

# TRUE 20

TM

## WORLDS OF ADVENTURE



FIVE THRILLING WORLDS  
FOR TRUE20 ADVENTURE  
ROLEPLAYING

# TRUE 20 WORLDS OF ADVENTURE

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to even *more* worlds of adventure! When Green Ronin Publishing planned a print release for our popular *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* system, we announced a contest to find exciting settings to show off the fun and flexibility of the *True20* rules. The publishers of the winning settings would receive a free license to produce *True20* support products for their setting, giving players a wealth of setting and adventure material from which to choose.

The response to the *True20* setting search contest exceeded our expectations, both in terms of the number and quality of settings submitted by potential *True20* publishers. Choosing just four settings for the core rulebook was a difficult task, so we decided to take some of the other settings we received and produce another book, this book, to feature them.

## OVERVIEW

*Worlds of Adventure* presents five all new settings for use with *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*, in the style of the sample settings found in the *True20* core rulebook. Each setting has its own style as well as backgrounds, archetypes, new feats, and powers to help bring it to life. Even if you don't use a particular setting for your *True20* game, you can find a wealth of material useful in other settings of your own creation.

**Chapter 1: Agents of Oblivion** describes a world much like our own, at least on the surface. Beneath the ordinary façade, however, lie deeper and darker truths. Monsters exist and have always existed, the objects of our myths, legends, and nightmares. Only the covert agency known as Oblivion—and its rival the Pandora Institute—know the truth. Oblivion seeks to keep humanity in blissful ignorance while fighting against forces beyond human ken. The Pandora Institute wants to use its knowledge of the hidden truths as a key to power and influence, even if it means allying themselves with the eldritch enemies of all humanity.

**Chapter 2: Blood Throne** introduces the fantasy world of Simarra. Once a realm of high magic and unparalleled peace, it has fallen into a terrible dark age, the Age of Blood, under the rule of the avatar of an evil god. The heroes are champions of the last bastions of hope and freedom in Simarra. Even as the light

fades from the world and evil sits upon the Blood Throne in the city of Thel-Kaza, can the heroes reverse the dark tide? If they cannot, will they stand true to their principles to the very end or betray them as so many others have, swearing allegiance to the Blood Throne?

**Chapter 3: Land of the Crane** is an Asian-themed fantasy setting. Here, shadowy ninja slip through the shadows, acting as the eyes and ears of their masters, gathering secrets and striking down their enemies. Learned mystics seek to understand and maintain the balance of the five elements, while ascetic monks train to acquire mastery over body and mind in their isolated temples. The noble rulers of powerful clans vie for control over the provinces, their armies of samurai clashing, seeking honor and victory for their clans. Shape-shifting foxes, mysterious spirits, and inscrutable celestial dragons work their own designs, while the dark Land of the Dead seeks to impinge on the realm of the living, spreading darkness and corruption wherever it may touch.

**Chapter 4: Nevermore** opens up the realm of dreams and invites heroes into a land that is not a land, in a time that is beyond time. It is an ever-changing world where imagination is the key to power and influence, but also the path to destruction, since nightmares are as real here as dreams. Created long ago as a haven for the fey, Nevermore has seen conflict between the Seelie and Unseelie Courts and is now dominated by the mysterious Dreamlords. Awakened dreamers visit the mysterious misty land from outside, and Nevermore spawns its own progeny from the depths of dream, as these newcomers contend with the reborn fey.

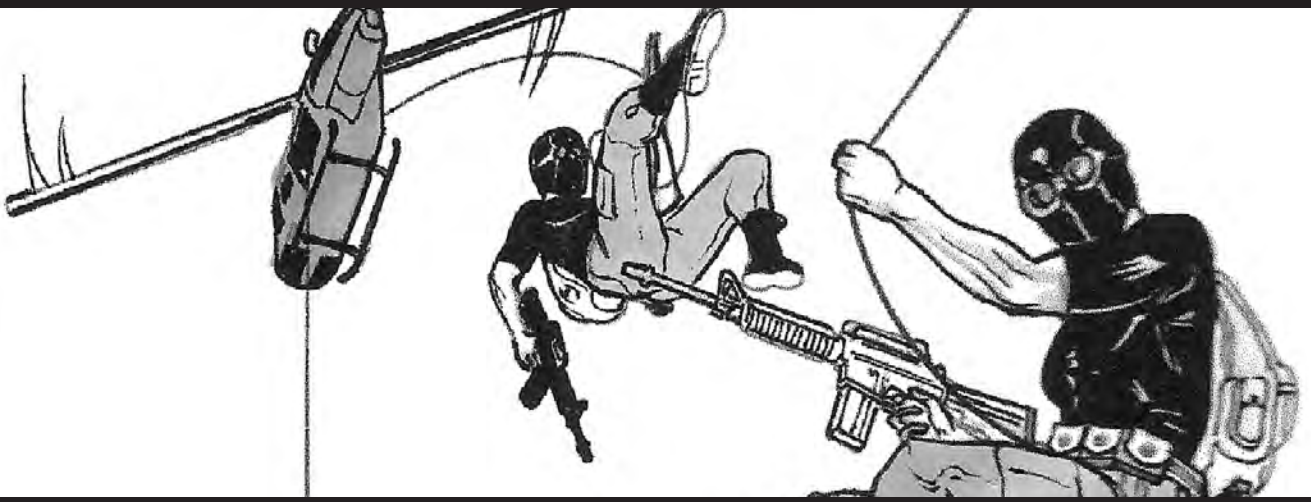
**Chapter 5: The Razor in the Apple** is a world of childhood imagination. Remember huddling in the dark under the covers with just a sliver of light coming in from the hallway and hearing something stirring in the closet or under the bed? Remember feeling your heart skip a beat, as you *knew* something was there? You were right, there was, and there still is. The monsters are real, and kids are the only ones who can really see them or fight them. Armed with the power of imagination, a few toys, and your friends, you meddling neighborhood kids are the only ones standing between us and the things that go bump in the night, assuming that Mom and Dad don't ground you or send you off to military school for running around in graveyards after curfew...

## WORLDS TO MIX-AND-MATCH

As much fun as the settings in *Worlds of Adventure* are, they can be even more fun if you take the opportunity to use the “common language” of the *True20* system to mix-and-match your favorite worlds, or even just your favorite aspects of different worlds. Most of the settings in this book and in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* offer opportunities for cross-overs, shared stories, and borrowing elements of one setting to use in another.

For example, what if the *Agents of Oblivion* discover some of the factions from *Borrowed Time* and the ability to manipulate time itself? Perhaps the “bank” of borrowed time is doing more than just holding off ill luck; it could be the barrier keeping Things From Outside Time away from our reality, and it weakens every time someone dips into the “account” to use some of it. Maybe the *Agents of Oblivion* only *think* they understand the true nature of the threat, but it's really the kids (from *The Razor in the Apple*) who comprehend its true nature and scope. Turn the *Land of the Crane* into a planet or colony with a fantasy Asian flair in *Lux Aeternum*. Place it on the far side of Simarra (from *Blood Throne*) and make the invaders from the Hordelands into extra-dimensional servants of Thal-Kaza. Send agents of the Mecha Assault Force (from *Mecha vs. Kaiju*) back through time to the *Land of the Crane* or into the realm of dreams in *Nevermore*.

These worlds of adventure are *yours* to explore and do with as you wish. Although *True20* publishers will be supporting them with adventures and source material of their own, it's your game, and ultimately, your decision what to make of them. So have all the fun that you can with them!



# AGENTS OF OBLIVION





WELCOME TO OBLIVION.

THOSE ARE THE THREE WORDS YOU READ ON THE PLAIN, WHITE POSTCARD THE DAY BEFORE YOUR LIFE OFFICIALLY CHANGED FOREVER.

THE NEXT DAY, YOU BECAME PART OF THE COVERT AGENCY OBLIVION. YOUR ROLE IS TO PROTECT HUMANITY, BATTLING THREATS BOTH NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL ON A GLOBAL BASIS, AS ASSIGNED BY YOUR DIRECTOR.

## AGENCY ORIENTATION: WHAT YOU KNOW

As a new recruit, we know you're anxious to get into the field: patience. The threats are not going away any time soon. Some may be older than our planet, but I'm getting ahead of myself. You don't even have clearance yet. Let me tell you what you are cleared for which, admittedly, isn't much. It's enough to tell you what we've done and allow you an opportunity to pick the career path best suited to you. Don't fear. If you decide down the road that you're not suited to be a Carnivore or a Field Sorcerer, that's all right. You fill out a few of the proper forms and you can get reassigned to another branch without compromising your team's integrity. Yes, you'll probably be working in a team. Few new recruits are capable of fielding solo missions right away. So remember: patience.

### A THUMBNAIL HISTORY

Project Bluebook closed its doors on December 17th, 1969. That's probably before many of you were born, but they investigated UFOs and the kind of things you've seen on television. The very next day, three non-descript men and an attractive redhead cleaned out a rather spacious supply room next to the janitor's office in the basement of National Reconnaissance Office's (NRO) main building. It is understood that some of the original files and bureaucratic headaches Oblivion suffers today come from the Founders' close affiliation with Bluebook.

### THE LURKER AT THE THRESHOLD

We've all had nightmares. I'm sure you recall those dreams where you're fading away and you vaguely see a shape in the doorway, or you awaken bolt upright in your bed, screaming about the

monsters coming down the hall. Those are inklings, atavistic protective mechanisms heralding back from our ancestors to be alert, to be aware, that something out there, somewhere, does not like us very much and wants us to go away permanently. Some of our finest writers have glimpsed through this dark lens, and it has driven some to drink, madness or worse.

Know you this: the dreams of fancy are real. The nightmares are real. They were there in our past. Our mythologies speak of them. They were dormant, lost interest, went away for awhile, but they are back. They are back with a vengeance.

Your job will be to use your talents, varied though they may be, to deal with the numerous threats that challenge us. We have many enemies, ranging from men to monsters to creatures somewhere in-between. Now, let me tell you why we wish to maintain a low profile.

### THE REASONS FOR SECRECY

Where Bluebook and other past organizations went wrong is they expected the world to hail them as heroes. That is not the case. Remember that in Oblivion that is never the case. If we do our job properly, no one even knows we exist. We are Oblivion. We are Zeros, nothingness in the eyes of our friends or our enemies. We don't appeal to common sense, for that's quickly decaying in our modern world. We know better, and we act accordingly.

An agency exists that rivals our own, the Pandora Institute. On the surface, a more placid think tank cannot be found, but underneath all of their talks for the common good, behind their mask of benevolence, is a darker face, a face corrupted by their contact with the Forgotten and other eldritch forces.

## CREATING YOUR AGENT

Now that you have some idea what's going on, it is time to start creating your agent. Look over the various career paths to see what abilities they suggest as essential for the type of agent you have in mind.

### BACKGROUNDS: ROADS TO OBLIVION

In Agents of Oblivion, everyone is human, but don't fret, being human is not such a bad thing. After all, if you're playing this game, it's likely

you're human too. Besides, doesn't it take away a bit from the horrific if you're adventuring with someone that looks like Kid Cthulhu?

### AWAKENED

Characters with inherent supernatural talents, random or controlled, are known as the Awakened. The source of their powers can include any of the following: unnatural ancestry, latent psionic abilities, long-repressed abductions or supernatural exposure. They must choose a Core Power Ability as defined under IFO: Paranormal Branch

## WHO THEY ARE

Firestarters, mind readers, trained psychic soldiers, lucky devils, mutants

## REASONS FOR RECRUITMENT

Unique abilities, provide training, study their powers

## BENEFITS

Awakened characters select a Power upon character creation and gain the Iron Will feat.

## CITIZEN

Citizens are those characters with humble beginnings that somehow find strength in adversity, whether they are doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs or demon-slaying department store clerks. This is the catch-all category for backgrounds that don't fit into the other ones presented.

## WHO THEY ARE

The guy at the gas station, an award-winning novelist, female field hockey player, computer technician...anyone you'd ever want to play, and many you won't ever think of.

## REASONS FOR RECRUITMENT

Resourcefulness, Civilian Contacts, Unusual skills

## BENEFITS

Citizens begin play with one skill related to their field, whatever says the most about their character. This means a Doctor gets Medicine, while a short order cook gets Craft (cooking). Also, they receive one additional Virtue and any one feat from the General feat list.

## MILITARY

Military characters come from police forces, standing military, mercenary groups or other such organizations. For some, Oblivion is a move up, a chance to do more than bust punks or a real opportunity to give something back to the world. For most, Oblivion is a place the military can send their loose cannons.

## WHO THEY ARE

Ex-cops, terrorists, bounty hunters, assassins, Secret Service, Congo mercenaries, Army, Marines, hulking 'Nam vets

## REASONS FOR RECRUITMENT

Combat experience, no one else will take them, knowledge of tactics and weapons

## BENEFITS

All Military possess an extra Vice. They begin with a Warrior Feat of their choice and a bonus skill from the following list: Bluff, Climb, Demolitions, Disable Device, Drive, Gather Information, Intimidate, Language, Medicine, Sense Motive, Stealth, Survival, Swim.

## OCCULT

A character with an Occult Background has stumbled upon knowledge of the Forgotten. Whether through ancient texts, tomes or random happenstance, they comprehend the madness that longs to devour the world.

## REASONS FOR RECRUITMENT

Knowledge of the Forgotten, encounters with various cults, practical knowledge of magic

## WHO THEY ARE

Former cultists, Goths, academicians, archivists of rare book rooms in small Eastern Seaboard universities, old souls

## BENEFITS

Occult characters have the Knowledge (supernatural) and Concentration skills and the Second Chance (Sanity checks) feat.

## BASIC TRAINING: THE INTERMEDIATE STEP

No matter their background, all Agent aspirants undergo a rigorous twelve-week training program as part of the selection process. During this time, you gain the following benefits:

- The Armor Training (light) feat
- The Sidearm Training feat
- A rank in the Language Skill (allowing you to speak an additional language)
- One feat from the following list: Acrobatic Bluff, Defensive Roll, Improved Grab, Improved Pin, Improved Strike, Improved Throw or Improved Trip

## CAREER PATHS: ENDS TO OBLIVION

Now that you know where you've come from, and undergone basic training, it's time to find out where you're going. The old saying, "All roads lead to Oblivion" is applicable. Oh, you thought that meant Rome, didn't you?

Oblivion is not your typical shoot 'em up firing gallery. No matter what path you choose, however, you're trained in a sidearm of your choice. But, some folks prefer to use their hands...or their minds. Oblivion is equipped to handle all of that. Mind. Body. Soul. Let's start with the last first and work backwards, shall we?

## IFO PARANORMAL BRANCH

### AGENCY ROLE: ADEPTS

What good is the rest of our work, if we lose our soul, you might ask? That's a good question, and something these agents ask every day. Oracles, scholars, philosophers and fools are among the contemplative luminaries that fill this rapidly declining

## INVESTIGATION AND FIELD OPERATIONS (IFO)

IFO is responsible for exploration, investigation and covert operations of unexplained phenomena. Their expertise and experience requires them to serve as an adjunct to the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU). Three main branches exist within this department, based on the agent's role: the Paranormal (adept), Technical (expert) and Combat-Ready (warrior) branches.



branch in the Agency. On the darker side are the psi-operatives and field sorcerers that combat the evils directly, risking the loss of humanity with every victory, weighing their short lives against that of the endless Forgotten.



**Agent Nicknames:** Librarians, Bookworms, Wizards

Adepts begin with the following traits:

### SKILLS

Choose 4 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1)

### FEATS

Choose 4 from General and Adept

### DRAWING OF THE DARK (CORE ABILITY)

An adept may spend a Conviction point to make use of a power they do not possess. Alternately, they may spend a point of Conviction to eliminate any accumulated modifiers to fatigue saving throws for using powers. Using either facet of this core ability earns the character a point of Corruption.

### STAVING OFF THE NIGHT (CORE ABILITY)

An adept may spend a Conviction point to eliminate all startled and scared conditions.

### CORE POWER ABILITY

Adepts must choose a mental ability score as the key ability for their powers. Intelligence-based powers are arcane or magical, Wisdom-based powers are spiritual or divine, and Charisma-based powers are psychic or psionic. Once selected, this cannot change and defines their make-up.

## ADEPT PATHS

The following sets of starting skills and feats show some of the more common paths taken by Librarians. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0.)

### DREAMER

Often called Oracles, these Agents live outside the normal perceptions of time, often adjusting their actions unconsciously. This is especially evident in their particularly good luck. Some do develop their abilities to delve into the minds of others, while others put their razor-sharp concentration to mastering their mind over their body. They require a strong Wisdom and Charisma score above all.

- **Key Abilities:** Charisma, Wisdom
- **Starting Skills:** Concentration, Knowledge (behavioral sciences), Notice, Sense Motive
- **Starting Feats:** Lucky, Second Sight, Truth-Reading, Visions

### FIELD SORCERER

Wielding powers perhaps better left untouched, a field sorcerer serves the cause of Oblivion handily. However, a seasoned field sorcerer is categorized under potential liabilities, as the threat of Corruption is never far off. Known as Wizards, even among the Library branch, these agents require high Intelligence and Wisdom scores, as well as enough Constitution to stave off Fatigue from their potent abilities. Sorcerers often speak multiple languages, the better to uncover arcane secrets with.

- **Key Abilities:** Intelligence, Wisdom
- **Starting Skills:** Concentration, Intimidate, Knowledge (supernatural), Language
- **Starting Feats:** Drain Vitality, Elemental Blast, Fire Shaping, Ward

## PSI-OP

Combat psi-ops are cross-trained in military ops and psionic abilities. Many manifest psychic talents from repeated exposure to the paranormal, while some undergo training in secret facilities to bring their latent abilities forward. These agents typically develop a broad skill base to cover a spectrum of situations. Dexterity and Charisma are this agent's key abilities. Psi-Ops generally play it subtle, typically developing such powers as Mind Blast and Invisibility over flashier ones.

- **Key Abilities:** Charisma, Dexterity
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Disable Device, Sleight of Hand, Stealth
- **Starting Feats:** Combat Sense, Mind Touch, Psychic Weapon, Sleep

## PUPPETEER

A master of mental manipulation and social skills, this Agent needs good Charisma and Intelligence to be able to lie and persuade others, and a reasonable amount of Wisdom for when they must resort to, shall we say, a more direct approach, mentally speaking. Their motto is, "Why do your own dirty work when you can get someone else to do it for you?"

- **Key Abilities:** Charisma, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Concentration, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Sense Motive
- **Starting Feats:** Dominate, Heart Shaping, Mind Touch, Supernatural Focus (Dominate)

## IFO TECHNICAL BRANCH

### AGENCY ROLE: EXPERTS

You have to know what you're up against before you can even begin to think up a plan. These Agents have broad skill sets covering the theoretical to the practical. Some focus on field research, while others get out there and perform damage control ranging from obfuscation to outright network.

**Agent Nicknames:** Suits, Spooks

Experts begin with the following:

### SKILLS

Choose 8 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1).

### FEATS

1 Warrior, 3 from Expert or General.

### EXPERTISE (CORE ABILITY)

See **Expert** in **Chapter One: Hero Creation** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

## EXPERT PATHS

The following sets of starting skills and feats show some of the more common paths taken by Spooks. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0).

### CLEANERS

When the going gets tough, someone has to clean up after the tough get going. Cleaners are the ones responsible for removing



the smoldering corpse of a Spawn of the Forgotten from a city park and convincing everyone around that they just watched an aerial dogfight between Venus and a weather balloon. They need to be glib and they need to think fast, so Charisma and Intelligence are usually the way to go. Gather Information and Bluff will carry a cleaner far, as well as Knowledge (forensics) to know what evidence to clean and what to leave for the convenient, rational explanation.





- **Key Abilities:** Charisma, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (forensics), Notice, Perform (acting), Search
- **Starting Feats:** Fascinate (Bluff), Firearms Training, Mass Suggestion, Suggestion

## MAVENS

Typically the point man of a mission, a Maven requires a broad knowledge base so they can handle a variety of situations and the leadership skills necessary to pull together a team of highly trained and independent individuals. Charisma and Intelligence are paramount, but the best MAVENS are well rounded.

- **Key Abilities:** Charisma, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Knowledge (supernatural), Medicine, Notice, Sense Motive, Stealth
- **Starting Feats:** Skill Mastery (Gather Information, Notice, Sense Motive, Stealth), Firearms Training, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan

## SPECTRES

These agents are the silent type and excel at acquiring equipment and information in those hard to reach places, relying upon a combination of their stealth and cunning. Dexterity and Intelligence are especially useful as is, to a lesser degree, Charisma, when a more direct approach to a secure facility is required.

- **Key Abilities:** Dexterity, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Climb, Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Search, Stealth, Sleight of Hand
- **Starting Feats:** Firearms Training, Improvised Tools, Skill Mastery (Disable Device, Disguise, Stealth, Sleight of Hand), Talented (Disable Device, Stealth)

## SPONGES

The most technically minded of the technical, Sponges are often found surfing the web, reading and watching television, so they are prepared to collate disparate bits of information as needed. They can handle general maintenance and are capable of answering the most obscure trivia questions at the pull of a trigger. Dexterity goes a long way towards keeping stuff in tip-top shape, and Intelligence lets them retain enough information to carry them the rest of the way. Most eventually develop Resourceful and Contacts as well—it's always handy to have a second opinion or even a second item.

- **Key Abilities:** Dexterity, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Computers, Craft (electronics), Craft (mechanical), Disable Device, Knowledge (current events), Knowledge (supernatural), Knowledge (technology), Knowledge (theology and philosophy)
- **Starting Feats:** Eidetic Memory, Field Tester or Firearms Training, Jack-of-All-Trades, Well-Informed



## IFO: COMBAT- READY BRANCH

**Agency Role:** Warriors

What good is a plan if you can't carry it out? That's the question often asked by these martial operatives. Their intense training programs rival those of most Special Forces units worldwide. This branch, more than any other, actively promotes cross-training to prepare their operatives for anything. You can't request a field manual when you're in an abandoned warehouse with a banshee calling your name.

**Agent Nicknames:** Outsiders, Invisibles

Warriors begin with the following:

### SKILLS

Choose 4 + Intelligence score (minimum of 1)

### FEATS

Exotic Weapon Training, Firearms Training or Weapon Training, 1 Expert or Warrior, 2 General or Warrior

### DETERMINATION (CORE ABILITY)

See **Warrior** in **Chapter One: Hero Creation** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

## WARRIOR PATHS

The following sets of starting skills and feats show some of the more common paths taken by Outsiders. (The paths assume an Intelligence score of +0.)

### CARNIVORE

When things need killing, you release the beast with the least... morality. Carnivores are calculating killing machines, often provoking conflict as a channel for their aggression. This serves them well when up against some of the scarier denizens of the Forgotten. Strength for carrying heavy gear and Dexterity to properly use it are essential.

- **Key Abilities:** Dexterity, Strength
- **Starting Skills:** Climb, Notice, Search, Stealth
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (Heavy), Firearms Training, Iron Will, Rage

## DEMOLISHER

An expert in the art of explosives, the demolisher is a handy addition to any team. Their specialization makes them in short supply, since bad demolishers don't survive.

- **Key Abilities:** Intelligence, Wisdom
- **Starting Skills:** Demolitions, Disable Device, Notice, Search
- **Starting Feats:** Bomb Expert, Firearms Training, Improvised Tools, Second Chance (Disable Devices)

## TYPEWRITER

Typewriters, close quarters specialists, were originally called martial artists until a British agent, a retired boxer, introduced the Cockney rhyming slang for fighter into Oblivion's lexicon. It stuck. Whether a rough and tumble brawler or a kung-fu master, typewriters comes in all shapes and sizes. Their common bond is their expertise in personal combat. While some use no weapons whatsoever, others prefer archaic ones. Strength and Constitution are paramount in dealing out and taking damage, while Dexterity aids in landing blows. Martial artists wanting to expand their minds as well as bodies are well advised to consider developing a few levels as an Adept.

- **Key Abilities:** Constitution, Strength
- **Starting Skills:** Acrobatics, Bluff, Jump, Medicine
- **Starting Feats:** Dodge Focus, Elusive Target, Exotic Weapon Training or Weapon Training, Redirect

## WRAITH

A wraith gets somewhere and makes sure he's the only person to leave the building alive. They need to be stealthy and smart and have the patience to time their kills. Dexterity, Intelligence and Wisdom are the most important aspects of a Wraith. A lot of Stealth goes a long way, and Feats such as Assessment, Blind Fight, Seize Initiative and Track will allow them to choose their opponents and fights carefully. In a wilderness environment, Survival is often important to set up traps and detect natural hazards.

- **Key Abilities:** Dexterity, Intelligence
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Notice, Search, Sense Motive, Stealth
- **Starting Feats:** Assessment, Firearms Training, Skill Training 2 (included in starting skills)

## SKILLS

The following section looks at skills for the *Agents of Oblivion* setting, including a new skill, as well as notes and modifications for existing *True20* skills.

### DEMOLITIONS

INTELLIGENCE, TRAINED ONLY, REQUIRES TOOLS

You can set, make and disarm a variety of explosives.

**Check:** You can make a check to disarm a bomb, set explosives or create an explosive device. Each requires its own particular tools: a demolitions kit or appropriate materials.

### DISARMING

The complexity of an explosive device determines its Difficulty as follows.

| Bomb Complexity | Difficulty |
|-----------------|------------|
| Simple          | 20         |
| Moderate        | 25         |
| Complex         | 30         |
| Amazing         | 40         |

**Action:** Disarming a simple bomb is a full-round action. More complex bombs require multiple rounds at the Narrator's discretion.

**Try Again:** If the check fails by 4 or less, you have failed, but you can try again. If you fail by 5 or more, the bomb explodes.

### CRAFTING

All handcrafted explosive devices deal +4 damage in a blast radius. Acquiring materials usually takes an hour and a successful Intelligence roll against the appropriate Materials Difficulty, but is subject to the Narrator's discretion.

| BOMB CRAFTING    |            |           |            |                                    |
|------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------------|
| Craft Complexity | Difficulty | Materials | Build Time | Examples                           |
| Simple           | 10         | 5         | 1 hour     | pipe bomb, hand grenade            |
| Moderate         | 20         | 10        | 12 hours   | car bomb, time bomb, booby trap    |
| Complex          | 25         | 15        | 24 hours   | landmine, motion-triggered bombs   |
| Advanced         | 30         | 25        | 60 hours   | IFF (Identify Friend or Foe) bombs |

**Challenges:** The following challenges are available for manufacturing explosives.

*Big Bang:* For every +2 you add to your Materials Difficulty, you may increase the damage of the explosives by +1. Each damage increase adds an hour to the time to locate the needed materials. (A pipe bomb of +6 damage increases the Materials Difficulty to +9 and the materials acquisition time to three hours.)

*Shaped Charge:* By adding +5 to the Craft Difficulty, you may create a shaped charge, focusing the force of the explosion in one direction. This increases its damage by +2.

*Time is of the Essence:* You may add +5 or +10 to the Craft Difficulty to reduce construction time by half or one quarter respectively, assuming materials are available. (A pipe bomb can be made in 30 minutes on a roll of 15.)

**Special:** You can take 10 when crafting a bomb, but you can't take 20 since doing so represents multiple attempts and each attempt uses up some of the raw materials.

### SETTING EXPLOSIVES

Putting sticks of dynamite next to a steel door will only scorch it, while properly setting the dynamite in holes around the door might well blow it off its hinges. The Difficulty to properly set explosives is 10 + the Item's Toughness.

If the explosives are properly placed, the Item must roll to see how much damage it takes when the explosives are detonated; roll d20 + Toughness against a Difficulty of 10 + attack's damage bonus. Properly placed charges double the explosive's damage bonus against objects.

**Example:** A demo man is planting explosives on a reinforced steel door with a Toughness 15. Total Difficulty: 25. Wisely, he takes 20. He has Int +3, Demolitions +4 and Skill Focus (Demolitions) for another +3. His total is 30. The plastique charge (+10) is properly set. The door must roll a d20 +15 against a Difficulty of 10 + 20.

If the charge was not placed properly, the door would roll against a Difficulty of 10+10, the likelihood of any damage at all being virtually nil. See **Damage to Objects** in **Chapter Six: Playing the Game** of the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book for further details.

### KNOWLEDGE (SUPERNATURAL)

The occult, magic and the supernatural, astrology, numerology and similar topics including:

- Clues about a creature's weakness or origin.
- Insights into the cultural origins of magic, cults or rituals based upon evidence as varied as an inscription, an offering or a chant echoing down a hallway.
- The link between current strange occurrences and those in the past.

### LANGUAGE

#### TRAINED ONLY, REQUIRES SPECIALIZATION

Languages are unusual skills. Each time you acquire this skill, you gain the ability to read, write and speak another language at its base level. Agents can speak, read and write their native language, plus one additional language per point of Intelligence bonus (if any), plus one more. Thus, all Agents know at least 2 languages, if not more.

**Basic Level:** Taking a language once grants you literacy and fluency in a language. You have a regional accent as well. This is the level that all Agents speak their Native tongue at, unless they elect to take another level of proficiency.

**Expert Level:** Taking the same language twice means complete and utter fluidity. The agent copies slang, local dialects and cultural body language with ease. (An Agent with English at this level may emulate regional American accents, as well as British, Cockney, Irish and other English accents, for example.)

**Dead or Exotic Languages:** These languages require the assignment of two skill ranks to have at the *basic level* and three skill ranks to have them at *expert level*.

### DEAD OR EXOTIC LANGUAGES

| Dead Languages (Common)      | Dead Languages (Exotic)                                     |
|------------------------------|---|
| Aramaic                      | Enochian (Angelic)  |
| Gaelic                       | Incantic (Blasphemer's Script, Cryptographic, Written Only) |
| Greek                        | Lethe (The Forgotten Tongue)                                |
| Hieroglyphics (Written Only) | Mortis (Corpse Tongue)                                      |
| Latin                        | Lucent (Corrupted Enochian)                                 |
| Quechua                      |   |
| Runic (Written Only)         |   |

# FEATS

The following are new feats used in the *Agents of Oblivion* setting.

## AMBIDEXTERITY (GENERAL)

The penalty for fighting with two weapons is reduced by 2. A character with this and Two Weapon Fighting, for instance, has a -0 and -2 penalty; no penalty if fighting with a light weapon in his off hand.

## BOMB EXPERT (EXPERT)

PREREQUISITE: TRAINED IN DEMOLITIONS

A bomb expert knows exactly how to set explosives for maximum impact. By successfully making his Demolitions check to set explosives, any placed charges do +4 additional damage to objects.

## CITY DRIVER (GENERAL)

PREREQUISITE: TRAINED IN DRIVE, VEHICULAR COMBAT

+3 to Driving checks made in combat. In addition, bullets seem to bounce off this character's vehicle; whether they're behind the wheel or not, the vehicle gains +1 to Toughness saves.

## COLD-BLOODED (GENERAL)

This character gains +1 to Sanity rolls and +1 to Intimidation attempts. Also, they gain +2 on saving throws to resist the Mind Touch power—their mind is a cold, dark place where few go willingly.

