives depend on the sea, and the weather that provides them their short growing season, and so praying for the blessings of the Mistress of Storms is a common practice. The Voivodh does not demand the same level of devotion from the Thrayceans as he does his own people, but massed religious services (or any massed gathering for that matter) are expressly forbidden by the Dominion. This hasn't dampened the Thraycean devotion to their Gods at all. Being a people who for centuries have passed down their myths and beliefs through story telling, they are comfortable practicing their religious beliefs wherever they happen to be: at home, on a ship, or deep in the country's rugged interior.

Geography

Thrayce is an island bracketed on its northern, western, and southern sides by the Dominion. Much of the country is composed of sharp shale and ancient volcanic rock. In the land's interior, gently sloping mountains rise from sturdy pine forests. Scattered among these rain soaked hills are Thrayce's few farming villages. Thrayce is lashed by fierce storms much of the year, with winters that blanket the land in snow, and so the growing season is short. It is only through the magics of Drandlur that the struggling Thraycean farms can grow enough food for their own communities. The coasts are winding and rock-strewn. They take much of the brunt of Thrayce's storms, breeding a strong people who have become accustomed to hardship. Near the nation's northeastern coast, though, there lays the strong northern current known as the "Tongue of the Hungry God." Ships that are caught in its pull and fail to escape are drawn into Darkfall's inner sea, to the island that lies at its center. The Tongue captures a handful of Thraycean ships every year, and its presence is a constant reminder to the Thrayceans of the evils in this world.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 7in. — 5ft. 10in./ 175 to 200 lbs.

Eye Color: Hazel, green and brown.

Skin Color: White to light tan.

Hair Color: Black, dark brown, and deep red.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Since old times, Thraycean men have worn little or no hair on their head, choosing a single braided lock or Zetti, a strip of hair kept on top and greased to a fin. The woman are completely opposite, wearing braided buns of hair not cut since their 13th birthday, cutting only a foot of it every 10th year.

THE SOUTHERN EMPIRES

In the regions south of Vallunei there lay an expansive realm of powerful nations who suffered little or not at all from the War of the Fane, busy at that time with their own conflicts and power struggles. They flourished following the aftermath of those dark years, wholly separate from the unification that led to the Treaty of Vallunei. For much of the post-Endwar era, the Southern Empires had little connection with their northern neighbors. For much of that time Ianu Voss has been the premier power of the Southern Empires. With the greatest navy in all of Zir'An, Ianu Voss has occupied nearly every one of the Southern Empires at one point in their histories. With the progress of globalization, the Southern Empires eventually had to solidify relations with the Nations of the Treaty. It has changed the Southern Empires greatly. In the passing centuries, countries like Talus and Arivonne have come close to allying themselves with the Treaty, and whereas Ba-Dur has remained mostly aloof of its northern neighbors, Ianu Voss has found a rival in the Treaty Nations and Vallunei in particular.

Arivonne

"The wind carries me high above my village, between the high mountains and the steep walls of the valleys. The wind bears my glidewing high into the sky. The feeling of freedom is overwhelming. A giant shadow falls upon the narrow towers below, then the thunderous bellowing of rotating propellers drowns out all sound as a Aeronought passes overhead, carrying passengers to the capital and to lands beyond. Ha ha! My father shouts playful curses and waves his fist as I buzz by him close to the ground. He shouldn't complain… he's the one who taught me how to fly. Next year I am off to the aeronautical institute in Edyss. I think I'll fly there… all by myself."

— Young Davi Wilmon describing his experiences to miss Ladet Vreonne, Shumua Cafe, Chelosia City

History

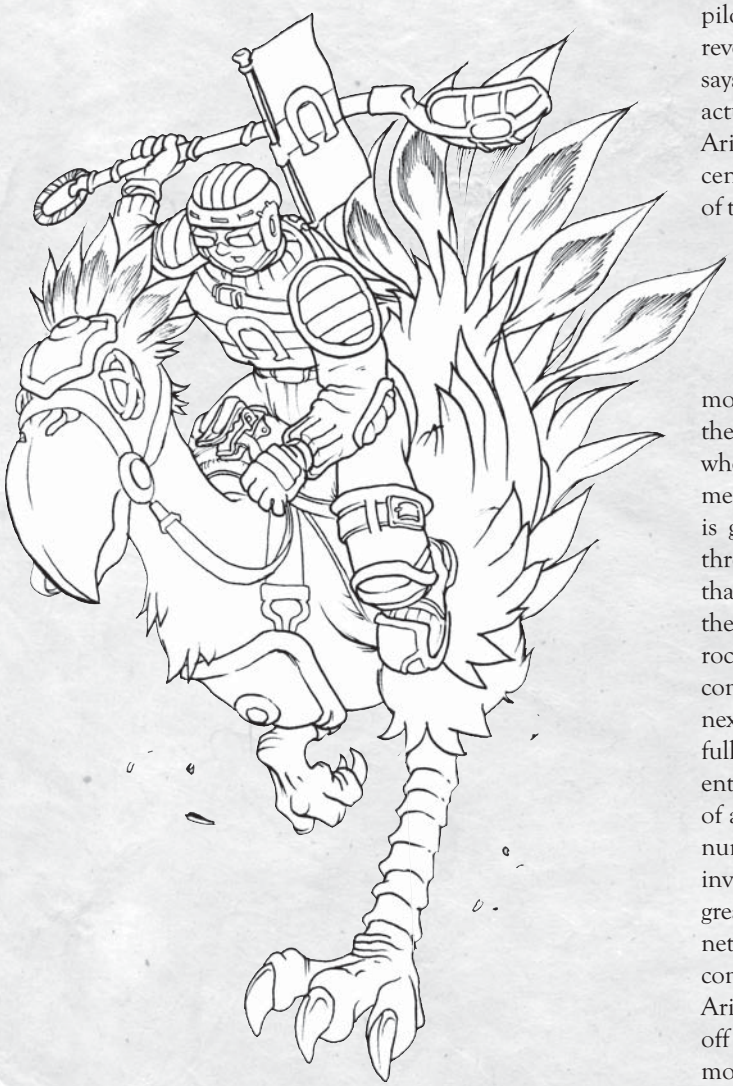
Arivonne was once part of the nation of Eriman (modern day Ianu Voss), but for all of its history remained largely unsettled. In the centuries after the Endwar, Eriman had become Ianu Voss and gone on to dominate much of the southern seas. It was not long before they began to explore the sheltered canyons of the Arivonne sub-continent. They were very surprised to find this supposedly uninhabited region host to a thriving culture. Since Arivonne was originally a part of the old Eriman nation (Arivonne being a centuries-old derivation of the name Eriman), Ianu Voss naturally asserted that Arivonne had no right to claim itself a sovereign nation. They had stopped short of forcibly absorbing Arivonne, and instead have maintained an occupation of the country, influencing its government, garrisoning soldiers inside its borders, and exploiting its resources.

The tides of revolution in Arivonne are beginning to rise,

however. The resistance movement has existed almost from the moment Ianu Voss began its occupation, but recent years has seen the resistance movement gathering momentum. As Arivonne's relationship with the Treaty Nations grows (through its principal trading partner Edyss) Ianu Voss has doubled its efforts to keep Arivonne isolated. Their tightening down upon Arivonne has only made the populace more determined to throw off the Ianu Vossan oppressors.

Culture

Arivonneans are a people very much in touch with their history. Ask any Arivonnean about the history of their nation, from their struggles to settle its rugged landscape, to coping with Ianu Vossan occupation, and they'll proudly oblige. As a whole, the Arivonneans are a proud people, industrious, courageous, and headstrong. Though the Ianu Vossan occupation has been going on for many centuries, the latest generation of Arivonneans has grown up during its darkest period. Ianu Voss has bought a great deal of support in the upper levels of Arivonne's government, even up to the nation's leader: Chancellor Solus. With the support of Arivonne's leadership, it has suppressed any public anti-Ianu Vossan sentiment, adding fuel to the growing fires of rebellion. Those who have grown up in this time, the youth of Arivonne, are driving this movement forward, given advice and support from the old guard rebels who have been undermining Ianu Voss's plans for decades. But as the resistance grows, the measures taken to quash them become increasingly severe.



Ciba is the Southern Lands' most popular sport.

Religion

The Arivonneans are devout believers in the Seven Gods. It is the goddesses Arroy and Drandlur who receive special devotion, though. Arroy is the goddess of creation, the provider of all that one sees. To Drandlur they give thanks for the bounty of their harvests and for the winds that bear their aircraft aloft. Because piloting is such a major part of Arivonnean culture, Lyiss is revered as the goddess of good fortune, and almost every pilot says a little prayer to her before his flights. The more devoted will actually carry with them a small figurine or sigil of Lyiss. But the Arivonneans revere their ancestors as well. Much of their ritual centers on honoring the deeds and names of great Arivonneans of the past. Through this the Arivonneans stay in touch with their history, which they deem central to their cultural identity. Ianu Voss has attempted to add the names of its heroes to the litanies, with limited success.

Geography

Arivonne is a land of winding canyons and lush valleys. The mountains of Arivonne are near vertical walls of pale granite, their blunted tops fringed with caps of greenery. At the bottoms, where they gradually level out into wide valleys, thick forests and meadows grow lush and full in the black fertile soil. The climate is generally pleasant, though powerful winds are channeled through the narrow canyons, turning the numerous windmills that do everything from mill grain to generate electricity. Only in the south and the far eastern coast to the canyons drop to form rocky hills dotted with groves of oak and cedar trees. The various communities of Arivonne are often hundreds of miles from the next, and much of the land's maze-like canyons have yet to be fully explored. There are some regions the locals even refuse to enter, having long histories of strange happenings and glimpses of ancient ruins best left undisturbed. Ianu Voss has, on a small number of occasions, ignored such warnings and sent teams to investigate some of these claims. Those that do return describe great bas relieves carved into the granite mountainsides and tunnel networks the plunge deep into the rock faces. The Paidan Demos complex, discovered over two centuries ago, is the only one the Arivonneans have truly explored, and it has since been deemed off limits, its entrances guarded by special bands of the Aibo Maru mountain warders.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 3in. – 5ft. 8in. / 130-160lbs.

Eye Color: Ice Blue, Green, and Hazel.

Hair Color: Dark Brown to Reddish Blonde.

Skin Color: White.

Distinctive Characteristic: Arivonnean men tend to wear an over-enthusiastic style of facial hair; large handle bar moustaches, long muttonchops, or wide wiry beards.

Ba-Dur

"When you see Ba-Dur all you see is sand… desert stretching to the horizon. But it wasn't always so… this used to be the 'Land of the Singing Rivers.' You do not truly see Ba-Dur. It was a paradise described in the verse of the ancients. But the foolishness of our kind brought an end to our lush garden. In our history, the Endwar is called the ba-heth thaad… the 'Day the Sun Swallowed the Land.' And the Fane came to finish what had been started… the Unholy Farsiid and his legions. Only our Ba-Duran hearts saved us from slavery. You… you of the Treaty… you made a pact with the Fane and you are so happy… 'We are saved' you cry, but nothing and no one can save you but yourselves… when darkness laps at your door, who will save you? Not your Fane… open your eyes and see that only you can provide your own ultimate salvation."

— Fey bin-Ra'al, Ben Sha'oud nomad, Qur Asamde, Ba-Dur desert

History

Oldest of all current nations, Ba-Dur, the "Land of Singing Rivers" was once fertile and green, until the Endwar scoured the land to the deserts that now charactierize this nation. But the Ba-Durai adapted. In large fortress cities the merchants and nobles carried out their games of state and commerce, while the Ben Sha'oud nomads plied the pathways of the wide trackless deserts. But their nation would be enslaved, their population decimated, by the inhuman greed and cruelty of the infamous Fane overlord: the Unholy Farsiid. He ruled Ba-Dur for centuries until a lone Ben Sha'oud Prophet: Ali bin-Sa'la, arose to tell tales of freedom and rebellion. His martyrdom at the hands of the Unholy Farsiid empowered the people to rise up against their oppressor, and as one they cast down the monstrous demigod Farsiid. Since that time they have returned to prosperity, becoming a power in the South.

Culture

The Ba-Durans are divided by two distinct groups, the Ba-Durai, who reside in the massive walled cities known as Altams, and the Ben Sha'oud, the tribes who track the country's vast deserts. Culturally, the two groups are intrinsically linked. The Ben Sha'oud often serve as lines of communication from Altam to Altam as they lead their caravans across the deserts. But most importantly, Ali bin-Sa'la arose among the Ben Sha'oud, and so they have become a sacred people.

Among the Altams, where modern Ba-Durai society reigns, Ba-Dur still retains its old governing method, a loose coalition of reigning merchant (Umir) and noble (Sudar) families, under the current Shah'baal-Orar shaz-Al'biin. The game of court politics and diplomacy has become an art form in Ba-Dur, and a complex yet unspoken code of behavior guides the actions of the court. Political maneuvering, assassination, secret deals and double-crosses occur on a nearly daily basis, feeding the imaginations of writers of pulp novels throughout the Known Lands.

Ba-Dur is openly hostile to any land where Fane rule. Its long time blood enemy is its neighbor, Bhuket. Bhuketi slavers regularly plunder the Ben Sha'oud, abducting tribal members to fill out their slave stock. Needless to say, any Bhuketi found in Ba-Dur, even those that are not actually caught in the act of abduction, are slain on sight. But because much of the world is either ruled by a Fane, or had been freed by one (the Treaty Nations), Ba-Dur remains in a state of self-imposed political isolation.

Religion

While Ba-Dur still respects the tenets of the Seven Gods, Ali bin-Sa'la is the true focus of their religious devotion. He has become a symbol of everything that is good and right about Ba-Dur. His defiance of a power far greater than he, his notion of self-sacrifice for the good of Ba-Dur, his belief that true power lies in the hearts of the nation's people, has become the central dogma of Ba-Duran society.

Geography

The majority of Ba-Dur is a flat desert that encompasses thousands of miles of high dunes. Along its west and northern boundaries rise tall mountains: the Vedu Sefhra to the west, the Mantu to the north. In a country known in the ancient past as the Land of the Singing Rivers, only one now courses its way through this desert nation; down from the Mantu flows the Ry-Kara river. Only along its length is the land green and growing, where irrigated farms line its banks for miles. Without the spring floods, snowmelt from the Mantu, the fields of Ba-Dur would wither and die. But nestled in the foothills of the Mantu mountains there exists a valley, a paradise that is like a window into Ba-Dur's verdant past. The Biasra Valley is the most sacred place in all Ba-Dur, so sacred that none are permitted to enter its unmapped interior. Elite members of the Sh'taaz Fahrouk regularly patrol the Biasra, looking for intruders.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 8in.– 5ft. 11in. / 160-175lbs.

Eye Color: Light to Dark Brown.

Hair: Black (most men prefer bald).

Skin Color: Brass to Olive Brown.

Distinctive Characteristic: None. There are some Ba-Durai born with dark red hair and yellow eyes which is thought of as a sign of good fortune, those with this trait are usually adopted into the Umaud A'liid.

Gallios

"Our years of trial and struggle, so long ago yet close in our hearts and minds, has led us to this day, when we can embrace that which is our essential self… that which makes us what we are. We are not hedonists living in a world of wanton pleasures… pleasures some would consider unnatural… we seek only to better ourselves in the peace of our own land. We are content with our lot… for it was with our bodies and minds that we were able to achieve all that we have today. I was originally born in the Merchant Isles and when I heard of Gallios I knew that finally there was a place that could offer what no other place could. Without fear, I came to Gallios. Without fear, I stay… "

— Nandi minShaza, Emishir township, Gallios

History

Four centuries past, the Galliosi were one of Arivonne's most active resistance organizations. So effective were they in their acts of sabotage and harassment of Ianu Vossan interests that Arivonne came very close to suffering a full-fledged military occupation. Much to the surprise of the Galliosi, their fellow countrymen came to see them as a threat to their continued peace, and the support they once counted on vanished. The Galliosi had little choice but to withdraw or face the wrath of Ianu Voss. As one, they moved the entire sect to the far south of the country, beyond the reach of Ianu Voss and the people they had sworn to protect.



The seducer is seduced in the Courts of Ba-Dur.

On the rocky, inhospitable shores of southern Arivonne, the Galliosi devoted themselves to the codes and beliefs that united them in the beginning. Little understood, even when they were active in Arivonne, the sect of Va'an disciples believed in the perfection of the masculine, honing their minds, bodies, and spirits into a perfectly balanced being. Isolated and largely forgotten by the Arivonneans, they have settled into lives of meditation, scholarship, and the perfection of their martial skills.

Culture

There are no women in Gallios, and as such, there are no true "native" Galliosi. Men of many different nations are found in Gallios, drawn to those of like mind and interest. Life in Gallios is austere and centered around the practice of their brand of Va'an worship, and so many Galliosi depart their country to journey in other lands. In their travels they work at expanding their knowledge and practicing the skills they developed in Gallios, but most importantly they seek opportunities to right wrongs and fight injustice. The very beliefs that made them such a successful resistance organization four hundred years ago are still alive and strong in modern day Gallios. In truth, all the martial training they undergo is in preparation for the coming conflict they see growing between Arivonne and Ianu Voss. Though their countrymen turned against them, cast them out, and forgot them, the men of Gallios are ever ready to lend their swords in the struggle to keep Arivonne free.

Religion

The particular branch of Va'an belief practiced in Gallios is known as Omaru. It stresses the responsibility of the individual to the society as a whole (a concept well understood by the many Edyssian men who make the journey to Gallios) as well as the individual's responsibility to themselves. This responsibility requires them to perfect every single facet of their being and to keep their mind and body free of impurities (no drugs, no alcohol). The penultimate state of being that all Galliosi strive for is known as *Gonshim,* or "the perfect being." Only a handful of Galliosi have achieved this supremely enlightened state in their lifetimes, the sect's founder, Galin Rehn, being the first to do so.

Geography

There is little level ground in Gallios. The temples and monasteries of whitewashed stone lay nestled in the rocky valleys, or cling to the terraced faces of the hills. Because the land is so rocky, Rune Magic became a necessity to ensure that the men of Gallios could grow enough food to feed themselves. As it stands, they import much of the food they eat from Edyss, Talus, Harakyr, and from their old countrymen, Arivonne.

Average Description

The Galliosi are from a variety of regions; so physical descriptions depend on the character's original place of birth.

Harakyr

"I saw you when you came in, I knew instantly that you were one of them. Lyiss has smiled upon you. Oh, why do you look at me that way? She has chosen you, you should feel blessed that your time has come. The things you have seen, the places you have been… oh, me? No, I have never left Harakyr. Someday I may, oh yes, but for now I am content to run my father's hotel. I get to meet so many people. So many interesting faces and so many strong with Lyiss' favor. Bani Siri then my friend… good day. Oh, and be sure to visit the Veamara Armitulsi, the Gallery of Animation, they have some new dioramas installed. Bani Siri, my friend. Bani Siri."

— Alla Marceline, Hotel Samsaro, Salarozan, Harakyr

History

Harakyr and Talus once formed the land of Irimor. A nation of warring noble families, the pastoral southern province of Harakyr often found itself at the mercy of its more agressive countrymen in the north, and when it attempted to declare its indepenance it sparked one of the most brutal civil wars in recorded history. Only the intervention of many other nations brought an end to the bloodshed, and in the aftermath the small southern nation of Harakyr was born.

Harakyr has prospered, creating a society distinct from their ancestral neighbors to the north, Talus, but they have long since put aside any animosity they once harbored over the civil war that divided their country. Harakyr has since become a beneficial trading partner with Talus and abroad. Though not a power compared to Talus or the other Southern Empires, the nation of Harakyr has become synonymous with art and pastoral peace.

Culture

The Harakyri are a people content with their lot in life. They generally enjoy simple pleasures and wish no ill on anyone. Some criticize the Harakyri for remaining ignorant of the events shaping the world around them, but that is hardly the truth. The people of Harakyr are exceedingly curious about other cultures. What they are unable to glean from the foreign press and static-riddled radio broadcasts from Ianu Voss and Edyss, they gratefully pry from visitors to their land.

Harakyr is world renowned for its craftsmen, who churn out beautiful artwork, elegant furniture, durable tools and other metalworks, all of which find their way into nearly every nation in the known lands, from Cyroon to Ba-Dur, even the Dominion. Much of Harakyri life is centered around perfecting one's craft, and all the various Houses are very competitive when it comes to creating objects of great beauty or devices that are as functional as they complex.

Religion

The people of Harakyr have always been devout worshippers of the Seven Gods. Lyiss, however, has become the focus of their religious practices since the arrival of the Vandalusans three hundred years ago. They sum up the entirety of their Lyiss devotion into a single word, Padam, or "web." They understand very well the concept of Fate, how the actions of one can change the lives of many, and envision the bonds of fate as a massive web that spans the world. This would explain why spiders feature strongly in much of their art; they are sacred creatures. Harakyri are naturally very curious about the Chosen, and adventurers who come to their land can expect a great deal of interest in their activities. But daily religious life is devoted to the hundreds of different Saints prayed to by the Harakyri. Some Saints are regional, some are revered throughout the country, but all were once regular Harakyri who performed some deed that elevated their name to great status. The Saints represent almost every aspect of daily life. They include Saints of the Fields, Saints of Rain, Saints of Wells, Saints of Orchards, etc.

Geography

Harakyr is an incredibly beautiful land. The high Marstaff Range divides the eastern and western portions of the Daromao peninsula, and drops to rolling hills once it reaches the northern border of Harakyr. Much of the land is covered with lush forests, and the warm climate keeps Harakyr green throughout the year. In the warm central regions, away from the brisk ocean winds, Harakyri wineries blanket the gentle slopes of the hills. Harakyri wines are considered by many connoisseurs to be the finest, most flavorful found anywhere. The cities and towns of Harakyr seem to have been built to blend harmoniously with the landscape. Streets wind around ancient oaks and other geological features, buildings too, such that many foreigners get quickly lost in the twisting avenues of Harakyr's larger towns.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 135 to 150 lbs.

Eye Color: Hazel, Green, and Blue.

Skin Color: Alabaster white to a ruddy tan.

Hair Color: Black, brown, and red.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Harakyri have slim hands and long, dexterous fingers almost without exception.

Ianu Voss

"It is a great thing to be a Ianu Vossan. We were one of the first nations to rise from the ashes of the Endwar. We survived the War of the Fane without a scratch, and when the dust settled, we were on our way to achieving dominance among the world's nations. We do not need others, the conflicts of lesser countries matter not to us. If the meddling Kingdom of Vallunei would only follow our example and stop trying to be the police of the world, they too would learn prosperity and peace as we have. The Tilerian Empire is a paper tiger, only a threat when roused. Then don't rouse them! There are better ways to deal with the likes of Mirkule. More profitable ways."

— Sir Simon Tallihew Orfileus, Rear Admiral, from the battleship **Arsinor's Hand**

"This morning we stopped a small Arivonnean fishing ship, pulling netfulls of shulia from the straits. It is the fourth such ship we have found plying the straits this day and as with each, we board her and search her. With resistance activities on the rise and with Ianu Vossan ships being the main target in their assaults, the dictum of Command was that we were to search all Arivonnean craft in the waters close to the Ianu Vossan border. They protest, but they all do, but what are a few fishermen going to say to a fully armed Ianu Vossan frigate? I truly wish that it did not have to be this way. I know that my great great uncle's family emigrated to Arivonne long ago… some of these people might even be my kinsman. I know that in a sense all Arivonne are our kinsmen. Why do they feel the need to resist what should be a natural desire… to become once again a part of their ancestral home? I am regretful, but diligent in the consummation of my duties. I know that some day we will be able to grasp shoulders as brothers, for now I will continue to execute the orders of my superiors… I will continue to carry out the inspections… I will continue to tie weights to the ankles of suspected terrorists and drop them into the sea… it is as they tell us… no? That every Arivonnean pops out of the womb chanting rebel slogans."

— From the journal of Capt. Bedlan Norric, Arinos City, Ianu Voss

History

When the Fane era ended, Ianu Voss once again returned to the world stage as a superpower, but now found a rival in the north: the Kingdom of Vallunei. As the Treaty nations grew in power, Ianu Voss naturally sought to form lucrative trade pacts with the markets of the north, but much to their surprise found their efforts blocked, their entreaties rebuffed. Vallunei and its chief partner, Edyss, condemned Ianu Voss's support of the slave trade, *("Slaves? They are merely indentured. We grant them their freedom and citizenship once their debt has been paid."),* continued association with rogue nations such as Bhuket and the Theocracy of Dharsus, *("Who are these Valluneians to tell us who we may or may not trade with?"),* its strict and often brutal class system, *("They question our traditions? What gall."),* and its treatment of Arivonne, *("This is our nation, and our blood kin, who are they to interfere?").* Neither side willing to relent on any of the issues that divide them, Ianu Voss has remained stridently opposed to the Treaty while Vallunei and Edyss spend considerable effort to pressure Ianu Voss into compliance. In the end this has only pushed Ianu Voss and the Treaty's enemies closer. Though there had been a lull in Ianu Voss's ties with such nations as Klesht and the Dominion after the rise of the Treaty, in recent years they have formed strong diplomatic relations.

Culture

Ianu Vossan society is clearly divided between the Aristocracy and the peasantry. In the days of Eriman, the ruling Aristocracy was made up exclusively by the noble class, but as the influence of peasant-class merchants and military personnel grew, they too were elevated to the Aristocracy. But it remains that the majority of Ianu Vossan citizens are of the peasant class. They who till the fields, clean the streets, tend the livestock and a million other necessary occupations, the peasants have only recently been given rights considered inherent by many other lands. But those rights still fail to include the right to hold public office, the right to own land, the right to study Rune Magic, and forbids access to many services available only to the Aristocracy. Ianu Voss may tout the new freedoms offered to the peasantry, but any who openly question the social order are dealt with swiftly and severely. Centuries of tradition, however, have led the majority of them to accept their lot, and dissention is rare. Many prefer to work within the system, hoping perhaps to make their fortune as a merchant or struggle up the ranks of the military, in hopes of being inducted into the Aristocracy.

But across all social lines, the Ianu Vossans are proud of their country. It endured the Endwar, survived the rise of the Fane, and is still a preeminent superpower, not only in the south, but also in the world. While the King is merely a figurehead, the people see him as a living embodiment of Ianu Voss' greatness, its history, and its grandeur. Ianu Vossans love a parade. True power resides in the hands of a small number of unknown, unseen, and unnamed Aristocrats.

The Code of Arsinor, once the hallmark of Erimani society, has long since fallen from power. Though the King remains the head of the Council of Arsinor the rise of the Aristocrat shadow government displaced both the Council and the Code as Ianu Voss' guiding force. The Knights of Arsinor are still the romanticized heroes of Ianu Voss, but many true Knights are either abandoning the Code or even their own country in disgust.

Religion

There is no single dominant religion in Ianu Voss, apart from the worship of Ianu Voss' greatness. The peasantry privately worships the Seven Gods under a variety of different aspects, while the Aristocracy has largely abandoned religious practice. Ianu Voss is a strictly patriarchal society, and so some of the Aristocracy belong to the Church of the High Father, a powerful Va'an sect that dates back to the time of Eriman. The peasantry is allowed to practice any religion it likes, but they are not allowed to be ordained priests of any church — this is a right held exclusively by the Aristocracy.

Geography

Ianu Voss is far less mountainous than the Arivonne subcontinent, consisting of expansive forests and rolling, grass-covered hills. Ianu Voss has been blessed with thousands of miles of coastline, which provide it limitless ports and shipyards, which have contributed to its naval strength. The land is incredibly fertile and Ianu Vossan farms are so productive that is has no need to import supplementary foodstuffs, and in fact runs with a surplus every year. This surplus food finds its way into markets throughout the known lands, fattening the coffers of the land-

owning Aristocracy.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in.– 5ft. 9in./ 135 to 170 lbs.

Eye Color: Light to dark blue and green.

Skin Color: White to lightly tan.

Hair Color: Light to strawberry blonde, light brown.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

The Merchant Isles

"Here in the pleasant blue waters of the Sea of Anjur lies the islands where all can be had, all can be purchased. From the pirates of the Sea of the Seven Gods comes contraband from the Theocracy. Here can be found the Valda'Bei from Ba-Dur. Where else can you rub shoulders with merchants from all the Kingdoms, enemies and allies alike? If you want it, it can be found in the Merchant Isles."

— Ambrose Delacroix, Entrepreneurial Investor

History

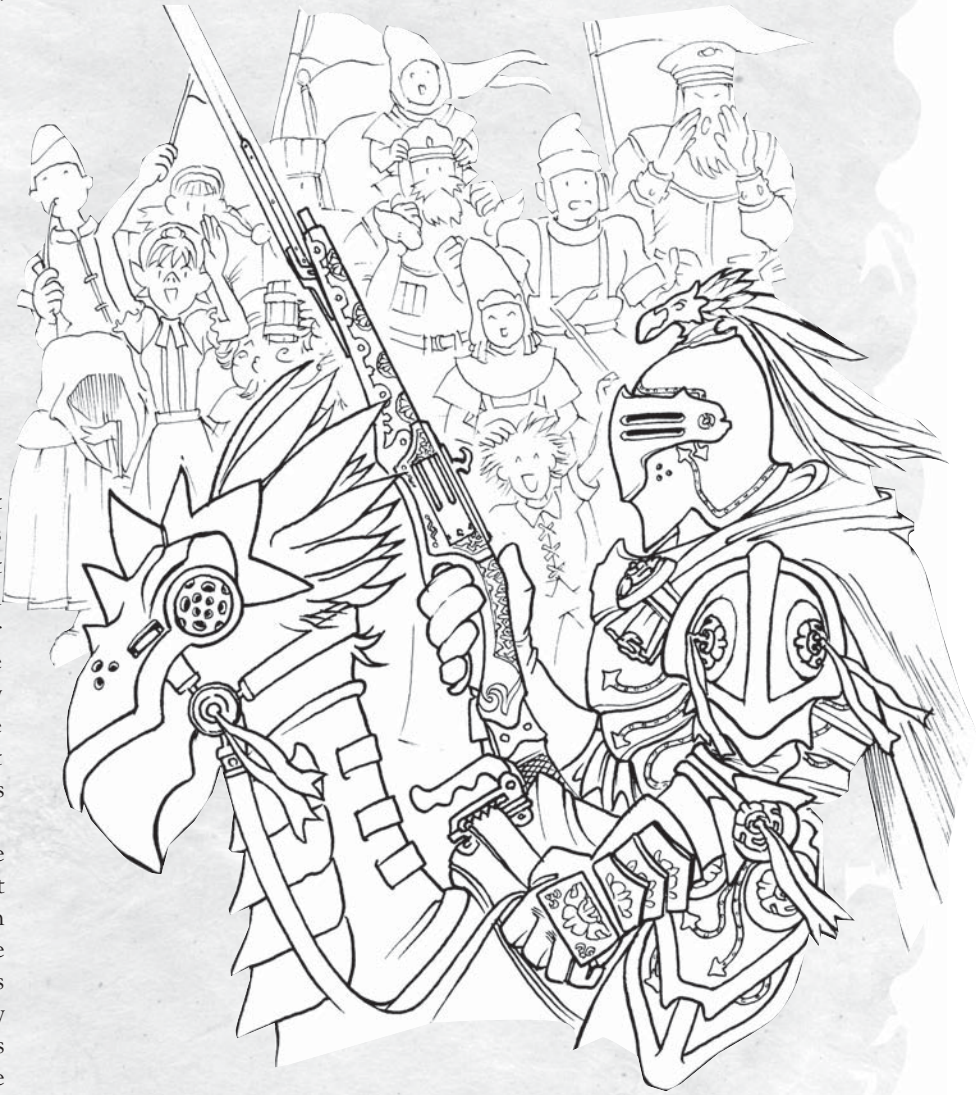
Traders from Ianu Voss, Ba-Dur, and Saraband, who used the Isles as a neutral trading territory, first settled the Merchant Isles. When Irimor was eventually admitted into this trading union, the Merchant Isles became the center for all mutual commerce in the Southern Empires.

The Merchant Islanders were left politically adrift when the Fane arose to spread terror across the lands. Into this power vacuum there came the pirates, who warred with each other over the right to rule the Isles, with the native Merchant Islanders left to fend for themselves. The Vermillion Coast pirate queen, Crimson Lil and her Black Fleet would eventually defeat her enemies to claim the Isles for her own. So began the Merchant Isles long line of pirate kings and queens, their reigns generally ceasing at the end of an assassin's blade. For the centuries that followed, the pirates of the Merchant Isles plagued the southern seas and the communities that bordered them.

With the defeat of the Fane, nations were once again eager to barter and trade. The Merchant Islanders, who had for so long depended upon piracy for their livelihood, saw the greater fortune to be made once they opened the Isles for trade as they had been in the beginning. No longer a colony shared by the Southern Empires, the Merchant Isles were a nation unto themselves, and they would be more than happy to let any and all come to their Isles to trade... for a price.

Culture

The lives of the Merchant Islanders revolve around two things: the sea and trade. Every Merchant Islander is involved with the commerce that takes place upon the Isles, in one way or another. Either they are merchants themselves, are go-betweens for various foreign merchants, or own businesses on the Isles that cater to foreign visitors. The Merchant Isles are a dangerous place for the unwary, for as much legal commerce that transpires, there are a dozen more back-room deals and other criminal enterprises taking place. The native Merchant Islanders have naturally adapted to this rough environment, living comfortably in the fuzzy



A Knight of Arsinor on parade in Ianu Voss.

gray middle ground as not quite criminal, not quite legitimate merchants. The Islanders don't even see things in such easily defined terms. One merely does what one must to survive in the Isles. No excuses, no apologies.

Religion

Religion is not a large part of Merchant Islander life. Some Islanders worship the Seven, surely, but what rituals they practice and what dogma they follow changes from individual to individual. The idea that strong religious belief can get in the way of business is the common, yet unspoken, thought in the Isles. But with the live-and-let-live attitude that prevails in the Isles, so long as one does not force their beliefs upon you, why should you care what god they pray to?

Geography

The Merchant Isles number three thousand and forty nine islands. Some are miles wide, while others are uninhabited atolls and jungle islands. Travel between the islands is usually accomplished with a wide shallow boat called a Jonto. Because the average depth of water between the islands is five to twelve feet, Jonto drivers propel their craft with long poles. Coral beds and dangerous sea creatures such as sea scarabs and flechette fish make the journey even more hazardous. Winding its way from the sea past many islands is the deep-water Brimalder Channel, the only place larger ships may reach the capital island of Rimbui, located at the center of the Merchant Isles. Most of the islands have no permanent inhabitants, but nearly all host some sort of merchant activity. Some islands are devoted to a single type of trade, or are "owned" by a single merchant or merchant organization. The more questionable a product or its source, the more likely they're to have an island to themselves, where only those who are invited, who know exactly which of the hundreds of unnamed isles they're looking for, may land upon its shores. Kleshti selling more esoteric wares generally have an island to themselves, as do most slave traders.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 6in. – 5ft. 9in./ 145 to 170 lbs

Eye Color: Hazel and brown.

Skin Color: Ruddy brown.

Hair Color: Black, brown, and ginger.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Many say that you can tell a Merchant Islander by his feet; which are calloused from walking bare-foot on crushed coral beaches and planked floors.

Talus

"We of Talus, we are a passionate people. You have heard of I am sure of the Evusha, the spirit of romance, faith, and justice that beats strong within the heart of every Talusian. Our lives in our brightly colored cities, in our sprawling vineyards, in the smooth execution of assassins, in the beauty of a deftly woven rune, in the torrid coupling of men and women — these are the spirit of Evusha. Such is the spirit of Talus. To live any other way is a waste of the precious life that the Seven Gods have given!"

— Juan Olivios De Plata,
Assassin of the House of Jagged Knives

History

The old nation of Irimor was a warlike land that for centuries was the bane of the Southern Empires. Though it would eventually abandon its dreams of conquest, the culture itself never lost is agressive nature. This agressiveness would result in the deaths of untold thousands when the southern province of Harakyr attempted to seceed from Irimor. Once Harakyr was given its independance, a popular revolt saw the final end of the brutal Irimor and the rise of the Talusian Houses, who tempered their society's often violent passions through art, culture, and the persuit of pleasure. They have prospered in the eleven hundren years since the civil war divided Irimor, becoming a great power in the Known Lands, a nation of magi, assassins, artists, and lovers.

Culture

In Talusian society, the concepts of honor and justice are paramount, but the dark flipside of this is their strong sense of vengeance and face. To lose face, to have one's honor stained is cause for bloody vengeance. Talusians are quick to laugh and smile, but they are also quick to anger and will do everything in their power to avenge an injury done to their honor and the honor of their House. And so in Talus, dueling and assassination are the preferred forms of social justice. Sanctioned by the state, assassins work under a complex system of rules and codes. Assassinations motivated purely by greed or political advancement are not considered just cause, and any House caught in the act of such an assassination can find their reputation greatly damaged, sometimes beyond repair.

Talusian Houses themselves are made up of large extended families. Each House may operate in a number of different guilds, the guilds themselves made up of members from different, allied Houses. A particular House may specialize in a particular skill or tradition, while the guilds exist solely to produce and market these talents and products. Some Houses are more selective than others. The Assassin Houses in particular keep their traditions within the family, though many have a sideline business in association with other Houses and through a single guild.

Religion

Talus' long tradition of Rune Magic has ensured its devotion to the Seven, though there is no single dominant faith. Similar to Harakyr, individual Houses revere particular saints. Some are ancestors of the House, others are aspects of one of the Seven. But either way, all Houses pay regular homage to their ancestors, with elaborate shrines and rituals. If one were to look for a common religious thread in Talusian society it would be a worship of the

Seven Gods collectively, as the Creators. There are churches in Talus, but since most Houses possess their own private places of worship, public churches represent an all-encompassing faith in the Seven.

Geography

Though the Daromao peninsula was devastated during the Endwar, the decades that followed the war's aftermath saw a gradual return to the lush green of its past. To this day there are few reminders that the Endwar had ever struck this beautiful land. Separating the peninsula, from its farthest northern border to the gentle green hills extending into the south, the mountains of the Marstaff split its east and western coasts. The Marstaff Mountains have further divided the populace into the peoples of the west and east, each characterizing the other with predictable stereotypes and half-hearted rivalry. The Marstaff are known for their picturesque, forest covered slopes. Though not nearly as high as the mountains of Ballinor, the Marstaff hide many isolated valleys where some of the more secretive Houses have their estates. Outsiders are not welcome there, and visitors are reminded to remain on the well-marked roads that connect the eastern and western coasts.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 135 to 150 lbs

Eye Color: Hazel, Green, and Blue.

Skin Color: White to an auburn tan.

Hair Color: Black, brown, and red.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: The men and women of Talus wear their hair much longer then their Harakyri cousins and in social situations it is always perfumed with pomades that are distinctly Talusian.

INDEPENDENT NATIONS OF THE FANE

Very few Fane survived the war of their birth two thousand years ago. Of the hundred or so Fane who tore across Zir'An, only three exist outside of Mirkule's hegemony. For these three, only a hasty withdrawal behind their borders kept them safe from Kah's wrath. They have existed since that time in relative exile. Their borders shut, they maintain a stranglehold upon their people; if they cannot rule the world then they shall rule part of it, and absolutely. In the aftermath of the War of the Fane these are small nations, with little impact upon the world around them.

Still, the Fane's dreams of power persist. It is fear that keeps them docile at the moment. To venture forth would be to encourage the return of Kah, as he had promised so long ago, or to risk absorption or destruction at the hands of Mirkule and his satellite powers. So safely ensconced within their homes, these three Fane content themselves with the utter subjugation of their people.

Bhuket

"These are sad times we live in my Brothers… when the Great Bell sounds, calling the sacrifices before the despoiler Lhar. Some of those sacrifices are our fellow disciples, my Brothers. The people are blinded by his radiance and the lure of gold. The people sing his praises while he taxes them to poverty. The world lays ignorant while the slave caravans pass unseen through their lands upon the Hidden Paths of Gold. Lhar killed our Shepherd and we are his lost disciples. We are the Screaming Fist, striking at the core of that heart borne of darkness… Lhar. When will our hands howl in fury, my brothers?"

— Nu-Zheng Su, Shree Kat Master,
Chomba Waeo Monastery

History

From the high plateaus of Bhukai province came the child prophet, Lhar Zhang-lei. A quiet child borne upon a golden palanquin by his devoted followers, young Lhar was merely one among thousands who claimed to possess the true faith. But unlike those many false prophets, Lhar was able to conjure miracles, and his melodious voice (when he chose to speak) captured the hearts and minds of all who heard it. It was not long before Lhar's cult outnumbered those of other faiths, and soon his followers were warring with and defeating all who opposed him. With the rise of the Fane spreading panic even to this isolated country, the people were desperate for leadership. Lhar, the God-Child, was placed upon the golden throne and declared the supreme spiritual ruler of their nation.

Culture

Within the cities, the devotion to Lhar and Bhuket is the strongest, reinforced daily by the B'hai Lhar militia and the creeping influence that emanates from the bloated lord of Bhuket. It is in the cities where the business of running the country takes place, and so all citizens contribute in some way to fulfilling Lhar's vision of Bhuket. In the mountain villages, where much of Bhuket's food is grown, the people are not as inundated with Lhar's will as are those in the cities. They provide the food to feed the citizenry, but their devotion to Lhar is enforced mostly through threats made by the B'hai Lhar. It is in the mountain villages where the Screaming Fist are most active, though they try to limit their reliance on the mountain towns.

Religion

Lhar uses his powers as a Fane to sap the wills of the populace, heaping praise and dreams of glory upon the people while at the same time suppressing their freedoms and ruthlessly rooting out dissidents, real or imagined. More than any other ruling Fane, Lhar demands his people worship him as a Living God. Prayer is daily and compulsory in the cities. Most, if not all of the devoted have never even heard the names of the Seven Gods before, and the concept of a god other than Lhar is simply ludicrous, if not outright blasphemous.

The other side of religious life in Bhuket is that of Koba and

the Screaming Fist. Koba is based on the teachings of Sahlru Ne, a shepherd who tended his flock on the lower slopes of southern Bhuket in the years before and during the rise of Lhar. Its practitioners were hunted down and if they would not recant, they were killed. Koba persists to this day because of the dedication of its followers and the hidden monasteries that lie scattered through Bhuket's rugged terrain. In the remote mountain villages, Koba is practiced in secret. It has no holy book nor any religious iconography. Its teachings are summed up in the "74 Questions of Koba," seventy-four simple, yet profound moral riddles meant to turn one's mind inward. The seventy-four questions are memorized and passed on by word of mouth.

Geography

Bhuket is a land of high plateaus and indomitable mountains. The highest mountains in all of Zir'An are in Bhuket, the towering 36,028-foot peak of mount Layahai being the greatest. Layahai is the "first mountain," the place of Lhar's birth from where he descended to create Bhuket. Its peak has yet to be summited; it is a sacred place and is off-limits to all Bhuket's citizens. Four other of Zir'An's highest peaks are also in Bhuket: Kenchang, at 30,120 feet; Joubo Che, at 28,002 feet; 26,720 foot Ambon Che; and the high bluff of Sangbon Che, at 23, 680 feet. There is a reason these high mountains form the range known as the Mantu, or in the old Tchan Tun dialect, the Hadha Che, the "Mountains of Gold." Bhuket relies on its vast gold mines for much of its livelihood, forming the basis of its trade with outside countries. Gold objects, ingots, and crafts from Bhuket can be found in markets as diverse as Ianu Voss, Talus, and the Merchant Isles; which, since its borders are closed to foreigners, is the central trading location for Bhuketi merchants and gold dealers. Lhar rules from Bhuket's capital, Kalesh'leng, in a palace covered entirely in gold leaf.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 140 to 150 lbs.

Eye Color: Dark Brown.

Skin Color: Yellow to light brown.

Hair Color: Dark Brown & Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: An interesting trait amongst urban Bhuketi are their differences in hairstyles depending on the province your are born in. To the north, men are bald save for a small patch slicked down to a curve on the brow. South-eastern royalty have very long complex bejeweled braids. The list can go on (and styles can change quite frequently at times, depending on the whims of Lhar's court).

The Fire Reaches

"The night is lit by the fire of the forges. It is a good sight. It makes us strong. The iron from the ground is in our blood. It makes us strong. Our king is Valkan. He is Fane. He is strong. We sing his praises and he makes us strong. I work for Group-Six. Group-Six's iron quota is up fourteen percent. Valkan tells us we are strong. That we are the best. That this week our foreman will not be fed to the fires. This week our quota is good. This makes us strong. By day I work in the refinery, making iron from rock. By night I go to the shop temple and pray to Valkan, to make the Fire Reaches strong. Though the window I see the Group-Six factory. It is a wonderful sight to see. I am strong."

— Gounda Sim, Group-Six worker, Dolban Refinery

History

The Fire Reaches were discovered in the first century after the Endwar, by a Ianu Vossan expeditionary fleet. There they discovered a primitive tribal culture living among the volcanoes and worshipping the fire that plumed from their summits. The captains of the Ianu Vossan fleet soon discovered the massive amounts of raw iron the land contained. Over the span of centuries they exploited the people of the Fire Reaches for the metal that seemed to virtually spring up from the very ground. After generation upon generation of abuse, the Gogachi, as simple minded as they are, had finally reached a breaking point. They called upon their sacred volcanoes for a savior, someone to drive the oppressors from their lands. The Ianu Vossans living on the Fire Reaches, managing the extraction of the iron ore, laughed at the simplistic mutterings and requests for succor made by the dim-witted Gogachi. That laughter died, however, for from the very lava arose the Gogachi champion Valkan. The Ianu Vossans were ill prepared for the ferocity and undeniable power wielded by Valkan, who rained magma and flaming boulders upon the Ianu Vossan enclaves and continued the attack until the survivors fled the island in their ships. Of the hundreds of Ianu Vossans who once populated the Fire Reaches, only a handful survived, never to return.

Culture

The people of the Fire Reaches are organized into labor groups. Once in a labor group, the Gogachi is identified as a member of the group forever. They live in the group housing. All of one's acquaintances and family will be of that group. Gogachi live and die in the same group, as will their children and grandchildren after them. The only time groups meet is in a communal mating ceremony once a month. Group housing generally takes the form of huge apartment complexes connected by causeways and tunnels to their own refinery. Living atop the complex is the group's foreman, part boss, administrator, governor, judge, jury, and high priest of Valkan. It is the foreman who is punished if the group's quota drops below accepted levels. The foreman's rule is unquestioned within the group as he passes the missives of Valkan along to the people.

Ritual and repetition are very important in the lives of the Gogachi; they crave it. Even when removed from their ordered lives in the Fire Reaches, Gogachi invent regular rituals for themselves. From their simple, even childlike, perspective, a life

without order and rules is no life at all. It doesn't make sense. And when life does not make sense to the Gogachi, they become disoriented, even violent.

Religion

Valkan rules over the Gogachi like a stern parent, dispensing punishments and rewards with equal measure. Those who work hard and consistently produce the raw metals needed to support the Fire Reaches economy are granted many luxuries but those who fail are consumed in sudden magma flows, directed solely by the will of Valkan. To the Gogachi, this is just payment for failing to work hard. As their beliefs tie them to the volcanoes and the iron it produces they put great faith in the concept of reincarnation. Death is merely a transition that leads to eventual rebirth in the fires, where their impurities are burned away.

Geography

The Fire Reaches were born from the lava flows of six great volcanoes: Shodja, Dolban, Gomchan, Ulgashor, Dagishiell, and Dom Shom. The land is characterized by its birth, with vast expanses of black, craggy volcanic rock, brightly colored deserts, and boiling fumaroles. From centuries of unchecked refining the land is saturated with toxic waste products, utterly dead of flora and fauna. The air is constantly hazy with the fumes of the refineries and the ash of the six volcanoes, making it extremely unhealthy for those who visit the Fire Reaches' forbidding shores.

Average Description

See Peoples of Zir'An, Chapter 4.

The Theocracy of Dharsus

"I have never known a life without fear. We struggled to be good citizens. We only wished to work and live in peace, we cared not who led us or to who we must pray, just a life without fear. I had never known it… our country has always been under the thumb of tyrants ever since the Endwar. It matters not if we are ruled by the Overseers or Markhaine the Black… I do not know… we tried to be what our leaders wished us to be… I am not one for dissent… But then is freedom then an impossible goal? Is the price of reaching for that goal worth the blood and pain it will need? Tyranny never changes… the rulers merely exchange hats, but their evil is the same."

— Lunziel Heik, Dharsuan expatriate, Vallunei City

History

In the beautiful waters of the Sea of Anjur lies a little island nation ruled by fear. From the time of the Endwar, the nation of Saraband was ruled by an autocratic elite of Runemages known as the Council of the Forbidden. The citizenry lived as servile slaves to the Magi of the Council, who controlled every aspect of their lives. In the aftermath of the sectarian conflict that transformed Vandalusa, some of their hard-liners emigrated to Saraband. Within a short span of time, the émigrés were inducted into the Council. This was the first time Shadowmages became a part of the Council, and their presence caused friction among the Sarabandi magi. Among the Vandalusan émigrés was Markhaine, a Shadowmage of exceptional power, which he used to consolidate control in the Council. When the opposition finally took action against Markhaine, they triggered the emergence of his true nature. The coup was quick and terrible, as none who opposed Markhaine survived.

As the years progressed, however, a creeping madness overcame the Fane ruler of Dharsus. Markhaine withdrew completely, speaking only to a handpicked few. The Overseers were left to govern the Theocracy, while its Fane lord lapsed into a slumber from which he rarely awoke. This suited the Overseers' desires perfectly. They were its rulers, now that the Fane lay in his Onyx Tower dreaming. But when night fell, Marhkaine's power gave his nightmares flesh and freedom to wander the city streets. Those they did not devour were driven mad. By day the Overseers command complete obedience, but creatures born from the darkest fears a mind can conjure rule the night.

Culture

The Theocracy, from the Overseers on down to the peasant citizenry and captured slaves, has had to adjust to the nightly wanderings of Markhaine's nightmare creations. The citizenry are put to labor by day while the Overseers bark their commands to work faster. They *must* work fast, for all must be indoors once the sun sets and the Dreaming Lord of Dharsus visits his nightmares on the world again.

The Overseers live in a state of luxury, just as the magi of the Council did in old Saraband. The common citizenry live in spartan apartments or huts, where the state provides everything from their clothing to their food. The Overseers greatly restrict the freedoms of the common citizenry. They are not allowed to leave the country, travel within the Theocracy without express permission of the Overseers, or even to speak to a foreigner.

Because of the nightly terrors, all the buildings in the Theocracy have doors, but no windows. The windowless buildings of Dharsus are one of the first things one notices when arriving in that country.

Religion

Though the country is dubbed a "Theocracy," there is very little religion practiced in this oppressive land. The Overseers do not enforce any rituals or teach any dogma. The people are made to labor hard for the benefit of the Overseers, who do not dress it in the trappings of religion. To their "Lord" they pay little more than lip service. He is portrayed as a dark, angry god who exists merely to punish them. Locking a citizen outside at night as a form of punishment is a very common practice. If they survive the night, they are allowed to live. Sometimes.

Geography

The island of the Theocracy is a green and pleasant land, with rolling, stone capped hills and lush forests. The flat lands are a

grid of well tended fields while its cities are all identical in shape and appearance, a cluster of whitewashed buildings arranged in a circle around a central tower, the Overseers' tower. Surrounding each city is a high wall, meant to keep people in more than to keep them out. The rare, ornamental wood Crimson Rysil grows only on the Theocracy, and as they tear up forests of it (to drive up the price, presumably), farm fields are laid down in their place.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 7in./ 135 to 150 lbs.

Eye Color: Light to Dark Brown.

Skin Color: Yellow to Tawny brown.

Hair Color: Dark Brown to Jet Black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

THE FORSAKEN LANDS

Dangerous and mysterious, these lands are the home of ferocious beasts and fantastic treasures, though most sane Ianer know well enough to stay far, far away. These forbidding territories do have their indigenous peoples, but their lot is so difficult and survival so much a daily concern, that these countries have little political presence in the larger context. These lands are the unmapped darkness that sometimes swallow adventurers whole, with secrets even more ancient than the pre-Endwar nations. Treasures are no doubt hidden in forgotten places, guarded by beasts that only the heroic could possibly defeat. Nevertheless, some find the risk worth the reward, as hardy Adventurers have brought priceless items of ancient technology from the wastes of the Periphery and Darkfall. The mysterious folk that dwell in the swamps of Mikesh and Neoll have guarded their land successfully against even the Tilerian invasions... who knows what gave them the power to do so, and what they're protecting?

Darkfall

"On the tenth day of drifting in the current, we could make out a line of ships on the horizon. Some thought that perhaps we were to be saved, but as we neared, we saw not a fleet of healthy ships, but a graveyard. The masts were like a forest. Some still had sails hanging torn from her crossbeams. The ships were pressed in tight together, leaning this way and that, you could have walked for miles across them without fear of touching water. We knew what would become of us then. Our boat would join theirs, and here we'd stay until the Hungry God came to take us. Someone on the deck shouted and pointed at the nearing wrecks. I could see people slowly emerging from the holds. They didn't wave or call. They merely waited. Silent as the dead."

— Primos Prioredes, lone survivor of the Thraycean fishing ship **The Trisianos**

History

Darkfall has remained vacant and unexplored by most adventurers, while at the same time being a powerful lure to daring (or simply insane) individuals. These adventurers are either never seen again or are reluctant to recount their travels through this dead land. What frightens many purveyors of forgotten lore is the strong bond shared by the Dominion's Violet Circle with Darkfall, both in its current barren state and with its past as the Society of Merkulian. Fragments of discovered Merkulian texts draw ominous similarities between their dark practices and the rituals of the Violet Circle. It is possible that in some way the Merkulian magi live on in the Tzerte Viazhe.

Culture

It is unknown whether any remnants of the Society survived the Endwar – unless they have since evolved into the many dangerous Shadekin that roam the wastes in Darkfall. The land's only apparent inheritors are plague spiders and hungering shadows, forever making Darkfall a subject of study best viewed at a distance.

Religion

Though there is no indigenous culture in Darkfall, save the Shadekin who prowl its wastes, some members of the Violet Circle have been known to travel through it in search of inspiration or perhaps lore of the past among Darkfall's numerous ruins. To some Tzerte Viazhe, though, Darkfall is an unholy place where the power of darkness reigns in a raw, primeval form.

Geography

The borders of Darkfall are marked by the gently sloping rim of a crater thousands of miles in circumference. It is a land of ash and rock where the ruins of the past poke from empty fields of ever shifting dust. The waters of the Ananshar Ocean have long since flowed into much of the crater, forming a vast inlet bay that has been dubbed by cautious Thraycean seafarers as the Sea of Screams. A powerful current runs north along the Thraycean coast that purportedly leads directly to a small island in the center of this crater-walled ocean. Many ships that have strayed too far north have been caught in this current (called the Tongue of the Hungry God), never to be seen again. What lies in the depths of Darkfall is open to speculation – theories abound of vast treasure hordes left unclaimed, and of a tower upon the land's central isle where the Hungry God itself resides, awaiting the arrival of lost souls snared by its Tongue.

Average Description

Unknown at this time.

Dorallia

"Gingald overheard some men talking in the tavern about their plan to enter Dorallia. Once he pointed them out, I knew immediately they were not scholars. They were not even Dolonorri. They had the look of treasure-hunters about them, mercenaries looking for an easy Flat. It

boiled my blood that they thought of looting the graves of my ancestors. Gringald, Theofal, and I followed them back to the hostel where they were staying. We'd wait for them to fall asleep before we made our way inside. The woman behind the counter was Dolonorri, luckily, so it did not take much to get the men's room number. Theofal carried with him a Silent Bell, his Hrondim talisman, and so concealed all sound of our entrance into their room. We'd give them such a rude awakening that they'd think twice about making their fortunes on the graves of our people."

— Mendus Gorthrim, Gravenwald City, Ballinor

History

Dorallia was the last of the old Dolonorri Havens. The arrival of Mirkule in their lands hastened their decline and those that did not flee were either slain or absorbed into Mirkule's army, the survivors would find little safety in other lands, who were hosting Fane of their own. In the end, save the Dolonorri who were living in Ballinor, not a single citizen of Dorallia survived the Fane era.

Since that time Dorallia has remained empty, its cities left to ruin. Many say the spirits of the slain Dolonorri haunts the land. Its grim reputation keeps most from daring its ruins. Explorers from Ballinor have hiked its mountains and studied its ruins. All of them remark upon the overwhelming sense of sadness that pervades the region. None have admitted to exploring the deeper underground complexes. The underground cities are like mausoleums, and modern Dolonorri respect them as such. Never let a Dolonorri hear that you plan to go to Dorallia to seek your fortune. To enter Dorallia for such a purpose is tantamount to grave robbing. Most advise that you respect the ancient Dolonorri homeland and leave it be.



An ancient Dolonorri ruin in Dorallia.

Culture

Though there is no active culture there today, modern Dolonorri have begun to turn their sights on their lost homeland. They have largely stayed away, the memories it evokes too strong even after all these centuries. But with their numbers dwindling, they dream of returning it to its former glory or at least living out their remaining years in the home of their ancestors.

Religion

There is no currently active religion in Dorallia. Modern Dolonorri, however, make occasional trips to Dorallia to commune with the spirits of their slain ancestors. Their stays are generally short, and they do not explore the ruins in search of Dorallia's secrets. Some do stay for extended periods, walking the same path as their long dead brethren. They connect with their history in a way impossible anywhere but Dorallia. They also protect the sanctity of the ruins by watching out for potential treasure hunters and other opportunistic adventurers.

Geography

The land of Dorallia is home to craggy mountains of granite that shelter boulder-strewn valleys. This far north, this high up, there is very little that is green in Dorallia. To the west towards Illestan and the north bordering the Duchy of Barren Moor, the jagged peaks slowly descend to dusty flatlands. The ruins of Dorallia generally sit at the bases of the largest peaks, where their structures precede the mouth of the mountain itself, the entrance to the underground domains of the Dolonorri. Most of the ruins barely resemble the cities they once were, the jumbled stones of their construction littering the valley floors. Some Dolonorri believe that an extensive network of tunnels connects the Haven of Dorallia to the other Dolonorri homelands scattered across the world.

Mikesh

"Another family was taken, or so the fungi tender from Tuppot village told me. Sub-chief Arros, his wife and children, taken in the night. The fungi tender tells me that some of the other Gatherers are going to form a hunting party and hunt the Shikuru to their lair. But I had seen the Sub-chief only two nights before, a time after he had disappeared. But I did not want to tell the fungi tender that. Or what else I saw that night either. A mile off the Kishtin trail I saw a standing stone like none I have seen in this land ever. As smooth as a still river, black as the night, I saw people kneeling before it, I heard their low voices, I saw the red moon reflected in its surface. I saw Sub-chief Arros raise a war club over a squirming bundle set upon the ground before him. I saw no more than that, for I could not bear to look and had fled back to the comfort of the marked trail."

— Oogot Brag, Tegesk village, Mikesh

History

Far to the west, beyond all the Neolli tribe lands, a tiny nation of primitive Ianer remained undiscovered until Edyssian explorers happened upon them by accident in 2816. The Mikeshi had always believed that they were the only survivors of the Endwar. For in their native tongue, Mikeshi translates as "the Last People."

Over the next century, the land was visited frequently by explorers and scholars from Vallunei to Ianu Voss. The last known survivors of the Endwar had finally been accounted for. The Mikeshi were mostly grateful to have such interesting visitors; a few Mikeshi even asked to go with the Edyssians when they returned home. After those first few, more Mikeshi felt the call of unexplored realms and eagerly, if not a little sadly, left their homeland to see the world. Eventually, though, the stream of foreigners to their land dwindled until the Mikeshi were alone once more. The hundreds of treacherous miles between them and the nearest civilization, the voracious predators and the swarms of parasites have kept all but the most ardent adventurers from making the journey.

Culture

The Mikeshi culture began as a single tribe that founded its first settlement a decade after the Endwar. They managed to overcome the tremendous obstacles set before them and from that first walled village expanded outward to settle the four corners of Mikesh. Because all the current tribes can trace their lineage back to the first, all recognize each other as kin. As they describe themselves they are many tribes but one people. Without this unity, they might not have survived to the present day. Though some of their number depart Mikesh to see the world, most do not. They see the rest of the world as a strange, far-off thing that has little effect on their lives. So they live much as they have for centuries, traveling from Tribehome to village, trading their wares and spreading the news of Mikesh. It is a simple life, but it is a good enough life for many Mikeshi.

Religion

The ancient ancestors of the Mikeshi had lost everything to the Endwar. They lost their gods, their faith, and the tool of their religion, Rune Magic. In a hostile world where death lurked around every corner, the Mikeshi developed a faith built around ritual and superstition. They fought with the swamp and its creatures, even sacrificing a single villager in hopes of appeasing the beasts that hunted them. The Mikeshi would come to re-learn the art of Runemagery, in dreams and other altered states of consciousness. Their land, though dangerous and drear, pulses with life, with the power of Drandlur. Through Drandlur's domain, the Mikeshi learned how to live in harmony with the swamp and its denizens. Her power saved their culture, and so the Mikeshi are entirely devoted to Drandlur. Though their mythology does tell of *Seven Empty Thrones,* they insist that Drandlur is still alive, and living in Mikesh. To them, the swamp *is* Drandlur.

Geography

Mikesh is a large island separated from the Neolli tribal lands by three to ten-mile wide ocean straits. The land is a single continuous mangrove swamp. For miles inward from the coast, the



A Mikeshi boy at home in the jungles of his homeland.

interlaced roots of the trees are the only hard ground upon which to stand. Toward the interior, though, the ground eventually rises above the bog, and the mangroves give way to a more diverse jungle. This is the home of the Mikeshi. The temperature is often cold in this northerly region, where it is damp and rainy most of the year. The native Mikeshi get around on well-established trails and through the thousands of miles of rivers and streams that course through their land. The river water is brackish, and so the Mikeshi are 100% dependant upon the rains for their drinking water.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 4in. – 5ft. 6in./ 135 to 155 lbs.

Eye Color: Brown.

Skin Color: Tawny to dark brown.

Hair Color: Brown to black.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: Like the Dolonorri and the Anazoulo of the Periphery many Mikeshi adorn their bodies with large piercings and tribal tattoos.

Neoll

"My brothers ran a pace behind the soft skin. They flanked him as I came up from behind. This had been a long hunt, and all of us could hear it breathing hard, blood pounding as its legs carried it forward. My, how these soft skins do run slowly. And so clumsy looking. But it was weighed down with one of our Tribe's sacred stones. And we were here to get it back. My brothers cut ahead of the soft skinned thief and made loud their howls, to startle our prey. He slowed, not knowing I was right behind him. I leapt and we both rolled in the tall grasses. I sat atop his chest and stared into his pudgy face, mouth open in fear. "Why do you take things that are not yours, soft skin?" I say, but he cannot understand me. But I don't care. We get him to his feet and return him to the Tribe. The Rukhaz will decide his fate, but I lick my lips as I look to him. He has a lot of flesh on him."

— Tikikili, Neolli tribesman, Neoll

History

The rise of the Neolli would leave a lasting mark upon the entire western world. Cyroon's rule of the Solda Nosh would hinge on his early victory against the Neolli. The Western Provinces of Vallunei would unite to protect themselves from Neolli aggression. Edyss' entire civilization was nearly wiped out by a massive Neolli invasion. And the people of Mikesh remained isolated from the rest of the world for twenty-eight centuries because of the tribelands. Only the arrival of the Fane cured the Neolli of their aggression. During the Fane era, there are very few mentions of the Neolli at all. Once facing defeat at the hands Cyroon and others, the Neolli drew far back into the deepest regions of their land. And there they stayed until 2240, when tribal leaders and their retinues actually braved a long overland journey into the

lands they had once plagued. To the surprised leaders of Edyss and Vallunei (it is reputed that the Neolli who journeyed to Cyroon never returned), the Neolli presented a wealth of native jewelry, art, pottery, cloth, and slaves. After leaving their tribute, they returned to their lands and have made no overtures since.

Culture

The Neolli exist as a collective of tribal groups, who settle in a single area where they farm, tend livestock, and build sunken lodges and yurt structures out of woven wicker and layers of peat. Though many of the Tribes coexist peaceably, conflict and bloodshed cannot be avoided among the rival Tribes.

What do the Neolli think of the bustling world beyond their borders? Very little. When their isolation during the Second Darkness tamed their warlike nature, many sought to make peace with those they had once preyed upon. The tributes were reparation for past wrongs — not a sign of friendship. With their payment made, they want little to do with the outside world. Most Neolli will not act aggressively against foreign visitors, provided they treat the Neolli with respect. They are adamant though about keeping foreigners out of their sacred places, far within Neoll. And the more warlike Tribes found deeper in have no qualms about killing any non-Neolli they find wandering the tribelands.

Religion

What surprised many visitors studying Neolli culture was their devotion to the Seven Gods and their fluency with Rune Magic. The Neolli worship the Seven in aspects unseen in the known lands, each governing a particular segment of Neolli life. Residing deep inside of the tribelands are the Great Ones, High Neolli who the more visible Neolli revere as paragons of their race and as direct representatives of the Seven Gods. These Greater Neolli have never been witnessed by living Ianeran eyes. They never leave their sacred lands and foreigners are never allowed to venture that far. The Greater Neolli receive regular tribute from the Tribes while communicating to the shamans the will of the Seven Gods. To the Neolli, the Seven never left, in fact they fail to understand why all the foreigners say they have. The Seven Gods reside in the earth, the air, the water, and in the very bodies of the Neolli themselves.