## DRIVE-BY (WARRIOR)

PREREQUISITE: TRAINED IN DRIVE

The penalty you take when using a ranged weapon from a vehicle is halved: -2 instead of -4 if your vehicle is taking a double move, and -4 instead of -8 if your vehicle is going full speed.

## FIELD TESTER (EXPERT)

This Agent is often called upon to field test the latest and greatest equipment. The Agent gains an additional +2 Resource Points to spend specifically on gadgets. The gadgets requisitioned with these points function at +2 Power Ranks.

## GREATER RESOURCES (GENERAL)

The Agent is able to requisition more equipment for his missions. He adds +2 to his Resource Points.

## GUNS (WARRIOR)

The character gains +2 Resource Points to spend specifically on Weapons.

## HOSE 'EM! (WARRIOR)

PREREQUISITE: FIREARMS TRAINING

The character is good at using automatic weapons offensively. When using autofire to target multiple opponents, the normal "walking" penalties are halved.

## INTERROGATOR (EXPERT)

The character adds his Reputation bonus to Intimidation when attempting to interrogate a suspect by exerting influence on him.

In addition, you can scare a target so witless that they count as Helpful rather than Friendly.

## JADED (GENERAL)

A jaded character receives +2 on all Sanity rolls.

## LINGUIST (GENERAL)

A linguist has a unique gift of gab. They know a number of additional languages equal to their level. This does not apply to dead or exotic languages.

## MORE GUNS (WARRIOR)

The character gains an additional +2 Resource Points to spend specifically on Weapons.

## RESOURCEFUL (EXPERT)

The character is able to requisition more equipment for his missions. This adds +2 to his Resource Pool.

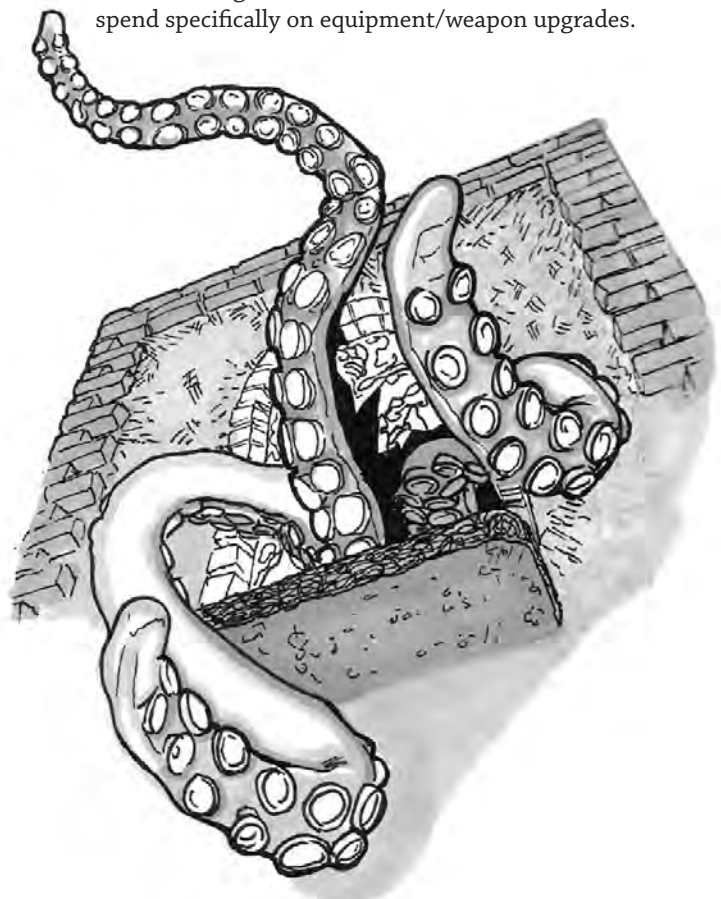
## SIDEARM TRAINING (GENERAL)

The Agent is trained in the use of general small arms and does not suffer any penalty from their use. Should he also have Firearms Training or later take the Firearms Training Feat, this feat is subsequently treated as Attack Focus, providing +1 to attack rolls with sidearms.

## SUPERIOR GEAR (EXPERT)

PREREQUISITE: CONNECTED

The character gains an additional +2 Resource Points to spend specifically on equipment/weapon upgrades.





# VIRTUES AND VICES

Every character begins play with at least one virtue and one vice, possibly more depending on their background, but never less. Together, these facets comprise your character's nature. An applicable set of good and bad qualities suitable for *Agents of Oblivion* follows, but feel free to make up your own with your Narrator's permission.

## VIRTUES

The following is a list of suitable virtues common for *Agents of Oblivion* heroes.

### ACADEMIC

An Academic character seeks knowledge for personal improvement or the betterment of mankind. Its opposite is Power Hungry.

### AUSTERE

An Austere character is an ascetic who practices self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual self-discipline. Typically, an Austere agent declines anything that gives him pleasure or may be considered indulgent. Its opposite is Addictive.

### FAITHFUL

The Agent who attends worship services, studies holy texts and tries to live in accordance with the tenets of his religion may be counted among the Faithful. Its opposite is Zealous.

### GREATER GOOD

This trait belongs to those that are willing to do for others, with disregard to personal imposition. These are the type to hold the door against a million carnivorous zombies, who volunteer to accept a demon into their

own body, or who are willing to miss out on a few minutes of a day off to fetch coffee. Their outlook is that virtue and sacrifice is its own reward. Its opposite is Egotistic.

### JUST

These individuals trust in the justice systems of men and are willing to do whatever it takes to see that the law remains the law. They believe in fair treatment for all under the law, no matter what their degree of guilt or innocence. Its opposite is Vengeful.

### PATRIOTIC

A character placing their love of their homeland above everything else in their life possesses the Patriotic Virtue. Its opposite is Jingoism.

## VICES

The following is a list of suitable vices for *Agents of Oblivion* heroes.

### ADDICTED

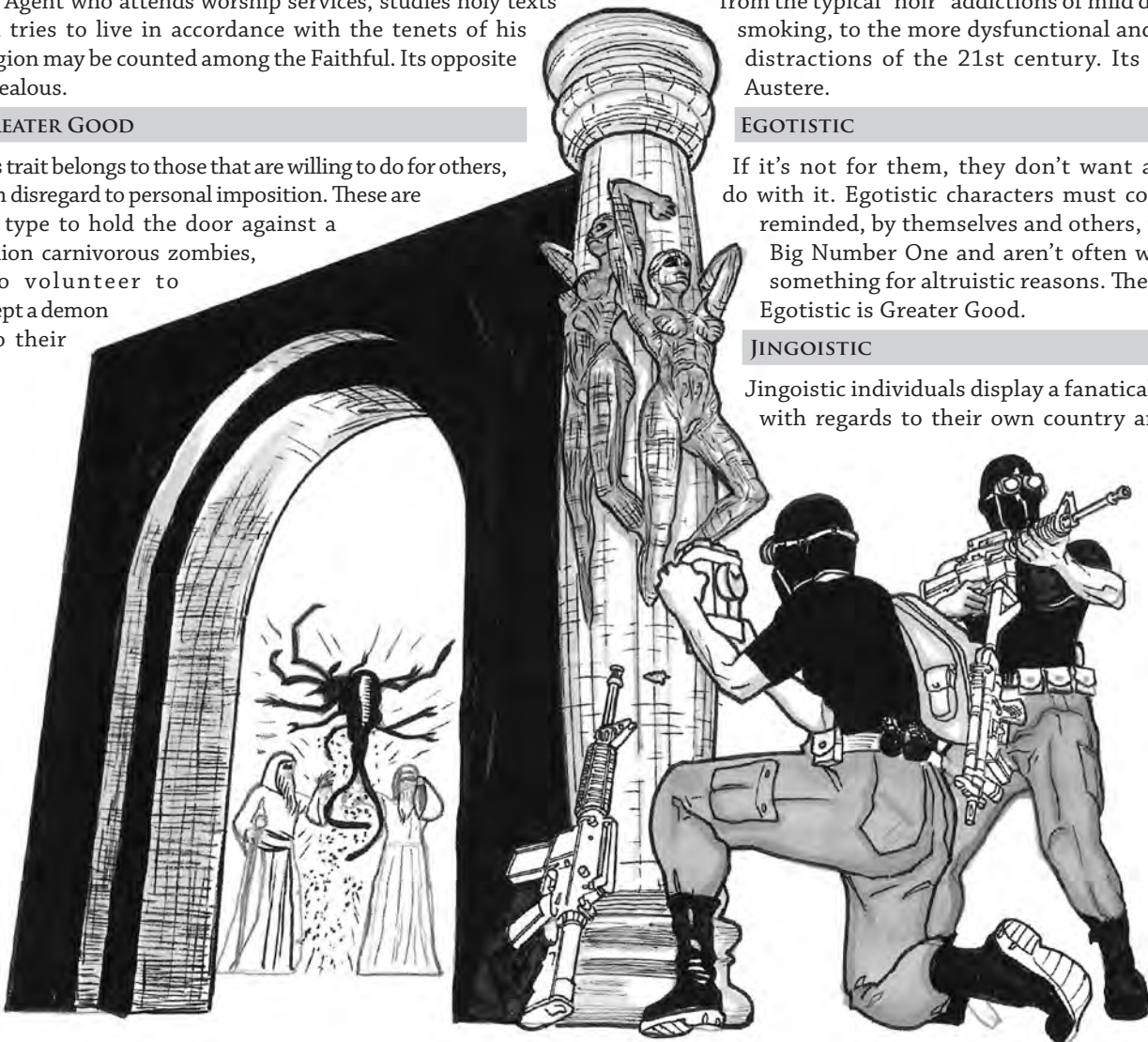
Addicted characters have some sort of harmful emotional or physical habit that they need to indulge often. This may range from the typical "noir" addictions of mild drinking and smoking, to the more dysfunctional and dangerous distractions of the 21st century. Its opposite is Austere.

### EGOTISTIC

If it's not for them, they don't want anything to do with it. Egotistic characters must constantly be reminded, by themselves and others, that they're Big Number One and aren't often willing to do something for altruistic reasons. The opposite of Egotistic is Greater Good.

### JINGOISTIC

Jingoistic individuals display a fanatical patriotism with regards to their own country and outright



hostility towards others. They have opinions and aren't afraid to back them up. Jingoistic characters are often prepared to come to blows with someone who might threaten their way of life. The opposite of Jingoism is Patriotism.

#### POWER HUNGRY

If a character is Power Hungry, they're prone to turning any scrap of knowledge or talent they might have towards personal gain, for the ultimate purpose of gaining MORE knowledge and ability. This is the Vice for those eldritch scholars who always have to translate "just one more work of forbidden knowledge" because they're convinced they'll figure everything out and for martial artists constantly pushing themselves to the edge of human endurance. Its opposite is Academic.

#### VENGEFUL

Vengeful characters perceive any slight to them or their loved ones as a personal challenge. They must strike back as hard as they can, but as Shakespeare teaches, revenge is cyclical and blood for blood is never enough. It's not enough for a Vengeful character to kill the henchman who killed his girlfriend; they have to slash and torture their way to the top. The opposite of Vengeful is Just.

#### ZEALOUS

There are those who take their faith too far. When Faith becomes intolerance, it transforms into Zeal. Refusing to speak to members of opposing religions, crusading and generally presuming to know the will of the Higher Power is hubris and prideful. Its opposite is Faithful.

## LOCK AND LOAD: GETTING DOWN TO GEARING UP

Now that you've got yourself together, it's time to get yourself kitted out for field duty. Sure, you may vary your equipment from time to time, and you'll probably get assigned certain mission-specific items on occasion as well, but you might as well get used to filling out the requisition forms, right?

Agents have their total level (referred to as Agent level) +3 + Cha in Resource Points (minimum of 1.)

Resource Points are renewable at the start of each mission and are spent to procure Gear. You may expend any portion of your Resource Points before the beginning of a mission or after the mission briefing, unless your Narrator indicates otherwise. Agents may pool their Resource Points at the Narrator's discretion. Unused Resource Points do not carry over from one mission to the next, nor do any items procured with them. All equipment has a Resource Point cost of 1 to 5, as indicated in the Gear section.

### COMMON ITEMS

In addition to their Gear, Agents also begin each mission with a number of Common Items equal to their Wisdom ability (minimum of 1). These items are inexpensive items, readily affordable to the average person. A Common Item may not grant a bonus greater than +1 nor inflict a penalty greater than -1. A Common Item may have no more than 1-2 very simple rules beyond its "common sense" application as determined by the Narrator (e.g. a flashlight improves vision in dim or no lighting,

and with a successful ranged attack, may inflict a -1 penalty to the opponent's attacks, due to partial blinding).

Characters wishing to requisition more common items may expend a Resource Point to gain a number of additional Common Items equal to their Intelligence ability (minimum 1).

Sample Common Items include: *altimeter, art supplies, batteries, binoculars, blanket, cane, camera, camera tripod, camelback, canteen, caving ladder, cell phone, chemical body warmer, compass, container (attaché cases, backpacks, luggage, etc.), courier pouch, crowbar, depth gauge, dice, document shredder, duct tape, entrenching tool, face paint, fire extinguisher, flares, flashlight, Geiger counter, glass cutter, glow sticks, clear goggles, handcuffs, heater, ionized water, multi-tool, load-bearing gear, magnifying glass, matches (1 box per Common Item), media (CDs, DVDs, film rolls, video tapes, paper, etc.), metal detector, standard microphone, microscope, MP3 player, MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), musical instruments, netting (including camouflage netting), notebooks, oven cleaner, padlocks, PDA, pocket knife, radiation monitor, portable ram, road flares, rope and chain, rollerblades, seismometer, signal mirrors, skates, skis and snowshoes, sleeping bag, slim jim car door opener, snacks and vices (chewing gum, cigars, cigarettes, lollipops, publicly available books, etc.), snorkel, snowboard, sports equipment, sunglasses, surfboard, stretcher, swimming fins and mask, Swiss Army knife, low-magnification telescope, tent, video game system, watch, water filtration tablets, weight belt, wire (barbed, concertina or razor), zip ties (20 per Common Item) and most items listed under Kit contents.*

## GEAR

Gear covers all the equipment an Agent may requisition for field work, ranging from guns to gadgets to all things in between.

### ARMOR

Agents generally go into the field protected. Both modern and archaic armor types are available. The Resource Point cost is equal to the Toughness Bonus of the armor requisitioned. Refer to **Armor in Chapter Five: Equipment** of your *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book for more details about specific armor types.

### SHIELDS

Oblivion makes a broad array of riot shields in all shapes and sizes, but they fall into three main size categories (small, medium, large). Standard shields are not bulletproof, but they provide sufficient protection against most denizens of the night, as well as against thrown bottles and the like. Masterwork shields are made of a lighter, stronger polycarbonate that is bulletproof and reduces the shield's Armor Check penalties by 1. The Resource Point cost is equal to the Blocking Bonus of the shield requisitioned. Less



commonly requested archaic shield types are also available. Refer to **Shields** in **Chapter Five: Equipment** of your *True20* book for more information on shields.

## ARMOR AND SHIELD UPGRADES

Armor and shields can be upgraded to masterwork quality (reducing the Armor Check Penalty by 1) for the cost of an additional Resource Point.

## EXPLOSIVES

Oblivion is extremely restrictive about disbursing explosives. Oblivion will not, in fact, issue any explosives, under any circumstances, to any team that does not have a member with the Demolitions skill. No exceptions. An Agent meeting this requirement may requisition explosives as follows. For each Resource Point spent, the agent gets +2 damage worth of plastique or prepared explosives, such as “short sticks” of dynamite. Additional requisitions can take the form of separate explosives or be combined into one greater bomb, etc. This must be defined at the time of the request and cannot change. Requisitioning concealed explosives follows the rules detailed in the Gadgets section.

## VEHICLES

Oblivion usually supplies agents with a vehicle or two sufficient to carry a team and all of their gear. This is left entirely to the discretion of the Narrator and the dictates of the adventure. A

comprehensive list of common vehicles is found in **Chapter Five: Equipment** of *True20*.

## KITS

Kits are the gear packages used by professionals. They represent the tools necessary to use certain skills to the best of your ability. Many skill checks become harder without kits; if tools are necessary for the proper use of a skill, the character suffers a -4 penalty with the check if appropriate tools are unavailable. Skills that do not require tools to use have their performance improved by using items found in a kit. Such tools add +2 to skill rolls when used. More advanced kits exist, but are typically too bulky to carry into the field. Each kit costs 1 Resource Point.

### APPRAISAL KIT (5 LBS.)

Lighted magnifying glass, jeweler’s loupe, tweezers, calipers, tape measure, UV Flashlight (for detecting repairs and cracks), magnet (to test metals), sketchpad and pencils, linen, latex gloves.

### ARCHITECT’S KIT (6 LBS.)

Drafter’s sketchbook, vellum tablet, protractor, aluminum color-coded triangular scale, compass and bow dividers, straight edges of various lengths, clear plastic triangles of various sizes, various pencils, pens and erasers, shading tools.

### AUTHENTICATION KIT (10 LBS.)

Handheld microscope, magnifying glass, personal standard and black lights, infrared viewer.

### CHEMISTRY KIT (30 LBS.)

Personal microscope, scale, test tube stand, analytical and precision balances, multiple various-volume beakers and styrene cylinders, alcohol lamp, digital multimeter, 12” thermometer, ten shallow 4” dishes, plastic funnel, legal chemical samples.

### CLEANER KIT (10 LBS.)

Jumpsuit, painter’s drop cloth, paper towels, trash bags, commercial cleaning chemicals, latex gloves, cable ties, duct tape, superglue, cigarette lighter, pine-scented oven cleaner spray (to remove fingerprints), spray bottle of ammonia solution (to destroy DNA evidence and blood).

### CLIMBING KIT (15 LBS.)

Backpack or butt-pack, rope (150’ rated for 1,200 lbs.), wristwatch altimeter, climbing harness, leather gloves and finger tape, rock shoes or strap-on foot spikes, carabiners, various markers.

### CONSTRUCTION KIT (50 LBS.)

Sledgehammer, power drill, power saw, nail gun, chalking gun, shovel, hardhat, work gloves, safety goggles, tool belt, trowel, steel-toe boots, stud finder, duct tape, sandpaper, tape measure, building supplies (cement and drywall mix, lumber, glass and so on, as needed), paint and painting supplies (brushes, mixing tins, etc.), Do-It-Yourself handbook.

### DEMOLITIONS KIT (5 LBS.)

Dentist’s mirror, non-conductive simple tools (sticks, tweezers, dull blades), wire crimper/cutter/stripper, needle-nose pliers, folding knife, cigarette lighter or waterproof matches, tape (duct, masking and electrical), grease pencils, chem lights, flashlight, good luck charm.



### DISGUISE KIT (20 LBS.)

Makeup base (flesh tones, shadows, highlights, rouge, etc.), pigments, makeup binding compound (to prevent sweating off the disguise), putty and liquid latex compound (for sculpting scars, boils, warts, etc.), spirit gum adhesive, clear adhesive surgical tape, assorted fake facial hair, makeup, brushes and sponges, facial cleanser, general personal grooming items (hairbrush, comb, toothbrush, nail clippers, tweezers, razor), lighted makeup mirror.

### ELECTRONICS KIT (20 LBS.)

Wire crimper/cutter/stripper, screwdrivers (assorted small sizes), needle-nose pliers, soldering iron and roll of solder, electrical tape, epoxy glue, voltage meter, circuit tester, compressed air duster, wire (varying lengths and widths), assorted spare components (resistors, capacitors, screws, LEDs, etc.), assorted spare batteries, pocket reference of component color codes and mathematical conversions.

### FIRST AID KIT (5 LBS.)

Adhesive bandages (various shapes and sizes), gauze (pads and rolls), elastic compress bandages, blister pads, wooden splints, tourniquets, latex gloves, thermometer, tweezers, razor blades, safety pins, cotton swabs (dry and alcohol-saturated), antibacterial soap, antiseptic solution, antibiotic cream, surgical tape, painkiller pills, antihistamine pills, antacid pills and salt tablets.

### FORENSICS KIT (10 LBS.)

Latex gloves, plastic safety goggles, filter masks, chalk, pens, permanent markers, marking paint, calculator, distilled water, ballistic probes, protractor and compass, laser pointer, scalpel, box cutter, scissors, magnifying glass, hand mirror, thermometer, tweezers, ruler, tape measure, glass vials with rubber stoppers, microscope slides and slide protectors, plastic baggies (various sizes), tape (clear, masking, colored and crime scene barricade), colored string, disinfectant solution, sterile gauze and swags, sexual assault evidence supplies, fingerprint tools (powders, brushes, glue, lift cards, measurement scale), blank forms (incident report, search authorization consent), sketch paper pad, flashlight.

### FORGERY KIT (15 LBS.)

Fine-edged knife set, ink pads with various inks, blank stamps, colored pens, paint and fine brushes, stencils, magnifying glass, disposable camera, scale, calipers, tweezers, fine-grain sandpaper.

### LOCKPICKING KIT (1 LB.)

Picks and shims (assorted sizes and shapes), tweezers, stethoscope, screwdrivers (assorted small sizes), penlight.

### MECHANIC'S KIT (30 LBS.)

Tool box, car jack, screwdrivers (assorted sizes and shapes), wrenches (assorted sizes), socket set, pliers (regular and needlenose), metal file, hammer, measuring tape, flashlight, pressure gauge, waterproof markers, baling wire, epoxy glue, tape (duct, masking and electrical), machine oil, wax, work gloves, safety goggles, professional solvents/cleaners,

rubber gaskets, tarp, electrical wires and tubing, clamps, tap and die set, jerry can with 1 hour's fuel.

### SURGERY KIT (15 LBS.)

Latex gloves, surgical scissors, scalpels and extra blades, surgical needles and suturing thread, forceps, disposable syringes, gauze (pads and rolls), sponges, surgical tape, cotton swabs (dry and alcohol-saturated), disinfectant solution, sedative pills, headmounted flashlight.

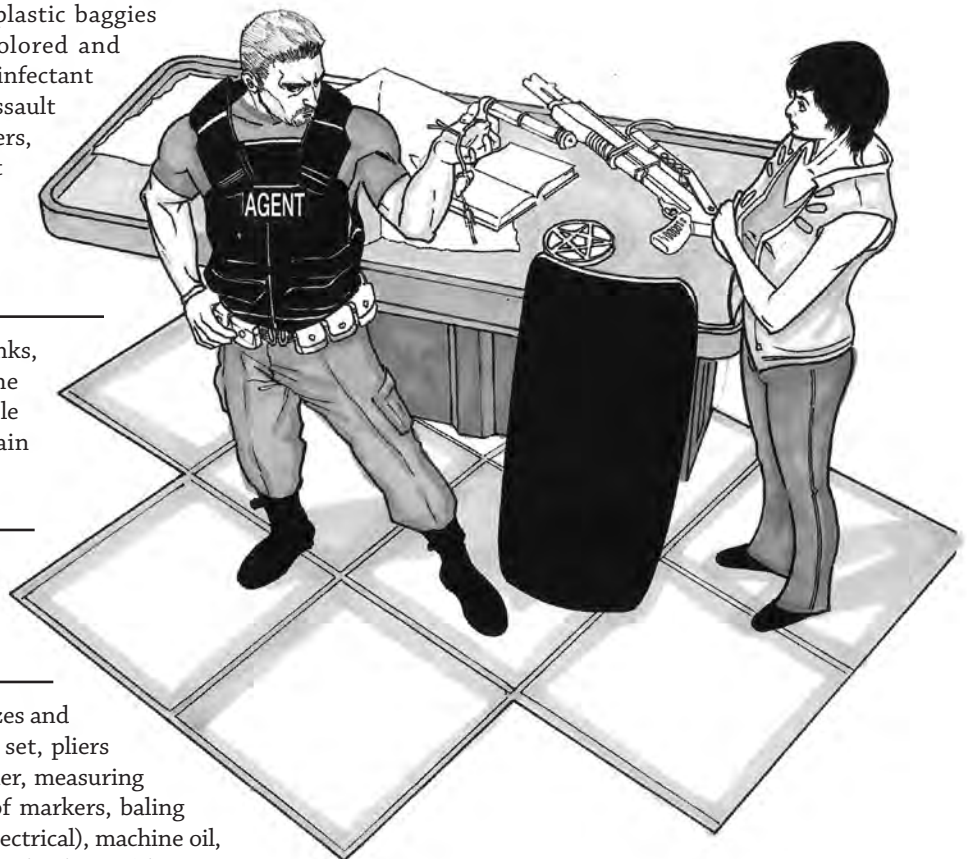
## GADGETS

Super-science makes any number of modern marvels a reality, from laser watches to grappling belts to smoke screens to jet packs. When choosing a gadget, a character must first determine its **Housing** — the shell within which all the high-tech wizardry resides. This may be any Common Item or any one requisitioned item of fine or larger size the character already possesses (except another gadget).

A gadget's housing may contain a maximum number of **Mechanisms** — each of which costs 1 Resource Point — determined by its size, as shown on the **Gadget Housings** Table. Gadget mechanisms requiring activation may be turned on or off with a move action.

The housing size is the physical size of the gadget, not the relative size to its user, hence a large gadget is going to be 8-16' in size and weigh 500-4000 lbs.

Every gadget possesses a Knowledge Difficulty, which is used to determine if someone with Knowledge (technology) recognizes it as unusually high — or flat-out impossible — science.



## GADGET HOUSINGS

| Housing Size | Max # of Mechanisms | Knowledge Difficulty* | Toughness | Example Objects | Gadget Size |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Miniscule    | 1                   | 40                    | 1         | Contacts        | 3"          |
| Fine         | 1                   | 35                    | 2         | Watch           | 3-6"        |
| Diminutive   | 2                   | 30                    | 4         | Shoe            | 6"-1 ft     |
| Tiny         | 2                   | 25                    | 6         | Skateboard      | 1-2 ft      |
| Small        | 3                   | 20                    | 8         | Jacket          | 2-4 ft      |
| Medium       | 3                   | 15                    | 10        | Surfboard       | 4-8 ft      |

All gadgets possess a Toughness based on their Size, as shown on the **Gadget Housings** table. Each time a gadget is damaged, it loses 1 random mechanism. The gadget's housing is destroyed when the final mechanism is lost.

Every gadget mechanism may be chosen multiple times, increasing battery life or adding a second identical mechanism as appropriate. Multiple mechanisms are each counted toward the maximum mechanisms possible in a housing.

Finally, the Narrator must approve each gadget before it enters play. It should be noted that in games where cybernetics are possible, a gadget's housing may be a part of the character's body, using the same rules and restrictions.

## MECHANISM DESCRIPTIONS

A device has a base Power Rating (PR) equal to the character's Agent Level (total level of all roles) +3. This Power Rating serves as its rank in powers and as otherwise indicated in the individual mechanism descriptions.

## GADGET BONUS CHART

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| PR < 4   | <b>+0</b> |
| PR 4-5   | <b>+1</b> |
| PR 6-7   | <b>+2</b> |
| PR 8-9   | <b>+3</b> |
| PR 10-11 | <b>+4</b> |
| PR 12+   | <b>+5</b> |

ATTACK

This mechanism produces a damaging attack that can inflict either non-lethal or lethal damage (chosen at the time of request). The range increment is the PR x 10'. The character may alternately choose a cone blast or radius blast configuration, reducing the PR by 1 or 2 respectively. A cone blast originates from the gadget at a base width of PR feet, and stretches PR x 5' (as an Area Attack). A radius blast equals the PR x 10' and can be thrown as a grenade with a range increment of PR x 10'. The number of uses equals half its PR.

BURROW

This mechanism enables the character to tunnel through dirt as per the creature quality.

CHEMICAL TRANSFER

This mechanism allows the character to transfer 1 chemical sample, that he provides separately, from the gadget to 1 target character or surface.

COMMON ITEM, MINIATURE

This mechanism builds any 1 common item into the gadget housing. The common item's size must be no more than 1 category larger than the gadget's housing (as this process shrinks the item's size by 2 categories.) The common item's function and statistics are retained, while its weight and battery life each decrease to half standard (rounded up.)

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

This mechanism grants the user a bonus to his Toughness as per the Gadget Bonus Chart.

DEFENSE BOOST

This mechanism grants the user a bonus to his Defense as per the Gadget Bonus Chart.

DISGUISED GADGET

This mechanism increases the gadget's Knowledge Difficulty by an amount equal to its Power Rating.

DURABLE GADGET

This mechanism increases the gadget's Toughness save as per the **Gadget Bonus Chart**.

EMP

This mechanism throws out an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that disables any item without a PR immediately. Each device with a PR must make a Resistance roll of d20 + PR vs 15 + PR of the EMP or short out as well. The range is equal to PR x 10 feet.

EMP HARDENING

This mechanism completely shields one electronic device or vehicle from electromagnetic pulse effects.

FLIGHT

This mechanism allows the character to fly at a speed equivalent to its PR x 10. It has a number of uses equal to its PR. Each "use" equals five minutes of flight time.

HEALING

This mechanism heals the character as per the Cure power, using the PR as the rank. Each such gadget has a number of uses equal to half its PR.

HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

This mechanism incorporates a hidden compartment into the gadget's housing. This compartment may store any 1 item that is a size category smaller than the housing.

| RANGED WEAPONS                         |              |          |                   |                 |              |          |       |        |
|--|--------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------|-------|--------|
| Weapon                                 | Damage Bonus | Critical | Damage Descriptor | Range Increment | Rate of Fire | Magazine | Size  | Weight |
| <b>Handguns</b>                        |              |          |                   |                 |              |          |       |        |
| Beretta 92F (9mm autoloader)           | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S            | 15 box   | Small | 3 lb.  |
| Beretta 93R (9mm machine pistol)       | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S, A         | 20 box   | Med   | 3 lb.  |
| Colt Double Eagle (10mm autoloader)    | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 9 box    | Small | 3 lb.  |
| Colt M1911 (.45 autoloader)            | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 7 box    | Small | 3 lb.  |
| Colt Python (.357 revolver)            | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S            | 6 cyl.   | Med   | 3 lb.  |
| Derringer (.45)                        | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 10 ft.          | Single       | 2 int.   | Tiny  | 1 lb.  |
| Desert Eagle (.50AE autoloader)        | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 50 ft.          | S            | 9 box    | Med   | 4 lb.  |
| Glock 17 (9mm autoloader)              | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 17 box   | Small | 2 lb.  |
| Glock 20 (10mm autoloader)             | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S            | 15 box   | Small | 3 lb.  |
| MAC Ingram M10 (.45 machine pistol)    | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box   | Med   | 6 lb.  |
| Pathfinder (.22 revolver)              | +2           | 20       | Ballistic         | 20 ft.          | S            | 6 cyl.   | Tiny  | 1 lb.  |
| Ruger Service-Six (.38S revolver)      | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 6 cyl.   | Small | 2 lb.  |
| S&W M29 (.44 magnum revolver)          | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 50 ft.          | S            | 6 cyl.   | Med   | 3 lb.  |
| SITES M9 (9mm autoloader)              | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 8 box    | Tiny  | 2 lb.  |
| Skorpion (.32 machine pistol)          | +2           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S, A         | 20 box   | Med   | 4 lb.  |
| TEC-9 (9mm machine pistol)             | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S or A       | 32 box   | Med   | 4 lb.  |
| Walther PPK (.32 autoloader)           | +2           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 7 box    | Small | 1 lb.  |
| <b>Longarms</b>                        |              |          |                   |                 |              |          |       |        |
| AKM/AK-47<br>(7.62mmR assault rifle)   | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 70 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box   | Large | 10 lb. |
| Barrett Light Fifty (.50 sniper rifle) | +6           | 20       | Ballistic         | 120 ft.         | S            | 11 box   | Huge  | 35 lb. |
| Beretta M3P (12-gauge shotgun)         | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 5 box    | Large | 9 lb.  |
| Browning BPS (10-gauge shotgun)        | +5           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 5 int.   | Large | 11 lb. |
| HK G3 (7.62mm assault rifle)           | +5           | 20       | Ballistic         | 90 ft.          | S, A         | 20 box   | Large | 11 lb. |
| HK MP51 (9mm submachine gun)           | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 50 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box   | Large | 7 lb.  |
| HK MP5K (9mm submachine gun)           | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S, A         | 15 box   | Med   | 5 lb.  |
| HK PSG11 (7.62mm sniper rifle)         | +5           | 20       | Ballistic         | 90 ft.          | S 5          | box      | Large | 16 lb. |
| M16A1 (5.56mm assault rifle)           | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 80 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box   | Large | 8 lb.  |
| M16A2 (5.56mm assault rifle)           | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 80 ft.          | S            | 30 box   | Large | 8 lb.  |
| M4 Carbine (5.56mm assault rifle)      | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 60 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box   | Large | 7 lb.  |
| Mossberg (12-gauge shotgun)            | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 30 ft.          | S            | 6 int.   | Large | 7 lb.  |
| Remington 700 (7.62mm hunting rifle)   | +5           | 20       | Ballistic         | 80 ft.          | Single       | 5 int.   | Large | 8 lb.  |
| Sawed-off shotgun (12-gauge shotgun)   | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 10 ft.          | S            | 2 int.   | Med   | 4 lb.  |



## RANGED WEAPONS (CONTINUED)

| Weapon  | Damage Bonus | Critical | Damage Descriptor | Range Increment | Rate of Fire | Magazine   | Size  | Weight  |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|-------|---------|
| Steyr AUG (5.56mm assault rifle)  | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 80 ft.          | S, A         | 30 box     | Large | 9 lb.   |
| Uzi (9mm submachine gun)  | +3           | 20       | Ballistic         | 40 ft.          | S, A         | 20 box     | Large | 8 lb.   |
| Winchester 94 (.444 hunting rifle)  | +5           | 20       | Ballistic         | 90 ft.          | S            | 6 int.     | Large | 7 lb.   |
| <b>Heavy Weapons (each requires a specific Exotic Weapon Training feat)</b> |              |          |                   |                 |              |            |       |         |
| M-60 (medium machine gun)   | +4           | 20       | Ballistic         | 100 ft.         | A            | Linked     | Huge  | 22 lb.  |
| M2HB (heavy machine gun)  | +6           | 20       | Ballistic         | 110 ft.         | A            | Linked     | Huge  | 75 lb.  |
| M72A3 LAW (rocket launcher)   | +10          | —        | —                 | 150 ft.         | 1            | 1 int.     | Large | 5 lb.   |
| M79 (grenade launcher)  | Varies       | —        | —                 | 70 ft.          | 1            | 1 int.     | Large | 7 lb.   |
| <b>Other Ranged Weapons</b>   |              |          |                   |                 |              |            |       |         |
| Compound bow  | +3           | 20       | Piercing          | 40 ft.          | 1            | 20         | Large | 3 lb.   |
| Crossbow  | +4           | 19–20    | Piercing          | 40 ft.          | 1            | 10 +1 int. | Med   | 7 lb.   |
| Flamethrower (no feat needed)   | +6           | —        | Fire              | —               | 1            | 10 int.    | Large | 50 lb.  |
| Javelin   | +2           | 20       | Piercing          | 30 ft.          | 1            | -          | Med   | 2 lb.   |
| Knife, Throwing   | +2           | 20       | Piercing          | 30 ft.          | 1            | 4          | Small | 1 lb.   |
| Pepper spray  | Special      | —        | Special           | 5 ft.           | 1            | 1 int.     | Tiny  | 0.5 lb. |
| Shuriken  | +1           | 20       | Piercing          | 10 ft.          | 1            | 10         | Tiny  | 0.5 lb. |
| Taser   | +1           | —        | Electricity       | 5 ft.           | 1            | 1 int.     | Small | 2 lb.   |
| Whip  | +1           | 20       | Slashing          | 15 ft.          | 1            | -          | Small | 2 lb.   |

**HOLOGRAM**

This mechanism produces an incorporeal image. The effect functions as the Light Shaping power using the PR as the rank. The max range such an image can be produced equals PR x 10' from the item's location. Each such gadget has a number of uses equal to half its PR. Each use equals 5 minutes.

**INCREASED POWER**

This mechanism's Power Rating is increased by +2.

**INVISIBILITY**

This device allows the Agent to use the Light Shaping power for the sole purpose of blurring their location. It uses its PR as its rank. Each such gadget has a number of uses equal to half its PR. Each use equals 5 minutes.

**REMOTE CONTROL**

This mechanism allows a gadget to be operated remotely at a range equal to its PR x 50'.

**SELF-DESTRUCT**

This mechanism destroys the gadget's housing and all other mechanisms within the gadget.

**SILENCE**

This item grants its PR as a bonus to its user's Stealth for each use. The mechanism has a number of uses equal to its PR. Each "use" equals ten minutes of silence.

**SKILL BOOST**

This item grants its PR as a bonus to a specific skill, as per the Gadget Bonus Chart. It can be used a number of times equal to its PR.

**SPEED BOOST**

This item increases its user's initiative by its PR. It has a number of "uses" equal to its PR. Each boost lasts for one scene.

## MELEE WEAPONS, PROJECTILES AND ARCHAIC MISSILE WEAPONS

Some Agents eschew guns or use a mixture of old school sensibility to supplant their modern arms. The Resource Point cost of such weapons equals their base rank plus any weapon upgrades selected. Some ranked weapons already include upgrades. For such things as throwing knives, bows and shuriken, the number of projectiles or arrows is listed in the magazine column of the Other Ranged Weapons section.

**RANK 1**

A basic 1-handed weapon  
Any makeshift grenade  
Any non-exotic thrown weapon  
Arrows, Standard  
Bow, Long  
Bow, Short

**Weapon Examples:** Brass Knuckles, Club, Knife, Molotov Cocktail, Sword

**RANK 2**

A basic 1-handed weapon, masterwork (+1 attack rolls)  
A basic 2-handed weapon  
A 1-handed exotic weapon  
Any exotic thrown weapon

Arrows, explosive (5, damage +1)  
 Bow, Compound  
 Grenade, Flash/bang (3)  
 Grenade, Smoke (5)  
 Grenade, Tear-gas (3)

**Weapon Examples:** Chain, Nunchaku, Whip

### RANK 3

A basic 1-handed weapon, elite (+2 attack rolls)  
 A basic 1-handed weapon, enchanted (affects supernatural entities)  
 Any basic 2-handed weapon  
 Any 1-handed exotic weapon, masterwork  
 Any 2-handed exotic weapon  
 Grenade, Concussive (3)  
 Grenade, Fragmentation (3)  
 Grenade, thermite (2)  
 Grenade, white-phosphorous (2)

**Weapon Examples:** Katana, Chainsaw

### RANK 4

Any basic 2-handed weapon, masterwork (+1 attack rolls)  
 Any 2-handed exotic weapon, masterwork

**Weapon Example:** Limbsweeper 3000 Chainsaw

### RANK 5

Any 2-handed exotic weapon, elite (+2 attack rolls)

**Weapon Examples:** Limbsweeper XL Chainsaw

## WEAPON UPGRADES

There are three special categories of upgrades that can be requisitioned. They are masterwork, elite and enchanted, and the Resource Point cost and their associated upgrade effect is listed below.

- A masterwork item (+1 to hit) increases the Resource Point cost by 1.
- An elite item (+2 to hit) increases the Resource Point cost by 2.
- An enchanted item (one that will damage supernatural entities) increases the Resource Point cost by 2.



## MODERN ARMS

When requisitioning modern arms, there is a broad array of weaponry to choose from. Each weapon comes unloaded with two magazines of ammunition. The Resource Point cost for modern arms equals their Damage -1. Weapons with autofire have a Resource Point cost equal to their Damage. Additional ammunition can be requisitioned. Each extra magazine costs 1 Resource Point. Enchanted clips of ammunition can be requisitioned for a cost of 2 Resource Points per clip.

# CORRUPTION, THE COST OF POWER

Regardless of the source of their powers - spells, miracles or psionics - any adept can draw upon the dark, primal forces watching the world to give him more power. Such is the lure and seduction of the Forgotten Ones - power in exchange for one's sanity and soul.

Adepts gain corruption when using their Core Ability: Drawing of the Dark. Whenever they opt to do this, they make a Sanity Roll against Terror with a Difficulty of 15 + their current Corruption level. The Sanity effects, if any, occur immediately after the power in question is used, whether the power is successful or not.

The effects of corruption are immediate and debilitating. Each point of corruption applies as a penalty to the Character's Constitution and

Wisdom scores until it is eliminated. Thus, a character with Con +1 and Wis +3 afflicted with 2 points of corruption would have a Con-1 and a Wis +1 until restored.

Eliminating corruption takes time and Conviction. A character may take the Conviction point they would normally earn each day and apply it towards their corruption. Additionally, they may take any Conviction points earned during the course of play and apply those toward their corruption as well. It takes ten applied points of Conviction to eliminate one point of corruption. Dealing with the dark forces comes with a price.

Whenever a character gains corruption through other sources, they must immediately make a Sanity saving throw as well.

# SANITY

Anyone encountering a sudden shock or horror in *Agents of Oblivion* must make a Sanity saving throw. This is a roll of d20 plus Wisdom plus any relevant feats and represents the mind's ability to deal with scary situations and reality-bending encounters. Think of it as a kind of "psychological Toughness saving throw."

The save has a base Difficulty of 15 plus a modifier equal to the Fear/Terror Level of the encounter. For example, a ghoul springs out of the dark. It has a Fear Level of 3, so resisting the effects of this is Difficulty 18 (15+3).

Sanity Saving Throw = d20 + Wisdom + Feats

If the Sanity saving throw succeeds, the target suffers no significant effect, nothing more than a slight scare or jolt. If the Sanity save fails, the target suffers mental health damage. What the effects are depends on the degree of the encounter (fear or terror) and the amount the Sanity save result is below the Difficulty.

Fear is instilled by lesser horrors and scares: a corpse, a gunshot, a man leaping out of a dark alley, etc.

A failed Sanity roll against Fear means the target is *startled*, imposing a -1 penalty on further saves against Fear, but not affecting saves against Terror. If the Sanity save fails by 5 or more, the target is *spooked*; mark down a spooked condition on the Mental Health Track. A spooked condition also imposes a -1 modifier on further saves against Fear. If the Sanity save fails by 10 or more, the target is *frightened*; check off the frightened box on the Mental Health Track. If the Sanity save fails by 15 or more, the target is *terrified*; check off the terrified box on the Mental Health Track. If a target suffers a result that is already checked off, check off the next highest result. So, if a target is already frightened and suffers another frightened result, check off the terrified box. If the terrified box is checked and the character suffers another effect from Fear, check off the first available Terror box (so, go to confused, unhinged and so forth.)

Terror is inflicted by great horrors and shocks that question the viewer's perceptions of reality: a window frosting over in the middle of summer, a ghost walking through the wall and so on.

A failed Sanity roll against a Terror means the target is *scared*. Each scared result imposes a -1 penalty on further Sanity saves. If the Sanity save fails by 5 or more, the target is *confused*; mark down a confused condition on the Mental Health Track. A confused result also imposes a -1 modifier on further Sanity saves. If the Sanity save fails by 10 or more, the target is *unhinged*; check off the unhinged box on the Mental Health Track. If the Sanity save fails by 15 or more, the target is *psychotic*; check off the psychotic box on the Mental Health Track. If a target suffers a result that is already checked off, check off the next highest result, so if a target is already confused and suffers another confused result, check off the unhinged box. If that's already checked off, check off the psychotic box. A character can only be pushed immediately over the brink of sanity by being exposed to a great shock or a series of shocks while already in a mentally unstable condition.

*Mental Anguish:* Terror effects also cause fear effects as well. Whenever your hero suffers a Terror effect, check off the corresponding Fear box. So, a hero who is confused is also spooked, a hero who is scared is also startled. The effects of the mental health conditions are cumulative, except for startled and scared conditions, where only the highest value applies.

## MENTAL HEALTH TRACK

| 0        | 5+                       | 10+                      | 15+                      |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Startled | Spooked                  | Frightened               | Terrified                |                          |
|          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
|          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Scared   | Confused                 | Unhinged                 | Psychotic                | Insane                   |

## IMPOSSIBLE SANITY SAVES

If the Difficulty of a Sanity save is so high the hero cannot possibly succeed, even with a 20 on the die roll, the Sanity save is still rolled to determine the effect (the amount by which the character misses the Difficulty). A natural 20 means the character is only startled or scared, regardless of the Difficulty. Fate intervenes to shield the character's mind from otherwise certain trauma.

Narrators interested in realistic consequences for damage should ignore this rule.

## MINIONS AND SANITY

A minion makes a Sanity save against mental health damage as usual; however, if the save fails, the minion suffers the maximum possible result for the Fear/Terror in question. For Fear, this usually means terrified,





while for Terror, this usually means psychotic. This is, of course, subject to the Narrator's discretion.

## FEAR EFFECTS

### STARTLED

A startled character receives a -1 penalty to further Fear saves.

### SPOOKED

A spooked character receives a -1 penalty to further saves against Fear. The character flees as fast as possible for one full round or cowers, dazed, if unable to get away. He defends normally, but cannot attack. The following round, he can act normally.

### FRIGHTENED

A frightened character loses one full round action. They can take no action, lose their dodge bonus to Defense, and have a -2 penalty to Defense. In the following rounds, frightened characters can only take a standard or move action.

### TERRIFIED

A terrified character falls to the floor, catatonic and helpless until he recovers.

## TERROR EFFECTS

### SCARED

A scared character receives a -1 penalty to further Sanity saves.

### CONFUSED

A confused character is *shaken*. They receive a -2 penalty on all checks, including attack rolls and Fortitude, Reflex and Will saving throws. This persists until the confused condition is lifted. Additionally, a confused character is *stunned* for one round after being confused. They can take no actions, lose their dodge bonus to Defense, and have a -2 penalty to Defense.

### UNHINGED

An unhinged character suffers -2 penalty to effective Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma until this condition is lifted.

### PSYCHOTIC

Psychotic characters suffer a -3 penalty to effective Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma until this condition is lifted and may only take a single action each turn. If a character was previously unhinged, these penalties replace those.

### INSANE

This character is unable to interact meaningfully with the world. This usually means the end for the character, as he is a gibbering shadow of his former self. Powerful sorceries or long-term counseling can restore sanity in some, but not all, cases. Oblivion calls this early retirement.

## REGAINING YOUR WITS

Recovering from mental health damage requires a Wisdom check (Difficulty 10). A successful check erases the mental condition, while an unsuccessful check means there is no significant improvement for that time period.

You can make a recovery check once per minute for frightened and terrified, once per hour for confused, once per day for unhinged and once per week for psychotic. Insane characters are over the brink and can only be returned to sanity, and to play, by special dispensation of the Narrator.

You can spend a Conviction point to get an immediate recovery check from Fear effects, rather than having to wait a minute. You can also spend Conviction on your recovery check.

Startled and spooked conditions fade automatically at a rate of one per minute. Scared conditions do the same at a rate of one per hour. You can spend a Conviction point to immediately erase all startled, spooked and scared conditions after, but not during, a conflict. Adepts can use their role's core ability to spend a Conviction point to erase all startled and spooked conditions at any time, even during combat.

## NARRATOR'S SECTION

**Warning!** This section discusses some of the truths of the *Agents of Oblivion* setting. Players should *not* read it without the Narrator's permission, or it may spoil some of the surprises of the game.

## THE ORIGINS OF OBLIVION AND FRAGMENTS OF THE FORGOTTEN

In 1879, the lonely conceit of man being alone in the Universe officially ended when the first bulb flickered into life at Menlo Park. Something long sleeping blinked an eyelid and shifted slightly in its transdimensional slumber. Certainly, there had been false starts towards light in the past, Sir Humphry Davy's efforts in 1810 among others, but it was after the turn of the century that the changes began. Perhaps it was a combination of the mad genius revealed by the New Science and the pioneers who

operated beyond conventional thought and wisdom. Men who cast strange signals through the cold, dark void with wanton disregard, destroying the world in their wish to elevate its civilization. Who could have guessed that something out there would notice and turn an angry, alien eye towards a planet it had long thought destroyed?

A stirring began in mankind. Unknown and unwanted by humanity, a power somehow long dormant in us reawakened. The power to preserve humanity by fighting the enemy on its own terms began to surface. Initially, it was the outer fringes of man who actively had been seeking the answers to all mysteries through dusty tomes and texts, asceticism and more radical attempts to transform themselves through the mysteries of Aleister Crowley and his ilk who noticed. Mystics, psychics, sorcerers and saints...all of them noticed the change. Some people suddenly found themselves possessing powers they didn't want or understand. Others, not so naturally gifted, but

hungry for power, discovered that the rituals contained within their ancient tomes now resonated with dark energies. Few mundane individuals noticed these changes. After all, it was early 1918 and the world was in the midst of the madness of a global war. Those who did notice, however, thought the two events were not unrelated.

The emergence of the Awakened began. Some used their powers for good. In 1928, for example, hundreds of cases were solved by a pair of them traveling throughout Europe. Many felt the Awakened were ushering in a new period of peace and prosperity. Many began claiming the Age of the Awakened had begun. When World War II broke out, however, the critics were quick to hold the Awakened and their unnatural powers responsible for another horrible war. That the remarks were outlandish did not matter; the Awakened were forever stigmatized. Most went into hiding, while a handful, driven by guilt and doubt, rushed to the aid of their respective countries. Despite their great powers and passion, they were nothing against the onslaught of tanks and wave after wave of men. The Age of the Awakened had ended as quickly as it had begun.

## STRANGE CURRENCIES

In 1948, the Awakened agent known in international espionage circles as Nil and a scientist codenamed "Mister E." requested permission from the United States to form an agency to investigate some of the phenomena reported in World War II—Nazi genetic experiments, gremlins, sorcery and other mysteries that defied comfortable explanation. They also held a certain concern about recent events in Roswell and felt individuals such as themselves were better equipped to handle them. Denied at every turn, Nil sought funding again and again until his public retirement in 1963, whereupon a close colleague picked up his moniker as well as his agenda. The truth is the age-resistant Nil simply took on a new guise and persona and continued his quest. In early 1968, the Johnson administration decided to take his proposal under consideration. This proposal circulated among high level insiders, and many supporters of Project Bluebook thought forming a specific agency to handle peculiar phenomena would be an ideal solution to the overexposure received due to the UFO craze. The decision was made to publicly kill Bluebook and bury it in Oblivion. Nil, after more than twenty years, had accomplished his first step towards preparing the planet for a very grim future.

In 1969, Oblivion set up shop in a grungy brick building in Washington, DC. Nil handpicked twelve individuals to form the original team - six men and six women, all misfits, all gifted, all ready to die for their country if need be. Nine of them did, giving their lives in West Germany in 1972 when an investigation into a dark cult and the discovery of a grave supernatural threat required immediate, drastic action. Subsequent investigations by Nil uncovered the cult's ties to the Soviet Union and their planned detonation of a nuclear device as a grand sacrifice to perform the Ritual of a Thousand Cries. Nil explained to his superiors that adequate funding and proper equipment could have averted the loss of his team. Oblivion subsequently received a massive infusion of funds and set about rebuilding the fledgling agency all over again. Two of the survivors of the Berlin Incident, the twin academics, Red and Blue, currently serve Oblivion as chief advisors. The third, Mister E, trained his successor and left in 1974; his current whereabouts are unknown.

## HIDDEN AGENDAS

The ability of Oblivion is rarely challenged. Since its humble beginnings, it has grown into a massive, world-spanning organization - comprised chiefly of misfits and malcontents from all walks and ways of life. Certain unofficial channels have been opened so that Oblivion is kept abreast of potential candidates from both domestic and international militaries, police forces and other investigative organizations. Oblivion cannot afford to be overly selective as the dark war is hard, and sometimes attrition rates are alarmingly high, despite the training and equipment at its disposal. Agents are all advised to actively keep an eye out for potential recruits at all times.

To what end the forces they combat are working, and whether they are working in concert, remains a mystery. What is known is that Oblivion is part of the solution.

Subsequent to 9/11, Oblivion expanded to deal with normal as well as paranormal threats; its information networks and diversity of staff make it an invaluable resource in such matters.

## THE HIERARCHY OF OBLIVION

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Oblivion is a decentralized bureaucracy. The Executive Director, Nil, gives orders to his district directors who in turn manage their district branches. Operating by the codename of Mister E, each director typically manages a region. In some cases, a more localized area, such as London, requires its own director. The rest of the English countryside is divided into two broad regions, North and South. America is divided into the following main regions - Northeast, Midwest, South, and West - and locales - New York, Chicago, Memphis, San Francisco, and HQ (DC).

## DISTRICT DIVISIONS (REGIONAL AND LOCAL)

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### ARCHIVING

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The Office of Archives is responsible for all of Oblivion's archives and storage facilities worldwide. Anything requiring research or of any esoteric value is sent to the Vaults, the central storage facility of physical manifestations of peculiar or unexplained phenomena. Things that have been quantified, classified and are of pertinent use to Zeros eventually make their way to the Procurement Branch.

### COUNTER-TERRORISM UNIT (CTU)

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The CTU is responsible for covert operations and intelligence gathering in the prevention of terrorist activity. As their ranks are chiefly culled from the IFO, they serve the IFO in a support capacity as needed.

### INVESTIGATION AND FIELD OPERATIONS (IFO)

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The IFO is responsible for exploration, investigation and covert operations of unexplained phenomena. Their expertise and experience requires them to serve as an adjunct to the CTU. Three main divisions exist within this department according to the agent's role; they are the Paranormal (Adept), Technical (Expert) and Combat-Ready (Warrior) branches.

## PROCUREMENT

Procurement is charged with keeping track of all equipment in the field, maintaining all equipment in its charge and ensuring that all properly requisitioned equipment finds itself in the right hands in a timely manner. Requisitions are generally handled through a virtual private network (VPN) and delivered via courier, though this may vary from district to district.

## UTILITY AND MAINTENANCE

U&M is charged with maintaining and monitoring all computer traffic coming into and out of their district, as well as the upkeep of all Oblivion owned vehicles and properties, both residential and commercial.

## EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Beneath each branch is a small army of people that aid Oblivion in a myriad number of ways. These fringe people, classified as affiliates, are kept mainly in the dark and only called upon when required. Affiliates receive numerous special privileges as their loyalties and assistance warrants. In return for these favors, they bury news stories, contaminate crime scenes and use their influence to discredit, confuse and obfuscate any facts that might arise about Oblivion and its activities.

## THE PANDORA INSTITUTE: ENEMY OF OBLIVION

In the quiet aftermath of WWII, when the world needed reassurance in its humanity, the Pandora Institute was founded. PI promised to help rid the world of war and hate through education and charitable works. PI's early endowments financed the scholarships of many future scientists and doctors that eventually came to work for them. As their notoriety grew, people started donating to PI. These surplus funds were directed into transforming the institute into the world-class university and charity it is today. With satellite learning centers throughout the globe, PI is helping to forge the future.

How dark that future will be is uncertain.

The Pandora Institute was created by bitter, disenfranchised Awakened after the Great War. They resented the way they were elevated and then cast down, and vowed to either transform the world or bring it crashing down once and for all. Only the Senior Board Members know this secret agenda.

## AN ANCIENT STRUGGLE ALIVE AND WELL

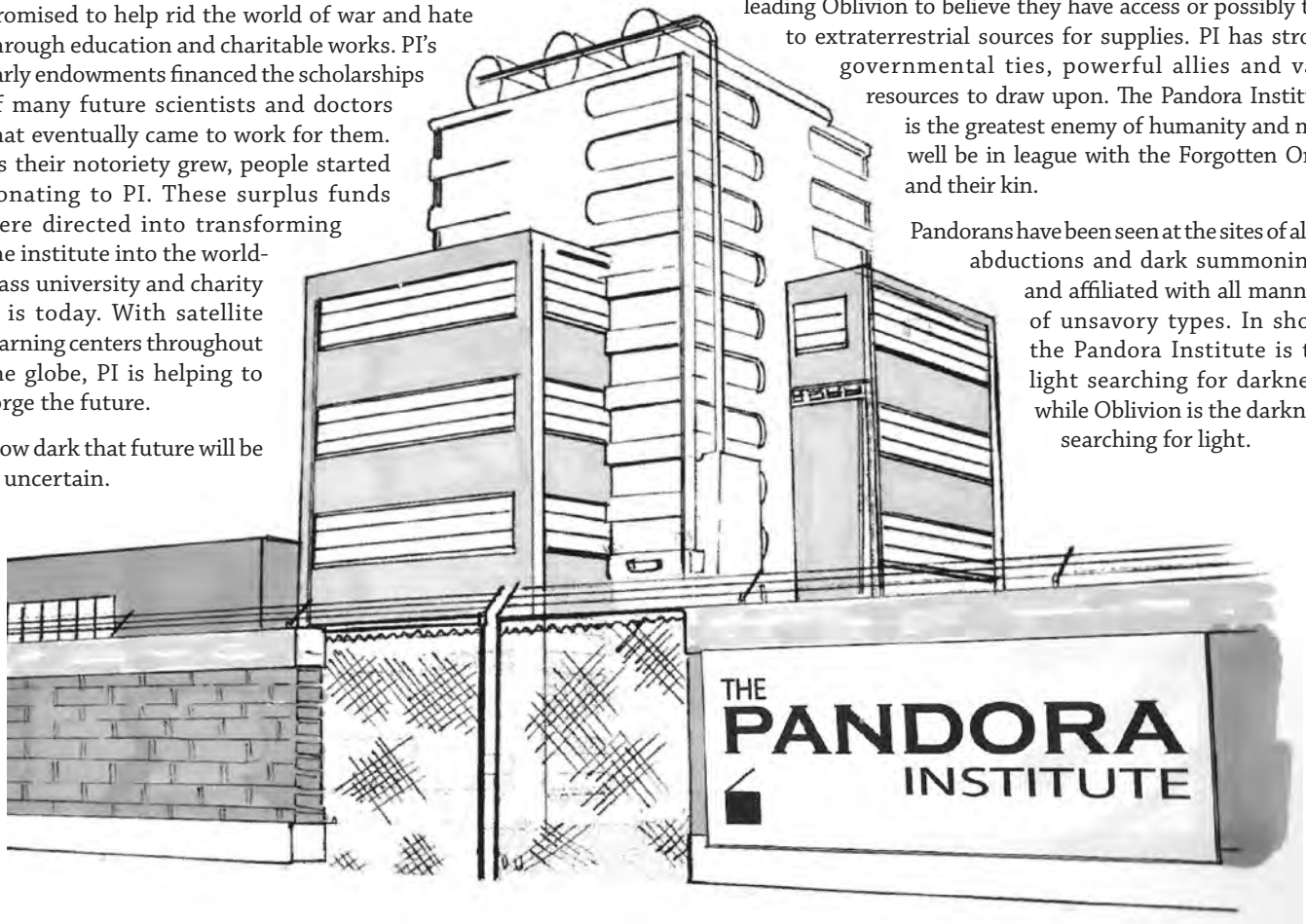
Ancient myths tell us the story of Pandora and how her curiosity unleashed all the woes upon the world. Oblivion views this as a cautionary tale, and their expert academics, Red and Blue, have indicated that the Pandorans may be as old as Oblivion itself. Though Nil founded the most modern incarnation of Oblivion in 1969, the agents of Oblivion have been waging an ancient struggle against Pandorans in various forms throughout and before recorded history. Legends get confused about their particular relationship and the original founding.

## THE COMPANY LINE: OBLIVION'S VIEW OF PI

The Pandora Institute's reputation is unblemished and they appear to be as they are- a shining beacon in a sea of darkness. They cannot be attacked overtly or publicly as that will only succeed in bringing unwanted attention to Oblivion and further PI's agendas.

Oblivion refers to PI as a dark cult and its agents as Pandorans. The facts they have about Pandorans are limited, but they are known to be well-rounded, well-trained and often superior solo combatants. Their equipment is similar in many cases and more expansive in others. Pandorans are sometimes seen with advanced technology, leading Oblivion to believe they have access or possibly ties to extraterrestrial sources for supplies. PI has strong governmental ties, powerful allies and vast resources to draw upon. The Pandora Institute is the greatest enemy of humanity and may well be in league with the Forgotten Ones and their kin.

Pandorans have been seen at the sites of alien abductions and dark summonings, and affiliated with all manners of unsavory types. In short, the Pandora Institute is the light searching for darkness, while Oblivion is the darkness searching for light.





# AGENTS OF OBLIVION ADVENTURE HOOKS

*Agents of Oblivion* is an eclectic mix of genres and moods: there is cinematic action, gritty military shootouts, Bond-style spy-gear, Lovecraftian horrors, cults, conspiracies, terra incognita, with a bit of gallows humor and a rival organization thrown in for good measure.

## HERE FOR THE COFFEE

In any given city, the Agency has a few hangouts in civilian areas for Zeros who need a break from Oblivion rec-rooms and cafeterias. One such location is Phil's Coffee Palace, run by an ex-Oblivion operative who was released due to magically induced insanity. Characters who recognize him by Reputation may remember him as codename "Black Tom," the man who went berserk under a sorcerer's machinations and executed three agents he was convinced were Pandora moles (one turned out to be, in the end, but nothing changes the horror of the situation). However, five years of therapy later, he was allowed to open his own coffee shop, which quickly became a haven for Oblivion personnel, so long as they don't discuss the supernatural too loudly, especially when Phil or his nineteen year old daughter can hear.

Recently, though, the Coffee Palace has become the site of poltergeist activity, which is just about the last thing anyone needs, least of all Phil. Oblivion is worried that he might revert to his old ways if the hauntings continue and needs agents to rectify the situation quickly and quietly. But, is the poltergeist brought on by Phil's late-blooming daughter, some insanity of Phil's manifesting itself, an old haunt of the owner's or one of the regulars or an elaborate hoax?