Geography

The tribe lands of Neoll are carved through the middle by a large inland sea. During the Endwar, the weapons unleashed upon the Triune Empire sank great portions of the land, depressions that the ocean rushed in to fill. Explorers and historians believe that the majority of the Triune Empire's ruins lay at the bottom of that sea. But little of that distant nation exists to the present day. Not that many have been given the opportunity to truly investigate the matter. The eastern portion of the Neolli nation is composed mostly of flat grasslands that rise to rolling hills and gently contoured mountains the further one gets to the inland sea. The western portion, extending up through the north and then to the east where Neoll meets Cyroon, the land is given over to the swamps that characterize lands such as Mikesh. Large temperate rainforests and ancient mangroves conceal many of Neoll's secrets. It is in the far northwest, where the forests are thickest, that the Greater Neolli reside.

Average Description

See Chapter 4: Peoples of Zir'An

The Periphery

"Out here, we don't care much about what's going on in Vallunei or the Tilearian Empire. I've seen things out in these parts that'd make Myrkuule shake in his boots, make no mistake. I've delivered babies, built windwells, dug into ancient cities, tracked down the men that killed my family and took what justice I could find out of their cursed hides. Now I'm a Marshall. Out here, I'm the only law there is. Anybody fails to live and let live, they talk to me and my longrifle — life's too hard out here to waste it taking advantage of others."

— Malikk Torundoon, Periphery Marshall, Altizul Plain

History

This far-flung chain of islands was discovered by famed Ianu Vossan admiral, Drekin Varulo, in 1703. On its largest, oldest isles, deep in the interior, were found the remains of ancient civilizations, ruins dating back tens of thousands of years. Ianu Voss was the first county to plant a flag in the Periphery, but others would follow. The modern natives of the Periphery are the descendants of the laborers transplanted here by the Ianu Vossans and others during those boom years of exploration and exhumation. In the thirteen hundred years since their arrival, they have spread throughout the islands of the Periphery, including the outermost jungle isles. The archeologists and explorers that once combed the Periphery are mostly gone now, and a tribal system rules. The Anazoulo tribesmen live in the deeper regions of the main continent of the Periphery, protecting their claim to what few secrets remain. The Hantsu dwell in the few cities that irregularly dot the coast, directing the trade between the Anazoulo, themselves, and the foreign traders who brave their shores.

Culture

Life in the Periphery is hard on the mind, spirit, and body. And it has bred a people who are hard-bitten and tough. Though the Anazoulo tribes and clans no longer fight each other and prey on the weak as they did in the past, the drive to exploit the Periphery's hidden treasures has made the Anazoulo more cunning and resourceful. Fighting still flares up, often over ownership of a treasure claim, trade routes, or water resources. It can be just as ugly and brutal as it was in the Periphery's past.

The Hantsu, which translates as "comrade" or "partner in survival," are more welcoming to foreigners than their desert wandering kin, but then they make a fortune selling equipment, supplies, mounts, and guidance to visiting explorers and adventurers. Though a name distinguishes them, the Hantsu

and the Anazoulo are truly one people. Tribal family lines extend through both sectors of Periphery society. Someone in an Anazoulo clan might migrate to one of the coastal cities and reside there a time, trading with the other Hantsu and visiting merchants, while a Hantsu may return to the deserts to join with her ancestral clan.

Religion

Neither the Anazoulo nor the Hantsu practice any single religion. Individuals choose to worship as they may. Rune Magic is less a reflection of the Seven Gods than it is a tool or a weapon in the Periphery. Because there are no established churches or schools, Rune Magic is passed down as secret knowledge from teacher to student. Runemages in the Periphery guard their secrets jealously. Because of the many ancient ruins found in the Periphery, odd cults emerge from the wastelands preaching of unknown gods. They gather a small following before eventually disbanding or vanishing back into the wastelands that spawned them. Even visiting explorers can succumb to sudden, irrational, religious devotion after they've spent extended periods studying the ruins. Some of the disappearances that occur in the Periphery are explorers who have divorced themselves from the world, and joined the anonymous, shambling wanderers that one sometimes encounters deep in the deserts.



Big-game hunters brave the wilds of Neoll.

Geography

The landscape of the major Periphery islands is not a sand desert as is found in Ba-Dur. It is a brown to gray brown clay, dried rock hard by the sun. It rises and falls in rolling hills and, eroded by the wind, forms oddly contoured buttes and crevasses. The erosion of the wind creates a rose-colored dust as fine as talcum powder. The infamous dust of the Periphery works its way into everything. When massive dust storms billow steadily across the landscape for days, all life in the Periphery stops. They hide and wait for the storm to cease. But the dust is minor compared to some regions where the sea-bottom clay hills give way to plains of fused glass. Traveling across them can be torture. The mottled, cracked glass surface reflects much of the light and the heat of the sun; some can get literally cooked out on the plains of glass. Storms in the glasslands can kill, or at the very least permanently blind those unfortunate enough to get caught out in them.

Average Description

Average Height & Weight: 5ft. 5in. – 5ft. 7in./ 150 to 180 lbs.

Eye Color: Dark gold to brown.

Skin Color: Deep tan to russet brown.

Hair Color: Black or brown.

Other Distinctive Characteristics: None.

Realm of the First Born

Forever a forbidden land, locked from within to outsiders, this abode of the ageless Zhalanti has been an endless topic of conjecture and distrust on the part of all Ianer ever since the nation's return more than a thousand years ago. It is believed by historians that Thallysia is merely one of several Zhalanti homelands left in existence, that others equally as formidable lay just beyond the horizon.

Thallysia

"… you look upon us and see nothing but our ageless faces and endless secrets… secrets you feel are yours by right. But do you truly wish to know what I know? Would it make you feel… better… to see the faces of our creators reflected in our mind's eye? To see the magnificence and know you shall never see its like again? I ask you this, then, little sibling, is it not comforting enough to know that we mean you no harm? Ah, yes, I know that look… you wonder how you can ever know if that is true unless we reveal to you the entirety of our domain. Believe me… if we wanted to take your lands from you or bend you to our will… we would. But we don't care to… be content with that."

— Eiledh IohVeern, Zhalanti Wanderer, Vallunei City

History

If there is any enmity between the Zhalanti and the Ianer, it's a result of the so-called Zhalanti Betrayal during the Endwar. As a race, the Zhalanti transported the entire continent of Thallysia away, out of this dimension and into a safer one. They left the Ianer to fend for themselves, or so the Ianer contend, when they could have done much to help them rebuild, perhaps even help fend off the Fane. In 1945, the continent of Thallysia returned. The return of their long-lost kin spread concern and confusion through the halls of power of every land. All wondered how the return of the Zhalanti would affect the balance of power. In the end, not a great deal. The Zhalanti never extended diplomatic relations to the known lands, neither the Treaty nor the Hegemony. A decade after the return of the Zhalanti, the first Avanai began wandering the world. Though met with suspicion, even open hostility in some cases, the Zhalanti never seemed phased by the reaction their arrival elicited.

The hostility felt towards the Zhalanti has eased a great deal in the thousand or more years since their return, but none can every fully accept the Zhalanti who now live in their midst. This doesn't seem to bother the Zhalanti a great deal.

Culture

Ask any Zhalanti about what the prevailing opinion in Thallysia is regarding this or that and they'll offer you a simple, "I don't know." And they believe it. The Zhalanti out wandering the world seem strangely detached from their homeland. They seldom choose to talk about it and deftly change the subject should it arise. Their stance is that they are completely impartial to the goings on in the world. They do follow a moral code, however. They agree that life should be protected, and that justice, equality, and freedom are all important elements of a functioning society. They are fascinated by the cultures of the Ianer, often taking the position of impartial observer. When they choose to get involved, it seems to be done out of a sense of curiosity rather than due to moral issues.

Religion

The concept of religion is amusing to the Zhalanti. Having been reared by the Seven Gods themselves, the idea of worshipping them is somewhat redundant. How the Zhalanti feel about the departure of the Seven Gods differs from Zhalanti to Zhalanti, though they are characteristically vague when it comes to expressing an opinion about anything. The Zhalanti, by their own account, long ago outgrew their need for the Seven, and so their absence has little impact on the Zhalanti.

Geography

No one from outside of Thallysia has ever made it inside. Many have tried, but all who do are always later found somewhere outside the Thallysian border, with no memory of their experiences inside. From the Ballinorian border, Thallysia appears to be a rolling landscape of stony hillocks and flatlands. Mountains are dimly visible in the distance, but little else can be seen. Boats that have sailed along its western coast have described a glow of shifting hues that paints the far horizon deep within Thallysia. The Zhalanti like their secrecy, and have the power to maintain it.

Average Description

See the **Races** chapter.

Technology in Zir'An

Technological Powerhouses

These lands can be expected to have available the latest in technological developments and in fact most of them are at the forefront of new developments. Their prowess in this area has also assured them their place of power among the nations of Zir'An.

Edyss
Ianu Voss
The Kingdom of Vallunei
The Dominion of Drakan
Illestan

Developing Technological Nations

While only a few years or a few decades behind the most advanced nations, their close ties to them have granted them a greater influx of new knowledge and technologies. But what they may lack in sheer technological strength they make up for with innovation. Surprising new techniques are finding their genesis

in such lands as Ballinor and Arivonne.

Arivonne
Ballinor
Cyroon
The Fire Reaches

PRIMITIVE TECHNOLOGICAL LANDS

Often due to their isolation or limited resources, these countries see little by way of the latest technology and may even be wholly ignorant of any advancement beyond what they currently know.

Thrayce
The Merchant Isles
The Theocracy of Dharsus
The Periphery

NON-TECHNOLOGICAL COUNTRIES

The poorest, most primitive lands, their standing has been rendered potentially insignificant by their lack of a strong technological base The reasons for this vary: Mikesh in its isolation and hostile swampy terrain, Neoll by the nature of its bestial Shadekin populace and Gallios through its strident non-technological beliefs.

Mikesh
Neoll
Gallios

MAGICAL LANDS

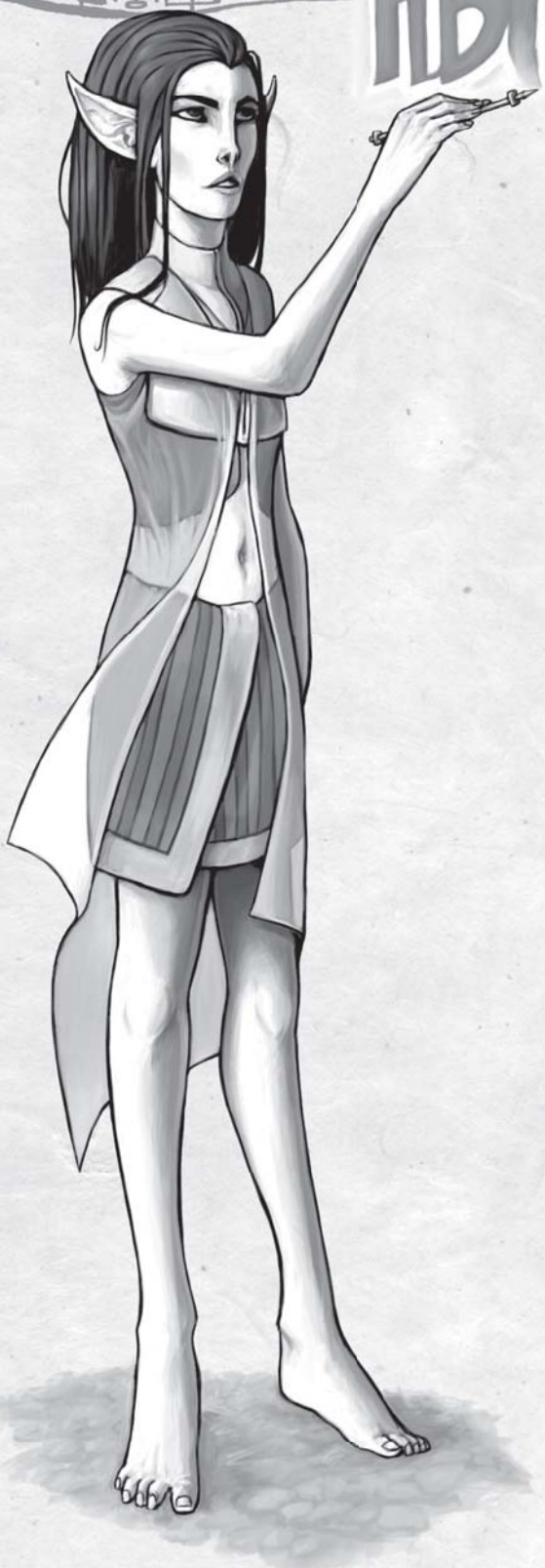
In these places Rune Magic is used abundantly. Lands strong with tradition and with an established way of life, these countries have continued to rely upon their skills with the most fundamental science of all, Rune Magic. Though varying from country to country, they manipulate Rune Magic into the roles becoming co-opted by technology. Their disdain for technology comes partially by choice or through the belief that the careful blending of Rune Magic and technology is a preferable alternative.

Talus
Harakyr
Vandalusa
Klesht
Ba-Dur
Bhuket

TECHNOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Energy

Electricity has been harnessed in the most developed countries, principally Edyss, Ianu Voss, Cyroon, the Dominion of Drakan, the Kingdom of Vallunei, Ballinor, and Illestan. Steam powered or hydroelectric turbines supply power for entire cities. Edyss



A Zhalanti Runemage.

has built tidal-powered turbines as well as inventing a renewable crop of grain, which when fermented creates a versatile, clean burning liquid fuel known simply as Distillate. Alternatively there is a ferrous ore, which can be burned as a solid fuel, compressed into combustible bricks, or refined into a noxious, highly toxic oil that burns very hot. Found primarily in Eastern Zir'An (the majority residing in Cyroon) and called Kluuzhe, its use as a fuel creates a variety of deadly toxins responsible for a great deal of the air pollution in less developed countries who rely on it as a fuel source. Edyssian distillate fuel is prohibitively expensive to all but the most prosperous nations. Because of its expense, distillate fuel is generally used only in military or other government vehicles, and in public and privately owned aircraft. Many argue that Edyss is attempting to maintain a monopoly on the cultivation of Distillate grain even though it can now be found in some areas of Vallunei. Edyss argues that the grain requires a specific mineral content found only in Edyss and in a few other warmer climes located in Vallunei's southern states. The facts are really that Edyss has used its great stores of technological knowledge as a means to maintain its position of preeminence in Zir'An. In the past few decades, methods have been developed to refine Distillate further, creating a solid crystallized form. Rendered in flaky white bricks, this solid fuel has begun to see use powering the steam engines of Edyssian trains. Burning longer and hotter than an equivalent quantity of liquid Distillate, Edyss has yet to distribute this eminently portable fuel to other lands.

Other fuel sources include natural gasses (most notably methane), and in primitive countries, oils derived from animal fat. The Fire Reaches, for all of its primitive and somewhat backward ways, is the only country that has harnessed geothermal power (piping seawater through ducts heated by the islands' volcanoes, converting it to steam that powers the turbines. Only the larger cities of Edyss, the Kingdom of Vallunei, the Dominion of Drakan, and Ianu Voss have working power grids, supplying electricity for homes and businesses. In less developed lands such as Ballinor and Cyroon, city power grids work on a time schedule, with power supplied only during certain times of the day. For many smaller towns or individual estates, small generators powered either by Distillate or kluuzhe provide electrical power and can generally run about six to eight hours on a full tank of fuel. Technological advancements have had difficulty penetrating into other lands where Rune Magic is in greater prominence such as Klesht, the Daromao peninsula (Talus and Harakyr), and Vandalusa, who view current technological developments with something bordering disdain.

Other developments are leading toward a power source derived directly from the Ylar. Using rune forms to channel and direct this limitless resource, only Vandalusa has been able to direct the intellectual resources needed to design a workable and safe system of its implementation. A workable system has been in use in Vandalusa for longer than anyone outside of that country knows (or anyone inside is wont to admit), Vandalusa has been open in distributing the schematics for such a system. Unfortunately such a power system requires a vast allocation of time and resources, even more so than its technological equivalent and only Talus so far has been willing or able to even attempt its construction. Requiring the scribing of a massively complex rune, powering an entire city would require over a thousand Rune Mages working more than ten thousand man-hours to complete. Compared to a standard technological power grid, the amount of ambient Ylar harnessed in such a system would prove disastrous to the entire city were it tampered with. But such countries as Ballinor and Arivonne have been using a simple combination of technology and Rune Magic for decades... even centuries. In Ballinor's capital of Gravenwald, for instance, the street lights are lit by specialized rune systems while heat and light indoors is generally a combination of the city's power grid, personally installed radiant Rune Magic, and small localized generators. Many Ballinorian Kraftwerks have built their businesses upon the maintenance of these systems. Technicians moving through the city on their appointed rounds, checking and re-scribing these systems are a common sight.

Communication & Media

The advent of air flight has contributed more to the development of communications technology than any other single invention in Zir'An. Courier services are still the principal method of getting messages from one place to the next. Early on in Zir'An's history, merchant caravans and fast moving solo messengers riding by beast were the only means of transporting mail over long distances. As rail systems and air ships became more prevalent they took up many of these duties. In lands where trains and air travel are scarce, the old standbys are still in frequent use, with some caravans specializing in the ferrying of mail and information. The greatest technological nations of Zir'An use air ships to courier their mail between destinations, giving the average transportation time within these countries anywhere from a week to a month. Depending upon the remoteness of the departure and destination, this is a half to a quarter of the time it would take for the slower means of overland travel, in addition to guaranteeing a greater likelihood that the information reaches its destination at all. There are still some countries, though, that receive little if any outside communication, either due to their isolation (such as the Periphery or Mikesh) or the totalitarian nature of their lands (the Theocracy of Dharsus or the Dominion of Drakan).

Radio was originally developed to make air travel reliable over the long distances that had to be traversed. The technology was adapted to public use and has since become the most effective tool of communication in the modern era. Naturally, quality varies from region to region, but only a handful of nations are still without the capacity to transmit or at least receive radio broadcasts. In the developed nations such as Vallunei, Edyss,

The Dominion, and Ianu Voss, radio is a powerful presence in the popular culture. News, music, radio dramas, and of course propaganda, all have an outlet in radio. Currently, however, even the most modern radio sets are bulky and expensive.

Few transmitters can rival the Terr d'Trompe tower in Edyss' capital of Villeanesband. While serving principally as an elevated docking port for airships visiting the sprawling metropolis, it is capable of transmitting telegraph communiqués and radio broadcasts beyond its borders. Its transmission range stretches as far as Ballinor but only Vallunei City's tall Vanroy Tower has enough range and power to transmit back. These two massive antennas, however, form the dual hubs through which the Treaty Nations' information is disseminated. Information is relayed to and from these towers constantly, allowing a quick flow of communication among the allied nations. Coming up from behind with developments of its own, Ianu Voss has begun construction of its own massive tower antenna, due to be completed some time in the next seven years, whereas Ballinor's own Reikval relay station is due to be finished sometime in the coming decade. Portable telegraphs are bulky and prohibitively expensive, requiring the additional use of an equally bulky portable generator.

Though most, if not all, lands have some sort of information periodical, a newspaper or a factoid journal, only a handful possess news gathering faculties that span the known lands. Edyss' newspaper, An-Jour DeMentan, and its magazine, The Madura Journal of the World, can be purchased in any major city across Zir'An along side Vallunei's newspaper, Prospectus, and Ianu Voss's widely distributed international weekly paper, the Integgary. Major events that occur Zir'An wide will find their way into one of these periodicals. With journalists traveling in a constant rotation abroad, most major events, wars, political upheavals, natural disasters, will often make it to print within a week to a month. Naturally Boes Code telegraphs are the chief tool of the traveling journalist to send their stories back to be published in the latest edition. So far only The Prospectus appears daily, with the DeMentan and Integgary appearing once a week and the Madura Journal (a thick bound magazine of 250-300 pages, featuring stories of a myriad topics) coming out every two months. In lands where access to telegraphs is difficult or unlikely, such stories of import may take weeks or months to see print, if ever.

Capturing the public attention across the developed world is the growing art of cinema. Less accessible than radio, film has been embraced by artists in Ballinor, Edyss, Ianu Voss, and the Kingdom of Vallunei. Epic stories unfold on grainy black and white to the sound of pre-recorded voices (often those of local actors and actresses) accompanying the images on screen. Dramatic tales are the most popular, while in Ballinor the Leigolliere Gruuftmensh: Agustus Kemper series of historical adventure tales, from the equally popular book series that spans over eighty volumes, has begun a successful run in Gravenwald. Every major city in the developed world will have a number of cinemas, packed with happy filmgoers nearly every night. Even less technologically adept nations have begun bargaining for projectors and imported films, shown in impromptu, often open air "theaters" where a hanging sheet or a building's whitewashed wall serves as a ready screen.

Production

The means of mass-producing technological devices has, for the last century, been utilized chiefly by the military of only the most advanced nations. As the fear of abiding conflict between the Nations of the Treaty and the Tilerian Hegemony remains prevalent, the continued development of arms has driven the techniques of mass-production at a steady climb. So far only governmental bodies have been able to sustain the costs involved with the machinery of mass-production, supporting in turn an upper strata of privately owned engineering co-ops, companies, crafts guilds and design houses. But as the wealth of nations grows, they have begun to apply this formidable production infrastructure toward civilian use. The trains that connect the major cities of the Treaty Nations are the most visible example of this.

But with hundreds, even thousands of craftsmen guilds possessing centuries of experience, the vast majority of products found in Zir'An are still made by hand. Entire societies are in some cases founded on the creations of its craftsmen, the people of Zir'An have come to trust and rely upon their works. Rune Magic can partially be attributed to this. In the time when technology was in its infancy, new inventions required runes for their power. Most everything in Zir'An is created generally by craftspeople: weapons, furniture, armor, vehicles, and particularly aircraft. Techniques of construction are passed down through generations, and while numerous houses may craft Bachab Repeaters, each will have their own innovations of its design.

The technology of mass production has relied on the larger scale of factories and assembly in the area of refining and ore extraction. The more advanced countries, those with the resources great enough, have used their technical strengths to strip mine mountains for the metals they conceal, converting them into workable alloys in large facilities for use in the construction of their military arsenal. Edyss, Vallunei, and Ianu Voss all have major operations to extract ores from the earth. So proficient have these newer, larger scale operations become that the question of their effect on the environment has arisen. Whereas a nation such as Ballinor relies upon thousands of miles of labyrinthine mines to gather the precious ores they require, Vallunei in particular has seen to the leveling of entire ranges in a search for new deposits of iron and nickel ore. Smelters and refineries running thirty hours a day pour vast quantities of soot and other toxic byproducts into the air — a regretful symptom of a thriving technological

society. Some have come to question also the draining of available manpower to these larger scale operations from the craft guilds, which often require a greater level of inherent skill (and a greater investment of time and effort on the part of the prospective worker to learn these skills). But in places where technology is less a part of the society's culture, the work of craftsmen has yet to be surpassed.

Transportation

The greatest example of the Zir'Ani recovery of pre-Endwar technologies can be seen in its airships and rail systems. With such a large continent spanning nations who require easy access to each other for the purpose of trade and diplomacy, the means to quickly traverse thousands of miles became a driving force in the growth of the Zir'An technological base. Air ships now travel frequently between the various nations of the Treaty and the Southern Empires, serving as a means of transporting goods, people and information with relative ease. Arivonne and Edyss have established themselves as the principal creators of much of Zir'Ani air power, with Vallunei rapidly becoming the newest authority in aircraft production and design. As the years progress, aircraft reach greater speeds and travel greater distances. A trip from Vallunei City to the Terr d'Trompe in Villeanesband in Edyss by airship takes about five days as opposed to the twelve to fourteen days it takes by rail.

Reaching remote areas of Zir'An still requires the use of more primitive means of transportation. Airships require airfields to land upon and only the most established cultural centers have them. Also, the extant Zir'Ani rail systems connect only the most populous cities in the more advanced countries. Smaller towns and villages only receive visitors by train if they happen to lie upon one of the primary rail lines. Within cities such as Vallunei City, Villeanesband, and Ianu Voss, inter-city rail carries citizens to points within their urban boundaries, becoming the chief method for quickly getting around. Some countries, such as Ballinor and Arivonne, have begun to lay down relatively brief lengths of track, mostly connecting one major city to another, the mountainous land proving a hindrance to a quick development of country-spanning rail systems. Illestan has long been using the rail systems left behind by ancient Gondolon, expanding and updating as needed. For them, trains are a dire necessity, used to transport troops to and from the many city-fortresses and border stations. All trains run on steam, with either Kluuzhe or Distillate bricks powering their boilers.

For many centuries, refined and highly efficient steam turbines have been a part of most land-craft: trains, tanks, and large construction and farm equipment, but advances in aircraft design has greatly advanced the development of internal combustion engines. Although IC has been a part of most aircraft of the past few centuries, only in the last century has it been adapted to ground vehicles. The military is again the clearinghouse for such technologies, and IC is now standard among all ground vehicles in the Dominion, Edyss, Ianu Voss, and the Kingdom of Vallunei, with the other second tier technological powers gradually gaining. Edyss is known to be testing a diesel train engine system for introduction within the coming decade.

Though shipping has been predominantly steam powered far longer than either trains or ground craft, IC is slowly being adapted for use in the largest military ships: some fear a growing arms race between Vallunei and Ianu Voss in this regard. But aside from the military advances in naval craft, shipping remains the primary means of transporting people, cargo, and information internationally.

Medicine

If there is one area where magic, and specifically Rune Magic, predominates over the rise of technology, it is in the field of medicine. Runes that knit flesh, replenish lost blood, and purge the body of toxins and other ailments have been around far longer than recorded history. It has been said that because of life's intrinsic connection to the Ylar, it is easily mutable — in part explaining the sheer numbers of Shadekin and other beasts altered by the magics of the Ylar. Surgical techniques have had little reason to prosper when a skilled rune mage can heal even the most egregious wounds without having to actually invade the patient's body with tools of any kind. A long history of medicinal herbs continues to this day, with the cultivation of beneficial plants and extracts carried through the generations by tradition. Even in such lands as Edyss, where technology is at the forefront, Rune Magic is used to heal the injured and treat the sick. Of course the skilled application of such healing magics varies from place to place, the quality of the physician Runemage depending heavily upon their access to proper instruction. In Cyroon for instance, Rune Magic refinements are scarce, whereas in Talus, master Runemage Houses claim to be able to revive the recently dead.

Few lands bother with large hospitals that house hundreds of patients. Through Rune Magic, one can recover from wounds safely within one's own home. Those hospitals that do exist specialize in long-term recovery — while healing of the physical wounds is generally quick, the depletion of the body's energy still requires an occasionally lengthy period of convalescence, depending of course upon the degree of the injury. Of note is Alienism, a science that claims to cure emotional damage and insanity, which has emerged recently. In the centuries before, asylums were merely places to house the mentally infirm in the hope that they might recover or to keep them safe from the public (or to keep the public safe from them). Edyss, Vandalusa, and Vallunei have begun developments to cure mental instability through the use of chemical agents derived from long cultivated herbal medicines. Edyss has even begun to treat repeat criminal behavior in such a manner, viewing such "aberrant" natures to

be akin to mental illness — an illness that can be cured through a science they call Alienism.

Weaponry

Though firearms have long been in use throughout Zir'An, their scarcity and exclusivity (not to mention the difficulty of enchanting their intricate components with runes) has made simpler, non-technological weapons still preferable to many. With the passing of the ages, the number of pre-Endwar weapons steadily decreases, their methods of creation forgotten, their ancient and intricate workings falling to wear and corrosion. But now, simple bolt-action rifles can be found even in some of the most primitive countries. Revolvers and rifles form the bulk of firearms seen in Zir'An though automatic weapons and the technology of their creation is finding its way from the armories of the greater military powers into lands who do not possess nearly the same level of technological achievement. Public display of firearms is nearly always a criminal offense and in such lands as Edyss and Vallunei, possession of an automatic weapon is regarded as an especially grave offense. Being the sole property of the military, carrying such a weapon is likened to theft of government property.

All firearms in Zir'An are hand crafted. Government militaries are the chief patrons of their construction, generally employing a number of Kraftwerks or weapon smith guilds to design and manufacture their weaponry. Because of this, many weapons differ greatly from each other even though they might come from the same essential design. The sale of automatic weapons is prohibited to the public in all civilized countries, though these laws are difficult to enforce in such places as the Merchant Isles, where illegal arms merchants from Cyroon, Klesht, and Ianu Voss are known to deal in such contraband. Maintaining these weapons, however, is a learned skill — one that often goes overlooked by the overzealous purchaser and these weapons eventually fail due to the indiscretions of their buyers. In Zir'An, simple bladed weapons surpass firearms in their ability to be easily enchanted with runes. For a firearm to be enchanted, every working part has to be similarly inscribed with the necessary runes, a task that would take weeks, if not months, and would require sums beyond even the most well-to-do citizen. Such enchanted firearms, however, are the stuff of legends — items that become heirlooms to their owners. Attempts have been made in the past to simply enchant the ammunition of firearms, giving the bullets greater velocity or range but what few seem to realize before using such magically endowed ammunition, is the effect they have upon the mundane weapons used to fire them. A bullet may be enchanted to fire with greater impact, but after a few shots the slugs render the firearm useless, the barrel subject to stresses it was never meant to handle.

MAGIC OVERVIEW

RUNE MAGIC

Runemages in Society

Throughout history, Rune Magic has played a central role in the formation of cultures dating back to the First Epoch, where the discovery of Rune Magic led to the discovery of the Seven Gods and subsequently the first Great War. Every society has implemented Rune Magic in different ways. As cultures grow and develop, their knowledge of Rune Magic grows with them, and the role of the Runemage in society changes to reflect this. Fanciful tales of the primitive past depict the Runemage as the hoary mystic, wizards and sorceresses who could alter the course of history with a deft turn of their stylus. Their abilities gave them great power and influence and though their hidden agendas may have been for ill or good, kings and emperors spent considerable effort to gain the support of these masters of magic.

In the modern era, where the mysteries of Rune Magic seem to open themselves further with each passing year, the study of Rune Magic has become a central focus of research and experiment.

The Runemage as Empirical Scientist

This opening up of Rune Magic is probably the most influential cultural shift, for it takes magic out of the hands of secretive magi and into the hands of the common man. In many cultures the perception is that Rune Magic belongs to everyone, that as a gift of the Seven, all should be free to explore its many levels. In the civilized cultures of the Treaty Nations for example, there are many institutes of learning that offer extensive courses in Rune Magic. Not all are fit to be Runemages, naturally, and the mental toll of six to eight years of intense study sees many who fail to complete the training. But for those who do and can truly be called Runemages, the world offers many opportunities to practice their skills. The skills of Runemages are needed to keep the infrastructures of many lands working efficiently. Airships whose hulls are reinforced and lightened by runes must be maintained. Public works rely on a fusion of runes and standard engineering to function, everything from power grids that light entire cities, to dams, train networks, and water supplies. Such mundane uses of such a powerful and beautiful science seldom attract Runemages of a more scholarly bent, who find their services much in demand in universities and secretive government institutions, where research in new runic techniques is most fervent. And then there are those who many dub Adventurers. Runes give their wielders special powers not found among the vast majority of common folk, who look up to Runemages to solve their many problems; solutions they would pay handsomely for. A Runemage skilled in the Domain of Hrond would find many willing to pay great sums for a chance to speak to their dead relatives, and a Runemage

skilled in healing can be assured to find a hearty welcome in any community.

But Rune Magic can never be divorced from its origins in the Seven Gods, and so will always be associated with mysticism and religious devotion. Call them Rune Priests, Church Bonded Runemages, or simply believers, those who seek the divine in Rune Magic do not see it as a resource or a tool, but as a doorway into the spirit of the Seven Gods themselves. In this modern Epoch, in an era without the Seven, Rune Magic is seen by a vast majority of the faithful as the only remaining link between them and their creators. Vandalusa, for example, has built its society around the study of this link between the Ianer and the Seven, and so for them, Rune Magic *is* their religion. Runes aren't merely magical spells; they are the dogma of the Seven Gods, each rune a chapter and verse that outlines their core beliefs.

No one can deny, however, that Runes provide their masters great power. For some, this is more power than any single person should be allowed to wield. Such power is a threat to some, and to those who are unscrupulous in their use, that threat can be widespread. The history of the world is replete with tales of those who wielded Rune Magic with little regard to the consequences. Such power unrestrained wrought the terrible destruction that ended the First Epoch, and such power focused toward a single purpose of war led to the Endwar. In lands of tyranny, places such as the Dominion and the Theocracy of Dharsus especially, the freedom to learn Rune Magic is non-existent. Such a powerful force is closely guarded by those in power, and its use is in part devoted to ensuring it remains in their hands. But even in free lands many Runemages are divided over this issue. The more liberally-minded Runemage hierarchy of Vallunei and Vandalusa have often criticized the secretive and highly exclusive Runemage Society system found in Ballinor while those on the other side of the issue cite the need for strict controls over who gets instructed and how they intend to use what they have learned.

But knowledge cannot be contained and it is a common argument that any attempt to restrict it only leads to the potential for abuse. History bears out this argument as well. For many, Rune Magic is still taught the way it has been for uncounted millennia, between a teacher and her pupil, outside of a structured school system and free of any established dogma or methodology.

SHADOW MAGIC

Unlike Rune Magic, which has been around for millennia, Shadow Magic has had the distinction of being a relatively new development, surfacing sometime before the Rise of the Fane, two thousand years ago. Where Rune Magic draws its power from the Ylar, Shadow Magic taps its power from the Shadowmage's spirit, or Shadow; siphoning off small portions of their own life force and shaping it with their will.

Shadowmages exude raw magical power in a process called the "Delve." It happens in a fraction of a second and becomes instinct with practice. With the Delve, the Shadowmage can accomplish a variety of effects: flight, bodily enhancement, blasts of raw or elemental energy, perception over great distances, even telepathy and mental domination. But the most frightening use of Shadow Magic is attacks against the shadows of another. Shadows are vulnerable to all sorts of abuse, easy targets to unscrupulous Shadowmages, who can draw power and life from an unfortunate victim. This sort of activity has earned Shadowmages a great deal of suspicion and scorn from the general populace.

The fundamentals of Shadow Magic are entirely different than those found in the execution of runes. There are those who have sought to perfect Shadow Magic into a concrete science, studying and refining techniques of its control, but ultimately it is a magic of chaos, rarefied magical energies formed and fashioned by the mage without any set rules of use. Consequently there are many different schools of thought about Shadow Magic, from the Universal Awareness of the Vandalusan Shadowmages, to the brutal, insidious techniques of the Violet Circle of the Dominion. Shadowmages all share a similarity in the source of their power, but it is the inherent creativity and willpower of the Shadowmage that dictates its form.

Shadow Magic, unlike Rune Magic, is not a taught skill. Shadowmagery is an inborn ability, often passed down through family lines, surfacing every eight or nine generations. The time when the powers manifest cannot be predicted. A baby may be born with a fully functioning ability or it might manifest while in the person's closing years. It is estimated that there is one Shadowmage for every 500,000 people.

Strangely, Shadow Magic has so far only been encountered among the Ianer and Dolonnori. Since nearly the dawn of their creation, the Zhalanti have known of a ritual called the Szathreh k!Eh, a procedure by which the Zhalanti can tap the vast reservoir of potential energy their spirits contain. It was thought that this would grant them increased, self-born abilities, hopefully severing them from the reliance on Rune Magic. It was a disastrous failure. Those Zhalanti who underwent the ritual either died as their bodies burned with too much power, committed suicide as the loss of their souls overcame them, or became amoral, unfeeling outsiders. These outsiders are now known as the Kahlith. For this reason, the ritual has been banned, and its seekers shunned.

It is well known among the people of Zir'An that the shadow is the reflection of the soul. Those under malevolent influence often have aberrations in their shadow; it exhibits independent movement or unnatural elasticity. The loss of one's shadow invariably ends in death, as the crushing weight of an immense distemper and sorrow compels self-destruction, but those who are melded with their shadows, Shadekin for example, can draw special powers from it. Shadowmages who have reached great heights of power can eventually learn to meld their shadows to their corporeal selves. These are known as Masters of the Shade. Masters of the Shade have attained dominance over the source



Adepts of darkness: The Tzerte Viazhe.

of their abilities and have risen to the next order of power.

The growing number of Shadowmages has begun to alarm major governments and organizations throughout Zir'An. Some have formed working groups to study the phenomena while others have created military plans and drafted any who show the Shadowmagic ability into special units and strike teams. The unspoken fear amongst all corridors of power is the same, however, if Shadowmagic is on the rise in the population, can a re-occurrence of the madness of the time of the Fane be far behind?

ALMANAC OF ZIR'AN

The Three Moons of Zir'An: Palligur (red). **Arelas** (silver/blue), and **Kahsal** (gray/white).

There are **twelve months in each Year.** Each has five weeks of seven days.

The **Winter** months are **Ost, Veritus,** and **Annontus.**

The **Spring** months are **Mittach, Kahthas,** and **Epistass.**

The **Summer** months are **Vitustide, Steltide**, and **Dranustide.**

The **Autumn** months are **Beltine, Vultine,** and **Faltine.**

Each day has thirty hours, divided into 10 Hours of Morning, Day, and Night. Dawn is between the 7th and 8th Hour of Morning. Noon is between the 5th and 6th Hour of Day. Dusk falls between the 2nd and 3rd Hour of Night. Midnight falls between the 10th Hour of Night, and the 1st Hour of Morning.

The days are named for each of the old Seven Gods:
Arroy (Prime Goddess of Creation)
Drandlur (Goddess of Nature)
Lyiss (Goddess of the Moons)
Talse (God of Peace and Spirituality)
Va'an (Prime God of Creation)
Hrond (God of Death and the Afterlife)
Paran (Goddess of War)

In many lands the names of the days change, as do their meaning.

Important Dates

1st of Veritus. First day of the year.

4th of Veritus. The day celebrating the arrival of Kah (date often changes from place to place). (1517 P.D.)

15th of Veritus. The Winter Solstice.

19th of Veritus. The day devoted to worship of the Seven Gods (lasting for the entire week, one day for each deity).

13th of Annontus. The day of the return of the Zhalanti. (1945 P.D.)

30th of Annontus. The start of the cessation of the Illestan Empire from the Kingdom of Vallunei. (2407 P.D.)

1st of Mittach. The ceremonial end of Winter.

7th of Mittach. A day commemorating those killed during the Endwar.

14th of Mittach. Farmer's day.

32nd of Mittach. The day celebrating the defeat of the Galrudai Brothers (two Fane). (1202 P.D.)

1st of Kahthas. The day devoted to Kah the Peace Bringer. Also speculated to be his birthday. The celebration, called Kahthas, lasts the entire month.

15th of Kahthas. The Spring Equinox.

6th of Epistass. Invasion of the Kingdom of Dorallia by the Tilerian Empire, and start of the Haven Siege War. (1001 P.D.)

8th of Epistass. The death of the Ba-Duran martyr, once spiritual leader, and now hero of a nation, Ali bin-Sal'lah. Killed by the Fane known as The Unholy Farsiid. (1488 P.D.) This also marks the day that the Unholy Farsiid was killed by tens of thousands of enraged Ba-Durans. It is also the first day of the Ba-Duran new year (their current year being 1513 of the Fifth Age).

14th of Epistass. Crowning of the First King of Vallunei, King Artuan I. (1627 P.D.)

1st of Vitustide. Summer Festival. Also marks the day the Treaty of Vallunei was formed by King Artuan I. The Treaty, which runs the workings of the Kingdom of Vallunei to this day, served to create a legislative body made up of the rulers of the many small states and nations within the Kingdom. (1627 P.D.)

15th of Vitustide. Summer Solstice.

20th of Vitustide. The day the Voivodh became the Impaler King of the old nation of Casseonae. (1214 P.D.) The land was renamed the Dominion of Drakan. In the Dominion, this month is called Gladro Cha.

21st of Vitustide. Day of the First Born. A day devoted to honoring the Zhalanti (seldom practiced).

9th of Steltide. Defeat of Mirkule by Kah at the Palace of Cyroon. (1623 P.D.)

10th of Dranustide. Celebration of the Children.

10th of Beltine. Peace reigns. The War of the Fane is over. (1624P.D.) To mark that event, a celebration lasting a week starts this day.

18th of Beltine. The King of Dorallia: Therrann Dorrill, is killed by Mirkule during the Haven Siege War. (1001.P.D.) This turns the tide of the war in favor of the Tilerian Empire.

17th of Vultine. Autumnal Equinox.

24th of Vultine. Autumn festival. Gathering of the last crops before winter.

19th of Faltine. Kah bids the people of the Kingdom of Vallunei goodbye. Kah is never seen again. (1626 P.D.)

21st of Faltine. Dorallia thoroughly defeated by the Shadekin and Mirkule. The war of genocide begins as thousands of Doralli (modern day Dolonorri) are sacrificed to Mirkule. A massive exodus of Doralli leave their land and head south. For the Dolonorri, this day is called "Agh Hasha" or "Day of the Broken." (1001 P.D.)

1st of Ost. First day of the week long Winter Festival.

12th of Ost. Death of King Artuan I. (1659 P.D.)

13th of Ost. Opening of the Trans-Continental railway. Upon two metal tracks, a long machine of metal, called an "engine" carries passengers across the land at terrific speeds. The railway links Edyss (who developed it) with the lands of Vandalusa and the Western Provinces of the Kingdom of Vallunei. (2432 P.D.)

19th of Ost. Edyssian Scientist Kennet Dylar, travels in an air ship of his own design, to see what lies beyond the Boundary Waters to the West. He never returns. (2602 P.D.)

35th of Ost. End of the year celebration.

A ZIR'ANI LEXICON:

Arelas: (Ar-re-lass) The large cloud-swathed blue/sliver moon; legendary (and now abandoned) home of the Seven Gods.

A'Vanists: (Ah-van-ists) the Seven Gods are sometimes referred to as the A'Vana. An A'Vanist is the formal word that simply identifies someone as a believer in the seven.

The Canticle: The never-ending chronicle of verse that maps the entire history of Zir'An. Every few millennia, the irresistible urge to compose the modern chapter of the Canticle arises in a new culture. After the Endwar it was the Tilandri of Casseonae. In modern Zir'An, the people of Thrayce are the canticle's new scribes.

Dolonorri: (Dou-lou-no-ri) An offshoot race related very distantly to the Ianer, now nearing extinction.

Fane: (Fain) Once normal people who somehow gain great power to warp and change reality, which corrupts them to evil.

- **Cyroon**: (Sy-roon) vassal of Mirkule and ruler of Cyroon.
- **Kah**: the liberator, the only benevolent Fane known.
- **Lhar**: (L-har) bloated tyrant of Bhuket.
- **Markhaine**: the dreaming lord of Dharsus.
- **Mirkule**: (Meer-kuul) enemy of the living, sovereign of the Tilerian Hegemony.
- **Valkan**: volcano born God Father of the Fire Reaches.
- **The Voivodh**: (Voy-vod) the Iron General who usurped legendary Casseonae to forge his Dominion.

Flats: The common currency in the lands. Slightly smaller than a playing card, a thin sheet of engraved metal, coming in numerous denominations.

Ianer: (Ya-nar) The most common race, they were the second race created by the Seven Gods.

Kahsal: (Ka-sall) Small featureless gray orb of rock orbiting Zir'An. Created by the Zhalanti long, long ago.

Palligur: (Pal-e-jur) Smallest and furthest moon from Zir'An. Little is known about it, other than the red moon has come to signify ill omens.

Seven Gods: the creators of all, they are:
Arroy: (A-roy) goddess of creation
Drandlur: (Drand-leur) goddess of nature
Hrond: (Hrond) god of death and the afterlife
Lyiss: (Lee-yiss) goddess of fate
Paran: (Pa-ran) goddess of war and chaos
Talse: (Tals) god of peace and law
Va'an: (Van) god of creation

Shadow (Shadow Magic): It is believed that the shadow is merely the cast reflection of the soul. Often shadow is spoken to mean a person's soul, whereas Shadow Magic is the power to draw upon the power of your shadow (your spirit force).

Shadekin: Beings who have been merged with their shadows and mutated by magic into monstrous shapes. They are the unquestioned enemies of all life and Mirkule's legions.

Ushonu: (Oo-sho-nu) Gone now, like the Seven Gods, the Ushonu were enormous serpentine entities of great power who vanished during the Endwar.

Valdreyr: (Val-dreer) An old Vandalusan term that has a combination of meanings; the things that make up who we are as individuals, our essential make-up.

Ylar: (Yuh'lar) The powering energy behind Rune Magic and life itself. The basic, raw, matter of creation. Also called "The Potentia."

Zhalanti: (Za-lan-ti) Immortal first born of the Seven Gods.

Zir'An: (Zeer'an) The name of the known world. Also simply referred to as the "Known Lands."



A Neolli tribeswoman menaced by Shadekin in Neoll.

CHAPTER 10

COMBAT

COMBAT ROUND

Combat is measured in rounds. During a given round, each combatant will take his Turn, perform his actions, until all the combatants no longer have any Speed left to perform actions, at which time a new Round begins, repeating the process. **Each Round is about Six Seconds of real time.**

Bonus Round

Sometimes combatants will have Speed left over from their Turn after bidding for Initiative and taking their first action. At the end of the Round, any combatants who have Speed, have the opportunity to spend them in a **Bonus Round,** during which they can spend whatever points of Speed they have left over. If more than one combatant has points of Speed left over, they act in the original Initiative count order.

INITIATIVE BIDS

Combat begins with the Initiative Bid. Bids are an amount of Speed sacrificed by the player from their total. The amount that is sacrificed is added to the character's Reaction stat. The totals become the Initiative Count order in which the combatants act in the Round, with the highest total acting first. Combat counts down from the highest Initiative number, each number being 1 Count. Extended actions, like movement, take a certain amount of Counts to be completed.

Example: *Thayer, Balzac, and Dumond are facing two Kleshti assassins. The Initiative Bids for Thayer, Balzac and Dumond are 4, 3, and 5, respectively. The Kleshti assassins rush forward, their bids being 9 and 8. Added to their Reaction stats (in parentheses), their totals are 11(7), 11(8), and 14(9) respectively. The Kleshti go on 17(8) and 15(7). Each performs his action. The Kleshti's attack followed each in turn by Dumond, Thayer, and Balzac. Once these first actions have been made, Thayer and Balzac have enough points remaining to perform another attack. They do so, Thayer attacking, followed by Balzac.*

TURNS

A character's Turn is the time when they may act. On a player's turn they may take a number of actions. Actions cost a certain amount of Speed to execute, and on her Turn, a combatant may take as many actions as her Speed will allow. As each combatant takes her Turn, until the last in the line is reached, those who still have Speed remaining may choose to spend them, again in the order of Initiative. Once every combatant has taken her actions, a new Combat Round begins with a new Initiative Bid.

SUCCESSES

During combat, the points a combatant rolls above the difficulty or opponent's roll matter a great deal — these points are called "Successes". After rolling and determining how many are available to the combatant, Successes can be spent on Finesse Effects in combat to accomplish things like increasing the base damage or armor piercing value of a weapon, target a specific hit location, or even more exotic and cinematic efforts depending on the combatant's Skill Finesse Level (see page 153).

Example: Viktor La Escrymir opens the hotel room door and surprises Duke Argo Wicket, the wicked Ianu Vossan industrialist who sabotaged his father's plane. He fires at the man, who tries to hide behind an antique table. They both roll, Viktor to hit with his Lamako Carbine while Argo tries to dodge and flip the table to hide behind it. Viktor wins the initial roll 30 to 24, and thus has 6 successes to spend on Finesse Effects. He spends 3 to increase the ap of his attack by 1, and the remaining 3 to increase the damage of his attack by 3.

ATTACKING

When combatants attack, they spend the Speed cost of the attack, depending upon the type of weapon used, and make their Attack Roll. Short Melee Weapons, Small Ranged Weapons and Unarmed attacks cost 2 Speed, Medium Melee and Ranged Weapons cost 3 Speed, and Long Melee Weapons and Heavy Ranged Weapons cost 4 Speed to attack with. The formula for making the attack roll is:

Reaction + Personal Aptitude (+ Skill Practice) + 1d10

The total is compared to the defense roll of the target. Any amount in excess is used to purchase Combat Finesse Effects (see below). Combatants generally only get 1 attack per Turn. To attack more than once in a single Turn (including the bonus round) incurs additional Speed Costs (see Simultaneous Attacks, below).

SIMULTANEOUS ATTACK

Customarily, all combatants get only 1 good solid hit a turn and players are free to hoard some speed for the end of the Combat Round, to use for an attack during their Bonus Turn. If characters attempt to attack more than once in their turn, they spend the appropriate amount of speed for however many attacks they are attempting. Each attack after the first incurs a cumulative +1 Speed cost. The first costs 1 additional speed, the second cost 2 additional, the third costs 3, etc. Simultaneous attacks must be with the same weapon. Unarmed attacks are considered to be the same weapon.

DEFENDING

When attacked, combatants make a defense roll that is compared to the attack roll targeting them. If the defender's roll is equal to, or higher than that of the attacker, the attack fails. Combatants can Block or Dodge, depending upon what skill is employed in the Defense roll. Defenders may block when using the skill of the weapon they are currently holding, which includes using the Unarmed combat skill. Defenders may dodge when they use their Athletics skill for the defense roll. The formula for the defense roll is:

Blocking

Reaction + Personal (+ Weapon skill Practice) + 1d10

Dodging

Reaction + Personal (+ Athletics skill Practice) + 1d10

When combatants make a Defense roll, they may augment it by spending Speed. For each point of Speed they spend, they gain a +1 to the roll. Players must declare that they wish to spend Speed, and how much, before they roll.

If characters use Speed to augment their defense roll, this is called an Active Defense, and they may take advantage of Special Defensive Finesse Effects (see below), which differ depending upon whether the character dodged or blocked the attack.

When characters are attacked from behind, they may not Block, and may only use Dodge as a defense. If the attacker is using Stealth, or is otherwise unknown to the character, see Ambushes and Surprise Attacks.

COVER

A defender that has hit locations that are not visible or accessible to their attacker is considered to have Cover. The attacker tries to hit the defender as normal. If the attacker succeeds and subsequently rolls a location to hit and the attack hits a part of the defender that is covered, that attack is applied to the structure or object that is providing the cover. If the cover absorbs the damage from the attack, the defender is unharmed. If the cover is destroyed before absorbing all the damage from the attack, the defender takes the remaining damage.

A character attacking from Cover with a ranged weapon must expose his head, chest and one arm to his target. If he has enough speed, he can use his free 5-foot move to leave full cover (around a corner, inside a door, etc.), perform his attack, then spend an additional 1 Speed to enter full cover during their Bonus Round. This leaves him exposed to attacks on the counts between the end of his attack and his action on the Bonus Round.

HELPLESS DEFENDER

If someone is unconscious, paralyzed, tied up, or otherwise immobile they are considered a Helpless Defender. Attacks verses a Helpless Defender automatically succeed and inflict double the base damage of the weapon to the target to a location chosen by the attacker. Alternately, an attacker may choose to make an attack roll against a flat 10 difficulty if they wish to inflict more damage or use Successes for a Finesse effect.

MOVEMENT

On a player's turn she may move, spending 1 point of Speed to move 5 feet. Once per Combat Round a combatant may make a free 5-foot move in any direction. Players that wish to move longer distances are said to be running. Depending upon the Finesse Level of the character's Athletics skill, she may move a limited distance in 1 Count. The cost to move 5 feet, however, always remains 1 Speed.

Unskilled	**5 feet**
Basic	**5 feet**
Advanced	**10 feet**
Expert	**15 feet**
Elite	**20 feet**

Example: *Songlian is running toward a Dancing Corpse 20 feet away. Songlian takes her free 5-foot move, and it will cost her 3 speed to move the remaining distance. Songlian has only a Basic Athletics, so she can only move 5 feet in 1 Count. Songlian's Initiative was 14 (her Reaction of 10, plus the 4 Speed of her bid), so she will be running for the counts of 14, 13, and 12. On Count 11, she will arrive at her location. Any enemies who act on the Counts of 14, 13, and 12 could possibly attack Songlian before she reached her destination.*

Such extended moves count as Delayed Actions. In the above example, Songlian decided to start running as her action during her Turn. When she reaches her destination she can continue her Turn by attacking, casting a spell, etc.

Combatants cannot move after attacking. The only exception to this is the free 5-foot move that all combatants get. If the combatant hasn't taken her free 5-foot move that Round, he may take it on his turn after attacking.

A combatant who spends at least half his Speed on movement, can declare that he is Sprinting. A Sprinting combatant can only dodge or shield block, and may not block with his held weapon. Sprinting characters gain a +2 bonus to all Defense rolls against ranged attacks. Sprinting may be combined with Dynamic Movement (below), which substitutes for the +2 ranged weapon defense bonus. Sprinting combatants who declare that they are continuing their sprint on the next Combat Round may retain the benefits of Dynamic Movement without spending another 2 Speed for the new Round.

DYNAMIC MOVEMENT

Dynamic Movement is everything from vaulting over a balcony rail or swinging on a chandelier, to bobbing and weaving in an attempt to avoid ranged attacks.

For a flat cost of 2 Speed a character can:

Swing

From chandeliers, ropes, vines, an Advanced athletics skill test allows a character to jump to any distance along a line determined by the length of the rope, chain, vine, etc. A character swinging from a 20-foot long rope could move up to 20 feet on their Turn. If the character fails, they fall, suffering falling damage normally (see Falling, page 238). If the character makes a Superior success, he may increase the jump length by 50%.

It is possible to use a swing movement to augment an attack. The process is the same as above, but requires an Expert athletics skill test. With a successful test, the character can make a standard attack against one target, gaining a +1 bonus to their attack roll for every 5 feet traveled. A Superior success can increase the distance of the jump by 50%, which can increase the character's attack roll accordingly.

Jump

From a standing position, the character's Athletics Finesse Level determines her horizontal jump distance:

Unskilled	**5 feet**
Basic	**5 feet (+1 foot per point of Practice)**
Advanced	**10 feet (+1 foot per point of Practice)**
Expert	**15 feet (+1 foot per point of Practice)**
Elite	**20 feet (+1 foot per point of Practice)**

An Athletics skill test can allow someone to leap a greater distance. A character with a Basic Athletics can do a standing jump of 5 feet (+1 foot per point of Practice) by making an Athletics skill test against the corresponding difficulty number. Any roll of a 1 means the character "landed bad," losing 1 Lethal Wound to 1 leg (left or right).

Vertical jumps are half the horizontal distances (minimum of 3 feet).

Jump movements are completed in the same turn, unlike normal extended movement (see Movement above). Normally, characters can only make one jump in a round, in addition to normal movement. Characters who want to use a jump to augment an attack can do so by making a normal attack roll against the target for the cost of 4 Speed (the cost of using a heavy weapon, in this case, their body), inflicting their Mass in damage, +1 point for every 5 feet traveled.

If the character is aiming for a certain spot or if they are jumping up to grab something, such as jumping for a dangling rope ladder or a cliff edge, they must make a new Athletics skill test to see if they can grab it. Typically this is an Advanced difficulty, but in special circumstances, such as when the target is on the outer limit of their jump distance, or if it is small or otherwise difficult to reach, it is an Expert difficulty.

COMBINING DYNAMIC AND NORMAL MOVEMENT

In addition to spending 1 point of Speed for every 5 feet traveled, the character may tack on 2 points of speed to the total and make an Athletics skill test. They gain a +2 to the Athletics skill test for every point of Speed they spent for normal movement. This Athletics skill test total becomes the value they use against any attacks made against them during the course of their movement. This is considered a Dodge action, but the character need not be aware of the incoming attack, as he is effectively bobbing and weaving. The same Athletics skill total may be used toward other actions using Athletics, such as jumping.

Example: Tierezio is taking cover from the volley of bolter spikes being fired by Ballinorian mercenaries. Since Tierezio bid zero for his Initiative (since he was hiding), he decides to make a break for it. He spots an open window leading to a neighboring building – safety. He possesses a total Speed of 12. For 1 Speed he can move 5 feet; he needs to move 20 feet to get to the window. He hasn't taken his free 5-foot move this Round, so it will cost him 3 Speed to run to the window, and it will take him 3 Counts. He's going to need to make an Athletics skill test to dive through the open window, and so he spends 2 points of speed for Dynamic Movement. His Athletics roll totals 25 (his total of 19 + the bonus of 6 for his three points of Speed spent on movement). 2 Initiative Counts after he starts his movement, the Mercenaries fire upon him. One mercenary rolls a 21 to hit, missing, the other rolling a 22, another miss. Tierezio successfully avoids the bolter fire and escapes.

SAMPLE DYNAMIC MANEUVERS

Sliding down a polished rail on your feet

An Expert Athletics Skill test is required, and a typical daredevil can slide down 15 feet of polished rail during a single Turn, or 15 feet per Count for really long staircases.

Using a Pole Vault

Any flexible pole (spear, pike, etc) that is strong enough, and 50% taller than the character, can be used to aid in a jump, granting a bonus of 5 feet to any jump distance (horizontal and vertical). This requires at least an Advanced athletics skill. Expert and Elite athletes gain a 10-foot, and 15-foot bonus respectively.

INTERRUPT ACTIONS

These are actions that characters can perform any time during a Combat Round. Some can be initiated by the player at any time, others are done in response to situations. As long as a character is free to act, and has Speed, she may perform as many Interrupt Actions as the HoF will allow.

Dive for Cover

Diving for cover is an important defensive technique for adventurers who encounter varied and deadly threats. Whenever threatened by any area of effect attacks, which includes Rune Magic, explosions, and Sprays from ranged weapons, characters can declare that they are going to Dive for Cover. By spending 3 Speed, characters can leap half their Standing Jump distance (minimum of 5 feet) in an attempt to get out of the area of effect. Characters can add their free 5-foot move, if they haven't taken it yet this Combat Round. If the characters manage to escape the area of effect, they are on the ground and Prone. Characters who possess an Expert Athletics skill or higher can avoid finishing a dive for cover in a Prone position. Characters who are already Prone cannot, naturally, dive for cover. If the character is not able to leave the area of effect, they do manage to protect themselves somewhat just in the action of diving for cover. Damage or any effects (the Construction Cost of a Rune for example) are halved.

Parlay

Characters can naturally talk to each other (if they are able to and want to communicate) anytime during the Round. The Character is free to use any Social skills when they parlay.

Shield Block

When attacked from the front or on their shielded side, characters can opt to block with their shield. Making a defense roll as if they were blocking with a weapon (small melee for small shields and bucklers, medium melee for round shields and typical knights' shields, long melee for greatshields or Tower shields), the character spends a point of Speed and even if the attack succeeds, the character gets to apply the shield's armor value first to any damage from the attack. Shield Block may be used in conjunction with Active Defense (see above).

Use a Knowledge or Personal Skill

Characters may, at any time, declare that they are going to use a skill of the above aptitudes, spending 8 speed to do so. The HoF is the final arbiter though, in this, as certain circumstances may prohibit the use of a particular skill, or what the player is attempting requires greater effort and may only be done on their Turn (see Skill Use During Combat below).

Attacking from a Prone Position

If knocked to the ground, a character is considered to be in a Prone Position and vulnerable to attack. Attackers on the ground suffer a –5 to both their melee and defense rolls. Getting up requires the expenditure of 1 speed. Lying prone grants a +2 bonus to ranged attacks, and ranged attacks against them suffer a —5 at medium and long range.

AMBUSHES, SURPRISE ATTACKS, AND SNIPING

An ambush occurs when one lies in wait, unseen, attacking when their foe presents itself. Those waiting in ambush must make a contested Stealth Skill Test against their target's Awareness. For each success the Stealth test beats the target's Awareness, the target loses 1 Speed for the first Combat Round. The target, if successful, gains a +1 bonus to their first initiative Bid for every 2 successes they scored with their Awareness, as they "charge the ambush."

Surprise Attacks are any attack that strikes when and where its not expected. These are generally attacks from behind, committed during combat. The action is done much like a normal combat roll, but in this case it is the attacker's Stealth against the target's Awareness. Successes for the Stealth skill are spent on Combat Finesse Effects just as though it were a normal attack, with the attacker able to use combat effects equal to the Finesse Level of the appropriate weapon skill. A failed Stealth Vs. Awarness contest simply means the Surprise Attacked missed.

Sniping attacks are ranged attacks made by an unseen attacker. Sniping can only be done at medium or long range (at short range its considered a Surprise Attack), where a Stealth Vs. Awareness skill test is made. The attacker gains a +2 bonus to their Stealth test at medium, and a +5 bonus at long range. If successful, the attacker makes their attack roll against the target's flat Shadow stat. If the target possesses the Valdreyr: Luck, they may apply its entire bonus to their Shadow. If the target wins the Stealth Vs. Awareness contest, she can attempt to defend against the attack roll as normal.

SKILL USE DURING COMBAT

Many times adventurers will find themselves trying to accomplish something while in the midst of battle. Two important factors come into play: did the Skill roll make the task difficulty and how long did the task take to accomplish in terms of Speed? The HoF assigns the appropriate Difficulty required for success and the attempt will have a speed cost of 8. The player makes his appropriate Skill Test roll and determines if he's successful. If the character fails, he is assumed to have spent the entire Combat Turn trying and failing to accomplish his goal. If the player scores a Superior Success, he can reduce the speed cost by half.

Example: Balzac has a Speed of 10. He is attempting to pick a lock (–8 Speed Debt) while his friends hold off a squad of Drakani infantry. He has already spent 4 of his Speed in his Initiative Bid, leaving him with 6. Unless he spends some Finesse Successes earned through his Security roll to decrease the time it takes, he won't manage to pick the lock until the next Combat Turn. By then it may already be too late. He makes his roll. His Security is Expert (+4 Practice). His total roll is 23 (his Personal of 4, +4 Practice, plus his Acuity of 7, plus a "8" he rolled). Since the difficulty to pick the lock was 15, Balzac achieves a Superior Success, reducing the speed cost of the attempt from 8 to 4. He picks the lock expertly; the skill usage only costing him 4 speed. This still leaves him with 2 points of Speed (–4 for the Lockpick, -4 from his Initiative Bid), so as he picks the lock, he whips open the door and uses the remaining 2 points of Speed to leap into the room and away from harm.

HIT LOCATIONS

Usually (unless successes are spent to decide otherwise) where a blow lands is decided randomly. 2d10 is rolled:

2	Head
3-4	Left Arm
5-6	Right Arm
7-12	Chest
13-16	Abdomen
17-18	Left Leg
19-20	Right Leg

Called Shots

A basic combat Finesse Effect (see page 155) allows the attacker to choose a specific hit location, or a generalized upper or lower body blow. A 1d10 is used for attacks toward the upper body; 1d10+10 for attacks directed at the lower body. See the Vitality and Lethal Wounds section on page 149 for details on the effects of damaging specific locations.

GENERAL COMBAT ACTIONS

Speed Cost	Description
2	Draw sheathed or holstered weapon
1	Drop weapon
3	Sheath or holster weapon
2, 3, 4	Attack. Depending upon the type of attack being launched, the speed cost is 2, 3, or 4. Unarmed attacks, Melee (short), and Ranged Weapon (small), only cost 2 speed to attack with. Melee (medium), and Ranged Weapons (medium) cost 3 speed to attack. And Melee (long), and Ranged Weapon (heavy) have a speed cost of 4. +1 each Simultaneous Attack. Making additional attack/s on same turn costs +1 Speed each; +1 for the first extra attack, +2 for the 2nd, etc.
4, 6	Autofire Bursts. Using automatic weapons, a Short Burst costs 4 Speed and a Full Burst 6.
6, 8	Autofire Spray. 6 Speed (90-degree arc), 8 Speed (180-degree arc). This fires a Full Burst over an area. All within the arc must make a defense roll versus the gunman's attack roll. Failure indicates a hit at base weapon damage to one rolled hit location.
1 per +1	Active Defense. For each point of speed spent toward defense, they gain a +1 to their defense roll, and may make use of any special Defensive Finesse Effects they are capable of.
1	Move 5'. All characters get a free 5' move once per Round, thereafter, they must pay 1 point of Speed per 5'. See Movement.
2	Swim 5'.
2	Dynamic Movement.
3	Dive for Cover. Move half standing jump distance plus free 5' move out of area of effect and lie Prone (Expert Athletics or better avoids Prone). If the character does not make it take half damage or half effect.
1	Mount or Dismount an animal.
4	Enter or Exit a vehicle
1	Shield Block. Can be used with or without an Active Defense, but even if the defense roll fails and they are hit, the attack strikes the shield first.
8	Use Non-Combat Skill.
2	Reload Weapon.
3	Aiming. Per +2 to roll for ranged weapons only
1	Wind Up. +1 to HTH/Melee damage per.
1 per Vit.	Recovery. Characters may devote any amount of their Speed to recovery, regaining 1 point of Vitality per 1 Speed. Characters can choose to use any unspent Speed at the end of the Combat Round to recover Vitality.
6	Cast a Rune Magic Charm.
6	Perform a Rune Magic Countercharm.
4	Activate a Rune Magic Talisman.
3	Place a readied Rune Magic Ward on a target.