## FRESH FRUIT

A student at a medium sized Texas university, while conducting an experiment about the mineral content of local produce, discovered the presence of an unknown substance that bears a tertiary resemblance to a neurotoxin or hallucinogen in spectrometer tests. Luckily, the student's professor was an Oblivion liaison and contacted Oblivion at once. Unluckily, both the student and the professor have been in mysterious accidents and are unavailable for comment until the hospital allows. More unluckily, neither the student nor professor told anyone else. Also unluckily, the Pandora Institute is getting set to hold a massive career fair and forum at the university at the end of the week, and attendance is expected to be high. Oblivion agents will be there in force, of course, although what actions they'll be able to undertake are limited due to the publicity. Meanwhile, the player characters are to investigate this fruit nonsense.

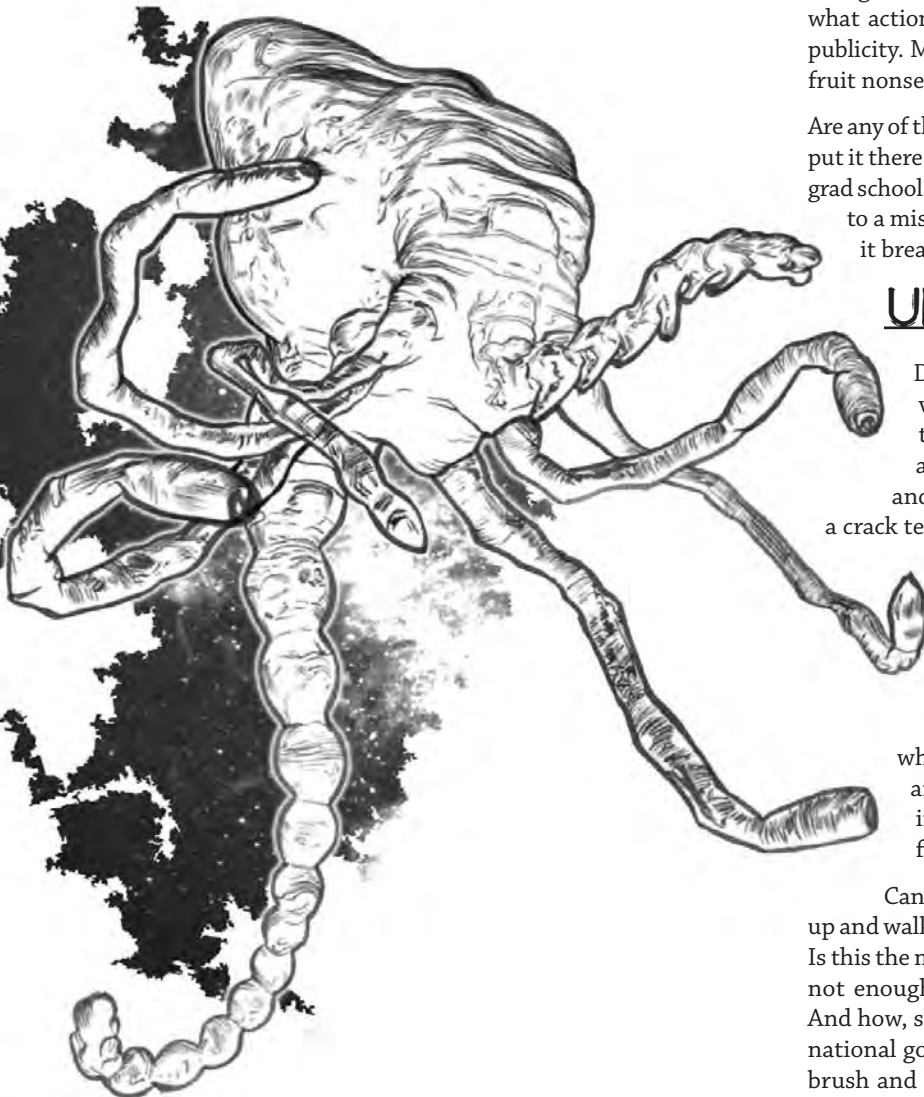
Are any of these events connected? What exactly is in the fruit? Who put it there: Pandora, local farmers or a student hoping to get some grad school attention? What is Pandora up to? How will agents react to a mission that doesn't involve shooting everything whether it breathes or not?

## UNWRAPPING PARTY

Despite the usual warnings about an ancient curse, vengeance from beyond the grave and the urgent need to protect national historical artifacts, an Australian anthropologist has pulled some substantial political and academic strings to procure a mummy. Together with a crack team of forensic pathologists, Egyptian history experts and a documentary filmmaker, the anthropologist set about to answer a few questions about Egyptian daily life.

That was a week ago. Yesterday, they were all found murdered at the lab. The Australian government has snatched up the six man film crew (sans director, whose head and torso they are having trouble locating) and several Egyptian interests are on their way. It's also important to note that the mummy is nowhere to be found.

Can the agents solve a locked room mystery? Is the mummy up and walking, or did an Egyptian cult of some kind do the deed? Is this the mother of all publicity stunts? It's possible, since there's not enough of the director's alleged body to identify properly. And how, should this come up, will the agents explain to various national governments why they had to track a mummy into the brush and light it on fire? Finally, how will aborigines treat the characters who seek to disturb an ancestor? (If you want to include



a mummy in this adventure, and why wouldn't you, you'll find one listed in the subsequent section, under **The Opposition**.)

## STORMING THE RAMPARTS

Senator Hiram Walker, one of the last Dixiecrats out of Arkansas, has stumbled across the existence of Oblivion by tracking their funding over the course of ten years (a Herculean feat, given the amount of time Oblivion spends covering its tracks). Dissatisfied with its paramilitary applications and belief in "voodoo and whatnot," Hiram is subtly trying to find ways to shut Oblivion down.

Ironically, Sen. Walker's son, Marcus, was just kidnapped by a cult back home. Oblivion intends to storm the compound, slaughter or capture all of the cultists possible and rescue Marcus and the other hostages in the bargain. There are a few problems,

though; the cult has announced it will begin sacrificing hostages at midnight, and there is a heavy media presence outside the compound. Additionally, the cult members are heavily armed and are suspected to be led by a sorcerer or two.

There aren't any "what if's" on this one. This is a session or more of straight bloody combat, magical duels and finding ways to put the cult at a disadvantage (such as turning off their power, taking out the leaders and meeting with other Oblivion teams and local National Guard/law enforcement for planning a massive assault). Oblivion supplies all agents participating with body armor and assault weapons, along with a few allied agents or law enforcement officers. Depending on when the agents arrive, one or more blood demons (see statistics below) may have been summoned and already be feasting upon sacrifices." change (see statistics below) to (see the statistics in The Opposition section).

## THE OPPOSITION

Oblivion deals with a wide spectrum of creatures, and a sampling of an alien, a demon and an undead creature are presented for your gaming pleasure. Other creatures, such as skeletons, ghosts and vampires, appear in **A True20 Bestiary of Chapter Eight: Adversaries** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* and can be used simply by adding the appropriate Fear/Terror Level as described in the following section.

## NEW TRAIT

### FEAR/TERROR

Any creature listed with a Fear or Terror Level forces an appropriate Sanity saving throw. Further details as to the roll and specific effects are found in the section on **Sanity** earlier in this chapter. Any creature listed with a Fear or Terror Level is itself immune to the effects of Fear and Terror.

Adding Fear/Terror Levels to existing Adversaries is easy. Simply take their highest creature level and consult the chart below to determine the appropriate classification. You can add situational modifiers as you see fit. It is suggested you reserve assigning Fear for animals and vermin to those especially scary ones, like giant cockroaches and hungry wolves, not the neighborhood dog or an individual rat.

## NEW CREATURES

The following is a sinister sampling of the types of opposition that Agents may encounter.

### GREYS

**Type:** 1st-level aberration

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str -2, Dex +1, Con -1, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2, Terror +1

**Skills:** Concentration 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+6), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+5)

**Feats:** Armor Training (light and heavy), Firearms Training, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.)

### CREATURE FEAR/TERROR

| Creature Type      | Fear | Terror |
|--------------------|------|--------|
| Aberration         | -    | Y      |
| Animal             | Y    | -      |
| Construct          | -    | Y      |
| Dragon             | -    | Y      |
| Elemental          | -    | Y      |
| Fey                | Y    | -      |
| Creature Type      | Fear | Terror |
| Humanoid           | Y    | -      |
| Monstrous Humanoid | -    | Y      |
| Ooze               | Y    | -      |
| Outsider           | -    | Y      |
| Plant              | Y    | -      |
| Supernatural Beast | Y    | -      |
| Undead             | -    | Y      |
| Vermin             | Y    | -      |

**Combat:** Attack +0 (+1 Dex), Damage: Stun (with Starpistol), Defense +1, Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness -1, Fortitude -1, Reflex +1, Will +4

**Possessions:** Alien Starpistol: Two Settings (Stun or Blast), Blast +4 damage, Range Increment:50, Crit: 19-20/+4, Stun: as Stun Gun but Range Increment of 50.

The most commonly encountered alien, greys are intent on conducting cruel experimentation on humans as they advance their secret agendas. Some folks believe they are benign and are on earth to guide humanity through its evolution. But that is not the case, as abductions increase year after year, and they are typically the ones responsible. Oblivion believes they have an agreement with the Pandorans, but that has yet to be proven.

Greys usually advance as adepts, but some have been known to follow other paths. The statistics listed are for a Grounder, the lowest echelon of the Greys.

## BLOOD DEMON

**Type:** 3rd-level outsider

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +2, Dex +1, Con +3, Int +1, Wis +1, Cha +0, Terror +3

**Skills:** Bluff 7 (+7), Climb 7 (+9), Disguise 7 (+7), Notice 7 (+8), Intimidate 7 (+7), Knowledge (supernatural) 7 (+8), Stealth 7 (+8)

**Feats:** All-out Attack, Armor Training (light and heavy), Rage, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.)

**Combat:** Attack +4, Damage: +2 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +4, Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +3, Fortitude +6, Reflex +4, Will +4

Summoned forth by dark words, dark acts and the promise of blood, this demon appears in a cloud of red mist. Any seeing it appear must make a Sanity check against a Terror level of +5. Possessing the empty shell of its sacrifice, the blood demon must feed once per day or it loses a point of Constitution. Once its Constitution reaches +0, it appears as a dry, empty husk and its Terror Level goes up by 2 while its Str and Dex drop by one for each point its Constitution falls below zero. Once its Constitution is debilitated, it is banished back to its home plane. For each minute a blood demon feasts upon a recently dead human, it regains one point of Constitution, draining the body dry. It may only feast on a body once.

## MUMMY

**Type:** 6th-level undead (cold)

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +5, Dex +0, Con -, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +0, Terror +3

**Skills:** Concentration 9 (+11), Intimidate 9 (+9), Notice 9 (+11), Sense Motive 9 (+11)

**Feats:** All-out attack, Armor Training (light and heavy), Tough +2, Weapon Training

**Traits:** Darkvision (60 ft.)

**Combat:** Attack +3 Damage: +5 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense: +3, Initiative: +0

**Saving Throws:** Toughness: +5, Fortitude: +2, Reflex +2, Will +7

**Immunities:** Mummies are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death and mind-influencing effects (including any power requiring mental contact). They are not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, physical ability damage, fatigue, exhaustion or any effect requiring a Fortitude save, unless it works on inanimate objects.

**Slow:** Mummies have poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or standard action each round.

A desiccated corpse wrapped in cloth, the Mummy is truly standard fare in any horror system. He could be revenging himself against the defiling of his tomb or be stirred from his long stupor by the familiar face of a long-dead lover from ages past.

## AFTERWORD

Agents of Oblivion is a flexible game of horror-espionage that you can play anywhere along the sliding scale of serious to sublime. Merely shifting the emphasis from one point to another changes the tone and focus of your game from a gritty, desperate struggle for the survival of humanity to a black ops team hunting down undead terrorists halfway around the world.

Unlike some other games, the Agents know that eldritch horrors exist. Oblivion tells them that right up front. They don't tell them everything, because part of the joy for players and Narrators alike

is the discovery and the unfolding of mysteries. Plenty of mysteries abound in Agents of Oblivion, and you are giving a broad canvas on which to paint your particular flavor of fear. You can pull in conspiracy theories, articles of lost civilizations, as well as draw upon your favorite works of horror by such masters as Richard Matheson and H.P. Lovecraft and spy-thrillers by Tom Clancy. And, you have an excuse to dust off your Ian Fleming books or pop a *James Bond* movie into the DVD.

Then again, you can just wait for our upcoming works. Enjoy!







# BLOOD THRONE

Nearly ten years have passed since Agärazôn's Betrayal plunged the world into darkness. The infernal keza-drak reign supreme over a large portion of western Simarra and might well have conquered the world by now, if not for fractious religious infighting between those who remain loyal to the Betrayer (and by proxy, the black god, Thûrak) and those who claim that Urkog-Drall is the only true god of the keza-drak.

The schism has spread further than the gates of the dread city Thel-Kaza, slowing the war on all major fronts. Some keza-drak generals have refused to lead their troops on any campaign until the Battle Priests determine which god will reign supreme. Enemy deserters have fled into the north lands, seeking to form their own "black" kingdoms in the ruins of the cities they have destroyed.

Even with this respite, there are still many captive allies bought at the slave pits of Thel-Kaza and the dock auctions of Naeth-Kügraz. In these and other wicked places, my people are sold into bondage and shipped off to every corner of the known world. Some even claim that the strongest slaves are now sent beyond the reaches of the Threshold Realm to toil under the twin suns of the keza-drak's vile home world.

Little is known about the fate of those living in the vast region beyond the Wild Lands. Contact was lost with the great nations of Sargolia, Volspar and Sudeja shortly after the keza-drak invasion. The marshland nation of Talmosa is rumored to have fallen to the invaders, although some travelers claim that the serpent goddess and her followers have sworn allegiance to the dread god Thûrak.

The keza-drak have long-since occupied Elk Horn Pass. The last time I was in Ardrennen Falls, the besieged city was packed with refugees and suffering nightly attacks. Some were discussing a risky escape through the Wild Lands. Ubrathil fell to the horde three years ago, and the keza-drak are using the dwarven keep as a base of operations for a campaign to root out the Thorongrar, or "Shieldwall" dwarves, from their holdfasts in the deep earth.

Mighty Thelstaad Keep still stands, I think. King Breoad always claimed that a force of a thousand men in Thelstaad could hold back an army one hundred times their size. I sincerely hope that this boast holds true. Thelstaad Keep guards Spire-Reach Pass, one of the precious few remaining bastions of safety on Simarra. Other free communities are scattered across the western continent, but they are well hidden, tiny and alone.

Magic has turned into something vile and deadly, and only the most daring risk using it. Mystics claim the world is infected with madness. I am no prophet and make no claim to know the truth of these matters, but I have seen individuals utterly consumed by their own magic.

For many, hope's light seems to have faded from our world, but not all have abandoned it. I have heard whispers of late. I dare not put it down into words, yet, for fear that agents of the dark god might find it and thwart us. The Sedrin Oracle has seen a vision that may be our salvation. I send this letter out, calling all heroes to arms. Simarra needs brave men and women to set forth into the southern lands and find out what the oracle has seen.

For those of you brave enough to answer this call, my hopes and prayers go with you.

-Elohan Salaistrien

## THE AGES OF SIMARRA

There are four ages in the history of Simarra: The Primordial Age, The Age of Steel, The Age of Plenty and the current Age of Blood.

The Primordial Age is thought to be the longest period of time, an age of innocence where all lived in harmony. There are no written records concerning the Primordial Age, and history wasn't recorded until the dawn of the Age of Steel.

The Age of Steel was a period of great strife, marked by constant war, the loss of magic and declining faith in the gods. The evil god Thûrak took advantage of this strife to send his agents, the morargrim, into the world. The morargrim spread hatred and sowed distrust among the elder races, sparking the hunting times – a period when the elder races, tricked by the morargrim, hunted dragons to near-extinction.

The Age of Plenty saw the wars and conflicts that defined the Age of Steel come to an end. The Othrännän served the people, guiding them into an era of peace and prosperity lasting longer than any other period on record. As faith in the gods returned, so did the ability to use magic. Instead of being as natural as breathing, however, magic now took effort and practice to master. Those who failed to master their gift died early and painfully.



# A History of Simarra

## Enâra and the Elder Gods

In the beginning there was only the god-form, existing as pure chaotic thought, alone in a sea of endless night. As time passed, the god-form began to take shape, and its thoughts became more ordered. As the god-form slowly began to comprehend what it was, the first emotion, fear, rippled throughout the core of its being. This fear created a pocket realm within the swirling black of the void, a haven from the uncertainty of the primal cosmos to which it was born. This place is Asha-Tor, or “First Home.” The god-form took solace here, finding comfort within the boundaries of that which it created. As the god-form grew more aware, another emotion rose from its depths: loneliness. The god-form struggled to understand this new sensation, this aching longing for something, someone else with which it might share this curious existence.

The god-form looked back out into the blackness of the cosmos and, seeing nothing, turned inward for comfort. It began to divide until it had become completely self-aware. When it was done, seven other beings stood before what was left of the god-form, each of them distinctly different from the original. It looked to the other god-forms and proclaimed itself Enâra, the First Mother. The others also took names; Torrodoth, Vathrim, Thûrak, Kel-Zedon, Gimbureth, Iragreth and Uzgora.

## Of Dragons and the Elder Races

After the elder gods had rested from the creation of the world, they began to fashion the elder races that would be as their children. Iragreth created the elven races. Vathrim, wanting beings with a warrior spirit, created the giant races, which would eventually lead to a rebellion. Out of this rebellion and consequent punishment, the half-giant people were born. Torrodoth created the dwarves, cunning masters of stone, after his own creative spark. And finally, Enâra created humans.

After some time, it became clear that at least one of the elder gods had conferred godhood upon some of the elder races. Fearing Enâra’s wrath, they commanded these Aberrant gods to hide. The rebellious godlings, reveling in their newfound power, stole down onto Simarra and fashioned secret places where they might hide from their benefactors.

The Aberrant gods were able to mold aspects of reality as they saw fit, creating the gnomes, the wyldlings, orcs, goblins, the wicked ghaskrii and a host of other creatures. These new

creatures began to harass the elder races, threatening the idyllic peace that existed in the world. Realizing their error, the Elder gods intervened, commanding their children not to harm the first born of the gods. A fragile peace was forged.

Artisans of all creeds built magnificent cities in a region of the world known as the Cradle of Life. These cities were places where members of the elder races lived in harmony. The largest and most glorious of these was Megath-Tor—Elysium in the common tongue—the shining city created with magic, growing around the Sedrin Henge, a ring of standing “Sathaen” stones built around a massive ley-line nexus.

Megath-Tor lay nestled in a lush valley at the heart of the Cradle of Life, ringed by hills known as the Hadrannath. The Elder gods took up residence in temples spread out across the rolling forested hills and fertile valleys

of the Hadrannath. The elder races came and worshiped at the feet of their makers, who delighted in their adoration.

Dragons led dual lives during those days, their savage natures contesting with their desire to be a part of the “civilized” world and contribute to its greatness and splendor. The dragons of old founded many of the great covens and were instrumental in teaching the people of Simarra the ways of magic. The dragons were among the wisest creatures to walk the face of Simarra, having an inborn understanding of the workings of mana.

## Of the Othránnän

Enâra created the Othránnän, or God Spawn, late in the Age of Steel. Enâra was concerned that, without guidance, the elder races would fall under the sway of Thûrak. The First Mother envisioned these Othránnän as advisors to the elder races, guides to assist her children and counteract the influence of the insidious morargrim. Their creation came at a heavy price.

Initially, Enâra wanted to create the Othránnän by choosing a consort among the Elder gods. She created the Threshold Realm to act as a proving ground for this purpose. Yet, after watching centuries of bickering and fighting between the other Elder gods, Enâra chose instead to create the Othránnän in secret, without a consort. When the Elder gods found out about this betrayal, they imprisoned her in the war-ravaged Threshold Realm, driving her mad with grief and despair.

The Othránnän carried out their mother’s wishes, guiding the elder races from the ashes of war into the Age of Plenty. For a millennium, the God Spawn served the people of Simarra until a powerful Othránnän named Agärazôn came to power in the great city of Megath-Tor.



## THE MAD GODDESS

The years wore on. The cultures of the world grew into flourishing nations. Peace had been maintained for hundreds of years, longer than any other time during recorded history. Its chief architect, Enâra, saw none of it. The centuries spent in the bleak void of the Threshold Realm stretched on, day after maddening day, night after endless night. Enâra had long since abandoned any notion of differentiating between light and darkness. Merely existing in this place proved a constant struggle against the hordes of beasts created during the time the Elder gods had spent warring in this realm. Her white robes had long since become tattered and stained with the blood of those who had come to feast on her flesh.

Long she wandered on roads of her own shattered mind's making. Her frigid, windblown dwellings crumbled down around her even as she created them. Her wine tasted like blood, and her food turned rotten in her mouth. A thousand weary souls rose to greet her each day. The menacing phantoms taunted their fallen goddess with the memories of those who died for nothing more than her whim. They lingered, ever elusive, just beyond her withering grasp. The First Mother slipped from despair into madness and delirium. As Gimbureth had long ago predicted, Enâra forgot all she had ever known, even her own name, as she wandered, hopelessly adrift in the ethereal wasteland that was the Threshold Realm.

## The Talmosian Revelations

In the 333rd year of plenty, in the bog-mired city of Tadar-kesh, prophecy came calling in the form of three heralds, hags in service of the infamous crone of the fell marshes, Anadriendra Udalanaarae. The three hags entered the capital of the swamp-infested nation of Talmosa seeking an audience.

The visit was unprecedented and most certainly beyond anyone's expectations. In the jade hall of the serpent goddess Zashtazzra, the hags presented the overlord with a scroll made from the very flesh of Zashtazzra herself. The prophecy contained a warning to the world - that a great evil would, in time, be unleashed upon Simarra.

Overlord Japira spat at them, saying she would accept no gift from fork-tongued crones. But as she spoke, the idol of Zashtazzra—an ornate half-serpent of jade—slithered down to coil around Japira. The creature spoke in a hissing whisper as the awestruck spectators cried out in terror:

*"When the two moons converge,  
The High one, beguiled by those of the blood, will read the  
words of the ancient text.  
The seals will weaken and the bound ones will escape their  
prison.  
The Lord of the city of two names will seek their allegiance.  
Verily, they will teach him the path of shadows,  
He will open the doorway between worlds  
and usher in an age of darkness..."*

The statue slithered back to its place behind the throne, releasing Japira's lifeless body. The hags set the scroll on the floor before the throne and left, never again returning to Tadar-kesh.

Many Othránnän studied the prophecies, hoping to somehow avert the future. One of the God Spawn in particular—Agärazôn, the advisor to Megath-Tor and head of the enigmatic Theladrin order—took a keen interest in the prophecy.

## Agärazôn the Just

Agärazôn grew into manhood with the desire to commune with the First Mother, the goddess he had been told created his kin. The leader of the Othránnän had spent his entire life in

search of Enâra, only to come away with nothing. Not one shred of information indicated where she might be. Time and time again, Agärazôn implored the Elder gods to grant him a meeting with the mother-creator. Each time, they laughed and sent him away. In time, Agärazôn began to believe that Enâra had not been imprisoned at all, but had been slain, if such a thing could even be accomplished. The world was changing and becoming a much darker place. Agärazôn began to see pieces of the prophecy beginning to take shape.

Agärazôn thought of going to the Elder gods once again and begging for their aid, but they seemed to care nothing for the state of the world. Over the past eight hundred years, the priests of the various gods had slowly, one by one, fallen to corruption. Driven by the desire to fill their coffers with gold, they ignored the declining state of affairs in Simarra. They built massive, decadent temples to the uncaring gods when they should have been using their resources to care for the wretched masses that so desperately needed their aid. The only thing the priesthood seemed passionate about was crushing those who spoke out against the corruption of the church.

An Inquisition formed under the banner of the churches and the mystic Arcanus League, enforcing doctrines they claimed had been written by the Elder gods themselves. Those poor souls accused of heresy were thrown into prison, where they were tortured until they "confessed" their sins against the Elder gods and begged for purification. More often than not, victims of such torments were more than willing to name other "conspirators" before they died. Consequently, many innocents perished, having served the dual purpose of "showing" people that evil existed in the world and providing more targets for the inquisition.

Agärazôn considered going to the rulers of the once-noble kingdoms that had risen out of the ashes of the Ascendant Wars with his fears, but they too had become indolent after years and years of peace and prosperity. Most kings and queens of the myriad kingdoms of Simarra were concerned only with maintaining peace and ensuring their continued rule. They were certainly not going to risk civil upheaval or drawing the suspicions of the Arcanus League by giving credence to the Talmosian Revelations, regardless of its validity.

The Arcanus League had long ago fallen to corruption as well. Driven by their lust for power and their need to maintain control of information, they had ingrained themselves within







the infrastructure of every nation and known source of knowledge on Simarra. Going to them with his suspicions was madness. With the emergence of the enigmatic Shodonai, the magi of the Arcanus League openly warred with the mysterious interlopers.

Agärazôn thought of going to his brethren, but even they seemed to have grown lax and uncaring with the passage of time. The light of Enâra had long-since faded from Simarra, extinguished in part by the very people she had entrusted to keep it burning. The Othrännän had failed their creator, failed the mother-goddess. Overwhelmed by the magnitude of his realizations, Agärazôn began to despair.

A lifetime of poring over ancient texts and consulting memory shards kept him from seeing the world as it really existed. Opening his eyes for the first time, he finally understood. This Age of Darkness, foretold long ago by the Crone of Talmosa, was a cleansing. The world was corrupt and unjust, unworthy of the mother who created it all. This sudden epiphany brought Agärazôn to his knees; the acceptance in his heart brought him serenity and peace.

Enâra had succumbed to the will of the Elder gods and, in so doing, condemned the world to its fate. Agärazôn had spent year after year trying to find a way to free a goddess who had no desire for liberation. He had spent nearly a lifetime watching the people of Simarra devolve into the corrupt nations of the present day. He pleaded with the Elder gods for aid only to be scorned for his efforts. He had suffered through it all with the notion that if he could somehow restore his beloved creator to her rightful place as queen of the cosmos, the people would

forsake their wicked, indolent ways. He'd had enough. The Elder gods, the people of Simarra, everyone who was unworthy and unclean would be punished for their transgressions, for their wicked ways.

## The Deeds of Agärazôn the Betrayer

Agärazôn began a different kind of research. Leaving his quest to find Enâra behind, he instead turned his thoughts towards finding any information regarding the location of the imprisoned servants of Thûrak, the dreaded morargrim. His quest led him north, deep into the Sundered Stone peaks to a gypsy camp in the Feycrag woods. There he met up with a woman named Ailindra Ungoril. Ailindra, a high priestess of Thûrak, taught Agärazôn the ways of the Sundaari. The blood priestess indoctrinated the fallen Othrännän into the ways of the dreaded Zörûn-Ahmrê, the Brethren of the Flesh. Once his training was complete, Agärazôn broke the seals holding the morargrim captive and called a meeting with the other Othrännän at the Narballa Henge.

As the congregation at the ancient standing stones was quickly surrounded by infernal agents, Agärazôn gave his brethren a simple and bleak choice: join him or die. The Othrännän fought valiantly against Agärazôn and his minions but, in the end, the vast majority of the God Spawn died. The remaining survivors fled into the wilds surrounding the Narballa Henge, leaving Agärazôn and his unholy plans unopposed. The Betrayer then visited the Threshold Realm to gather allies for the cleansing that was to follow.



## The Coming of the Keza-Drak

They came in droves; countless keza-drak warriors flooded through the Threshold Realm to swear fealty to Agärazôn. The fires of their camps lit up the region as far as the eye could see, illuminating the black void with an orange glow. The keza-drak used the Threshold Realm as a staging ground for their armies. Agärazôn ordered massive citadels built to protect not only the great stone gate, but all the other portals into Simarra from the tainted horrors that roamed the nether-wastes. Keza-Drak battle lords developed strategies while their forces massed. They would move invasion forces to each of the great gates and simultaneously fall upon the unsuspecting people of Simarra.

City after city fell to the infernal warlords and their battle-hardened armies. The people of Simarra fled into the wilderness to escape the great horde of alien fiends that slaughtered or enslaved all who stood in their way. Agärazôn himself led the attack on Megath-Tor. The city, already in the throes of the Inquisition, fell to Agärazôn's legions within a fortnight, scattering what remained of the order of the Avikus and the Arcanus League to the winds.

The Shodonai, exhausted from fighting the Arcanus League-backed Inquisition, were too weary to hold back the keza-drak horde. The mysterious people had come to Megath-Tor to defend the city from the attack predicted in the Talmosian revelations, believing it to be their destiny to either throw back the horde or die trying. In the end, their struggles with a populace that did not wish to believe them doomed their mission to failure. The remnants of the Shodonai fled back into the desert. Within six months, nearly every major surface city on the continent had fallen to the invading horde. Agärazôn proclaimed himself Lord of the World and renamed Megath-Tor to Thel-Kaza.

The Age of Blood had begun.

## Thel-Kaza: City of the Blood Throne

Ever since the beginning, there was Megath-Tor, The First City. Once home of the gods and a bastion of peace and tranquility, Megath-Tor withstood the chaos of the Age of Steel and returned to glory during the Age of Plenty. As the Age of Blood dawned and war exploded in every corner of the known world, Megath-Tor fell under the weight of over a half million invaders from another world.

Under the guidance of Lord Agärazôn, the keza-drak sacked the city, tearing down the great icons of a fallen people and replacing them with idols of their own making. Megath-Tor was rebuilt into a sprawling, byzantine metropolis of wickedness and degradation, forever hence to be known to the people of the world as Thel-Kaza and a living monument to both Thûrak and Urkog-Drall, god of the keza-drak.

### A Sanguine Throne

Agärazôn built his palace on the remains of the ancient abbey next to the Sedrin Henge. In the great hall at the center of the immense complex, the Lord of Simarra constructed an altar to Thûrak - an ornate throne of bone, flesh and steel. Thûrak himself blessed the Throne, imbuing it with an insatiable thirst for blood.

In a diabolic week-long ritual, in which over a thousand innocents were sacrificed, Agärazôn proclaimed himself High Priest of Thûrak and sat on the Blood Throne. As he did, the artifact drained the blood from his body and bestowed indescribable power upon the fallen Othrännän. Agärazôn, the Lord of the World, commander of the keza-drak legions, chief of the morargrim and the first true Disciple of Thûrak was reborn a Thaorük - the avatar of Thûrak himself.

## Hero Creation

While the struggle against the extra-planar invaders is the most common thematic element of a Blood Throne-based campaign, there are a myriad of possibilities for game play in Simarra. Heroic characters might choose to defend a freehold from raiders or engage in exploration of this war-torn world. They might set sail on the black sea with the privateers who keep vital southern trade routes open, or even brave the perilous Threshold Realm in search of lost portals, many of which may still provide a means for more keza-drak to enter Simarra. Characters might even roam the lands seeking the lost secrets of ascendant technology.

The following section provides backgrounds, skills, feats and powers specific to the Blood Throne Campaign Setting.

## Backgrounds

The scattered, ragged people of Simarra come from many different cultures. With few exceptions, they all remember what life was like before the treachery of the Betrayer brought the Age of Plenty crashing to an end. The heroes were once farmers,

artisans, merchants and healers. They had families—brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers—all too many of whom are no longer alive. These scarred heroes join the fight for various reasons.