RANGED ATTACK ACTIONS

Ranged weapons; firearms, bows and mechanical ejectors/projectors, follow a similar yet different set of rules from Melee attacks. Some weapons have up to three firing modes, Single Shot, Short Burst, and Full Burst. Short and Full Burst attacks differ from Single Shots and any other kind of attack in that they cannot use any Finesse Effects except those included in their descriptive paragraphs. Even if someone had enough successes and a Finesse Level high enough to conceivably do it, you could not Full Burst and pick hit locations for each bullet.

Single Shot (2, 3, or 4 Speed)

Most weapons only fire a single bullet, quarrel, steel spike, with every pull of the trigger. Single Shots are best for accurate shooting as they can take advantage of Universal Combat Finesse Effects.

Autofire Burst (4 Speed short burst, 6 Speed full burst)

Multiple bullet hits add both to the Vitality damage of the weapon used and to the number of locations hit. The number of locations struck is always limited by the Rate of Fire (ROF) value of the individual weapon. A weapon with a Short Burst ROF of 3 cannot strike more than 3 locations. The total damage done by the weapon is marked against the victim's Vitality as normal while the Lethal Wound loss would be divided among the locations struck. Instead of the normal 1 Success adding 1 point to the base damage, short bursts add 3 points of damage for every Success; full bursts add 4 points of damage per success. Autofire cannot otherwise use any Universal Finesse Effects.

Example: *Tomarr is struck by multiple hits from an Eshutha Mk. III submachinegun. The weapon's base damage is 6 and it has a ROF of 3/30, or 3 bullets in a Short Burst, 30 with a Full Burst. Tomarr's defense was exceeded by the attack by 3 successes. Since the attacker was firing in full burst (emptying the clip in the process), 3 locations are struck generating a bonus of +12 to the damage, or 18 Vitality points total. To Tomarr, this amounts to 3 Lethal Wounds. Having been struck 3 times, the location rolls are torso, torso, and left arm. Instead of subtracting 3 Lethal Wounds from a single location, as would normally be done, he loses 2 to the torso, and 1 to the left arm.*

Armored opponents fare better than those without, as the comparative Armor Piercing (AP)/Armor Value (AV) values are figured by individual location.

Example: *Vars Rieklind, Ballinorian border guard in heavy Ballinorian plate armor12av3 (see Taking Damage page 150), is fired upon by a Drakani Machine Cannon emplacement which does 33ap2 (meaning it does 33 damage points with a Armor Piercing of 2). When all results are in, Vars is struck in three locations, his right leg, his abdomen, and his torso for 42 points of damage. Ouch. His armor reduces that to 30 Vitality points and 5 Lethal Wounds. Normally, that much damage to a single limb would spell its doom, but with a burst fire weapon, those 5 Lethal Wounds get divided among the three locations, right leg taking 2 Lethal Wounds, the abdomen taking 2 Lethal Wounds, and the torso taking 1 Lethal Wound. Vars' AV exceeds the AP value of the weapon by 1 so he can only take 1 Lethal Wound in each location from that hit no matter how many Damage Points are inflicted. In the end, he takes only 1 Lethal Wound to the Right Leg, and 1 to the Abdomen. He still took 30 points to his Vitality, however, so he's been blasted senseless with a perforated belly and thigh.*

Weapons with autofire capability will have listings in their Rate of Fire similar to 3/30 where the 3 is the number of bullets spent in a Short Burst and the 30 being the number of bullets spent in a Full Burst. With either attack type, the total number of successes scored is the maximum number of locations that can be struck. The actual number of hit locations struck is dictated by the ROF for the attack type used: you can't hit more locations than the number of bullets fired.

Autofire Spray (6 Speed 90-degree arc, 8 Speed 180-degree arc)

A Spray is a frantic firing of bullets over a wide area at Full Burst. The player must decide at the outset whether they are covering a 90-degree arc (6 Speed) or a 180-degree arc (8 Speed); all within the arc must make a defense roll versus the gunman's attack roll. Failure indicates a hit at base weapon damage to one rolled hit location. Autofire Sprays are only effective to the weapon's Short Range distance.

VITALITY AND LETHAL WOUNDS

A Character's health is tracked with two elements: Vitality and Lethal Wounds. Based on the Physique and Mass Stats, a character has a set of Lethal Wounds for each body location, and a Vitality based on his Chest Lethal Wounds. Vitality represent the character's overall stamina, while Lethal Wounds represent actual flesh and bone damage. All characters have 7 Lethal Wound Locations. Each location has a number of Wounds based on the character's Physique and the size of the body location. Use the chart on the next page to determine each location's number of Lethal Wounds (always round up; each has minimum 1 Wound):

2d10	Location	Number of Wounds	(Total Damage Effect)
2	**Head**	**Physique/2–1**	**(unconscious)**
3,4	**Right Arm**	**Physique/2**	**(disabled)**
5,6	**Left Arm**	**Physique/2**	**(disabled)**
7–10	**Chest**	**Physique/2+2**	**(unconscious)**
11–14	**Abdomen**	**Physique/2**	**(unconscious)**
15–17	**Left Leg**	**Physique/2+1**	**(double movement Speed cost)**
18–20	**Right Leg**	**Physique/2+1**	**(as above, or no movement if both legs disabled)**

Example: *The Lethal Wounds (LW) of a character with a Physique of 5 would break down like this: Head: 2LW, Arms: 3LW, Chest: 5LW, Abdomen: 3LW, Legs: 4LW.*

A Carousel thug stabs Sir Kilias Melereton. The thug hits Sir Melereton for 8 points of damage. Rolling the location, he struck Sir Melereton's right arm. Based on his Mass, Sir Melereton's has 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound (see below). With 8 damage points, the dagger inflicts two Wounds in damage. These two Lethal Wounds are marked against the number of Lethal Wounds he has in his arm (which in this case is 3) leaving his arm terribly hurt,but still functional. The remaining 2 Damage Points delivered by the dagger are dropped since they didn't exceed the 3 Damage Points in his arm's last Lethal Wound. Unless Sir Melereton recieves healing he still only has 1 Lethal Wound left in his arm location - 3 Damage Points more will disable the arm.

The Head has the least Wounds, while the Chest has the most. Each Lethal Wound contains a number of Damage Points equal to the character's Mass/2.

VITALITY

The character's Vitality is:

(Physique/2) +5 x (Mass/2)

Remember to always round up. When the character is hit by an attack, damage is subtracted from **both** Vitality and the Lethal Wound Location that was struck.

Example: With a Physique of 6 and a Mass of 5, the character possesses a Vitality of 24, with 3 points of Vitality per Lethal Wound. If the character were to take 12 points of damage from an attack, the player would mark off 12 points from the character's Vitality and 4 full Lethal Wounds from whatever location was hit.

As characters take damage, they begin to be slowed and weakened by the loss of life. After characters lose half their Vitality to damage, they suffer -2 to all rolls. When they have taken enough damage to be at one-quarter their original Vitality, they can no longer roll a die and must rely on their Base Value for all skill resolutions. When they've reached zero Vitality, they are unconscious or dying.

ARMOR AND TAKING DAMAGE

When a character is struck in combat, the location and amount of damage is determined. All attacks have Damage Points (DP) and an Armor Piercing (AP)factor. Any protection will have a Damage Point value in defense, and an Armor Value (AV). To determine how much damage penetrates a target's defense, first compare the AP value of the weapon to the AV of the armor. If the armor's AV is greater than the weapon's AP value, that difference is subtracted from the number of lethal wounds inflicted by the attack. If the armor's AV is lower than the AP value of the weapon, that difference indicates the number of times the armor's Point Value is halved.

Example: Again we find Sir Melereton confronted with a Carosel thug. The thug strikes with a thrust from his rapier. The rapier has a value of 9AP4, versus Sir Melereton's armored jerkin, which has a value of 12AV2. Normally, Sir Melereton's armor has a point value high enough to stop the rapier, but since the pointy rapier has an AP value of 4, some damage gets through. With the rapier's AP value 2 levels higher than the AV value of Melereton's armor, Sir Melereton's 12 point armor is reduced to 3 (12 points reduced by 50% to 6, reduced by 50% again to 3). 6 points of the Rapier's damage penetrates Sir Meleretons' armor.

Example: The Zhalanti adventurer Zellyce, is facing the Fire Reaches pit fighter, Suma Chom. Zellyce is lightly armored, but magically so, with a defensive capacity of 12AV5. Suma wields a large maul with a value of 26AP1 (damage adjusted upwards for Suma's strength). Unfortunately for Zellyce, she is hit. Her armor sucks up 12 points of the hammer's damage, leaving her to take the remaining 14 points. The rolled location is to Zellyce's torso. Zellyce marks off the 14 damage from her Vitality. Since she has 4 damage points per Wound, she would subtract three Lethal Wounds from the location (the damage is 2 points shy of being 4 wounds). However, since her magical armor's AV is 4 levels higher than the hammer's AP of 1, she subtracts 4 from the Lethal Wounds done to her torso, reducing the wound damage to zero. She has still taken the 14 points of Vitality and is reeling, but her magical armor has saved her from many broken ribs and ruptured internal organs.

Armor that the character acquires has separate protection values for different locations (a helmet generally provides more

protection than armlets or a breastplate). It is possible to wear different types of armor on different locations, in which cases the character will look rather rag-tag but can get the benefit of better armor if the specific location is hit with a random hit location roll, or if it is specifically targeted. When a character's Vitality drop to zero they are knocked unconscious or otherwise temporarily incapacitated, falling Prone if standing. If a location is reduced to zero Lethal Wounds, but the character still has points of Vitality left, that location is severely injured and ceases to function (in the case of head, torso, or abdomen the character is rendered incapacitated and unconcious). Losing all the Lethal Wounds in a vital location (the head, abdomen, or chest) in addition to losing all of one's Vitality indicates death. If all Lethal Wounds any location are lost the character will die in a number of minutes equal to their Physique due to bleeding and shock.

DAMAGE TO SHADOW

Any character, Shadowmages included, losing all of the points of their Shadow Stat, will immediately suffer a crushing malaise that can lead to death. Often, a spirit that has been attacked will eventually heal, given enough time and rest, but those whose loss is unrecoverable will wither and fade, passing into a slow death.

Normal subjects recover one point of Shadow per hour of sleep (an hour of successful Meditation will recover 3 points), while shadow-less creatures (i.e. Shadekin) must heal the damage like normal Lethal Wounds. Each Shadow point lost also causes a loss of 1 Speed Stat point. If the lost points cannot be recovered (such as is the case with the Dark Rapine or Obliviate Shadowmagic spells and some Shadekin attacks), the victim at 0 shadow suffers the Dizzy, Weak, and Confusion Handicaps and will linger for 24 hours before their bodies die unless someone finds a way to restore their soul.

RECOVERING FROM DAMAGE

At the end of the Combat Round, characters may use any unspent Speed to recover some of their Vitality. For each point of Speed devoted to Recovery, the character recovers 1 point ofVitality. If a character has not lost all of the Lethal Wounds to a body location, they can recover up to their maximum Vitality, given enough Recovery actions by the character. If the character has lost all the Lethal Wounds to a particular location, the maximum Vitality they may recover to is reduced by the number of Lethal Wounds the location possessed.

Example: *Rianiqui possesses a total of 24 Vitality. Her arms have 4 Lethal Wounds,each with 3 Damage Points. During combat, her arm loses all 4 of its Lethal Wounds. Now, Rianiqui can Recover only 12 Vitality, or 24 minus 4 Lethal Wounds x 3 Damage Points per wound.*

If more than one location is reduced to zero Lethal Wounds, then the greater of the two values becomes the limiting factor.

Example: Rianiqui takes more damage over the course of combat until now her leg is also reduced to zero Lethal Wounds. Since the leg possesses 5 Lethal Wounds,Rianiqui's Recovery is limited to 9 Vitality, or 24 - 15 (5 Wounds x 3 DPs).

Magical Healing, unlike a typical Recovery, can raise a character's Vitality above what reductions from Lethal Wound loss would allow.

Example: Rianiqui's friend, the Tilandri Runemage Vrazha, quickly casts a healing charm upon the beleaguered mercenary. This heals Rianiqui for 15 Vitality, lifting her from the 9 maximum she could recover to, to her healthy maximum of 24. She still can't use her arm, and her bum leg has reduced her speed, but she has enough energy to retreat, defend, or even continue the fight. Unfortunately, the scrappy mercenary continues the fight. The next attack she suffers is 40ap2 damage points to her torso. Though her 15av2 armor reduces the Vitality damage to 25 (or 8 Lethal Wounds for Rianiqui), she has only 24 Vitality points total and 6 are the number of Lethal Wounds she has in her torso. Her torso Wounds reduced to zero, her Vitality reduced to zero, the blow shatters her ribs and internal organs, killing her instantly.

At the moment a character loses all the Lethal Wounds in a location, but still have points remaining in their Vitality, no other actions can be performed by the character that Combat Round. If the location lost happens to be a vital one, the head, torso, or abdomen, the character is incapacitated for the duration of Combat unless someone either revives him with healing magics or an Advanced (15) Healing skill test.

Though the prevalence of healing magics has allowed for the injured to recover quickly from almost any injury, in cases where no healing magics are present, Lethal Wounds heal at the rate of 1 a week to each location. The recovery length is doubled if any location was reduced to zero Lethal Wounds.

HANDICAPS

The hazards of combat include much more than simple injury or death. A skilled opponent, special weapon, poison, or bad luck can inflict handicap states that debilitate the character or their opponent, decreasing their combat effectiveness. If a handicap is caused by a finesse effect or non-magical attack, the subject can try to shake off the effect by spending a certain amout of speed and making an an approptirate skill roll, as defined in each Handicap. If caused by a magical effect, the Handicap ceases only when the spell duration ends.

Blinded

A partially blinded character suffers a –5 penalty to all attack and defense rolls. A totally blinded character suffers –10 to all attack and defense rolls. They are considered **Stressed** while Blinded. Temporary blindness (blood or dust in the eyes, dazzle from a bright flash, etc) may be negated by spending 8 Speed to make an Advanced 15 Awareness Skill Test. Permanent blindness (a curse of blindness, poison, etc.) caused by magic or injury will require magical healing.

Confused

Addled by a concussion, poison or magic, the subject must roll a d10 to determine what their action is for the round.

d10	Result
1–2	**Do nothing (0 Speed)**
3–4	**Drop prone (2 Speed)**
5–6	**Run away from closest fighting or loud noise (all Speed spent on Move)**
7–8	**Attack the nearest person (4 Speed)**
9–10	**Drop whatever they are holding (1 Speed)**

They get no speed for initiative, and must pay the speed cost for whatever action they take. The handicap can be shaken off by spending 8 speed to make an Advanced difficulty 15 Intelligence + Meditation roll after they have taken their confused action, on every subsequent turn. Those with an Elite Finesse Level in Connive or Indimidate can cause natural Confusion with an Elite 25 Skill Test. The target must be able to hear and understand the speaker for it to work.

Deaf

The subject cannot hear due to loud noises or head injury, and suffers a –3 Speed and –5 to Personal and Knowledge rolls. Non-magic deaf effects can be recovered from by making an Advanced difficulty 15 Perception + Awareness roll.

Dizzy

Off-balance and uncoordinated, the subject must make an Advanced Athletics check of 15 every time he spends Speed on movement. He is considered *Stressed* while Dizzy. If he fails, he falls prone and takes 5 points of Vitality damage, not including falling damage if he stumbles over a precipice or steep slope. A non-magical dizzy effect can be negated by making an Advanced difficulty 15 Reaction + Meditation roll.

Enraged

The subject must spend all Speed on hand-to-hand physical attacks, or on movement to reach a target to attack. If caused by a non-magical effect, this handicap can be ended with a successful Intelligence + Meditation roll of Advanced difficulty 15 by the victim, or by an Acuity + Conversation roll of Expert 20 difficulty by someone they trust who they can hear and see. Those who possess an Elite Finesse Level in Connive or Leadership can cause someone to become Enraged with an Elite 25 Skill Test. The target must be able to hear and understand the speaker for it to work.

Insane

Driven mad by glimpsing mundane atrocities or Abominations from beyond, from fear so great it unhinges the mind, or simply from knowing too much, the subject can suffer from either temporary or permanent insanity. Temporary insanity occurs at the first exposure to insanity-inducing effect if the subject fails a Shadow + Meditation + d10 roll verses whatever is causing their insanity (if it is caused by a creature or magical effect) or verses a static difficulty determined by the HoF (if it is caused by the environment). They are considered **Stressed** while Insane, either temporary or permanent. On their next action, the subject must roll d10 to determine their reaction:

d10	Result
1	**Attack themselves (spend all Speed inflicting base HtH damage on themselves)**
2–3	**Panic in place (spend all Speed in defense)**
4–6	**Run in fear (spend all Speed on movement)**
7–8	**Attack source of insanity (spend all Speed on attack)**
9–10	**Fall prone, withdraw into catatonia (considered a Helpless Defender)**

The subject may get a grip on herself and shake off non-magical Insanity once she is out of view of the cause of it by making a Intelligence + Meditation roll verses Advanced 15 difficulty. Someone with an Elite Conversation or Connive skill can induce temporary insanity by spending up to an hour speaking to the target and making an Elite 25 skill test.

Permanent insanity occurs after a subject has failed her Shadow roll to resist Temporary insanity a number of times equal to their starting Shadow stat. After recovering from the Temporary insanity effects, the player and HoF must determine what specific sort of psychosis, obsession, or anxiety based on what she's been through. The effect will always impose a –5 penalty to all Personal and Social rolls. Permanent insanity can be cured by another person accumulating one Advanced, one Expert and one Elite Success using their Acuity + Conversation, Intuit or Pursuasion skill verses the subject's Shadow + Conversation roll. These successes may be accumulated over any amount of time.

Pain

The subject is racked by intense pain and cannot think or act very effectively, suffering –5 to all rolls while the effect lasts. They are considered **Stressed** while Pained. A non-magical Pained effect can be toughed out with a successful Advanced difficulty 15 Mass + Meditation roll.

Paralyzed

Held immobile, the subject is unable to move. Breathing and heartbeat are unaffected, and the subject may move his eyes, but otherwise no action is possible. The unfortunate is considered a Helpless Defender and subject to a killing blow. A nonmagical effect may be shaken with a Physique + Athletics roll against an Advanced 15 difficulty made on their turn.

Slowed

The subject moves in slow motion, as if he were underwater. The Speed cost for all actions is doubled. The non-magical version of this effect can be negated with a successful Reaction + Athletics roll against Advanced 15 difficulty.

Stunned

Mental shock engulfs the mind of the subject of this effect and he suffers –5 to all Intelligence and Acuity rolls. He drops anything he is holding. He is considered **Stressed** while Stunned. An individual can recover from a non-magical Stun with an Advanced 15 difficulty Intelligence + Personal roll.

Unconscious

This handicap means the subject is knocked out or asleep due to Lethal Wound damage to a hit location, zero or fewer Vitality, a finesse maneuver, or a magical effect. She is treated as a Helpless Defender and subject to a killing blow (see also the Helpless Defender rules). If unconscious due to a nonmagical effect the subject may rouse themselves by rolling an Advanced 15 difficulty Physique + Athletics at the end of every Combat Round.

Weakened

The strength drains out of the subject and base Hand to Hand damage is halved. It can be recovered from a non-magical Weaken effect with a successful Advanced difficulty 15 Mass + Athletics roll.

COMBAT FINESSE EFFECTS

Combat Finesse Effects allow for dramatic weapon effects and dynamic actions. A player need not learn a list of complex maneuvers unless they wish to. Combat Finesse Effects are as deep and varied as the player chooses them to be.

When two opponents face off they compare their attack and defense rolls as determined by Reaction + Personal + Skill Practice + 1d10. The winner of this contest can then use the Finesse Successes to increase damage, cause devastating special strikes, disarm an opponent, etc. What sort of effects can be earned depends upon the type of weapon used, be it blunt, edge, or projectile.

Example: Tom is playing Jakharta, a Periphery assassin facing off against an Ianu Vossan bodyguard. He rolls to hit on his turn, scoring a total attack value of 17. The bodyguard's defense roll totals 15. Tom's roll beats his opponent's by 2. Not very high, so he decides to just drop it straight into damage. Jakharta's base damage for the weapon she wields is 10 (a Petushti dagger), giving her a total of 12.

Example: Darren's character, Fassult, a Thraycean merchant, has run afoul of a vicious A'kounk on Klesht's windswept shale cliffs. On his turn, Fassult scores a 23 on his attack. The A'kounk (a sort of rabid mountain goat/wolverine) only scores a 15 on its defense. Fassult beats it with an 8. Knowing that the A'kounk's thick hide will protect it from even his mighty iron war-mallet, he uses his 8 successes and buys a Special Attack, Knockback. To his relief the A'kounk's body is flung through the air and over the edge of the cliff, where it vanishes into the shadows hundreds and hundreds of feet below.

Another factor of Combat Finesse Effects is the Finesse Level of the skill being used. As a combat skill's Finesse Level rises, additional effects can be mastered and used as the player desires. At its simplest, a player merely rolls to perform her attack, converts any Successes straight into damage and that's it. But situations may arise where you just might have to shoot the revolver from the hand of the nefarious Baron Vrecht and Combat Finesse Effects will show you how.

Depending on what kind of attack the character is launching or what type of weapon she's using, she will have access to different kinds of effects. Some effects are universal. The Combat Finesse Effect that increases damage is the same for all forms of attack. But bladed weapons have effects different from blunt weapons or even hand-to-hand attacks.

Another important facet of Combat Finesse Effects is Defensive Effects, which can be used whenever a character uses an Active Defense (*q.v.*). These cover everything from counterattacks to disarms.

UNIVERSAL COMBAT FINESSE EFFECTS

The following Combat Finesse Effects can be used with all forms of attack.

Increasing Damage: 1 per point

This is the most basic and often used Combat Finesse Effect. All weapons in *The Secret of Zir'An* have a base damage value. For every 1 Finesse Success, that base damage can be increased by 1. This total amount is what is compared to the defensive value of armor that is struck.

Armor Penetration: 3 per AV

For every 3 successes scored, the attacker may decrease the AV of the defender's armor by 1 for that attack only. This has no effect on the damage defense value of the armor, only its AV.

Choosing Hit Location: 4, 6, 8

For 4, 6 or 8 Finesse Successes, the player may choose a hit location as opposed to rolling a random location. For 4 Finesse Successes, the player may choose a random upper or lower body location (roll d10-upper body locations are 1 Head, 2-4 Torso, 5-7 Left Arm, 8-10 Right Arm; Lower Body locations are 1-4 Left Leg, 5-8 Right Leg, 9-10 Abdomen). For 6 Finesse Successes, the player may choose any specific non-head location. And for 8 successes, the player may choose a head shot, or any other specific area on the target's body no matter how small.

UNARMED COMBAT FINESSE EFFECTS

The Unarmed skill, as explained earlier, encompasses all degrees of hand-to-hand combat, from bare-knuckle brawling to the most graceful martial art. Hand-to-hand attacks naturally have a lower base damage than weapon attacks, but what they lack in raw damage potential they make up for in versatility. In addition to having its own special Finesse Effects, unarmed combat can use both Blunt and Edged Effects. The fist of a martial arts master can either be a hammer or a sword.

Grappling: 4

A grapple is a 2 Speed attack that uses the Unarmed Skill. One cannot grapple a defender whose combined Physique and Mass exceed their own. The attacker declares the attempt to grapple and normal attack and defense rolls are made. If the attacker scores 4 successes she achieves a grapple. Any successes beyond this can be used to perform a number of secondary actions listed below. On each subsequent turn for the grappler, they can make a new attack roll with their Unarmed skill against the defender's Unarmed skill, and any successes scored can be used to perform any of the listed secondary actions, without having to spend the 4 successes needed to achieve the grapple. On the defender's turn, she may attempt to escape. To do so, she only need score 4 successes in an Unarmed skill test against the grappler.

Crush and Choke: 4

If the attacker scores 4 successes after having grappling their opponent, they can squeeze them to do damage equivalent to their base Hand-to-Hand damage plus or minus the relative values of their Mass stats. In addition, the victim is considered Stunned, as the Handicap (q.v.) The attacker can continue to deal damage each round in lieu of rolling an attack until the target escapes. Or he can begin Choking his victim, instantly Suffocating the victim (see Drowning and Suffocation, Chapter 12: Running the Game).

Throw Opponent: 4

Picking up and throwing someone into the nearest hard object, be it a floor, a wall, or out over a balcony. If the target is small enough to score a Grapple on, then they can be flung 5 feet plus 5 feet for every point the attacker's Mass exceeds that of the victim. Damage is the attacker's base Hand-to-Hand +1 point per 5 feet thrown, plus any Falling damage incurred.

Take-Down: 2

For 2 successes, the grappler can take the opponent down to the ground, putting them in a prone position. The opponent is stuck in this position and is subject to all the penalties associated with being prone (-5 to attack and defense). These penalties are applied to any attempt by the defender to escape the grapple.

Lock: 2 (Advanced Finesse Level)

Target is grappled and expertly put into a painful and inescapable lock. Unless the target can escape in a contested attack roll on their turn the victim is fully immobilized and afflicted with the Pain Handicap (q.v.). The attacker may, on his turn, choose to do Crush damage to a single hit location, or begin to Suffocate the victim (see Drowning and Suffocation, Chapter 12: Running the Game).

BLUNT SPECIAL FINESSE EFFECTS

Whenever an attacker scores at least 6 Successes in any attack, the attacker may choose to make it a Special Attack; stunning, impaling, disarms, all of these fall under Special Finesse Effects. Though all of these effects have a minimum requirement of 6 Successes, scoring more can increase the power of some effects. Additionally, some effects will have a minimum Finesse Level requirement.

Destroy Armor: Expert Finesse Level

So powerful is this attack, it permanently lowers the AV of the armor struck by 1 for every 6 Successes. Once an armor's AV drops to 0 it is completely destroyed. Magical armor is unaffected.

Destroy Weapon: Expert Finesse Level

For the standard 6 Successes, fragile weapons, such as guns or other mechanical ranged weapons, are destroyed or damaged

enough that they cease to function. For 10 Successes, if the weapon used is of a size greater than the targeted weapon, it will automatically destroy all but the most heavily enchanted weapons (those above +10 value, see Items of Power page 323).

Disable: Advanced Finesse Level

The attack does half the normal base damage but can render a limb inoperable or a defender unconscious. By scoring the base 6 Successes, the defender's arm or leg can be made to temporarily cease functioning. For 8 Successes, the defender can be rendered unconscious if they possess no head protection. If the defender wears head protection, they incur the Handicap of Dizzy and Deaf. Disable lasts for the duration of combat unless healed. An Expert Healing skill test can alleviate the effects of Disable.

Disarm: Advanced Finesse Level

Though the attack does no damage, it forces the weapon from the defender's hand (unless their hand *is* the weapon), causing it to land at his feet. For 10 Successes, the defender's weapon isn't merely knocked from his grasp, it is thrown. The type of weapon used determines the distance:

Short Melee: 15 feet
Medium Melee: 20 feet
Long Melee: 30 feet

The type of weapon disarmed adjusts the final distance:

Short Melee/Small Ranged: +5 feet
Medium Melee/Medium Ranged: –5 feet
Long Melee/Heavy Ranged: –10 feet

Knockback: Advanced Finesse Level

For each Lethal Wound the attack is capable of doing (not the amount of damage actually inflicted) the attacker will knock the defender back 5 feet. This amount can be doubled if the attacker scores 8 Successes, quadrupled for 10 Successes. The defender will take an additional point of damage for every 5 feet thrown. Defenders that are knocked back land Prone. Characters with an Expert Athletics skill can land on their feet, provided they remain conscious from the actual damage the attack caused.

Heavy Stun: Basic Finesse Level

In addition to inflicting the Sunned Handicap (q.v.), every Lethal Wound of damage the attack was capable of inflicting, not how much actually got through, the target loses a point of Speed on their next turn.

EDGED SPECIAL FINESSE EFFECTS

Blind: Advanced Finesse Level

The player does not make a hit location roll and causes temporary blindness as the Handicap (q.v.). 6 Successes causes partial blindness, while 8 Successes cause total blindness. The attack causes half base damage, which is applied in Lethal Wounds to the head. If the damage is enough to cause a loss of all LWs to the head, then the blindness is permanent, requiring magical healing to cure.

Deathblow: Expert Finesse Level

If the attack succeeds in causing the loss of at least 1 Lethal Wound, the target will begin to bleed to death; losing an amount of Vitality equal to 1 Lethal Wound every Combat Round. If they reach zero Vitality without receiving an Advanced (15) Healing Skill Test or the application of Healing Magics, they will die. If the attacker scores 10 successes, the target loses 2 Lethal Wounds worth of Vitality every Combat Round.

Destroy Armor: Elite Finesse Level

So powerful this attack, it permanently lowers the AV of the armor struck by 1. Once an armor's AV drops to 0 it is completely destroyed.

Destroy Weapon: Expert Finesse Level

For the standard 6 successes, fragile weapons, such as guns or other mechanical ranged weapons, are destroyed or damaged enough that they cease to function. For 10 successes, if the weapon used is of a size greater than the targeted weapon, it will destroy all but the most heavily enchanted weapons.

Disarm: Advanced Finesse Level

Though the attack does no damage, it forces the weapon from the defender's hand (unless their hand *is* the weapon), causing it to land at his feet. For 10 successes, the defender's weapon isn't merely knocked from his grasp, it is thrown. The type of weapon used determines the distance.

Short Melee: 15 feet
Medium Melee: 20 feet
Long Melee: 30 feet

The type of weapon disarmed adjusts the final distance:

Short Melee/Small Ranged: +5 feet
Medium Melee/Medium Ranged: –5 feet
Long Melee/Heavy Ranged: –10 feet

Slash: Basic Finesse Level

The weapon causes a painful wound. For 6 Finesse Successes, the attack causes +3 points of damage and incurs the Handicap: Pain, on the target. The effects can be recovered normally (q.v. *Handicaps*).

PIERCING SPECIAL FINESSE EFFECTS

Blind: Advanced Finesse Level

The player does not make a hit location roll and causes temporary blindness as the Handicap (q.v.). 6 Successes causes partial blindness, while 8 Successes cause total blindness. The attack causes half base damage, which is applied in Lethal Wounds to the head. If the damage is enough to cause a loss of all LWs to the head, then the blindness is permanent, requiring magical healing to cure.

Deathblow: Expert Finesse Level

If the attack succeeds in causing the loss of at least 1 Lethal Wound, the target will begin to bleed to death; losing an amount of Vitality equal to 1 Lethal Wound every Combat Round. If they reach zero Vitality without receiving an Advanced (15) Healing Skill Test or the application of Healing Magics, they will die. If the attacker scores 10 successes, the target loses 2 Lethal Wounds worth of Vitality every Combat Round.

Destroy Weapon: Expert Finesse Level

For the standard 6 successes, fragile weapons, such as guns or other mechanical ranged weapons, are destroyed or damaged enough that they cease to function. For 10 successes, if the weapon used is of a size greater than the targeted weapon, it will destroy all but the most heavily enchanted weapons.

Disarm: Advanced Finesse Level

Though the attack does no damage, it forces the weapon from the defender's hand (unless their hand *is* the weapon), causing it to land at their feet. For 10 successes the defender's weapon isn't merely knocked from their grasp, it is thrown. The type of weapon used determines the distance.

Short Melee: 15 feet
Medium Melee: 20 feet
Long Melee: 30 feet

The type of weapon disarmed adjusts the final distance:

Short Melee/Small Ranged: +5 feet
Medium Melee/Medium Ranged: –5 feet
Long Melee/Heavy Ranged: –10 feet

Impale: Basic Finesse level (Melee) Expert Finesse Level (Unarmed)

If the attack manages to inflict the loss of at least 1 Lethal Wound, the weapon will completely pierce the limb struck, giving the attacker one of two options. Either they can aggravate the wound, doing their base weapon damage again, ignoring armor, or pin the opponent to any convenient surface or structures. Pinned opponents are considered Prone (*q.v.*).

Skewer: Expert Finesse Level

Similar to Impale, Skewer requires that the attack inflict at least 1 Lethal Wound on the target to work. Skewer allows the attacker to strike figures adjacent to the defender who is within the line of the strike within 5'. Those struck suffer the base weapon damage of the attack without benefit of a defense roll.

SPECIAL DEFENSIVE FINESSE EFFECTS

Just as you can pull off a Special Attack if you score 6 or more successes in an attack, you can pull off Special Defense maneuvers by beating any attack roll by 6 or more successes. Depending on whether the character blocked the attack with a weapon or dodged it, certain effects will be available.

Blocking Effects

Set-up: Basic Finesse Level

The defender manages to block the attack and set the attacker up for their next attack. For every 2 Successes scored on the Defense Roll, he gains a +1 bonus to his next attack roll against that enemy.

Catch: Advanced Finesse Level

With a simple Special Defense success, the defender can catch the attacker and place her in a grapple, provided their hands are free. Additional successes are required to perform any of the other Grapple effects listed above. A simple grapple costs the base 6 Successes scored in a Defense roll, while a Grapple + Crush/Choke, Grapple + Lock, Grapple + Take-Down, and Grapple + Throw cost 10,8,8, and 10 successes respectively.

Counterattack: Advanced Finesse Level

If the defender scores 6 successes or more, they have the opportunity to counterattack right then and there for no Speed cost. The tables suddenly turned, new attack rolls are made. But keep in mind that Counterattacks can be counterattacked.

Defensive Disarm: Expert Finesse Level

The same as a normal Disarm (see above), but can be used as a defensive action.

Dodging Effects

Back Attack: Expert Finesse Level

The defender's dodge slips them behind their attacker. If they have not attacked yet in the Combat Round, they may make a free attack at that moment, with the normal rules for striking from behind (see Defending above). With a successful Stealth skill test versus an Awareness skill test, they can make this attack a surprise attack (see Ambushes and Surprise Attacks above).

Defensive Leap: Basic Finesse Level

The defender can Jump as a defensive action if she scores

at least 6 successes in their Defense roll. It is an Advanced 15 Athletics skill test, and if successful, the defender can move her standing jump distance based on her Athletics skill as normal. This leap can be made in any direction, as long as it is away from the attacker. The defender can add her free 5-foot move if she hasn't used it this Round.

Defensive Trip: Advanced Finesse Level

As the dodging character slips past the attacker, he has the option of tripping his foe. The enemy makes an Expert 20 Athletics skill test, failure indicating they they are now Prone.

Misdirect Attack: Advanced Finesse Level

The character times his dodge so that the attacker's swing strikes a different target. By scoring 6 successes in a defense roll, any single combatant who lies withing 5 feet adjacent to either the attacker or the defender will be struck on a random hit location for the Base weapon damage of the attacker.

SPECIAL RANGED ATTACK FINESSE EFFECTS

Whenever an attacker scores at least 6 Successes in any attack, the attacker may choose to make it a Special Attack. Stunning, impaling, disarms, all of these fall under Special Finesse Effects. Though all of these effects have a minimum requirement of 6 successes, scoring more can increase the power of some effects. Additionally, some effects will have a minimum Finesse Level requirement.

Attack Weapon: Expert Finesse Level

Essentially amounting to a ranged disarm, a successful Special Attack will knock the weapon from the target's grasp. For 10 successes, the weapon targeted will be destroyed, again unless it is a powerful magic or otherwise supremely resilient.

Blowthrough: Advanced Finesse Level

By scoring a Blowthrough, the character's attack penetrates the target and continues on, striking the next person in its path for base weapon damage.

Knockback: Expert Finesse Level

Similar in execution to the Knockback Special Attack above, the target is thrown a number of feet equal to the number of Lethal Wounds the attack is capable of causing. This distance can be doubled for 8 successes and quadrupled for 10. The victim takes 1 point of Vitality for every foot thrown.

Pin: Advanced Finesse Level

If using a long solid projectile (arrows, quills, knives, etc.), the character can crudely pin the target to the nearest convenient hard surface: hands to trees, feet to floors, etc. Removing the projectile causes 1 Lethal Wound to the location struck.

Ricochet: Expert Finesse Level

With this trick shot, the character can strike targets behind objects or around corners. No other Finesse Effects can be purchased when using Ricochet, its hit location will always be random, the damage at its base.

BATTLE ARTS

Certain Skill Packages allow the player to devote some of their CCPs towards the purcahse of Battle Arts. The player chooses a particular Melee or Unarmed skill to which these battle arts apply.

Example: Chrys has spent 9 CCPs on Battle Arts. She chooses to put those nine points into her Melee: Medium skill. Alternately she could have decided to put 6 points in her Melee: Medium skill, and 3 points in her Melee: Short skill, or 3 points into three different skills.

These points can be used to purchase individual Battle Arts that apply towards a certain skill, so long as that skill meets the minimum Finesse Level of the Battle Art.

Example: Chrys's starting Melee; Medium is Expert, and with the 9 points in Battle Arts, she has decided to purchase Trick Strike (for 3 points), and Flurry (6 point Expert Battle Art). Alternatively, she sould have purchased three 3 point Battle Arts, or saved the 9 points for the day her Melee: Medium skill reached Elite, and spent those points on an Elite Battle Art. These only apply to attacks made with this skill.

Unarmed and Melee Battle Arts

Absorb Minor Melee Damage — 3 point Battle Art - requires Unarmed at Advanced

The first step on the path of body toughening techniques, it requires the character to make an Advanced Difficulty (15) Unarmed Skill Test. Successes create a pool of Lethal Wounds that substitute for the character's own when taking damage from non-magical, blunt force attacks. Every 2 successes puts 1 Lethal Wound into this pool. Absorb Minor Melee Damage lasts for the duration of combat or until its pool has been depleted.

Sacrifice — 3 point Battle Art - requires Unarmed/Melee at Advanced

The character willingly puts themselves in harms way in order to get a better opportunity to attack. For every voluntary –1 penalty they take to their defense roll will add +2 to their next attack roll.

Prone Fighting — 3 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Advanced

Limber and agile, the character has learned how to still be a threat even if knocked off their feet. They suffer no penalties whilst prone, to their attack or defense rolls.

Ignore Pain — 3 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed at

Advanced

The character is immune to the Pain Handicap and gain a +2 to any Skill Test to recover from the effects of the Stunned. Paralyzed, and Weakened Handicap.

Attacking Draw — 3 point Battle Art — requires Melee at Advanced

The character is able to attack with their melee weapon as they draw it from its sheath, in one fluid motion. They do not have to spend the 2 speed it normally costs to draw their weapon from its sheath and gain a +2 to their initiative for the round in which they draw and attack with their weapon.

Trick Strike — 3 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Advanced

A blow that does not have an obvious target or path until it lands. Like floater punches, uppercuts, and fast hook kicks. By adding a 2 point Speed cost to that of a normal attack, the defender will suffer a 1 point penalty to their defense roll per Finesse Level of the attacker (-2 for Advanced, -3 for Expert, -4 for Elite). This can only be done once a turn.

Nerve Attack — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed at Advanced

By scoring 6 successes in an Unarmed attack, they can inflict the Handicaps: Blinded, Deafened, Pain, or Paralyzed, provided their attack strikes a location protected by armor of an AV less than 3. The attack still does normal damage and may be combined with other finesse effects.

Flurry — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Expert

In a blaze of action, the attacker strikes the target multiple times. In lieu of the standard attack, the Flurry attack costs 8 Speed to execute. For every 1 success the attacker scores, they add 3 points of damage and strike 1 additional location, in a process similar to Burst Fire rules (q.v.), with a maximum Rate of Fire equivalent to their Personal Aptitude (+ any points of Practice they possess with attack skill).

Absorb Major Melee Damage — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed at Expert

Similar in execution to Absorb Minor Melee Damage, except in this case the character can absorb both blunt force and edge weapon damage. Unlike Absorb Minor Melee Damage, now the character must make an Advanced Difficulty (15) Unarmed skill test.

Duality — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Expert

In lieu of a regular attack, the character can spend 6 Speed to attack two targets within striking distance, with a single attack. The attacker makes their roll and if it beats the greater of the two defense rolls, both targets are struck. Damage, hit location, and other effects are then applied equally to the two victims.

Second Wind — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Expert

Once during the course of a single combat, the player may choose to recover all of their Vitality, up to the maximum allowed (depending upon the loss of all Lethal Wounds to a particular location), without spending speed. This does not heal Lethal Wounds or relieve any Handicaps.

Blind Fighting — 6 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Expert

By attuning their senses to a preternatural edge, they can engage targets in hand-to-hand and melee combat in blindness or darkness without penalty and are immune to Surprise Attacks (forcing the stealthy attacker to make a normal attack vs. defense roll).

Projection — 9 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Elite

Projection allows the character to project a hand-to-hand attack over a distance. For every point of Personal aptitude (+ any points of Practice they may have in Unarmed), they can project their strikes 5 feet. Projected blows can pass easily through solid (non-magically reinforced or otherwise warded) objects, increasing the AP of the attack by 1. Made in lieu of a regular attack, Projected Attacks cost 8 Speed to execute.

Destroy Attack — 9 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Elite

The defender takes the offense, attacking directly the limb or weapon that is attacking him. By succeeding with a block defense roll, the defender strikes the attacker's limb for their base hand-to-hand damage, +1 point for every success they scored in their defense roll. Wooden weapns will shatter, otherwise it is treated as a Disarm (q.v.) as normal.

Perfect Defense — 9 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed/Melee at Elite

Anyone who strikes at the master of this technique is opening themselves up to surprise counterattacks that strike with blinding speed. For every 1 Success scored in a defense roll, they inflict 2 Damage Points to the attacker. This damage is dealt to a randomly rolled hit location.

Iron Flesh — 9 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed at Elite

The final stage of body toughening techniques, it follows the same rules used in Absorb Minor/Major Melee Damage, but works against blunt force, edged weapons, and ranged weapons/firearms. The Task/Effort required to manifest Iron Flesh is an Expert Difficulty (20) Unarmed Skill test.

Heal — 9 point Battle Art — requires Unarmed at Elite

Usable once for the duration of combat, it allows the character to heal Lethal Wounds and Vitality when they take a Recovery. They take a Recovery as normal, but the amount of Vitality recovers an equal amount of Lethal Wounds to one or more locations (with 3 points of Vitality per Lethal Wound, would recover 2 Lethal Wounds if his Recovery was for 6 Vitality).

RANGED WEAPON BATTLE ARTS

Trick Shot — 3 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Advanced

Though not applicable to combat situations per se, with this battle art the character can pull off all manner of impressive feats like shooting cigars from the mouths of targets from a hundred yards or splitting an arrow with another arrow. Naturally, the higher the Finesse Level of the character, the more complex and daring stunts the character will be able to perform. A trick can entertain (granting the player a temporary +2 to Social Rolls if they make an Advanced Ranged Weapon skill test to do the trick, +5 if its a Superior Success), or be used to flick switches, target locks at range, and other seat-of-the-pants gunplay action heroes are known for, by making an Advanced Ranged Weapon skill test.

Manufacture Ammunition — 3 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Advanced

The character can, with the right tools and raw materials, manufacture one type of ammunition like arrows, crossbow bolts, rifle cartridges, shotgun shells, or pistol bullets. The materials and tools cost half the cost of the ammunition to be made, and the character can manufacture 20 shots for a particular weapon in every 8 hours of work. By rolling a Acuity + Mechanics or Artisan: Firearms test verses Advanced difficulty 15, the amount of ammunition produced can be doubled or the time taken to make it can be halved if a Superior Success is made. Without the proper tools and materials, the difficulty to create the ammunition rises to 25 as the character improvises material from their surroundings (wood, stone, etc.) Explosive ammunition cannot be improvised in this way.

Familiar With Weapon — 3 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Advanced

The character has had their particular, individual weapon for so long they are particularly fast and skilled in using it. Reloading the weapon requires only 1 Speed, and attempts to disarm the weapon suffer a –2 to their roll. The character probably inherited the weapon and has named it, developing an almost personal relationship with the object. If it is destroyed, the character loses this Battle Art permanently.

Quickdraw — 6 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Expert

The character has the ability to draw his weapon quickly and fire. By suffering a -1 penalty to their first attack, they may add +2 to their first Initiative Bid. Quickdraws can only be performed once during combat, and all bonuses and penalties only apply to the first attack the character makes with their chosen ranged weapon.

Two-Gun — 6 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Expert

This allows the character to wield a firearm in each hand, reducing the cost of performing a simultaneous attack (see Combat Action chart page 148) by 1 Speed per action. I.e., the first extra attack costs +0 Speed, the second costs +1, the third +2, etc.

Volley — 6 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Expert

Volley allows a character to perform a burst fire effect with a man-powered ranged weapon such as bows, darts, throwing stars, etc. The rules are just as those for Burst Fire (q.v.), with the ROF being limited by the amount of ammo on hand, the character's Aptitude with the particular Ranged Weapon skill being the maximum ROF.

Sharpshooter — 9 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Elite

The character is a master at making precise, calculated shots. Beyond simply aiming, the character can perfectly visualize the target and the attack they are attempting. In addition to the normal Speed cost to make a single shot, the player can spend additional points of Speed, increasing their attack roll by 1 for every additional point of Speed they spend.

Marksmanship — 9 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Elite

Marksmanship grants the character the ability to use Combat Finesse Effects with Burst-type autofire attacks. Effects once prohibited from use with autofire attacks are now possible: reducing armor values, choosing hit locations, even special attacks, as long as the character has Successes to spare.

Pushing the Envelope — 9 point Battle Art — requires Ranged Weapon at Elite

Pushing the Envelope increases the performance of weapons. For the duration of combat, the attacker may double the effective range or base damage of the weapon. She can do this with only one weapon for the duration of combat. When combat ceases, the weapon will also cease to function until repaired.

MARTIAL ARTS OF ZIR'AN

Thousands of years, hundreds of cultures, and countless conflicts have shaped Zir'Ani arts of hand-to-hand combat into forms as varied as the cultures that engendered them. These physical arts vary from simple forms with only a tiny core of well practiced and effective techniques, to complex and thorough scientific systems.

Martial Arts are acquired in a fashion similar to acquiring Battle Arts. During character creation, the player will have the opportunity to devote a certain amount of CCPs towards the purchase of Martial Arts abilities. When it comes time for the player to choose his martial arts abilities, he and the HoF discuss which Style those points count towards. This shoulg be based on the concept and skill packages the player chose. Particular Styles have special Valdreyr associated with them that the player can acquire as soon as he meets the perequisites:

Example: Tom's character, the Bhuketi Martial Artist, is focusing on Unarmed: Shree-Kat, the legendary Martial Art. He has devoted 6 points to Shree Kat and possesses an Unarmed skill of Expert. In choosing his abilities, he picks Mountain Roots Stance, a 3 point ability and Snow Flower Palm, another 3 point ability. In choosing, there is another benefit: Shree-Kat has a dedicated Valdreyr as well, Voice of the Ancients. Since its perequisite is to have at least 3 points of Shree Kat abilities, he has also learned this as well! Unfortunately, his skill in meditation is only Basic which does not meet the minimum requirement of Advanced for the Valdreyr, so it is not useable... yet.

Caress of Silk and Satin (Ba-Dur)

". . . and so the invaders smote the Ben Sha'oud, foreign rifles barking like traitorous and cowardly dogs from the cover of night. The holy ones fell, their blood watering the sands, oaths broken. Infidels!! They approached the undefended camp that lay before them. Heady with victory and the needs of men, they rushed towards those who watched with dark unblinking eyes. What jewels are these? Seductive are the veils! What treasures lay beneath the scarves? Each defiler seized his prize and off into the shadows of the tents each went. Gasps of delight, gasps of awe filled the air of the camp as each jewel began her dance, the sighing of the scarves, the parting of the veils . . . each was silenced for the Caress of Silk and Satin is not meant for the likes of men."

—Alaya Azizz, Mistress of the Dance

Evolved from an ancient Ba-Duran dance once performed only by and for women, this Martial Art is designed to confuse and distract from its true purpose. It is also known as "the Dance" among its disciples who oft term themselves "Dancers." A soft technique system, it emphasizes footwork and hidden or disguised circular techniques. Combined with the use of Ba'siid (the Dancer term for sash), scarves, veils, flowing diaphanous clothing, and a pair of long, curved Zhebulah Blades, the Caress of Silk and Satin is particularly effective against men (see the Seduction modifiers below), although it also functions on women and beasts. It is rumored that Mistresses of the highest orders are able to place its observers into a trance from which they may never awaken. A Dancer of the Caress of Silk and Satin must be free to move, and may not wear armor of any sort when performing her techniques.

It is also believed that once long past, a traveling Dancer far from home was taken in by a Tilandri troupe in times of misfortune and cared for as a daughter. In exchange for their protection and kindness, the Matrons of the troupe were taught the Dance, and it has spread among them. A Tilandri matron may use her Air of Inscrutability Valdreyr with any Seduction based bonus as described below.

The Caress of Silk and Satin grew from a very sensual origin; in short a Dancer exudes sexual appeal to all manner of men while performing the Dance. When fighting a male opponent, a dancer may in effect "turn on the charm" and use her Seduction skill to further enhance her fighting ability. By making a successful Skill Test of equivalent difficulty to the technique or finesse effect desired, the dancer may add a flat +1 to her Unarmed roll for the first attack or defense, every 5 Finesse Successes spent will purchase an additional +1. This is only useable on a target once, the first attack or defense roll the Dancer makes. However, if utilizing undetectable attacks (Dancers in the Shadows, see below), the Dancer may continue to use this bonus on a new target every round!

Sigh of the Scarves — 2 point ability — requires Basic Artisan: Dance)

"Ah, the swirling scarves! At once concealing and revealing the dancer within."

True of all movements in the Caress of Silk and Satin system, the Dancer whirls about, arms, legs, scarves and sashes spiraling about her deceptively. This technique allows the Trick Strike (q.v.) finesse effect to be used with any Unarmed attack for a reduced cost of 1 Speed. This may also be used with Zhebolah Blades or Ba'siid.

Parting the Veil — 4 point ability — requires Basic Artisan: Dance

"One must use both hands to properly remove a Dancers Veil."

The attacker, not aware of the precise position of the dancers movements, becomes vulnerable to having his offending weapon or limb drawn briefly into the rhythms of the Dance. Upon a successful defense, the Dancer may perform a Disarm (q.v.) (as if by a Medium Melee weapon) on an opponents weapon or a Lock (q.v.) on the attackers limb for 5 Successes. The Lock technique is fleeting and no contact is maintained once the damage is dealt; if wielding Zhebolah Blades or Ba'siid, the damage of the weapon is added to the base damage of the Lock itself.

Dancer Uncoils Her Hair — 6 point ability — requires Advanced Artisan: Dance

"To uncoil a Dancers hair is to give yourself over to the will of the

Dance."

Any contact made by the Dancer on her opponent can use her entire momentum of rotational force to throw the attacker or defender a considerable distance. For 6 Successes the dancer can add the Throw (q.v.) effect to any attack or defense. The Dancers MASS is doubled for purposes of this technique.

Dancers in the Shadows — 8 point ability — requires Expert Artisan: Dance

"Where do the Dancers end and their shadows begin?"

Beyond the basic technique of concealing her movements with the Sigh of the Scarves, a Dancer may lash out offensively in any direction on any opponent within 10 feet without being detected for 6 Speed. Before being able to detect the impending attack, the target must first make an Awareness skill contest against the Dancers Artisan: Dance skill. If the Dancer succeeds in this contest, the attack cannot be defended against, nor can its source be determined! An observer can also make the same contest to see the attack occur. This technique may be combined with the use of Zhebolah Blades or a Ba'siid.

Caress of Silk and Satin — 10 point Caress of Silk and Satin Valdreyr — requires Expert Artisan: Dance

"The Caress of Silk and Satin is not meant for the likes of men."

Dancers of the highest order, called Mistress by junior Dancers, are capable of feats of incredible power and skill. The spinning Dancer accelerates to blinding speed as the she lashes out. Through this display, all of the fervor of the dance is unleashed in a blur striking out in all directions. Similar in nature to a Flurry (q.v.), but much more accurate and damaging, the Dancer can pick and choose her targets within 10 feet of her. For 8 Speed, a dancer may deal as many blows to as many targets as she can at an additional cost of 1 Finesse Success per attack. Each attack is considered discrete for purposes of defense and damage. Furthermore, it is considered to be single attack at the dancers normal HtH damage value. This technique may be combined with the use of Zhebolah Blades or a Ba'siid (see below).

Dancer in the Flames — 5 point Caress of Silk and Satin Valdreyr — requires Expert Artisan: Dance(req. Expert Artisan: Dance)

"She danced on still. Bright were his eyes. She danced on still. Hot were his loins. She danced on still. His breath still, his heart still, and she danced on still. . . ."

A time comes when a Dancer can move her body with such precise patterning, an observer falls deep into a trance as if staring deep into a spinning color wheel, a waterfall, or even a magical effect. By succeeding an Expert Skill Test (20) against her Artisan: Dance skill, a dancer may entrance a single opponent, reducing all of his or her Aptitudes by 1 for every 3 Finesse Successes spent for the duration of the Dance. For 5 Finesse Successes, the Dancer may expand this effect to include an additional target. This Valdreyr is not restricted to combat situations!

Weapon: Zhebulah

R Zhebulah 5ap3 1 Unarmed: Caress of Silk and Satin or Melee: Short

The weapon preferred by the Dancer, the Zhebulah is a long, curved, very thin bladed dagger made from the finest metals and ornately ornamented. It is also very, very sharp. Its distinctive feature is the long, red (as if soaked in blood), silken sash or tassels handing from handle. Typically paired, the whirling dance-like movements of the blades appear to add an element of danger as the Dancer circles her body so closely with the blades; few realize the risk is to the observer as the sashes conceal the path of the blades. Used correctly, even those slashed sternum to groin don't notice the deep cut left by it's passage, fixated on the swirling woman and the oh-so-gentle Caress of Silk and Satin.

Weapon: Ba'siid (Dancers' Sash)

R Dancer's Sash 3ap1 1 Unarmed: Caress of Silk and Satin

If trained in its use, a Dancer's first motion is to uncoil her sash, or Ba'siid, and cast her scarves about her. The Ba'siid is a length of silk or cloth, which can be worn decoratively. In combat it acts as a Palagria (q.v.) with the exception that all effects can be used at an Advanced Finesse Level due to the constant practice and integral part of a Dancers training. Dancers with Elite levels in the Caress of Silk and Satin can cause the fabric of the Ba'siid to become so rigid and move so fast she can use it to strike as if it were a Spear (q.v.) for 4 Finesse Sucesses!

Kahmen Gora "The One That Are Many" (Vallunei)

"Their armies outnumber us, their armor's thicker, their cannons more powerful, but their souls....they are empty. They fight because their masters will them to, like machines, like insects. But you men and women, your souls burn, you back every blow with pride, with purpose, with the will to save all that is dear to you. Each one of you is worth a hundred of them. That is why I know we will win."

— General Kardr Stemvolt, Steel Confederacy, Vallunei

Adopted from a number of different sources, including Illestani fighting styles and an esoteric Bhuketi discipline, Kahmen Gora has become the primary fighting art of the Valluneian military. A highly diverse style, it favors high-speed punches and techniques designed to counter unusual or overwhelming opposition. Its kicks tend to be low, meant to set the victim up for a devastating punch. Their particular integration of tactical sciences lends them extraordinary insight into martial conflict. Masters of note are supposedly able to draw on the martial strength of the entire Kahmen Gora school. Other myths exist about Grand Master who was supposedly able to duplicate his form many times to become

a small army. It was he who brought down and entire Dominion company in the Battle of Baron's Head a century ago. These legends support the style's creed "The One That Are Many."

In order to reach the state of understanding required to take advantage of the benefits of their training, the student of Kahmen Gora must first make a Meditation skill test of Advanced Difficulty (15) to properly frame their minds for action. This preparation lasts 1 hour per point of practice in Meditation.

Patternstride — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed & Meditation at Advanced

"The Pattern is your guide, your path. Speed along unconcerned for you always arrive where the Pattern dictates."

Through understanding that all things are one, and all paths go the same direction, a Kahmen Gora stylist has an advantage over those that are not as perceptive towards patterns and movements. This translates into a flat bonus of +1 Initiative per point of practice in their Unarmed Skill.

Patternstrike — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed & Meditation at Advanced

"Touch the Pattern at one point, and touch it at all points."

There are only a limited number of positions a target can employ to protect its vital areas. The disciple of Kahmen Gora learns what these positions are and learns to strike powerfully at those areas that cannot be protected. For a point of Speed, the character can increase any attack roll, that had been successfully *blocked* by the defender, by 1. The attacker can only spend as much Speed as it takes to surpass the target's defense roll, no more.

Patternweave — 6 point ability — requires Unarmed & Meditation at Expert

"Like any Pattern, one may change the structure of the weave with a gentle hand."

The master of Kahmen Gora has learned to direct attacks that target him, deciding where and how they are struck by their enemy. Against one attack per round, per point of practice in Meditation (3 practice in Meditation would be 3 attacks in a given round), the practitioner of Kahmen Gora can decide what his enemy spends their attack successes on. The Special Combat Finesse effects the character chooses are limited by the appropriate weapon type and skill level of the attacker.

Patternbend — 9 point ability — requires Unarmed & Meditation at Elite

"If the Weave doesn't suit you, re-weave it."

By visualizing the appropriate imagery and the desired outcome, a true disciple of Kahmen Gora can actually elect to change the outcome of a particular variable in conflict. By making an Expert (20) Skill Test with Meditation on their turn, spending 8 Speed for skill-use during combat, the disciple can choose to re-roll any one die roll (hit location, skill contest, etc.) in a given combat and choose the best result of the two. Every 5 successes buys an additional Re-roll.

The Many that are One — Kahmen Gora Valdreyr — requires 6 points in Kahmen Gora & Meditation at Expert

"All points of the pattern are a reflection of but a single point."

By reaching within and drawing on all reflections of themselves, fellow Kahmen Gora students, Martial Artists can increase their Physique and Acuity by 1 with a successful Advanced (15) Skill Test with Meditation, for the duration of combat. Each additional 5 successes obtained results in an additional +1 to both Stats. These augmented stats also affect the character's derived stats appropriately.

The One that are Many — Kahmen Gora Valdreyr — requires 9 points in Khamen Gora & Meditation at Elite

"Look inside. Embody the point which reflects upon the pattern."

The stuff of legend, Masters of the Kahmen Gora system can move with such speed that they actually appear to be in multiple places in at the same time. Each combat round, with a successful Elite (25) Skill Test with Meditation, the Master can act as if there was a duplicate, or "twin" on the battlefield. This "twin" is treated as a different character for purposes of Initiative and other basic combat function, but all negative effects (damage, etc.) are applied to the character as if he were not "Twinned." For 5 additional Finesse Successes, the Master can elect to make a third "twin," or a fourth, etc.

Longboxing (Gallios)

"You seem to have the advantage, my well armed friend. I see your firearm, a V'tloc Enforcer, no? A fine weapon! I'm sure its former owner misses it sorely. Your sword, is it crafted of Casseonaeum? Very nice . . . and a VERY heavy set of armor there, with such an intimidating helmet, my my. You must be packing a great deal of well-sculpted muscle to support all of that as well as you seem to. Me? Well . . . I'm clearly unarmed, hands bound with these clever iron wristbands. I'm wearing what amounts to a tattered washrag and some blood, which I believe to be mine. I've been beaten regularly by your brutes here... Hi boys! I haven't eaten in several days, although the buckets of freezing water were appreciated, and sleep is but a distant memory. However, I'd be willing to wager that I can defeat the lot of you despite all of this unpleasantness! Oh dear, the wristbands came off somehow..."

— Renaul Zene-Rouber, Galliosi Mercenary by way of Edyss

Gallios prides itself on its endeavors towards perfection of the physical and masculine. Men of all background have trickled into Gallios over the years, each bringing their contribution to the culture and it's body of skills. Among these have been Warriors and Martial Artists. An idea formed that became a movement among those within its borders. Take the best techniques that can be found and blend them into a straightforward system, none of the flash and pomp of the older, more intricate systems. This they have done. Quick to learn, the Longboxing system emphasizes physical strength and is famous for its powerful kicks, versatile

hand techniques, and of course, wrestling.

Spearleg — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed at Advanced

"Ooo! Straight to the smallberries! Did that hurt?!"

Spearleg, the first technique, is actually more than a single maneuver, rather it is variety of long thrusting kicks using the whole body as a counterweight. Characterized by power and accuracy, the technique lends a kick a certain devastating flair. Any kick performed by a Longboxer does normal damage and hit location determination, however, the cost to increase damage or penetrate armor is halved in terms of Finesse Successes (i.e., each Finesse Success spent to increase damage provides +2 instead of +1 to damage).

Longfist — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed at Advanced

" Sword not long enough? Don't be embarrassed, I'm sure your mother said you are gifted in other respects..."

The signature technique of Galliosi Longboxing, through body torque and efficient lunging footwork, a Longboxer can actually strike targets out of immediate range with alarming speed and return to his former position before the target can react. The Longboxer can strike a target 10 feet from their current position for 6 Speed. Every additional 1 Speed spent will add 5 feet to the range of the attack. On a successful attack, the Longboxer can return to his original position by spending 4 Successes. If the attack fails, the Longboxer enters Melee and HtH range and does NOT resume his original position.

Flutterpalm — 6 point ability — requires Unarmed at Expert

"Too bad you dropped that fancy revolver in the water bucket... you did buy waterproofed ammo, didn't you? No? A pity..."

A series of sharp open-handed blows designed to make the muscles of the arm spasm, Longboxers are notorious for making their opponents lose control of their weapons. The Disarm (*q.v.*) effect may be bought for the reduced cost of 4 Successes upon winning a successful attack or defense skill test. For an additional 4 Successes the weapon is thrown per the Disarm (*q.v.*) guidelines. By Spending 4 more Successes (a total of 8) the Longboxer can choose the precise place the weapon will land.

Yield Mastery, Counterattack — 9 point ability — requires Unarmed at Elite

"Nice punch! What say you and I go for a bit of a wrestle since you appear to be so agitated?"

When a Longboxer can't take the heat of combat, or needs to equalize the opposition, he yields mastery to his opponent, and allows him to land a strike thereby opening an immediate hole in his opponent's defense which can be instantly exploited, provided the Longboxer is fast enough. The Longboxer, upon a failed defense roll, can immediately launch an attack for the same amount of Speed he failed the defense roll by. Example: A Longboxer gets an 18 total in his defense roll. His attacker scores a 21, a difference of 3. For 3 Speed, the Longboxer can elect to throw an attack immediately. This can be combined with the Sacrifice Battle Art (q.v.) to devastating effect.

Wrestling Techniques — Longboxing Valdreyr — requires 6 points in Longboxing

"That bruise is turning a lovely shade of purple don't you think? Ah, right, you'd need a mirror to see . . . it does compliment your breastplate most fetchingly I must say! The swollen tongue is a nice touch, though I am having a bit of trouble understanding you."

With the philosophy that many unarmed contests end on the ground, Longboxers regularly practice takedowns, holds, and other grappling techniques. They are in essence, second nature. With a successful attack that ends in a Grapple (*q.v.*) the Longboxer may immediately apply a Lock (*q.v.*), Crush (*q.v.*), or Takedown (*q.v.*) to his target for no additional Finesse Success cost.

Mekoul Deshuuk (Illestan)

"Erase from your minds the images of Bhuketi monks in flowing robes on mountaintops. Dispel any illusions you may have of jumping great heights, shattering stone with your fist, or marshalling the forces of nature within your palm. Forget myth. Forget legend. There is no 'art' in this classroom... No flourishes. No dances.... Sweat. Blood. Flesh. Bone. These are the implements of our science..."

— Professor Veeras Kouzen, from a lecture in Unarmed Engagement and Tactical Probability 601.

Illestan produces more warriors of the finest quality than any other Nation. Theirs is a nation of minimalist existence and utmost efficiency, as one would expect from a warrior society in a state of near constant conflict. The Martial Science developed through thousands of years of warfare against a variety of threats has been refined, examined, and reexamined countless times is Mekoul Deshuuk, or Unarmed Engagement and Tactical Probability. Kinesiological theory, mathematics, anatomy, and brutal 'live examinations' are the subjects required to master this system. It is not easy to master, however, taking time and dedication, but it is most effective. It is possibly the only Unarmed combat system in existence that does not focus on technique based training, but instead on systematic fighting tactics & strategy as well as the physics & mechanics of motion and movement.

Precision — 2 point ability

"Precision is our principle. Accuracy, our code. Unerring, unrelenting direct strikes reinforced by intent and systematic practice open the door to the neutralization of threat."

While studying this system, a Tactician will throw literally millions of strikes. Through the use of proper visualization of geometry, theory of kinesiology and skeletal motion, and this repetition, these strikes become extraordinarily accurate. The Finesse Success cost to perform any specific hit location selection is halved.

Power — 4 point ability — requires Advanced Lore: Anatomy and Advanced Unarmed)

"A strike remains empty, or forceless, until the precise instant of contact. That moment, everything is committed. Every measure of body mass and muscle is utilized for this purpose. All force that can be generated is focused to a single point."

Each Tactician is examined, corrected, and analyzed to provide maximum output of any given strike. Once capacities are determined, the Tactician is faced with a series of challenges designed to learn to use the motions of the target against him when striking to make the Tactician's blows even more effective. HtH damage for the character is recalculated as Physique + Mass/3 when the character reaches Advanced Unarmed. When the character reaches Elite Unarmed, damage is recalculated at Physique + Mass/2.

Extension — 6 point ability — requires Advanced Unarmed and Expert Melee

"This? This is not a blade. No, it is part of my being. A finger, a hand ... perhaps in this case, a claw."

Practice is the byword of Mekoul Deshuuk. Practice. Practice. Practice. A knife becomes dull without sharpening, a gun jams without cleaning, armor ceases to protect if not repaired. Maintenance of current ability is required through practice. Through practice, a Tactician can incorporate weapons into their regimen. If a Short or Medium Melee weapon is in use by a Tactician and he possesses a Finesse Level of Expert with that weapon, he can use it as if he was unarmed. This includes speed expenditures and finesse effects.

Reactive Defense — 8 point ability — requires Expert Unarmed

"It is said a good offense is a good defense. This is true, especially in unarmed engagement. Defend offensively. The attacker is connected to his weapon, shatter a sword or shatter an arm, the effect is the same: threat is minimized. Damage one, and damage both."

A Tactician considers every part and parcel of a given threat a potential target. The Tactician can elect to perform the Destroy Attack (q.v.) technique in combination with any other defensive act for a reduced cost of 5 Finesse Successes.

Nerve Paths— 10 point ability — requires Advanced Lore: Anatomy & Expert Unarmed

"All life, with few exceptions, has nerve plexus and channels distributed throughout the body. Crushing, cutting, or other disruptions to these centers are the fastest methods in which to neutralize a threat."

By studying the effects of different types of blows and damage on real subjects, the Mekoul Deshuuk Tactician can render a limb of an attacker useless for a short time. For 6 Finesse Successes the location struck is rendered paralyzed as if by Nerve Attack (q.v.) in addition to any other effects. If the Abdomen or Chest location is paralyzed by this attack, the subject suffers a –3 penalty to the Personal Aptitude for the duration of the effect. A successful attack to the Head location with this effect results in unconsciousness as per Nerve Attack (q.v.).

Lethal Blow — 12 point ability — requires Advanced Lore: Anatomy & Expert Unarmed

"Yes, the physique is an amazing contrivance in its versatility and durability. It has its delicacies, however."

By spending 10 Finesse Successes in any successful attack the Tactician may elect to seriously injure his opponent in different ways depending on the location struck. A Limb location results in crushed arteries, shattered bones, and severed nerves. The limb struck is rendered a useless ruin at zero Lethal Wounds and will require magical healing to be made functional again. A strike to the Abdomen will result in internal bleeding as if the target had been struck by a Deathblow (q.v.). If struck in the Chest, the target's rib cage/spine is cracked and splintered and his heart is stopped. Death is immediate unless revived by magic or a successful Healing roll of difficulty 25, and even then he is reduced to 0 Lethal Wounds in that area. A blow to the Head results in a massive hemorrhage or broken neck and the target is Paralyzed, Unconscious, and will die in their Vitality in minutes unless medical attention is received, as above.

Adaptive Combat — 14 point Mekoul Deshuuk Valdryr — requires Elite Unarmed

"Every step tells a story, every twitch makes a statement. Movement is a chronicle. These signs indicate the abilities, skills, training, and the instincts of a threat. Like a book, they can be read. Like a book, they eventually come to a conclusion."

The ability that truly makes a Tactician of Mekoul Deshuuk a modern legend of the Martial Arts world is his remarkable capacity of anticipation. By studying an opponent as he attacks and defends in HtH or Melee combat, the Tactician catalogs the knowledge of his opponent, and thus is able to act against the opponent's weaknesses. For every 4 cumulative Speed expended by his opponent as a combat act in view, the Tactician receives a bonus Finesse Success any time an attack or defense roll succeeds to mirror the growing understanding of an opponent's capabilities during that encounter.

Example

If an opponent spends 17 Speed over the course of combat, the Tactician receives a bonus 4 Finesse Successes with each successful roll for the duration of that combat.

Red Sands, Red Sails, Red Tides (Vallunei, the Vermilion Coast)

"The dark skies, the gulls' cry
What comes this night?
Red sands nigh! Red sands, alas!
Seas they sail, our sons wail
What comes this night?
Red sails nigh! Red sails, alas!
Lines they strain, red earth stains
What comes this night?

Red tides nigh! Red tides, alas!"

—The Red Earth Trinity, Traditional Shanty, Talus

The Vermilion Coast is traditionally the home to countless pirates and coastal raiders. Stories are still told to children in some parts of the ferocity and ruthlessness of the Vermilion Coast pirates. Their reputation is due in part to the effective fighting system conceived and practiced by many pirate bands. Now it is called the Red Earth Trinity. From the sea only the beaches, salt flats, and cliffs of the Vermilion Coast are visible... when sails are seen, looming red and menacing on the horizon, the observer knows he has drifted to the wrong shores. It is a system developed for fighting on the deck of pitching ship, or in the crashing waves of a rocky shore. Flowing with a shuffling step that advances and recedes, enemies are lulled into thinking they possess the advantage... until the waves crash down upon them. The system is unpredictable and indirect at all times.

Stutterstep — 1 point ability

"The tides rise and fall with the moons, a sailor knows a deep sea at nine may be shallow at noon"

Called a stance by its practitioners, Stutterstep is actually a footwork pattern that rolls back and forth, receding then suddenly crashing forward. This action lends a high degree of unpredictability to the combat with the Red Earth Trinity student. Any Unarmed or Melee attack costs the opponent 1 additional Speed to execute because of the constant adjustment needed to counter the style's irregular movements.

Cutting the Lines — 3 point ability — requires Advanced Unarmed

"A ship without sails? Flotsam in the makings..."

Once again, footwork plays a key part in this system. Deceptive steps and long slides permit the martial artist to perform a Trip (q.v.) at a reduced cost of 1 Finesse Success following any successful attack. An additional 1 Finesse Success will allow the martial artist to choose the direction of their opponents fall.

Seabreach — 5 point ability — requires Expert Unarmed

"Like a woman of great beauty, it demands your attention . . . woe betide those who turn their backs to our mistress the sea."

A sudden rush into a gap in defense, those who practice the Red Earth Trinity can overwhelm a defender with a rain of blows. Upon landing a successful attack, the Martial Artist can elect to commit to another attack, provided he has the speed available, without penalty. If that lands, he may attack again and again until there is no more speed available.

Embrace of the Tide — 7 point ability — requires Elite Unarmed

"White shroud, clear sky. The sea swells a bit when sailors die."

A sudden shift of direction and force causes an opponents body to snap in an awkward and alarming fashion, as if caught in a strong current. For 5 Finesse Successes on any successful attack roll, or 10 Successes on a successful defense roll the target is the subject of a Throw (q.v.) of unusual force. All damage to the target is doubled after all considerations and is applied directly to Vitality regardless of armor from the force of the throw. Note: Damage is applied BEFORE the target lands; any damage from landing on a hard or harmful surface is applied after this effect. If the damage applied is less than two LWs, the target is considered Stunned (q.v.), if greater than two LWs the target is rendered Unconscious (q.v.). These effects can be negated with a successful Skill Contest against the attacker's Unarmed Skill.

Tidewalk — 2 point Red Earth Trinity Valdreyr

"Roll of the waves, roil of the storm... sailors endure for a safe port."

Typically taught only on ships at sea, students of the Red Earth Trinity have remarkably stable tread and sense of motion. Any penalty incurred from unstable footing or unusual terrain is halved, as are any penalties for fighting submerged in water.

Shree-Kat "Screaming Fist" (Bhuket)

"The time for silence and meditation is over, my pupil . . . can you not hear the scream of the wind as my fist falls?"

—Wei Zhir Shen, Temple Groundskeeper

Efficient and highly effective, Shree-Kat is considered the root of most, if not all, Bhuketi martial arts. Urashi are loath to admit that even their renegade style has its beginnings in this classic system. Driven to hide among the remote Koba monasteries sprinkled in the remotest reaches of the frozen mountains of Bhuket, Shree-Kat and Koba have become synonymous for not only each other, but for revolution and resistance in the face of tyranny. Shree-Kat is a hard system characterized by utilizing only the upper body for actual strikes and defense. When fighting on dizzyingly high ridges and cliffs, one does not break contact with the mother mountain! It emphasizes only a few highly evolved techniques, which can be likened to the wind coursing through mountain ravines and passes.

Mountain Roots Stance — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed at Advanced

"Like the twisted mountain pine, one stands indifferent to the insults of wind, rain, and time"

The Mountain Roots Stance is the first thing visited upon all hopeful Shree-Kat students as a punishment, a meditative tool, and source of stable footing. This technique firmly grounds the subject as if he is rooted into the very earth. By spending 2 Speed and making a successful Advanced (15) Unarmed Skill Test, the Shree-Kat practitioner is firmly fixed in place. Upon successful execution of this technique, Absorb Minor Melee Damage (*q.v.*) is in effect. Subjects' PHY + MASS value is considered doubled for purposes of a Grapple (*q.v.*), thereby reducing the chances of being thrown or locked. Throw (*q.v.*) or Take-Down (*q.v.*) attempt costs are doubled. 5' of Knockback (*q.v.*) is nullified for each point

of Unarmed practice the subject possesses. If the Martial Artist has Unarmed at Expert or higher, spending an additional l Speed, Absorb Major Melee (*q.v.*) damage can be invoked. While in Mountain Roots Stance the subject may not move during combat without breaking the stance and its positive effects. Similarly, if the subject is moved out of the stance all effects are lost.

Snow Flower Palm — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed at Advanced

"From what at first seems barren, springs life unsuspected!"

This technique is considered the base of all strikes in the Shree-Kat system. It allows the Set Up (*q.v.*) finesse effect to be used with any Unarmed attack for a reduced cost of 1 Finesse Success per +1 on the next attack. This technique often leads to an unerring sequence of blows that culminates in the Screaming Fist technique.

Lightning Leaps from the Clouds — 6 point ability — requires Unarmed at Expert

"Even as the clouds reach to touch the mountain, does the mountain not also touch the clouds?"

This technique allows one who is close to mastery of Shree-Kat to Counterattack (*q.v.*) so suddenly any incoming attack, the two attacks appear to happen simultaneously. The cost to Counterattack is reduced to 4 successes, *or* the character can borrow 4 Speed from the next round to attack on the same turn as their attacker. This technique can only be employed once per round and the speed points spent are not available in the successive round.

The Screaming Fist — 9 point ability — requires Unarmed at Elite

"Gathered in a fist, the wind screams it's ancient fury at our unfortunate foes."

The signature of a true Shree-Kat disciple is the Screaming Fist technique. What it lacks in subtlety it makes up in potency. The stylist circles her open palms in an ever-accelerating spiral around her body, the air rushing between her fingers until the precise moment of the strike in which the palm is closed to a fist which literally howls and moans as if driven by a gale into its target. For a cost of 6 Speed this technique combines both the Knockback (*q.v.*) and Stun (*q.v.*) finesse effects as if a blunt weapon. Damage is also incurred, unlike the normal Stun effect. Knockback effects are considered doubled for the purposes of this attack. More than one unwelcome marauder has plummeted thousands of feet with the howls of the Screaming Fist chasing them to their unfortunate end.

Voice of the Ancients — Shree-Kat Valdreyr — requires 3 points in Shree-Kat, Lore: Koba & Meditation at Advanced

"Koba guides from within. Every act. Every thought. Every moment. Listen . . . can you hear it speak, my pupil?"

By driving Shree-kat underground, causing it to no longer be taught openly to anyone by anyone, Lhar made a determined and versatile enemy. Once per day, a Shree-Kat disciple with a strong background in Koba and Meditation can call upon the wise teachings of Koba's founders. By meditating for three hours and making an Expert (20) Skill Test, the character can lower the skill test of a single task by one difficulty or finesse level. If the character meditates before combat and focuses upon a single, known, foe, they gain an extra 3 successes on any successful attack or defense roll made in combat against that foe.

Sticky Hands (Cyroon)

"Get ta da bloody point, clodder! What? You no like getting pushed aroun'? Ain't dat too bad...methinks its time fer you ta make da acquaintance of da lower landing of dis here lift shaft. Ya, ya I ken see its nine stories down... wot, you don' appreciate modern convenience? Enjoy da breeze! >CRASH!< Oh, an' fanks for dem nice rings an' dat bit o' coin, clodder!"

— Gheez Fatoomch, Cyrooni "Cultural Attaché"

Much, much less than a martial art and more of highly, shall we say, *aggressive* form of pickpocketing, "Sticky Hands" is essentially a set of techniques that an enterprising thug can use in pursuit of wealth during his day-to-day duties. Relying on the use of Intimidation and Basic Brawling attacks, most Sticky Hands effects are undetectable to the poor target as they are harassed, beaten, and generally made miserable by strong-arm tactics.

Casing da Bloke — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed & Sleight of Hand at Advanced

"Welp...'es got a purse full o' coin, a real nice pendant, I fink dat vest is Gravenwulf fur... da real treasure 'ere mate is da moneybelt under all dat fancy clothing!"

By making physical contact with the target (i.e. handshake, pat on the back, a grapple) a fairly accurate catalog of items on the subjects' person can be made, provided an Advanced (15) Skill Test with Awareness is made. Every 3 successes will provide a flat +1 to any attempts to pick the pockets of the target.

Lightening da Mark — 3 point ability — requires Unarmed & Sleight of Hand at Advanced, and Intimidation at Basic

"Wot did you say, clodder? May be you talk bedder wit yer nose all smash' in...>SMACK< Say, dis here is a loooovely brooch...fanks!"

The master of Sticky Hands has learned the art of aggressive pick-pocketing. For 4 successes in any Unarmed attack, the character can attempt a pick-pocket attempt, making a contested Sleight of Hand roll against the target's Awareness. This is a good follow up to the Casing da Bloke ability.

Loosening Yer Collar — 6 point ability — requires Unarmed & Sleight of Hand at Expert

"'Ey dere Mr. Shiny-pants, dat metal shirt looks 'eavy, 'ese allow me."

Used when confronting an armored opponent, this technique is used to actually remove the armor of the adversary thus making them more susceptible to weapons of the thugs trade. In lieu of inflicting damage, a thug can instead make an attempt to remove

the armor of their opponent. A successful attack will remove the armor from one location, as determined by normal hit location. For every 5 Finesse Successes one additional location of armor can be removed, determined by a normal hit location roll. This can continue until the target no longer wears armor. This does NOT work on natural or non-corporeal armor.

Goodnight, Little Clodder — 9 point ability — requires Unarmed & Sleight of Hand at Elite

"'Scuse me sir, I woz won'drin where the >SMACK< ohh, down 'e goes."

The masters of Sticky Hands are not merely pick-pockets, they are sly hand-to-hand combatants who have learned to disguise their body-language and hence their intent, striking suddenly and without warning. The elite master of Sticky Hands can execute a Surprise Attack (q.v.), even if in full view of the target. Outside of combat situations, the character can attack a target within hand-to-hand striking distance as though they were performing an Ambush (q.v.), making contested Stealth versus Awareness tests for each as normal. Only Unarmed attacks can be executed in such instinces.

Terrorize — Sticky Hands Valdreyr — requires 6 points in Sticky Hands & Intimidate at Expert

"Widdle clodder gonna cwy? Boo hoo! Let us see ya cwy..."

Using taunts and insults, a thug can actually reduce their opponent to a state of frustration, fear, and make them feel like a 5-year-old. With every successful attack, the thug can make a contested Intimidation versus Intimidation roll which, if successful, reduces the subjects Social and Personal Aptitudes by 1. The lost points last until the character fails a contested Intimidation roll with the target, or until combat ceases. The points can accumulate, but a single failed Intimidation contest sets the effect back to zero.

Ya'Panos "The Living Trap" (Thrace)

"Like the Canticle, our tradition is ancient. Like ancient Casseonae, our tradition is shrewd. Like our people, our tradition is strong. Like the Iron General, our tradition is unforgiving."

—Ya'Panos Doctrine, Traditional

Handed down from parent to child for centuries is Ya'Panos, or "The Living Trap." An ancient wrestling system prided and praised in its brutality and disregard for the aesthetically pleasing in combat. "A fight should be short. No time for fancy techniques or details! Crush them and be done with it, the next fight awaits!" These are the phrases often heard when learning the tradition. Its moniker comes from the fact that like a snare or tripwire, a Ya'Panos practitioner is always poised, ready to uproot his opponent and send him crashing to the ground.

Hammerfall — 2 point ability — requires Basic Unarmed

"Like a hammer, your body strikes the anvil."

The first thing any student in the Tradition is taught is how to fall, and how to make an opponent fall simultaneously. Any successful Takedown (q.v.) attack automatically does double damage to its target.

Maul — 4 point ability — requires Advanced Unarmed

"Like a dog, your jaws are feared."

While not respected by some martial artists as an 'honorable' attack, the student of the Tradition can bite any target he has successfully put into a Grapple (q.v.) for 1 Speed in addition to any other act performed. A bite does base HtH Damage as if it were AP2 to the target. A normal attack roll is required to succeed with this endeavor.

Clawgrip — 6 point ability — requires Expert Unarmed

"Like a vise, your arms tighten as if driven by cogs."

For the purposes of Crush (q.v) attack or defense, the Ya'Panos Traditionalists' MASS is considered doubled.

Cavity Strike — 8 point ability — requires Elite Unarmed

"Like a burr, your blows always find tender flesh."

Blows from a true student of the Tradition are exceptionally painful; striking the parts of the body that can collapse or compress, they are stunning in their power and sensation. With each successful attack performed, the subject of the strike must make an Advanced Test against MASS + Personal roll (15) or suffer the effects of Pain (q.v.) for 3 combat turns, the penalty stacking from turn to turn.

Ground Fighting — 1 point Ya'Panos Valdreyr

Ya'Panos is wrestling embodied. More time is spent fighting from a prone position than any other. To reflect this, a Ya'Panos traditionalist suffers no penalty when attacking or defending from the ground, other than movement penalties.

Rugged — 3 point Ya'Panos Valdreyr

"Like a stone, your body is resilient."

Tough is an apt description of a Ya'Panos practitioner. The tradition dictates hundreds of hours of thrashing about, being thrown onto, and struggling up from the ground. One becomes inured to casual damage from such activity.

NOTE: This CAN stack with the normal Rugged Valdreyr, for double the normal damage points per wound state.

The Living Trap — 5 point Ya'Panos Valdreyr

"Like a trap, you are poised to ensnare the unwary."

With any successful offensive or defense act, the Ya'Panos stylist can elect to attempt a Grapple (q.v.) free of Finesse Success expenditure. This is reflected as a second attack roll to attempt the grab. Once this Valdreyr is acquired, the Ya'Panos practitioner is considered to have double PHYS + MASS for the purposes of the Grapple (q.v.) only.



The cover of the A'vana Septet, the Book of the Seven Gods.

CHAPTER 11

MAGIC

RUNE MAGIC

Chun-Ma, abbot of the Koba temple of Guangoon, turns to face the dark forms that advance across the courtyard. Weapons drawn, their eyes glitter with the hope of violence. "Abbot Chun," their leader barks, "I admire your compassion for the villagers. I'm sure you lost many disciples when my men raided Sauksoo. I admit that I didn't expect there to be such resistance. You Koba are a tough lot, but you'll soon yield. Bow to the Will of Lhar!"

Shouts ring out on all sides as the forces of the B'hai Lhar and the disciples of Koba clash. Chun-Ma stands still among the chaos, as does his arch nemesis Goa-Khun, leader of the Goksao B'hai. Throwing aside his robe, Goa-Khun draws his weapons. In one hand a longknife, the other, his preferred weapon, the stylus. Brandishing the stylus before him, Goa-Khun suddenly launches into a flurry of activity. Runing papers swirl about him and in the blink of an eye his stylus dashes a quick rune. A pale streak through the cold air, the runic attack flares a bright sapphire before exploding into a shower of brilliant sparks and coiling vapor. In a matter of moments, the form of Chun-Ma is frozen still, a statue of thick white frost. Goa-Khun laughs as he steps to the steaming visage of his longtime enemy. "You've gotten weak, old Chun. I'm almost disappointed." He slaps the face of the abbot, but instead of toppling, it breaks into crumbly fragments, revealing it to be merely a hollow shell. "A trick," he gasps. "An illusion, Officer Goa." Standing atop the crest of the monastery, the abbot smiles at Goa-Khun's shocked expression. "This whole monastery is an illusion. Your men fight phantoms." At his words, all around the B'hai Lhar slowly melts to reveal the blunt hilltop where once there had been the Temple of Guangoon. Standing among the tall grasses several feet away, Abbot Chun smiles. Meeting this mocking image with a grimace, the leader of the B'hai Lhar thrusts his longknife through the chest of the abbot. But it is laughter, not blood that comes spilling forth. The laughter, like the image of the abbot himself, quickly fades. Stunned to silence, Goa-Khun slowly casts his gaze to the ground. A rough slab of gray stone catches his notice, just barely visible through the grasses. Upon its surface he finds a glyph etched, its power already leeched. An illusion rune.

Turning to his men, Goa-Khun calls them together. They will press on further through the pass. Their hunt will continue.

Rune Magic has been a part of the world since before the time of the Ianer. Many believe that in fact these symbols of power were once the written language of the Seven Gods. Rune Magic functions by drawing the Ylar into itself. Its specific shape, its pattern of lines and swirls channel ambient Ylar, or focus it like a lens, molding it into a specific shape. Perhaps the greatest strength of Rune Magic is its versatility, where function follows form. A single rune can have any number of variations depending upon how it is crafted. Truly, the total amassed knowledge of runes and Rune Magic comprises a mere fraction of what Rune Magic is truly capable of. In Zir'An, study of Rune Magic has approached that of a science. With the passing years, Rune Magic's mysteries are being uncovered... until the next Endwar comes to scatter that accumulated knowledge to oblivion once again.

The Potentia, the Source, the Ylar, these different terms name the ambient energy that runes tap for their power. It permeates physical matter and is the energy that drives all life. The Ylar moves in a constant cycle from the surface to the deep core of the world where the source of the Potentia is said to reside. As runes expend their borrowed Ylar, it returns to the cycle. The energies that empower runes are so abundant and runes so versatile that their use has become commonplace through much of the known world. Runes have come to replace or duplicate functions necessary to run many mechanical devices. Heat runes in place of heating coils; runes that regulate air pressure, or strengthen thin sheets of steel fivefold. But skill is required to maintain runes. Their systems are easily as complex, if not more so, than any mechanical device. Ancient texts tell of a time long ago, long before the Endwar, when there existed a perfect synthesis of runes and technology. Though this path looks enticing to the ambitious Runemage or technologist, the potential for disaster is clearly evident in the ruins of long dead, technologically advanced societies found in the darker corners of Zir'An.

DOMAINS AND FORMS

There are seven primary Domains of Greater Rune Magic, each corresponding to one of the Seven Gods. Most Runemages are fluent with all the seven domains, but some do specialize, just as some specialize in particular Forms of Runemagic. Though only seven Domains are described here, there are countless variations. Throughout Zir'An, different schools of Rune Magic thought have developed their own Domains. Experimentation with current techniques as well as re-discovery of old, nearly forgotten ones continually add new layers to Rune Magic and its use. Many of these domains come to reflect some particular aspect of the god they derive from. Though Hrond is the god of death and the afterlife, in the past he has also been worshipped as the god of pacts, the god of decay, and the god of secrets. Every variant belief system throughout history has created new domains.

As mutable and multifaceted as Domains can be, there have only ever been five Forms. Each form represents a different means of applying essentially the same rune, from quick combat runes to static Glyphs. All Runemages become accustomed to all the different forms, though it is not uncommon for some Runemages to specialize in a particular one.

Each Form has certain attributes that remain constant regardless of what Domain of rune is being executed. All charms, for instance, have a range of line-of-sight; all wards can only affect a single person or object, etc. This holds true whether it is a Hrond Charm or a Drandlur Charm. New attributes become available as the Runemage grows in power.

Runes of Energy: Arroy's Domain

Arroy is the Goddess of Creation, the Lady of the Firmament, Wellspring of Existence; she holds sway over the fundamental creation of all matter and energy. Her runes tend to involve the manipulation of that energy. It is a popular domain for combat magics, as her Charms allow a Runemage to wreathe an enemy in fire, or do just the opposite and draw all the heat from his body. Matter is energy and energy is matter, and as such, Arroy's runes also involve the transformation, transportation, or destruction of physical matter. Devotees are *Arroyan Runemages.*

Runes of Life: Drandlur's Domain

Drandlur is the Caretaker of the World, the Mother of Nature, the Queen of All Life who governs everything from the passing of the seasons to the blood that pumps through a living heart. For the adventuring Runemage, Drandlur's Domain is important for its healing magics. But it is also a source of potent magics used to manipulate or generate weather and its effects. Through Drandlur's Domain, a skilled Runemage can also affect living systems, weakening an enemy or strengthening himself. Devotees are *Drandlurite Runemages.*

Runes of Death: Hrond's Domain

Not simply a God of Death, Hrond is the Shepherd of the Dead, the Father of Secrets; he governs the realm of spirit and the knowledge of all things forgotten. Hrond's runes are powerful symbols against the menace of the undead; they can compel a restless spirit to seek its peace or forcibly expel a murderous phantom. Hrond's Domain can also offer a Runemage protection from assaults against his own spirit by the undead, but more importantly, from Shadow Magic. Hrond's runes are the only known runes capable of resisting or suppressing the powers of a Shadowmage, a clear contributor to the enmity (or at least suspicion) between Shadowmages and Runemages specializing in Hrond's Domain. The least of Hrond's powers is that of secrecy, of keeping things hidden, and so in Hrond's Domain reside all runes that obscure the senses or hide things through invisibility. Devotees are *Hrondim Runemages.*

Runes of Fate: Lyiss' Domain

At the center of all lies the tying binds of Fate. Lyiss is the

continuity of All, she who secures the Paths of Destiny, Maiden of the Balance. Her runes govern the complex web of circumstance that is Fate, and Runemages find them useful to tweak chance, granting (temporary) preternatural luck. But any Runemage who dedicates herself to the study of Fate's plan scoffs at such crude manipulations of Lyiss' power. To these, the Runes of Fate are a window into the inner workings of the cosmos, and mastery of them allows a Runemage to catch glimpses of possible futures or visions of the past. Of great use, however, is the ability to perceive the present, or parts of it anyway. Scrying into distant places or searching the strands of fate for a particular person, Fate exists in all places, through all time, and all that was, is, or shall be is contained within. Devotees are *Lyissan Runemages.*

Runes of War: Paran's Domain

In the mythology of the Seven, Paran was known to take lovers among mortal Ianer, and from their union she would birth weapons of great power. Her runes, therefore, are crafted to empower weaponry, which symbolically are all children of the War Goddess. But Paran is not only a war goddess, she is also the Goddess of Chaos, and rules that part of the mind devoted to emotion. Though not as often acknowledged as her weapon runes, there exist in Paran's Domain, runes that can affect emotional states to powerful effect. In the past, such runes flew like banners above the battlefield, strengthening the wills and courage of the soldiers under its effect. Crafty Runemages can use these runes against their enemies, crippling them with fear or panic, or spreading chaos by bringing them to uncontrollable rages. Devotees are *Paranai Runemages.*

Runes of Peace: Talse's Domain

Paran's brother, Talse is the Lord of Order, a God of Reason, who acts as a counterbalance to his sister. While Paran's runes are used in the service of war, Talse's can provide protection from even powerful magics. The sanctifying runes of Talse have adorned the armor of heroes down through the ages, and served them well against many enemies. But beyond Talse's symbol as a protector, the realms of the intellect, logic, and the hidden powers of the mind fall into his Domain. Not only may a Runemage augment his own mental faculties, he may use Runes to beguile or even control, enslave, the minds of others. Devotees are *Talsean Runemages.*

Runes of Power: Va'an's Domain

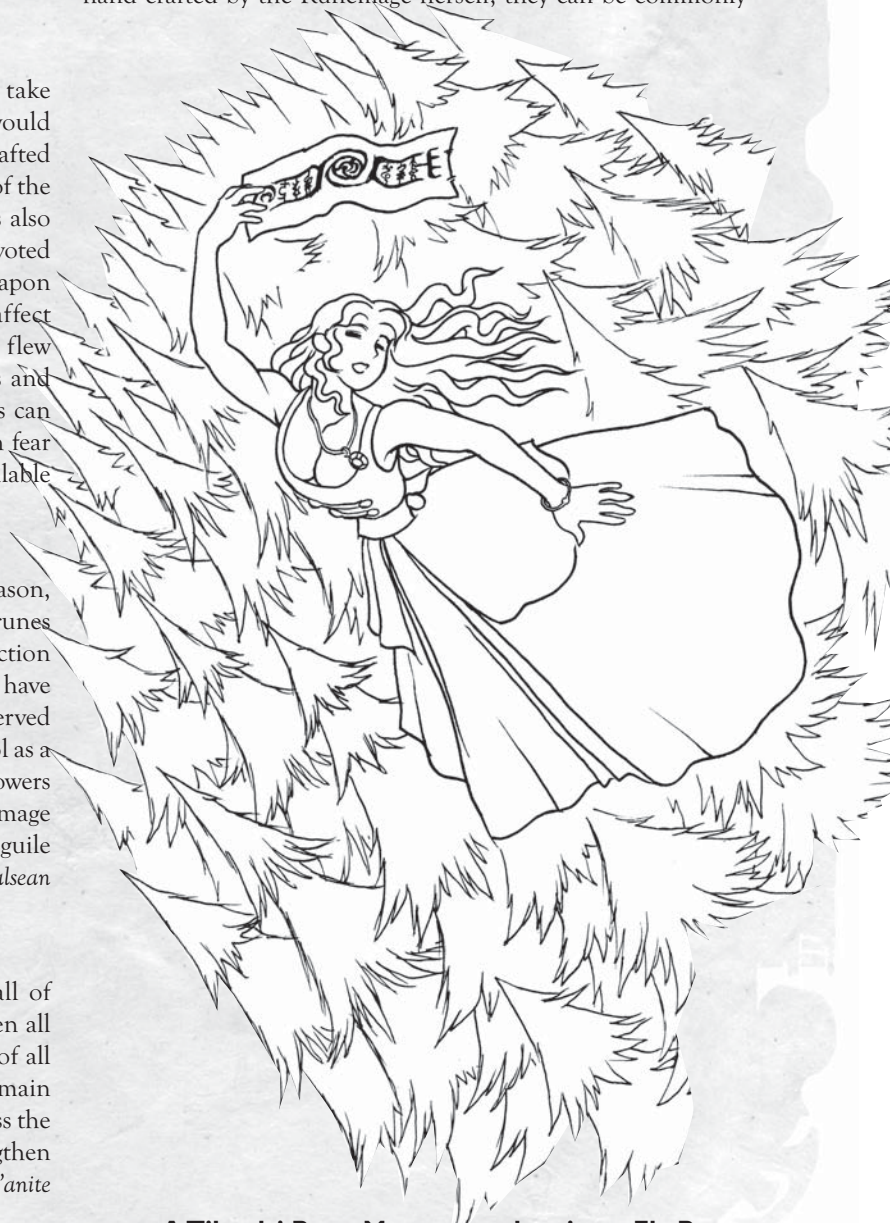
Va'an, the Binder, the Great Architect, he arranges all of existence into a functioning whole, building union between all the other gods and their Domains. The key to the power of all Rune Magic is the manipulation of the Ylar; Va'an's Domain governs the flow of all Ylar. The Runes of Va'an can suppress the function of other runes, draw Ylar from them, or even strengthen other runes when used in their construction. Devotees are *Va'anite Runemages.*

Charms

Charms cover all forms of combat magic. Combat magic, however, is a misleading term here. Charms, of the Greater Rune Magic forms, are the simplest and quickest to manifest, and as such finds much of their use in combat.

Talismans

Also called fetishes, a Talisman is any object that has been enchanted by a rune. What the objects customarily are changes from Domain to Domain. For instance, the talismans of Paran, the goddess of war, are generally weapons, the talismans of Talse generally being censers or prayer mats. These objects needn't be hand crafted by the Runemage herself; they can be commonly



A Tilandri Rune Mage ascends using a Fly Rune.

bought items, or ones fashioned for the Runemage by an artisan. All talismans, regardless of their Domain, either possess limited charges or a limited effective life before their powers fade and the Talisman becomes a mundane object once more.

Wards

Wards are runes generally used to specifically target a single person or object with an effect. They last longer than Charms but are limited as to what runes can be adapted into this Form.

Glyphs

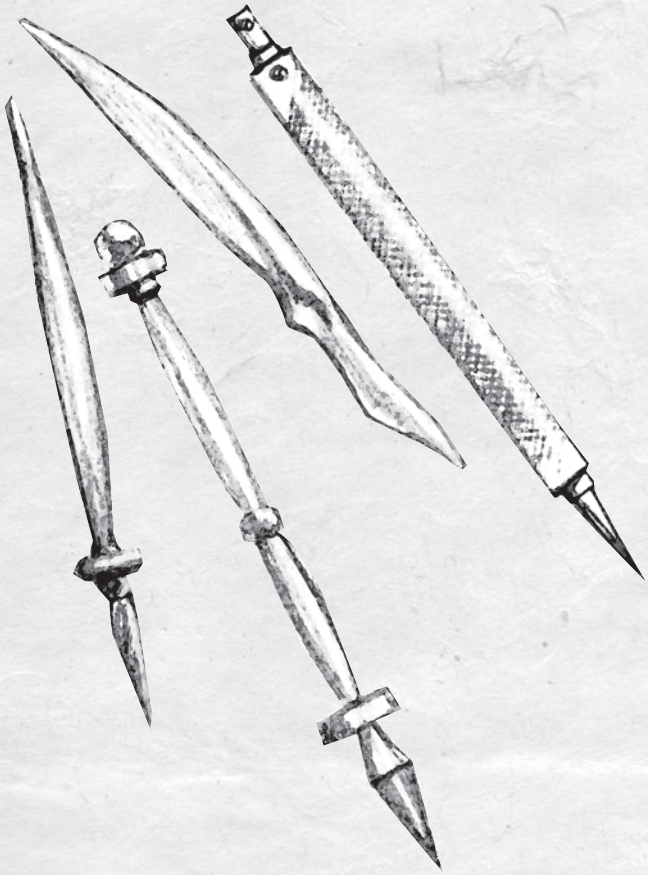
Generally fixed in a single location, Glyphs are larger runes that have an effect over an area. Often used to protect an area, such as a building or campsite, Glyphs sometimes also serve as traps or other utility-oriented Rune Magics. Unlike other runes, Glyphs can be increased in power by writing the overall rune larger. A large Glyph will gather more Ylar into itself and thereby create a greater level of effect.

LESSER AND GREATER RUNE MAGICS

Lesser runes have come into general use in many lands of Zir'An and many people are able to do maybe one or two lesser runes by heart without having had proper Rune Magic training. Lesser runes power Ballinor's streetlights and Vallunei's generators. They're what make many of the improbable airships of Zir'An feasible by lightening loads, strengthening supports, and generating lift. Like any complex system, however, they require maintenance. Runes of all kinds will slowly lose their efficiency as their harnessed Ylar leaches back into the environment. The maintenance of Lesser Runes is just as involved a skill as engineering or mechanics. More often than not, your typical mechanic will have enough rune knowledge to perform simple refurbishment on Lesser Runes.

Only someone who chooses to explore the deeper mysteries and capabilities of Rune Magic can truly be called a Runemage. Beyond the mere functionality of Lesser Runes, Greater Runes open up worlds of possibility to the exploring Runemage. As a young Runemage starts out on the path of Greater Rune Magic, he is introduced to the Seven Domains, the seven spheres of power that reflect the persona of the Seven Gods. It was the Seven Gods who donated portions of their own power to create the sea of potential energy that is the Ylar. Acolyte Runemages are often overcome by their first experiences harnessing what is in essence the power of the gods themselves. Some liken it to possessing the key to a door that holds back a flood. Each of these Domains represents a particular aspect of the God who sired it. Though there are only seven Domains listed within this text, history has told of uncounted hundreds of parallel Domains, lost arcana from a distant past. Surely more will be re-discovered as the ages progress.

Each Domain is further broken down into Forms. All Domains share the same Forms, as each Form is simply the power of the Domain applied in different ways. Forms cover such applications as combat magics, fetishes, and wards. Each Form has different requirements for casting; though from domain to domain, these requirements are consistent.



The Stylus

It is not simply the shape of the rune itself that allows the Ylar to be channeled through it; the Ylar responds only to the will of a sentient mind. It is the conscious act of a creative mind actively working the rune that truly gives it power. It requires many years of experience to learn how to weave functioning runes without a tool, however. This tool is the Stylus. The Stylus is any instrument intended for the purpose of writing runes that has been crafted by the Runemage herself. That is the most important factor of any Stylus, that it be the product of a focused will and creative

mind. The Stylus itself can be of any shape and size, subject to the fancy of the Runemage, and though a rune could be crafted without a Stylus, it is very difficult and the results are often less effective than desired. Runes are not written with ink or any other medium, nor does the Stylus itself produce any such pigment. As the Runemage focuses her will, envisions the rune she is to weave, and sets the Stylus to writing, the rune will appear as a thread of pure white light, the color of the Ylar when it is harnessed in such a fashion. Customarily, the Runemage will inscribe the rune upon a readily available surface or upon Runing papers, but as her skills improve, she will eventually lose the need to cast her runes upon a physical surface until she loses the need to use a Stylus at all.

RUNING PAPERS

One of the most important tools of the adventuring Runemage, apart from her Stylus of course, are blocks of tear-away paper that can be quickly inscribed with runes. Runing papers serve best as the recipients of Charms and Wards. Talismans, naturally, cannot be fashioned from Runing papers alone, though wrapping or tying a piece of runing paper to the proper talismanic object is a common practice.

Runing papers are thin and durable. The shape and color of runing papers differs from culture to culture, but all are made from a single type of wood fiber. Commonly called Graceborne, this bushy tree is recognizable by its smooth gray bark and small teardrop-shaped leaves. Most Colleges of Rune Magic and Runemage societies keep small groves of Graceborne close at hand. It often falls to the Runemage novices to cultivate the Graceborne and render them into runing papers. Being a sturdy plant, it can grow in all but the most inhospitable climes (though it may even then), and can be found throughout Zir'An, going by many different names from region to region.

CREATING A RUNEMAGE CHARACTER

The procedure is like making any other character. When it comes time to start purchasing skill packages, players simply pick those skill packages that suit their character concept. Players may purchase as many skill packages that contain the skill Rune Magic as their points will allow. There is no prerequisite to learn Rune Magic, no minimum stat requirements, etc, but those of a high intelligence will be more adept at its use.

Not every country has a specific Runemage skill package, but that does not mean that someone from such a country cannot learn Rune Magic or that it has no established Runemage tradition. Some countries, like Arivonne, are more apt to pass Rune Magic down from a single teacher to a single pupil, often along family lines, or send potential Runemages to other countries where training in Rune Magic is more prevalent, such as Vandalusa. Many Edyssian Runemages, for example, received the bulk of their education in Vandalusa.

Selecting a Compliment of Runes

Once a player has gone through the process of acquiring all of their character's skills, reaching the final Finesse Level and Practice, they may select the Runes their Runemage character possesses.

For every Finesse Level they possess in the Rune Magic skill, the player may select 6 Lesser Runes or 3 Greater Runes.

Example: John is creating a Talusian Runemage. When he is done with his skills, he ends up with a Rune Magic skill of Expert (with one point of Practice). He can choose up to nine Greater Runes, or eighteen Lesser Runes, or a combination of the two (six Greater and six Lesser Runes or three Greater and twelve Lesser Runes).

Note: Remember, a Runemage character must have a Rune Magic skill of at least Advanced Finesse Level to select Greater Runes.

The player may select runes from any Domain (or anything from Common to Very Rare for Lesser Runes) but the more they focus on a single Domain, the more that Domain will open its secrets to the Runemage. For every 3 Greater Runes the Runemage possesses in a single Domain, they get a bonus of 2 Greater Runes from that Domain. This only works for a single Domain, so if the Player possess 3 or more Greater Runes in two different Domains, they will have to select which single Domain they are focusing upon.

Example: John finally selects six Greater Runes and six Lesser Runes, choosing to purchase 4 Greater Runes from Paran, one from Lyiss, and one from Drandlur, as well as six varied Lesser Runes. Because he possesses four Greater Runes from Paran, the Warbride's Domain begins to reveal its bloodstained tapestry to him through his dreams, and he gets a bonus of two more Greater Runes from the Domain of Paran.

Finishing Up

When players have finished making their character, they get to pick a bonus number of runes to add to their repertoire. They may select a number of additional Lesser Runes equal to their Knowledge Aptitude, and for each point of Practice in Rune Magic, they may select a Greater Rune from any Domain they are familiar with.

Additionally, characters may pick up Lesser Runes in a fashion similar to how they acquire their equipment and other resources. Each Lesser Rune is grouped by its commonality, which translates directly to the availability values used for resources and equipment (*q.v.*).

Amateur Runemages

It is possible for someone to pick up knowledge of a Lesser Rune without having fully learned Rune Magic. It is not uncommon for a particular Lesser Rune to be passed down, like an heirloom, through family lines, or to have it taught to the character as part of a job or close association. Players who wish to have their non-Runemage character be able to cast a Lesser Rune can acquire it with Connections resources, as one does their resources and equipment. Casting their Lesser Rune is done with a generic stylus, as they have not learned how to craft their own personal stylus.

Learning new Runes

Once a Runemage has learned the runes of a particular Domain, its secrets will slowly reveal themselves to him. Runes will haunt his dreams and through constant study and experimentation wholly on his own, a process typically taking two months, a Runemage can learn new runes of a Domain he is already familiar with. He need not receive instruction to learn such runes. These familiar-domain runes can be acquired for a cost of 8 Exp. It is also possible to learn a new rune of a known Domain from another Runemage who possesses this rune. Typically, a month of instruction is required to learn and become fluent with a new rune, and costs 10 Exp.

Direct instruction from another Runemage is required to learn a rune of an unfamiliar Domain, but once learned, the Runemage needn't seek tutelage to learn runes from that newly acquired Domain. Learning a new Domain takes roughly four months and costs 12 Exp.

Lesser Runes naturally require less diligent instruction and can be learned in a month from an instructor or codex, at the cost of 6 Exp.

RUNE MAGIC SKILL

Everyone knows that the Stylus is the tool of the Runemage. It can be used to fashion both lesser and greater runes and the shape of the Stylus itself is limited only by the personal fancy of the Runemage. Eventually, however, a Runemage can grow past the need to use a Stylus at all. What grants a rune its power is the focused will of the Runemage; it is what calls the Ylar to be shaped by the Stylus and the rune itself to be born. When a Runemage reaches the highest level of ability, simply the act of envisioning the rune in the Runemage's mind is enough to manifest the rune in the real world.

Basic

The first task of inexperienced Runemages is the creation of their personal Stylus. Just beginning to master the complicated art of envisioning runes in their minds, they must continue to rely upon a physical medium upon which to weave their runes. It is customary for Runemages to weave simple runes upon Runing papers, longish strips of paper specially created for this purpose, but any hard, stable surface will suffice. At such a basic level of ability, however, Runemages are limited to Lesser Runes, but for many this is as far as they can or wish to go. Lesser Rune Magic is much like any other specialized skill and many schools have extensive courses and degrees offered for Lesser Rune Magic. Ballinor has a strong tradition of Runemagery and craftsmen skilled in Lesser Rune Magic form the bulk of this trade. Streetlights and the power generators used in private homes all use Lesser Runes to function and it is these technician Runemages who keep these systems in order.

Advanced

Only instruction by an experienced Runemage can bring a fledgling mage to this level of development, and it is only the beginning of their journey into a larger world. Advanced Runemages can now use Greater Rune Magic, accessing all of the Domains and Forms unavailable to Basic Runemages. The form and substance of their personal Stylus is now fixed. If their Stylus is broken or otherwise lost, their new Stylus must be identical to the first (see "Improvised Styli" below), as it has become the symbol, or badge, of their ability. Having entered into the realm of Greater Runes, the Runemage can manifest flawless threads of Ylar from the tip of her Stylus. This allows her to inscribe runes upon any surface, no matter how malleable or unstable it is. Runes could be inscribed upon sand, human flesh, even water.

Expert

The Runemage has finally mastered the skill of "Sky Runes," manifesting threads of the Ylar with her Stylus that are so stable they hang effortlessly in the air; the Runemage no longer needs to inscribe her runes upon a surface for them to be effective. In some cases they will still be necessary, such as with Talismans, otherwise the runes created by the Runemage will hang suspended in the air before her, follow her as she moves, or speed lightning quick toward the Runemage's enemies.

Elite

The power of an Elite Runemage resides in her ability to completely visualize the rune she wishes to weave, so completely that its impression upon the mind's eye is enough for it to draw the Ylar into itself. Because it is completely internalized, the rune may not actually be visibly present to those around, but the rune's effects will. Or the Runemage can make the rune suddenly appear, as a Sky Rune, anywhere within the range of her senses. Secondly, since simple visualization manifests the rune, they no longer need to use a Stylus. **Because they no longer require the use of a Stylus or any medium upon which to inscribe a rune, the Creation Time for all Runes is halved.**



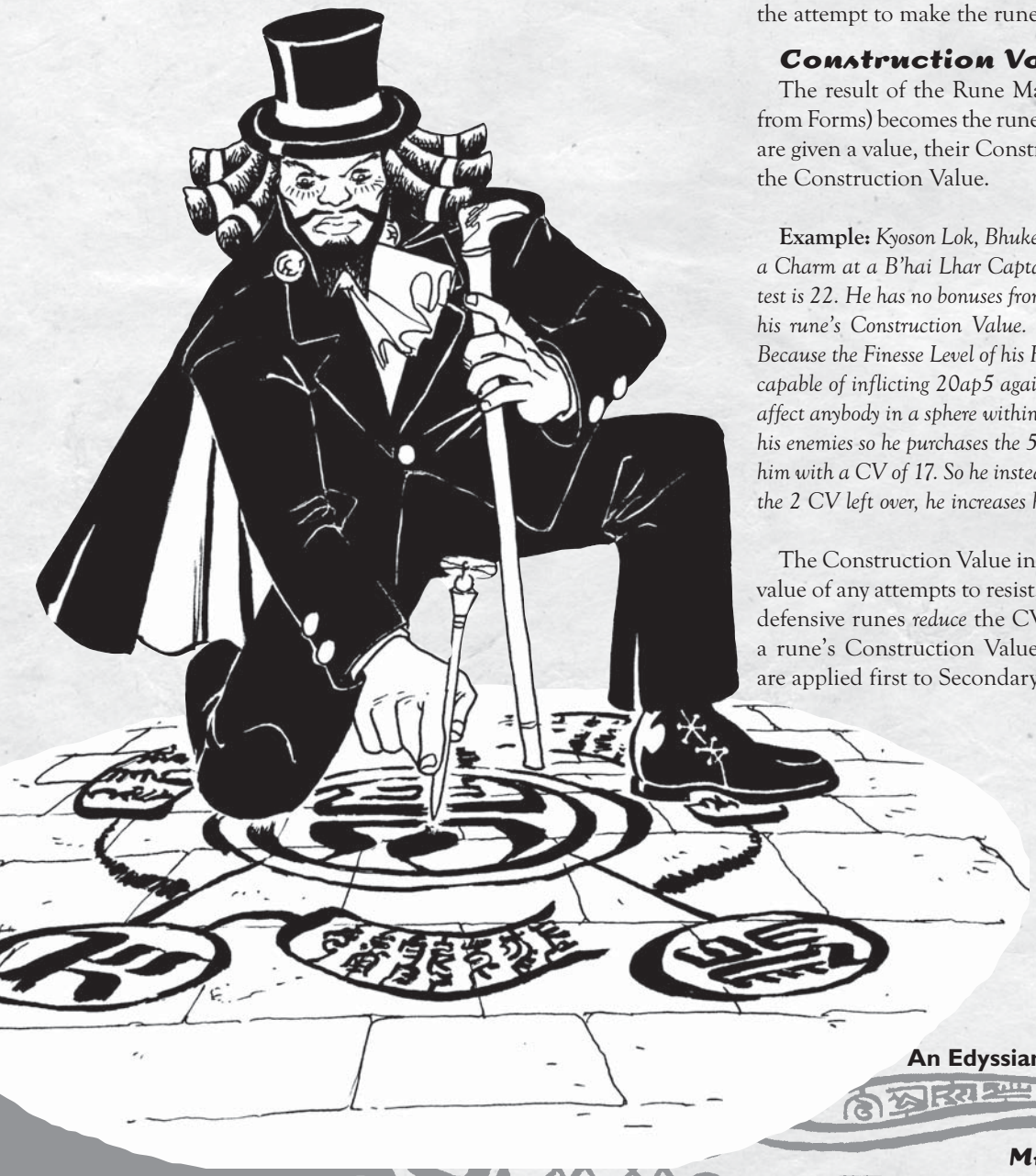
RUNE MAGIC SYSTEMS

Using the Rune Magic Skill:

1. Complete Creation Time needed to scribe the Rune.
2. Roll 1d10 + Intelligence + Rune Magic Aptitude (knowledge + points of Practice).
3. Roll total and any bonuses become the Rune's Construction Value (CV).
4. Tally and apply Runemage's total Mental Fatigue (based on Form of rune created).

Creation Time

With all but the simplest of Charms, Runemages need a secure environment to craft their Rune, thus they are never performed during combat. Runemages can pause in the construction of a rune, and that rune will remain, unfinished, for a duration equal to the amount of time the Runemage has invested in its construction thus far. Once that time has elapsed, the rune will fade and have to be scribed anew.



An Edyssian Rune Mage creates a Glyph.

Rune Magic Skill Test

When the Runemage completes the Creation Time of the rune desired, the player makes his Rune Magic roll (see above). The total is the Construction Value (CV) of the rune. Each rune power has a Primary and Secondary effect with its own Construction Cost (CC). Different Forms can modify the rune's total CV. Wards, for instance, have an inherent +5 CV bonus. These Form-related bonuses are not bonuses to the Rune Magic skill test, but if the player rolls a "1" on his Rune Magic skill test, the attempt to make the rune automatically fails.

Construction Value

The result of the Rune Magic skill test plus any bonuses (as from Forms) becomes the rune's Construction Value. Rune effects are given a value, their Construction Cost, which cannot exceed the Construction Value.

Example: *Kyoson Lok, Bhuketi priest of Koba, readies himself to cast a Charm at a B'hai Lhar Captain. The result of his Rune Magic skill test is 22. He has no bonuses from the Form he is using, so that becomes his rune's Construction Value. He is casting a Lighting Strike rune. Because the Finesse Level of his Rune Magic skill is Expert, he would be capable of inflicting 20ap5 against his target. His Form allows him to affect anybody in a sphere within a 14-foot radius. But he wants to stun his enemies so he purchases the 5-point secondary effect of Stun, leaving him with a CV of 17. So he instead is capable of inflicting 15ap4. With the 2 CV left over, he increases his damage to 17ap4.*

The Construction Value in some cases also serves as the target value of any attempts to resist, unweave or dispel the rune. Some defensive runes *reduce* the CV of active rune effects. Whenever a rune's Construction Value is being reduced, such penalties are applied first to Secondary Effects, if any, before the Primary

Effect is reduced. Whenever a Runemage crafts a rune, he is to keep track of what his ultimate CV was, even if they do not end up using the whole of it in purchasing their effect.

Example: *SoongGan, B'hai Lhar captain, bears a Talisman with a Mask rune. His Talisman reduces the CV of incoming runes by 10. Kyoson's Lightning Strike has had its CV reduced from 22, to 12. This would only permit him to inflict 10ap4. With the remaining 2 CV, he raises this to 12ap4.*

Mental Fatigue

As Runemages scribe runes, the fatigue of mentally reconstructing complex runic forms takes its toll. Each Form has a number listed as its Mental Fatigue. This number is the penalty the Runemage incurs to all further Rune Magic rolls until he has rested. Mental Fatigue modifiers do not stack; of all the runes the Runemage has scribed in a given day, the highest Mental Fatigue modifier is the one counted.

Example: *Vandalarai, a Vandalusan Runemage, has cast her first Charm of the day. The Mental Fatigue of the Charm is 2. From that point on, until she rests, all Rune Magic rolls will be made at –2. Later in the day, she scribes a Glyph, with the –2 Mental Fatigue modifier she had from casting a Charm earlier. She succeeds in creating her Glyph. The Glyph, however, has a Mental Fatigue of 10. Any Rune Magic rolls she makes until she rests will suffer a –10 modifier.*

There are ways in which a Runemage can temporarily alleviate conditions of mental fatigue. These are often in the form of elixirs or special medicines that grant quick energy and clarity of mind (see Chapter 10: Equipment).

Any Mental Fatigue incurred will alleviate given rest. 10 hours of rest will reduce their current Mental Fatigue by an amount equal to their Rune Magic Aptitude. High mental fatigue, as from the creation of a Glyph, may require extended sleep periods to fully recover. Consequently, each 5 points of Mental Fatigue incurred results in a –1 to all Knowledge skill tests.

Example: *Vandalarai has scribed a large Glyph. A large Glyph has a Mental Fatigue of 15. Vandalarai's Rune Magic Aptitude (his Knowledge Aptitude + the amount of Practice he has in Rune Magic) is 8. He will have to rest a total of 20 hours before his mind has completely recovered.*

Line of Sight

A Runemage can target someone with a rune who happens to be in the Runemage's Line of Sight. If the Runemage can see someone, he can affect him or her with a rune. The standard Line of Sight rule is 60 feet in daylight. Anything that affects a Runemage's ability to see, and thus to target his Rune Magic, interferes with the Line of Sight rule as to the HoF's discretion.

Effective LoS is a 90 degree cone 60 feet from the character's eyes. Larger targets (such as airships) have a higher normal LoS *against* them, and so can be targeted from longer distances. Certain conditions can limit LoS rules (see Weather).

Unweaving Runes

All runes can be unwoven. Given enough time and provided the Runemage has the skills, any Rune can be safely dispelled. By writing over the old rune, but in the exact reverse, the Runemage effectively returns its energy back to the Ylar. To unweave, a Runemage simply has to make a Rune Magic skill test as though she were attempting to cast the rune herself. The creation time is the same, so a Runemage could spend hours unweaving a glyph; in combat a Runemage can unweave a charm as blindingly fast as they are written.

Creating Runes in Concert

It is a common practice for Runemages to pool their resources and fashion runes in concert. Generally this is done only for the largest runes, Glyphs, whose creation can be very labor and time intensive. But in a pinch, two Runemages could fashion a Ward or Talisman in concert. To do so, they both must have knowledge of the rune to be created. Divide the Creation Time of the Form being used by the number of Runemages involved, once the Creation Time has been completed, all involved Runemages make their Rune Magic skill tests. If none of them rolled a "1," the attempt is considered a success. The Runemage who scored the highest CV in the attempt is the one used to determine success, with a bonus equal to the Practice in Rune Magic of all the other Runemages involved. Mental Fatigue is equally divided among all involved, rounded up.

Improvised Styli

Perhaps the most common complaint of any Runemage is the inconvenience of having to fashion a new Stylus to replace a lost or destroyed one. But to many a Runemage, losing a Stylus can make the difference between life and death. When a Runemage advances into the realm of Greater Runes, the Stylus is less a tool than an extension of the Runemage's will, losing it denies her access to her power. No Runemage has lasted long without having a few spare Styli handy. But there will come a time when a Runemage has lost all her Styli and has no recourse but to use whatever is available, even if it is just a sharp rock, stick, or even the Stylus of another Runemage. Unfortunately, such objects do not channel the Ylar well, its threads fragile and prone to collapse.

It is not as simple as just grabbing any old piece of flotsam and quickly whipping off a Greater Rune. Only after the Runemage has spent a minute or more focusing on the object will it ever begin to issue forth its tenuous tendrils of the Ylar. When using an improvised Stylus, the Runemage suffers a –5 to her roll (giving her a range of –4 to a positive 5, potentially lowering the total value needed to construct the rune). A roll of a natural "1"

not only causes an instant failure, energy feedback destroys the improvised Stylus (and singes fingertips) as well.

Only Runemages who have learned to weave Greater Runes may take advantage of improvised Styli. Those who are only skilled in Lesser Runes often use prefabricated Styli, generally bought in specialty shops and universities (Runemage colleges never trade in over-the-counter Styli), which if lost means having to use another prefabricated Stylus. They have yet to learn how to properly focus their will and visualize runes.

LESSER RUNES

Though given the title of "lesser," their sheer utility is a boon to any who possess knowledge of even a few lesser runes. Such lesser runes have been a natural part of daily life for a vast majority of people across the world for thousands of years. Though it is possible to find someone who can teach you a variety of Lesser Runes, many are passed down from parent to child. This has allowed runes millennia old to survive unchanged to the present day. Lesser Runes are similar in construction to their Greater cousins, but do not require quite the powerful focus and will of Greater Runes. They do need to be woven with a Stylus, but not one of the caster's own creation.

Though some of the Lesser Runes featured below list durations that say permanent, it is a relative term in this case. All runes fade in power with time. Powerful runes of high skill as those that existed right before the Endwar can last thousands of years before their power begins to fade. But your typical lesser rune as listed below can last 12 months, before requiring "maintenance." The only cases where this might apply are such things as healing and mending runes, which simply stimulate tissue and cloth to weave them whole again. But steel runes, with their widespread use, have a whole trade built up around their continuous recasting and refurbishment.

Runemages can use their Connections skills to acquire these runes in the same way they do equipment, by their Availability rating (common, uncommon, rare, very rare).

Naturally, Greater Runemages are free to cast Lesser Runes, and may employ the skills of skywriting and visualization in their creation.

Common Lesser Runes

A large body of lesser runes are used often in daily life though much of Zir'An. In the more developed, wealthy countries, it is fairly easy to acquire the skills necessary to weave one or two runes; in fact many local colleges feature courses in some of the more basic lesser runes. All of these runes are of a non-offensive, utilitarian nature.

Heal

Creation Cost: 15, Creation time: 12, Speed cost during combat 6 (near instantaneous outside of combat), Duration: Permanent

Wounds bound with a bandage bearing a Heal rune will knit closed to stop their bleeding. This will return 5 Vitality damage points, but will not heal Lethal Wounds. For every 1 point added to the Creation Cost, an additional point can be healed. Only a single heal rune can be used on each body location. Though heal runes cannot return Lethal Wounds, they can keep a dying person stable long enough to get more strenuous healing applied.

Join

Creation Cost: 15, Creation time: 4 minutes, Duration: Permanent

The opposite of the Parting rune (see below), any two surfaces bearing a Join rune will do so when joined together rune to rune. Only a proper unweaving or the actual physical destruction of the joined objects can undo this rune. Shipbuilders and cabinetmakers make heavy use of this rune, as do many in the smithing trade as it can solidly bind together materials of different composition. Join runes do not work on living flesh, however.

Light

Creation Cost: 10, Creation time: 12 seconds (2 rounds), Duration: 3 hours Any small object (or even a wadded up runing paper) inscribed with a light rune will begin to glow with brightness equivalent to a lantern or electric torch (lighting a 30' radius area). The object will also float a few feet above the caster, trailing behind them as they move. At any time the caster can retrieve and pocket the object without affecting its duration.

Signal

Creation Cost: 10, Creation Time: 30 seconds (5 rounds), Duration: 5 minutes

A simple variation of the light rune, signal runes create bright flares or even simple symbols or letters up to ten feet tall. The signal will glow brightly for the duration of the rune, hovering above the caster at a height of her choosing. Each 5 added to the Creation Cost can double the signal's duration. An additional 5 to the Creation Cost alone will allow the caster to add special properties to the signal: coded flashing, complete words, brighter radiance, etc

Uncommon Lesser Runes

Uncommon runes are more specalized, usually very useful to a trade or service activity. Those who learn these runes are generally in guilds and work professionally casting them.

Mending

Creation Cost: 15, Creation time: 30 Seconds (5 Rounds), Duration: Permanent

Tears or breaks in any pliable material such as cloth or leather can be sealed back to its whole state if a Mending rune is inscribed across the break. These are considered minor tears, generally used to mend clothing or wicker baskets. Larger tears can be mended with the use of multiple Mending runes. A mainsail torn from stem to stern would require perhaps four or five mending runes

to close.

Parting

Creation Cost: 20, Creation time: 10 minutes, Duration: 1 hour

This rune generates a force that will push two objects apart when inserted between them. Most commonly inscribed upon axes or wedges to ease the work of log-cutters and stonemasons, it can reduce the time it takes to chop firewood or wedge open a door, by half. It is impossible to use for fine work, however, as it is meant to create wide rents, not delicate cuts. The warriors of Gallios have used a little known variant of a parting rune on their weapons to devastating effect (it adds +1 AP, maximum of AP5).

Preservation

Creation Cost: 20, Creation Time: 15 minutes, Duration: Permanent

Preservation runes are in widespread use throughout Zir'An as a way of keeping foodstuffs and other perishables free of decay. They are applied in one of two ways; containers can bear a preservation rune, keeping their contents fresh, or if applied directly upon an object, said object will be resistant to the effects of decay. In some cultures, preservation runes are used to keep the bodies of esteemed ancestors looking as they did when alive.

Seal

Creation Cost: 20, Creation Time: 5 minutes, Duration: Permanent

Anything that by its design is meant to close and lock: doors, stoppers, lids, etc, can be made to seal tightly if a Seal rune is inscribed upon it. Only its destruction, the rune's unweaving, or the living hand of the rune's creator will open such objects.

Rare Lesser Runes

Because of their relative power compared to the more utilitarian common runes, these runes are generally only taught by individuals who trust the person into whose hands they give this knowledge. Passed down through families like an inheritance or to trusted members of a particular organization, these rare runes grant their owners considerable power.

Bolt

Creation Cost: 20, Creation time: 6 Speed, Duration: Instantaneous

Runing papers are the common medium upon which bolt runes are inscribed. Once completed, they flash into a bolt of bright white light capable of striking any target within line of sight. It has a base damage of 7ap2 and for every 2 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage (but not the armor penetration) can be increased by 1.

Explosion

Creation Cost: 20, Creation time: 6 Speed, Duration: Instantaneous

Popular with mercenaries and other military types, this rune creates a great burst of concussive force a few seconds after it is inscribed (generally on something easily thrown such as a strip of runing paper or a small stone). All within a 10-foot radius suffer a 10ap1 attack. For every 3 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage can be increased by 1 point.

Levitation

Creation Cost: 20, Creation time: 5 minutes, Duration: 1 hour

Objects inscribed with a Levitation rune will become neutrally buoyant in air, and can be easily moved about. Up to a hundred pounds can be levitated thus for each Levitation rune, so heavier objects will require multiple applications. Objects that bear a Levitation rune will have their Encumbrance Value (*q.v.*) halved for the duration of the rune and if used to make a person lighter will allow them to add distance to their standard jumps of 5 feet for every point of Athletics aptitude (Personal aptitude + Practice in Athletics).

Shield

Creation Cost: 15, Creation time: 1 minute (10 Rounds), Duration: Permanent

This rune projects an invisible shield of force that protects against projectiles of all kinds (arrows, bullets, stones, etc.) for a defensive value of 15ap3. It does not block melee attacks. The shield extends from the rune like a wide, flat mushroom, 3 feet out and 5 feet in diameter. If a projectile manages to penetrate the shield and causes its bearer to suffer a loss of Lethal Wounds, the shield will fade.

Steel

Difficulty: 25, Creation time: 2 hours, Duration: Permanent

Through skilled application of this rune, substances and materials can be made to harden to the point they feel like pieces of tempered steel. Such materials gain an incredible amount of durability while still retaining their original weight. These are the runes used by many industrial craftsmen to strengthen hulls and add strength and support to structures. With typical use, as seen in airship hulls, a single steel rune can strengthen a 10-foot square of thin sheeting material. Another use for the Steel rune is to strengthen soft armors, granting them an additional point of AV, but of course, the armor is no longer soft.

Very Rare Lesser Runes

Those who know these runes are naturally reticent to pass them along to just anybody. Though ancient books of Rune Magic are rife with such Lesser Runes, these books are often the property of universities or Runemage societies and seldom fall into unauthorized hands. But it is not uncommon for the knowledge of such runes to pass down through families as a prized heirloom.

Blind

Creation Cost: 25, Casting time: 6 speed, Duration: Special

As the rune is inscribed, those who witnessed its weaving will

be struck blind if they fail an Acuity+Personal test of 20. This blindness will persist as long as the rune remains in their general area or is unwoven. Alternatively a blind rune may be inscribed directly upon someone's person, which strikes the person blind without the chance of a roll. Since the victim cannot leave the rune's general area, only by it being unwoven will their sight return.

Fascination

Creation Cost: 20, Casting time: 15 minutes, Duration: 2 hours

When shown in plain sight, it catches and holds the eyes of any who happen to glimpse it. This effect will focus viewers' attention so much so that they will be unable to turn from it and will follow it if it moves. They are aware that they are being manipulated, but are unable to resist the compulsion to focus only on the fascination rune. If the rune is covered or their sight of it is obstructed, the enchantment will cease, that is until they get sight of it again. By making an Expert (20) Awareness skill test, they can manage to wrench their eyes from the alluring patterns and flashing colors of the rune. The rune itself will eventually lose power and fade after two hours.

Shroud

Creation Cost: 20, Casting time: 6 speed, Duration: ^1 hour

This rune generates a pale, hazy shroud about the inscriber. It obscures details and identities and generally makes the bearer difficult to see in dim light. When attempting to pass unnoticed in the right conditions, the rune's bearer can decrease the difficulty of any Stealth skill test by -5.