Some have noble causes, while others, simply surviving as best they can, are thrown into situations where they have no choice but to become heroes or die. Still other would-be heroes set out into the darkness of the world, seeking to bring some measure of hope to people, only to succumb to the lure of selfish desires and turn from their path, forsaking the light and abandoning hope. All of them have one thing in common: The mantle of heroism has been thrust upon them, and they have responded, for good or ill.

The Elder Gods and the Aberrant Gods appear to have abandoned their children, although the faithful insist that the gods walk among the people still, hiding from forces that would destroy them. While the diminished gods secretly gather their strength, they wander the world, bringing what hope and healing to the people that they can.



## Humans

A human hero belongs to one of several diverse cultures, often referred to as tribes among the elder races. Humans have the same traits given for the human background in **Chapter One: Hero Creation** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

### DALEIANS

Daleians are a noble breed of scholars who have always lived close to the Cradle of Life. They are known for their great memory vaults: giant mana shards philosophers and sages use to store vast amounts of knowledge. With these shards, it is no wonder the Daleians remember more than anyone else, even the elves.

They live in the great Daleian Wood, building their beautiful cities near the rivers. Elves, mostly Thusparri, live among these humans, and both peoples benefit from this friendship. In these dark times, the close relationship between the Daleians and the elves is the only thing that keeps the keza-drak from their borders.

Daleians are a fair people, with light hair and blue or green eyes. The Daleians are open and welcoming, happily mingling with members of the other human tribes and other races.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Favored Feats:** Dedicated, Eidetic Memory

### NARBALLANS

The Narballans have inhabited the primordial hinterlands near the Feycrag Woods ever since the first tribes migrated from the Cradle of Life. With the coming of the morargrim and the keza-drak, these once-peaceful, hardy folk have found themselves embracing war and barbarism in order to survive. Narballans are constantly living under the dark shadow of the keza-drak, who raid their villages for slaves. Most Narballans bravely meet their foes with a song and an axe. While many Narballans fight the encroachment of the keza-drak horde upon their lands, others have turned away from the ways of their brethren and joined the enemy. These blood-traitors submit to unimaginable horrors and are assimilated. Some whisper they are changed into something else entirely.

Narballans are a tall and robust people. While they may seem crude and uncivilized to others, Narballans have a strong sense of honor and loyalty. The northmen are muscular and hirsute, with blond and red hair. The men have long beards, sometimes braided. The women are strong and have been known to take up arms themselves.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Favored Feats:** Endurance, Taunt

### NARMROTHANS

Known as the horse lords, these nomadic people were once native to the kingdom of Numarath. With the weakening of the veil and the emergence of ravaging undead over a thousand years ago, they were forced to leave their ancestral home. That place is now called the Broken Realm, and only the bravest of heroes venture into that dark land. The Narmrothan refugees traveled north, crossing Spire-reach pass in the Shieldwall Mountains, until they finally found a land that suited their lifestyle: The Trachan Steppes. The steppes are a rugged region where many different races live, but few rule. The horse lords quickly settled on the great steppes though, true to their nomadic past, they never stay long in one place. They prefer to travel with the seasons, so their beloved horses always have good grazing land.

Narmrothans are dark-skinned and have curly brown and black hair. Their eyes are mostly brown, and the men rarely keep beards. There is a rare equality between the Narmrothan men and women; women fight and hunt just as often as men rear children and take care of other domestic duties that other cultures might categorize as being "woman's work." The invasion of the keza-drak has brought war to the Trachan Steppes, and the proud Narmrothans have decided to stop running and face their enemy. The Narmrothans excel at hit and run tactics and guerrilla warfare against the keza-drak, using their mobility as an advantage against their enemy's plodding troops.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Favored Feats:** Track, Vehicular Combat (Ride)

### SARGOLIANS

East of the formidable mist-laden range of mountains known only as the Sargolian Wall, lives a people shrouded in mystery. Named for the mountains which mark the boundaries of their lands, the Sargolians long ago closed their borders to the outside world. These deeply spiritual people turned to a philosophy of



personal improvement of the mind and body, seeking a simple life in communion with nature over the hustle and bustle of the rest of Simarra. The invasion of the keza-drak changed all of that.

The keza-drak invaded Sargolia through unused Stone Gates scattered throughout the vast realm. All along the nation's coastline, keza-drak war galleons spewed legion upon legion of soldiers into Sargolia's cities. In less than a handful of days, the relatively untested armies of Sargolia were routed by the battle-hardened keza-drak. The survivors of the short conflict, known to the Sargolian refugees as the *Four Days of Shame*, fled in droves across the treacherous Sargolian Wall into the ominous Spiderhaunt forest and the war-ravaged elven kingdom of Volsparr.

Sargolians, like most Simarrans, are a people without a home. However, the shock of losing the only home they've ever known is compounded by the fact that, with few exceptions, the majority of Sargolians knew nothing about the world beyond the Sargolian Wall. A great number of refugees have been taken in by the benevolent Volsparr elves. Those who didn't trust the hospitality and unfamiliar appearance of the elves have scattered like leaves in the wind since then.

Sargolians have light-tanned skin and thin, dark hair of varying lengths and styles. Their almond-shaped eyes vary in coloration from blue to a deep emerald green.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Favored Feats:** Improved Strike, Point Blank Shot

### SUDEJANS

The people of the isolated kingdom of Sudeja have been cut off from the rest of the world since the beginning of the Age of Blood. It is whispered that dreaded Blight elves took advantage of the invasion and fell upon the peaceful nation of fur traders, guides and woodsmen in payment for past wrongdoings. No one has traveled into Sudeja and returned since the war began. Very few Sudejans can be found west of the Griffon Peaks in these dark days. Those who do show up at a freehold or one of the myriad refugee camps are marked by their rugged facial features, sandy brown hair and stocky girth. They are shrewd negotiators and expert trackers.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Favored Feats:** Talented (Diplomacy and Sense Motive), Track

## Dwarves

There are a myriad of dwarven cultures in the Blood Throne Campaign Setting. The most prolific, however, are Shieldwall dwarves and their cousins, the Volagar.

### SHIELDWALL DWARVES

One of the original elder races, Shieldwall dwarves are the most common dwarf to be found on the continent of Simarra. Although they live primarily in the mountain range that is their namesake, Shieldwall dwarves can be found everywhere in war-torn Simarra. Their capital, the fabled city of Moran-gûr, is rumored to be under siege by keza-drak and their Ungchuk goblin slaves deep in the heart of the Shieldwall Mountains. One of the few remaining surface outposts of the Shieldwall dwarves,

Ubrathil Keep, fell to the keza-drak in recent years. Scouts from the free city of Ardrennen Falls claim the invaders are using the keep as a staging point for underground operations.

Shieldwall dwarves are good hearted by nature but also set in their ways. They are master artisans, especially when it comes to stonework, armor and weaponsmithing. The fabled Magdan Stair, which winds ten thousand feet down into the treacherous Wild Lands, was created by Shieldwall dwarves.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Constitution, -1 Charisma.
- **Size:** Medium
- **Bonus Feats:** Great Fortitude, Night Vision, Talented (Craft and Search, only involving stonework)
- **Favored Feats:** Diehard, Favored Opponent (mountain ogres or gretchclaws)

### CLAN VOLAGAR

Precious few races are as enigmatic as the Volagar, or "fire dwarves," in the common tongue. The Volagar were cast out of the fabled dwarven kingdom of Moran-gûr for heretical practices. They chose to worship Galburak, an Aberrant god of flame, instead of Torrodoth, an Elder god and patron of the Shieldwall dwarves. The Volagar roamed the deep places of the world as outcasts, following the leadership of the first priest of Galburak, Durrigan Flameheart. Durrigan led them to an





enormous vault deep in the world. It was in this cavern that the legendary city of Gündüm-Zog, home of the fire dwarves, was built.

The Volagar have prospered since they left Moran-gûr. There are over fifty separate clans of fire dwarves scattered throughout the subterranean world, far below even the most remote strongholds of their cousins. In addition, there are no less than ten thousand Volagar operating various trade-garrisons and surface volcanic citadels that pepper the Ash Mountains of Droghedia. From these citadels, the Volagar send out heavily armed caravans to trade with the various peoples of Simarra.

Volagar clans are highly religious. As a general rule, thanes of individual clans are chosen from the ranks of the Galburakian Priesthood to ensure all clans follow the will of the fire god. In recent days, there have been a number of progressive clans who have chosen their leaders from outside of the priesthood, a development which has led to another schism. These “reformed” priesthoods broke from the orthodox Volagar and struck off into the darkness of the deep earth. One such clan - the Volugrash - has even promised vengeance upon their brethren for perceived injustices.

The hairless Volagar are typical of most dwarven cultures in that they value hard work and honest labor. They have a love for finely wrought metal, as do other dwarves, and their thirst for fine ale is unquenchable. While other dwarven cultures seem uptight and easily offended, the Volagar are a jovial, light-hearted people who have a strong sense of kinship and zest for living. Indeed, they are often-times quick to befriend a stranger or help those

who others might turn away. With that said, once a fire dwarf does actually become offended, violence will soon follow. Like their distant kin, the Volagar are not quick to forget or forgive a harsh word. They hold grudges longer than any other race on Simarra.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Dexterity, -1 Charisma.
- **Size:** Medium.
- **Bonus Feats:** Aspect of Flame, Night Vision
- **Aspect of Flame:** All fire dwarves have the power to wreath their hands (or weapons) in flame, increasing the attack's damage by one. This can be used once per day for 3 rounds. Every 3 additional total levels allows the power to be used for an additional round, to a maximum of 9 rounds at level 18.
- **Favored Feats:** Elemental Resistance (Fire)

## Elves

Like humans and dwarves, elves are one of the elder races. At the dawn of the Age of Steel, many humans stayed in the Cradle of Life, but the elves traveled far and wide. They had a curiosity to see the world and found many wonders. As a result, the elven people are spread over the entire continent. Elves can be found living in the lofty mountains, deep within the primordial forests, in what free cities are left and even traveling the burning deserts of Simarra. Among the greatest elven cultures are the Thusparri and Volsparran elves.

### THUSPARRI ELVES

Known as the Wind Lords, Thusparri elves historically live in mountain strongholds (called aeries) or deep in the forests, so as to be near the Great Eagles, Griffons and Dire Falcons they have domesticated and use as mounts. With the dawn of the Age of Blood and the loss of many of their greatest aeries, the Thusparri have taken advantage of their kinship with these majestic creatures to aid in the war effort. Thusparri wind riders regularly raid keza-drak supply lines and enemy encampments in the Korduc Barrens.

Thusparri elves are tall, stocky folk. Most have dark hair, varying from deep brown to jet black. Blue and violet-hued eyes are common, though Thusparri elves' eyes tend to shift color according to their moods.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution
- **Size:** Medium.
- **Bonus Feats:** Animal Empathy, Night Vision, Talented (Notice and Search)
- **Favored Feats:** Any one adept feat

### VOLSPARRAN ELVES

The Volsparran elves, while enjoying the same thirst for adventure as their Thusparri cousins, tend to stay closer to the ground, living in forests and magnificent cities that blend in with nature rather than stand apart from it. Many of the first cities to grace the face of Simarra were built by Volsparran architects and craftsmen. Volsparran elves are the most common on Simarra and also the most persecuted. Caught between the



fury of the Blight elves to the north and the keza-drak to the east, the Volsparran elves find themselves clinging tenuously to survival. Every day, more and more of their kin flee westward or die in clashes with their enemies.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution
- **Size:** Medium.
- **Bonus Feats:** Night Vision, Talented (Notice and Search), Weapon Training
- **Favored Feats:** Any one adept feat

## Gnomes

The gnomes of Simarra were created by the Aberrant gods and have never been fully accepted by the elder races. Comparatively few gnomes have left the cavernous Wild Lands, so precious little is known about these strange and wondrous people. The gnomes are split into two different tribes, the Seguire and the Shek-Tar, both found in the Wild Lands.

Gnomes are small creatures, quick on their feet and built differently from dwarves. They are better proportioned and can be quite agile. Their skin is lightly tanned and their hair is found in various shades, some wildly vibrant.

### SEGUIRE GNOMES

The Seguire gnomes revere nature and seek to live in harmony with all plants and animals. They alter very little of any location and stress that any settlement affects the surrounding wilderness as little as possible. They are mystics who follow the patterns of the moons and the sun in keeping with the doctrines of the star god Seguirion.

Sequire gnomes are craftsmen and gadgeteers without peer. Their cunning and ingenuity have led to the development of many strange and wondrous devices, expanding on developments the Shieldwall dwarves have made in steam-powered technology. The Seguire have also made headway in the use of enigmatic ascendant technology.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Constitution, -1 Strength
- **Size:** Small
- **Bonus Feats:** Night Vision, Trailblazer, Use Mana Shard
- **Favored Feats:** Nature Reading, Tap Mana Well, Use Ascendant Technology

### SHEK-TAR GNOMES

The Shek-Tar gnomes are domineering and known to keep slaves, mostly wyldlings, though sometimes Seguire gnomes or humans. They care little for nature and follow one of the Aberrant gods, a lesser god of trickery and domination. They sacrifice to honor their nameless god, and build monuments in his glory.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Dexterity, +1 Constitution, -1 Wisdom, -1 Charisma.
- **Size:** Small
- **Bonus Feats:** Night Vision, Trailblazer, Weapon Training

- **Favored Feats:** Fascinate, Favored Opponent (Wyldlings or Seguire Gnomes) or Power (Summon Spirit). The latter counts as two favored feats if chosen.

## Half-Giants

The half-giants of Simarra—commonly known as Kotarrans—are the descendants of ancient giants who walked the lands during the primordial age when the world was young. Giants were created by the Elder god Vathrim, who wanted a warrior-race to stand as protectors of the world. Some of the giant clans forsook Vathrim, however, and swore fealty to an Aberrant god. Angered and hurt by this betrayal, Vathrim cursed the renegade clans of giants, claiming that until their kin learned the values of honor and loyalty, they would be half their former stature, and so began the Kotarran's quest for redemption.

Kotarrans have endured much over the centuries that have passed since the time of judgment. They have a powerful hatred of the Sundaari. During the Age of Steel, the blood magi enslaved many half-giants during their second invasion of the Cradle of Life and subjected them to vile experiments that directly resulted in the creation of the dreaded Urrumaz half-giants. Kotarrans never forget a hated enemy, passing the enmity down through the generations. They fight with a great passion, male and females alike. Many half-giants choose to become mercenaries as a way of financing their crusade against the keza-drak and the minions of Thùrak. One such mercenary company is the renowned Skull-hammer Squadron.

Half-giants are large, but not slow or clumsy. All half-giants are fierce and strong, with slightly tanned skin and dark eyes.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, -1 Wisdom, -1 Charisma.
- **Size:** Large
- **Bonus Feats:** Favored Opponent (Sundaari), Weapon Training
- **Bonus Skill:** Half-giants have one bonus skill, balancing out the one they lose for low intelligence.
- **Favored Feats:** All-out Attack, Rage

## Saran-Ghori Orcs

The Tarud Mesa and the vast Northern Reaches are the ancestral homeland of the Saran-Ghori orcs. For much of the Age of Steel, the orcs were spread throughout the region, living segregated in tribes, fighting each other as much as the elder races. When the morargrim came and recruited them for the Ascendant Wars, the tribes united against their hated enemies - the elder races.

After the wars, the Saran-Ghori remained united under the guidance of Dundran'Kal, a benevolent Orthrännän. Dundran'Kal taught the Saran-Ghori to live in relative peace and challenged them to forsake many of the old ways. The orcs grudgingly did as Dundran'Kal suggested and evolved into a culture based on that of the elven and human races, flourishing in the Age of Plenty.

Nearly a thousand years later, the betrayal of Agärazôn and the invasion of the keza-drak sparked a civil war within the ranks of the Saran-Ghori orcs. Numerous disenchanting orcs cried out for a return to the old ways. The leader of the Saran-Ghori, Battlemaster





Ghûchok Seven Tongues, rejected the pleas of his people and declared martial law. Furthermore, he had one thousand dissenters beheaded as a lesson to those who would oppose his rule. It didn't have the effect that Ghûchok had hoped for.

Thousands of orcs broke from the Saran-Ghori nation and formed their own alliance of loosely-aligned clans under one banner - The Morash-Ghóran. Led by a brutal, domineering warlord by the name of Drogon Felslayer, the Morash-Ghóran swept across the Tarud Mesa and into the Sundered Stone Peaks, killing everyone in their path. There, the clans founded the city of Blackstone Hearth. Drogon Felslayer allied his fledgling nation with Agārazôn and the keza-drak. The orcs of the Saran-Ghori and Morash-Ghóran tribes have been at war ever since.

When they aren't fighting the renegade Morash-Ghóran, Saran-Ghori orcs can be found aiding the embattled Narmrothan horse clans in their fight against the keza-drak. The Narmrothans and Saran-Ghori are unlikely allies, maintaining a tenuous alliance with each other. Numerous fights have broken out between the two peoples, and the number of casualties from these exchanges grows daily. Despite the infighting, the two groups continue to hold together for mutual survival.

Saran-Ghori orcs are a proud people, respecting strength and the memory of their ancestors. The thousand years that have passed since the Age of Steel have done much to temper the fiery spirit of these orcs. Still, the Saran-Ghori orcs are fierce warriors and capable magi. Their adepts have always practiced the old ways of shamanism, a custom that Dundran'Kal was never able to convince them to abandon, often talking to the

bones and wearing fetishes from the bound spirits of their enemies.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +2 Strength, +1 Constitution, -1 Intelligence, -2 Charisma.
- **Size:** Medium
- **Bonus Feats:** Night Vision, Weapon Training
- **Bonus Skill:** Orcs have one bonus skill, balancing out the one they lose for low intelligence.
- **Favored Feats:** Choose two of the following: Cleave, Favored Opponent, or Rage

## Shodonai

One of the most enigmatic cultures on Simarra, the Shodon warlords rode out of the treacherous Vaskraall Wastes in the latter days of the Age of Plenty. These people, calling themselves Shodonai, brought with them a number of oracles claiming the world was about to plunge into a terrible darkness, eclipsing all the horrors of the Age of Steel.

Known as the Talmosian Revelations, these prophecies spoke of a betrayal of the nations by a righteous man. The oracles claimed the gods themselves would be betrayed, and the dread legions of Thûrak would make war on the people of Simarra. The Shodonai were mocked and their words rejected. As a final insult, the magi of the Arcanus League persecuted the Shodonai. The betrayal of Agārazôn brought the Shodonai a small measure of vindication, but by then it was too late. The keza-drak had invaded Simarra, and the Great War had begun. The first chaotic months of the invasion saw the Shodonai resume their ancient role as protectors of the Cradle of Life.

When word reached the Shodonai in the Azruun Badlands that their leader, Togrun Ael-Shodai, had been slain and there was fighting in Megath-Tor, a great assembly was held to determine the fate of the Shodonai. Leaders from each of the clans came forth and presented the views of their respective peoples to the remaining members of the circle of five – the highest order of the Nekarim priesthood. In the end, the circle of five agreed that, until a new leader of the tribes was revealed, the Shodonai were indeed forsaken, shattered like pieces of a broken glass. Only once a new leader was chosen could he determine the next course of action for the Shodonai.

Over half of the clan leaders stormed out of the council, determined to go north and do what they felt must be done to preserve the honor of their people. Twelve different clans, numbering over ten thousand people, left their kinsmen in the Azruun Badlands and traveled north, only to find that the vile keza-drak had sacked the city and driven off or enslaved its inhabitants. A new king now reigned in the ancient city - Agārazôn.

The leaders of the twelve clans decided that it would be futile to engage the “demons from beyond the stone gates” in open warfare. They would fight these keza-drak, but on their terms. The warlords divided the clans into packs of warriors and Nekarim priests capable of traveling fast and light. They would nip at the heels of the great beast until they had brought it down.

Shodonai have fine features, much like the elves. Their bodies are lithe, with tanned skin that takes on a bluish tint. This tint



varies in hue according to how much water they have in their bodies. Shodonai ride Kaparru beasts, which are native the Vaskraall Wastes. Most of the Shodonai have strange stones growing out of their bodies in various places. These stones are resonance crystals that manifest on their bodies when they mature psychically.

### BACKGROUND FEATURES

- **Abilities:** +1 Constitution, +1 Wisdom, -1 Strength, -1 Charisma.
- **Size:** Medium.
- **Bonus Feats:** Lightning Reflexes, Night Vision, Resonance Crystal
- **Favored Feats:** Supernatural Focus
- **Resonance Crystal:** See the **Feats** section.

## Feats

Sometimes having a mighty weapon, powerful spell or strong arm isn't enough. Sometimes characters need an edge to overcome their foes, and that's where feats come into play. Feats help your characters become truly heroic. The following section offers new feats for you to choose from when creating a hero for the *Blood Throne* setting.

### ATTUNE MANA SHARD (ADEPT)

PREREQUISITE: USE MANA SHARD

You are able to attune an unfocused mana shard. Attuning an unfocused mana shard changes its characteristics into that of an amplification shard, an energy shard, a focus shard, a memory shard or a power shard. To attune a shard, you must make a power check with a Difficulty equal to 15 plus the attunement rating (AR) of the new shard, and spend a number of Conviction points equal to the intended rank of the shard. Failure on the power check indicates the mana shard remains unfocused. The character loses all Conviction points previously spent on the shard but may try again.

MANA SHARD ATTUNEMENT RATINGS:

- **Amplification Shard:** Attunement Rating (AR) 5
- **Energy Shard:** Attunement Rating (AR) 3
- **Focus Shard:** Attunement Rating (AR) 5
- **Memory Shard:** Attunement Rating (AR) 1
- **Power Shard:** Attunement Rating (AR) 3

### IMPROVED USE ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY (GENERAL)

PREREQUISITE: USE ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY

You have not only learned the fundamentals of ascendant technology operation, but have developed an advanced understanding of the use of ascendant technology. As well as not incurring the -10 penalty when attempting to operate ascendant technology, you add +2 to your Operation Difficulty check.

### RESONANCE CRYSTAL (ADEPT)

PREREQUISITE: SHODONAI BACKGROUND

As a Shodonai, you have inherited a psychic legacy which has been handed down to you by your gods - the Nekarim. This feat may be taken multiple times. Each time you choose this feat, pick a power from the supernatural powers list. You can use this power as if your total level is your adept level.

### SAPPER (EXPERT)

PREREQUISITE: KNOWLEDGE (PHYSICAL SCIENCES) 5 RANKS, CRAFT (ALCHEMY) 5 RANKS

You are an expert at the creation and use of explosive devices. You gain a +2 to craft checks when creating simple explosive devices and a +1 to craft checks when creating complex explosive devices. You also gain a +2 competency bonus to checks when activating these devices.

### SENSE SPIRITS (ADEPT)

You can sense and observe objects and beings in the spirit world by using your normal senses. You can make Notice checks with regard to things that exist in the dead lands, including the spirits themselves. This feat does not allow you to manipulate features of the spirit world, nor does it give you the ability to communicate with spirits.

### STORE POWER (ADEPT)

PREREQUISITE: ATTUNE MANA SHARD, POWER, USE MANA SHARD

With this feat, you are able to channel a power you know into a power shard. The power is only useable a finite number of times. The number of times that you can use the power stored in the power shard is determined by your adept level + the rank of the shard. So, a 3rd level Adept using a stored power in a rank 1 power shard can only use that power 4 times before the stone is drained of mana and needs to be recharged. The power rank of any supernatural power stored in a power shard equals the level of the adept +3 or the level of the shard +3, whichever is less. See the **Magic of Simarra** section for more information on power shards and powers.

### SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCE (ADEPT)

PREREQUISITE: THE CHARACTER MUST HAVE THE AFFECTED POWER

Choose a power you are trained in using. You have a +5 bonus on all saving throws against harm from that power and suffer only non-lethal damage from it so long as you are conscious.

You may acquire this feat multiple times. Each time, it affects a different power.

### TAP MANA WELL (SUPERNATURAL)

PREREQUISITE: KNOWLEDGE (SUPERNATURAL) 5 RANKS, CONCENTRATION 5 RANKS, USE MANA SHARD.

Your studies have given you the knowledge to tap mana wells and prepare them for use. You are able to charge a mana shard with the powers of the mana well. A mana shard loses one rank every time it is recharged. A mana shard used near a mana well will not require recharging. See **The Magic of Simarra** for more information on mana wells and their use.

### USE ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY (GENERAL)

PREREQUISITE: KNOWLEDGE (ASCENDANT TECHNOLOGY) 5 RANKS.

You know how to use various types of ascendant technology. This feat allows you to make an attempt at operating ascendant technology without incurring the normal -10 penalty to the Operation Difficulty check (See the **Using Mundane and Ascendant Technology** section). In addition, this power

allows the character to use Power Shards (see the **Magic of Simarra** section) when maintaining and using ascendant technology. See the **Ascendant Technology** section for more information on ascendant technology.

#### USE MANA SHARD (ADEPT)

You are able to use a mana shard with a rank equal to your adept level +3. See the **Magic of Simarra** section for more information on mana shards and their use.

#### USE MANA WELL (ADEPT)

PREREQUISITE: KNOWLEDGE (SUPERNATURAL) 5 RANKS, CONCENTRATION 5 RANKS, USE MANA SHARD

Your studies have given you the knowledge to tap dormant mana wells and prepare them for use. You are able to perform

the following functions at a mana well with a rank equal to your adept level +3.

You are able to charge a mana shard with the energy from a mana well. A mana shard loses one rank every time it is recharged. A mana shard used near a mana well will not require recharging. In addition, you are able to perform any function built into the mana well, such as teleporting to any mana well that is connected to the one you are at. See the **Magic of Simarra** section for more information on mana wells and their use.

#### USE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICE (GENERAL)

You have gained a modicum of expertise in the utilization and operation of mundane technology. This feat allows you to operate various technological devices without incurring the normal -10 penalty.

## The Magic of Simarra

The magic of Simarra takes on many forms and is perceived in different ways by those who work it. Mana ripples across the world along invisible ley lines and physically manifests in the world as mana shards. The arrogant magi of the Arcanus League view it as a series of formulae to be researched and quantified, while the bone shamans of the Saran-Ghori orcs and the wicked ashoi-noktah claim magic comes from the spirits of those who have passed from the world. Witches and druids who have recently rekindled the old ways believe magic comes from the world around them. Others perceive magic as a gift from the gods, asserting that the gift is within a chosen few who either choose it to do their god's will, or use it for personal gain, as the case may be.

### Key Ability Scores

Adepts who choose a more formal, structured approach to magic use Intelligence as their key ability score. Arcanus League magi and non-aligned magi are examples of this type of adept.

Bone shamans, ashoi-noktah, witches, druids and other adepts who perceive magic as being apart of the natural order of things use Wisdom as their key ability.

Psychics such as the shodonai and adepts who rely purely on the use of mana, such as members of the order of the Avikus, use Charisma as their key ability.

### Power Descriptions

The following powers are available in the Blood Throne Campaign Setting in addition to those in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

In the early days, the people of Simarra were immortal. Magic was as much a part of them as a hand or an eye. Magic, or Mana, flowed through the elder races into the world and many great and wondrous things were created. All of that changed with the creation of the Threshold Realm. The gods disappeared from the world, and the people, confused and coping with their newfound mortality, forgot how to work magic. Some of the remaining scholars of the present day assert it was because their faith in the gods waned. I would tend to agree with them, if it weren't for the ley lines and mana shards, the latter of which were discovered early in the Age of Steel, long before magic was reborn in the hearts of men...

-A Discourse on Mana, by Elohan Salaistrien

#### BIND SPIRIT

FATIGUING

You can attempt to bind a summoned spirit into a fetish you have prepared. You make a power check at a difficulty equal to 15 + the spirit's level. The spirit gets a Will save with a difficulty equal to 15 + your power rank to avoid becoming bound. If the spirit succeeds, it may attack you or flee. The spirit will remain in the world for a number of days equal to your adept level. If the spirit fails its save, it becomes bound to your fetish. The binding is permanent or until the fetish is broken.

**Time:** Bind spirit is a full action.

#### BOIL BLOOD

FATIGUING, CONCENTRATION

By focusing on your target for a full round and making a power check, you cause the target's blood to boil. The target gets a Fortitude saving throw; if it exceeds the result of your power check, the attempt fails. If the initial Fortitude save fails, the subject makes another Fortitude save against your normal power save Difficulty. Failure is read as a result on the lethal damage track (i.e. a hurt result on a failure, a wounded result on a failure by 5 or more and so forth). Each round you maintain concentration, you deal additional lethal damage to the target. The target gets a new Fortitude saving throw each round. Two successful saves in a row ends the effect. This power only affects living targets that have blood; creatures like constructs, oozes and undead (for example) are immune.

**Time:** Boil Blood is a full action.

**INFECT****FATIGUING, MAINTENANCE**

This power allows you to infect a person or creature with a toxin or disease by touch. This attack requires an attack roll against the target. The target makes a Fortitude saving throw against your power save Difficulty. A poison does initial ability damage equal to half your adept level and secondary ability damage equal to one-third your adept level, rounded down. A disease does initial ability damage equal to one-third your adept level, and secondary damage equal to one-fourth your adept level (also rounded down). You choose the ability or abilities affected when you use the power. A disease or poison inflicted on a target with this power affects the subject normally and may be removed using the Cure Disease and Cure Poison powers. Infect only works on creatures affected by diseases and poisons.

**Time:** Infect is a standard action.

**MANA BLAST****FATIGUING**

With this power, you unleash a blast of pure mana at your enemy. This works like an Elemental Blast (from **Chapter 4: Supernatural Powers** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*), except it uses pure magical energy rather than an elemental medium.

**Time:** Mana Blast is a standard action

**MANA SHIELD****FATIGUING, MAINTENANCE**

With this power, you create a shield of pure mana around you or the subject of your choice. Make a power check (Difficulty 15) to bring the shield into being. It provides a Toughness save bonus equal to half your adept level. Each round you have the shield active, you must make another power check (Difficulty 15). Failure indicates the shield disperses. This is in addition to any Concentration checks required if you are distracted in any way.

**Time:** Mana Shield is a full action

**SUMMON SPIRIT****FATIGUING, CONCENTRATION**

You can summon a spirit to aid or engage in combat for you. The spirit will remain with you for 1 round per rank in this power, until you stop maintaining the power, or until it is defeated or destroyed.

To summon a spirit, make a power check with a Difficulty of 10 + the level of the spirit. The summoning lasts a full round, at the end of which the spirit gets a Will save. The Difficulty is your result on the power check to summon the spirit. Failure indicates the spirit must appear. Success indicates the creature is not bound to appear, but can if it so chooses.

All spirits use the combat and saving throw progression for Warriors, have 6 points to distribute amongst their abilities and have the Improved Strike feat. A summoned spirit is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease effects, mind-influencing effects (including Heart Reading, Heart Shaping and any supernatural powers requiring mental contact) and the Imbue Unlife supernatural power. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also works on objects



or is harmless). It is not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue or exhaustion. It cannot be healed and is immediately destroyed when reduced to “dying” status on the damage track. A spirit with the fast healing quality still benefits from that quality.

**Time:** Summon Spirit is a full action

**SUMMONING A SPIRIT**

When summoning a spirit, you can choose its abilities from a menu of choices. You can always substitute two choices from a lesser menu for one of its given abilities. Multiple selections of the same menu choice do not stack unless the ability specifically notes that stacking is allowed.

Some menu choices grant a spirit the ability to use supernatural powers. All such powers have a rank equal to your rank in this power, and use the same mental ability score you do. Because it is immune to fatigue, a spirit does not need to make a Fatigue save when using powers that normally require it. A spirit also does not need to meet the prerequisites for a feat granted by a menu choice.

**SPIRIT MENU A**

Spirits of level 1 to 7 have one trait from this menu.

- **Aggressive:** The spirit has the All-out Attack feat.
- **Cleave:** The spirit gains the Cleave feat.
- **Deflection:** The spirit gains a +1 bonus to Defense.
- **Fly:** The spirit can fly at a speed of 20 feet (average).



- **Improved Speed:** The spirit has the Improved Speed feat.
- **Elemental Resistance:** Choose one of the following elements: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind. The spirit has the Elemental Resistance power of that element.
- **Tough:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to Toughness.
- **Trip:** If the spirit hits with its slam attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the spirit.

### SPIRIT MENU B

Spirits of level 8 to 14 have one ability from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two special abilities from Menu A. These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu A.

- **Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms a hard carapace and gains damage reduction of 3/supernatural.
- **Elemental Slam:** The spirit's fists are wreathed in a particular element. It does an additional +2 damage of an element you designate: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind.
- **Fast Healing:** As long as the spirit remains conscious, it removes one bruised or hurt condition per round.
- **Heavy Deflection:** The spirit gains a +4 bonus to Defense.
- **Improved Critical:** The spirit gains the Improved Critical feat with its unarmed attacks.



- **Improved Fly:** The spirit flies at a speed of 40 feet (good).
- **Improved Grab:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat.
- **Improved Toughness:** The spirit gains a +6 bonus to Toughness.
- **Infect:** The spirit has the Infect power.
- **Muscle:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to its Strength score.
- **Poison Touch:** If the spirit hits with a melee attack, the target must make an initial Fortitude save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Constitution score) or take 1 point of Constitution damage. One minute later, the target must save again or take another point of Constitution damage.
- **Smite:** Once per day, the spirit can make one attack that increases its damage by half its level.
- **Trample:** As a standard action during its turn each round, the spirit can literally run over an opponent at least one size smaller than itself. It merely has to move over the opponent to deal bludgeoning damage equal its normal damage. The target can attempt a Reflex save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Strength score) to negate the damage.

### SPIRIT MENU C

Spirits of level 15 and above have one special trait from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two special traits from Menu B. (One or both of the Menu B choices can be swapped for two choices from Menu A.) These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu B.

- **Blindsight:** The spirit has blindsight out to 60 feet.
- **Constrict:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat. In addition, on a successful grapple check, the spirit automatically deals its normal damage.
- **Elemental Blast:** The spirit has the Elemental Blast power of the element you choose: Cold, Earth, Fire or Wind.
- **Extra Tough:** The spirit gains a +10 bonus to Toughness.
- **Extreme Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms hard, armor-like plates and provides Damage Reduction 6/supernatural.
- **Extreme Deflection:** The spirit gains a +8 bonus to Defense.
- **Natural Invisibility:** The spirit is constantly invisible, even when attacking.
- **Mana Blast:** The spirit has the Mana Blast power.
- **On the Run:** The spirit has the Move-by Action feat.

## Mana Shards

Thengrin Talerion, founder of the Order of the Avikus, first discovered mana shards during the Age of Steel. Thengrin found that by focusing on a mana shard, he could tap the energy contained within. Shards are found in areas of high ley-line activity. All mana shards have a rank used to measure their magical potential, which is loosely based on the size of the shard.

## Using Mana Shards

Mana shards are unfocused in their raw form. They can be attuned—a process of ridding the mana shard of any impurities—to perform a wide range of functions. The first mana shards were used as batteries, powering many of the anti-dragon weapons and mana shields during the hunting times. Since then, many devices have been developed, including the strange weapons of the Ascendant Wars. Numerous inventions have been lost to the ravages of time, although the shards are still used today. Mana shards can only be manipulated if the adept's level is equal to or higher than the shard rating. Mana shards can be attuned in five different ways: as amplification shards, energy shards, focus shards, power shards or memory shards.

### AMPLIFICATION SHARDS

These mana shards allow an adept to increase his power level when using powers in exchange for an increase in fatigue. An adept adds half the shard's power rank, rounded down, to his power check. Any fatigue checks made add the shard's full rank to the Difficulty. If a power does not normally cause fatigue, a fatigue check is still made, adding only half of the shard's rank to the check. An adept can never utilize more of an amplification shard than his adept level.

*Example:* A 4th-level adept using a rank 4 amplification shard can temporarily add 2 levels to a power, effectively casting at 6th level. Any fatigue checks are made as if the power check was rank 8, however.

### ENERGY SHARDS

These mana shards are bright yellow and laced with black lines. They act as mana batteries, powering various forms of ascendant technology. An energy shard will power a piece of ascendant technology and its effects for a number of days equal to the rank of the shard, after which it must be recharged.

Energy shards must be charged in a mana well periodically or they begin to wane. After each recharge, the energy shard must make a Toughness save (Difficulty 15) or lose a number of ranks equal to the difference of the check divided by 2, rounding down. The Toughness of a given energy shard is equal to the shard's current rank. When the energy shard reaches zero ranks, it turns black and becomes useless. Shards may never gain ranks as a result of this Toughness check.

### FOCUS SHARDS

These mana shards allow an adept to maintain multiple powers with less concentration. Each rank in a focus shard allows the adept to maintain an additional power without increasing the difficulty of power checks and fatigue saves. An adept can never utilize more of a focus shard than his adept level. When utilizing a focus shard, all power and fatigue checks have their base difficulty increased by 2.

*Example:* A 3rd-level adept utilizing a rank 5 focus shard can maintain three additional powers (four total) without any additional penalty. All of his difficulty checks are at +2, however.

### MEMORY SHARDS

These are the most common of all attuned mana shards, and are primarily used to create rotes and encode functions into

complex pieces of ascendant technology. The Daleian sages use them to store vast amounts of knowledge, accessible by anyone capable of using a memory shard. The number of memories, pieces of information or commands that can be placed into a shard is twice the rank of the shard. Memory shards do not degrade over time. They exist only to store various forms of information which can be accessed an infinite number of times. However, memory shards can be drained of their information. Once this happens, the shard becomes black and useless. Memory shards may never be recharged.

### POWER SHARDS

Power shards are used to hold magical powers, and are accessed and used by focusing intently on the shard to activate it. They hold a number of powers equal to the rank of the shard. Power shards must be charged in a mana well periodically or they begin to wane. After each recharge, the shard must make a Toughness save at a Difficulty of 15 or lose a number of ranks equal to the difference of the check divided by 2, rounded down. The Toughness of a given power shard is equal to its current rank. When the shard reaches zero ranks, it turns black and becomes useless.

## Ley Lines and Mana Wells

Ley Lines are veins of mystic energy crossing Simarra, often connected with sacred sites. Places such as the Narballa Henge and the Sedrin Henge (both sites long held sacred by many different cultures) are massive nexus points for 12 and 14 ley lines, respectively. These mystical nexuses – called mana wells – are a source of power for adepts.

Some of the most visionary mana-smiths created gigantic ships designed to float along the ley lines and mechanical war-machines, the O'rak-dra, used to hunt dragons. These revolutionary breakthroughs helped found numerous cities and facilitated trade with many distant communities, such as the remote nation of Sudeja.

To bring about the Age of Blood, Agārazôn used this knowledge to open gateways into the Threshold Realm. The major mana wells, such as the Sedrin and Narballa Henges, are still held open by a mysterious sorcery. The keza-drak use them to move freely about Simarra, even to and from the Threshold Realm. Each major stone gate is heavily guarded. The same can't be said for the lesser mana wells across Simarra. Many mana wells have yet to be found, even a thousand years since their discovery. Rumors also persist of secret gates, created by the God Spawn, which they used to travel in secret throughout Simarra.

## Using Mana Wells

Mana wells have a rank equal to the number of ley lines which fuel them. However, even the lowest ranked mana well is still a source of immense power. Any supernatural power checks or fatigue checks at a nexus point have their difficulty decreased by the rank of the well. An adept can recharge a mana shard by making a power check (adept level + 3 + ability modifier) versus a Difficulty of 10 + the shard rank. Each time a shard is recharged, its rank decreases by 1. The rank of the mana well affects the difficulty of this roll.



# Ascendant Technology

Ascendant technology gets its name from the Ascendant Wars, which occurred during the Age of Steel. This was a very chaotic period of time when the elder races of the world were coping with the sudden disappearance of their gods who were fighting a war against beings known as “Aberrant gods.”

During this period of strife, a dwarf named Thengrin discovered mana shards. Thengrin found if a person focused hard enough on a mana shard, that person could tap into the latent energy within the shard. Upon further investigation, Thengrin made another discovery. These mana shards existed in areas of high ley line activity, places he came to identify as nexus points. At the ley line nexuses, the dwarf applied what he had learned about mana shards and tapped the first ever mana well at a place known as the Sedrin Henge. These discoveries led to the development of gateways, allowing travel throughout Simarra. Many years later, these gates would prove the undoing of the people of Simarra.

The Ascendant Wars were a backdrop to this period of discovery, and consequently, many pieces of ascendant technology were created as weapons of war or as protection. Losing their war with the Elder gods of Simarra, the Aberrant gods resolved to trick many of the elder races, sending agents of evil known as morargrim into the cities of the world.

The morargrim were able to convince the myriad people of Simarra that dragons (a once-beloved race of creatures who

once shared the cities of the world with the lesser humans, elves, dwarves and half giants) intended to destroy society as it existed and become the rulers of all humanoid races on Simarra. The hunting times began, and the most powerful pieces of ascendant technology were created to tip the balance in favor of the elder races.

Great, mana-fueled war machines, known as O’rak-dra, were created to aid people in fighting the dragons. Mana shards fueled weapons from swords to energy batteries designed to unleash waves of pure mana on their assailants. Mana shards were embedded into armor, creating energy fields to protect their wearers. Entire cities were protected, as mana-smiths, known as Aviki, learned to harness the most potent shards and created massive energy fields that helped ward against dragon breath. Because of these pieces of technology, the elder races were able to hunt dragons to near-extinction, forcing the once noble creatures into hiding.

After the Ascendant Wars and the hunting times ended, the people of the world lost their taste for war. Many of these great machines were discarded or lost, and the secrets of their making were forgotten, though some say they still exist. It is rumored that there is an ancient subterranean city called Kiv’Larast. There, some dragons still exist as guardians of the ancient technology that once nearly destroyed them.

## Using Mundane and Ascendant Technology

Every machine, ascendant device, engine, construct and so forth in Simarra has an Operation Difficulty that determines the complexity of the object’s operation and function. Simple, usually smaller devices are less difficult to figure out than larger, more complex machines, and the Operation Difficulty reflects this difference. Ultimately, the Operation Difficulty is determined by the Narrator, however the scale of difficulty should loosely resemble this:

### OPERATION DIFFICULTY SCALE

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Operation Difficulty 5   | Effortless           |
| Operation Difficulty 10  | Easy                 |
| Operation Difficulty 15  | Average              |
| Operation Difficulty 20  | Challenging          |
| Operation Difficulty 25  | Difficult            |
| Operation Difficulty 30+ | Very Difficult, etc. |

To determine whether or not a hero is able to use a given technological device, the player needs to make an Intelligence check against the Operation Difficulty assigned by the Narrator. You cannot take 10 or take 20 on this check.

**Note:** Without any of the relevant feats (Use Technology or Use Ascendant Technology), characters suffer a –10 penalty to all checks when attempting to use technology.

## Rotes

In Simarra, manasmiths have long studied ancient lore regarding the construction of ascendant technology. Much of this lore can be found in the form of rotes. The most famous of all manasmiths was Thengrin Tarelion, founder





of the Order of the Avikus. He studied the ley-lines and mana shards, learning their secrets before anyone believed in their power. He also created the first rotes but, when he saw the destructive power of ascendant technology during the Hunting Times, Thengrin begged the God Spawn to hide the knowledge from the world. Much of the most devastating lore was, and remains, hidden. Over the centuries, however, some of it has been recovered. In this, the Age of Blood, Agärazôn seeks the most powerful rotes so he may use them against the people of Simarra.

Rotes are schematics that teach a person how to build a piece of ascendant technology. These schematics grant a bonus to Craft (ascendant technology) checks equal to the adept level of the person who created the rote. A rote may be found embedded into a memory shard, carved into a wall or simply written on a piece of parchment.

## Rote Descriptions

The following pieces of ascendant technology are samples of the possibilities available to Narrators and players.

### BANDS OF DEADLY STRENGTH

**Mana shard rank:** 2

**Number of mana shards needed:** 3

**Type of mana shards required:** 1 energy shard, 2 power shards with requisite powers

**Item cost:** 15

**Powers:** Enhance Ability, Harm

**Operation Difficulty:** N/A

**Description:** Wearing these ornate armbands confers a +1 strength bonus. Also, any successful unarmed strike is treated as a lethal attack. If the wearer's unarmed attack is already considered lethal, the attack receives a +5 damage bonus.

### LIGHT BOMB (ACTIVE)

**Mana Shard Rank:** 2

**Number of mana shards required:** 3

**Type of mana shards required:** 1 energy shard, 2 power shards with requisite powers

**Item cost:** 15

**Powers:** Light Shaping, Widen Power

**Trigger:** Container opened or broken

**Operation Difficulty:** 5

**Saving Throw:** Reflex half

**Description:** Activating a light bomb releases a blast of pure light within a 4 ft. radius (double the shard's rank) of the vial. The light is a +1 attack (one-half shard rank, rounded down) to all supernatural creatures of innate evil or darkness, like the keza-drak. This rote is often cast into more powerful shards for a more deadly effect. The saving throw Difficulty is 10 + the damage bonus.

### WELL TRAP (ACTIVE)

**Mana Shard Rank:** 1

**Number of mana shards required:** 2

**Type of mana shards needed:** 1 energy shard, 1 power shard with requisite power

**Item cost:** 14

**Powers:** Infect

**Trigger:** Item submerged in liquid

**Operation Difficulty:** 5

**Saving Throw:** See text

**Description:** The well trap is commonly made of a small mana shard or a marble. Once submerged in water, it spreads a deadly poison. Any person drinking from the tainted source must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 14) or become infected as per the Infect Power. The effects of this item last for 24 hours.

## Life in the Age of Blood

Simarra is by no means a pleasant world. It is a thunderous sea of darkness with tiny pinpoints of light scattered across the surface, each one representing one of the last bastions of hope and safety for the descendants of the elder races. The Great War has raged on for the past decade, devolving into a multitude of smaller, but no less significant, conflicts that rage across the world.

Meanwhile, the indigenous races haven't fared much better than their would-be conquerors. Anarchy prevails over the lands of Simarra, where brigands prey on the weak and helpless, taking what they need and daring anyone to stop them. Most people have reverted back to a communal way of life, with outsiders or non-tribesman being kept at arms length.

Freeholds, independent city-states, are the only places where there is truly any law and order. Even then, laws and politics change from one place to another according to the whims of the ruling class. Various ascendant technologies lay scattered across the continent. Some are trinkets, others unfathomable monoliths said to hold devastating power. These devices could hold the keys to the future of the elder races.

## Ardrennen Falls: On the Edge of Darkness

Located on the edge of a cliff looking ten thousand feet down into the mysterious Wild Lands, Ardrennen Falls is the largest freehold in the west. Indeed, the city is one of the few remaining beacons of light left in the world. Before the keza-drak invaded Simarra, Ardrennen Falls was a thriving city boasting a population of 100,000 souls. In the ten years since, that number has swollen to over 400,000. Most of the newcomers are refugees from the Cradle of Life, the Dassúrri Basin, Kotarra, the Thusparran Lowlands, Talmosa, the Daleian Wood and a myriad other places that have long-since fallen under keza-drak rule. The influx of races has been both a boon and a curse for Ardrennen Falls.

The city has been able to hold its own against wave after wave of keza-drak invaders due to the mushrooming population. Ascendant technologies have been recovered, and new devices, such as an energy field fueled by power shards, have been developed by some of these newcomers. But with the

good also comes the bad. Unsavory groups have begun to infest Ardrennen Falls. Corruption and favoritism plague the infrastructure of the city. Many people live in the streets, starving, while nobles and rich Trade Lords live in opulence. Disease runs rampant through the city's poorest sectors, and morargrim and Sundaari infiltrators are rumored to have come in secret to Ardrennen Falls to aid in the city's conquest.

In recent months, the hated keza-drak mysteriously halted their campaign against Ardrennen Falls, pulling the vast majority of their troops north to Ubrathil Keep. The ancient dwarven keep has long been under control of the vile race and, much to the dismay of the dwarven refugees living in Ardrennen Falls, no word has come from the deep holdfasts of their kin. Elven and dwarven scouts are reporting wicked infighting in the numerous camps of the keza-drak which ring the ancient fortress of the Shieldwall Dwarves.

The vaunted Storm Rider Legionnaires, led by Lord Perethil Skyhand, patrol the skies above Ardrennen Falls on the backs of griffons and giant eagles. Dispossessed from their homeland during the early years of the war, the Thusparri elves remain steadfast in their resolve to fight the vile invaders. The elves bring what supplies they can to the gates of Ardrennen Falls and the surrounding outposts, but such supplies are rapidly depleting. The city walls echo with the cries of the starving masses.

Edward Brinhold, High Commander of Ardrennen Falls, has issued a call to all people to aid in the defense of Ardrennen Falls and the outlying farming communities. Adventurers are being recruited to scout the enemy, guard supply trains and find possible escape routes in case an evacuation becomes necessary.

## Adversaries

The following chapter takes a brief look at some of the notable creatures and antagonists inhabiting Simarra.

### ASHOI-NOKTAH

**Type:** 2nd-level undead

**Size:** Small

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +1, Dex +1, Con -, Int +2, Wis +4, Cha -2

**Skills:** Diplomacy 5 (+3), Notice 5 (+9), Intimidate 5 (+3), Knowledge (history) 5 (+7), Knowledge (supernatural) 5 (+7), Sense Motive 5 (+9)

**Feats:** Bind Spirit, Drain Vitality, Imbue Unlife, Summon Spirit

**Traits:** Damage resistance +2/supernatural, darkvision, ghost sight, immunity, sustenance, touch of the grave, undead traits

**Combat:** Attack +3 (+1 Dex, +1 Size), Damage +1 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +3 (+1 Dex, +1 Size), Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +1, Fortitude +0, Reflex +1, Will +7

**Ghost sight:** Ashoi-Noktah can naturally see incorporeal creatures and have a +4 to detect invisible creatures and illusions. This bonus applies to saving throws as well.

**Immunity:** Ashoi-Noktah are immune to cold, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease and mind-influencing effects (including mind-influencing powers). They are not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, ability damage or any effect requiring a Fortitude save, unless it works on inanimate objects.

**Sustenance:** Ashoi-Noktah need no food or drink to survive and do not sleep.

**Touch of the Grave:** Once per day, an ashoi-noktah can choose to channel the negative energy of the Dead Lands, dealing an additional +2 lethal extreme cold damage on an unarmed strike.

These wicked creatures are a strange sight to behold. They can be found in the Wild Lands or in Talmosa, serving the Crone. The ashoi-noktah were once gnomes, but were cursed after betraying the morargrim; they now walk Simarra as undead monstrosities. The ashoi-noktah learned dark magic to summon and bind spirits to serve their foul purposes, earning them the nickname of spirit binders. The most powerful ashoi-noktah spirit binders can animate corpses as slaves. The ashoi-noktah are very closely connected to the spirit world and can see

beyond the veil into the Deadlands. They are hated and feared by most races for their mysterious and disturbing powers.

Ashoi-Noktah appear to be gnomes, twisted and drained of all life and vitality. Their dry, wrinkled skin is often decorated with tattoos and mystic sigils. They have long bony fingers and often have hunched backs or other disfigurements.

The save Difficulty against an ashoi-noktah's traits is 11 (10 + ½ adept level), unless otherwise noted.

### BLIGHT ELVES

**Type:** 1st-level humanoid (elf) (1st-level adept)

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +0, Dex +2, Con -1, Int +4, Wis +2, Cha -1

**Skills:** Intimidate 4 (+3), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+8), Medicine 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+8), Search 4 (+10), Sense Motive 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6), Survival 4 (+6)

**Feats:** Flesh Shaping, Harm, Nature Reading, Pain

**Traits:** Night Vision, Pestilent Glance, Talented (Notice and Search)<sup>B</sup>, Trailblazer

**Combat:** Attack +2 (+2 Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +2 (+2 Dex), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness -1, Fortitude -1, Reflex +2, Will +4

**Pestilent Glance:** A Blight elf may use the Infect power (see **Magic of Simarra**) at will with a power check (use the elf's total level as adept level when making the power check).

The Blight elves broke from the Volspar nation during the little-known Blood War early in the Age of Steel. The Blight elves, or the Fallen, are hated by most of the races of Simarra. They can be found living in places of taint and sorrow, places blighted by their very presence. The largest known gathering of Blight elves is in the vast Saragangak Forest, west of Sudeja.

These wicked creatures revel in the defiling of nature. They are said to be capable of working powerful destructive magic and can curse a person with a single glance. They often bear evidence of their inner perversion on their thin, emaciated bodies in the form of puss-filled boils and long, reddish-green

lesions. Their teeth are invariably black and rotting, and their grey eyes seem to have sunken into their skulls.

The difficulty against a Blight elf's traits is 11 (10 + ½ adept level), unless otherwise noted.

## GRETCHCLAW

**Type:** 3rd-level supernatural beast

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +1, Con +2, Int -3, Wis -1, Cha -1

**Skills:** Notice 6 (+5), Stealth 0 (+1)

**Feats:** Great Fortitude, Tough +2

**Traits:** Darkvision, Poison, Poison Immunity, Scent

**Combat:** Attack +3(+1 Dex, -1 Size), Damage +5 (claws), Defense +3 (+1 Dex, -1 Size), Initiative +1

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +6, Fortitude +7, Reflex +4, Will +0

**Poison:** Upon a successful grapple, a gretchclaw can poison a target by secreting blood through its tentacles. Gretchclaw blood is poisonous, and any who come in contact with it must make a Fortitude save Difficulty 14 or take 1 point of temporary Constitution damage.

**Poison Immunity:** The gretchclaw has a natural immunity to all poisons.

The gretchclaw is a large, bipedal, cave-dwelling creature with fierce claws and a hunched back with spiked protrusions along its spine. Their skin is dark grey to black in color, and they have thick, vermin-infested fur and fierce, oversized jaws surrounded by small tentacles that aid the creature when it eats. The gretchclaw is a natural hunter, and will attack anything that ventures near its lair. They have been known to hunt in packs and ambush unsuspecting travelers. The gretchclaw has a natural +4 bonus to stealth.

## KAPURRA BEAST

**Type:** 3rd-level animal

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 50 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +2, Con +3, Int -4, Wis +1, Cha -4

**Skills:** Stealth 0 (+2), Jump 4 (+11)

**Feats:** Endurance, Great Fortitude

**Traits:** Blind Sense

**Combat:** Attack +3 (+2 Dex, -1 Size), Damage +3 (Bite), Defense +3 (+2 Dex, -1 Size), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +5, Fortitude +8, Reflex +5, Will +2

The kapurra are natives of the desert and have only been domesticated by the Shodonai, who use the great lizards as mounts and beasts of burden. Kapurra have a +4 bonus to Stealth checks, increasing to +8 in desert terrain. They also have a +4 bonus to Jump checks and can take 10 on any jump check, even when threatened or distracted.

## KEZA-DRAK

**Type:** 1st-level outsider

**Size:** Large

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +4, Dex 0, Con +2, Int +1, Wis -2, Cha -2

**Skills:** Climb 4 (+8), Intimidate 4 (+2), Jump 4 (+8), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+2), Stealth 4 (+4)

**Feats:** Cleave, Rage

**Traits:** Damage Resistance +2/supernatural, Darkvision

**Combat:** Attack +0 (-1 size), Damage +4 (unarmed), +9 (greataxe), Defense +0 (-1 size), Initiative +0

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +4, Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0

The keza-drak are towering monstrosities, often measuring over 7 ft. tall and weighing well over 300 lb. Their bodies are covered in tough, chitinous protrusions, and they have slightly elongated heads, emphasizing a sloping forehead and a cavernous mouth with four rows of razor sharp teeth. Despite their appearance, the keza-drak are master tacticians, bred for war and conquest by their god, Urkog-Drall. The dark god created the keza-drak to further his own ambitions regarding the utter conquest of all things, mortal and immortal alike.

Keza-Drak live for war; their entire culture is centered around the conquest and subjugation of other civilizations. The keza-drak rely on their military and spiritual leaders to guide them at all times. The tazâri-chock, generals of the infernal armies, and the zukuk-chock battle priests work in unison to keep the troops in line. The keza-drak are very superstitious and will not march if the omens are not auspicious.

## MORARGRIM

**Type:** 6th-level outsider (shapechanger) (1st-level Outsider/5th-level Adept)

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +0, Dex +2, Con +2, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +5

**Skills:** Bluff 8 (+13), Diplomacy 8 (+13), Disguise 6 (+21), Gather Information 8 (+13), Intimidate 8 (+13), Notice 8 (+10), Sense Motive 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+10)

**Feats:** Canny Dodge, Fascinate (Bluff), Heart Reading, Heart Shaping, Skill Mastery (Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Sense Motive), Suggestion, Taunt, Truth Reading, Well-Informed

**Traits:** Alternate Form, Damage Reduction +4/Supernatural, Darkvision, Immunities, Outsider Traits

**Combat:** Attack +5 (+2 Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +7 (+2 Dex, +2 Canny Dodge), Initiative +2 (+2 Dex).

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +2, Fortitude +5 Reflex +5, Will +8

**Alternate Form:** A morargrim can change its shape at will as a full action, becoming any race or sex it wishes. If imitating a specific person, it gets +10 to the disguise check.

**Immunities:** Morargrim are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease and mind or emotion-influencing effects (including powers).

Thûrak watched the creation of Simarra from the confines of the sulfurous, blazing abyss of Thugash-Tor. He raged at the birth of the races and howled his fury at the Elder gods for creating such creatures. As the races spread out and laid claim to this new world, the dark god decided to plague these creatures with a creation of his own. Thûrak bided his time, waiting until the Elder gods diverted their attention from Simarra, and crept down into the world to steal souls from each of the elder races. Thûrak took these souls back





into Thugash-Tor and visited untold horrors on them, perverting and molding their essence until they pleased him. The results of his efforts are the dreaded morargrim, baleful shape-shifting agents of Thûrak and instruments of the dark god's will on Simarra.

Agärazôn freed the insidious creations of Thûrak from their prison at the end of the Age of Plenty. Now they serve the Betrayer directly, moving undetected through Simarra. Morargrim have the following traits. Saves have a Difficulty of 14 + the morargrim's Charisma score, unless noted otherwise.

## SUNDAARI BLOOD LORD

**Type:** 5th-level humanoid (5th-level Adept)

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +1, Dex +2, Con +0, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +2

**Skills:** Concentration 8 (+11), Intimidate 8 (+10), Knowledge (theology & philosophy) 8 (+12), Knowledge (supernatural) 8 (+12), Medicine 8 (+11), Notice 8 (+11), Search 8 (+12), Sense Motive 8 (+11)

**Feats:** Boil Blood, Dominate, Drain Vitality, Flesh Shaping, Harm, Illusion, Night Vision, Pain, Second Sight.

**Combat:** Attack +4 (+2 Dex), Damage +1 (unarmed), or by weapon, Defense +4 (+2 Dex), Initiative +2 (+2 Dex)

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +0, Fortitude +1, Reflex +3, Will +7

The Sundaari, often referred to as Blood Lords or Shadow Spawn, are a people with a long history of violence and brutality. True to their bloody heritage, the Sundaari sacked Megath-Tor (now known as Thel-Kaza) twice during the Age of Steel and used the city as a gigantic altar, offering up nightly sacrifices to the evil god Thûrak. They were eventually driven out both times by the half-giants of Kotarra and have since traveled the world as gypsies or languished in their ancestral homeland, the Sundanar Peninsula, waiting for the opportunity to re-conquer the Cradle of Life.

In the Age of Blood, the Sundaari have once again assumed their roles as the high priests of Thûrak, offering up nightly sacrifices to the dark god and performing vile experiments on slaves brought to them from the conquered regions of Simarra. The vile Zôrûn-Ahmrê, Brethren of the Flesh, have begun operating once again as the secret police of Agärazôn. These diabolic minions of Thurak are sent to hunt down insurgents and bring them back to Thel-Kaza.

Sundaari are deathly pale and usually have white hair. Most have blue eyes and wear loose clothing. Men are the undisputed rulers among the Sundaari; their women are nothing more than chattel.





# LAND OF THE CRANE

# INTRODUCTION

In the Land of the Crane, shadowy ninja silently slip through the night, gathering secrets and assassinating their enemies. Mystic onmyōji struggle to keep the five elemental forces of nature in balance, and ascetic monks train in the arts of unarmed combat, so they might have the stamina necessary to spend days in meditation.

Powerful nobles engage in political machinations as they vie for control of the shogunate. Poverty-stricken peasants labor in their masters' fields, harvesting rice and wheat, and brave samurai ride headlong into battle to bring honor and glory to their clans.

In the Land of the Crane, spirits inhabit the land, spreading fortune and prosperity to those that appease them, and famine and pestilence to those that do not.

Mischievous foxes, hungry ghosts and celestial dragons threaten the security of the Empire just as much as the lizard-riding barbarians of the Hordelands or the ruthless Warlords of Xin.

It is these turbulent times that give rise to heroes; men and women who will defend the Empire, earn glory for their clans and bring honor to their ancestors.

## HISTORY

Tsurukoku, the Empire of the Crane, was founded sixteen hundred years ago by Mikado Kazuhiro of the Aono clan. Since then, the Land of the Crane has flourished under the rule of the Aono dynasty.

For nine hundred years, the empire saw peace. The arts and culture flourished under the watchful eye of the court nobles. Martial arts

and warfare were perfected as the imperial samurai armies defended the borders. Religion flourished as the Fenist shinkan built shrines to honor the great spirits and Darumist monks built monasteries to educate those who seek enlightenment.

The empire was at peace until seven hundred years ago, when a period of great drought and famine hit. The onmyōji who counseled the Mikado consulted their astrological charts and prescribed programs to restore the balance of the elements, but to no avail. As supplies dwindled, the size of the imperial army diminished dramatically.