GREATER RUNES

Many possess the knowledge to cast a few Lesser Runes, but only those who have chosen to devote their lives to the study of Rune Magic are tutored in its higher aspects. A lifetime is spent in pursuit of its secrets and even after thousands of years of study and research the Ylar has yet to yield all of its mysteries. The knowledge of Runes and their use has never been completely lost, despite the global catastrophes that have befallen the world of Zir'An. The science always manages to live on in some form.

What follows are the seven Domains. Each Domain contains a number of Powers. Powers are the core effects of Rune Magic. The effects are given in a raw form, so that each Power can be used in all the various Forms. Each Power has an Effect, an explanation of what the Power does in terms of game mechanics. Each Effect is either Instantaneous or Continuous. What Form a Runemage uses ultimately decides how long a rune with a Continuous effect will last.

A Power's Effect has a Construction Cost (CC), which cannot exceed the sum of the mage's Rune Magic skill test. Each Power will have a Primary Effect, followed by a number of Secondary Effects, each with its own Construction Cost. During a Rune's construction, the Runemage can have 1 secondary effect per point of Practice in Rune Magic.

Attributes of Greater Runes

Each runic Power comes with a set of simple attributes and defines certain parameters of the Power's effects. The Form used dictates the actual values: ranges, effect durations, etc.

Target

The powers of the rune affect a single, specific target, be it an object, person, or location. The rune has to come in contact with the target: charms fly to their target and stick, wards are placed upon an object, a talisman's powers work when held by their user, etc. As the Runemage rises in ability, they can affect more than a single target with some of their runes.

Zone

The rune's powers extend over an area, affecting all who happen to be within that area. Generally, the Zone effect extends in a sphere centered on the rune, and the Form employed greatly affects the size. Charms, however, are more versatile when it comes to Zone effects (fashioning bolts, rays, cones, etc.).

Instantaneous

Healing runes and most combat magics are of the instantaneous variety. The effect is generated and directed against the target, finally dispersing. There are fewer runic powers that are instantaneous than those that generate a continuous effect, but their effects tend to be more powerful. Experienced Runemages can, with the right techniques, turn an instantaneous effect into a continuous one.

Continuous

Runes, by their nature, are meant to generate a continuous effect. Runes were created to give the Ylar a matrix in which it could exist stably. It is theoretically possible to create a rune that would generate its effect until the end of time, never disintegrating as most runes scribed today eventually do.

Charms

Some mistakenly consider Charms to be the simplest form of Rune Magic. Experienced Runemages scoff at such generalizations, noting the great level of technique and finesse required to fashion such complex runes in a matter of seconds. Some Runemages would even claim that of all the **Five Forms** (four of which are detailed here), Charms require the most discipline from their creator. Many marvel upon seeing a Runemage's hand and stylus blur with the movement of scribing a Charm upon a piece of runing paper or in the air itself.

Charms move through the air at the direction of the Runemage, and regardless of what they are scribed upon, remain unaffected by environmental conditions. A rune on a piece of runing paper will not be hindered by high winds or driving rain (unless those effects hamper the Runemage's ability to scribe the rune itself, which is possible). Charms bearing a Power that possesses both the Zone and Continuous attributes will persist, floating in midair at the direction of the Runemage. If left to its own devices, the



A Lightning Strike Charm in action.

Charm will hover in place or follow either the Runemage or someone of the Runemage's choosing. If the Runemage does nothing but focus on directing the Charm, they can move it to a new target area on their Turn. Charms so directed are very fast, moving 60 feet in 1 Count, out to a maximum distance of the Runemage's Line of Sight.

Creation Time

All Charms have a Speed Cost of 6.

Mental Fatigue: 2

Special Attributes

- **Countercharm**: If a Runemage is targeted by a Charm, cast by an enemy Runemage in their LoS, the defending Runemage can quickly scribe a Charm in response and negate any effects, provided they can spend the required amount of Speed to do so. The defending Runmage must be of equal or greater Finesse and Practice Runemagic Skill to succeed.

Advanced

- **Target**: Can affect a single human-sized or smaller object or person.
- **Zone**: 5-foot sphere centered on the Charm.
- **Continuous**: 1 Combat Round per point of Knowledge Aptitude (+ Practice in Rune Magic).

Expert

- **Target**: The Runemage can unleash multiple copies of the single Charm and direct them at multiple targets. For each target the Runemage wants to affect (all of whom must be within the Runemage's LoS) the Rune suffers a –2 C.V. penalty. The maximum number of targets the Runemage can affect is equal to their Aptitude with Rune Magic.
- **Zone**: The Runemage can direct the Charm out to any distance within their LoS, upon which time the Charm's Zone attribute comes into play. The Zone can extend further than the customary 5-foot sphere, and can follow any of the following dimensions:
  - Sphere, 2' radius per point of Rune Magic Aptitude (Knowledge Aptitude + Rune Magic Practice).
  - Cone, 2' long, 2' wide at base per point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
  - Straight Line, 1' wide, 5' long per point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
  - Barrier, 5' wide and 5' high per point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
  - Shell (hollow sphere), 5' radius per point of Rune Magic Aptitude.

  The Runemage can alter the size of her Zone effects to her whim; the values listed above being the maximum size possible.
- **Continuous**: Charms with Continuous effects last for the duration of combat.

Elite

- **Target**: the Elite Runemage can unleash multiple copies of the same Charm in a fashion similar to that listed above, but is not confined to targets within her LoS. The Elite Runemage can target anyone within a radius equal to standard LoS, and does not actually need to *see* her targets to affect them.
- **Zone**: as above, but dimensions doubled.
- **Continuous**: Effects last 1 minute per point of Knowledge Aptitude (+ Practice in Rune Magic).

Talismans

The powers of the Talisman are free to whoever possesses it; one needn't be a Runemage to take advantage of the Talisman's powers.

If the Runemage so wishes, however, he can key the Talisman to one specific person (often himself), making it useless to anyone else.

Creation Time

Talismans require time for their careful preparation, their creation often being the end result of a ritual or practiced rite. The Runemage must have the required object (each Domain lists appropriate talismanic objects) and at least 1 hour of undisturbed time to create the Talisman. Talismans require more from the Runemage than the simple inscription of a Rune. Talismans are holy objects related to the Runemage's Domain and require a certain amount of ceremony, meditation, and prayer on the part of the Runemage to construct.

Mental Fatigue: 8

Special Attributes

The range of Talismanic powers are limited. Talismans are meant to affect their owner/creator, but can also house offensive magics that can be turned upon an enemy. Not as versatile as Charms, Talismans cannot create multiple copies of rune effects and so all runes with a Target attribute can only affect 1 target. Powers with Zone effects will be centered on the Talisman. Unlike Wards, which last a fixed amount of time and then cease, Talismans with Continuous effects can be deactivated, so as to save their powers for a time when they're most needed.

A Talisman can hold more than one Power from a single Domain. The creation time is merely repeated with the addition of a new power to a single talisman. The number of uses and/or stored duration does not compound with each power added. All powers must draw from the same single pool of energy.

In combat situations, a Talisman's powers can be activated, or targeted against an enemy, for a Speed cost of 4.

Advanced

- **Target**: Rune's powers can affect a single target within 30'.
- **Zone**: Rune's powers extend in a 5' radius from the Talisman. The Runemage bearing the Talisman may choose not to be affected by the Rune's effects.
- **Instantaneous**: Talisman carries a number of charges equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude. When they are used up, the rune disappears.
- **Continuous**: Talisman holds a total stored duration of 10 minutes x the creator Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.

Expert

- **Target**: Rune's powers can affect a single target within the Runemage's LoS.
- **Zone**: Rune's powers extend in a 10' radius from the Talisman. The Runemage bearing the Talisman may choose not to be affected by the Rune's effects.
- **Instantaneous**: Talisman carries a number of charges equal to the total Base Value of the creator's Rune Magic skill.
- **Continuous**: The Talisman holds a total stored duration of 10 minutes x the total Base Value of the creator's Rune Magic skill.
- **Multirune**: Talisman can contain 2 powers from the same Domain.

Elite

- **Target**: Rune's powers can affect a single target within the Runemage's LoS.
- **Zone**: Rune's powers extends in a 15' radius from the Talisman. The Runemage bearing the Talisman may choose not to be affected by the Rune's effects.
- **Instantaneous**: Talisman carries a number of charges equal to the total Base Value of the creator's Rune Magic skill and may be recharged (see below).
- **Continuous**: The Talisman holds a total stored duration of 1 hour x the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.
- **Multirune**: Talisman can contain up to 3 powers from the same Domain.

Recharging Talismans

Normally Talismans require the use of Greater Runes of Va'an like Shunt and Tax to replenish their store of energy. Talismans created by Elite Runemages can be recharged without the use of any outside aid, such as the Runes of Va'an. It simply involves repeating the process used to create the Talisman, making a Rune Magic skill test, etc. If successful, the Talisman will be replenished to its original charge count.

Wards

A Ward will confer its abilities upon the person who bears it, this can be the Runemage himself or someone of his choosing. Wards can only accommodate Runes that are Target and Continuous.

Creation Time

A Ward can be scribed in 1 minute.

Mental Fatigue: 4

Special Attributes

A Ward can be pre-scribed and saved for 1 hour per point of the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude, but only 1 Ward can be saved at a time.

Runemages can use Wards against enemies, but must be close enough to actually place the Ward on their person. Doing so is considered a 3 Speed attack and requires that the Runemage perform an Unarmed attack against the target's Dodge defense roll. Defending against a Runemage who is attempting to place a Ward must be performed as a Dodge, for a successful Block still means the Runemage connected with his enemy and has succeeded in placing the Ward. Once the Ward has been placed its power comes immediately into effect. If the Ward is removed, either by the Runemage or someone else, the effects cease and that Ward loses its power.

All wards have an inherent +5 CV bonus.

Advanced

- **Continuous**: The Ward will have a duration of 10 minutes per point of the Runemage's total Base Value (Intelligence + Knowledge + Practice) of their Rune Magic skill.

Expert

- **Continuous**: The Ward will have a duration of 1 hour per point of the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.

Elite

- **Continuous**: The Ward will have a duration of 1 hour per point of the Runemage's total Base Value of his Rune Magic skill.

Glyphs

Glyphs are the largest of all runes and so are the most powerful of all Forms, but require a greater amount of time and energy on the part of the Runemage to scribe. Glyphs, because of their size, are generally fixed in a single location, though some Glyphs can be employed to endow their Power upon a large moveable object, such as an airship.

Creation Time

- Standard (3–5 feet in diameter): 1.5–2.5 hours
- Large (6'–10' diameter): 3–5 hours

- Huge (11'–20' diameter): 5.5–10 hours
- Enormous (20'+ diameter): 10+ hours

There is no upper limit on how large a Glyph can be. The largest Glyph listed here, twenty feet in diameter, takes ten hours to scribe. Each additional 10 hours will increase the size of the overall rune by 10 feet. Each additional 10 feet of diameter gives runes with the Target attribute an additional bonus of 10 in addition to the standard bonus (see below). Glyphs of such size are quite an undertaking and are generally only attempted by more than one Runemage working in concert. Runemages who craft Glyphs of this size do not incur a Mental Fatigue modifier as with other Forms, but in fact cannot scribe any runes at all until they have rested at least a number of hours equal to the amount of time they put into crafting the Glyph.

Mental Fatigue:

- Standard: 10
- Large: 15
- Huge: 20
- Enormous: The mental fatigue of an enormous Glyph is such that the Runemage cannot scribe any other runes until he has rested fully (24 hours).

Special Attributes

- **Target**: Powers with the Target attribute can gather greater power because of their size. Larger Glyphs channel greater amounts of the Ylar, granting a bonus to the rune's CV. Glyphs with the Target attribute affect anything that is actually touching the glyph. Once they lose contact with the Glyph, they are no longer under its effect.
- Standard: +0
- Large: +5
- Huge: +10
- Enormous: +15
- **Zone**: Because of the large Glyph's ability to draw more raw power into it, its effects have the potential to expand over a vast area. The Runemage, during the Glyph's construction, decides how far he wishes the Glyph's power to extend. The default Zone size is equal to five times the Glyph's size, but increasing the zone size decreases the power of the rune itself, expressed as a modifier to the final CV of the rune.

Area of Effect equals	*CV mod.*
Rune's diameter x5	**0**
Rune's diameter x10	**–5**
Rune's diameter x100	**–10**
Rune's diameter x1000	**–15**

- **Continuous**: A glyph's powers are longer lasting than any other rune. Continuous powers will last, from the time of the glyph's creation, twice the length of time it took for it to be created. For a –5 penalty to the Rune's CV, the effect's duration can be increased by 50%. The powers of the glyph only exist within the glyph's area of effect. Those leaving the area of effect are no longer able to use, or be affected by, the glyph's powers.
- **Instantaneous**: Instantaneous powers use the hours of the glyph's Creation Time as a number of charges the glyph contains before the power of the glyph is expended. For a –5 penalty to the rune's CV the number of charges can be doubled.
- **Persistent Effects**: For a –15 CV modifier, any Instantaneous effect can be made Continuous. A large Fire Sign Glyph would continually project a fire attack within its Zone for the typical duration of the Glyph. Glyphs with Persistent Effects can be created with a trigger to start their effects, but once started they cannot be turned off until the duration has ended.
- **Mobile Glyphs**: Though it is more common to find Glyphs inscribed upon the ground, fixed and immovable, it is possible to create Glyphs on objects that can be transported or that are mobile themselves. Rugs, banners, even the hulls of airships can bear a Glyph. Glyphs gain their power, though, from their stability, and creating one that is capable of being moved incurs a –10 CV penalty.

DOMAIN OF ARROY

Arroy's runes crackle with powerful energy, throwing off bright arcs of violet and sapphire electricity. Pulsing with power, Runemages find Arroy's Domain an exciting one, and a seductive one as well. It is difficult to not be impressed with the energies a skilled Runemage can unleash. Runemages who specialize in Arroy's Domain tend to be those most fascinated with the nuclear process, plumbing the mysteries of subatomic particles and the construction of matter. Those of a more philosophical bent see Arroy's Domain as a path to the primal, the threshold into the soul of a goddess. All of them see that deep within the mysteries of Arroy's Domain lie the secrets to not only master energy, but to create entire worlds, for the world of Zir'An was fashioned from the runes of her Domain.

Arroy's Talismans: Arroy's holy symbol, bowls, bottles, clear crystals, dishes, diamonds, fans, lenses, magnesium, mirrors, rods made of metal, small gadgets.

Arroy's Powers

Banish Light (zone, continuous)

This rune doesn't merely create darkness; it also robs items of

the ability to produce light. Targets subject to the effects of this rune cannot see, and are subject to Blind Fighting rules. This darkness cannot be penetrated by any form of light, and will prevent all sight from the outside through the area of effect. If the CV of Banish Light exceeds that of any Sun Flare runes cast into or from Banish Light's area of effect, it is cancelled. If the CV of a Sun Flare rune exceeds that of the Banish Light rune, the Banish Light rune is dispelled.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Darkness effects as described above

Chill Shield (target, continuous)

Just as easily as Runemages from Arroy's Domain can release uncontrolled, and destructive, bursts of energy, they can also redirect those forces. A chill shield offers protection from harmful cold sources such as those from a Frost Brand spell and from harsh weather conditions. Those under the effect of a chill shield are protected from such mundane effects as frostbite. The Chill Shield rune also protects against the effects of the Frost Brand rune.

If an attack exceeds the value of the rune's protection (say, if a person protected with a Chill Shield 10av4 is hit by a 20ap4 Frost Brand attack), the damage is reduced accordingly, but the remaining duration of the rune is halved. This happens each time the protection value of the rune is surpassed.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Protect target/s against Frost Brand with a value of 10av4
15	Protect target/s against Frost Brand with a value of 15av4
20	Expert Protect target/s against Frost Brand with a value of 20av4
25	Elite Protect target/s against Frost Brand with a value of 25av4

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	Absorption. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Rune will absorb Frost Brand attacks that fail to penetrate the protection value of the rune The absorbed energy can be re-released against 1 target within 5' of the rune. Only one attack can be absorbed and held at a time.
+10	Improved Absorption. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). As with standard absorption, but the rune can hold as many attacks as the Runemage has Practice in Rune Magic.

Drain Electricity (zone, continuous)

This rune suppresses any electricity within the rune's area of effect. Any electrical devices fail to function while in the area of effect; electric generators would cease generating a charge. It also keeps all mundane forms of energy from entering the area of effect. Everything from simple static electricity to natural lightning will dissipate harmlessly in the area of effect. Lightning Strike runes will fail to target into or be cast from the area of effect if they fail to exceed the CV of the Drain Electricity rune. If it surpasses the CV, the Drain Electricity rune is dispelled.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Electrical suppression effects as described above

Electricity Armor (target, continuous)

Electricity Armor offers protection from harmful electrical sources such as from a Lightning Strike rune or from mundane electricity. A character protected could grasp a live power line without fear.

If an attack exceeds the value of the rune's protection (say, if a person protected with Electricity Armor 10av4 is hit by a 20ap4 Lightning Strike attack), the damage is reduced accordingly, but the remaining duration of the rune is halved. This happens each time the protection value of the rune is surpassed.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Protect target/s against Lightning Strike with a value of 10av4
15	Protect target/s against Lightning Strike with a value of 15av4
20	Expert. Protect target/s against Lightning Strike with a value of 20av4
25	Elite. Protect target/s against Lightning Strike with a value of 25av4

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	Absorption. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Rune will absorb Lightning Strike attacks that fail to penetrate the protection value of the rune. Such absorbed energy can be re-released against 1 target within 5' of the rune. Only one attack can be absorbed and held at a time.
+10	Improved Absorption. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). As with standard absorption, but the rune can hold as many attacks as the Runemage has Practice in Rune Magic.

Fire Sign (zone, instantaneous)

With a flash to ruby light, this rune radiates a searing wave of flame at targets. Victims are burned in the onrush of heat, contorting their bodies in agony. The effects of Fire Sign can be avoided or reduced if the target/s immediately spend 3 Speed to Dive for Cover (*q.v.*).

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Attack of 10ap3 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
15	Attack of 15ap4 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
20	Expert. Attack of 20ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
25	Elite. Attack of 25ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
CC	**Secondary Effect**
+1	Increase Damage. Beyond the base damage of the Primary Effect, the Runemage may convert the remaining CV into damage on a one per one basis.
+5	Burning Agony. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Each Lethal Wound inflicted causes the affected target/s to subtract 1 point from all rolls until healed, from the pain of their burns. This compounds with die roll penalties accrued from normal wound loss.
+5	Immolate. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Any flammable objects in the area of effect continue to burn and the flames spread, with a damage value equal to half the Rune's original damage value.

Flame Guard (target, continuous)

A flame guard offers protection from harmful heat sources such as those from a Fire Sign rune and from mundane flame. Someone so protected could brave the interior of a burning building without fear.

If an attack exceeds the value of the rune's protection (say, if a person protected with a Flame Guard 10av4 is hit by a 20ap4 Fire Sign attack), the damage is reduced accordingly, but the remaining duration of the rune is halved. This happens each time the protection value of the rune is surpassed.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Protect target/s against Fire Sign with a value of 10av4
15	Protect target/s against Fire Sign with a value of 15av4
20	Expert. Protect target/s against Fire Sign with a value of 20av4
25	Elite. Protect target/s against Fire Sign with a value of 25av4
CC	***Secondary Effect***
+5	Absorption. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Rune will absorb Fire Sign attacks that fail to penetrate the protection value of the rune. The absorbed energy can be re-released against 1 target within 5' of the rune. Only one attack can be absorbed and held at a time.
+10	Improved Absorption. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). As with standard absorption, but the rune can hold as many attacks as the Runemage has Practice in Rune Magic.

Fly (target, continuous)

The bearer of this rune is made weightless for a time, and under direct mental command can fly through the air. Because of the weightless state granted by the rune, the load-bearing capability of a flying Runemage is limited. The rune grants weightlessness to the Runemage and all her carried possessions, and she may bear with her someone of equal or lower MASS without suffering any loss to her flying speed. Encumbered Runemages, those whose total carried equipment exceeds three times their MASS, fly at half normal speed, as do those bearing a passenger with a MASS that is half again greater than their own. Flying Runemages are grounded if they attempt to bear someone with a MASS twice their own.

Inanimate objects can bear a Fly rune, but will simply hover or drift (depending upon prevailing weather and wind conditions) until a guiding mind comes in contact with the rune. Generally, Charms, Wards, and Talismans will allow an inanimate object to fly that is roughly man-sized or smaller. For larger inanimate objects, Glyphs function much better. Large objects with a Fly Glyph have a greater load-bearing capacity, but the Glyph must be at least half the size of the object in question. A Standard Glyph could make a rug, a door, or something of similar size able to fly, while an Enormous Glyph could make something as large as an airship float unaided in midair.

Because of the weightless nature imparted by this rune, flying Runemages struck with a Knockback combat finesse effect are thrown three times the standard distance.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Flight speed is 20 MPH. In combat, the flying

	Runemage can fly 5 feet for 1 Speed as normal, and can move 40 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the LOS direction of the Runemage.
15	**Flight speed is 40 MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 10 feet for 1 Speed and can move 80 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the direction of the Runemage.**
20	**Expert. Flight Speed is 60 MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 20 feet for 1 Speed and can move 120 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the LOS direction of the Runemage.**
25	**Elite. Flight Speed is 80 MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 40 feet for 1 Speed can move 160 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the direction of the Runemage.**

CC	*Secondary Effect*
Total CC	**When inscribed upon an inanimate object, the total CV of the Fly Rune becomes the total MASS it is capable of bearing before it is too overburdened to maintain lift.**

Frost Brand (zone, instantaneous)

This glittering matrix of sapphire blue energy unleashes a chilling blast of cold, which numbs the body and can even cause held objects to malfunction or weaken in the cold. The effects of Frost Brand can be avoided or reduced if the target/s immediately spend 3 Speed to Dive for Cover (*q.v.*).

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**Attack of 10ap3 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)**
15	**Attack of 15ap4 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)**
20	**Expert Attack of 20ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)**
25	**Elite Attack of 25ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)**

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+1	**Increase Damage. Beyond the base damage of the Primary Effect, the Runemage may convert the remaining CV into damage on a one per one basis.**
+5	**Freeze. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Each LW inflicted causes the affected target/s to lose 1 point of Speed until healed.**
+10	**Hoar Frost. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Any complex devices possessed by those affected are gummed with frost and cease to function until cleaned or repaired.**
+10	**Frigidity. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Any held weapon is weakened by the cold for the duration of combat and may shatter if the target rolls a "1" on any attack or block roll.**

Illusion (zone, continuous)

Through Arroy's dominion over energy, it is a relatively easy matter to shape light into believable illusions. As the Runemage grows in power, these illusions can even take on apparent physical reality. But at all levels, the illusions created will seem wholly real and even bear close scrutiny, until touched that is. The size of the illusion is defined by the size of the rune's Zone, as based on the Form used, and can be something as simple as an illusory object or a complex series of images decided by the Runemage's whim. The size of the rune's Zone and its total duration are the deciding factors on how complex the illusion can be. Any illusion can be made to animate, but if the size of the Zone is small, the range of motion will be limited and runes with a short duration will not be able to support a long series of varied images.

Once the rune is completed, the Runemage decides what she wants the illusion to be and do; she needn't be in constant contact with the rune for it to perform as intended. It is even possible for the illusion to have a semblance of autonomy, reacting to its environs in a manner defined by the Runemage.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**The illusion will be a very simple, static image. It can be seen and produce sound, but has no physical "weight," so if touched it will be instantly recognized for what it is. Seeing through the illusion without touching it first requires an Expert (20) Awareness skill test.**
15	**The illusion can be made to animate in a**

	manner decided by the Runemage. The illusion will seem to have a physical presence, responding predictably when touched or otherwise interacted with. Seeing through the illusion without touching it first requires an Elite (25) Awareness skill test, while physically examining the illusion reduces this to an Advanced (15) Awareness skill test. If someone attempts to remove an illusory object from the rune's Zone, the object will fade, reappearing back to its original position.
20	Expert. As above, but the illusion now has a limited sort of autonomy, and will respond to certain stimuli in a fashion defined by the Runemage. Once she completes the rune, she defines a simple set of parameters and reactions for her illusion. An illusory monster will attack, an illusory person will respond to the presence of others and may speak to them in a manner decided by the Runemage.
25	Elite. As above but the illusion will seem completely real, responding to the real world in a seamless fashion. Illusory attacks may even harm those affected by them, causing loss of Vitality and even apparently "killing" some, though these wounds will fade, being part of the whole illusion, once the rune's duration has ceased. Illusory objects will seem completely real, even when touched. An illusory bridge can support the weight of those standing upon it and so the rune becomes something more than just a tool of trickery, providing the Runemage with a sort of instant, malleable reality that is subject to her whim.

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	Montage Illusion. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Customarily, the Runemage defines the illusion and that is how it remains for the duration. But a montage illusion can be a series of wholly different images that can change from one to the other as directed by the Runemage.

Lightning Strike (zone, instantaneous)

Violet arcs crackle in the air around this dynamic rune of electricity, striking with lightning speed to wrack bodies and shock victims into unconsciousness. The effects of Lightning Strike can be avoided or reduced if the target/s immediately spend 3 Speed to Dive for Cover (*q.v.*).

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Attack of 10ap3 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
15	Attack of 15ap4 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
20	Expert Attack of 20ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
25	Elite Attack of 25ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+1	Increase Damage. Beyond the base damage of the Primary Effect, the Runemage may convert the remaining CV into damage on a one per one basis.
+5	Shock. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Each Lethal Wound inflicted knocks the victim/s unconscious for 1 Combat Round unless healed. An Advanced healing skill test will revive affected target/s.
+10	Arc Bolt. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The rune's effect arcs from the target/s beyond the initial area of effect. Any figure adjacent to the area of effect or affected targets suffers half the Lightning Strike's damage.

Light Screen (target, continuous)

A light screen offers protection from harmful light sources such as those from a Sun Flare spell and from the Sun itself. Those under the effect of a light screen are protected from such mundane effects as sunburn, sunstroke, and even blindness from bright light. But the Light Screen rune also protects against the effects of the Sun Flare spell.

If an attack exceeds the value of the rune's protection (say, if a person protected with a Light Screen 10av4 is hit by a 20ap4 Sun Flare attack), the damage is reduced accordingly, but the remaining duration of the rune is halved. This happens each time the protection value of the rune is surpassed.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Protect target/s against Sun Flare with a value of 10av4

15	Protect target/s against Sun Flare with a value of 15av4
20	Expert Protect target/s against Sun Flare with a value of 20av4
25	Elite Protect target/s against Sun Flare with a value of 25av4

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	Absorption. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Rune will absorb Sun Flare attacks that fail to penetrate the protection value of the rune. Such absorbed energy can be re-released against 1 target within 5' of the rune. Only one attack can be absorbed and held at a time.
+10	Improved Absorption. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). As with standard absorption, but the rune can hold as many attacks as the Runemage has Practice in Rune Magic.

Quench Flame (zone, continuous)

Any open flame or sources of flame will be quenched in the rune's area of effect. Torches, campfires, or out of control forest fires will be extinguished and will not be rekindled while the rune is in effect. Embers will cool and even magma will solidify. Even a distillate-soaked torch would fail to catch light in the rune' area of effect. If the Construction Cost of Quench Flame exceeds that of any Fire Sign runes cast into or from Quench Flame's area of effect, it is cancelled. If the CV of a Fire Sign rune exceeds that of the Quench Flame rune, the Quench Flame rune is dispelled.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Quenching effects as described above

Regulate Temperature (zone, continuous)

This rune prevents cold and the effects of cold sources that come into its area of effect. Inside the area of effect, it raises the temperature to a comfortable degree. This negates the effects of cold weather conditions and keeps anything inside of the area of effect from being brought below room temperature. Ice will quickly melt and even chill winds entering the area of effect will be calmed. Regulate Temperature even has the ability to suppress the effects of Frost Brand runes. If the Frost Brand's CV fails to exceed the CV of Regulate Temperature, it is cancelled. If the CV of a Frost Brand rune exceeds that of the Regulate Temperature rune, the Regulate Temperature rune is dispelled.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Warming effects described above.

Sun Flare (zone, instantaneous)

This rune unleashes a blinding flare of pure white light. So bright in fact that it is capable of blinding and even burning those it touches. The effects of Sun Flare can be avoided or reduced if the target/s immediately spend 3 Speed to Dive for Cover (*q.v.*).

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Attack of 10ap3 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
15	Attack of 15ap4 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
20	Expert Attack of 20ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)
25	Elite Attack of 25ap5 to target/s affected (roll random hit location)

CC	Secondary Effect
+1	Increase Damage. Beyond the base damage of the Primary Effect, the Runemage may convert the remaining CV into damage on a one per one basis.
+5	Glare. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Each LW inflicted causes the affected target/s to be blinded for 1 minute until healed.
+10	Blinding Flare. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Anyone in the immediate area, even those outside of the power's area of effect, who happen to be looking in the direction of the Rune, must make an Expert (20) Awareness skill test to avoid being blinded for 1 Combat Round (or 1 Minute outside of combat).

Teleport (target, instantaneous)

The use of this rune actually requires that the Runemage scribe *two* teleport runes, creating a junction between the two that allows the Runemage to instantaneously travel from one to the other. To function properly, the Runemage makes two separate Rune Magic skill tests, one for each of the Teleport runes. Once completed, the runes will hold their power until used. When created in any Form but a Glyph, only the bearer of the rune and a single person he is in physical contact with can teleport to the location of the other rune. Glyphs, because of their larger size, can teleport as many people or objects as can comfortably fit on the Glyph. In combat, Teleport can be used to quickly move about the battlefield. The Runemage scribes his first Teleport Charm, and then casts out a second to any destination within his LoS, as per normal Charm rules.

There is a danger involved with using the Teleport rune,

though it is an unlikely one. If the destination rune is dispelled or unwoven at the precise moment the Runemage is teleporting to it, the Runemage vanishes, gone. His physical form has been cast into nothingness from which there is no return. This danger has kept the Teleport rune from widespread public use, though the Runemages of Vandalusa have been studying this problem in detail and may someday create safeguards against such an event.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**The two teleport runes must be within direct LoS of each other.**
15	**The distance between the two teleport runes can be a number of feet equal to the Runemage's total Base Value in Rune Magic x10.**
20	**Expert. The maximum distance separating the two Teleport runes can be a number of miles equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.**
25	**Elite. There is no limit on the total distance separating the two Teleport runes.**
CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	**Teleport Network. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The Runemage can scribe more than two Teleport runes, forming a network of teleportation sites. Each additional Teleport Rune added to the network increases the overall Construction Cost by 5. New Teleport Runes can be added to an already existing set of Teleport Runes by increasing the Construction Cost by 5 for each subsequent Teleport Rune.**

DOMAIN OF DRANDLUR

Adventurers all over the world all revere Drandlur, and it is not difficult to understand why. For many, Drandlur is the goddess of mercy, who heals the sick and breathes life into the dying. But Drandlur is also the Matron of the Elements, the Storm Queen, and to the unlucky she is anything but merciful. Drandlur's power courses through all living things and the environment in which they exist. Runemages who devote themselves to the study of this Domain feel connected to that life force.

Drandlur's Talismans: Blood, carven wood items, ceramic objects, Drandlur's holy symbol, electrum, earthenware containers, fertility symbols, seed pods/nuts, staves of oak, walnut, or any hard wood, twig bundles, wind chimes, wreathes of woven greenery, umbrellas (actual or symbolic).

Drandlur's Powers

Accelerated Growth (zone, instantaneous)

Through the use of this Rune, plant life can be made to grow in an instant as through months or even years had passed; seeds will sprout into full bloom; saplings will rise to trees. All plant life in the rune's Zone will spring upward with a surge of growth, and will remain matured thereafter. The plant's growth has been accelerated, and its lifespan slightly shortened accordingly, but in the lifespan of most plants, the affect is negligible. The power of the rune is such, however, that plants made to grow with this rune will be larger and more fruitful than their unaided counterparts. This rune accelerates plant growth through one stage, as determined below.

Seed to Immature Plant: The seed will sprout and grow into to approximately half as large as a typical mature specimen. An apple seed will sprout into a bushy, 5-foot tall apple tree (with inedible, un-ripened apples on the branch).

Immature Plant to Mature Plant: The plant will grow into complete maturity, and in fact be roughly 50% larger than typical plants of the same age. The same apple tree will quickly rise to lush maturity, its branches laden with ripe, red apples.

Mature Plant to Enhanced Size: An already mature plant will have a growth spurt, increasing in size by 20%, or roughly a season's worth of growth.

When this rune affects a larger area, the sudden tangle of rapidly growing plants can snare anyone who happens to be standing in the Zone. Those caught in the Zone can choose to Dive for Cover if they're able, those who cannot must make an Expert athletics skill test. Failing it, the character is trapped, enmeshed in plant life and cannot move. To escape requires an Expert Athletics skill test, substituting Mass for Physique in the roll. For characters that succeed in their initial athletics skill test, they are thrown from the area of effect by the surge of growth, and land prone.

Accelerated Growth has the potential to topple or damage structures as well. Large plant life, like trees, affected by this rune that are adjacent to structures may upset foundations, breach walls, or topple fragile structures like watchtowers or utility poles.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**The rune only affects seeds and immature plants.**
15	**The rune affects all plants normally.**
20	**Expert As above, but seeds and immature plants pass through two stages.**
25	**Elite All affected plants pass through two stages.**

CC	Secondary Effect
+5	Reverse Growth. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the rune actually reverses the growth process, shrinking mature plants and returning immature plants to seeds.

Drandlur's Blessing (zone, continuous)

Many sailors call fair weather Drandlur's Blessing. This rune has the ability to create fair weather, at least for a limited time and in a limited space. Affected target/s, those generally within the rune's Zone, will not be bothered by poor weather effects, even from a hurricane or a blizzard. Within the area of effect, no wind will blow, no rain or snow or sleet will fall, the temperature will be comfortable and natural lightning will arc away from the rune's effect.

This spell is a counter to Drandlur's Rage, and in fact, Drandlur's Rage will have to surpass the CV of Drandlur's Blessing to affect those under the Blessing's effect.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Weather calming effects listed above.

Drandlur's Rage (zone, continuous)

Drandlur's mastery of weather can be used to great effect by Runemages. Through the use of Drandlur's Rage, the Runemage can call into being a small, self-contained storm. All the weather effects of a storm can be directed against target/s in the rune's area of effect. Everything from chilling rain and torrential winds to scythes of lightning can lash the Runemage's enemies or even friends if the Runemage is not careful. The Runemage herself is immune to the effects of their own Drandlur's Rage rune.

Drandlur's Blessing (above) and certain protective magics of Arroy can safeguard targets from some of Drandlur's Rage effects. Target's protected by a Chill Shield do not suffer die roll penalties, while those protected by Electricity Armor are protected from the lightning strikes at their normal value.

Current weather conditions can have an effect on the casting of Drandlur's Rage.

Location	CV mod.
In-doors/underground	–10
Dry climate	–5
Normal weather conditions	—
During an actual storm	+5

CC	Primary Effect
10	A cold rain and wind batters the target/s. Affected target/s are considered stressed and suffer a –4 to all ranged attacks while caught in the storm. Affected targets cannot take their Free Move this Combat Round, or any Combat Round while still under the effect of Drandlur's Rage.
15	The cold rain becomes a chilling downpour and tornado-like winds tear at the target/s. Effects as above, but targets also lost their free 5-foot move and other movement speed costs are doubled. Affected targets also suffer a –2 to all die rolls (this compounds with the –4 to ranged attacks above, making the modifier –6).
20	Expert. As above, but each Combat Round (or 1 minute), on the Runemage's Turn, at her direction, 1 affected target will be struck with lightning, acting as a Lightning Strike rune (see Arroy's Domain above), for 15ap4. Or the Runemage can direct the winds of the Rage to drive the target/s to the ground (prone), unless they succeed with an Advanced athletics skill test (which suffers the above die roll penalties), or throw them (as a combat Throw) as if they possessed a Mass of 20. This 20 Mass must be divided among multiple targets if more than one target is to be thrown (10 mass against 1 target, 10 against another, etc).
25	Elite. As above, but each Combat Round (or 1 minute), on the Runemage's turn, up to 3 affected targets will be struck with lightning, acting as a Lightning Strike rune (see Arroy's Domain above), for 15ap4. These 3 strikes can be divided among three different targets, or multiple strikes against two or less targets Alternatively the Runemage can direct the winds of the Rage to drive the target/s to the ground (Prone), unless they succeed with an Expert athletics skill test (which suffers the above die roll penalties), or throw them (as a combat Finesse Effect Throw) as if they possessed a Mass of 25. This 25 Mass must be divided among multiple targets if more than one target is to be thrown (12 mass against 1 target and 13 against another, etc).

Enfeeble (target, instantaneous)

As Drandlur can grant strength and life, she can suppress it. Drandlur's power does not give her the ability to steal life from something, that is Hrond's Domain, but she can leech power and strength from a target. This rune throbs a dull brown with violent streaks of indigo flame, encapsulating its target and sapping it of energy. This translates as a non-lethal attack against the target/s Vitality. This attack ignores armor, but naturally doesn't affect things that do not have a life force, like constructs, undead, and other unnatural creatures. Beings reduced to zero Vitality are unconscious.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Drains the target/s of 10 Vitality
15	Drains the target/s of 15 Vitality
20	Expert. Drains the target/s of 20 Vitality
25	Elite. Drains the target/s of 25 Vitality
CC	***Secondary Effect***
+5	Emaciate. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Each Vitality lost causes the target/s to effectively lose 1 point of Mass. This affects the amount of Vitality they possess in each Lethal Wound, their Base HTH damage and bonus Melee Damage as well as their encumbrance. In addition, any die roll penalties (at Half and one-quarter max Vitality) incurred from Vitality loss are doubled.

Heal (target, instantaneous)

The most prized power of Drandlur, it is impossible to calculate the number of people who have been saved by its calming blue threads of energy. Heal can mend wounds, reattach severed limbs, alleviate the effects of shock, and restore lost vital fluids. Heal runes will automatically stop any bleeding and will stabilize the body. Heal cannot be used to cure poisons or disease, though it can temporarily slow their progression. Heal spells generally only heal one location at a time, requiring multiple applications to heal more than one area. So a character with Lethal Wounds lost from his chest and arm, would require one healing rune application on his arm and another for his chest. With one application, the total CV of the Heal rune is subtracted from the Potency of any Poisons or Diseases suffered. This specific effect on Poisons and Diseases has a duration depending upon the Form used, as though this were a continuous effect.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	Heals the target/s for 1 Vitality per point of the Runemage's Base Value in Rune Magic, but does not heal LWs.
15	Heals the target/s for 1 Vitality per point of the Runemage's Base Value in Rune Magic, also healing Lethal Wounds.
CC	***Secondary Effect***
+1	Increase the healing effects by 1 Vitality point per point of additional CV.

Life Force (zone, continuous)

Many factors contribute to the perpetuation of life. The Life Force rune is, in a sense, the combination of all those factors into a single source. This pulsating web of emerald light creates around it a zone of life-giving energy. Nothing that lies within its Zone can truly die, sustained by the energies of the rune. For simple life such as that of plants, this rune could allow a lush garden to grow in the middle of a desert without the benefit of water or rich soil. More complex forms of life, people and animals, will continue to live even if they suffer wounds that would kill them. They still suffer the ill effects such grievous wounds would give them, but they fail to fully pass on. As this rune does nothing to heal injury to relieve pain, this can possibly be a mixed blessing. But in instances where adequate healing is unavailable, this rune can grant the time necessary to find such healing.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Life sustaining effects listed above.

Purify (target, instantaneous)

Purify is an important companion to the Healing rune listed above as it treats the effects and causes of poisons and diseases. Though customarily used upon the afflicted, the Purify rune can also be used to cleanse tainted water or food.

CC	*Primary Effect*
Total CC	The total CV of the Purify rune is compared to the potency of the disease or toxin. If the potency is exceeded, the poison or disease is neutralized and the afflicted can begin their recovery. If the CV fails to exceed the potency, the Purify rune fails. Multiple attempts may be necessary.

Rebuke the Unnatural (zone, continuous)

Shadekin are anathema to life and as such are an affront to Drandlur, who has no connection to these unnatural creatures. When Drandlur's energy is invoked in its purest form, Shadekin respond violently and negatively to its presence, shrinking from its radiance and sometimes even being wounded by it. The rune itself is simply the true name of Drandlur, expressed as a single brilliantly

glowing sigil of rainbow hues. Simply seeing the rune, Shadekin will be reluctant to approach it. Those Shadekin that are inside of its Zone will, on their Turn, attempt to move out of the rune's area of effect. As the Runemage grows in power, their Rebuke the Unnatural rune has the capability to harm some Shadekin and cause others to flee in terror or become confused.

CC	Primary Effect
15	**All Shadekin caught in the rune's Zone must spend their turn moving out of the rune's area of effect.**
20	**Expert. As above but all those Shadekin with an INT of 5 or less flee in terror, leaving the Zone on their turn and fleeing the immediate area for the duration of the rune. Those Shadekin with an INT of 6-10 must spend their turn moving out of the rune's area of effect and from then on are Confused for the duration of the rune. Shadekin with an INT of 11+ are unaffected by either of the above conditions.**
25	**Elite. As above but all Shadekin caught in the rune's Zone take damage equal to the CV of the rune (with an AP of 5)**

Strength (target, continuous)

Through the application of this rune, the target is infused with great strength. Power and vitality flow through the body, supplying him or her with not only greater than normal strength, but endurance and overall health as well. This blessing does not come without a price, however, and when the rune's power fades lethargy often follows in its wake.

CC	Primary Effect
15	**The rune grants a +2 bonus to Base HTH Damage, +2 to all Melee Attack rolls and all skill tests involving Physique, grants a +2 bonus Vitality per Chest Lethal Wound. The character's MASS is figured to be 4 points higher for purposes of Encumbrance and such combat effects as grappling. When rune's effect ceases the character is fatigued, suffering a –2 to all skill tests and is considered Stressed until fully rested.**
20	**Expert. The Rune grants a +4 bonus to Base HTH Damage, +2 to all Melee Attack rolls and all skill tests involving Physique, grants a +4 bonus to Vitality per Chest Lethal Wound. The Character's MASS is figured to be 8 points higher for purposes of Encumbrance and such combat effects as grappling. When the rune's effect ceases the character is fatigued, suffering a –2 to all skill tests and is considered Stressed until fully rested.**
25	**Elite. The rune grants a +8 bonus to Base HTH Damage, +8 to all Melee Attack rolls and all skill tests involving Physique, grants a +8 bonus to Vitality per Chest LW. The Character's MASS is figured to be 16 points higher for purposes of Encumbrance and such combat effects as grappling. When the rune's effect ceases the character is fatigued, suffering a –2 to all skill tests and is considered Stressed. until fully rested.**

Wild Mastery (target, continuous)

Through this rune, the Runemage is granted dominion over the lower life forms of the planet. Drandlur's influence encompasses the Runemage and animals will respond positively to the character's presence. They will follow the direction of the Runemage, responding to the character's thoughts, attacking the Runemage's foes or giving the Runemage aid. The recipient Runemage communicates with them telepathically. Though their thoughts are primal and primitive, the Runemage will be able to pose simple questions to them, to which they will answer truthfully, albeit with a limited vocabulary. This rune has no power over unnatural creatures such as Shadekin, who in fact may act more aggressively toward those who bear this rune. If the Runemage violates the unspoken pact with their animal friends, attacking them or otherwise causing them any harm, the rune will quickly fade.

This power extends to all animals within the Runemage's LoS.

CC	Primary Effect
15	**Animal communication and command abilities as listed above.**

Wrack (zone, continuous)

Throbbing with a violet and black radiance that is painful to even gaze upon, this rune causes unbearable pain to flow like liquid fire through the bodies of all who come under its effect.

All those who are within the rune's Zone must make an Expert Athletics or Meditation skill test to resist the effects. They may do so on their turn so long as they remain in the area of effect. Those with the Resist Pain Battle Art gain a +4 bonus to these

skill tests.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Affected targets suffer a –4 to all skill tests and combat rolls and lose 4 points of Speed due to painful muscle spasms.
20	Expert. Affected targets suffer as above in addition they lose their free move and can only move a maximum of 5 feet per count.
25	Elite. Affected targets are Paralyzed with pain and cannot act for the rune's duration.

DOMAIN OF HROND

The domain of the Death Lord calls few adherents to its mysteries. The runes of the God of Secrets are, by their nature, reluctant to reveal themselves. Some Runemages believe that only the souls of the dead are given the freedom to study Hrond's tomes and so in an effort to learn his secrets, these will drive themselves to the brink of death in hopes of some kind of revelation. Unfortunately true death is more often the reward than the recovery of a forbidden rune. But some do succeed and this encouraged the remaining Hrondim. In appearance, his runes are of the deepest sable, occasionally wrought with motes of sapphire and violet, that seem to fade as one stares directly at them, only to gain clarity just as they pass from view.

Hrond's Talismans: Animal horn, bells, black stones (obsidian, onyx, jet), bones, cultural symbols of death (differs depending upon culture), keys, locked coffers or small boxes, masks, mortician tools, rods of black iron, urns and other receptacles of the dead.

Hrond's Powers

Call Spirit (target, continuous)

This rune calls to it the spirits of the dead, those who wander aimlessly through the twilight spaces. It also attracts the attention of any undead who happen to be wandering the lands of the living as well. Creatures drawn to the area will remain until the rune ceases; though what they do there is dependant upon their own disposition. Most restless spirits, those who commonly haunt desolate locations with harmless poltergeist activity may continue to do so in the area they are drawn to, perhaps even more so as the rune may end up calling more than one such spirit. Malevolent undead drawn to the site will naturally prove dangerous to any living being who happens to be in the area.

After 5 minutes, unseen and (mostly) harmless spirits will be drawn to the area. After 10 minutes they may make their presence known through classic symptoms of haunting. Undead who currently inhabit the physical plane of the living will arrive at the discretion of the HoF, based solely upon the setting of the current adventure and the possible presence of (generally rare) undead.

All undead and spirits, regardless of strength or intelligence will be irresistibly drawn to the location of the Call Spirit rune, but those Undead with an INT greater than 5 may choose to leave the location once they arrive and discern what exactly compelled them to come. In the case of two or more competing Call Spirit runes, the one with the highest overall CV will take precedence.

If one knows the identity of a wandering spirit, and possesses an item related to that person, he can call that spirit to him unerringly.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Spirit summoning effects as listed above

Censure Spirit (target, instantaneous)

Through the use of this rune, the Runemage can actually harm or cause pain to spiritual entities or undead creatures. Many Shadowmages have been shocked to find this rune an effective weapon against them as it targets their Animus and is even more effective against Shadowmages adopting the Mantle of Darkness or Superior Form. It can quickly tear through the material manifestations of Shadow Magic as well. The following spells can be potentially dispelled by the Censure Spirit rune: Geas the Other, Night Talons, Phantasmal Doppelganger, Phantom Wings, Resilient Shell, Shadow Shield, Shadow Steed, and Unwanted Guest. The Rune's total CV is applied against the rolled value of the above-mentioned Shadow Magic spells. This has the potential to reduce the effectiveness or dispel the Shadow Magic outright.

CC	Primary Effect
10	Spirits and Undead creatures feel pain and must spend their next turn moving away from the area.
15	Spirits with and Shadow of 5 or less are temporarily fragmented and cannot reform for 1 day per point of Rune Magic Aptitude. Material Undead with a Shadow of 5 or less suffer 15 points of Vitality. Spirits and Undead with a Shadow 6 or greater area rendered inactive for 1 Combat Round. Shadowmages lose 5 points of Animus
20	Expert. Spirits and Undead with a Shadow of 5 or less are utterly destroyed or otherwise dispelled. Spirits with a Shadow of 6 or greater are dispelled for 1 hour per point of Rune Magic Aptitude. Material Undead with a Shadow of 6 or greater suffer 30 Vitality. Shadowmages lose 10 points of Animus.

25	**Elite. All types of Undead, material and spiritual, are destroyed. Shadowmages lose 15 points of Animus.**

Commune (target, continuous)

Hrond's dominion over spirits extends to the recipient of this rune, granting them the power to understand and communicate with the spirits of the dead. For the duration of the rune, the Runemage can hear and speak to any spirits who happen to be in the area. This communication takes place telepathically. Though this does not give the Runemage any kind of control over the spirits, they may be more amenable to someone who can actually hear and speak with them. Keep in mind however, that unless the Runemage knows who he is talking to, and exactly what he wants to say to the lost soul, most wayward spirits are essentially insane, and may be nonsensical or petulant. The communing Runemage may have to enter into strange bargains or perform some inane task for the spirit to truly open up.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Communication with spirits and undead as described above.**

Dark Majesty (target, continuous)

Those endowed with this rune radiate the power of the Deathgod, which shines like a dark beacon through the spirit realm. Spirits and Undead faced with the bearer of this darkly radiant rune will obey his commands. The first power of the rune is that undead and spirits that fall under its sway will not attack the bearer. To mortals, the bearer of this rune appears dark and sinister, radiating a terrible power. All successful Intimidation skill tests are considered **Superior Successes**.

One of the most important powers of the Dark Majesty rune is its ability to compel restless spirits to depart and continue the journey of the dead into the afterlife, to return to the cycle of death and rebirth that all life must follow, that as undead they have abandoned.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**All spirits and Undead in the Runemage's LoS, who possess a Shadow of 5 or less follow the commands of the Runemage unwaveringly. Those spirits and Undead with a Shadow of 6 or greater are immune.**
20	**Expert. All spirits and Undead in the Runemage's LoS who possess a Shadow of 5 or less can be commanded to "move on," to end their unlives and continue on the path of the dead into the afterlife. Those spirits and undead with a Shadow of 6-10 will follow the commands of Runemage unwaveringly.**
25	**Elite. All spirits and undead with a shadow of 10 or less can be commanded to "move on," to end their unlives and continue on the path of the dead into the afterlife. Those undead and spirits with a Shadow greater than 10 are immune to the effect and will make all attempts to flee the Rune bearer.**

Inhabit (target, continuous)

Seldom is this rune placed upon a living body, for to do so would permit a disembodied spirit to inhabit and gain limited control over that body. But Runemages wishing to channel spirits and allow themselves to act as mediums for their communication will use this rune. Other Runemages, knowing the nature of the spirits particular to their area will let those spirits inhabit their bodies for ritual purposes, dancing wildly at the urging of an inhabiting spirit. Inanimate objects can be made to house spirits, who can animate said objects within the limits of the object's mobility. Tales exist of a house where a mad puppet maker crafted life-size marionettes that would come to life and attack trespassers, inhabited as they were by the spirits of the puppet-maker's murdered family.

For the duration of the Rune, any spirits in the immediate area may take residence in the object or person bearing the Inhabit rune. The possessing spirit may take full advantage of any faculties the object or person provides, as limited as they may be. A table inhabited by a spirit may jump and shudder, but couldn't move, but a wheeled cart could drive on its own (spirit-directed) volition. A dead body could be made to move and even speak if inhabited by a spirit. A spirit inhabiting a radio could communicate through the radio's sound system, though most wandering spirits tend to do nothing but jabber inanely.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**The inhabit rune can be put upon inanimate objects that any convenient spirit may inhabit and possibly animate up to the limits of the item inhabited.**
20	**Expert. The inhabit rune can be put upon organic objects, such as people, living or dead. If placed upon living persons, they can successfully resist the inhabiting spirit if their Shadow exceeds that of the possessing spirit.**

Muddle (target, instantaneous)

Part of Hrond's aspect is that of the God of Secrets, of keeping things secret. He is a master of muddling the minds and memories of people to preserve those secrets. The rune targets an individual

and strikes from his mind a memory or body of memories of the Runemage's choosing. Memories so stricken are lost forever unless recovered through the use of Talsean restorative runes. The Hrondim Runemage using this power can choose to excise a particular memory or simply remove a period of time from the target's memory. If the Runemage is looking to remove a particular memory, it must be one he is familiar with. Either he was a participant in that memory, or had it described to him in detail. Often the simpler course is to simply block out chunks of time from the target's memory. Those blocks of time start from the moment the Muddle rune is applied, stretching back from that point for hours or even days, depending upon the power of the Runemage.

Targets who have a combined INT and Knowledge Aptitude of 6 or less will have those memories permanently lost. But in those with a combined INT and Knowledge Aptitude of 7 or greater, some lingering thread of the lost memories will always remain and cannot be fully erased. These threads will linger in the back of their thoughts and pop up occasionally in dreams, but unless they find a way to restore these lost memories, the nagging threads will continue to bother them.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**The Runemage can erase a single, trivial memory from the target: another person's name, minor descriptive details, the time of an appointment, etc. If he chooses to excise a period of time from the target, he can remove the previous hour from the target's memory.**
15	**The Runemage can erase a single, non-critical memory from the target. This could be something as simple as a recent meeting with a contact or the location of an enemy's hideout. If the Runemage chooses to simply remove a chunk of time from the target's memory, he can carve out 1 hour per point of his Rune Magic aptitude.**
20	**Expert The Runemage can erase a single major memory from the target. He must be familiar with the particulars of this memory, either he was a witness/participant, or had the memory described to him. This could be something as major as a friend or enemy's identity or home, or the particulars of a recent adventure. Alternatively, the Runemage could erase 1 day worth per point of his Rune Magic aptitude.**
25	**Elite. The Runemage can erase a major chain of memories from the target, including his own identity, causing a generalized amnesia. Or the Runemage can carve 1 week per point of his Rune Magic aptitude of memories from the target.**

Restore Spirit (target, continuous)

There are times when victims have had their shadow, or spirit, torn from them. This always causes a steady decline that leads to their inevitable, true, death. If the Runemage has the spirit of the victim on hand, having recovered it somehow, he can use this rune to reconnect the spirit to the body it once housed. Though this would seem to be the proper use of this rune, it is not necessary for the spirit to return to its own body, any body will do. If the body is capable of sustaining life (if it has been painstakingly preserved, healed, and has no putrescence whatsoever) any suitable spirit can be returned to it. It should be noted, however, that unless the spirit is of one recently dead, the mental states of the long dead can be categorized as highly unstable (all have the Permanent Insanity Handicap). A fractured personality given a new lease on physical existence can lead to all sorts of unpleasantness. In the majority of cases, however, the return of a spirit to a physical body is temporary, and once the rune fades the spirit will pass on once more.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**The restoration will be complete so long as the spirit is returning to the body it possessed in life. The body must be completely preserved for the restoration to work. Foreign spirits cannot inhabit the body.**
20	**Expert. Any spirit can be restored to a suitablyfresh body. But the effect is only temporary. A more permanent solution will need to be found if the spirit intends to live on in its new body.**
25	**Elite. If the spirit is reunited with its original body, the connection is permanent and the subject has a new lease on life. If the spirit is foreign to the host body, the connection is only temporary.**

Spirit Armor (target, instantaneous)

Spirits and the Undead have many ways to harass the wayward adventurer. Spirits, powerful ones, can possess or even drain the shadow of their enemies as can some Undead. This shimmering, milky-white rune wards off their attacks, and can even cause them some pain. Spirit Armor has also proved a powerful protection

from Shadow Magic. The total CV of the rune will act as a direct counter to all Shadow Magic spells targeting the rune bearer, save those Shadow Magic spells that drain points of Shadow. These are treated as standard Shadow draining attacks common to Spirits and Undead.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**Provides a 10-point protection from damage to the bearer's Shadow. Attacks that drain points of Shadow deduct their damage from the 10 points first, but once that value is reduced to zero, so is its protection.**
15	**Provides a 15-point protection from damage to the bearer's Shadow. Attacks that drain points of Shadow deduct their damage from the 15 points first, but once that value is reduced to zero, so is its protection. Unless its value is reduced to 10 points or below, the Spirit Armor will provide total protection from any attempts of possession.**
20	**Expert. As above, but protection is 20 points. Additionally, spirits and undead who possess a Shadow of 5 or lower, feel pain in the rune's proximity and will retreat on their Turn.**
25	**Elite. As above, but protection is 25 points. All spirits and undead who possess a Shadow of 10 or lower, feel pain in the rune's proximity and will retreat on their Turn.**

Spirit Trap (zone, continuous)

It often falls to the duty of Runemages to rid places of spiritual infestation. One of the best ways to capture wayward spirits is through a Spirit Trap. But in addition to creating a zone that bodiless spirits cannot escape, an activated Spirit Trap can provide a barrier that repels pestering ghosts. Very powerful Spirit Traps can even snare a Shadowmage when she's in a shadow form. The Spirit Trap has no effect on corporeal beings, however, and has no effect on the Undead.

Trapped spirits will remain trapped until the duration of the rune ceases; until that time it can do nothing, cannot leave, and cannot use any powers it might possess beyond the limits of the rune. Likewise, someone seeking refuge inside a Spirit Trap cannot be possessed or attacked through the barrier. Any number of spirits can be contained in the Spirit Trap, depending upon the power level of Spirit being affected. Spirits (or Shadowmages likewise) who possess a Shadow greater than the power of the Spirit Trap are not affected. If their Shadow is twice as high as the power of the Spirit Trap they may destroy the Spirit Trap.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**The spirit trap will repel or contain any spirit/s who possess a Shadow of 5 or less.**
20	**Expert The spirit trap will repel or contain any spirit/s who possess a Shadow of 10 or less.**
25	**Elite The spirit trap will repel or contain any spirit/s who possess a Shadow of 15 or less.**
CC	*Secondary Effect*
+10	**Draw In/Drive Away. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The Spirit Trap can be made to either forcefully push Spirits away from the rune's area of effect, or if it is designed to trap Spirits, suck them into their prison. The repel/draw-in distance is half again the Zone of the trap itself. If the Spirit's Shadow is higher than that of the Spirit Trap, it is not affected by this. Affected Spirits can attempt to fight against this effect. Making a Shadow + 1d10 roll vs. the CV of the rune. Failure means it succumbs to the effect, success means it has either pressed its way to the Runemage, or has escaped the rune's pull.**

Spirit Walk (target, continuous)

The power and mystery of the Spirit realm is something few people trifle with. Fewer still would even voluntarily wander its warped landscape. This rune, however, grants its bearer the power to step over to the other side. Whatever bears this rune fades from sight until nothing but a vague, gray haze stands in its place. The rune bearer now exists within the Spirit Plane. Though entering the realm of the wandering dead has its risks, passing through it does grant the Runemage a distinct advantage. Though he cannot interact with the physical world, it cannot interact with him, and he may freely move through physical objects as though they were not there.

Though the bearer of this rune is immune to those runes that normally target bodiless entities, Spirit Trap will still affect those who are Spirit Walking. They can be blocked or trapped as a normal spirits can. Of course they can cancel the rune's effect and leave the Spirit Trap as living creatures without ill effect. Another unfortunate side effect of this rune is the vulnerability is bestows against attacks from Shadowmages. While under the effect of a Spirit Walk rune, any protections the Runemage might have had against attacks to his Shadow are effectively void to attacks made on the material plane. Furthermore, the Shadowmage is granted a +2 bonus to any Shadow Magic roll targeting the Runemage.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Spirit Walking effect as described above
20	Expert. The Runemage bearing this rune can take others with him on his Spirit Walk. Up to two other people can accompany the Runemage, so long as they never lose contact with the Runemage. The moment they let go, they revert back to the physical world, standing at the corresponding position from which they departed the spirit plane.

Unseen (target, continuous)

To not be seen is the essence of secrecy, and so it is no surprise that among Hrond's gifts is the ability to do just that. That which bears the rune of the Unseen will be rendered invisible. People, animals and inanimate objects can be made invisible. Unseen enemies make attacks as though by surprise (see *Ambushes and Surprise Attacks*) and gain a +5 bonus to any Melee Defense rolls and a +10 to any Dodges to ranged attacks.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Invisibility to the visual senses.
20	Expert. Invisibility to sight and sound. Bearers of the Unseen rune make no sound when they move, not even if they wear a robe of bells.
25	Elite. Complete invisibility. Not even those who sense by the soul of their prey can sense the presence of the Unseen. Additionally, those bearing this rune leave no tracks of their passing.

DOMAIN OF LYISS

Few have the courage or the temerity to play with the workings of Fate; they are the *Chances* and the events that hold the world together. But those who treat her domain with respect see it for the great gift it is. Through her domain come the powers of prophesy as it has for many millennia, where the Lyissan Runemages have been called to testify about the future. Even in this modern era many call upon the foresight of those who have mastered this domain. But the future is hardly a solid fact. It is merely a multitude of possibilities, and while most heed the most probable outcome, there are those who attempt to actually force another. Attempting to divert the course of Fate is , and not one that would go long unchallenged once it had been detected by the workings of reality (often via unknowing Chosen adventurers) itself.

Lyiss' Talismans: Chains (often as necklaces), crystal or glass beads, clocks, knot and string puzzles, metal hoops, mobiles, pendulums, Runemage Styli, rings, spherical crystals, spindles, tops, wheels (actual wheels, or symbolic wheel-shaped objects).

Lyiss' Powers

Call the Chosen (target, continuous)

Adventurers, those for whom Fate has special interest, and who often witness and participant in great and terrible things, have a certain *weight* to them. Unseen are the powerful binds of Fate, but they can be felt, sensed. And they have a gravity all their own. This rune of Lyiss provides an attractor of such forces. This rune can be used to target a person or a place, which becomes the focal point for the chance arrival of one of Fate's Chosen. Minor events will conspire to bring one of the Chosen to the location of the Rune, though what they do there and what the Runemage who scribed the Rune intends varies of course. When the Chosen arrives, the Runemage will instinctively know that this is the one who was called. For those called, they may notice the odd series of occurrences that brings them to the desired place or person, often extending to months or years before the rune was cast!. Runemages so affected, who are familiar with Lyiss' domain may even know precisely what is taking place, that their arrival is no accident.

Who arrives is based purely on how long the rune stays in effect and how close the nearest Chosen is to the rune's location. A rune that only has a duration of a minute (casting Call the Chosen as a charm, for example) would have little chance of ensnaring anyone, unless such a person were in the immediate location. As a general rule, the rune will bring the nearest Chosen to the location if she can make it there within the duration of the rune. The HoF can decide, then, that there may be no such Chosen who could arrive at the location in time. As the Runemage grows in power, however, he may fine-tune this rune' effect so that it can call someone of a certain persuasion, "call Zhalanti" or "call Runemages." At this rune's peak, it can be used to call a specific person, any person, provided it is someone the Runemage has encountered. In cases where this rune targets a specific group or person, the range of the Rune's effect is nigh limitless. Once the rune is crafted, minor events will conspire to bring the Chosen to the rune's location. If they do not make it there within the duration of the rune, then their journey will be incomplete, potentially stranding them somewhere between where they started and where the calling rune is located.

This rune, and others that have a bearing on those considered "Chosen," should receive careful consideration by the HoF and the player scribing the rune. Crafting one of these runes becomes essentially a new plot device for the current adventure. Using such runes calls into the story a new character and so the HoF should be ready to implement this new wrinkle. It is a good way to introduce newly joining PCs or NPCs who may be important to the current adventure. Alternatively, this rune could be used to draw PCs into an adventure, the Call the Chosen rune being cast by an NPC Runemage.

CC	Primary Effect
15	The rune calls upon the Chosen, who are brought to the rune through miraculous coincidence and seemingly random events.
20	Expert. This rune can be tuned to call upon a particular group or persuasion (see above).
25	Elite. The power of the Runemage has allowed him to tune this rune to a specific person, who will begin their journey to the Rune's location even if he is thousands of miles away. Though if he is too far away, he may never make it to the rune's location.

Charmed Life (target, instantaneous)

Within the workings of Fate there lay the fuzzy gray areas called Chance. They are the little variables that creep into the plan, potentially diverting the course of the Chosen. Fate has little control over the weather or the actions of animals and beasts, things which could potentially alter the course of the Chosen as set by Fate. The little mistakes that can happen along the way are also part of Chance. This rune can buffer its recipient from the caprices of Chance, giving apparently supernatural luck.

While under the effect of this rune, the recipient basically doesn't make any stupid mistakes. He may fail at something, but it will merely be because it is beyond his current ability. Someone picking a lock wouldn't make a mistake and break his pick, nor someone trip while sprinting away from his enemies.

CC	Primary Effect
15	When cast, the rune counteracts the next "Instant Failure" when rolling a "1" on any skill test. This only applies to skill tests the character would have still succeeded in despite the Instant Failure rule. A character facing a Finesse Difficulty skill test of Advanced (15) who already possessed a Base Value of 14 or higher would normally succeed even if they rolled a "1."

Chronology (target, instantaneous)

Fate and time are closely intertwined. From the present spring forward myriad possibilities, some more probable than others, some leading to doom, some to future prosperity, but the past is fixed. The true future can only be guessed at, but the past gives up its secrets more easily. This rune grants the Runemage the ability to see into the past history of a person, an object, or a location. This rune only gives important glimpses into the target's past, moments that were important to their development or that left a lasting impact upon the world. Used upon a sword it wouldn't show the time of its creation, but might show it in the hands of a warrior who uses it to turn the tide of an important battle. The visions come without context and may often be confusing, but for many scholarly Runemages, they have proven an invaluable aid in discovering important facts about the Endwar and other epic events.