To compound the problems the Empire faced, the Xin warlords threatened to invade from the east, and the barbarians of the Hordelands suddenly became an imminent danger. The daimyō, or feudal lords, of Tsurukoku, who had always played a secondary role to the imperial court, saw an opportunity to seize power.

Raising their own samurai armies, who they were able to feed with locally grown rice, the daimyō united under Shogun Yoshirō, of the Kobayashi clan. The new military forced out the Xin and barbarian invaders, then turned their sights on the imperial army. At the Battle of Sekigahara, Kobayashi Yoshirō defeated the Mikado's army, and established himself as the de facto ruler of Tsurukoku.

Over the next seven hundred years, the shogunate would change hands several times. Following the Kobayashi shogunate, the daimyō swore fealty to the Suzuki, Nakamura and Itō clans.

It is currently year 337 of the Itō shogunate, and Itō Takeshi struggles to control the empire as other daimyō viciously vie for power.

# PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Tsurukoku is a strictly feudal society that follows a rigid caste system. Ideally, everyone knows their place, and harmony is maintained throughout the land.

Noble landowners, known as *daimyō*, act as landlords for farmers (by far the largest segment of the population) who produce rice, wheat and livestock to supply the *daimyō*. Artisans, who produce weapons, armor and everyday items, are considered lower in the caste system than farmers, and merchants are the lowest of all. There is also an "untouchable" caste considered lower even than the merchants. These people are usually considered tainted in some manner, often by dealing with the dead.

A small segment of "casteless" people, such as Fenist shinkan and Darumist monks, enjoys the freedom associated with being outside of the caste system, but they also lack the societal guarantees it provides.

## POPULATION AND ETHNICITY

Tsurukoku is a nation of about 5 million people, with an average population density of 34 people per square mile. The Tsurukokans are an extremely homogenous people, with minority ethnic groups representing only 1% of the total population.

## TSURUKOKUJIN

The vast majority of citizens (of any race) are descended from the people known as Tsurukokujin. This group originated in the western lands and spread east as the population grew.

Tsurukokujin have dark hair, which ranges from brown to black, dark eyes, which have the same tonal range and fair skin. They have rounded faces, almond-shaped eyes and are of a generally slim build.

## XIN

The foreign nation of Xin is regarded as an enemy of Tsurukoku, but a small number of Xin merchants, scholars and adventurers do live within its borders.

The Xin typically have darker skin and longer faces than Tsurukokujin and have their own distinct manner of dress and customs.

## AINU

The Ainu are the only ethnic group native to eastern Tsurukoku. While originally populous, they were almost completely wiped out by the Tsurukokujin as they spread east and by the Xin as they invaded into the west. Only a few thousand Ainu remain, mostly in isolated villages in the east of Tsurukoku.



Unlike either the Tsurukokujin or Xin, the Ainu have occidental features: round eyes, light skin, blond or brown hair and blue or green eyes.

Because there are so few of them, and because of their strange features, they are often ostracized by the ethnic Tsurukokujin majority.

## NOBLES

Two classes of nobles hold sway in Tsurukoku: *kuge*, aristocrats who serve in the Mikado's court, and *daimyō*, warlords who swear fealty to the shogun.

### KUGE

This group of nobles is comprised of men and women whose families ascended to power when the imperial court ruled Tsurukoku. While they were once the most wealthy and influential class of nobles, the past seven centuries of military rule have left them without much political power.

Though their political influence has waned, their position in the Mikado's court has enabled them to maintain a significant cultural influence.

### DAIMYŌ

Under the shogun, warlords known as *daimyō* govern areas of land known as *han*. The *daimyō* act as landlords for farmers, merchants and artisans, and it is through the labor of their people that they become wealthy.

*Daimyō* employ armies of samurai to protect their lands and, occasionally, to seize the lands of others.

## PEASANTS

Life as a peasant is not easy, and the typical Tsurukokan experiences enough hardship toiling in the fields, laboring in the forge or traversing the Mikado's highways peddling wares to advance in level during his life.

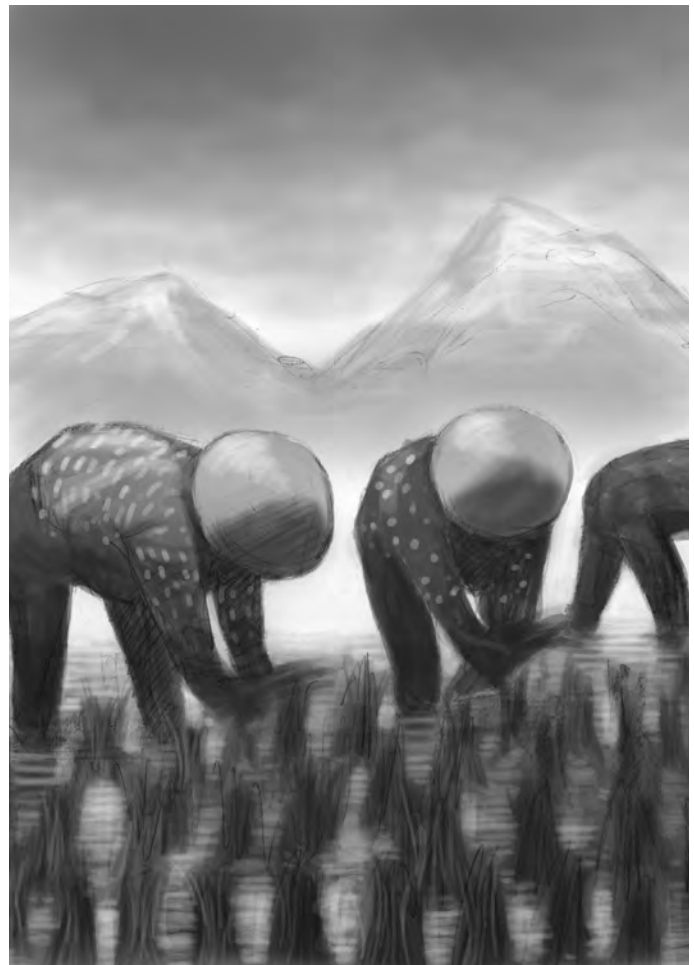
Some peasants, such as a wife of a wealthy merchant, lead less stressful lives, and therefore advance at a slower rate. Others, however, lead much more dangerous lives, such as farmers in areas populated by fearsome creatures.

The table at right shows the average age at which a peasant will achieve a given level, based on the average difficulty of the life he leads.

## ADVENTURERS

From samurai, to ninja, to onmyōji, to monks, Tsurukokans from all walks of life take up the mantle of the adventurer. Some adventure to advance the cause of their clans, while others are more concerned about achieving enlightenment. Some adventure to amass wealth and power, while others seek retribution and vengeance. Some seek the answers to mystical questions, while others simply want to see the world.

Whatever the reason, Tsurukoku has a rich history of adventure. People from all segments of society wander the land, engaging in duels, fighting the forces of Yomi and bringing honor and glory to those to whom they owe their allegiance.



PEASANT AGE AT LEVEL (STARTING AT 15)

| Level | Easy | Normal | Hard |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| 1     | 15   | 15     | 15   |
| 2     | 18   | 17     | 16   |
| 3     | 25   | 20     | 17   |
| 4     | 35   | 25     | 19   |
| 5     | 48   | 32     | 23   |
| 6     | 65   | 42     | 28   |
| 7     | 85   | 55     | 34   |
| 8     | 112  | 75     | 44   |
| 9     | 152  | 102    | 58   |
| 10    | —    | 142    | 78   |

## MUSHA SHUGYŌ

Considered the final step in a student's training, the *musha shugyō*, or "warrior's pilgrimage," is a Tsurukokan tradition whereby young warriors leave their families and monasteries and travel the land, fighting in duels to hone their skills and promote the names of their martial schools or fighting styles.

While this tradition began with young samurai, adventurers of all types now embark on the *musha shugyō*. Around age 15, monks, ninja, yamamori and even shugenja leave their masters to hone their skills or die with honor.

## CULTURE

Tsurukokans value tradition and community. As a result, their culture is rich and varied, but extremely slow to change. Great emphasis is placed on treating others with respect and with maintaining one's public image. As a result, Tsurukoku culture tends to be extremely polite. Deference is always paid when another's status is unknown, for an insult can easily lead to a duel or worse.

## NAMES

Noble Tsurukokan names are composed of a surname (i.e. family name) followed by a given name, with no middle name. Commoners are not permitted to use surnames.

## HONORIFICS

When Tsurukokans address each other, they almost always do so by employing one of the titles described below. Using no title indicates a level of extreme familiarity usually limited to siblings, spouses, or a parent addressing a child. When used, the title is

added as a suffix to the subject's surname. For example, when talking to the samurai Kurosawa Musashi, a peasant would address him as "Kurosawa-sama." When addressing peasants, or those that do not have a surname, the title is added to the subject's given name. For example, if talking to Takeshi, one might address him as "Takeshi-san."

- **Dono** - used when addressing one's own daimyō. It is an elevated form of -sama.
- **Sama** - used when addressing one's superiors, or when showing great respect for someone. It is the rough equivalent of "Lord or Lady." A commoner addressing a noble would use this title.
- **Sensei** - used when addressing a teacher of any sort, or a "master" of an art form or trade.
- **San** - this is the default honorific, used when addressing an equal or near equal. It is the equivalent of calling someone "Mr. or Ms."
- **Kun** - used to address a male friend or subordinate.
- **Chan** - used to address a female friend or close companion.

## GEOGRAPHY

Tsurukoku is a primarily mountainous region with a total land area of 144,500 square miles. It is shaped like an elongated boomerang, with the western arm much longer than the eastern arm. The distance from the westernmost point to the easternmost

point is ten times the distance from the northernmost point to the southernmost point.

The empire is bordered on the west by the Great Sea, to the north by the Ashlands, to the south by the Nagara River and to the east by the Xin Empire. About 10% of the land area is totally uninhabitable due to the extremely mountainous conditions.

The Tsuchitora mountain range runs north to south along all of Tsurukoku's eastern border. A smaller range, of which its volcanic namesake, Mount Hizuru, is a part, runs parallel to Tsuchitora for several hundred miles before swinging west. The largest mountain range is Iwayama, which runs east to west through the center of the country.

The Nagara River is the mightiest of the Tsurukokan rivers. It is the home of one the five spiritual guardians of Tsurukoku, the great dragon spirit that shares its name. The roots of the river are in the Tsuchitora range, and it is fed by each of the other mountain ranges as it flows west toward the Great Sea. The river is considered the southern border of the empire.

## KUNI

Tsurukoku is divided into seven *kuni*, or "countries," which were initially administrative units in the time of the Mikado, but now serve simply as geographical regions. The regions, from west to east, are:

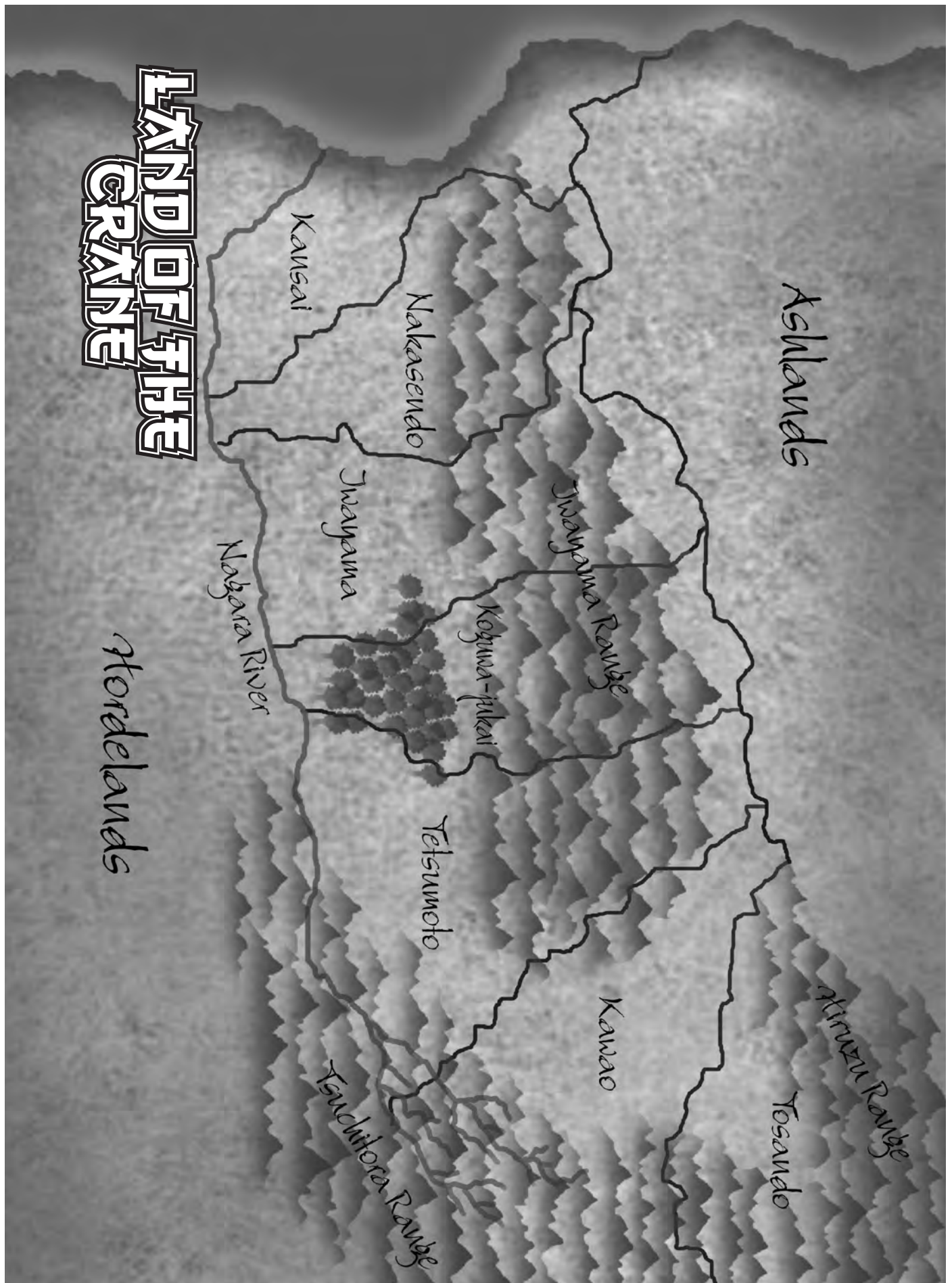
## KANSAI

The lands "West of the Checkpoints" were originally defined as all those west of the ancient capital of Aono-kyō. This region meets the Great Sea on the west, and is home to the port city of Kanba.

## NAKASENDŌ

The "Road through the Central Mountains" is home to the ancient capital of Aono-kyō. The Iwayama mountain range cuts through the northern half of this region.







## IWAYAMA

Named for the Iwayama mountain range, which dominates its northern half, this region is also home to some of the most fertile farmland in Tsurukoku. The southern third of the region is entirely flat plains.

## KOGUWA-JUKAI

This region is named for the largest forest in Tsurukoku, which falls almost entirely within its borders. The forest is comprised primarily of mulberry trees, which are used for two purposes. First, the silkworms that eat the mulberry leaves are harvested to make silk. Second, the bark of the trees is harvested to make paper.

## TETSUMOTO

The “Birthplace of Iron” is extremely mountainous, since it contains the tail end of the Tsuchitora range and the eastern end of the Iwayama range. As is implied by its name, the iron and jade mines in this region are the most prolific in the empire.

## KAWAO

The “River’s Tail” covers most of the southern portion of Tsuchitora. Here, the Nagara River begins its journey west. The region is famous for its hot springs, glacial water and sake production.

## TŌSANDŌ

The “East Mountain Road” is the easternmost region of the empire, and is home to the northernmost section of the Tsuchitora mountain range and the entirety of the Hizuru range.

## BEYOND TSURUKOKU

The lands beyond the borders of Tsurukoku are viewed as mysterious and dangerous by the average peasant, and ready for exploration and conquering by the average adventurer.

## ASHLANDS

To the north of Tsurukoku are the Ashlands - a desert formed by the ashes of the volcano, Mount Hizuru.

## HORDELANDS

To the south of the Nagara River are the steppes where lizard-riding barbarian hordes roam.

## ONIGASHIMA

A hundred miles off the western shore of Tsurukoku lies the Island of Ogres, Onigashima.

## XIN EMPIRE

To the east of Tsurukoku, past the Tsuchitora mountain range, is an empire ruled by the Warlords of Xin, a xenophobic society that shuns outsiders.

# ORGANIZATIONS

Duty is the foundation of life in the Land of the Crane. Every individual places his role as part of the larger community over his own interests. The following organizations are known and respected by the majority of the Tsurukokan citizenry.

## CLAN

The clan, is the basic unit of social structure in Tsurukoku. Each clan is headed by a *daimyō*, who holds dynastic control over a large section of land, known as a *han*. Under the daimyō are the samurai, noble warriors pledged to defend the daimyō’s territory, farmers who tend the land and artisans who produce weapons, tools and other items.

There are hundreds of clans in Tsurukoku, but few with significant economic or political power. The major clans are those that produce over 100,000 koku (a quantity of rice, about 5 bushels, that will feed one person for an entire year) annually. Together, the twelve major clans account for over one million people, nearly 1/5 of Tsurukoku’s total population.

The daimyō of the major clans are required by the shogun to spend three months of each year in the capital city of Itō.

## ITŌ

DAIMYŌ: ITŌ TAKESHI

The Itō shogunate has lasted for 337 years, due in part to its control of the port city of Kanba in Kansai. Their farmlands are

fertile and extremely well irrigated, which allows them to produce enough rice to feed the 200,000 people that occupy the capital city of Itō.

## KOBAYASHI

DAIMYŌ: KOBAYASHI SENZŌ

The Kobayashi lands in Nakasendō are some of the most fertile farmlands in Tsurukoku. Their ability to produce vast quantities of rice, and thus feed a large army, directly led to their establishment of the first shogunate.

Losing control of the Land of the Crane to the Suzuki clan after over two hundred years of power was a deep blow to the Kobayashi sense of pride, and the two clans have been bitter enemies ever since.

## KUROSAWA

DAIMYŌ: KUROSAWA HIDEKI

Kurosawa han in Kawao is one of the smallest of the major clans. Their access to pure springs of water fed by melting glaciers contributes to their production of the two most highly-valued sakes in Tsurukoku.

During the Nakamura period, the Kurosawa suffered from the seizure of lands by the shogun. In addition, the Kurosawa aids the Watanabe clan in their defense against the Nakamura. Consequently, the Kurosawa and Nakamura clans consider each other enemies.

## MORIMOTO

DAIMYŌ: MORIMOTO YŪKO

The Morimoto clan is the second largest landholder, after the Suzuki clan. Their territory in Koguwa-jukai contains a variety of mulberry tree especially appetizing to the silkworm. Therefore, they are the largest exporter of silk in the empire.

## NAKAMURA

DAIMYŌ: NAKAMURA NAMI

Located in Tetsumoto, the Nakamura clan is the largest producer of jade. They, along with the Tanaka clan, control over 50% of the jade market and have historically taken every opportunity to expand their influence over it, by means both violent and subtle (but usually violent). They periodically invade Watanabe han for this very purpose.

The Nakamura shogunate, possibly the most brutal and violent period in Tsurukokan history, lasted less than fifty years. It was marked by constant warfare, as the Nakamura attempted to take control of neighboring lands. As a consequence, the Nakamura are considered enemies by many of their neighbors.

## OKANO

DAIMYŌ: OKANO TÔRU

Located in Kansai, the Okano have historically been a devoted ally of the shogun. They have and do now act, both physically and politically, as a buffer between Itô and Kobyashi. The bond was cemented recently by the marriage of the shogun's sister to the Okano daimyō.

The Okano are one of the few clans that have enough grasslands to support the farming of cattle. Additionally, they are the largest producer of soybeans in the empire.

## SUZUKI

DAIMYŌ: SUZUKI SHUJI

The Suzuki clan is the largest landholder of the major clans. Like the Morimoto clan, the majority of their territory in Koguwa-jukai is covered in mulberry trees. However, they focus on paper production instead of silk.

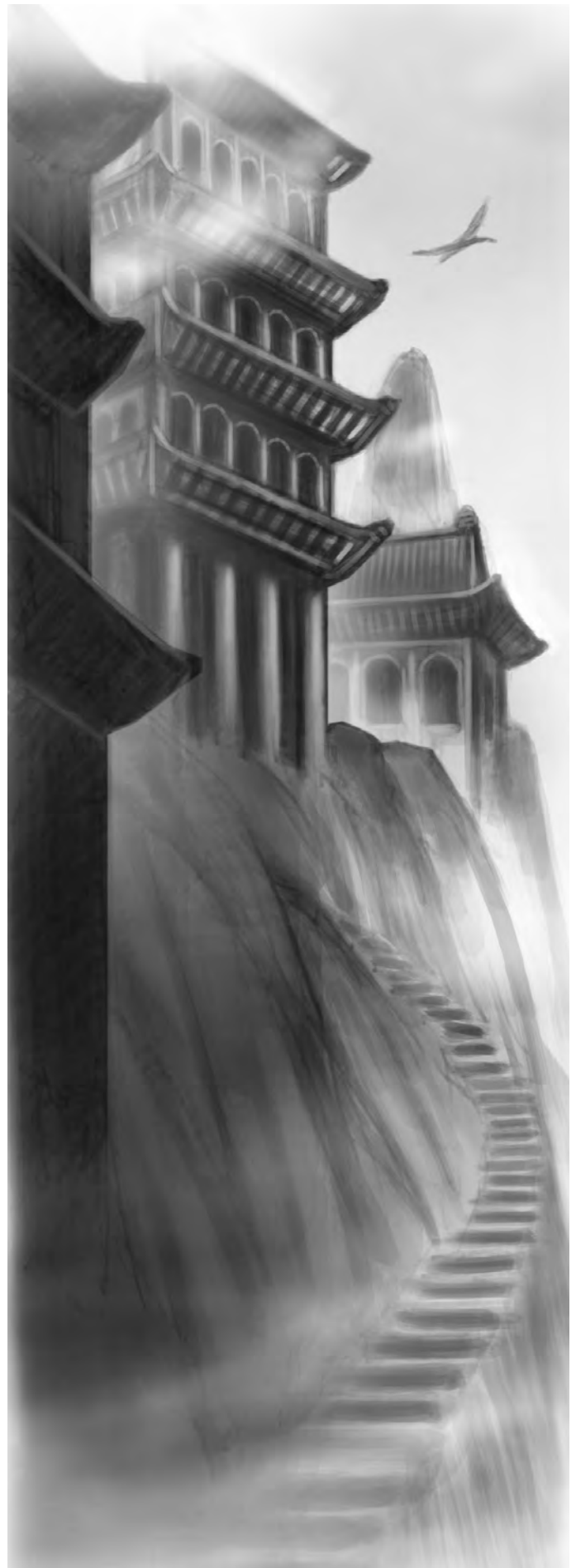
The Suzuki shogunate lasted only one hundred years. Even though their territory is vast, little of it is suitable for rice production, and they simply could not sustain the army needed to retain control of the empire.

## TAKAHASHI

DAIMYŌ: TAKAHASHI HAJIME

The Takahashi clan occupies the northeast corner of Tōsandō, which is home to the greatest of the five spiritual guardians, Hizuru, as well as several of the most sacred shrines and temples in Tsurukoku: the Temple of the Fire Crane, the Bridge of the East Wind and the Shrine of the Five Gates.

By taxing the steady stream of pilgrims flowing through their lands, the Takahashi have become extremely wealthy. However, as the most remote of the major clans, they are also the most vulnerable to invasion by outside forces. Therefore, they have taken great pains to maintain a diplomatic and military alliance with Umeda, their neighbors to the south.



## TANAKA

DAIMYŌ: TANAKA GAKU

The Tanaka, who control several mountain passes in Iwasama, are the second largest producers of jade. They have a smaller output than the Nakamura clan, but their jade is considered to be of a slightly higher quality.

## UMEDA

DAIMYŌ: UMEDA KAORU

As with the Takahashi, Umeda's lands in Tōsandō are far removed from the empire's political and population centers. Therefore they place great emphasis on alliances with their neighbors. Through centuries of diplomacy, they have managed to absorb a large number of smaller clans.

## WATANABE

DAIMYŌ: WATANABE NAOKO

The Watanabe clan's tiny han in Kawao produces about 5% of Tsurukoku's jade. Their Shiratama River, which carries pebbles and boulders of white jade with it as it flows down from the peak of Mt. Ina, has been coveted by the Nakamura clan, their neighbors to the west, for centuries.

Their neighbors to the east, the Kurosawa clan, are their allies, due to a marriage that occurred between cousins of the two families in the distant past. They receive military aid from the Kurosawa to help defend their borders against the Nakamura clan's constant incursions.



## YAMAMOTO

DAIMYŌ: YAMAMOTO MAMORU

Yamamoto is the largest producer of iron ore in Tsurukoku. Their lands in Tetsumoto are riddled with mines and forges, and their artisans are generally considered the most skilled. Because they have traditionally supplied other clans with weapons and armor, the Yamamoto attempt to maintain a neutral political stance.

## MONASTERIES

Monasteries are a fixture of Tsurukokan life. They provide sanctuary to the poor and oppressed, military prowess for the local daimyō and spiritual counseling to all.

While individual beliefs vary somewhat between different temples, all Tsurukokan monasteries have one thing in common: martial arts. Monks have developed their martial arts expertise as a defense against aggressors' attacks, as a means to promote health and as a mental and physical discipline.

## BYAKUREN-IN

FOUNDER: HASU AKITOMI

For millennia, the Byakuren temple has been the guardian of the Daruma's sacred teachings, both physically, as the caretakers of the few scrolls directly attributed to his hand, and spiritually, as the successors to the great master's first disciple.

The temple's monks strive to be shining examples of a life of virtue. They are vegetarian, take a vow of nonviolence and strive to illuminate the path to enlightenment for all who they meet.

## GYOKURO-JI

FOUNDER: SEN RISHI

The monks of Gyokuro monastery are masters of the tea ceremony. The hours of meditation and martial training they engage in every day are intended to steady both their mind and their body, so that they may perform the tea ceremony with the utmost grace.

Because of the importance of the tea ceremony in imperial culture, the Gyokuro monks are often tasked by the Mikado to act as his personal diplomats and guardians.

## SILENT LAKE

FOUNDER: ZENIGAME KAMIKO

Zenigame Kamiko was born into a samurai family, but took on the life of an ascetic monk on her sixteenth birthday. She abandoned her family name and took on the title of "Zenigame," which is a type of pond turtle. Over the next 8 decades, she developed the defensive fighting style known as the Way of the Tortoise, authored over two hundred scrolls detailing the most efficient way to defeat the forces of Yomi and founded the Temple of the Silent Lake.

The Order of the Silent Lake is dedicated to ridding the world of taint.

## THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

FOUNDER: KADONOMARO

The Temple of Thunder and Lightning was founded by Kadonomaro as a means to instruct others in his art. He was a



firm believer in combat effectiveness, stripping his art of any maneuvers that were the least bit gentle.

As a result, many of Tsurukoku's best warriors have made the pilgrimage to this temple to learn the secrets of the Way of the Storm.

## NINJA GUILDS

Most ninja guilds are headed by a single *jōnin*, or high ninja. Acting as the *jōnin*'s lieutenants are several *chūnin*, or middle ninja. Reporting to the *chūnin* are the majority of guild members, known as *genin*, or low ninja.

The rules by which ninja guilds operate are called *ninpō*. While each guild has its own rules and codes, all *ninpō* share a prohibition against revealing the secrets of the guild or of the daimyō that employs them.

Ninja very rarely leave their guilds. Even those that retire or take up the life of a monk are still considered to be a valuable part of the ninja family. In rare cases, and only with the permission of her *jōnin*, a ninja may sever all ties with her guild to pursue another life.

Those that leave a guild without permission are referred to as *nukenin*, or fugitive ninja, and are hunted down and killed.

### JADE FIST

JŌNIN: YASUDA MITSURUGI

#### DESCRIPTION

The Jade Fist ninja guild is the foremost trafficker of tainted objects in Tsurukoku. They are rivals with the Kiriko-shū and Senryu-shu guilds, since both operate primarily within Itō city.

#### GAME INFORMATION

Jade Fist ninja are shrewd negotiators and skilled burglars. They focus on the following skills: Diplomacy, Disguise, Sense Motive and Sleight of Hand.

### KIRIKO-SHŪ

JŌNIN: "HITOKIRI" ODA

#### DESCRIPTION

The Mist Tiger guild is comprised of some of the most notorious assassins in Tsurukoku. Their ability to infiltrate well-guarded compounds is legendary.

#### GAME INFORMATION

Members of Kiriko-shū routinely take the Hide in Plain Sight feat in addition to focusing on the following skills: Disable Device, Notice, Sleight of Hand and Stealth.

### ONIYURI-SHŪ

JŌNIN: SHIZUHATA YUMI

#### DESCRIPTION

The Tiger Lily ninja guild acts as the eyes and ears of the Shogun. They are a primarily female guild that specializes in infiltrating the courts of daimyōs throughout Tsurukoku.

#### GAME INFORMATION

The Oniyuri ninja place great emphasis on social interaction skills, specifically Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information and Sense Motive.

### RED HAND

JŌNIN: AKE JUNZŌ

#### DESCRIPTION

The Red Hand ninja operate primarily within the lands of Itō and Aono. Many are employed by the shogun as an army of secret enforcers.

#### GAME INFORMATION

The Red Hand operate more like an organized crime syndicate than ninja, using extortion, intimidation, blackmail and violence to enforce the will of the Shogun. They prefer feats that increase their combat prowess and focus on skills that make them effective bullies: Bluff, Craft (forgery), Gather Information and Intimidate.

## RELIGION

All Tsurukokan children learn about their relationship with the spirit world at a very early age. They learn about the spirits of the field that encourage the rice to grow, about the spirits of the heavens that bring good health and about the spirits of the dark realm that cause misery and misfortune. They learn about the animal spirits that govern the cycle of years and about the ancestral spirits that bring them daily fortune. Above all, though, they learn of the spirits that guard Tsurukoku, who protect their homeland from the lizard-riding barbarian raiders and the savage warlords of Xin.

What they learn, primarily, is that, in order to keep the spirits happy, and thus, secure good fortune, one needs to make offerings on a regular basis. The spirits of the field require a cup of sake when the rice is sown, the ancestral spirits require daily worship and the heavenly spirits require gifts of food and drink.

Consequently, religion plays an extremely important role in the daily lives of all Tsurukokans. The two major religions practiced in the Land of the Crane are Fenism, which concerns itself with the worship of the spirits of the land and the celestial realms, and Darumadō, which concerns itself with escaping the cycle of birth and rebirth through achieving enlightenment.

In addition, there are a number of mystical traditions and mystery cults that hold influence over portions of the population.

### FENISM

Fenism is the indigenous religion of Tsurukoku. It is a combination of animism, fertility rites and ancestor worship, with a heavy emphasis on interaction with the spirit world.