This rune will reveal the last major event that has involved the target of this rune. Normally this must be an event that has occurred in the last few weeks and it will only show the moments leading up to, including, and immediately following the event. Repeated uses, however, can reveal new events. These events, if any, will reveal themselves in chronological order, moving back from the most recent events. One finds though, that few major events occur within an average week.

The Chronology rune gains greater use, though, as a Glyph, where the ability to draw greater amounts of the Ylar can propel the Runemage's sight back decades, even centuries. It is through such Glyphs that explorers have been able to uncover hidden histories from the ruins that can be found throughout Zir'An. As a Glyph, a person or an object must be in contact with the rune for their history to be read, but Glyphs are best used to view the past history of a location. By standing upon the Glyph, the Runemage watches the tapestry of past events play about them, the larger the Glyph, the further back they may go.

CC	Primary Effect
15	The Runemage gets a brief glimpse of a recent, important event, related to the person, object, or locale. The image is short and concerns only the immediate moments preceding and following the event. The event had to have happened within a number of weeks equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.
CC	**Secondary Effect**
+5	(+1 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the Runemage can view any event that has occurred within a number of years equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.
+10	(+2 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the event may have passed within a number of decades equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.
+15	(+3 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the event may have passed within a number of centuries equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.

+20	**(+4 to Mental Fatigue). The peak of this rune's ability, the Runemage can view any events that may have occurred within a number of centuries equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Base Value.**

Condemn (target, continuous)

Just as Lyiss's runes can be turned to aid their possessors to tweak chance and fate in their favor, so can her runes curse those to become victims of a merciless fate. Those who have been condemned by fate will find their path dogged by all manner of ill fortune.

Those under the effect of this rune are considered *Stressed* in all situations and cannot achieve a Superior Success in any skill tests. Afflicted individuals are also prohibited from making unskilled Skill Tests, as any they attempt will automatically fail. If cast upon someone bearing a Charmed Life rune, that rune's powers will be rendered inactive for the duration of the Condemn rune, but will not suffer from the effects of the Condemn rune itself. Charmed Life has no effect upon someone who is afflicted with a Condemn rune.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Skill dampening effects as listed above.**

Far Sight (target/zone, continuous)

The world and everything in it is bound together by the bonds of Fate. Nothing escapes her notice it is said and through this rune, a Runemage can be granted this all-encompassing sight. By allowing their senses to follow the invisible bonds of Fate's web, they can see over vast distances, traveling thousands of miles in mere seconds.

Initially, the rune's power is limited to a place or person well known by the Runemage. At the successful completion of this spell, the Runemage will be able to perceive the desired individual or locale and for the duration of the rune either follow that individual or invisibly roam the location that is familiar to them. She will see things as they are happening at the time the Runemage creates this rune, but gain no supernatural enhancement to her senses. If the area she is viewing is plunged in the darkness of night, then she will be able to see very little. But while the Runemage's sight may be limited by light conditions, her other senses are not. A Runemage cannot merely hear the area they perceive, they can also smell and get impressions of the temperature.

An alternate version of the Far Sight rune replaces the Target Attribute with Zone. This alteration allows the Runemage to extend her senses anywhere within the rune's area of effect, centered on the rune itself. A Far Sight charm then could be directed to any position within the Runemage's LoS, as normal, and permit her to sense the distant location targeted by her charm. This also allows the Runemage to perceive through physical barriers, provided the rune's zone extends past the barrier. The advantages to this alternate version of the rune are obvious. The character will never suffer surprise attacks or ambushes and all Awareness skill tests, if successful, are treated as a Superior Success.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Far Sight abilities as listed above.**
CC	***Secondary Effect***
+10	**Seer. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The Runemage, when crafting this rune with the Target attribute, can perceive a person or place they are not familiar with, provided they have an article related to the person or place in question.**

Prescience (target, instantaneous)

Just as Lyiss' Domain can grant Runemages the power to view moments from the past, so too can it provide glimpses into one of many possible futures. As with Chronology (*q.v.*), the Runemage targets a specific person, object, or locale, and peers into one of its possible futures. Unlike the past, which is fixed, the future contains so many possible outcomes that perceiving it can be very confusing, and no Runemage undertaking such a task should assume that what she is seeing will necessarily come to be. In fact, many argue that simply glimpsing the future will already alter what is shown, for none who see the future can resist being changed by it. With so many possible future outcomes, this rune will present the most probable outcome, the outcome that would most likely occur if the Runemage had remained ignorant of it. The further the Runemage glimpses into the future, the more variables enter into the equation, so what she sees may make no sense whatsoever. Because of this, the Prescience rune is most useful if the Runemage keeps her predictions to within a few weeks from the present. The Runemage could use this rune to see the destination of a particular individual, by seeing that future time when she arrives at her destination. She could see an ambush that is coming or the figure stealthily creeping into her home with plans to steal a valued object. Just so, simply seeing the future alters it, turning what she has just seen into an improbability. Repeated uses of this rune on the same subject shifts the Runemage's sight into increasingly improbable futures, so unlike the Chronology rune, continual use of Prescience will render its visions next to worthless.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**The Runemage gets a brief glimpse of the most probable future events related to the person, object, or locale. The image is short**

	and summarizes the major events that *may* occur over the coming weeks equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	**(+1 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the Runemage can view the most probable future a number of months equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude.**
+10	**(+2 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the Runemage may peer into the future a number of years equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude. At this point, what they Runemage sees has a lesser probability of occurring.**
+15	**(+3 to Mental Fatigue). As above, but the Runemage may peer into the future a number of decades equal to the Runemage's Rune Magic Aptitude. Now the future that they perceive will be nearly random, and have little bearing on the present.**

Second Chance (target, instantaneous)

Fate has little control over the random little quirks that are Chance. But her power is great and through it, Chance can be tweaked minutely in the character's favor. Just as failure seems ready to rob characters of their glory, this rune can give Chance a little *tug,* possibly shifting the outcome into a positive one.

When the rune is crafted, its power abides until the bearer fails a skill test. In the fraction of a second that failure seems inevitable, the power of this rune essentially gives its bearer a second chance for success. In game terms it translates just as it sounds. When a character fails a skill test, they may instantly make a *re*test. If they fail in this second chance, then they fail, even if the character is utilizing this rune in a Form that permits multiple uses. If used in conjunction with a Charmed Life rune, the Charmed Life rune takes precedence. So, for example, a character bearing both a Charmed Life rune and a Second Chance rune, rolls a "1," resulting in a score lower than the target difficulty, the Second Chance rune would allow them a retest. Any skill test is subject to a Second Chance, even attack and block/dodge rolls.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Second Chance ability as listed above.**

The Wayfarer Rune (target, continuous)

The power of Lyiss to tweak chance is well known. Such runes as Charmed Life, Condemn, and Second Chance are examples of this, but possibly the most well known rune is the Wayfarer Rune, for it has featured in stories and myths and has become the symbol of safe passage throughout the lands. The Wayfarer Rune protects its bearer from random mishaps that may occur during a journey, so long as the rune lasts. Indirect, random events will fail to arise while this rune is in effect. It would keep the bearer from getting mugged (the muggers are conveniently somewhere else at the time), but it would not protect them from an assassin hired to kill them. The rune would protect its bearer from chance encounters with dangerous animals when traveling through the wilds, and it even extends to whatever conveyance they are currently using. Wagon wheels would fail to break, mounts would not accidentally injure themselves on uneven terrain. It has become customary in many lands to have a Wayfarer glyph inscribed upon vehicles such as airships and trains for this reason. Again, however, because this rune does not protect the bearer from direct threats, a wagon wheel that is bound to break because of poor maintenance or a mount that is ill may still succumb.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Wayfarer Rune effects as listed above.**

DOMAIN OF PARAN

When the Ianer first discovered the Seven, the cults of Paran were some of the fastest growing, her runes the ones that were swiftly put to use. For she is the goddess of war and strife, and those who wield her runes become warriors, mighty and terrible. Blade edges glow with her magics and her Inspiration emboldens the weak and frightened to destroy their enemies. To the present day, Paran's Domain still enchants the weaponry of adventurers and soldiers, particularly in Illestan, where Warpriests perform the enchantments on the eve of every operation. But more than simply empowering weaponry, her runes can alter the emotional states of others, or even cause complex machinery to fail or even come apart.

Paran's Talismans: Any weapon, a heart (freshly extracted or mummified), heart symbols, Paran's holy symbol.

Paran's Powers

Biting Edge (target, continuous)

One of Paran's weaponry runes, the target of this rune *must* be a melee weapon, as all melee weapons are the symbolic children of the War Bride. Weapons bearing a Biting Edge (even if they are blunt force weapon) cleave through armor and injure their victims with a force only the goddess of war can provide. For the duration of the rune, the weapon targeted will have its base damage and ap value increased by the listed amount. With this rune it is possible for the weapon's ap value to rise above 5.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Increase base weapon damage by 2. Increase weapon ap value by 1.**
20	**Expert. Increase base weapon damage by 4. Increase weapon ap value by 2.**

25	Elite. Increase base weapon damage by 8. Increase weapon ap value by 3.

Blood Rage (target, continuous)

This rune of exploding red light and black arcs of electricity causes the intended target to fly into a murderous rage. Paran's influence has awakened the killer that lies deep (or not so deeply sometimes) within the hearts of all sentient beings. Those who fall under the rune's effect must make an Elite (25) Meditation skill test, or they will attack the nearest target on their next available action. They will continue attacking until the target stops moving (either because of unconsciousness or death), and then they will seek the next nearest target. At the start of every Combat Round, the victim can make an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. With each success, the CV of the Blood Rage rune is reduced by 5. Once the CV has dropped below 10, the effects of the rune cease.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Enraging effects as listed above. The total CV becomes a value that can be reduced by 5 each time the target makes an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. Once it falls below 10, the rune is canceled.

Chaos (zone, instantaneous)

Within Chaos, nothing can function in an orderly fashion. Complex systems are prone to failure and the Chaos rune takes advantage of this fact. Within the rune's area of effect engines will grind to a halt, firearms will jam, the more intricate the design the more spectacularly it will fail. In an orderly, highly technological society, the Chaos rune is anathema. More than one radical extremist has sabotaged his Edyssian enemy with a precisely placed Chaos rune. Fortunately runic systems are immune to its effects, but mechanical devices, from clocks to trains, even comparatively simple mechanisms like locks are subject to failure. In a way, this rune is tied to Lyiss' Domain — there is always a *chance* that a complex system will fail: Chaos makes it an actuality.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Any mechanical device caught in the rune's Zone will temporarily cease functioning. An Advanced (15) Mechanics skill test is required to get it working again. A mechanical device is defined as any machined instrument with moving parts.
20	Expert. Not only does this rune cause mechanical devices to fail, it causes them to literally come apart. A gun will crumble into its component pieces, an engine will quake and smoke, throwing gears and grinding its pistons.
25	Elite. The power of this rune to cause the failure of structures now extends past mechanical devices and to any constructed object. A brick wall would crumble, a bridge would shudder and fall as its supports came loose, a door would simply fall off its hinges.

Discordance (zone, continuous)

Paran's rule over Chaos is in direct opposition to that of her lawful brother, Talse. Her power can extend outward in an attempt to counteract the ordered influence of Talse's Domain. When this rune is created, it creates a zone that has the ability to dispel the power of any Talsean rune that enters it, or is cast from it.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	Anti-Talsean rune effects listed above. The total CV of this rune becomes the factor any Talsean rune must exceed in order to successfully penetrate or be cast from the Discordance rune's zone If the CV of the Discordance rune is exceeded by any Talsean rune, it is dispelled.

Entropic Blast (target, instantaneous)

At Paran's core is her dominion over Chaos, and through Chaos there is Entropy, the dissolution of matter and energy. This rune of blinding, metallic rainbow hues bathes its target in the forces of entropy. Inorganic substances crack, crumble, and are rapidly worn away, but against living tissue the effects are far more dramatic. Those unfortunate to be targeted by this rune find their bodies withering away, their life force draining back to the Ylar as their flesh desiccates.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	5ap5 damage to the target.
15	7ap5 damage to the target.
20	Expert. 10ap5 damage to the target.
25	Elite. 30ap5 damage to the target.

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+10	Atrophy. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Against a living target, the Entropic Blast greatly weakens them. In addition to the damage inflicted, the target loses 1 point of Mass and Physique for every Lethal Wound lost from the damage inflicted. Those whose Mass or

	Physique is reduced to 0 are incapacitated and affected by the Unconscious Handicap. The stat loss lasts 1 hour for every point of Rune Magic Aptitude. An Elite (25) Healing skill test will return lost stat points.
+15	**Dilapidate. (+3 to Mental Fatigue). The substance of non-living matter is greatly weakened. Its structure rating will be reduced by half and it will lose 1 from its AV. Anything reduced to 0 AV will immediately crumble. This is figured in after the target has already suffered the damage of the Rune's Primary Effect. This includes armor, while melee weapons lose 1 from their ap value.**

Finishing Stroke (target, instantaneous)

Another of Paran's weapon runes, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll — doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Deathblow** (*q.v.*), except that even a Blunt force weapon can bear one and the wielder needn't have an Expert Finesse level in his melee skill. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, he automatically scores a 6-success Deathblow (target loses 1 Lethal Wound every Combat Round). The attacker is still required to meet the criteria for a Deathblow to occur (by inflicting at least 1 Lethal Wound with his attack). This does not actually cost the attacker his 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect.

CC	***Primary Effect***
	Deathblow effects as listed above.

Inspiration (zone, continuous)

The banner of Paran can give its faithful the courage to face any enemy. With the War Bride as your matron, there is no force that can halt your advance. The power to instill courage in battle has been one of the most renowned abilities of Paran's Domain, and those who bask in the rune's golden aura feel no fear. So heartening is this aura, that at greater levels of ability, Inspiration can cause its benefactors to feel no pain, or to even shrug off any attempts to manipulate their minds through magic. This rune only affects allies of the Runemage who happen to be in the rune's Zone.

CC	***Primary Effect***
15	**All under the rune's effect will never be Stressed in combat situations and are immune to Intimidation or any other attempts to cause fear.**
20	**Expert. As above, but all affected targets gain a +1 bonus to all attack rolls. Those under the effect of the rune are also instilled with a warrior's mindset. While in combat, any moral qualms any affected targets may have, any fears concerning the battle or whom they are fighting will be forgotten and they will be unhesitating in their attacks. They are unaffected by Insane, Pain and Stun Handicaps.**
25	**Elite. As above, but all affected targets do not suffer die roll penalties acquired from Vitality loss and the rune's CV becomes the value any rune or Shadow Magic spell must exceed in order to affect the minds of those under the rune's influence. They are immune to the Confusion, Dizzy, Insane, Pain, and Stun Handicaps**

Mania (target, continuous)

As Paran rules the realm of emotion, her runes can tap into that reservoir of feeling and bring it rushing and screaming to the surface. Targets of this rune find their emotions cranked up several notches. Any emotion felt will be expressed outwardly, often exaggeratedly. The slightest hint of laughter will explode forth in unrelenting gales of hilarity. The minutest feeling of doubt will weigh like iron upon their shoulders. Mild annoyance can turn to murderous rage. The effect of this is to cause targets to fail any Social skill test. They are also considered **Stressed** at all times. The player whose character is under the influence of this rune is expected to role-play accordingly. Though this rune crushes any attempt by the target to concentrate on even simple tasks, if the character makes an Expert (20) Meditation skill test, she can reduce the duration of this rune in half. The effects of Mania will be dispelled if its CV is overcome by the CV of a Wellmind rune (*q.v.*).

CC	***Primary Effect***
15	**Extreme emotional states as listed above.**

Paran's Might (target, instantaneous)

Another of Paran's weapon runes, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Knockback** (*q.v.*), except that even an Edged or Piercing weapon can bear one and the wielder needn't have an Advanced Finesse

level in his melee skill. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, he automatically scores a 6-point Knockback (target is knocked back 5 feet for every Lethal Wound the weapon could do to the defender). This does not actually cost the attacker his 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	6-point Knockback
20	Expert. 8-point Knockback (Knockback distance is doubled).
25	Elite. 10-point Knockback (Knockback distance is tripled).

The Rune of Lordship (target, continuous)

Many of the great military leaders of history and the modern era are sometimes described as radiating the might of Paran, a palpable force that demands the respect of those beneath them and inspires confidence. The bearer of this rune radiates a powerful magnetism, instilling in its bearer the bearing of a great leader. The bearer of this rune is indeed filled with the confidence of one experienced in battle, and also of one who is used to giving orders and having them carried out. While under the effect of this rune, the Runemage's Social Aptitude is effectively 5. It raises Leadership and Intimidation skills by one Finesse Level, or grants the bearer the skills at Advanced if he does not possess them already. While under the effect of this rune, only injury or harsh environmental conditions will cause them to be **Stressed.**

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	The bearer of the rune has the abilities listed above, and in addition gains a +1 bonus on all attack and block rolls.
20	Expert. As above, but the Rune bearer gains a +3 to his final Initiative, after his bid. In addition, the bearer is resistant to any effects of fear, magical or otherwise. The CV of the Lordship rune becomes the value a rune such as Terrorize must beat in order to affect the user of Lordship.
25	Elite. As above, plus any successful use of Leadership or Intimidate is automatically considered a Superior Success.
CC	***Secondary Effect***
+10	Command. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The rune bearer radiates the power of authority. Once every Combat Turn, the bearer can command a single person to perform an action, and he will obey without question or hesitation. If he wishes to refuse, he must beat the rune bearer in a contested Shadow + Leadership roll. If he wins, he does not have to honor the command, if he fails, he will follow it to the letter.
+10	Warmaster. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The rune bearer is filled with the might of Paran. In addition to any bonuses the rune may already grant, he gains a +2 to all combat rolls and a +3 to his final Initiative, after his bid has been made.

Shatterblade (target, instantaneous)

As with all of Paran's weapon runes, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Destroy Weapon** (*q.v.*), except that the wielder needn't have an Expert Finesse level in her melee skill. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, she automatically scores a 6-point Destroy Weapon (fragile weapons, such as guns or other mechanical ranged weapons are damaged or destroyed). This does not actually cost the attacker her 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	6-point Destroy Weapon.
20	Expert. 10-point Destroy Weapon (will destroy all but the most indestructible melee weapons, provided it is a size smaller than the weapon used)
25	Elite. As above, but weapons of a smaller size can destroy those of a greater size.

Stagger Foe (target, instantaneous)

Another weapon rune of the War Bride, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Disable** (*q.v.*), though the wielder needn't have an Advanced Finesse Level in her melee weapon skill and even edged or piercing weapons can bear this rune. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, her attack inflicts half the normal amount of damage (whatever amount gets past any armor) and if the location struck is an arm or a leg, it is instantly disabled. An Expert (20) Healing skill test is required to return function to

the limb. This does not actually cost the attacker her 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Disabling ability as listed above.
20	Expert. Acts as an 8-success Disable, rendering the defender unconscious if the location struck is the head, chest, or abdomen.
25	Elite. As above, but the attack deals damage normally.

Stunning Blow (target, instantaneous)

The sixth of Paran's weapon runes, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Stun** (*q.v.*), even edged or piercing weapons can bear this rune. If wielders score at least 6 successes, each point of damage they inflict will cause a corresponding loss of Speed. This is still a non-lethal attack, and does not cause the loss of Lethal Wounds. This does not actually cost attackers their 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Stunning effect as described above.

Sundering Strike (target, instantaneous)

The last of Paran's runes of weaponry, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. This rune mimics the Special Combat Finesse Effect **Destroy Armor** (*q.v.*) though even piercing weapons can bear this rune and the wielder needn't have an Expert Finesse Level with her melee skill. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, the AV of the target's armor will drop by 1. If the AV drops to 0 or below, the armor is destroyed. This does not actually cost the attacker her 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Armor destruction as listed above.

Terror (zone, continuous)

Just as the majesty of Paran can instill a warrior's spirit in the hearts of its loyal followers, so too can it inflict the greatest feelings of terror in the minds of her enemies. This rune of nightmarish murkiness, wrought with flashes of unhealthy green light, causes all who are caught within its Zone to quake in fear. Those who are under the effect of this rune must make an Advanced (15) Shadow + Personal unskilled skill test, or drop whatever they are holding. So long as they are under the effects of this rune they are considered **Stressed**, and suffer a –5 to all skill tests. If those under this rune's effect are injured, their fright will turn to flight and they will retreat on their next Combat Turn. Afflicted targets who possess a Shadow score of 5 or less will be paralyzed with fright and will remain rooted in place unless attacked, at which time they flee. An Expert (20) Meditation skill test can relieve the feelings of fright, but if they do not leave the rune's Zone, they will have to make a new Meditation skill test on the next Combat Round or suffer the rune's full effects. This rune can be dispelled if its CV is overcome by the CV of a Wellmind rune (*q.v.*)

CC	Primary Effect
15	Fear effects as listed above.

DOMAIN OF TALSE

Many Runemages find Talse's runes to be far too esoteric, passive even, but those who devote themselves to their study find the mental realms that open up to be so compelling they're nearly addictive in their quality. The mental vistas these runes open for their users allow great leaps of logic. In many Vandalusan classrooms, minds are abuzz with the runes of Talse. But those who seek a more tangible use for his runes find them useful to counter the deadly runes of his sister, Paran. Such runes as Mindlink and Truthsight have proved invaluable to adventurers exploring distant and dangerous places, where communication and the ability to see past deception can save lives.

Talse's Talismans: Books, braziers, brooches, candles, censers, chimes or gongs, flutes, lanterns, prayer mats, prayer wheels, sapphires, silver objects, staves of willow wood, Talse's holy symbol.

Talse's Powers

Accord (target, continuous)

Through the Domain of Talse comes understanding and the linking of minds into a connected whole. Though cultures are divided from each other by many factors, language is the most obvious one. But ultimately the meaning and thoughts expressed are the same regardless of what language they are draped with. With the Accord rune, the barrier of language falls away and the actual meaning of what is said becomes immediately apparent to the Runemage. For the duration of the spell, unfamiliar languages are translated into the native language of the Runemage. This also covers written languages, whose arcane symbols become familiar to their eyes. Only words that have no direct translation or whose meaning is bereft of context will be unfamiliar to the Runemages employing the Accord rune. They themselves are unable to speak the unfamiliar tongue, but two people with no common language will be able to communicate freely if both

bear an Accord rune.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Translation abilities as listed above

Beguile (target, continuous)

Talse's dominion over the realm of the mind allows Runemages familiar with this domain to access and have influence over the minds of those targeted by this rune. Talse's ability to beguile the minds of others is not an invasive thing, however. Talse is not about forcefully bending others to his will, but playing instead on their own desires and directing them in a new course. Most then, who fall under the influence of this rune, will not act in a way counter to their own beliefs or against their own self-interest or survival. But Runemages grow in power, more and more are they able to overcome this limitation and turn an unfortunate victim into their faithful servant. The Slave rune is a lesser, cruder version of this rune, for it offers nothing but a direct control over the body of the enslaved, playing them like marionettes. Regardless of what they were commanded to, beguiled individuals believe, for the time being, that the decision came wholly from them. Even if they retain the memory of a Runemage giving them the order to act, they still believe it was ultimately their choice to do so. Many who fall victim to this rune, when asked to explain their actions, often reply matter-of-factly "it seemed like the right thing to do at the time."

CC	Primary Effect
15	Targets will follow any order that does not go against their basic beliefs, something they'd be inclined to do anyway and in no way threatens themselves or someone close to them. The orders given should be simple. Convincing a guard to let you pass by, getting a shopkeeperto give you a special discount on merchandise, etc.
20	Expert. Targets will follow orders that normally balk at committing or that may run counter to what they already know. Getting someone to attack a friend or adventuring companion. Forcing someone into a situation they know is dangerous.
25	Elite. Targets are completely under the Runemage's control. They will follow the Runemage's command without question or hesitation.

CC	Secondary Effect
+5	Evil Eye. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). The commands need not be spoken and can be communicated through eye contact alone.
+5	Forgetfulness. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). Targets can be made to forget that the Runemage gave them orders, that they were under the influence of a rune, or that the Runemage was even present when they committed their beguiled actions.
+10	Thought Control. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). The Runemage can give her commands mentally and does not need to remain in proximity with the target. If the Runemage uses a Mindlink rune between her and the target, they can achieve this without needing to purchase this 10-point secondary effect.

Bulwark (target, continuous)

In counter to Paran's weapon runes, Talse has perfected a single rune meant to protect its users from all manner of weaponed attack. The target of this rune must always be a piece of armor. A piece of armor is categorized as a single suit, helmet, or shield, each of which must be emblazoned with Bulwark to gain its protection. For the duration of the rune, the armor targeted will have its base defense value and AV increased by the listed amount. With this rune it is possible for the armor's AV to rise above 5.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Increase armor defense value by 3. Increase armor's AV by 1
20	Expert Increase armor defense value by 6. Increase armor's AV by 2
25	Elite Increase armor defense value by 12. Increase armor's AV by 3

CC	Secondary Effect
+2	For every 2 points of the Rune's CV the Runemage wishes to invest, the armor is granted a 1 point defense value that ablates as it takes damage. This pool of defense is targeted by attacks first. Once its value has been dropped to zero, the rune still retains the defense bonus from its PrimaryEffect.

Cognizance (target, continuous)

When people think of Talse's domain, they immediately think of its power to greatly increase the mental powers of its users. Cognizance is this rune. Those under its power feel their minds expand to astounding levels. Insights come quickly, inspiration

flows from the hidden depths of consciousness. Memories long forgotten return with crystal clarity and the ability to retain new memories becomes greatly heightened. Those under the influence of this rune receive the following benefits:

- The character's Knowledge skills are never affected by **stress** Though they may be under stress from injury or other factors, they make all Knowledge skill tests as though they were under optimum conditions.
- Rolling a "1" on any Knowledge skill test is not considered an automatic failure, so long as the actual value of the total is enough to achieve success based upon the difficulty of the skill test.
- No Knowledge skill tests are considered **unskilled,** even if the Runemage does not possess the required knowledge skill. It is treated as Basic, permitting them the possibility of scoring a Superior Success.
- If the Rune's duration is an hour or longer, the Runemage may make an Advanced (15) Meditation skill test to recall any memory from their life with complete clarity. The Runemage may make one such roll each hour.
- Any new memories made during the duration of the Cognizance rune, will be completely retained even after the rune ceases.
- The Mental Fatigue of any runes cast while under the effect of Cognizance is reduced in half.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Cognizance effects as listed above.**

Memorium (target, continuous)

Were it not for the recovery of Memorium runes discovered in the ruins of past civilizations, much of the world's history would be forever lost. The Memorium rune, considered by many to be the single most *important* rune in Talse's Domain, becomes an actual vessel for stored memories. The rune targets an individual whose memories are to be stored. The amount of memory that can be stored is equal to the duration of the rune, as based by the Form used. Once the duration ceases, the rune will remain with its stored memories intact. The Runemage need merely come in contact with the rune and make a Basic (10) Meditation skill test to recall the stored memories. The Memorium rune counteracts the standard rule that runes lose their power once they've finished their duration, but they do have a limited life. The Form used to store the memories determines the overall life of the Memorium rune, the amount of life it has left before the rune completely deliquesces.

- Charms: 1 day for every point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
- Ward: 1 week for every point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
- Talismans: 1 month for every point of Rune Magic Aptitude.
- Glyphs: 1 year for every point of Rune Magic Aptitude.

It is possible to transfer any stored memories into a more stable Form. The Runemage makes a Rune Magic skill test. If the CV is equal to or greater than the CV of the Memorium rune being transferred, the transfer process is a success and all stored memories are retained. If the CV is lower than the CV of the Memorium rune to be transferred, then the process is incomplete and not everything that was stored was transferred (HoF's discretion) into the new Vessel. If the Rune Magic skill test failed to reach the minimum CC of the rune (15), then the transfer failed, but the stored memories were not lost and the process can be attempted again. But if the Runemage rolls a "1" in the transfer attempt, all stored memories are lost. One proviso to this process is that the new Form must have a duration greater than that of the first Memorium rune, so that there is enough "space" for the new memories to be stored in.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Memory storage abilities as listed above.**

Mindlink (target, continuous)

To create a Mindlink, the Runemage must craft two such runes, one to be possessed by the Runemage, the other by someone of his choosing. Once in their possession, the two individuals can communicate directly from mind to mind. Generally this is only a surface connection, where the two may converse as though right next to each other, but as the Runemage rises in power, he can form more intimate, deeper connections between two minds. In Illestan, they've found a way to turn this normally peaceful rune to a warrior's purposes. At greater levels of power, two linked individuals think as one and can act as a single, flawlessly coordinated unit. Other Runemages have found that a deep link allows them to craft runes in concert in a fashion impossible without such a connection.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**The two linked individuals can converse freely with each other, regardless of the distance between them. This communication is conversational surface thoughts only. Either individual has the freedom to not transmit their surface thoughts.**
20	**Expert. The connection now includes anything the other may be seeing or hearing. Through this connection, connected individuals make any Awareness, Tracking, or Intuit skill tests in**

	concert, with the higher of the two counting toward success. This way, what one may miss, the other may notice.
25	**Elite. The connection between the two is so complete, they are working with a single, coordinated mind. Whenever they use a skill in concert, they may combine their respective Practice values toward a single skill test. If the skill test succeeds, they both succeed. If the result is a Superior Success, they are both considered to have scored Superior Successes. In Communal Spellcasting (*q.v.*), this rune gives them an immediate +5 CV bonus. When used in combat, connected individuals act on the same turn (coordinating their Initiative Bid with their Reaction scores to ensure acting on the same turn), and when attacking the same target, the higher of the two attack rolls is counted for both their attacks. The link is so complete, however, that if one is targeted by magics that affect the mind, both individuals are affected. Connected individuals will take half the Vitality suffered by their partner, but not Lethal Wounds.**

CC	*Secondary Effect*
+5	**Mind Network. (+1 to Mental Fatigue). A new person can be added to the link, each new individual adding +5 to the rune's CC.**

Pacify (zone, continuous)

At the core of Talse there lies a place of supreme harmony, of total serenity that voids any violent or aggressive thought. In the glowing radiance of this rune, people come into direct contact with this quiet place and are compelled to embrace the stillness found there. Anyone entering the rune's Zone who possesses a Shadow of 5 or less is immediately rendered non-violent. They will drop their weapons, refuse to react violently to any act, and be put at ease. Even if attacked, they will prefer to flee than respond in kind, though this is an unlikely possibility if the attack is coming from within the rune's area of effect. Those who possess a Shadow of 6 to 10 can choose to resist the effects of this rune by making an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. But unless they leave the rune's area of effect, will have to make a new roll if they are to resist it on their next turn. Those who possess a Shadow of 10 or greater need only make an Advanced (15) Meditation skill test to resist the rune's effect. While under the effects of this rune, individuals will set aside any feelings of hatred or anger, and in fact look at all things in an objective manner, free of personal bias. In Vandalusa, it has been found that this rune is very useful in discussing deep subjects without fear of the debate lapsing into wasteful argument or personal attacks.

This rune has the ability to counteract anyone under the influence of the Blood Rage rune so long as the CV of the Pacify rune surpasses the CV of the Blood Rage rune.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Calming effects as listed above**

Rule of Order (zone, continuous)

Talse is the lord of order, and within the confines of this rune's power order rules. Things will function properly and will not be prone to failure. This rune abhors Chaos and the influence of Paran's Domain. When this rune is created, it creates a zone that has the ability to dispel the power of any Paranai rune that enters it, or is cast from it. This includes such things as her weaponry runes. Such enchanted weapons may have their effects cancelled if their CV is below the CV of the Rule of Order rune.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Anti-Paranai rune effects listed above. The total CV of this rune becomes the factor any Parani rune must exceed in order to successfully penetrate or be cast from the Rule of Order rune's zone If the CV of the Rule of Order rune is exceeded by any Paranai rune, it is dispelled.**

Thoughtspeed (target, continuous)

The brain processes information at a blazingly fast speed, and through this rune the body can be made to follow suit. Many peaceful Runemages have found little use for this rune, often calling it a pointless physical exercise that distracts one from the true power of Talse's Domain. But many more have found it handy in combat, where the body is made to move in rapid response to the mind's every command. But bodies were not meant to move with such speed and once the rune's powers cease, exhaustion quickly sets in. Once the rune's duration ceases, the character must rest a time equal to the time they spent under the influence of the rune or suffer penalties equal to the bonuses they had previously enjoyed.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**+2 to the recipient's Speed and Reaction scores. +2 to Dodge defense rolls. This stacks with the character's Reaction bonus, so a Block defense roll would have the normal +2**

	from the rune's Reaction score bonus, but Dodge defense rolls would be +4 total.
20	**Expert. +4 to the recipient's Speed and Reaction scores. +2 to Dodge defense rolls, giving a total of +6 (including the +4 gained to their Reaction score).**
25	**Elite. +6 to the recipient's Speed and Reaction scores. +2 to Dodge defense rolls, giving a total of +8 to any Dodge defense roll.**

Truethought (target, continuous)

Talse represents truth, and while devotees of the Peace God commit themselves to the principle of honesty, they know that most do not. But through this rune, none can bear false witness, and will speak the truth if and when they choose to speak. This rune does not compel one to speak the truth, they can choose not to speak at all, but if they do, they will find it impossible to utter anything but the complete truth as they see it. Truth is relative, of course, and someone may speak what they *think* is true, but it may not necessarily be so. This rune has found its way into the area of law many times as it can be a, mostly, foolproof method of extracting truthful information. It can be thwarted though, through some of Va'an's magic and potentially by a Discordance rune as well, so many in the legal profession choose carefully where and when to use this rune. Though affected targets may choose not to speak, their faces cannot hide what their mouths cannot. Any Intuit skill tests used against the target are made at one Finesse Difficulty lower.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Truthsaying abilities as listed above.**

Truthsight (target, continuous)

An extension of Talse's dominion over truth, this rune forms a window through which all that is false is revealed for what it truly is. The Runemage is the target for this rune, which creates a panel, viewable by others, that discloses the true nature of anything viewed through it. The runes of Illusion and Unseen, and the Shadow Magic spells of Veil, Trick the Eye, and Dance of the Shadows are all useless against those seeing the world with Truthsight. Additionally, those who have physically altered themselves, as through a Transformation rune, will show their true form to the bearer of this rune.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Truthseeing abilities as listed above.**

Turn Missile (target, continuous)

Many call Talse the Protector, for it is his mission to keep all from harm. His magics can bolster the defenses of armor, but they can also prevent some attacks from even reaching their intended target. While Bulwark is meant to protect against the wounds of melee weapons, Turn Missile provides perfect defense against bullets and other missile weapons. An invisible barrier surrounds the bearer of this rune, and all missile weapons targeting her will arc harmlessly out of their path.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**All missile weapons of AP2 or lower are instantly deflected. Those of AP 3 or greater have their velocity blunted, reducing their base damage by 50% and their AP reduced by 1 for damage purposes.**
20	**Expert. All missile weapons of AP 3 or lower are instantly deflected. Those of AP 4 or greater have their base damage reduced by 50% and their AP reduced by 2.**
25	**Elite. All missile weapons, regardless of AP are instantly deflected.**
CC	*Secondary Effect*
+10	**Redirect missile. (+2 to Mental Fatigue). Runemages may redirect 1 missile attack per Combat Round to any target in their LoS. The new target must make a defense roll against the original Attack roll made.**

Wellmind (target, continuous)

Though this rune, the Talsean Domains of peace and mind are brought together to ease the mental suffering of others. While Pacify counters violent thought, Wellmind eases anguish, mental fatigue, and the chaotic influence of insanity. Its ability to temporarily bring lucidity in the minds of the insane has seen its use spread to hospices and asylums where such people are treated. It is not a permanent solution, not even a solution really, merely a salve for the mind, but it gives the afflicted the peace they need to address the problems that vex their thoughts. Runemages have found it useful in easing the mental fatigue that comes from extended use of Runemagic. Where Pacify can act as a counter to Blood Rage, this rune can effectively counter Paran's Mania and Terror runes. If the CV of the Wellmind rune overcomes that of the two runes mentioned, they are dispelled. Likewise, if those runes are cast upon someone bearing a Wellmind rune, the Wellmind rune will be dispelled if its CV is overcome.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**This rune will grant temporary sanity to those afflicted by the Insane Handicap. For the duration of the rune they will be free of any insanity.**
20	**Expert This rune can temporarily ease Mental**

	Fatigue, even from the Mental Fatigue resulting from the use of this rune. For the duration of the rune, the Runemage will not suffer any penalties related to Mental Fatigue. But once the rune ceases, all Mental Fatigue penalties will immediately come into effect.
25	**Elite. The rune completely suppresses any feelings of anxiety or fear, relieving any situation of *Stress*, regardless of the source. Atthis level of power, the Runemage can return lost memories to those who have been afflicted with the Hrondim rune, Muddle. The CV of the Wellmind rune must still overcome that of the Muddle rune.**

Unveil (zone, instantaneous)

An extension of the Truthsight rune, this rune actually dispels the effects of any rune or power that is crafted to deceive or hide the true nature of something. Illusions and even mundane disguises are cast away to reveal the target's true nature. This spell will automatically counter the Shadow Magic spells of Veil, Trick the Eye, and Dance of the Shadows, regardless of the CV of the Unveil rune. But the Unveil's CV must overcome the CV of Illusion, Unseen, or the Transformation rune. If it does so, such runes are dispelled. Even if the Unveil rune does not overcome the mentioned runes, it will cause them to stop functioning for a single Combat Round.

CC	*Primary Effect*
15	**Illusion dispelling effects as listed above.**

DOMAIN OF VA'AN

At the root of all runes there lies Va'an. Va'an's Dominion is over the very matter that runes are composed of, the Ylar. Some Runemages call Va'an Domain the Master Runes, for they govern the flow of Ylar through all things, especially runes themselves. In many lands, Runemage organizations have been given the responsibility of policing themselves and those Runemages given the task of bringing renegade Runemages to heel must become adept at the runes of Va'an. Runemages who specialize in the crafting of runic objects must master the runes of Va'an too, as it is through these runes that Ylar can be channeled, keeping attendant runes functioning long after they should have ceased.

Va'an's Talismans: Cages, crowns, feathers, gauntlets (or gloves), gold objects, manacles, marble tablets, medallions, lodestones, objects bearing the Seven Gods mandala, scepters, scroll cases, Va'an's holy symbol, wristbands (bracers).

Va'an's Powers

Augment (target, instantaneous)

Runes, when created, will gather to themselves just enough energy to perform their task. Once they have done so, the energy used is freed and returns to the environment. But Runemages adept in Va'an's runes have at their disposal a rune that can channel even more Ylar into a rune, making it more powerful than before. The process is relatively simple, comparatively speaking, and the additional energies can provide novice Runemages with an extra boost of power to an otherwise weak rune. As Runemages grow in ability, the amount of additional energy they can call forth increases. The target of this rune is always another rune, and so it can be limited if used in the Form of a Charm, though if used in this form it can be readily used to augment the Charm of another Runemage who is scribing his rune on the same turn. Many Runemages find Augmented Talismans to be especially useful, while in Vandalusa, Augment Glyphs are commonly used to boost the power of runes of any Form created while standing upon them.

CC	*Primary Effect*
10	**Grants target rune a +2 CV bonus.**
15	**Grants target rune a +5 CV bonus.**
20	**Expert. Grants target rune a +10 CV bonus.**
25	**Elite. Grants target rune a +15 CV bonus.**

Blight (zone, continuous)

The Blight rune causes fluctuations in the Ylar of any runes that enter its zone. The Ylar is made unstable and runes may sputter or cease to function completely. This effect is most noticeable with runes that were created prior to entering the Blight zone, such as Wards and Talismans. Newly fashioned runes, while suffering somewhat from the instability of the Ylar in the area, are less susceptible to the effect once they have been created. The following rules apply while within the zone of a Blight rune.

- Wards will cease to function and will lose half their remaining duration after they've left the zone of the Blight rune.
- Continuous Charms will permanently cease to function.
- Talismans with continuous effects will still function, but with a –10 CV penalty. They also lose half the number of uses for any stored Instantaneous runes.
- If cast within the area of a Glyph with a Continuous attribute, the Glyph will continue to function but with a –15 penalty. Glyphs with an Instantaneous attribute will not function while in the zone of a Blight rune, and will lose half their number of uses once the Blight rune has been removed.

• Attempting to create any runes with a Continuous effect while in a Blight zone will suffer a –5 CV penalty, but these newly created runes will not suffer the limitations described above.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Rune Blighting effects as listed above.
20	Expert. As above, but the duration of any Continuous runes is reduced by half. In addition, Talismans with a CV of 20 or greater, containing a rune with an Instantaneous attribute will spontaneously activate, possibly harming, or otherwise inconveniencing, the Runemage and her party.
25	Elite. As above, but all runes of a CV of 25 or greater entering the Blight zone will "flare," expelling half their duration or number of uses in a flash of raw Ylar. If the rune affected has a Zone affect, those within the zone will suffer half the rune's CV in damage, with an AP value of 4, to a randomly rolled location. If the affected rune has a Target attribute, whoever is carrying it will suffer the full CV in damage, with an AP value of 4 to whatever hit location the Talisman is carried.

Fortify (target, continuous)

One of the many uses of Va'an's Domain, in addition to runes meant to attack other runes, are runes that keep their target runes stable and resistant to suppression or dispersal. The Fortify rune must target another rune, and for the duration of Fortify, the targeted rune will receive a bonus to its total CV, which raises the value other runes need to beat in order to affect the Fortified rune. Furthermore, a Fortified rune is far more stable than its unfortified kin, and so becomes immune to the effects of Blight and Runebreach.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Target rune's CV, in regards to resistance to dispelling or suppression, is +5
20	Expert Target rune's CV, in regards to resistance to dispelling or suppression, is +10
25	Elite Target rune's CV, in regards to resistance to dispelling or suppression, is +15

Example: *Sarkannah, Vandalusan scholar, has a Talisman containing a Fortify rune. She scribes a Drandlur's Blessing Ward, and from her Talisman, targets it with a Fortify rune, raising the CV of Drandlur's Blessing by 10, for a total of 33. Any Drandlur's Rage rune that attempts to cancel the Drandlur's Blessing rune, must exceed a CV of 33, instead of the 23 that she rolled.*

Timorias Vandlorn, Valluneian Runemage, stands upon a Fortify Glyph. From his position, he casts an Entropic Blast Charm against a foe. The Fortify Glyph targets any runes cast within its boundary, and so the Entropic Blast gains a +15 bonus to its resistant CV. Timorias' foe is currently wearing a Mask Ward, that would normally reduce the CV of incoming Charms with a Target attribute by 15. But because the Entropic Blast Charm is fortified by 15, the 15 CV the Mask Ward would normally cause it to lose is subtracted by the Fortification value first. Timorias' foe is blasted for the full effect of the Entropic Blast Charm.

Locus (zone, instantaneous)

The Locus rune is a magnet for runic energy and effects. Any runes or runic effects (as those generated by Talismans) manifested in the Locus' zone are immediately drawn from their course to fall upon the rune itself. Once created, the Locus will sustain itself, waiting to absorb incoming magical energy, preferably away from the Runemage and her companions. Caution must be taken, however, for any runic attacks with the Zone attribute that fall under the sway of the Locus rune have their Zone centered on the Locus instead of its intended target, and so anyone in proximity to the Locus rune may fall under the effect of the redirected rune. Once it has redirected and absorbed a rune or runic effect, it consumes itself in a blaze of light, all of its collected Ylar returning to the environment. The Locus rune has no effect upon Runes that were already in effect before entering its zone, such as Wards or Talismans that only Target their owner.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Rune redirecting and absorbing abilities as listed above.

Mask (target, continuous)

While many Domains offer protections from very specific runes, such as Electricity Armor's resistance to Lightning Strike runes, Mask offers a broad-spectrum protection against runes of all Domains and Forms. For the rune's duration, Mask will protect its Target by dispersing incoming magical energy across its surface, radiating it back harmlessly as light and sound. The more directed the Ylar, the better the Mask rune is at dispersing its energy, so Runes that possess the Target attribute are more apt to be dispersed than those with a Zone attribute. The younger the rune, too, the more easily it is to disperse, so Charms have the greatest chance of being absorbed and dispersed.

CC	Primary Effect
15	Charms: –5 CV. Talismans: –5 CV. Wards: –0. Glyphs: –0. Rune has a Target Attribute: –5 CV.

	Rune has a Zone Attribute: –0 CV.
20	**Expert. Charms: –10 CV. Talismans: –5 CV. Wards: –5. Glyphs: –5. Rune has a Target Attribute: –5 CV. Rune has a Zone Attribute: –5 CV.**
25	**Elite. Charms: –15 CV. Talismans: –10 CV. Wards: –10. Glyphs: –10. Rune has a Target Attribute: –10 CV. Rune has a Zone Attribute: –5 CV.**

Example: *If a Runemage creates a Mask Ward with a 20 CV and is targeted by a Charm that possesses a Target attribute, that incoming charm's CV would be reduced by –15. Were that same Runemage to step upon a Glyph that had a Target attribute, the CV of that Glyph would be reduced by –10. Against a Talisman bearing a Fire Sign rune, the Runemage would reduce the CV of that incoming runic attack by –10 (–5 for a talisman, –5 for zone attribute).*

Runebreach (target, instantaneous)

When a rune is too complex to unweave, or if the Runemage hasn't the time needed, the act of last resort is often a Runebreach. Runebreach is a dangerous rune for it releases all the Ylar contained in a targeted rune in one cataclysmic blast of raw energy. For this to work, the Runemage must be targeting a rune that was created by a Runemage of equal or lesser Finesse Level. Runes crafted by someone of a greater Finesse Level are stable enough to resist the opposing Runemage's attempt to cause a Runebreach. Secondly, the CV of the Runebreach must exceed that of the targeted rune. If these two factors are met, the targeted rune self-destructs in a spherical zone, the size of which depends upon the Form used by the targeted rune. If the targeted rune already has a Zone attribute, the resulting explosion will be twice the size of its normal Zone area of effect. The blast deals damage equal to the total CV of the targeted rune, with an AP value of 5. The dangers of using this rune are apparent, as in many cases, the Runemage will be uncomfortably close to the targeted rune.

CC	***Primary Effect***
15	**Rune destroying effects described above. The total CV of the Runebreach must exceed that of the targeted rune.**

Shunt (zone, continuous)

The Shunt rune slowly draws ambient Ylar into itself, no faster than can be replaced naturally, and so has no negative impact on runes that come into its area of effect, and in fact benefits any runes within its Zone that possess the Continuous attribute. Shunt essentially takes over the Continuous attribute for any runes in its zone. Runes with a Continuous attribute have their duration suspended while under the influence of a Shunt, using the duration of the Shunt first. Once the duration of the Shunt rune has run its course, any runes possessing a Continuous attribute resume their normal duration.

CC	***Primary Effect***
15	**Continuous attribute extension as listed above.**

Tax (zone, continuous)

Runemages rely on the presence of ambient Ylar to create runes. Though there are Founts, invisible upwellings of raw Ylar that are found at random intervals all across the land, it is the unseen flow of energy permeating everything that feeds runes as they are crafted. Without a source of ambient Ylar, Runemages cannot create runes. The Tax rune creates a vortex within its zone that draws all the ambient Ylar into itself, greedily hoarding it so that no other runes may be created in its vicinity. Tax has no effect upon runes that already exist, but makes crafting new ones very difficult, if not impossible. If the Runemage has another source of Ylar, through the use of an Infuse rune for example, they may get around this, but most Runemages will find their runes sputter and die even before they finish scribing them. What infuriates many powerful Runemages is the fact that the more powerful the rune, the more susceptible it is to Taxing. Runemages wishing to create runes while in the zone of a Tax rune must resist using all of their rune's Construction Value if they intend it to work.

CC	***Primary Effect***
15	**No Greater Runes with a CV of 25 or greater can be created within the zone of the Tax rune.**
20	**Expert. No Greater Runes with a CV of 20 or greater can be created within the zone of the Tax rune.**
25	**Elite. No Greater runes with a CV of 15 or greater can be created within the zone of the Tax rune.**

SHADOW MAGIC

. . The stranger stepped from the shadow as though ascending from a still pool, the dim light turning his violet robes blood black. His smile was clear in the darkness, a crescent moon of malevolence. Cerric drew back, the revolver wavering in his grip. The Shadowmage's smile sapped the strength from his hands with a chill. "What ails you, Cyrooni?" the Shadowmage whispered. Cerric made to speak but his tongue felt thick in his mouth, his throat clenched. With every silent step the Mage made, Cerric stumbled closer to the wall. When the marble mantle pressed into his lower back, he feebly thrust the gun before him, its quaking magnified with the extension of his arm. The Mage opened his hands in a gesture of mock magnanimity, "Too late," he crooned. Cerric's eyes fell to the floor. With a liquid swiftness, the Mage's shadow slid across the carpet, extending like a tendril of smoke, until it found Cerric's own. A sudden numbing cold flashed through his being, stiffening him in shock. He felt as though a leaden curtain was drawing tightly around him. As the Shadowmage's shadow consuming his own, darkness descended upon him, his last sight being the mottled circle of violet and yellow upon the fiend's brow.

The Whisper of the Shadows

There is no way to predict who will become a Shadowmage, with the possible exception of a tendency to pass the trait from one generation to the next. The manifestation of the ability is gradual, with the first symptoms being irregularities in the person's shadow. At inopportune times it will froth and pulse like a living, growing thing, it may even take on apparent weight leaving an impression in sand or brushing like a swift breeze as it passes over someone. Even in modern times there are accounts of a developing Shadowmage being persecuted or exiled for fear of feeding upon the souls of others. When Shadowmages enter the second stage in their development this caution on the part of others is often warranted. With powers now approaching maturity they begin to manifest raw magical energy when the developing mage is under emotional stress. It responds to the mage's inner thoughts and moods. If angry, a burgeoning Shadowmage may lash out unintentionally. If discovered and tutored, this ability can be refined, but if this is not done soon after development, it will continue to grow with uncontrolled power. This can often be disastrous for the neophyte Shadowmage as it can consume him or slowly devour his own soul from within as he loses control of his inner feelings and satisfies base desires with his newfound power. If his will is strong, however, he can gain some sense of control before becoming wildly unpredictable.

It is impossible to be heir to such power and not be changed by it. Shadowmages, no matter the strength of their character, all carry a distinctive dark cast to their personality. Many individuals describe the power as parasitic, considering their shadows to be virtually separate entities. During the formative years of their abilities, some have recounted hearing a faint whispering in their minds, ever present, but rarely rising to a level of comprehension. For some these whispers in the background last their entire lives. For others it is able to rise up to be a commanding or corrupting influence. It is not uncommon for some Shadowmages to feel adversarial to their own shadows. To combat these feelings, Shadowmages often join fraternal orders or mage guilds. The rigors of daily ritual and the company of other Shadowmages help to ease the mental stress their power brings.

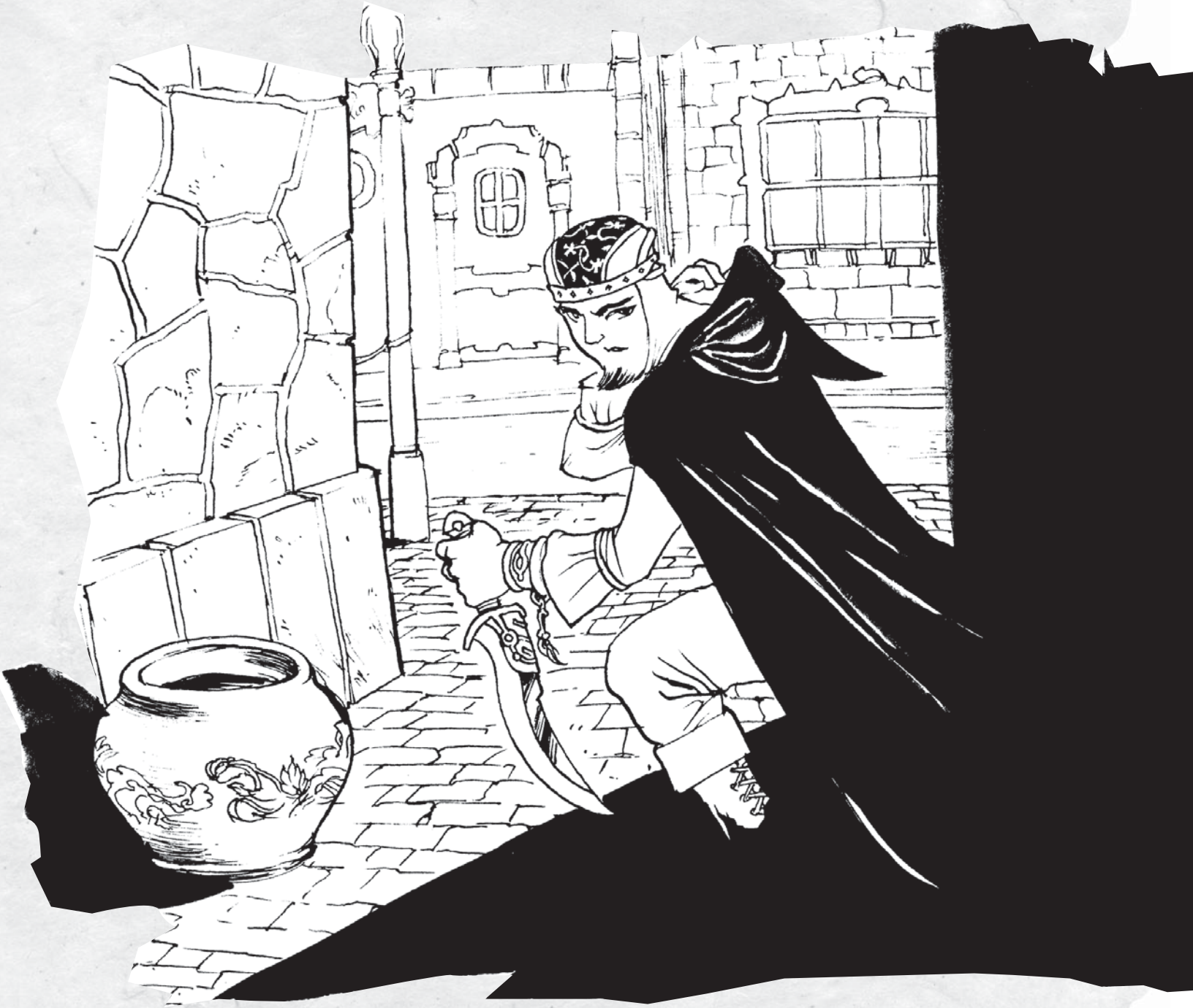
CREATING A SHADOWMAGE

Because schools of Shadow Magic are few, and their institutions so centralized, many developing Shadowmages have to travel thousands of miles to find the training they need to survive. Likewise they may be taken in with their cooperation or even against their will by an organization of Shadowmages. The Brotherhood of the Sapphire and the Violet Circle both seize custody of any manifesting Shadowmages in their respective countries or Ba-Dur and the Dominion of Drakan. The new Shadowmage has little choice in the matter and soon becomes indoctrinated into that school's teachings and traditions. The land of scholars, Vandalusa, has the largest concentration of Shadowmages in Zir'An, accepting membership from any country regardless of political or ideological bent. Instruction at any of Vandalusa's Fortresses of Thought is not dependent upon the initiate's loyalty or conversion to Vandalusa's dogma of neutrality, though many do opt to remain.

The Powers of the Shadowmage

The spirits of every living thing contain a great reservoir of potential energy. Shadowmages are endowed with a more potent reservoir than most. Shadowmages possess the ability to tap this power, draw it into the physical realm, and mould it with their wills. This fountain of life energy is called the Animus. The Animus is the force that Shadowmages see as being an integral part of their being, but also a separate entity that reflects their baser, hidden thoughts and desires. The condition of the Shadowmage's Animus is what causes the distortions in the shadow they cast in the physical world. Some believe that as the dark sun of the spirit realm shines upon the Animus, its shadow and the shadow of the Mage's physical form merge to create a juncture between the two realms. By directing magics at the shadow of another, the Shadowmage's power crosses this threshold to strike at the Animus, or soul, of the victim. The rituals and spells of Shadow Magic often manifest as tendrils and wisps of dark energy or an actual transformation of their Mage's cast shadow; again a reflection of the mutable form of the Animus.

All Shadowmages possess certain powers in common, reflecting the growing control they have over the substance of their own shadows. How Shadow Magic manifests is greatly affected by the Shadowmage's state of mind, and so branching schools of thought generate new and different powers. This distinguishes



A Shadow Mage using Night Crossing

the meditative magics of the Vandalusan Shadowmage from the dark and sinister rituals of the Violet Circle.

Innate Abilities

Just by their very nature, Shadowmages are endowed with special skills. Unlike other manifestations, these inborn abilities, unless specifically noted, require neither a skill roll nor expenditure of Speed to use. Further, the Shadowmage's natural abilities do not have a base Animus cost the way Cardinal spells do.

Basic

At the Basic level of the Shadowmagic Skill, the Shadowmage is first learning the essential nature of the shadow, or spirit, itself. The mage is exploring its connection to himself and others, its substance and structure. With a glance he can Gaze into Shadow, able to detect if someone is afflicted with disease or poison. One can even gain possible insight into the subject's mental state. If the Shadowmage is given a short amount of time to observe the shadow of the subject, 3 minutes or more, he can gain a +2 to either a Healing or Intuit skill test.

Early in the development of their abilities, Shadowmages learn to hear the subtle harmonic vibration given off by all souls, called among them its "song." By pausing to briefly meditate, the Shadowmage can detect and pinpoint the presence of other spirits by sending out harmonic pulses that other shadows instinctively react to, in a sense, "singing back." Only other Shadowmages and some Shadekin can hear the "song," others are completely unaware that their presence is being sensed. The range of this effect is 100 feet. For every Animus point spent the radius can be increased by 20 feet. The Shadowmage is unable to distinguish specific souls or their precise location. Those abilities coming later as the Shadowmage increases in proficiency.

Advanced

By now the Shadowmage is skilled in discerning the subtleties of each individual shadow. All shadows have their particular scent, no two shadows are alike and the practitioners of Shadow Magic leave the residue of their essence wherever and whenever they use Shadow Magic. The Shadowmage can sense the use of Shadow Magic as it happens or detect the residue of past use. Those under the influence of Shadow Magic reek of it, and are clearly noticeable by experienced Shadowmages. This ability is known as Scent of the Prey. By making a Perception + Shadow Magic Aptitude roll versus a difficulty determined by the HoF (based on the situation), they can sense when Shadow Magic is in use. They can detect a trace of Shadow Magic up to 1 day old per point of their Shadow Stat. This effect is constant and requires no effort by the Shadowmage to use, its range dependant upon the magnitude of the Shadow Magic the mage is sensing

At this level of ability, the Shadowmage's Shadow Song skills have improved to the point that they can distinguish individuals within the range of their song. They are able to precisely locate the direction and approximate distance of souls they are familiar with.

Expert

Though Shadowmages of any Finesse can channel points from their own Animus to another Shadowmage, only a Shadowmage of this level of ability can actually use those donated points for their own spells. The ritual known as the Ring of Shadows allows a group of closely associated and willing Shadowmages to cast a spell in concert, greatly magnifying their power. Of those Shadowmages participating, one is chosen to cast the intended spell and make the Shadow Magic roll. This Shadowmage can then draw on the Animus of the other participating Shadowmages.

Learning to extend the reach of their powers, a Shadowmage can form a Spirit Bridge, a link between his soul and that of another. Requiring an extended period of time getting accustomed to the shadow they intend to link themselves with, the Shadowmage makes a Expert (20) Shadow + Personal skill test. If successful, the Shadowmage expends a point from his Shadow that does not return until the Spirit Bridge is annulled. Once the bridge is formed, the Shadowmage can affect the target with any Shadow Magic spell regardless of the distance that separates them. Another Shadowmage of equal or greater Finesse can break this connection with a contested Acuity + Shadow Magic skill test.

As the Shadowmage's mastery over the forms and techniques of Shadow Magic grows, she is able, through the use of Scent of the Prey, to distinguish the precise nature of the spell he is sensing. When tracing the residue left behind by Shadow Magic, identification requires an Advanced Perception + Shadow Magic skill test.

Finally, the mage's Shadow Song ability is effectively silenced, making his act of detection unnoticeable to all but powerful Shadekin or Shadowmages of Expert or Elite Finesse Level.

Elite

The Shadowmage has reached the pinnacle of his development. Reaching this point should be an arduous task lasting years, ending in the final ritual: consumption of one's own shadow. This initiates the Shadowmage to the rank of Master of the Shade. The Elite Shadowmage has acquired complete control over his spirit though the act of physically merging with it. This renders him immune to spells that directly target his shadow, to drain it, control it, or obliterate it. With the access to previously unknown reserves of energy to draw from, the Master of the Shade's Shadow is now considered to be Exceptional as defined in the Shadow Gift *Valdreyr* (see *Valdreyr*).

The final act many Masters of the Shade perform is to deposit their shadows into a specially crafted receptacle that will keep it safe even after the body has died. The receptacle must be something that has a strong personal meaning for the Shadowmage or was specifically fashioned to hold his spirit. If the object is destroyed, so will the Mage's shadow. The mage cannot act on the physical world while resting imbued within the object

but may affect anyone touching it with any spells his possesses. Thus, a Shadowmage imbued dagger could drain someone touching it through Spirit Drain or create a Spirit Bridge. Often is the case that the Shadowmage will use Seize Shadow to control whoever touches his final resting place, or even take over the body altogether through the use of The Dark Rapine.

Animus and the Shadow Stat

Two essential parts of the Shadowmage character are the Shadow statistic and the Animus. All living beings possess Shadow, but only Shadowmages have Animus. Animus is the pool of self-renewing power the Shadowmage draws from to empower her magics. Shadow is the degree of sheer will and spirit the Shadowmage possesses. At the start, the Shadowmage's Animus has a value equivalent to her Shadow plus her Personal aptitude score (plus any points of Practice she may have in Shadow Magic). A character's Animus score can be increased with experience points as a normal Stat can (see Experience Point Expenditure) and so may grow in power as the Shadowmage grows. If the Shadowmage spends all the points in her Animus, she cannot cast any Shadow Magic spells, but does not suffer the effects of a loss of her Shadow (see Damage to Shadow). Animus recovers 1 point per hour whether the Shadowmage is fully awake or sleeping. Keep in mind that any loss to the Mage's Shadow results in a corresponding loss to her Animus score.

Starting Cardinals and Spells

When the character first gains the Shadowmagic Skill at Basic, the player selects two Cardinals and one Spell from the Cardinal's Basic Finesse Level list if there is more than one. If the Shadowmage starts at higher than Basic Finesse Level, consult the following to determine what their repertoire of spells is:

Finesse Level	*Spell Selection*
Basic	**2 Cardinals, 1 spell at Basic in each for a total of 2 Spells.**
Advanced	**+2 Cardinals, 2 previous spells plus 1 new spell at Advanced in the Shadowmage's initial Cardinals and 1 new spell at Basic in the 2 new Cardinals for a total of 6 spells.**
Expert	**+2 Cardinals, 6 previous spells plus 1 new spell at Expert in each initial Cardinal, 1 new spell at Advanced in each their secondary Cardinals, and 1 new spell at Basic in their new tertiary Cardinals for a total of 12 spells.**
Elite	**+2 cardinals, 12 previous spells plus 1 new spell at Elite in each initial Cardinal, 1 new spell at Expert in each secondary Cardinal, 1 new spell at Advanced in each tertiary Cardinal, and 1 new spell in each new quaternary Cardinal for a total of 24 spells.**

New spells can be learned by spending Experience accordingly:

- Basic Spell — 4 EXP
- Advanced Spell — 8 EXP
- Expert Spell — 16 EXP
- Elite Spell — 32 EXP

CASTING SHADOW MAGIC

1. First the Shadowmage must spend the Speed Cost of the Spell to cast. All spells have a numerical value of Speed it costs to complete the spell and a time (minutes, hours...). Spells that list only a numerical value are spells that can be cast in Speed in a combat Turn. Spells with longer casting times in minutes and hours come into effect at the beginning of the round after the Shadowmage completes the spell

2. Spend Points from Animus. All spells cost a base amount of Animus to use. Basic spells have a minimum cost of 1 to use, Advanced spells cost 2, Expert spells 3, and Elite spells have a base cost of 4. Additionally, the Shadowmage can spend points from her Animus to add to any Shadow Magic roll (either in the course of spell casting or if attempting to resist Shadow Magic effects).

3. Make a Shadow Magic skill roll: Shadow + Personal + d10 (plus any points of Practice the character possesses in Shadow Magic).

4. Compare your roll to the spell difficulty. Casting is successful if the roll is greater than the difficulty.

5. Spend Additional points from Animus. If the Shadowmage is successful in casting the spell, she may spend additional points from her Animus to further empower the spell. For every point of Animus spent, she gets one additional Success, which can be used to enhance the spell's effect, or purchase effects as listed in the spell description.

THE CARDINALS OF SHADOW MAGIC

Since the majority of powers wielded by the Shadowmage are fashioned principally by will alone, there are very few concrete rituals or rote magics to call upon. Shadowmages strive to manipulate the raw energy of their spirits towards a desired effect, the result is all-important, and not the method that achieved it.

These Cardinal Powers are available to all Shadowmages though some schools of thought will invariably emphasize certain Cardinals over others. The Cardinals are:

- Body — powers to aid, alter, or obliterate the physical form
- Defensive — shields, wards, and ghost armors
- Movement — levitation, flight, and translocation
- Mind — plumbing the depths of the psyche
- Offensive — combat magics
- Perception — expanding the powers of the baser senses
- Phantasm — creating strange glamours or complex illusions
- Shadow Autonomy — affecting the substance of one's own shadow
- Shadow Self — assuming the matter of shadow

CARDINAL SPELLS

Spell Name

SPD: [casting speed cost (time increment)] / DIFF: [difficulty] / DUR: [duration] / ANI: [base Animus cost]

Tradition.

Description.

System: effects.

Body Cardinal

Basic

Infuse Self

SPD: 20 (Minutes)/DIFF: 10/DUR: 1 hr/ANI: —

Infuse Self is a ritual that temporarily improves the mental or physical abilities of the caster. The caster's body and aura ripple with amassed energy, but it is a crude and inefficient use of power that can come to harm the Shadowmage. Many young Shadowmages have abused this easily accessed and tempting source of power. Often techniques of rigorous self-control accompany the teaching of the young Shadowmage when they reach this stage of their development.

System: Add +1 Physique or +1 Intelligence for every 2 Successes gained in the roll, its duration doubled for 5 successes. This rush of power is very taxing on the body, however. When the spell's effects wear off, the stats boosted will be reduced by an equivalent amount. This depleted state will last for a full day. There is the temptation to use this ability to replenish the loss temporarily, but as the penalties accrue, the outcome is obvious.

Advanced

Knit the Flesh

SPD: 10/DIFF: 10/DUR: perm/ANI: 1

Through the strength of their will, the caster forces the target's body to heal damage it has taken. This is very painful and causes the recipient to suffer the Pain and Unconscious handicaps. No scars or marks are left after the ritual is finished. Unfortunately, this basic spell does not affect disease or heredetary problems, simply restoring a body to its original state. Thus, it can regenerate limbs, though this would be extremely painful and would take some time, about 8 hours.

System: Every 4 successes gained cures 1 Lethal Wound and 5 Vitality.

Purge Impurity

SPD: 10 (hours)/DIFF: 18/DUR: perm/ANI: 1

This long ritual purifies the body of the recipient and cures any normal disease as well as purging poisons affecting them. Magical disease and poisons of 21 potency or greater are unaffected by this spell.

System: Neutralizes effects of all diseases or poisons affecting the character, but does not restore lost Stats or Lethal Wounds, which must be recovered by other means. Purge Impurity's other notable benefit is that it can effectively nullify the effects of any magic currently affecting the Shadowmage, provided the effects are the work of a Mage of equal or lesser Finesse Level.

Expert

Hideous Strength

SPD: 20 (minutes)/DIFF: 15/DUR: 15 minutes/ANI: 2

Once performing a short meditative ritual, otherworldly power flows through The Shadowmage's body. The mage's shadow flows like ink up and around them, healing wounds as quickly as they appear and endowing the caster with seemingly limitless energy.

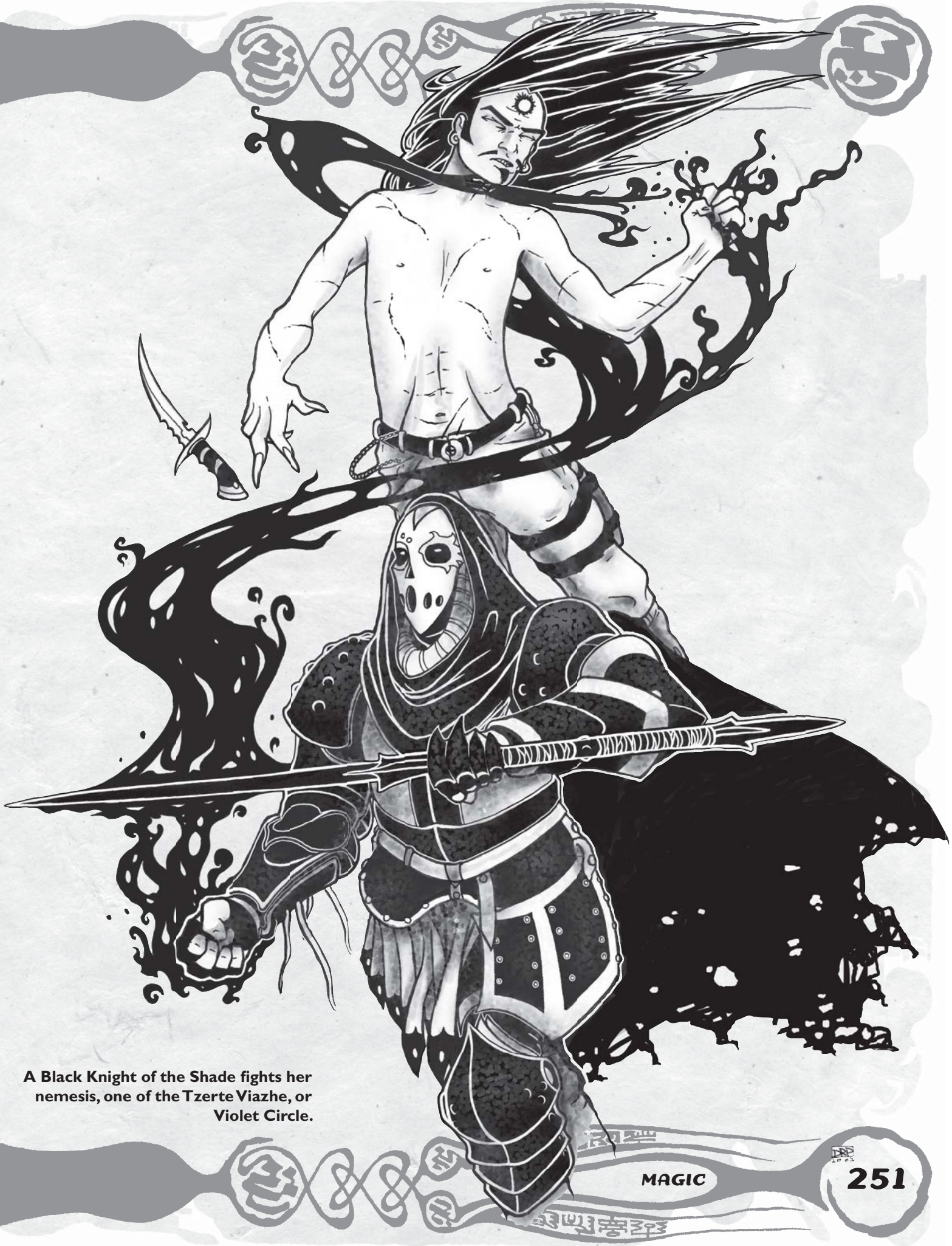
System: For the duration of the spell, the mage will immediately regenerate any Vitality less than 1 Lethal Wound per 5 successes. Wounds greater than that will be fully healed if the Shadowmage spends one combat round doing nothing (spending no speed). Further, the Shadowmage cannot be affected by the Stun or Pain Handicaps, made unconscious or suffer from penalties brought about by damage taken. The duration of the spell can be doubled for every 4 successes. If the spell is broken before its duration is over, all wounds that the Shadowmage has suffered will reopen, generally leading to a quick and bloody death. This spell offers no protection from continuous damage like flame or poison, and does not negate the effects of Shadow or Animus point loss.

Elite

As the Shadow, So the Form

SPD: 50 (hours)/DIFF: 25/DUR: permanent/ANI: 4

This vile spell enables the Shadowmage to alter the shape of the victim's shadow and cause their physical form to alter in



A Black Knight of the Shade fights her nemesis, one of the Tzerte Viazhe, or Violet Circle.

kind. The flesh and bone of the target actually flows into the new shape in a few minutes of terrible agony (causing the Pain Handicap). Making malformed and tortured shapes is easy, but there are said to be specialists, sculptors of flesh, in Klesht and the Dominion that can duplicate the physical appearance of anyone or anything.

System: Casters must spend the casting time undisturbed as they work the shadow of the victim into the desired shape. If they stray from the task at hand for more than a few minutes, the spell automatically fails and they must start over again. Near the end of the procedure, when the Shadowmage has manipulated the victim's soul into the proper shape, the hardest part occurs, getting the body to follow suit. The Shadowmage makes her Shadow Magic skill test at this point. If she fails, the Shadowmage was unable to mirror in flesh the soul's new form.

Altering a person's appearance, either completely differently or mimicking someone else is perhaps the simplest execution of this spell. Unfortunately, gross deformations and mutilations are all too often the goal of some Shadowmages skilled in its use. But there are those who turn this power to aid and heal. As the Shadow, So the Form can cure deformity and defects, and is an effective form of bloodless surgery. But there are deeper levels to this spell that are only hinted at in most circles. This spell could effectively create Shadekin, granting them powers and abilities far beyond mortal capabilities. Further, it is rumored that it might be possible for a Shadowmage to turn this power upon herself, becoming powerful Shadekin in the process.

Defensive Cardinal

Basic

Shadow Shield

SPD: 2/DIFF: 10/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: —

Solidifying a portion of her shadow into a physical barrier, the Shadowmage erects a shield that can fend off physical attacks. Her whirling shadow can deflect strikes, weapons, even bullets and explosions. It provides no defense against magical attacks, however.

System: Each success can create 3 points of armor, with an Armor Value of 4. These points are ablative, or limited, and are reduced as they absorb damage point per point. Armor Piercing 5 attacks penetrate the Shadow Shield without affecting it. The Shadow Shield can, however, regenerate itself. For the duration of the spell, whenever the Shadowmage takes a Recovery. Speed used will also allow the Shield to "heal" 1 point of armor. The duration of the spell can be doubled for every 2 successes. The Shadow Shield will defend without direction of the Shadowmage, deflecting even those attacks from unseen quarters. Shadow Shields will continue to deflect attacks until their duration has ended.

Advanced

Resist Magic

SPD: 10/DIFF: 15/DUR: 1 minute/ANI: 1

The basic defense against magical attack, this quick ritual insulates the caster against being affected by all kinds of magic. Once cast, the spell defends against both detrimental and beneficial effects directly targeted on the caster. Incidental effects like the explosion of an detonation rune or falling over a cliff as the result of a Shadow Magic push are not covered.

System: Subtracts the character's current Animus score from the skill test of any Rune or spell cast at the Shadowmage for the duration of the Resist Magic spell (note this is the current state of the pool, so as the Shadowmage expends points to cast more spells her defense weakens). The caster may cancel the defense if she wishes by expending 1 Speed at the beginning of a round. Otherwise the defense is subtracted from any and all spells targeted on the caster. For every success spent, the spell lasts 1 minute.

Expert

Ghost Armor

SPD: 2/DIFF: 15/DUR: 20 minutes/ANI: 2

A well-known and much talked about power is the Shadowmage's Ghost Armor. Formed from the Mage's own shadow, it rises up his body assuming the shape of a suit of full armor. Glossy black, its shape contours to the personal whim of the Mage.

System: Ghost Armor has a point value equivalent of 2 points per success, and an Armor Value of 3. The Armor Value can be raised by 1 for every 4 successes spent. Duration of the spell can be doubled for 1 success. Ghost Armor is weightless and so has no Encumbrance Value.

Elite

Resilient Shell

SPD: 6/DIFF: 15/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: 4

A faint shadowy nimbus surrounds the Shadowmage to a radius of 10'. All within this shell share the protection it offers. As long as the Shadowmage concentrates upon maintaining the Shell, no projectile, no matter how massive or enchanted, will penetrate the Shell. The Shell will also protect those within from any collateral damage that might result. Some masters are even able to redirect such an attack back upon the aggressor.

System: The Shell will remain centered on the Shadowmage as she moves and anyone inside must keep pace. It is possible for the Shadowmage or anyone in the Shell to attack out but the Shell will offer no protection from melee attacks or more subtle magics (those that do not involve a projectile as a means of attack). For 10 successes, the Resilient Shell will not only stop incoming missile attacks, but also will turn them back upon their owners, who must make a Defensive roll versus their original Attack roll to avoid being struck.

Movement Cardinal

Basic

Shadow Steed

SPD: 10/DIFF: 15/DUR: 1 hour/ANI: —

The shadow of the caster carries the Shadowmage across any surface, the direction and speed controlled by the Shadowmage's mere thought. The Steed's appearance is dictated by the Shadowmage's own creativity and does not necessarily have to be in the shape of an animal, or any recognizable shape at all. It can move over any surface, from dirt to rock to snow, ice and water without penalty, including any slope, wall, or ceiling, but cannot fly. The Steed has a limited life and dissipates after a certain amount of time. It is advised that the Shadowmage be upon solid ground when this occurs.

System: Because the condition of the surface crossed has no bearing on the speed the Steed may travel, for every 1 success, the Steed will travel at 15 MPH. The base 1-hour duration of the spell can be doubled for every 2 successes. For every 2 successes the Steed will also accommodate an additional passenger. The Shadow Steed is silent and leaves no traces of its passing, and in fact exerts no pressure upon the surface it walks.

Advanced

Phantom Wings

SPD: 8/DIFF: 15/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: 1

A natural progression of the Shadow Steed, Phantom Wings allows the Shadowmage to achieve flight. Some Shadowmages prefer the image of great raven wings, while others prefer billowing capes of darkness. The function remains the same.

System: For every 1 success the Shadowmage will fly at +20 MPH. This means the flying Shadowmage can fly 5 feet for 1 Speed as normal, and can move 40 feet in 1 Count. These rates increase proportionately with the expenditure of successes (2 successes allows 10 feet for 1 speed and 80 feet per count, 3 allows 15 feet for 1 Speed and 120 feet per count, etc.) The duration of the spell can be doubled for every 2 successes. Not meant for transporting numbers of people, the Shadowmage can only carry with him someone of a Mass equal to or less than hers.

Expert

Night Crossing

SPD: 4/DIFF: 20/DUR: instant/ANI: 2

By entering the shadows around her, the mage travels to another shadow without traversing the space in between. Powerful Shadowmages can travel almost any distance this way with a single step.

System: Only places that have been previously memorized (a ten-minute process) or are in sight of the Shadowmage can be traveled to this way. The caster can spend successes depending on how far she wants to travel. The base distance is 100 feet, which the caster can spend 2 successes to double. (Thus, +2 successes = 200', +4 = 400', +6 = 1,600', +8 = 1 mile, +10 = 2 miles, +12 = 4 miles, +14 = 8 miles. Traveling to one of the Moons of Zir'An would require approximately 100 successes, to the stars, 600.

Elite

The Dark Threshold

SPD: 100 (minutes)/DIFF: 25/DUR: instant/ANI: 4

The ultimate journey waits beyond the Dark Threshold. The Shadowmage's body fades and darkens until only a pool of quivering shadow remains. The Shadowmage has stepped bodily into the spirit realm, a mirror image of the physical world where lost souls wander, powerful Shadekin hunt their prey, and curious or malevolent Shadowmages travel. It is a dreamlike realm where the fantasies of the realm's ghostly inhabitants superimpose upon the dim reality of the physical world. The spirits of the living appear as wisps and specters moving about a gray landscape, marking their passage through the material realm. Shadowmages have greater access to the spirits of others in this realm and can track a single soul from billions with much greater ease than in the physical world. As spirits now themselves, the laws of matter or gravity no longer restrict their movements. But their freedom comes with a price. They are susceptible to the predations of malevolent spirits and other unscrupulous entities that prowl this realm. If the Shadowmage is not careful, such a being might track the Mage back to her body.

System: To pass through the Dark Threshold, the Shadowmage must spend the casting time in deep meditation. A meditation roll is not necessary, but if the player so chooses, a Basic (10) Mediation skill test will add to her Shadow Magic roll by +1 for every 1 success she achieves. Once she has completed casting the spell, the Mage's body vanishes, leaving a shadowy pool behind. This is the Threshold that marks where the Mage entered the spirit realm. It is also where the Shadowmage must exit. No physical force, no matter how great, can harm the Threshold. Powerful magics, both of Shadow or Rune, could conceivably close the Threshold, trapping the Shadowmage inside the ghost realm, but so long as the Shadowmage lives, the Threshold will exist. There is no limit to how long the Shadowmage can exist inside the spirit realm, and time moves in odd ways there. Though much of the spirit realm is relatively harmless, the longer one remains, the greater the chance that she will attract the attention of rogue entities that traverse the realm. Once the Shadowmage wishes to return to the physical world, she can do so in an instant, snapping back to and through the Threshold without having to search for where she actually entered.

Mind Cardinal

Basic

Empathic Impressions

SPD: 8/DIFF: 10/DUR: instant/ANI: —

When coupled with the use of a Shadow Song, the Shadowmage can gain an impression of the emotional states of those souls that he senses. As the Shadowmage's skill in Shadow Song improves, so his perception of emotions becomes more precise.

System: With a successful roll, the Shadowmage will only be able to sense strong, simple emotions. If the Shadowmage is Advanced in level or spends 3 successes, the Shadowmage will be able to discern more subtle emotions. For Shadowmages of Expert level or those spending 5 successes, deep emotional states and even motives become clearer.

Advanced

Seize Shadow

SPD: 6/DIFF: 15/DUR: special/ANI: 1

The caster grasps and manipulates another's Shadow, forcing the body to follow suit. Powerful Shadowmages can work their target like a puppet on a string.

System: Once cast, the Shadowmage subtracts his successes casting the spell from the Speed of the target. If the number of successes fails to exceed the Speed of the target, the Shadowmage fails to take control, though the target will lose those points off of his Speed for the duration of that combat turn as their body spasms and flails. If the casting successes are greater than the Speed of the target, the Shadowmage may force the target to perform standard actions of his choice (speak, move, attack with hands or weapon, but not spell casting or magic use). The duration of the spell is a matter of how long the Shadowmage can concentrate undisturbed on controlling the victim.

Expert

Dominate the Spirit

SPD: 200 (minutes)/DIFF: 13 + target's ACUITY/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: 2

With this spell the Shadowmage insinuates the force of his will into another's spirit via his shadow. It requires the Shadowmage to closely observe the victim, examining his shadow to slowly take possession of it and the victim's mind. This has the tendency of placing the target into a trancelike state where the deep well of his every memory and thought are open to perusal. He will answer questions to the limits of his knowledge. The most insidious use of Dominate the Spirit, however, is the Shadowmage's ability to build up control over time until the victim does the Shadowmage's bidding without question or hesitation.

System: In order for the spell to work, the victim must remain in sight of the Shadowmage. This does not have to be done in physical proximity however, as there are means for Shadowmages, particularly those of this Finesse Level, to view targets remotely. This sight must remain unbroken throughout the casting time; if it is broken, the spell will have to be re-cast once the victim is within sight again. The initial trancelike state which the victim lapses into lasts for 5 minutes, can be doubled for every 2 successes. Four successes will suppress any single memory or moment from the victim's mind. If the Shadowmage accumulates a number of successes equal to the target's Acuity x5, generally over a period of time where the Shadowmage regularly subjects the victim to this spell, the victim will obey any an all commands given for the duration of the spell. Subjecting the victim to a Purge Impurity spell can negate the effects of this spell.

Elite

Consume Memory

SPD: 150 (hours)/DIFF: 25/DUR: instant/ANI: 4

This dreadful ritual involves the Shadowmage directly consuming knowledge from the mind of the victim. This requires an extended period of time as the Shadowmage delicately excises the specific body of knowledge from the thoughts and memories of the victim. The victim must be restrained or otherwise cowed, for this period of activity must be undisturbed or the spell fails. Once complete, the Shadowmage now possesses the knowledge and the victim has no recollection of it any longer.

System: This allows the Shadowmage to steal an entire skill, Finesse Level and all, from the mind of the victim. The higher the Finesse Level of the skill, the more successes are required. With a simple success, a Basic skill can be stolen. For 8 successes, an Advanced skill can be stolen. Expert skills require 16 successes, while Elite skills require 24. The Shadowmage will now gain full and permanent use of this skill. More directly it can be used to extract a memory or a group of memories from the victims' minds, memories that for them are gone forever. A simple success will yield a day's worth of memories. 8 successes could steal a week's worth or a single chain of related memories that stretch back through the subject's multiple lifetimes.

Offensive Cardinal

Basic

Attack the Spirit

SPD: 4/DIFF: 15/DUR: instant/ANI: —

This attack siphons energy away from the target, causing it to be lethargic and weak-spirited. Against beings without shadows (Shadekin, Kalith, Zhalanti, etc.) this attack actually causes physical damage. If the energy of a person's spirit is completely drained, he will fall into an apathetic daze and may die.

System: For every success, the victim will lose a point from his Shadow. The loss isn't permanent and as the rules for Shadow loss state (see Damage to Shadow page 151), each hour of 55sleep will restore a point of Shadow. Shadekin, Kalith, Fane, or Elite Shadowmages take a similar amount of damage in Vitality. The range of the attack is the sight of the caster.

Advanced

Bolt of Shadow

SPD: 3/DIFF: 15/DUR: instant/ANI: 1

It is possible for the Shadowmage to give his shadow physical form. At this stage, it is only possible to solidify small portions of his shadow. But the Shadowmage is capable of creating supremely sharp bolts or thin tendrils that can lance outward with great speed and accuracy.

System: With the successes gained on the Shadow Magic roll, the mage may cause lethal damage at a distance. The attack

damage is (Shadow Magic skill level) ap4 and the base range is 30 feet. +1 damage costs +1 successes. For +4 successes the armor piercing level may be increased. Though limited by line of sight, for +2 successes the range can be doubled (30' to 60', 60' to 120', etc.).

Shade Blade Hurricane

SPD: 4/DIFF: 20/DUR: instant/ANI: 1

Spinning around the caster, the shadow emits a piercing scream and slices into anything around the mage, delivering millions of slicing cuts to those nearby.

System: This spell causes base 1ap5 damage to anything within 5' radius of the Shadowmage. +1 successes add damage points while +2 successes double the radius.

Expert

Obliviate

SPD: 4/DIFF: 20/DUR: instant/ANI: 2

The Shadowmage violently rips spirit energy from another with this spell by touching her shadow to that of the victim. Victims are weakened as their shadows are torn to shreds that visibly flow into the mage's own shadow.

System: Every +4 success spent transfers 1 Shadow point from the target to the Shadowmage's Animus. These points may be used just like Animus points, but if they are not used within 12 hours they dissipate. The loss of points from the victim's Shadow is permanent until raised through experience points. Those reduced to zero Shadow gradually fall into torpor and die in a few hours, their will to live torn from them.

Elite

The Dark Rapine

SPD: 15/DIFF: 15+Shadow of target/DUR: permanent/ANI: 4

With this fell magic, the caster strips the victim of his shadow and spirit, enslaving it forever to her own.

System: The successful use of this spell requires a specially constructed vessel, which will contain the trapped soul. Because of the potentially high Animus cost involved, it is almost assured that the Shadowmage will have to expend Animus to succeed. Cast upon a living victim, a successful attempt tears the soul from its tether, drawing it into the prepared vessel. The victim, now without a soul, will sink into depression, eventually losing the will to live in 2 to 3 hours. The trapped soul is under the complete control of its possessor. The Shadowmage can subject it to any spell that affects the mind or soul but with the ^spell's difficulty reduced by 3. A trapped soul has several uses. It contains all the memories and knowledge of the person it once was, information to which the Shadowmage has easy access. The trapped soul's Shadow score can be used as a pool of points, similar to Animus that the Shadowmage can use to enhance spell casting. If the Shadowmage wishes, she could simply devour the soul, permanently adding 1 point to her Animus. It is possible to return the soul back into its body, provided it is still alive.

Perception Cardinal

Basic

Shadowsight

SPD: 1/DIFF: 7/DUR: special/ANI: —

The Shadowmage is able to see in the dark and detect magically invisible or concealed things.

System: No penalties to Perception rolls from darkness or invisibility spells or abilities of others. Smoke or other opaque concealment is still effective. Each success grants 1 minute of sight.

Advanced

Eye of the Shades

SPD: 12/DIFF: 10/DUR: special/ANI: 1

With only general knowledge of where or whom they desire to see, the Shadowmage can view things through the shadows extant in the area.

System: Every success allows the Shadowmage to perceive through any shadows within a 5' radius. Each additional success spent doubles that radius. This allows the Shadowmage to see behind him or peer into the inside of a closed structure through the shadows within it. Alternately, the Shadowmage can view into an area he is familiar with, regardless of the distance. To view a place, a mage must have been there or have an accurate detailed map or illustration of the location. An artifact owned by a person is required to view individuals and their general vicinity.

Each success allows a minute of viewing time. Shadowmages can notice another mage observing in their vicinity with an Advanced (15) Shadow Magic skill test. Scent of the Prey will also reveal this spell's use. If a Shadowmage notices that another is using this spell in the area, he can disrupt the spell automatically with the expenditure of 1 Animus. At Elite Finesse Level skill, 2 successes allow the Shadowmage to view one day into the past or future, and for every 4 successes thereafter he can double this amount of time (6 for two days, 10 for four, 14 for eight, etc.) into the past or possible future viewed.

The Unwanted Guest

10/DIFF: 15/DUR: special/ANI: 1

Through this spell, the Shadowmage attaches a small portion of her shadow to that of another person, in essence hitching a ride on that person's soul. During this time, the Shadowmage can perceive through all the host's senses, but is not aware of his thoughts. She cannot influence the host, merely see, hear, taste, and feel all that he does.

System: The Shadowmage must be in close proximity to the subject in question in order to sneak a bit of her shadow into that of the target's, all without the subject knowing. The cost of this begins with a base 1 point of her Shadow for every person targeted. Those points will not return or regenerate until the Shadowmage withdraws that portion of her shadow from the soul of her target, thus cutting their connection. The Shadowmage must be in a meditative state to perceive through her target's

senses; their connection lasting until either the Shadowmage withdraws the connection or their symbiotic attachment is discovered. Other Shadowmages can sense the presence of a hitchhiking Shadowmage through the spell Gaze into Shadow, Scent of the Prey, or Shadow Song. A simple Purge Impurity spell will immediately sever the connection.

Expert

Piercing Vision

SPD: 8/DIFF: 20/DUR: instant/ANI: 2

When Shadowmages send forth the harmonic song for other souls to silently respond to, the Shadowmages do not actually see the souls around them. This spell allows Shadowmages to actually see the physical selves of the souls they perceive.

System: If they succeed they will clearly perceive the physical forms of the souls around them. The range is within a 150' radius, 1 point from the Mage's Animus will extend this range another 30'. Further, Piercing Vision will reveal a being's true form, easily seeing past any disguises, magical or otherwise. For certain creatures and beings, this may be disastrous, driving the viewer Insane...

Elite

Other Eyes

SPD: 8/DIFF: 20/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: 4

Though the ability known as the Dark Threshold allows a Shadowmage to traverse and interact with the spirit realm, Other Eyes allows the Shadowmage to peer into that concurrent reality. The Shadowmage can shift her sight to perceive the spirit realm as though she exists within it. While this allows the Shadowmage to see the souls of others and the bizarre landscape of the ghost world, it also allows her to see through physical objects as though they were made of smoky glass. The Shadowmage can witness the strange creatures and lost souls that wander the spirit realm; all but the most powerful will be unaware that they are being watched.

System: Other Eyes will last until the Shadowmage decides to shift back to normal vision. Other Eyes can grant the Shadowmage great perceptive abilities, but lacks the physical world's crispness or precision. Fine details of the physical world are invisible in the spirit realm, lost in translucency or obscured by the contorted revision of physical reality common in the ghost world. Although use of Shadow Magic spells suffer no penalty while Other Eyes is in effect, attacking or defending against physical attack suffers a –5 to the Shadowmage's roll. The eyes of the Shadowmage will turn a solid inky black while Other Eyes is employed. Each success will add 1 minute to the duration.

Phantasm Cardinal

Basic

Veil

SPD: 6/DIFF: 10/DUR: 30 minutes/ANI: —

This simple illusion allows the Shadowmage to alter his physical appearance. The changes can be simple or grandiose, and with even a little more effort these changes will feel real to those who actually touch him.

System: A simple successful roll will allow the Shadowmage to greatly alter his appearance, though they must maintain the general shape and size of his true form. For 2 successes the Veil may cast an image that varies greatly from the Shadowmage's actual appearance. For 6 successes, the illusion will take on physical weight, defying even hands-on, up-close inspection. The duration of the Veil can be extended by 5 minutes for every 2 successes. For the duration of the spell the Shadowmage can change his appearance into a completely new shape for a 6-Speed action.

Advanced

Trick the Eye

SPD: 10/DIFF: 10/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: 1

Light and shadow warp around the Shadowmage, concealing her from view. As she moves, the air seems to shimmer with her vague ghostly image. Even in plain sight, the Shadowmage can pass without detection.

System: The duration of the spell can be doubled for 2 successes. For each 1 success, the Shadowmage can deduct 1 point from any Knowledge or Personal aptitude rolls used to detect her. This only affects visual perception and more thorough senses are unaffected by this spell.

Expert

Dance of the Shadows

SPD: 3/DIFF: 15/DUR: special/ANI: 2

By manipulating the warp and weft of shadows, the Mage can create illusions of startling complexity.

System: The difficulty for those to see through the illusion is equivalent to the spell-casting roll made by the Shadowmage to establish the deception after successes are spent. The total area the illusion can encompass is a 5' sphere radius sphere, doubled for every 1 success. The images created are restricted in movement to the area of the spell's effect but can be seen from without. Illusions are capable of generating sound (any sound the caster has ever heard) for 2 successes. For 6 successes the illusion will appear and feel to be completely real, having apparent weight, temperature, and physical characteristics. Illusions cannot cause harm, even to those who believe them to be real, though they could indeed frighten the unsuspecting. The point at which the illusion is centered can be anywhere within the line of sight of the Shadowmage. Dance of the Shadows requires complete concentration by the Shadowmage. So long as the Shadowmage remains focused on the illusion it will remain. Once concentration is lost, the illusion immediately ceases.

Elite

Nightmare World

SPD: 8/DIFF: 25/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: 4

This terrible spell allows the Shadowmage to have complete

control over the perceptions of the victim. Everything the target sees, smells, touches, hears, and tastes falls to the Shadowmage's whim. The victim is plunged into a world of the Shadowmage's creation. No matter how surreal or horrifying the illusionary reality, it will be very difficult for victims to disregard what all their senses are telling them. No one else will be able to see what the target is witnessing, though the Shadowmage may make them unwitting participants in the victim's delusion. Or the Shadowmage can ^steep the target so deeply into this false reality that they simply stare off into the distance, disconnected from the normal world. It is possible for the victim to be harmed, even killed, by the illusions created by the Shadowmage.

System: The Shadowmage picks a single target to be the recipient of the Nightmare World. An additional victim can be targeted for 8 successes per new target. The target will still have control over his movements and actions, but the Shadowmage can turn this to her advantage by urging the target to move, act, or attack in accordance to the illusions the Shadowmage presents to him. For 6 successes, the Shadowmage can completely disconnect the victim from physical reality, rendering him essentially catatonic while his mind wanders vistas of the Shadowmage's creation. The spell duration can be doubled for every 2 successes but will cease if the Shadowmage is rendered unconscious. Though it does not require that the Shadowmage be in constant sight of the victim, the Shadowmage must remain focused on the spell for the length of its duration. It is possible for the Shadowmage to even cause actual harm to the victim through the illusions. Over the course of the illusion, the Shadowmage can inflict damage equivalent to her Shadow. This damage bypasses armor or any other protections the victim bears or thinks he bears. This damage is non-specific, taken directly off of the victim's Vitality, but will result in death if it reduces his Vitality to zero. Nightmare World can be dispelled with a Purge Impurity spell, but the roll must exceed the amount rolled by the Shadowmage who cast Nightmare World.

Shadow Autonomy Cardinal

Basic

Phantasmal Doppelganger

SPD: 4/DIFF: 23/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: —

By granting their shadow limited autonomy, they can create a phantasmal image of themselves that can be used to distract or mislead others. While not able to pass as the actual Shadowmage in good light and at close range, at distances greater than 10' the shadow will seem completely solid and indistinguishable from the Shadowmage who created it. It can be made to run around corners or stalk people. The Shadowmage cannot perceive through the shadow, nor can any information be gleaned from his doppelganger about what it may have witnessed. The doppelganger can be recalled instantaneously at any time, vanishing back to the mage.

System: The duration of the spell can be extended by 1 minute for 1 success each. Any magical attacks directed at the Phantasm will cause it to immediately disperse, with no ill affect to the Shadowmage. The Shadowmage specifies a specific routine for the Doppelganger, "lead anyone within sight in this (or that) direction" or "follow anyone who enters this area." The Doppelganger will follow this simple instruction until its duration ends, and requires no direct control of the Shadowmage.

Shadow Sentry

SPD: 2/DIFF: 10/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: —

The Shadowmage endows her shadow with a limited sensory capability, meant to detect the presence of ambushes and surprise attacks, sending a warning to the Shadowmage when an attack comes from an unseen quarter.

System: During the spell's duration, the Shadowmage will not lose Speed from ambushes or surprise attacks. Shadow Sentry's duration can be lengthened by 5 minutes for every 2 successes.

Dark Voices

SPD: 10/DIFF: 15/DUR: special/ANI: —

The shadow of the caster is sent to deliver a message. The missive can be spoken or whispered to the target in any of the languages that the Shadowmage can speak.

System: Simply succeeding in the spell casting allows the Shadowmage to deliver a quick statement of a sentence or two, either to a specific individual named by the Shadowmage or to anyone within earshot of the general area decided upon. Two successes could allow the Shadowmage to deliver a longer, more detailed message. It costs no successes to deliver a message to anyone within line of sight of the Shadowmage. If the Shadowmage knows the general location of the person in question, it costs 4 successes. For 8 successes, the message will reach its intended even if the Shadowmage has no idea where the recipient is. This latter part necessitates the caster having a valued possession or talisman (lock of hair, fingernail) of the target. The messenger shadow travels at incredible speeds, traversing both the material and spiritual realms. Several hundred miles an hour is typical and once the message is delivered, the Shadowmage will be able to sense if the message was delivered successfully. The spell can reach people in anything but magically warded structures, which dispel the Shadowmage's messenger.

Advanced

Night Talons

SPD: 5/DIFF: 15/DUR: variable/ANI: 1

The Shadowmage sets her shadow loose to attack independently of the Shadowmage. The Shadowmage is free to act however she wishes, attacking, casting spells, while her Shadow strikes at all within range of its grasping claws.

System: The number of successes gained becomes a Speed pool for the shadow of the caster. It has only one type of action, a strike that costs 4 Speed. The shadow can attack targets within a radius of 5' per point of the caster's Shadow stat, striking anytime after the Shadowmage's Initiative Bid, using the Shadowmage's

Physique + Shadow Magic for its attack roll. It delivers melee damage equal to the caster's Acuity, with an ap3. Combat Finesse successes scored by the Night Talons can be drawn from the Unarmed Combat Finesse Effects, up to a Finesse Level equal to the Shadowmage's own Unarmed skill (or Basic Finesse Level if the Shadowmage does not possess the skill Unarmed). The shadow ceases attacking when it runs out of enough Speed points to perform attacks, at which point it returns to its natural state. The Shadow itself cannot be harmed by any known force, but will cease to act if the Shadowmage is rendered unconscious.

Expert

Geas the Other

SPD: 40 (minutes)/DIFF: 25/DUR: special/ANI: 2

The Shadowmage has learned how to detach his shadow, but unlike the Dark Voices spell, this Shadow can have complex instructions and it can think for itself. A natural progression of Night Talons, the shadow is now free to roam independently. There are rumors of a more advanced version that enslaves and commands the unwilling shadows of others.

System: For every 1 success, the Shadowmage can give his shadow a simple instruction, "Go there," "Protect this," "Attack that," "Scout ahead," etc. For 1 success, the Shadowmage can grant his shadow a point of Speed to perform any tasks or attacks required to fulfill its instructions. The shadow itself possesses little ability to affect the physical world. It can pass silently and swiftly, as a shadow does, and is not hindered by most barriers. It can attack, with a value equivalent to that of Night Talons, as above. It cannot be physically harmed, but attacks that affect the shadow, affect the Shadowmage as normal. The Shadowmage can recall its errant shadow whenever he wishes; otherwise it will continue to remain active as long as the Shadowmage has tasks for it to perform. Most Shadowmages, however, are reluctant to let their souls go wandering for too long. The HoF needs to interpret how successful the Shadow is at following the instructions given — the Shadow itself is a reflection of the inner spirit of its origin and has a personality to match. A Kleshti shadow is always looking for loopholes in its instructions, while an Illestani shadow will try to attack those it sees as enemies if possible, even if the mage is currently its ally.

Shadow Scribe

SPD: 2/DIFF: 15/DUR: instant/ANI: 2

By gaining control over the form of his own shadow, the Shadowmage can contort it into runic patterns, using the medium of his own soul to create the rune. Thus he can devote his own personal Shadow to empower Rune Magic.

System: For every 2 successes, the Shadowmage can add 1 point to any Rune Magic roll. Normally the rune so empowered must be in the immediate vicinity of the Shadowmage (so using it to boost the power of explosion runes might be a tad problematic). When used in conjunction with Geas the Other, a Shadowmage could shadow scribe a rune at a distance, sending out his shadow to form the rune at some distant location.

Elite

Unbound Spirit

SPD: —/DIFF: 25/DUR: special/ANI: 4

The last resort of the powerful Shadowmage, this spell allows the Shadowmage's soul to persist in the physical realm for a short period of time after the Mage's death. The soul will then have a limited amount of time to find a new host body. Once it has, it forces itself upon the unfortunate host, ejecting the previous soul into the spirit realm, where it will wander, forever lost. If the Shadowmage is unable to find a host body in which to inhabit, it will fade into the afterlife.

System: The moment the Shadowmage dies, he may attempt this spell, rolling as normal. If he succeeds, his spirit will remain in the area, free to possess an available host. The Shadowmage has a number of minutes equal to his Shadow to find a suitable host. For every 1 success, the duration of the spell can be increased by 1 minute. To possess a host body, the number of points currently in the Mage's Animus must exceed the Shadow of the victim. In such a case, the spirit must move on in search of a suitably weaker host (unfortunately, children are often the target of evil Shadowmages, as they are easiest to possess). Once a body has been possessed, it is owned fully, its previous host rudely shoved aside. Such souls end up wandering aimlessly in the silver twilight of the spirit realm forever.

Shadow Form Cardinal

Basic

Enshroud

SPD: 6/DIFF: 10/DUR: 10 minutes/ANI: —

The Shadowmage may remove herself from physical reality by stepping into her own shadow. She fades from view and in fact has completely vanished. Time seems to stand still within the shroud of her spirit, and when she steps out once again, many minutes will have passed. The Shadowmage cannot move from the spot she stepped into, nor can she perceive anything but the darkness that surrounds her.

System: While Enshroud is in effect, the Shadowmage cannot be detected or affected by anything existing in the physical world, but the Shadowmage can do nothing to affect the physical world, much less see it. The duration of the spell can be increased by 5 minutes for every 1 success. For every 2 successes, the Shadowmage can pull someone into the shroud with her.

Advanced

A Mantle of Darkness

SPD: 4/DIFF: 15/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: 1

Though this spell, the Shadowmage takes on the form of her shadow, assuming its shape and substance. The Shadowmage can move without making a sound, leave no trace of her movement, and blend in invisibly with darkness. In this form she is impervious to physical harm but opens herself completely

to Shadow Magic attack.

System: The duration of the spell can be increased by 1 minute per 1 success. While immune to physical attack, all Shadow Magic attacks directed at her gain a bonus of +5 to the roll. The Shadowmage can resume her physical form at any time without penalty.

Expert

Superior Form

SPD: 12/DIFF: 20/DUR: 5 minutes/ANI: 2

Through the transformation into the Superior Form, the Shadowmage's body assumes some of the characteristics of a shadow, but can still interact with the physical world, attacking or casting Shadow Magic spells. Foremost among the powers of the Superior Form is weightlessness and elasticity. Shadowmages can stretch their bodies into nearly any shape and to great lengths. As a shadow, the Mage has no weight and so can move swiftly and silently. Her body is nearly invulnerable to physical harm though in this form she is more vulnerable to Shadow Magic.

System: The Shadowmage can still affect physical objects as she can when in a completely physical form. Her body can stretch a number of feet equal to twice her Shadow stat. This distance can be doubled for 5 successes. Her body can also shrink and contort, squeezing through even the tightest spaces (under doors or through a knothole). The duration of the spell can be increased by 1 minute for 2 successes each. Though the Shadowmage is invulnerable to mundane physical matter, enchanted weapons will still be capable of causing physical harm. All Offensive Shadow Magic spells gain a +5 to their roll against the Shadowmage adopting a Superior Form.

Elite

Visions of the Potentia

SPD: 24 (days)/DIFF: 20/DUR: special/ANI: 4

By meditating and contemplating the shadow, the mage enters into a state of oracle and prophesy. He may seek the answer to a question, the cure for an ill, or insight into the nature of himself. Looking into the heart of All, he merges into his shadow and disappears for days. Some never return. Those that do are filled with energy and purpose, their insight galvanizing them into action.

System: To merge with the Potentia, the source of all energy, is an unusual experience to say the least. It does not give up its secrets easily, often devising ways to test the Shadowmage or force him to look into himself and plunge the secrets of his own soul. No Shadowmage undertakes this effort and remains unchanged by what he experiences. But secrets, truths, and visions of the past, present, or future, can be divined. The spell is not without its risks, however, as many Shadowmages never return from their trip into the Ylar.



An angry Rune Mage is a deadly adversary.

CHAPTER 12

ADVERSARIES

"The light of civilization now flickers darkly, and in the night the things outside howl for its death."

—Introduction to *The History of Histories,* by Artaud Tevali

Name

Names given are those that fit the common definition of the creature in question. Different cultures have different names for most creatures found in Zir'An.

Classification

These Vandalusan terms connote the species and phylum of the creature in question. Creatures whose classification begins with *"Dran"* represent natural creatures, while the classification *Myrkullan* has come to define Shadekin creatures. Though not all Shadekin have been created by Mirkule, his name has become synonymous with them.

Habitat

Where the creature may be encountered and notes on regional variations.

Physical Description & Behavior

Self explanatory.

Stats

The stat ranges given are for a typical adult of the species.

Aptitude/Skills

While most creatures lack the intelligence to acquire the skills common to adventurers, they do possess some rudimentary skills. Athletics determines the creature's ability to leap or chase or avoid being hit.

Valdryer

Some creatures will possess unique Valdreyr.

Move

The creature's movement rate (distance moved for 1 Speed) and the amount of distance it can cover in 1 initiative Count. If the creature possesses more than one mode of movement (flight, swimming, leaping, etc.), its distances and Speed costs are listed separately.

Special Abilities

If the creature possesses special senses, magical abilities, or special combat finesse effects, they will be listed here.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Commonly, creatures of an animal intelligence will respond in rote fashion, offering up fixed Initiative Bids

from their speed, depending upon whether they are in an aggressive or defensive posture. Aggressive creatures are those that are actively attacking the characters, making their fixed bid and attacking on their turn. If wounded, magically frightened, or otherwise dissuaded, they're in a defensive posture and will generally use any remaining Speed to flee and only attack if cornered, in which case their defensive posture is still used to the last.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

The creature's combat roll is listed here, along with its respective Finesse Level and defense modes (either Dodge or Block) available. Creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or less can only use Universal Combat Finesse Effects, as they lack the intelligence to carry out any sort of planned attack. Creatures with an Intelligence of 3 or less cannot use any Special Defensive Finesse Effects, but may spend Speed to increase a defense roll.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

The damage, ap value and speed costs of the creature's attacks are listed here.

Armor

The defense value and armor value are listed here.

Health

Complete with each listing is the creature's appropriate hit location chart, Vitality and Lethal Wounds.

MOUNTS

APOLAI (DRANAVUS LONDOS)

Habitat

The Apolai enjoy the wide-open plains and warm weather of Ianu Voss. They are creatures of the grasslands, where they hunt malhags (small burrowing mammals) and create large nests among the tall grasses of the continent's interior. In Arivonne, the Apolai have adapted to the mountainous terrain, and while they prefer Arivonne's wide canyon bottoms, they have learned how to navigate the scant mountain passes and scale its steep slopes.

Physical Description & Behavior

Axe-beaked birdlike war mounts of Arivonne and Ianu Voss are perfectly suited for the mountainous environment there. Used in both peace and war for their sure-footedness and ability to glide



for short distances, the Apolai sky cavalry of Arivonne is famed for its aerial drops into the midst of enemy lines. A rather sizable income can be made as a successful Apolai breeder and the bird comes in a variety of desirable plumages and temperaments. On average they stand 7' and weigh 300 pounds. Arivonneans, besides using them as pack animals, have also used the Apolai to play the popular sport, Ciba.

Stats

Phy: 14	Spd: 12
Mass: 12	React: 8
Int: 2	Per: 4
Acu: 6	Sha: 4

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics. A2
Awareness. A4
Social: 1

Valdryer
None.

Move
Free move: 5 feet
Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.
Glide: No Speed cost, 30 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics, +5 feet.

Special Abilities
Starlight Vision (120 feet).

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 6
Defensive: 3

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 11+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 13+1d10. Dodge (Basic)

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Beak Chop: 3 Speed. 15ap1
Dewclaw: 4 Speed. 12ap2

Armor
Feather coat: 4av1

Health
72 Vitality. 6 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2–4 Head (5LW). 5–7 Left Wing (6LW). 6–8 Right Wing (6LW). 9–14 Body(9LW). 15–17 Left Leg (6LW). 18–20 Right Leg (6LW).

Apolai War Mount

Stats

Phy: 16	Spd: 14
Mass: 14	React: 12
Int: 3	Per: 6
Acu: 8	Sha: 8

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 4
Athletics. Ex3
Awareness. A2
Social: 1

Valdryer
None.

Move
Free move: 10 feet
Move: 15 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 30 feet in 1 Count.
Glide: No Speed cost. 40 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Expert Athletics, +5 feet.

Special Abilities
Starlight Vision: 120 Feet.
Wing Block: An Aplolai war mount may use its wing to block attacks targeting its rider. If the Apolai is aware of the incoming attack directed at its rider, it may make a defense roll against the incoming attack roll, for a cost of 1 Speed. If successful, the attack strikes the wing instead. This may injure the wing and so is best performed with barding.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 8
Defensive: 10

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 16+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 19+1d10. Dodge
Defense: 16+1d10. Block

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Beak Chop: 3 Speed. 18ap1
Dewclaw: 4 Speed. 15ap2 (18ap3 with metal-sheathed dewclaws)

Armor
Feather coat: 4av1; 12av2 with Barding

Health
91 Vitality. 7 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2–4 Head (6LW). 5–7 Left Wing (7LW). 6–8 Right Wing (7LW). 9–14 Body(10LW). 15–17 Left Leg (7LW). 18–20 Right Leg (7LW).

HORSE (DRANIKUUS EQUUS)

Habitat

Found in nearly every clime, adapted to nearly every environment.

Physical Description & Behavior

Found in the main continental regions of Zir'An, namely the Tilerian empire and Vallunei. Many breeds exist, from the swift steppe ponies of Bhuket to the proud Roans of Vallunei. Trained for battle, the armored warhorse is a powerful advantage on the field for its attacking power and mobility. The majority of horses are used for transportation and labor, however. In general they stand 3ft. — 6ft. at the shoulder, and weight 250–600 lbs.

Stats

Phy: 10	Spd: 10
Mass: 16	React: 6
Int: 2	Per: 4
Acu: 6	Sha: 7

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics: A1
Awareness: B
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

Free move: 10 feet

Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 30 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics, +5 feet.

Special Abilities

None.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/ Defensive

Aggressive: 4
Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 9+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 10+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 3 Speed. 7ap1
Rear Kick: 4 Speed. 12ap1

Armor

Hide: 2av1

Health

80 Vitality. 8 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2–3 Head (4LW). 4–5 Left Foreleg (5LW). 6–7 Right Foreleg (5LW). 8–16 Body(8LW). 17–18 Left Hindleg (5LW). 19–20 Right Hindleg (5LW).

Armored Warhorse

Stats

Phy: 12	Spd: 12
Mass: 20	React: 10
Int: 3	Per: 5
Acu: 7	Sha: 9

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics: A3
Awareness: B2
Social: 1

Valdryer

None.

Move

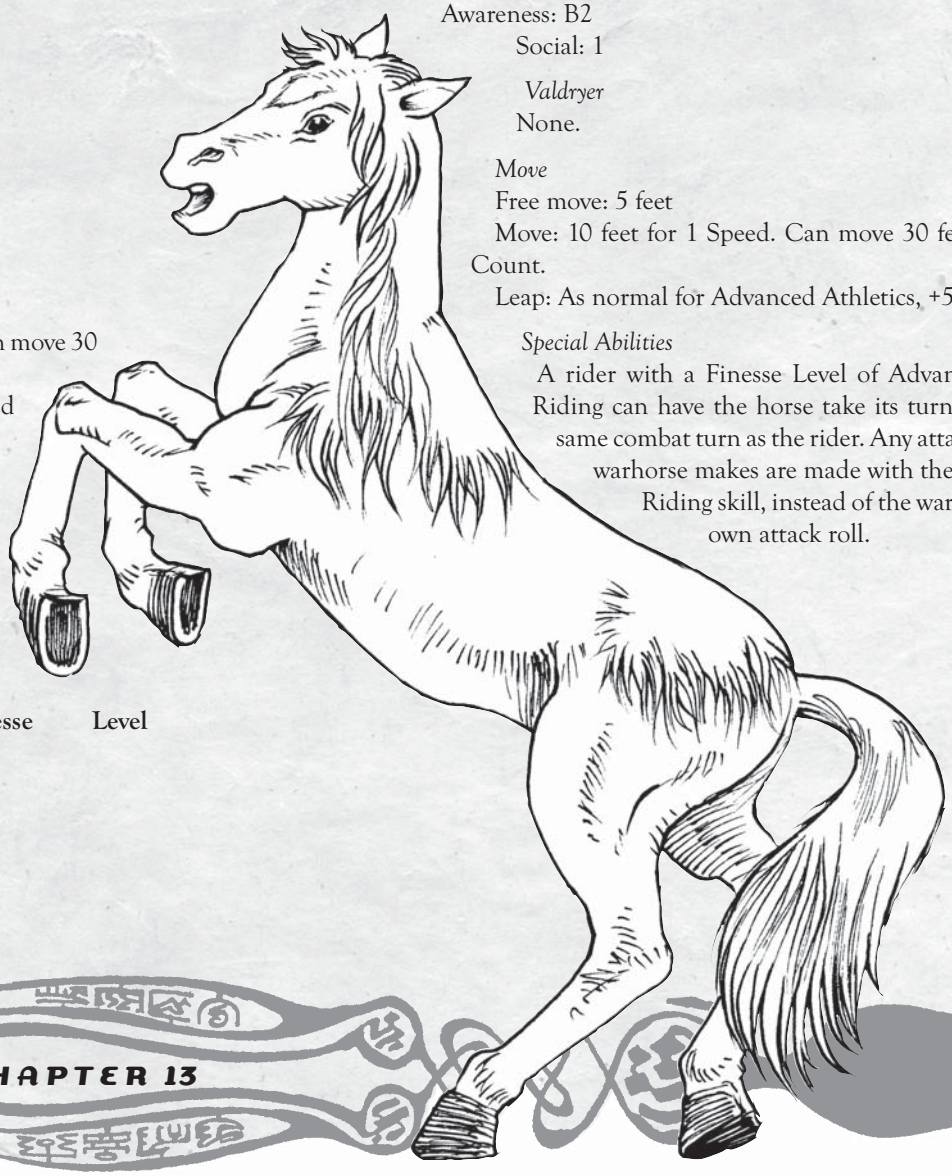
Free move: 5 feet

Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 30 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics, +5 feet.

Special Abilities

A rider with a Finesse Level of Advanced in Riding can have the horse take its turn in the same combat turn as the rider. Any attacks the warhorse makes are made with the rider's Riding skill, instead of the warhorse's own attack roll.



Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 6
Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 13+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 8+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Bite: 3 Speed. 8ap2
Rear Kick: 4 Speed. 16ap1
Front Hoof Stomp: 4 Speed. 12ap2

Armor
Hide: 4av1; 20av2 with Barding

Health
110 Vitality. 10 Damage Points per Lethal Wound
2–3 Head (5LW). 4–5 Left Foreleg (6LW). 6–7 Right Foreleg (6LW). 8–16 Body(9LW). 17–18 Left Hindleg (6LW). 19–20 Right Hindleg (6LW).

MEK TALUDI (DRANIDENSHUS IBOORUS)

Habitat
The Mek Taludi are only found in Mikesh. They favor lives in the dense forests of Mikesh, high up in the canopy.

Physical Description & Behavior
These rarely-seen giant rodents (5' to 6' from nose to rear, 7' to 9' including the tail) are used by the Mikeshi as mounts and as pack animals. Extremely agile and clever, the Mek Taludi ("curious bandits") possess dexterous hands that have untied the knots of adventurers' packs and unlocked food stores more than once. A thin membrane stretching from hand to foot allows them to glide between the trees for short hops, so riding them is quite a bumpy experience. The sight of a dozen Mikeshi hunters gliding among the trees on their Mek Taludi has astounded adventurers brave enough to travel there.

Stats

Phy: 14	Spd: 12
Mass: 10	React: 8
Int: 3	Per: 6
Acu: 8	Sha: 9

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 4
Athletics: Ex4
Awareness: A2
Stealth: A4
Slight of Hand: B3
Social: 1

Valdryer
Starlight Vision: 150 feet.

Move
Free move: 15 feet
Move: 15 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 15 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Expert Athletics. +10 feet.

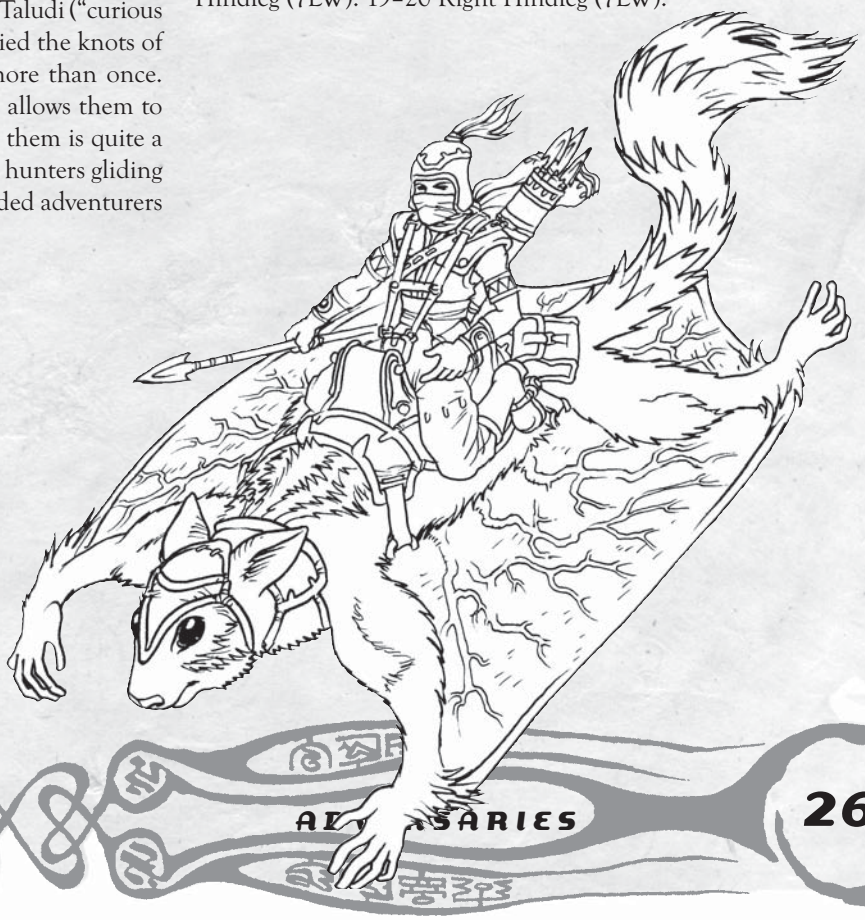
Special Abilities
A rider with a Finesse Level of Advanced in Riding can have the Mek Taludi take its turn in the same combat turn as the rider.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 2
Defensive: 8

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 12+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 16+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Bite: 2 Speed. 4ap1
Armor
Hide: 5av1

Health
60 Vitality. 5 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (7LW). 4–5 Left Foreleg (7LW). 6–7 Left Gliding Membrane (4LW). 8–9 Right Foreleg (7LW). 10–11 Right Gliding Membrane (4LW). 12–16 Body (9LW). 17–18 Left Hindleg (7LW). 19–20 Right Hindleg (7LW).



SHADEKIN

The common perception is that all Shadekin are the creation of Mirkule. That is not the case. In fact, Shadekin existed long before Mirkule arose in the north. Shadekin are classified as any living creatures that were warped into a new shape by the magical radiations of the Endwar. The energies contained in their spirits were turned against them, to power the transformation of their physical bodies into new shapes. Those shapes were the monstrous Shadekin seen today. The transformations their bodies were subjected to were more than just surface malformations, they became a part of them, so that they could pass on those new traits to the next generation. They are not merely mutants; they are an entire new species.

Natural Shadekin, those remnants of creatures created in the aftermath of the Endwar, can be found in only the most remote areas of the world. Most had been killed and their populations driven back as civilization began to prosper and spread in the centuries following the Endwar. Mirkule's Shadekin armies, at their height, outnumbered the Ianer that remained during the time when Fane rule was widespread, and Kah's arrival and the fall of the Fane regimes saw the Shadekin numbers recede once more. Historical records show that Shadekin are a new phenomenon to this current Epoch. Never in all the thousands of historical, pre-Endwar texts are there mentioned creatures similar to those that now prowl the wastelands of today's world. Some believe that it is the absence of Drandlur that allows the Shadekin to exist. The weapons unleashed in the Endwar were not much different from those unleashed in Epochs of the past; surely the capacity for Shadekin to exist was there. Only Drandlur's influence, it is surmised, prevented it from happening earlier.

What distinguishes Shadekin from all other natural creatures is their extreme hostility towards other intelligent creatures, even other Shadekin. They not only hunt other creatures for food, they do it out of sheer malevolence, often torturing and mutilating their victims before killing them. Even sub-intelligent Shadekin seem to take unhealthy pleasure in tormenting their prey.

A Shadekin casts no shadow, as its shadow no longer exists on the spiritual plane, but is instead housed on the physical plane inside the Shadekin's body, similar to the Elite Shadowmage's ability to absorb his own Shadow. Shadekin are immune to all Shadowmagic spells that are meant to influence the mind, but are vulnerable to attacks that target the Shadow. It has been found that the stronger the spirit of the creature in life, the more mighty a Shadekin it can become. Myths exist of a hidden cabal of master Shadowmages in the Violet Circle, who have undergone the transformation into Shadekin. If this were true they would be powerful monsters indeed. Most Shadekin, but not all, are somewhat resistant to Rune Magic. The only rune that seems to surpass this resistance is Drandlur's rune: Rebuke the Unnatural, a rune crafted by the Illestani Battlemages soon after the formation of the Treaty, just so they could reinforce their borders against invasion.

The Shadekin armies of Mirkule threaten the peace of people everywhere. Though many scoff at the prospect of encountering a Shadekin (as many justifiably believe that most Shadekin are only found in far away lands like Darkfall), Mirkule, aided by his cult, continually smuggles Shadekin into the civilized lands. He directs these Shadekin towards specific targets, or simply lets them loose to wreak as much havoc and terror as possible. There are many accounts of Shadekin popping up in some isolated locale, terrorizing the region, and leading to scores of deaths before the military or adventurers arrive to dispatch the menace.

DREADWING (MYRKULLAN AERIS)

Habitat

Dreadwings are generally found in the air above the Tilerian Empire, but they can also be encountered in Darkfall, the Duchy of Barren Moor, and in the skies above Neoll and Illestan.

Physical Description & Behavior

This Shadekin is actually two distinct creatures. The namesake portion of the beast is a large, manta-like creature measuring a dozen feet from wingtip to wingtip and eighteen feet from its blunted front end to the long, whipcord tail. Its dominant coloration is a deep beetle-brown, but along its underside, it turns a fleshy, vein-ribbed pink. The skin of its back is tough and rubbery, but its underside is a mass of winkled, very muscular tissue. It secretes a solution that is both adhesive and corrosive all at once. Its mouth is a circular aperture lined with small, needle-like teeth, while its tail is tipped with a barbed stinger.

Primarily, the Dreadwing serves as the delivery system for the *Dread Beings*, Shadekin of Ianer who resemble little more than slime-slicked corpses in an advanced stage of decay. With a wet tearing sound, Dread Beings will detach from the Dreadwing, free to move and attack, while the Dreadwing circles above, occasionally diving to attack. The Dread Being is a terrible entity, possessing powerful claws and, worst of all, the ability to let loose a powerful jet of corrosive toxin from its gaping, toothless maw. Though two separate beings, they are inextricably linked. Dreadwings have the ability to smother victims, and, once they are dead, turn them into new Dread Beings.

Dreadwing

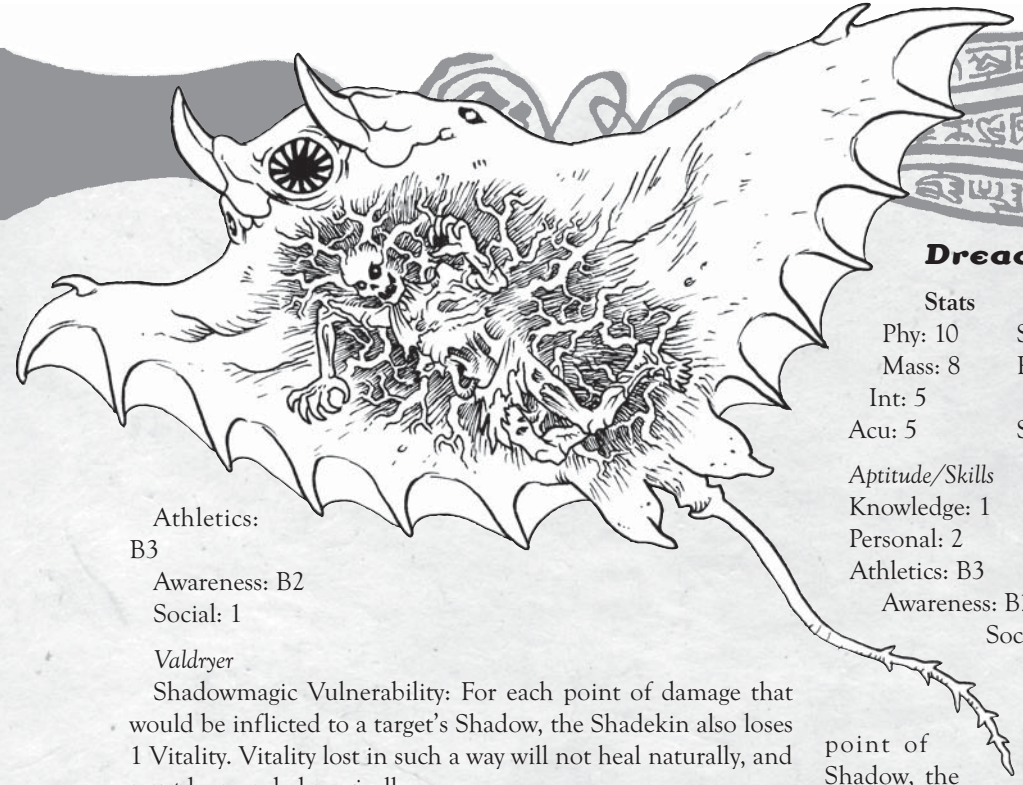
Stats

Phy: 8	Spd: 10
Mass: 8	React: 10
Int: 4	Per: 3
Acu: 4	Sha: 6

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1

Personal: 3



Athletics: B3
Awareness: B2
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.
Fly: 20 Feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Immune to the Handicaps: Blind. Confusion. Deaf. Dizzy. Enraged. Insane.

Rune Magic Resistant: All runes targeting the Dreadwing suffer a –5 penalty to their CV.

Because of its intelligence it can use Special Combat Finesse Effects up to its attack Finesse Level.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Any Value

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 16+1d10 (Advanced)
Defense: 18+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Smother: 6 Speed. Acts as a Grapple, in addition to 4ap4 of acid damage each Combat Round + Suffocation (see Suffocation and Drowning).

Poison Sting: 2 Speed. 4ap3.
Poison Potency: 20
Onset/Effect: 1 Round/Paralysis Handicap; 2 Rounds/Paralysis Handicap.

Armor

Rubbery Skin: 8av2

Health

36 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2–8 Body. (6LW). 9–12 Left Wing (4LW). 13–16 Right Wing (4LW). 17–20 Tail (3LW).

Dread Being

Stats

Phy: 10 Spd: 10
Mass: 8 React: 10
Int: 5 Per: 5
Acu: 5 Sha: 7

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 2
Athletics: B3
Awareness: B2
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost will not heal naturally, and must be mended

point of Shadow, the in such a way magically.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Immune to the Handicaps: Blind. Confusion. Deaf. Dizzy. Enraged. Insane.

Rune Magic Resistance: All runes targeting the Dread Being suffer a –5 penalty to their CV.

Dread Beings are coated in a very adhesive, viscous slime, allowing them to stick to walls and ceilings. Anyone who attacks a Dread Being in HTH must make an immediate Defense roll versus an attack roll from the Dread Being. If he fails, he is Grappled, unfortunately stuck to the creature's sticky flesh.

Dread Beings regenerate 1 Location Wound State every Combat Round unless damage is inflicted by fire or a Shadow damaging attack.

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 15+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 15+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Claw: 2 Speed. 6ap2

Acid Jet: 6 Speed. 10ap4 out to a range of 20 feet. Those struck will suffer 8ap4 on the second Combat Round and 6ap4 on the third, after which the acid neutralizes. Common, unenchanted armor possessing an AV of 3 or lower, loses 1 point of AV

permanently if hit by the acid jet. Dread Beings can only fire an acid jet every other Combat Round.

Armor
Slimy, self-sealing flesh: 8av2

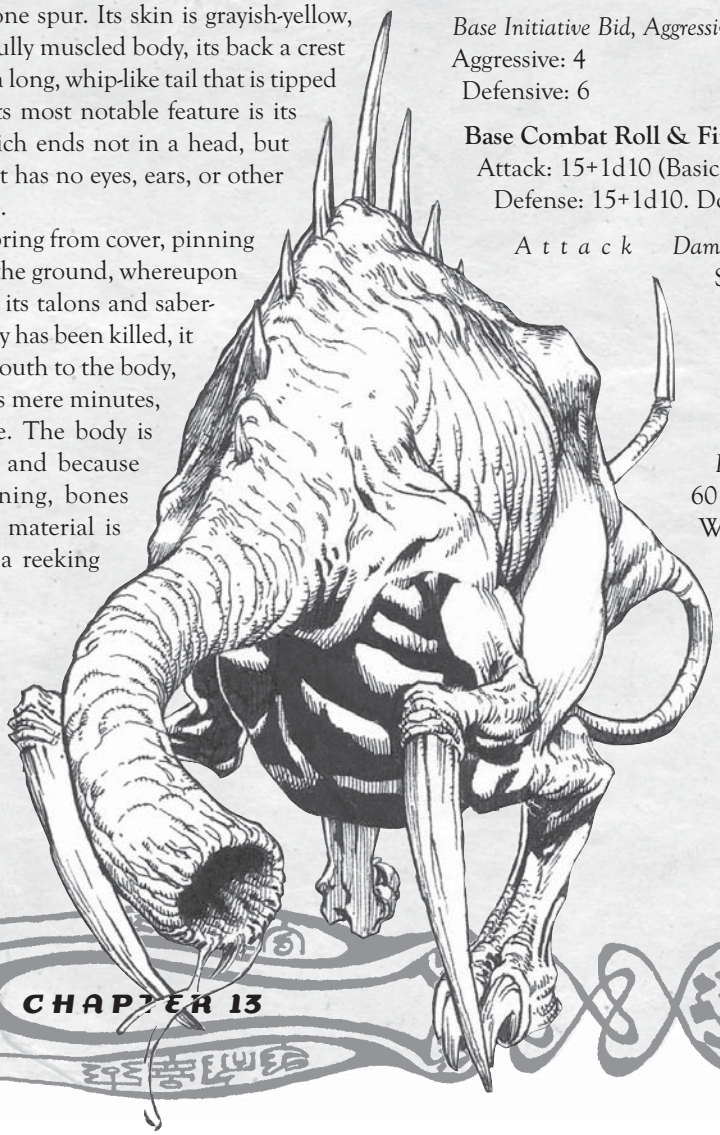
Health
40 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (4LW). 4–5 Left Arm (5LW). 6–7 Right Arm (5LW). 8–10 Chest (7LW). 11–14 Abdomen (5LW). 15–17 Left Leg (6LW). 18–20 Right Leg (6LW).

Flesh Fiend (Myrkullan Vakkuno)

Habitat
Flesh Fiends are relatively common in Darkfall, but specimens have been discovered in remote areas of Vallunei, Illestan, Neoll, and Ballinor. They are adaptable to nearly any environment that contains enough food to sate their appetites.

Physical Description & Behavior
Reportedly, a Shadekin created from animals like the Apolai, horse, or Ponko, the Flesh Fiend is a loping horror with powerful legs capable of high speed and great leaps. Its toes are tipped with strong, hooked talons, and its arms end in a long, two to three foot saber-like bone spur. Its skin is grayish-yellow, stretched over the powerfully muscled body, its back a crest of tall spines. It possesses a long, whip-like tail that is tipped with a sharp spike, but its most notable feature is its long muscular neck , which ends not in a head, but in a puckered sphincter. It has no eyes, ears, or other noticeable sensory organs.

Its favored tactic is to spring from cover, pinning its unfortunate victim to the ground, whereupon it ravages the victim with its talons and saber-tipped arms. Once the prey has been killed, it affixes its large, tubular mouth to the body, and in a process that takes mere minutes, swallows its victim whole. The body is digested in a few hours, and because it has no excretory opening, bones and other nondigestable material is expelled, vomited up in a reeking pile.



Stats
Phy: 10 Spd: 10
Mass: 12 React: 10
Int: 2 Per: 8
Acu: 2 Sha: 5

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics: A2
Awareness: A5
Social: 1

Valdryer
Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move
Free move: 5 feet
Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics. +5 feet.

Special Abilities
Immune to the Handicaps: Blind. Confusion. Deaf. Dizzy. Enraged. Insane.

Flesh Fiends sense their prey by their Shadow, lacking all the normal senses. This allows the Flesh Fiend to track a target unerringly, regardless of weather conditions or physical obstructions between the Flesh Fiend and its intended victim. Elite Shadowmages, Kahlith Zhalanti, and other Shadekin, are effectively invisible to the Flesh Fiend.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 4
Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 15+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 15+1d10. Dodge.

Attack *Damage & Speed Cost*
Saber Claw: 2 Speed. 7ap3
Toe Rake: 4 Speed. 16ap1
Tail Lash: 3 Speed. 9ap2

Armor
Tough Hide: 10av1

Health
60 Vitality. 6 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2–4 Neck (4LW). 5–6 Left Arm (5LW). 7–8 Right Arm (5LW). 9–14 Body (7LW). 15–16 Left Leg (6LW). 17–18 Right Leg (6LW). 19–20 Tail (3LW).

GAUNT ONE (MYRKULLAN HOMIDAI)



Habitat

Gaunt Ones, by their physiology, are not suited to cold weather, and so are not believed to be part of Mirkule's legions. Gaunt Ones prefer hot, dry conditions, like deserts and scrub forests, and so occasionally turn up in Ba-Dur, Vandalusa, Ianu Voss, and the Periphery.

Physicial Description & Behavior

Gaunt Ones are twisted remnants of the Endwar, found now only in extremely remote locales, far from civilization. They are deeply evil beings, wracked by a constant pain that is the source of their abiding hatred for all intelligent life. Gaunt Ones earn their name from their tall (8 to 10 feet), lean bodies of taut muscle. They seem to spasm and ache constantly. Pinprick eyes glow from deep sockets in faces that are dominated by massive swollen lower jaws that can deliver a terrible bite. The creature relies mostly on its long, incredibly sharp talons, which it uses to wantonly rend its victims. Intelligent beings are its favored food.

Gaunt Ones often haunt a single desolate location in groups of 2 to 6, slaying any living thing that falls under their notice. If adventurers enter an area Gaunt Ones call home, they will be ambushed by the Gaunt Ones, who always use their knowledge of their territory to their tactical advantage.

Stats

Phy: 12	Spd: 10
Mass: 12	React: 10
Int: 6	Per: 5
Acu: 4	Sha: 8

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Athletics: A2
Awareness: A2
Stealth: B2
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Gaunt ones can borrow Speed from the next Combat Round to use in the Combat Round they are currently in. Those borrowed points will be gone from the next Round, and so the ability cannot be used on consecutive rounds.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics. +5 feet.

Special Abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.
Night Vision: 100 feet.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 16+1d10 (Advanced).
Defense: 15+1d10. Dodge. (Advanced).

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Claw: 2 Speed. 12ap2
Bite: 3 Speed. 15ap2. Must grapple first.

Armor

Thick hide: 8av1

Health

66 Vitality. 6 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (5LW). 4–5 Left Arm (6LW). 6–7 Right Arm (6LW). 8–10 Chest (8LW). 11–14 Abdomen (6LW). 15–17 Left Leg (7LW). 18–20 Right Leg (7LW).

HIGH STRIDER (MYRKULLAN AZZKARRUS)

Habitat

High Striders are purposefully built to fight in Mirkule's army, and so are only found in the lands where Mirkule's monstrous army holds sway, the Tilerian Empire.

Physicial Description & Behavior

High Striders appear as large disks of lumpy, pink-gray flesh, a dozen feet across, and supported on eight, thirty-foot high, stilt-like legs. At the center of the creature's underside there lies the circular aperture of its mouth. What horrifies any who've seen the High Strider in battle, is its ability to disgorge its entire digestive tract onto a victim, ensnaring them in the suction pull of its grasping mouth. It can extend its feeding tract, envelop a victim, and draw in its organs all in a matter of seconds. Its legs allow it great leaps and bursts of speed, and in normal walking speed it keeps its knees bent and its body suspended ten to fifteen feet above the ground.

The Strider, by design, serves a purpose as a platform for Garralli Shadekin to stand upon, firing down with ranged attacks while the High Strider impales unfortunates on the great clawed tips of its legs.

Stats

Phy: 12	Spd: 13
Mass: 24	React: 8
Int: 2	Per: 10
Acu: 8	Sha: 12

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 4
Athletics: Ex3
Awareness: B5
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Sensory Hairs: The High Strider's body is bristling with many stiff hairs, which serve to give it complete awareness of objects in its proximity. Sound, motion, and temperature, are all sensed by these hairs, making it impossible for one to surprise or ambush a High Strider.

Move

Free move: 10 feet
Move: 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 20 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: as normal for Expert Athletics. +20 feet.

Special Abilities

Immune to the Handicaps: Blind. Confusion. Deaf. Dizzy. Enraged. Insane.

Rune Magic Resistance: All runes targeting the High Strider suffer a –10 penalty to their CV.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 6
Defensive: 8

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 15+1d10 (Basic).
Defense: 15+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Claw Stab: 2 Speed. 14ap3

Entrail Snare: 4 Speed. Must score a Grapple. If successful, target must make contested attack roll with the High Strider to escape. If they fail to escape, they are drawn in and suffer 10ap4 each Combat Round from digestive juices.

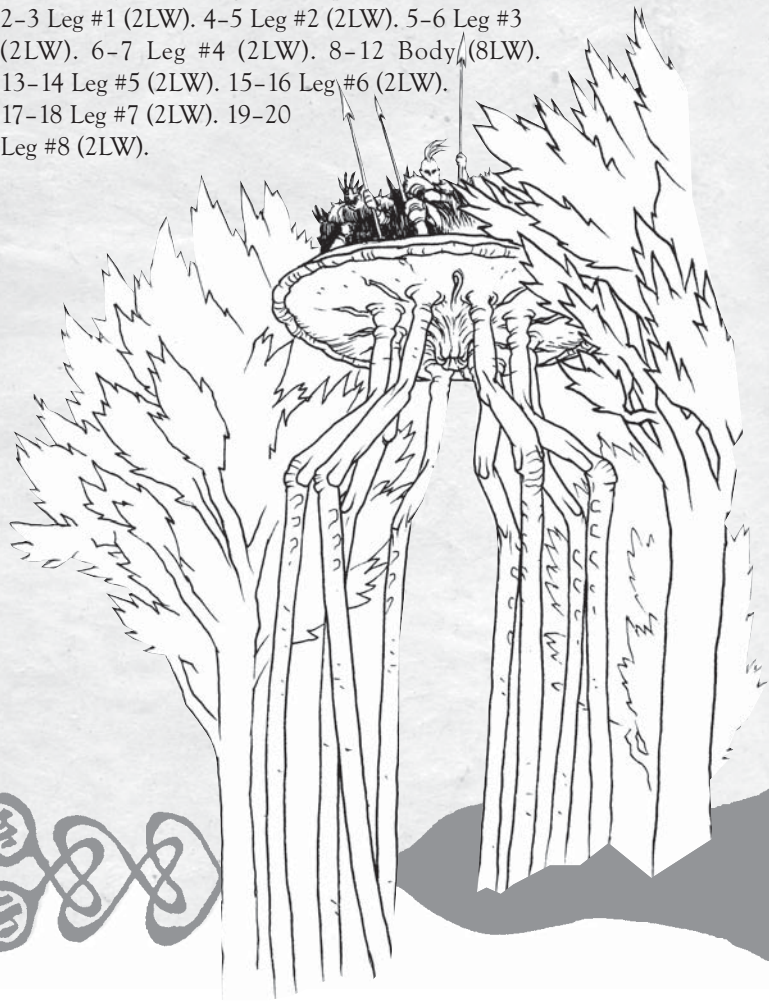
Pounce: 7 Speed. Leaps onto target and presses them to the ground, typically right under the creature's mouth. Target is Prone and must make a contested attack roll with the High Strider to escape.

Armor

Hard bony body: 20av2
Chitinous legs: 12av3

Health

132 Vitality. 12 Damage Points per Lethal Wound. 2–3 Leg #1 (2LW). 4–5 Leg #2 (2LW). 5–6 Leg #3 (2LW). 6–7 Leg #4 (2LW). 8–12 Body (8LW). 13–14 Leg #5 (2LW). 15–16 Leg #6 (2LW). 17–18 Leg #7 (2LW). 19–20 Leg #8 (2LW).



HUNGERING SHADOW (MYRKULLAN KORTINGUS)

Habitat

Hungering Shadows can exist in any environment, at any time, and are not bothered at all by weather or temperature. Thankfully, though, they are only found in the Tilerian Empire and seldom in Darkfall.

Physicial Description & Behavior

One of the rarest and most dangerous of all Shadekin, the Shadow is a translucent cloud of darkness whose only aim is to consume all that comes in contact with it. Any matter (including any weapons someone might foolishly use against it) that touches the shadow ceases to exist — "consumed." Hungering Shadows are especially fond of the shadows of other beings. It can sense a living shadow from tens of miles away and will pursue its prey tirelessly. Once it has consumed a shadow, it grows in size in proportion to the power of the shadow it absorbed.

Hungering Shadows are difficult to hurt as they can only be affected by Shadow Magic or Rune Magic; any kind of weapon attack has no effect as the matter is "consumed." Its one weakness is its speed, moving only as fast as a jogging man. Unfortunately it is nocturnal (and completely invisible in the dark) and almost completely silent, the only warning someone might have is the vague sibilant whispering accompanying it and the occasional violet flaring which occurs when it consumes matter.

Stats

Phy: n/a	Spd: 2
Mass: n/a	React: 15
Int: 2	Per: 15
Acu: n/a	Sha: 20

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Social: 1

Valdryer

Immaterial: The Hungering Shadow has no physical form, and can only be injured by Rune Magic attacks, such as those by Hrond's Domain, or attacks that do Shadow damage. Only by reducing the Hungering Shadow's Shadow stat to 0 will it be defeated.

Sense Shadow: Hungering Shadows can sense the presence of all living things within ten miles of its position.

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Immune to all Handicaps and physical or energy damage.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 0
Defensive: 0

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

n/a

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Envelop: No Speed. 14ap5 every Round while in contact with the Hungering Shadow. The Hungering Shadow doesn't roll to attack, it simply moves into an area occupying a living target. Hungering Shadows can envelop an area twenty to thirty feet across, and all those within that area suffer the listed damage. On the turn a Hungering Shadow moves to envelop a target, said target can opt to Dive for Cover (*q.v.*).

Armor

None.

Health

n/a

ING SHA (MYRKULLAN LHARANIN)

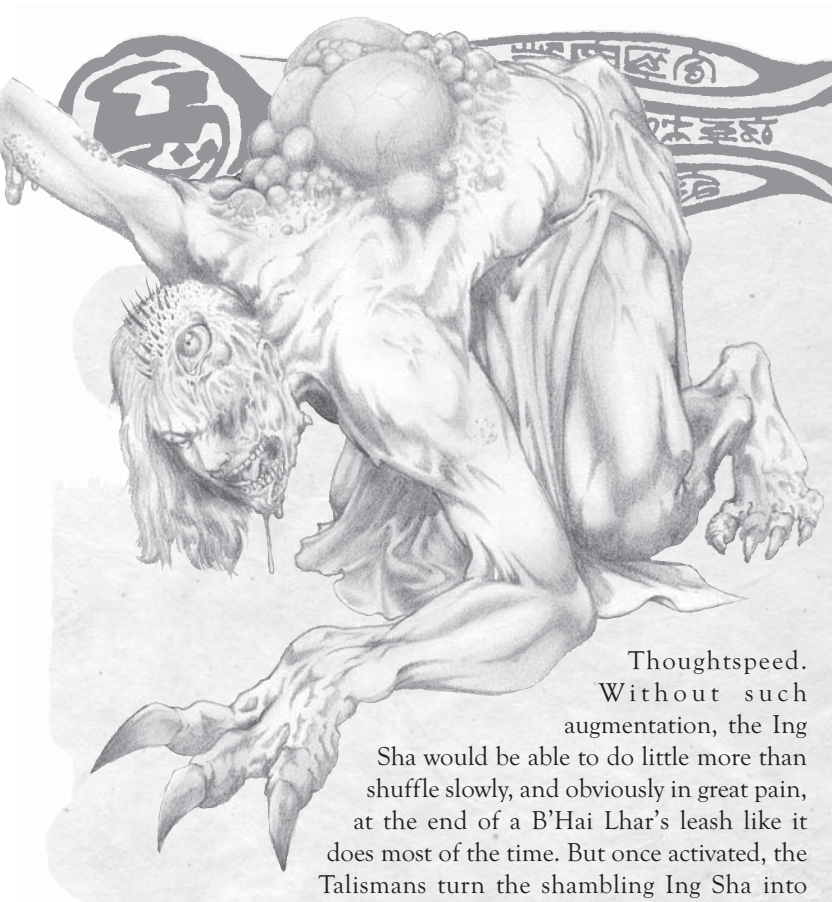
Habitat

The Ing Sha are created by the B'Hai Lhar and so do not appear anywhere in nature or outside of Bhuket, except in the company of slaver caravans.

Physicial Description & Behavior

The Ing Sha, or "blessed servants," are the monstrous attempts by Lhar and his B'Hai to create Shadekin as Mirkule has done; however, they have been unable to replicate Mirkule's apparent genius in creating monsters. Some are made when insanely devoted followers of Lhar volunteer to become one of the Ing Sha out of a desire to be closer to their god, but the majority of them are captured dissidents and revolutionaries, criminals and other undesirables. The process that Lhar uses to manipulate the energies of their souls in order to mould their physical forms results in twisted monstrosities that seldom live long. But they possess many of the traits that the B'Hai Lhar desire: powerful clawed limbs, fang bristled maws, and appearances that are terrifying to behold. They serve the Fane's purpose in being attack-dog servants the B'Hai Lhar can use to further intimidate the people of Bhuket.

The Ing Sha are incredibly flawed creations. From the moment they are created they are already dying, their bodies slowly losing their shape until in the end they disintegrate into puddles of liquid flesh and wet bones. The B'Hai Lhar use Rune Magic to extend the Ing Sha's life by a slight degree (turning what could have been a lifetime measured in days into one that can stretch on for weeks) and to augment its physical form for the purpose of combat. The Ing Sha are customarily draped with a number of Talismans, containing such runes as Bloodrage, Bulwark, Strength, and



Thoughtspeed. Without such augmentation, the Ing Sha would be able to do little more than shuffle slowly, and obviously in great pain, at the end of a B'Hai Lhar's leash like it does most of the time. But once activated, the Talismans turn the shambling Ing Sha into a terror of rippling claws and gnashing teeth, controlled remotely by the slave rune that is always tattooed somewhere on its body.

Stats (Listed stats are without bonuses from Strength or Thoughtspeed rune augmentation.)

Phy: 3	Spd: 3
Mass: 8	React: 4
Int: 4	Per: 2
Acu: 1	Sha: 3

Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 1
Personal: 1
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move
Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Rune Magic Resistance: Because Shadekin sometimes possess the ability to resist Rune Magic, and because Rune Magic is so necessary to making the Ing Sha function, their resistance has been stunted. All runes targeting the Ing Sha receive a +5 CV bonus, to be spent only on Secondary Effects. If the rune has no Secondary Effects, the bonus is ignored.

With Strength Rune: +4 HTH Damage. +2 to attack roll. +4 to Vitality per Chest LW.

With Thoughtspeed Rune: +4 to Speed. +4 to attack roll. +6 to Dodge defense rolls.

Night Vision: 100 feet.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Any value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 5+1d10 (Advanced).
Defense: 5+1d10. Dodge. (Advanced).

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Claw: 2 Speed. 6ap2
Bite: 3 Speed. 10ap2

Armor
Thick hide: 10av1
with Bulwark Rune: +6av2

Health

28 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (1LW). 4–5 Left Arm (2LW). 6–7 Right Arm (2LW). 8–10 Chest (4LW). 11–14 Abdomen (3LW). 15–17 Left Leg (3LW). 18–20 Right Leg (3LW).

KAZDRAH SYTH "THE HOUNDS OF MIRKULE" (MYRKULLAN TEREXISS)

Habitat

The Kazdrah Syth have no home, no place, except by Mirkule's side. They are meant to travel hundreds of miles on errands for Mirkule, and so can potentially be found anywhere, at any time. Recorded encounters have taken place in Vallunei, Ianu Voss, and the Dominion of Drakan.

Physicial Description & Behavior

Few have had the misfortune of studying the Kazdrah Syth up close. It is a creature of stealth, a killer in the darkness meant to dispatch its targets quickly without any witnesses. Those who have survived encounters with the Walking Darkness describe a creature half flesh, half shadow. The body is long and sleek, like a hunting cat, but sculpted from Ianeran flesh. Walking on all fours like a hound, its limbs are long and skeletally thin. Claws and spines jut from every joint and its head is a steam-lined helmet of bone — no eyes, no nose, just a powerful jaw lined with sharp teeth.

But the form most often attributed to it is a blindingly fast

streak of darkness and shadow that moves quicker than the eye can see and leaves mangled corpses in its wake. The Kazdrah Syth exists only to kill at Mirkule's direct command. An encounter with a Kazdrah Syth never happens by accident. Dispatched from the Tilerian Empire or from an especially powerful Cult of Mirkule, if you happen to find yourself facing down this hissing terror, it means you have been marked for death by Mirkule or his followers.

Stats

Phy: 14	Spd: 22
Mass: 6	React: 12
Int: 7	Per: 9
Acu: 10	Sha: 10

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 5
Tracking, Wilderness: El3
Tracking, Urban: El3
Personal: 5
Athletics: El4
Awareness: Ex2
Stealth: El3
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move

Free move: 10 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 25 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Shadowform: The Kazdrah Syth spends most of its time in this semi-substantial state, with all the characteristics of a Shadowmage's Superior Form spell. While in this form, the Kazdrah Syth cannot be harmed by physical attacks. Only spells that target the Shadow, such as Attack the Spirit or the Rune: Censure Spirit, can harm the Kazdrah Syth in this form. But it is especially vulnerable to the Arroy Rune: Sun Flare. Even in its Shadowform, a Sun Flare rune will harm it physically, bypassing the Kazdrah Syth's natural Rune Magic resistance. It can remain in its Shadowform state indefinitely, but may revert to its physical form if it needs to feed (on living flesh, which it must do every week or so), or if its Shadow is attacked. If it reverts to its physical form, it must wait two full Combat Round before it can shift back into its Shadowform.

Invisibility: The Kazdrah Syth is considered Invisible (See Special Situations) when in darkness.

Rune Magic Resistance: In its physical form, all runes targeting the Kazdrah Syth suffer a –10 penalty to their CV.

The Kazdrah Syth is immune to all handicaps and cannot be Surprised or knocked Prone.

Kazdrah Syth regenerate 1 Lethal Wound each Combat Round unless they are reduced to 0 Shadow, exposed to sunlight (or a Sun Flare rune), or decapitated.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 20+1d10 (Elite).
Defense: 21+1d10. Dodge.(Elite).

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Claw: 2 Speed. 8ap4. Not in Shadowform.

Shadowform Claw: 2 Speed. 5 Shadow. All losses are recoverable as normal. Only when in Shadowform.

Bite: 3 Speed. 6ap4. Not in Shadowform.

Tail Sting: 4 Speed. 7ap4+poison.

Potency: 25

Onset/Effect: 1 Round/Dizzy; 2 turns/-10 GWS, Paralyzed; 3 turns/-20 GWS, Paralyzed.

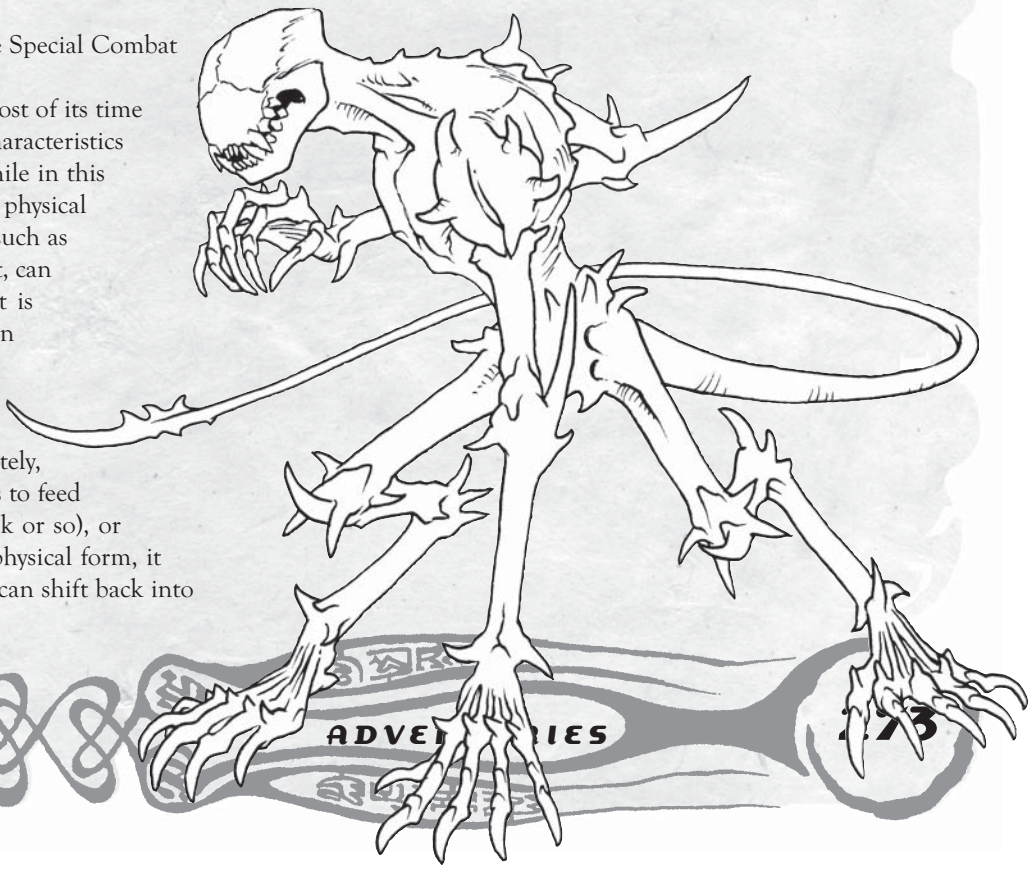
Armor

Magically toughened flesh: 16av1

Health

36 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (6LW). 4–5 Left Arm (7LW). 6–7 Right Arm (7LW). 8–10 Chest (9LW). 11–14 Abdomen (8LW). 15–17 Left Leg (8LW). 18–20 Right Leg (8LW).



MARROW HOUND (MYRKULLAN FLAUTIUM)

Habitat

Marrow Hounds are a common sight in Klesht, but can also be found in Dorallia, Darkfall, and sometimes even parts of Vallunei. They prefer cooler climates and rough terrain that provides both good burrows and ample ambush opportunity.

Physicial Description & Behavior

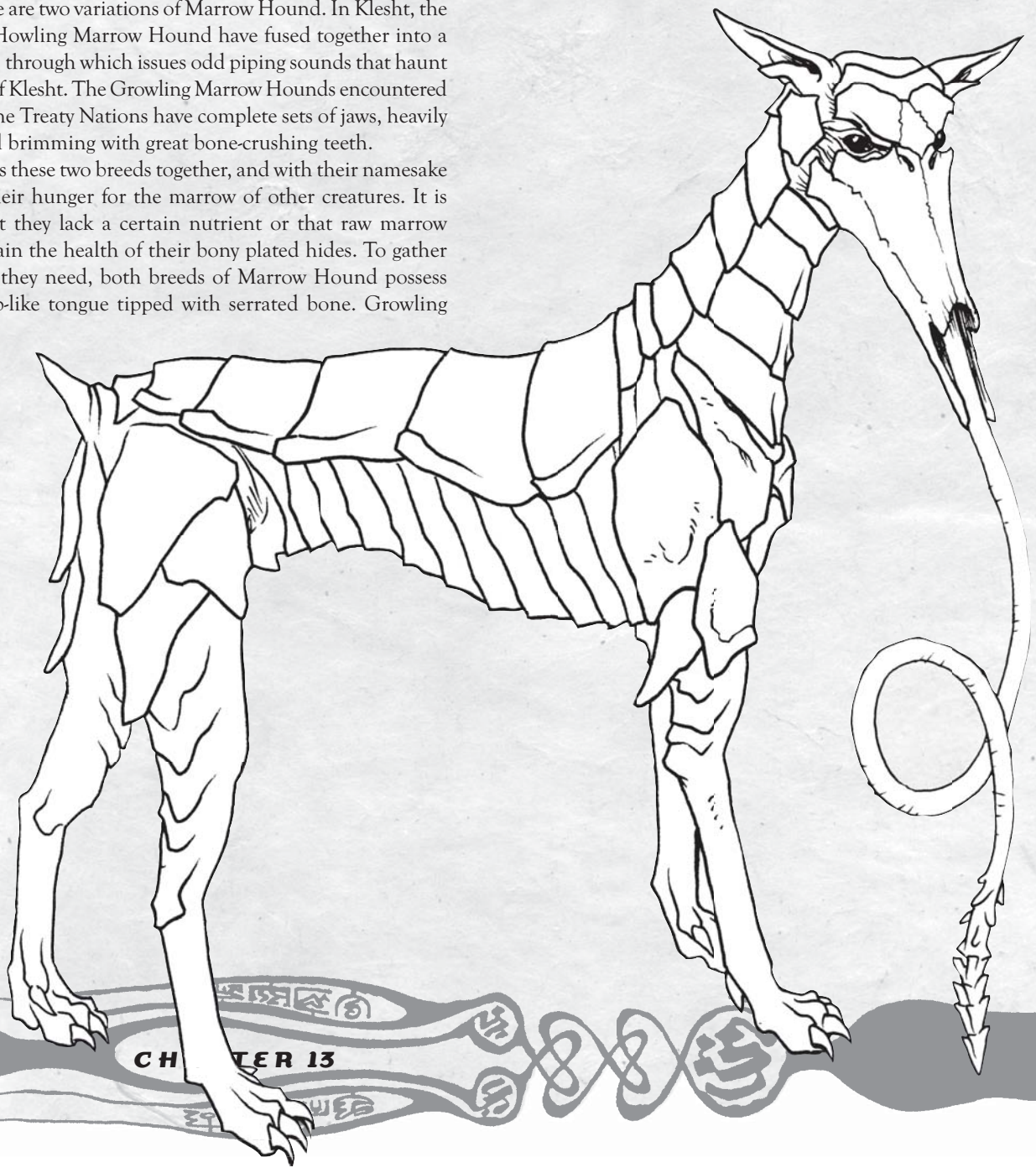
The Marrow Hound is a species of canine that had its birth in the aftermath of the Endwar. Once normal dogs, their early ancestors were warped into the shape Marrow Hounds are today. They are the size of large dogs, following that expected silhouette, but their bodies are covered head to toe in segments of bony armor. There are two variations of Marrow Hound. In Klesht, the jaws of the Howling Marrow Hound have fused together into a bony funnel, through which issues odd piping sounds that haunt the steppes of Klesht. The Growling Marrow Hounds encountered in some of the Treaty Nations have complete sets of jaws, heavily muscled and brimming with great bone-crushing teeth.

What links these two breeds together, and with their namesake as well, is their hunger for the marrow of other creatures. It is believed that they lack a certain nutrient or that raw marrow helps maintain the health of their bony plated hides. To gather the marrow they need, both breeds of Marrow Hound possess a long, whip-like tongue tipped with serrated bone. Growling Marrow Hounds use their powerful jaws to crack bones and use their tongue to core out the marrow. Howling Marrow Hounds use their claws to subdue their prey before inserting their tongue into a living host. Worming its way through the victim's body, it finds the nearest large bone and bores into the marrow, sucking it out like a straw.

Wild packs of Marrow Hounds are a menace to those traveling the world's more remote areas, but the Kleshti raise Howling Marrow Hounds as pets, even carving designs into their Hounds' bone plates.

Stats

Phy: 6	Spd: 8
Mass: 8	React: 7
Int: 2	Per: 6
Acu: 5	Sha: 5



Aptitude/Skills
Knowledge: 4
Tracking, Wilderness: Ex2
Personal: 3
Athletics: A3
Awareness: A2
Stealth: A3
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move
Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.
Leap: As normal for Advanced Athletics.

Special Abilities
None.

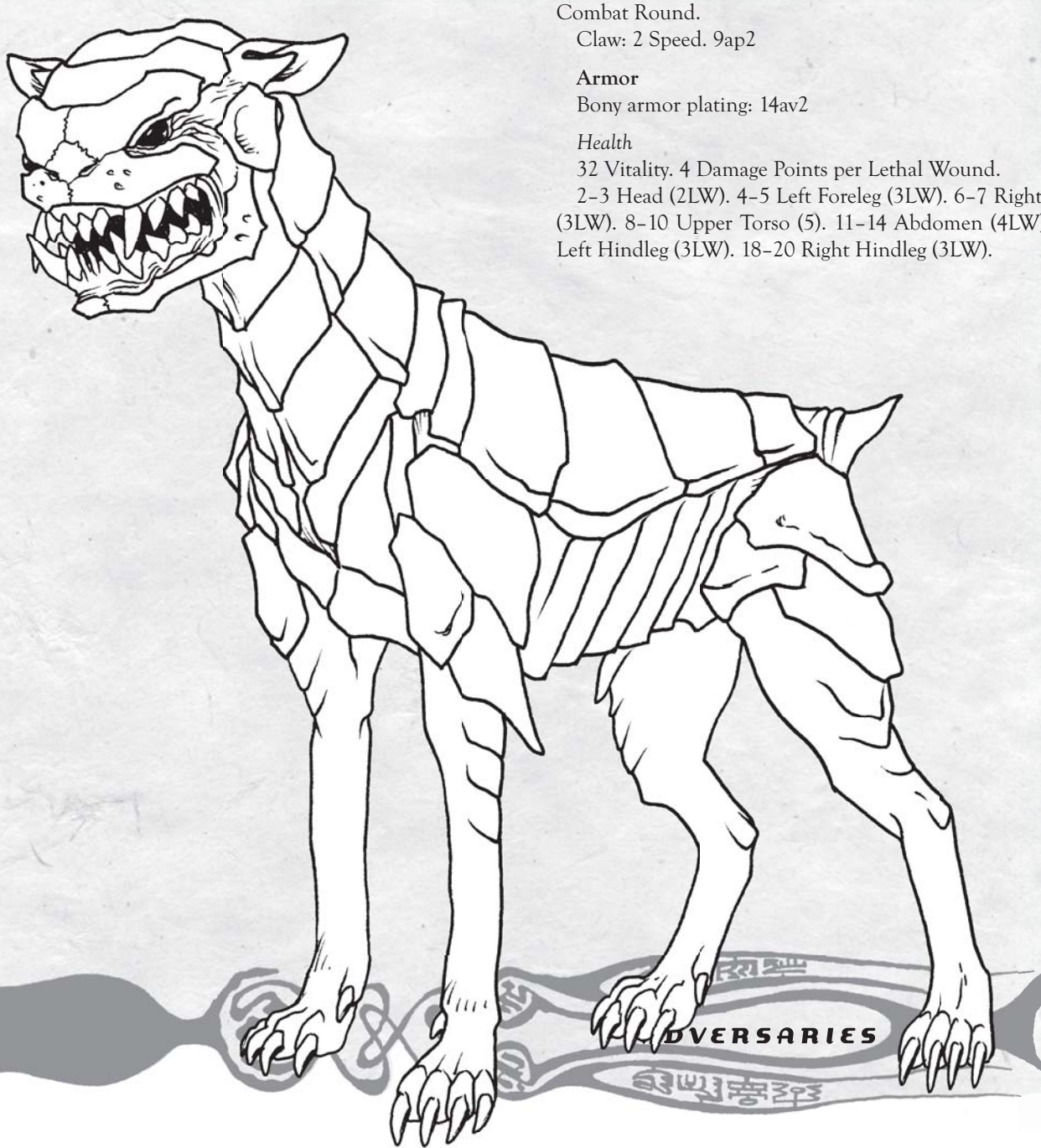
Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive
Aggressive: 3
Defensive: 6

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level
Attack: 12+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 13+1d10. Dodge.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost
Growling Marrow Hound Bite: 3 speed. 13ap2
Howling Marrow Hound Tongue: 2 Speed. Only vs. a Prone opponent: Causes 5 Damage Points of lethal damage each Combat Round.
Claw: 2 Speed. 9ap2

Armor
Bony armor plating: 14av2

Health
32 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2–3 Head (2LW). 4–5 Left Foreleg (3LW). 6–7 Right Foreleg (3LW). 8–10 Upper Torso (5). 11–14 Abdomen (4LW). 15–17 Left Hindleg (3LW). 18–20 Right Hindleg (3LW).



PLAGUE SPIDER (MYRKULLAN AREKID)

Habitat

Plague Spiders are not believed to be a creation of Mirkule, but a mutated remnant of the Endwar. As such, they are a common sight in Darkfall, though somehow a few have popped up in Talus, Ianu Voss, and even Edyss. How exactly they got there is a mystery.

Physicial Description & Behavior

It is unknown what Plague Spiders might have been before they were warped into their present form in the aftermath of the Endwar. They stand about two feet in height, measuring six feet from the tips of their tails to the ends of their long ropy necks. From bodies of mottled bone-yellow flesh sprout six fleshy, jointed limbs, bristling with long black spines. Their instrument of attack is their toothy mouth, that not only inflicts a painful bite, but can spread any number of diseases. The creatures themselves virtually sweat contagion. Coming into direct physical contact with one can risk infection, while the bite ensures it. Many fear the prospect of Plague Spiders making their way into civilized areas, for with their abilities of concealment, they could spread all manner of sickness before anyone could guess the cause.

Like all Shadekin, Plague Spiders viciously attack any living creature they encounter. Fearless and exceedingly stupid, they care not if they are outnumbered or outgunned, they know only to kill and to feed.

Stats

Phy: 5 Spd: 8
Mass: 7 React: 7
Int: 1 Per: 8
Acu: 4 Sha: 6

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 3
Stealth: A2
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Move

Free move: 5 feet

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Climb: On any hard surface, 5 feet for 1 speed. Can move 5 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Plague Spiders sense creatures by their Shadows and can track a living being from up to four miles distant.

Contagion: Striking with one's hand or coming in contact with the skin or blood of a Plague Spider exposes the victim to a disease (chosen by the HoF). The contagion is weak when caused by contact and will have a potency equal to half normal. Being bitten by the Plague Spider, if the bite causes the loss of a Lethal Wound, causes infection at the disease's normal potency. The Plague Spider is naturally immune to all disease and poisons.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Aggressive: 4
Defensive: 4

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 10+1d10 (Basic)
Defense: 12+1d10. Dodge

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 2 Speed. 5ap2+contagion
Claw Stab: 4 Speed. 7ap2+contagion.

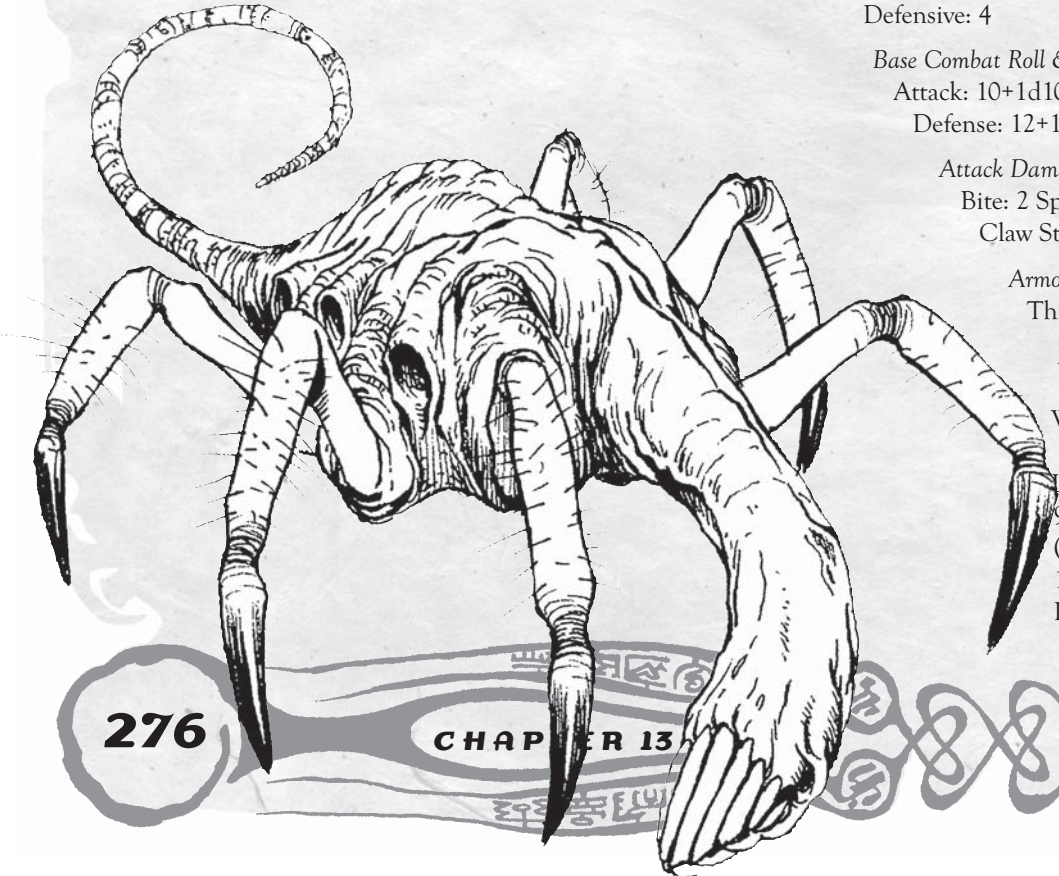
Armor

Thick rubbery hide: 8av1

Health

24 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2–4 Head/Neck (2LW). 5–6 Front Left Leg (3LW). 7–8 Front Right Leg (3LW). 9–10 Middle Left Leg (3LW). 11–14 body (5LW). 15–16 Middle Right Leg (3LW). 17–18 Rear Left Leg (3LW). 19–20 Rear Right Leg (3LW).



SHUVECH "THE RENDING HULK" (MYRKULLAN GUARGIIN)

Habitat

The Shuvech are some of Mirkule's most prized soldiers, and so are only found in the Tilerian Empire, in raids against Ilestan, and wandering the wastes of Darkfall.

Physical Description & Behavior

These Shadekin resemble tall (12 to 15 feet high) powerfully built Ianer with thick grey hides. Their mouths make up most of their heads and are lined with needle-like teeth. Their jaws are so strong that they can seriously dent armor plate or crush stone. Their arms are nearly as long as their bodies, with large hands disproportionate to their thin yet incredibly strong arms. Each finger is tipped with an extremely sharp claw, some 8"-9" long. Their upper torsos and heads are covered by small, irregularly spaced eyes, resembling black marbles embedded in their skin. Thus, they have complete 360-degree vision. Normally they move in a slow, loping gait, but they are capable of great leaps. Their preferred tactic is to leap into the air and land upon the nearest target, either crushing him in the process or stunning him so he becomes easy prey for their rending claws.

The Shuvech hide is very pliable and reacts to foreign objects penetrating it by closing around and holding the object fast. This also keeps the Shuvech from bleeding as the wounds pucker closed.

Stats

Phy: 12	Spd: 6
Mass: 20	React: 10
Int: 4	Per: 9
Acu: 3	Sha: 9

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 1
Personal: 2
Athletics: B3
Awareness: B5
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Cussed (+8)

Move

Free move: 10 feet

Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Leap: as normal for Basic Athletics. +20 feet.

Special Abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Rune Magic Resistance: All runes targeting the Shuvech suffer a –5 penalty to their CV.

If they score 6 successes in any block defense roll, they can effectively capture the weapon that has struck them. The character must make a contested combat roll against the Shuvech at the cost of 2 Speed, to retrieve their weapon.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any Value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 14+1d10 (Advanced)
Defense: 11+1d10. Block.

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Bite: 3 Speed. Must Grapple. 16ap2

Claw: 2 Speed. 13ap2

Or as weapon: (+3 to weapon's Base Damage).

Armor

Self sealing flesh: 8av4

Health

110 Vitality. 10 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 Head (5LW). 3–5 Left Arm (6LW). 5–6 Right Arm (6LW). 7–10 Chest (8LW). 11–14 Abdomen (7LW). 15–17 Left Leg (7LW). 18–20 Right Leg (7LW).

SHIKURU (MYRKULLAN MIKESHI)

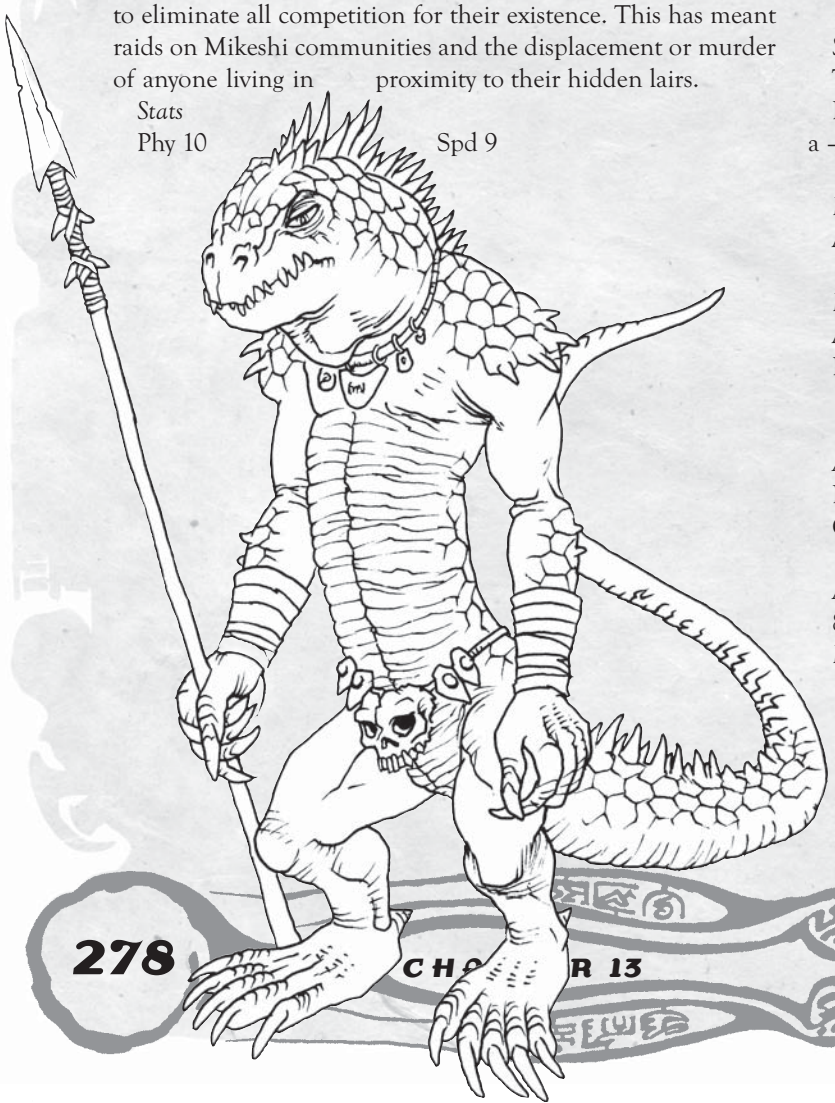
Habitat

The Shikuru are particular to Mikesh, where they hide their society away in the deep forests of that forbidding land.

Physical Description & Behavior

In appearance the Shikuru stand five to seven feet in height. Their torsos are long and of even width, granting them great flexability for swimming and climbing. The scales that cover their bodies are often a rich shade of emerald, while patterns in yellow or blue speckle their backs and bellies. They prefer throwing spears and crossbows to swords or other bladed weapons and nearly never wear armor

The Shikuru are a race of bipedal reptilians who, like the Neolli, are a Shadekin race that arose after the Endwar. They are remarkably intelligent, having formed a culture independent from the rest of the world, one that has never existed in all recorded history. It is unfortunate that the Shikuru, in addition to being highly secretive, are also murderously aggressive to the other intelligent beings who reside in Mikesh. So much so that open conflict between the Shikuru and the local Mikeshi and Neolli seems inevitable. Not much is known about Shikuru culture, but they seem to be driven by a kind of religious faith, devotion to an unknown god or gods, that seems to have commanded them to eliminate all competition for their existence. This has meant raids on Mikeshi communities and the displacement or murder of anyone living in proximity to their hidden lairs.



Stats

Phy 10 Spd 9
Mass 7 React 9
Int 4 Per 5
Acu 6 Sha 7

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 3
Tracking: Wilderness. A5
Personal: 3
Athletics. A2
Awareness. A3
Stealth. A3
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability

For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Shikuru possess the ability to breathe under water.

Move

5-foot Free Move.
Move 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.
Swim. 10 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Special abilities

They may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Rune Magic Resistance. All runes targeting the Shikuru suffer a –5 penalty to their CV.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any Value.

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 15+1d10 (Advanced)
Defense. 15+1d10. Block (Advanced)
16+1d10. Dodge (Advanced)

Attack damage and Speed cost

Bite. 3 Speed. 6ap2
Claw. 2 Speed. 7ap2 Or as weapon. (+3 to Base Damage).

Armor

8av1. Reptilian scales.

Health

40 Vitality. 4 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.
2 Head (4LW). 3-4 Left Arm (5LW). 5-6 Right Arm (5LW). 7-10 Chest (7LW). 11-14 Abdomen (6LW). 15-17 Left Leg (6). 18-20 Right Leg (6LW).

TENTACLED THUG (MYRKULLAN POREXIS)

Habitat

Tentacled Thugs form part of Mirkule's army of monsters, and so are generally found only in the Tilerian Empire and Darkfall.

Physicial Description & Behavior

Tentacled Thugs are one of the oddest forms of Shadekin on record. Though their bodies greatly resemble the Ianer stock from which they were created, their upper bodies are given over to three powerful tentacles. From their shoulders sprout long manipulator appendages, each very flexible and able to stretch to twice its length. Where the head would normally be there droops a single hollow tentacle. A vertical rent opens along its forward side, lined with serrated teeth.

Tentacled Thugs prefer to gang up on potential targets, and so can be encountered in groups of two to six — more if encountered in the Tilerian Empire. They whip their victims, opening deep cuts with the sharp spines that irregularly dot the length of their tentacle arms. Grasping their prey, they draw them toward their mouth tentacle, slashing with the razor edges of their fangs. Their thirst for blood is unmatched, and they will go to great lengths to satisfy their bloodlust.

Stats

Phy: 10	Spd: 10
Mass: 6	React: 10
Int: 4	Per: 3
Acu: 4	Sha: 5

Aptitude/Skills

Knowledge: 3
Tracking, Wilderness: A3
Personal: 3
Athletics: A2
Awareness: A3
Stealth: A3
Social: 1

Valdryer

Shadowmagic Vulnerability: For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 Vitality. Vitality lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

Cussed (+8)

Move

Free move: 5 feet
Move: 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Special Abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Special Combat Finesse Effects.

Rune Magic Resistance: All runes targeting the Tentacled Thug suffer a –10 penalty to their CV.

Tentacled Thugs possess the Battle Art: Duality, for their Tentacle Whip attack.

The Mouth Tentacle is not a vital location and so losing all Lethal Wounds in that location does not result in a death if brought to 0 Vitality.

Tentacled Thugs regenerate 1 Lethal Wound a Combat Round unless the damage is inflicted by fire, acid, or attacks targeting the Shadow.

Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/ Defensive

Any Value.

Base Combat Roll & Finesse Level

Attack: 15+1d10 (Advanced)
Defense:15+1d10. Block (Advanced)
18+1d10. Dodge (Advanced)

Attack Damage & Speed Cost

Tentacle Whip: 3 Speed. 6ap2. May Grapple for 0 Successes.

Mouth Tentacle Bite: 4 Speed. 8ap1. Must Grapple first. May continue to deliver bite damage each Combat Round the character is still Grappled.

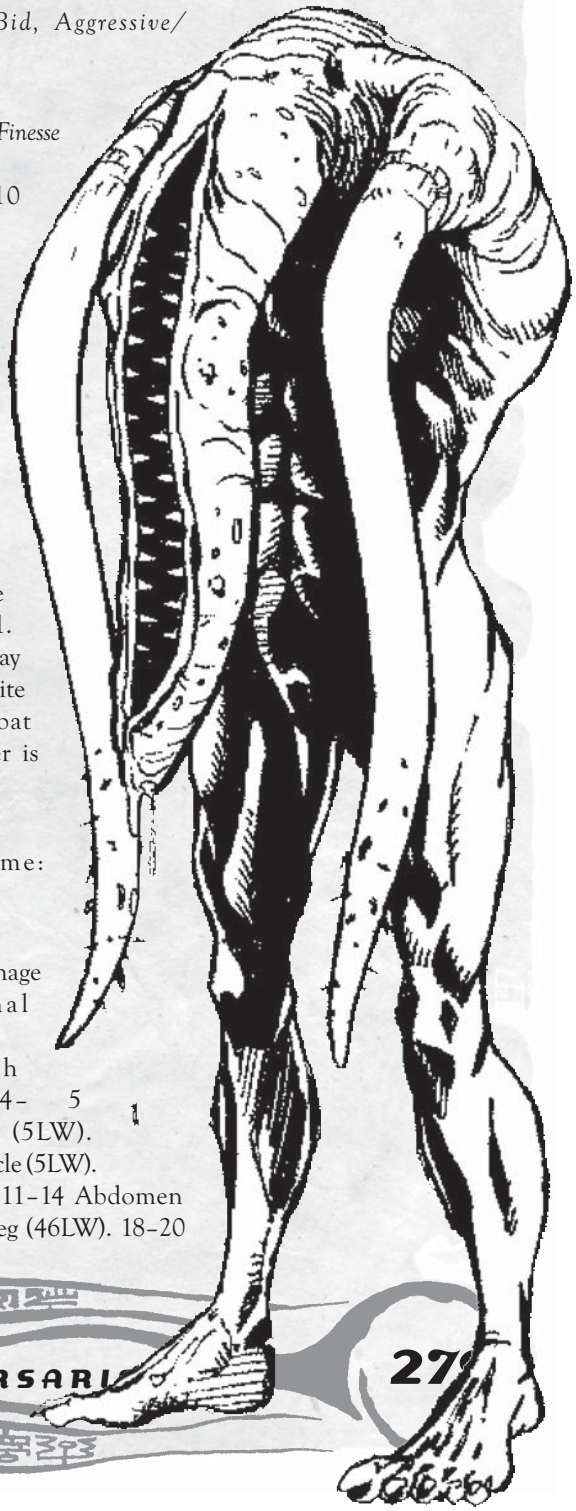
Armor

Toughened frame: 10ap1

Health

30 Vitality. 3 Damage Points per Lethal Wound.

2 – 3 Mouth Tentacle (4LW). 4– 5 Left Arm Tentacle (5LW). 6–7 Right Arm Tentacle (5LW). 8–10 Chest (7LW). 11–14 Abdomen (5LW). 15–17 Left Leg (46LW). 18–20 Right Leg (6LW)



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Playtester Credits

A hearty Evuxia to all our playtesters over the years. We couldn't have done it with out your amazing input and inspired roleplaying!

Joshua Archer
Jason Armenta
Chrys Lear
Marco Marlais
Adrienne Rappaport
Bruce Scanlon
Joshua Gabriel Timbrook
Dean Yuen

Name:_____
Race: _____
Origin:_____
Occupation:_____
Religion:_____
Gender:_____ Age:_____
Campaign Type:_____

Stats

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Character Record

Primary		Derived	
( )	Physique	( )	Reaction
( )	Mass	( )	Speed
( )	Intelligence	( )	Perception
( )	Acuity	( )	Shadow
		( )	HtH

Reaction = (Phy+I+A)÷3, Speed = A+Phy-M, Perception = (I+A)÷2, Shadow = (High+Low)÷2, HtH = (Phy+M)/4

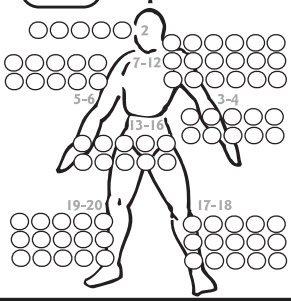
Valdreyr

Valdreyr	CCP cost

Health

Vitality ( )

Lethal Wounds ( ) DP per Wound



-2 to rolls at ½
Base only at ¼

Languages

Language	F.L.

Character Creation Points

( ) Spent on Skill Packages
( ) Spent on Valdreyr
( ) Experience Earned
( ) Experience Spent
( ) Total CCPs

Skill Packages

Origin _____ Language _____ Base Characteristics P___ M___ I___ A___ Base Aptitudes K___ P___ S___ Racial Valdreyr _____

Skill Package	Cost	Years	Aptitudes	Skill Package	Cost	Years	Aptitudes

Knowledge: ( ) **Personal:** ( ) **Social:** ( )

Knowledge Skills	F.L.	PoP	Base Roll
Area(I):_____			
Healing(I)			
Lore(I):_____			
Mechanics(I)			
Rune Magic(I)			
Science(I):_____			
Tracking: Urban(Per)			
Tracking: Wilderness(Per)			

Social Skills	F.L.	PoP	Base Roll
Connections(A):_____			
Connive(A)			
Conversation(A)			
Intimidation(A)			
Intuit(A)			
Leadership(A)			
Seduction(A)			
Socialize(A)			

Personal Skills	F.L.	PoP	Base Roll
Artisan(A):_____			
Athletics(Phy):			
Awareness(Per)			
Disguise(I)			
Driving(R)			
Meditation(A)			
Melee(R):Short			
Melee(R):Medium			
Melee(R):Long			
Occupation(A):_____			
Pilot(R)			
Ranged(R):Small			
Ranged(R):Medium			
Ranged(R):Heavy			
Ranged(A):Fixed			
Riding(R)			
Security(I)			
Shadow Magic(Shadow)			
Sleight of Hand(A)			
Stealth(A)			
Survival(A)			
Unarmed(R)			

Movement

Free Move: ( )
Move per Count: ( )
High Jump: ( ) Long Jump: ( )

F.L. = Finesse Level, PoP = Points of Practice, Base Roll = Stat + Aptitude + PoP

Combat

Unarmed Skill ( ) + Reaction ( ) + Personal Aptitude ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Base Damage:_____

Unarmed Base Damage = HtH Stat

Melee Skill ( ) + Reaction ( ) + Personal Aptitude ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Weapon:_____ Type: b( ) e( ) p( )

Base Damage:_____ Encumbrance:_____

Melee Skill ( ) + Reaction ( ) + Personal Aptitude ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Weapon:_____ Type: b( ) e( ) p( )

Base Damage:_____ Encumbrance:_____

Melee Base Damage = Weap. Dam. + ½ HtH Stat

Ranged Skill ( ) + Reaction ( ) + Personal Aptitude ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Weapon:_____ Base Damage:_____

Rato of Fire:_____ Capacity:_____

Range: S(+0):____ M(-2):____ L(-5):____

Ranged Skill ( ) + Reaction ( ) + Personal Aptitude ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Weapon:_____ Base Damage:_____

Rato of Fire:_____ Capacity:_____

Range: S(+0):____ M(-2):____ L(-5):____

Equipment

Item	Encumbrance

Starting Resources Given by Connections
Basic: 2 C, or 1 UC; Advanced: 3 C + 2 UC, or 1 Rare; Expert: 4 C + 3 UC + 2 R, or 1 VR; Elite: 5 C + 4 UC + 2 R + 1 VR, or 2 VR

Battle Arts & Martial Arts

Combat Skill ( ) CCPs ( )

B FE:_____ Ad FE:_____

Ex FE:_____ El FE:_____

Martial Art ( ) CCPs ( )

Finesse Effects & Valdreyr

Combat Skill ( ) CCPs ( )

B FE:_____ Ad FE:_____

Ex FE:_____ El FE:_____

Martial Art ( ) CCPs ( )

Finesse Effects & Valdreyr

Combat Skill ( ) CCPs ( )

B FE:_____ Ad FE:_____

Ex FE:_____ El FE:_____

Rune Magic

Rune Magic ( ) + Knowledge ( ) + Intelligence ( ) - Mental Fatigue ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Lesser Runes

Greater Runes

Shadow Magic

Shadow Magic ( ) + Personal ( ) + Shadow ( ) = Base Roll ( )

Animus Pool ( )

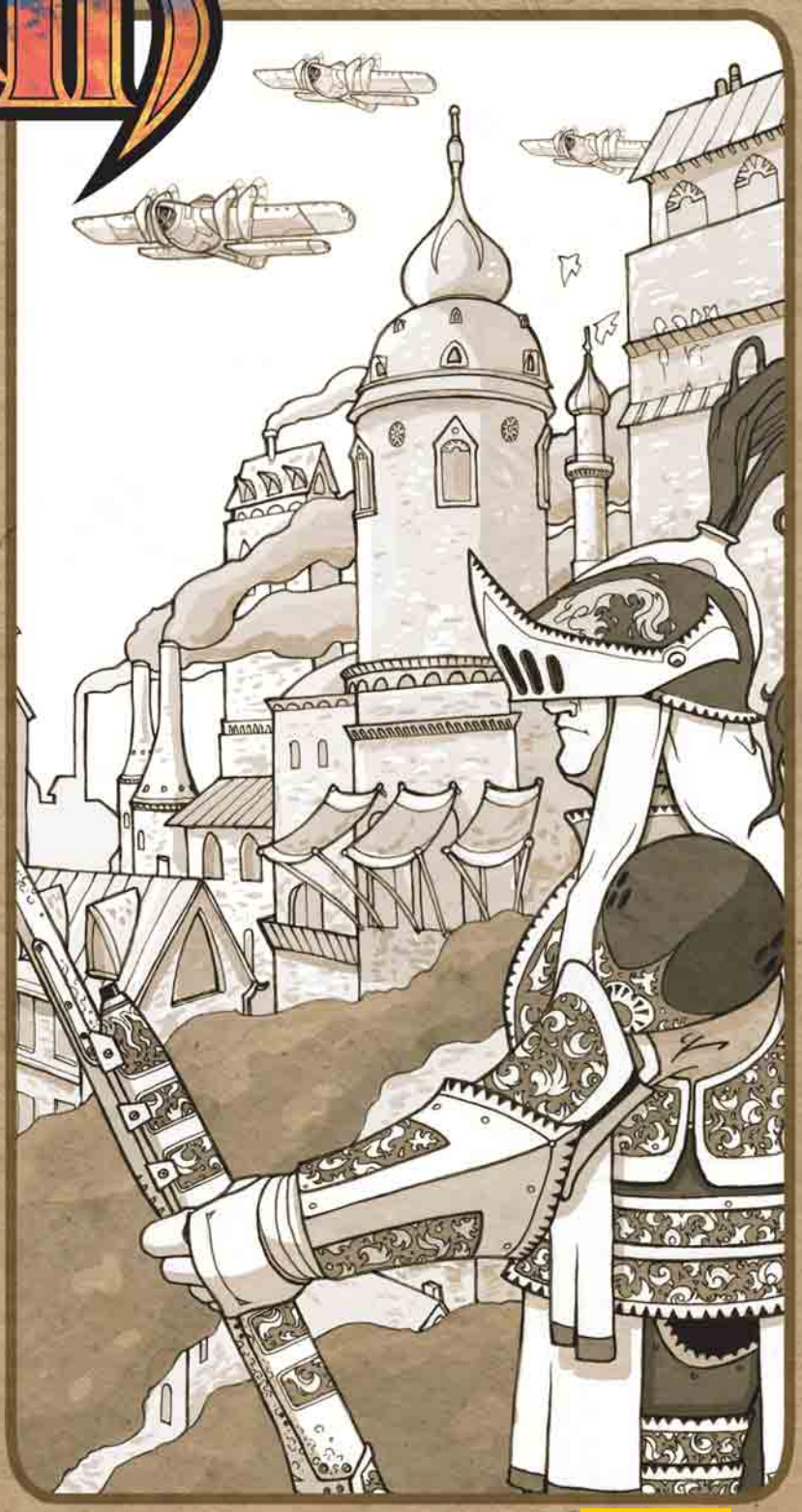
Cardinal:_____

Spells:_____

Cardinal:_____

Spells:_____

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