There are no moral absolutes in Fenism. Rather, Fenism is an optimistic faith, where the civilized races are thought to be fundamentally good, and misfortune is caused by exposure to the malevolent spirits and tainted energies of Yomi. Consequently, the purpose of most Fenist rituals is to keep away evil spirits by purification, prayers and offerings to the benevolent kami.

Kami are Fenist deities, though they are neither omnipotent nor omniscient. They can represent natural phenomena, abstract concepts or specific powerful historical figures. They may be guardians or troublemakers, but tend toward benevolence.

The centers of Fenist worship are numerous shrines, each of which is dedicated to a specific kami. Each shrine has a torii, a symbolic gateway, which separates the mortal realm from the spirit realm.

The four pillars of Fenist belief are:

### TRADITION

Fenists value history and tradition, for they form the cornerstone of stable society.

### NATURE

Fenist practitioners revere the natural world. Every natural creature or object is said to possess a spirit, and thus, is worthy of veneration.

### CLEANLINESS

Because misfortune is thought to be caused by exposure to Taint, Fenists place a lot of emphasis on both physical and spiritual cleanliness. Many Fenist rituals are designed to cleanse taint from the spirit and body.

### WORSHIP

Fenists believe that the multitude of spirits influence their daily lives, so great pains are taken to appease them. Worship of the natural, heavenly and ancestral spirits is paramount to a Fenist practitioner.

Fenists believe that when a sentient creature dies, its spirit travels to Yomi, the dark realm of the dead. There, it languishes in darkness and decay until the negative energies of Yomi finally weather it away.

As a result, death is considered tainted in Fenism, and consequently, there are no funeral rituals. Dead bodies are simply burned within hours of death (to prevent them from rising as undead).

## DARUMADŌ

Darumadō was founded twelve hundred years ago by a Xin monk known as Daruma. He taught that death is not simply the end of one's existence – that there exists a cycle of birth and rebirth that perpetuates one's spirit.

He further taught that suffering is not caused simply by the tainted energies of Yomi, but by one's own behavior. Through negative actions, one builds up a cosmic debt, known as *gō*,

that one must repay in future lives, and, through positive action, one could improve one's station in subsequent lives. For example, an untouchable could be reborn as a farmer, or a samurai could elevate himself to a daimyō.

Though many peasants would gladly trade their lives for that of a samurai, even nobles experience loss, sadness and pain. The ultimate teaching of Darumadō is the idea that one can ultimately escape the cycle of birth and rebirth entirely and join the spirits of Takama no Hara, the high plain of heaven.

Darumists believe that through increasing one's spiritual power, one can achieve enlightenment, thereby leaving the bonds of the moral world behind. It is this desire to achieve spiritual perfection that fills the monasteries of Tsurukoku. There, the ascetic lifestyle, constant meditation, and Darumist teachers are thought to hone the spirit.

## REACHING ENLIGHTENMENT

Any creature that accumulates 20 levels (in any role or combination of roles) or advances 20 levels beyond a "typical" member of his or her race is considered to have achieved enlightenment.

## ONMYŌDŌ

Onmyōdō is a mystical tradition concerned with maintaining the balance and harmony of the five elements (earth, metal, fire, water, and wood).

Onmyōji, practitioners of onmyōdō, learn to control the ebb and flow of the five elements in a concrete manner. They learn to shape the world around them through their knowledge of how the elements interact.

## SHUGENDŌ

Shugendō is an animistic mystery cult that venerates the natural world. Unlike Fenism, shugendō teaches that all spirits are part of a greater reality, known as *shinnyo*, which encompasses the entirety of existence. They also believe that it is only through self-imposed limitations that people see a distinction between their own spirits and the ultimate reality that is shinnyo.

The goal of a shugenja is to, through ascetic practices, achieve *shugen* – the mastery over his own spiritual energy that will allow him to break down the barriers of perception that prevent him from becoming one with the whole.

## CULT OF THE GREAT BEAR

Kimun Kamuy, the Great Bear, is the spirit worshipped by the Ainu. He provides them with food and clothing by sending them bear to hunt, and it is he who will take them bodily to Kamuy Moshir, the Land of the Gods, when their time in the mortal realm is at an end.

The cultists of the Great Bear worship bears in all forms. They keep bear idols, wear bearskins as clothing and give thanks to Kimun Kamuy when eating bear flesh.

## COSMOLOGY

Beyond the world of mortals lies the Celestial Realms: planes of existence where spirits and gods dwell.

### TAKAMA NO HARA

Takama no Hara is the spirit world where the kami dwell. Spirits of enlightened individuals ascend directly to Takama no Hara upon death, bypassing Yomi, the land of the dead.

*Amatsukami*, the gods of heaven, reside here. They are the guardians of the natural order, and it is their duty to ensure that the cosmos continues to function.

### YOMI

Yomi is the land of the dead. It is a realm of negative energy that gradually corrupts and consumes everything it comes in contact with, including the spirits of the deceased.

The Jashin, or dark gods, rule portions of Yomi. They strive to spread the corrupting energy of the land into the mortal realm through disease, decay and war.

### HIDDEN WORLD

Far beneath the surface of the known world lies the Hidden World, a realm of ancient horror and unspeakable madness. Its inhabitants remain trapped behind the Seven Seals of Tzu (created by a legendary Xin onmyōji), waiting for the day when they will be powerful enough to break the seals and lay waste to the world above.

### YAMIJI

The Black Road is an insubstantial realm of whispers and shadows where thought and movement become one. It is the land that lies behind and connects every shadow cast in the mortal realm. Yamiiji is largely uninhabited.



### KAMUY MOSHIR

The Land of the Gods is the realm where the great animal spirits are said to live, according to the Cult of the Bear. It is a land of unspoiled wilderness where man and beast coexist in peace, where hunger does not exist and where warfare is unnecessary.

## BACKGROUNDS

Tsurukoku is a nation of primarily two races, human and kitsune. Humans comprise about 70% and kitsune about 25% of the civilized population. The other 5% represents hanyō, harinezumi and kobolds.

### HUMAN

Humans are the most populous and adaptable of the civilized races. They not only exist, but thrive in every environment, and fill every role available in Tsurukoku.

#### PERSONALITY

Humans run the gamut of personality types: kind, mean, chivalrous, vindictive, predictable, disorganized and everything in between. Some are easily excitable and quick to take up arms, while others are calm and prefer to avoid conflict. Their only common characteristic is that they adapt easily to new

circumstances, often adopting and assimilating characteristics from every culture that they encounter.

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Humans stand, on average, about five to six and a half feet tall and weigh 120 to 200 lbs. Females tend to be shorter and lighter than males and typically have less muscle mass.

Humans live, on average, about 70 years, and their short life spans cause them to move and adapt quickly.

#### RELATIONS

As befits their extreme adaptability, humans get along well with all other races. They often adjust their own personalities and habits to accommodate companions of other races, and other races seem very comfortable having human companions.





## SOCIETY

Because of their ability to adapt to every environment and situation, humans dominate Tsurukokan society. They hold positions of power in almost every social and political structure. From a sociological standpoint, human society is society.

## ADVENTURERS

Humans become adventurers for almost as many reasons as there are adventurers: fame, fortune, faith, power, love, hate and happenstance are just a few of the motivating factors in a human's choice to live an adventurer's life.

### HUMAN BACKGROUND TRAITS

- **Ability Adjustments:** Humans gain a +1 bonus to one ability score of their choice and take a -1 penalty to one ability score of their choice.
- **Bonus Feat:** A human hero gains one bonus feat at 1st level out of the list of feats available for the hero's role.
- **Bonus Skill:** A human hero gains one bonus known skill at 1st level, in addition to those gained for the hero's role and Intelligence score.
- **Favored Feats:** Defensive Roll, Tough

## HANYŌ

Hanyō are the children of mortals and supernatural creatures (usually oni).

## PERSONALITY

Hanyō possess the same types of personality traits that normal humans do, but they tend toward extreme versions of them. The conflicting nature of their heritage often drives them toward chaotic behavior.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Hanyō are humanoid, with mostly human facial features. They have horns, and their most notable characteristic is a high body temperature which results in steam rolling from their mouths whenever they talk.

Hanyō stand, on average, a foot taller than their human counterparts and weigh 50 to 100 pounds more.

## RELATIONS

Hanyō are looked upon with suspicion and fear by others. They must overcome initial hostile attitudes wherever they travel, though kitsune are normally the most accommodating towards them. They are typically shunned by the barbaric kobolds.

## SOCIETY

Hanyō have no society of their own and must learn to survive in whatever society they are born into.

## ADVENTURERS

The chaotic personality of hanyō is often accompanied by an intense wanderlust. Some adventure to satisfy this drive, some adventure because they feel unwelcome in the society of their birth and some adventure to find their parents (often to take revenge).

### HANYŌ BACKGROUND TRAITS

- **Ability Adjustments:** None
- **Natural Weapon:** The hanyō's horns may be used to head-butt. They have a damage bonus of +2.
- **Elemental Ability:** The hanyō gains one of the following special abilities:

- **Earth:** The hanyō may burrow at a rate of 20 ft. She can tunnel through dirt, but not through rock. Hanyō cannot charge or run while burrowing. They do not leave behind tunnels other creatures can use, because the material they tunnel through fills in behind them.
- **Metal:** The hanyō has thick, metallic skin which confers a +1 natural armor bonus to Toughness.
- **Fire:** The hanyō gains the Elemental Resistance (Fire) supernatural power. Hanyō treat their total level as their adept level for this ability.
- **Water:** The hanyō can breathe underwater and gains a swim movement rate of 40 ft. The hanyō has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. She can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. She can use the run action while swimming, provided she swims in a straight line.
- **Wood:** The hanyō gains a prehensile tail and a brachiation movement rate of 30. When in dense forest, the hanyō can move through the treetops as easily as she can on solid land. She can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if distracted or endangered, and does not lose her dodge bonus to Defense while climbing.
- **Taint Resistance:** The hanyō's supernatural blood makes them immune to the detrimental effects of taint. They can still acquire a taint score and be affected by taint-based magic, but they do not apply their taint score as a negative modifier to their ability scores.
- **Favored Feats:** Body Control (hanyō treat their total level as their adept level for purposes of this ability)

## HARINEZUMI

Harinezumi are a race of short, nature-worshipping, anthropomorphic porcupines.

### PERSONALITY

Harinezumi are good-natured and even tempered. They have dedicated personalities, and when they set their minds to accomplishing a task, it is nearly impossible to dissuade them from completing it.

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Harinezumi stand about three feet tall (see the rules for **Small Heroes** in **Chapter 1** of *True20*), and for all intents and purposes, look like giant, bipedal porcupines. In contrast to their animal cousins, harinezumi have fully articulated hands, eyes that face toward the front and are able to speak the languages of other civilized races.

### RELATIONS

Because of their easygoing nature, harinezumi get along with nearly anyone they meet. As long as the creatures they interact with show a respect for the natural world, they are often willing to overlook behaviors that members of other races would find distasteful.

### SOCIETY

Harinezumi consider themselves stewards of the natural world, so they tend to congregate in isolated communities far from

civilization. There, they organize themselves into patriarchal tribes.

### ADVENTURERS

The combination of a reverence for the natural world and their dedicated personalities often finds harinezumi engaging on life-long quests to avenge the nature-spirits that they worship.

#### HARINEZUMI BACKGROUND TRAITS

- **Ability Adjustments:** +1 Wisdom, -1 Intelligence
- **Bonus Skill:** Harinezumi automatically gain the Survival skill.
- **Natural Armor:** Because of their thick skin and quills, harinezumi gain a +2 natural armor bonus to Toughness.
- **Favored Feats:** Familiar (harinezumi treat their total level as their adept level for purposes of this feat), Mind Over Body

## KITSUNE

Kitsune are a race of mischievous, shape-changing foxes.

### PERSONALITY

Kitsune are capricious, cunning, and curious creatures. While they are not generally malicious, they do enjoy playing pranks and derive a deep sense of satisfaction from watching others get their come-uppance. Kitsune almost always have some scheme in motion and always treat others as though they do, as well.

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The natural form for kitsune is that of a wolf-sized fox. They can, at will, also assume a humanoid fox/human hybrid form, which is the form they normally take when interacting with the other civilized races. In either form, their fur ranges from reddish-brown to a dull tan, to a dark grey. Their eyes are a deep amber color and have vertically slit pupils, like a cat.

In hybrid form, kitsune are, on average, about as tall and heavy as humans. Like humans, males usually have greater muscle mass and stand a few inches taller than females.

Kitsune have an extremely long lifespan, upwards of nine hundred years. Every century, a kitsune will grow another tail, and the most venerable members of the race can end up with nine.

### RELATIONS

Because of their tendency to treat anyone they meet with suspicion, kitsune often take a very long time to build trusting relationships. Consequently, the bonds they form tend to be unbreakable once established.

### SOCIETY

Despite their tendency toward mischief, kitsune have managed to fully integrate themselves into human society. Consequently, there are few isolated kitsune communities.

### ADVENTURERS

Kitsune have an insatiable appetite for new information and experiences, so much so that they will often work to generate new experiences when life does not provide them. Therefore, many kitsune take up the mantle of the adventurer in order to satiate this appetite, while others are forced into the life of adventure when they make things a little too interesting at home.

**KITSUNE BACKGROUND TRAITS**

- *Ability Adjustments:* +1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution
- *Alternate Form:* As a standard action, kitsune may change between animal and hybrid form. Any equipment they may be carrying remains on their person, though gear that fits tightly in one form may rip, tear, or become binding in the other form. For example, a loose necklace may make the transition from animal to humanoid unscathed, while a tight kimono worn while in humanoid form might stretch and tear when changing to the animal form. A kitsune retains all abilities and statistics when in this alternate form.
- *Natural Weapon:* When in fox form, the kitsune gains a natural bite attack, which has a damage bonus of +2.
- *Improved Speed:* When in fox form, the kitsune's base speed increases by 10 ft.
- *Favored Feats:* Body Control (kitsune treat their total level as their adept level for this power).

**KOBOLD**

Kobolds are outsiders to Tsurukoku, hailing from the Hordelands to the south of the Nagara River.

**PERSONALITY**

Kobolds are skittish, nervous, and generally high-strung. They are shrill and demanding, and have little patience for genteel society.

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Kobolds are small creatures and stand about two and a half to three feet tall (see the rules for **Small Heroes** in **Chapter 1** of *True20*). They have scaly skin, like reptiles, a short, non-

prehensile tail and yellow eyes. Most are slightly built, though it is considered a status symbol among kobolds to be somewhat rotund.

**RELATIONS**

Few people inside of Tsurukoku like kobolds. Their nervous demeanor makes many people uncomfortable, and their utter disregard for the customs of Tsurukokan society makes them a social liability.

**SOCIETY**

In the Hordelands, kobolds organize themselves into lizard-riding clans. Their society is one based on strength, and the strongest kobold (as often female as male) is considered the head of the clan for as long as he or she can hold onto power.

**ADVENTURERS**

Kobolds take up the life of an adventurer for many reasons. Some have been ostracized from their clan, some seek to gain power of their own, some adventure to bring glory to their own clan or to strengthen themselves for a possible return to the Hordelands.

**KOBOLD BACKGROUND TRAITS**

- *Ability Adjustments:* +1 Dexterity, -1 Strength
- *Bonus Feat:* Night Vision
- *Bonus Skill:* Kobolds automatically gain the Ride skill.
- *Natural Armor:* Because of their tough hide, kobolds gain a +1 natural armor bonus to Toughness
- *Light Sensitivity:* Kobolds are dazzled in bright sunlight or any equivalent illumination.
- *Favored Feats:* Rage, Tough

**HEROIC PATHS**

Each of the heroic paths detailed below serves as an example of a typical role found in Tsurukokan society. Each example assumes an Intelligence score of +0, and does not take into account extra skills or feats gained from a character's background.

**ADEPT PATHS**

The following heroic paths are appropriate for adepts in the Land of the Crane.

**ONMYŌJI**

Onmyōji are practitioners of the mystical tradition of onmyōdō. They study the interaction of the five elements (earth, fire, metal, wood, and water) and the forces of yin and yang, gaining power as they increase in knowledge.

Their knowledge gives them the ability to bend the elements to their will, though they strive to maintain the balance between them. In addition to their practical knowledge, onmyōji are often consulted for their oracular abilities.

Onmyōji rarely engage in melee combat, preferring to stand back and let loose with an elemental strike.

- *Qualities:* Key Ability (Intelligence)

- *Starting Skills:* Craft (origami), Concentration, Knowledge (supernatural), Sleight of Hand
- *Starting Feats:* Familiar, Earth, Fire, Metal, Plant or Water Shaping, Elemental Blast, Elemental Resistance

**SHINKAN**

Shinkan are Fenist priests, whose duty it is to act as a mediator between the mortal and spirit realm. They often train and serve at Fenist shrines and are well-versed in the sacred rites and rituals that are employed to curry favor with kami, the great spirits. Thus, they are often asked by the general populace to intercede in matters of health, wealth, luck, and any other aspect of life that the spirit world has influence over.

Shinkan gain their power from the spirits they serve and honor. As their influence in the spirit world increases, they become capable of wielding greater supernatural power.

Shinkan attempt to avoid physical combat as much as possible, preferring to negotiate with spirits to engage in melee for them.

- *Qualities:* Key Ability (Charisma)
- *Starting Skills:* Bluff, Craft (shodō), Diplomacy, Knowledge (religion)



- **Starting Feats:** Ghost Touch, Imbue Item, Spirit Senses, Summon Spirit

## SHUGENJA

The mountain-dwelling ascetics known as shugenja are followers of the mystical tradition of shugendō. They adhere to their solitary and ascetic lifestyle in order to develop their own ki, or spiritual power.

Shugenja are famed for their healing and divination abilities. Additionally, they are often hired to ward off evil spirits and fight malevolent oni.

Shugenja generally do not seek out physical combat, though they do train in the martial arts for those occasions when they cannot avoid it.

- **Qualities:** Key Ability (Wisdom)
- **Starting Skills:** Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature), Medicine, Survival
- **Starting Feats:** Animal Empathy, Cure, Improved Strike, Visions

## EXPERT PATHS

The following heroic paths are appropriate for experts in the Land of the Crane.

### NINJA

Ninja fill a variety of roles: spy, assassin, saboteur, guerilla warrior and crime lord. While they are capable combatants, their greatest strength is the element of surprise.

In addition to having their own agendas, ninja guilds are often employed by daimyō for the purpose of fighting or spying on other clans.

Ninja prefer weapons that allow them to strike from the shadows. They employ a versatile short sword known as a *ninja-tō*, which is about the same length as a *wakizashi*, but has a straight blade. They train with the *manriki-gusari*, *shuriken* and any other weapons that are easily concealable or disguisable.

- **Qualities:** Good save (Fortitude)
- **Starting Skills:** Acrobatics, Bluff, Climb, Disable Device, Disguise, Gather Information, Notice, Stealth
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), Evasion, Sneak Attack, Weapon Training

### URANAI-SHI

Uranai-shi are itinerant fortune tellers who travel Tsurukoku selling prophecies and spinning tall tales. They occasionally resort to thievery to support themselves, but their powers of observation and persuasion usually allow them to pick the easiest target and talk their way out of trouble when they do get caught.

In polite society, uranai-shi are regarded as little more than an amusement. Their nature as jacks-of-all-trades, though, often makes them valuable allies when diplomacy fails.

Uranai-shi pick up a little bit of martial arts experience during their travels and tend to employ weapons that are inexpensive or easy to make, like the *bō*, *sai* or *kama*. If they wear armor, it is usually cobbled together from old and discarded suits.



- **Qualities:** Good save (Will)
- **Starting Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Knowledge (streetwise), Notice, Perform (oratory), Sleight of Hand
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), Fascinate, Suggestion, Well-Informed

### DARUMIST MONK

Darumist monks fill the monasteries of Tsurukoku. They train in the art of unarmed combat as a way to gain the stamina necessary for prolonged meditation, and they learn to focus their ki to accomplish extraordinary tasks.

Throughout history, they have had to employ their fighting arts in the defense of their monasteries and their fellow worshippers. Their main goal, however, has always been to achieve enlightenment.

Each Darumist monastery teaches a different style of martial art. Some focus on swift movement, some on power, some on misdirection and some on turning an opponent's strength against him. In each case, the monks learn to defend themselves without wearing armor.

- **Qualities:** Good save (Reflex)
- **Starting Skills:** Acrobatics, Climb, Concentration, Escape Artist, Jump, Knowledge (religion), Medicine, Sense Motive
- **Starting Feats:** Canny Dodge, Improved Strike, Mind Over Body, Slow Fall

## WARRIOR PATHS

The following heroic paths are appropriate for warriors in the Land of the Crane.

### LIZARD-RIDER

The lizard-riding, kobold barbarians of the Hordelands occasionally venture into Tsurukoku for various reasons. Some cross the Nagara River as part of a raiding party, while others are fleeing their own clan. In any case, the lizard-riders are some of the best mounted combatants in Tsurukoku.

Rogue lizard-riders can sometimes find employment teaching their unique style of mounted combat or as part of a daimyō's cavalry.

Lizard-rider tactics focus on mounted archery (and mounted combat in general), since they are often ill-equipped when it comes to armor and melee weapons. Consequently, they tend to avoid direct hand-to-hand combat.

- **Starting Skills:** Handle Animal, Notice, Ride, Survival
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), Mounted Archery, Vehicular Combat (Ride), Weapon Training

### SAMURAI

The samurai is the consummate professional warrior. He serves at the behest of, and is paid for his services by, a daimyō. Their training in martial arts is an end unto itself, as their goal is to serve their master by being as effective a warrior as possible.

Samurai are considered minor nobility in Tsurukokan society. While they live to serve the major nobility, they are elevated high

above the common peasantry, and, in fact, are empowered by the Mikado to summarily kill any peasant who may offend them in any way.

The samurai trains in a number of unarmed and armed arts, but his signature weapons are the katana and wakizashi, collectively known as a *daishō*. While other warriors may carry one of the blades, only a samurai is permitted to wear a *daishō*.

- **Starting Skills:** Diplomacy, Knowledge (nobility), Intimidate, Sense Motive
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (heavy), Attack Focus (katana), Quick Draw, Weapon Training

### YAMAMORI

Yamamori, or “guardians of the mountains,” are a group of ascetic, mountain-dwelling warriors. Like shugenja, they follow the mystic tradition of shugendō, but unlike shugenja, they focus on martial training as a means to spiritual growth. Because of their tendency toward a solitary existence, yamamori usually find it necessary to learn the arts of stealth and survival.

Yamamori occasionally find it useful to fight alongside ninja when their goals coincide, and their choice of tactics complements each other. They are notoriously disdainful of samurai, since the professional warriors do not have spiritual fulfillment as their ultimate goal.

Yamamori train with a multitude of weapons, including bow, yari and katana, but their weapon of choice is the naginata.

- **Starting Skills:** Concentration, Notice, Stealth, Survival
- **Starting Feats:** Armor Training (light), Track, Trackless, Weapon Training

## ALLEGIANCES AND HONOR

One of the defining characteristics of Tsurukokan society is a deeply ingrained sense of duty. Every Tsurukokan feels as though she is part of a larger community, and that she is in some way responsible for the success or failure of that community. The ties that each Tsurukokan feels toward her community are known as allegiances. By acting in a way that advances the cause or improves the standing of her chosen allegiance, a character gains Honor.

### ALLEGIANCES

In the Land of the Crane, A character may only have one allegiance. While a character may work closely with multiple groups and organizations, she is ultimately responsible only to one. Some rare characters, like a *rōnin* (a samurai who has either lost or abandoned his master), may not have an allegiance, but these unfortunate souls have limited options for regaining Honor.

In order to acquire an allegiance, a character must perform a deliberate action, such as swearing fealty to a daimyō, taking the vows of a monastic order or being initiated into the study of a mystic tradition. By contrast, a character may renounce an allegiance at any time, simply by declaring her desire to do so.

If a character ever intentionally performs an action to harm her allegiance or its standing in the community, the Narrator may immediately strip her of the benefits of said allegiance, including the opportunity to gain Honor.

The community to which a character pledges allegiance may be clearly defined or somewhat abstract, but the effects of having the allegiance are the same. The list of allegiances below is by no means exhaustive, and the Narrator is encouraged to develop allegiances that are appropriate to his campaign.

#### CLAN

Most characters in Tsurukoku belong to one of several clans, headed by a daimyō (a hereditary warlord). These characters owe their allegiance to the daimyō, and, ultimately, to the Mikado, the Emperor of Tsurukoku. They work to bring honor to their clan, and their actions affect the reputation of the entire clan throughout Tsurukoku.

#### ORGANIZATION

Some Tsurukokans belong to organizations that are defined by a specific purpose and are not under the control of a daimyō - for example, a ninja clan or a monastery. These people must normally maintain an allegiance to this organization in order to receive its full benefits.

## SPIRITS

Tsurukokans are heavily influenced by their proximity to the spirit world. They pay tribute to the spirits of their ancestors as well as the spirits of the natural world. In addition, some may hold a specific allegiance to individual or groups of spirits, such as the spirits of Thunder and Lightning or the Frost Lords.

## PHILOSOPHY

A Tsurukokan may subscribe to a particular philosophy or religion. For example, an onmyōji would have an allegiance to the mystical tradition of onmyōdō, and a shinkan would have an allegiance to Fenism.

## HONOR

Conviction is known as Honor in Tsurukoku and represents the glory and goodwill that a character acquires for her allegiance. Except for regaining spent points, which is detailed below, Honor functions identically to Conviction.

## REGAINING HONOR

The bond between a character and his allegiance fuels his spirit, which is what allows him to regain a point of honor each

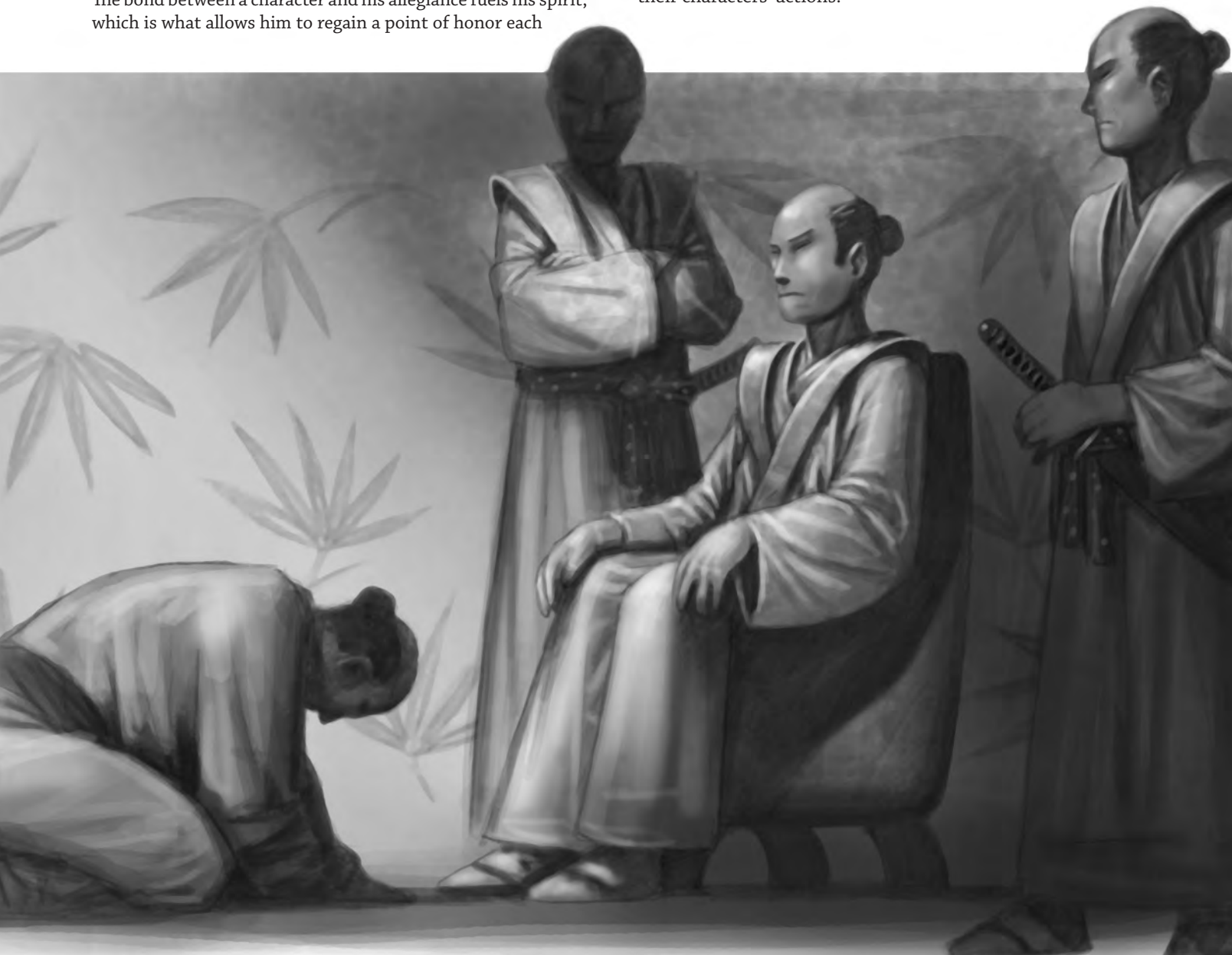
day. Heroes without allegiances are considered dishonored and cannot regain honor in this manner.

## OPTION: LOSING HONOR

If the Narrator wishes for a more complex system of managing Honor, he may choose to penalize characters by removing points of Honor if they perform an action that unintentionally harms their allegiance, or if through their inaction, they cause harm to come to their allegiance. In this case, they have dishonored, or brought dishonor upon their allegiance.

In addition, when using this option, a character that has dishonored his allegiance within the past 24 hours is not eligible to receive the point of Honor that characters normally regain each day.

This option requires a high level of trust between the Narrator and players, however, because Narrators often take great delight in thrusting characters into morally ambiguous situations. However, it has the potential to reduce reckless behavior and cause players to more carefully consider the consequences of their characters' actions.





# SKILLS AND FEATS

Tsurukoku has a rich tradition of craftsmanship and artistry that is reflected in new rules for masterwork items. The unique mechanics of Tsurukokan cosmology also provide the ability for characters to acquire two special feats.

## SKILLS

The following are new rules for the skills in the Land of the Crane.

### CRAFT

Some of the most common Tsurukokan crafts are:

- **Irezumi:** The art of tattooing has a long and rich tradition in Tsurukoku. Images of dragons, oni and koi adorn the bodies of many samurai, and images of cherry blossoms adorn the bodies of many courtesans.
- **Origami:** The production of items and figures by the folding of paper is practiced by young children, adults and masters of supernatural forces alike.
- **Shodō:** The way of writing is considered one of the foundational skills for all learned and enlightened individuals. At higher skill levels, shodō is considered an art unto itself.



- **Ukiyo-e:** Woodblock printmaking is exceptionally popular, and ukiyo-e artists produce portraits, landscapes and battle scenes that hang in the homes of thousands.

### MASTERWORK ITEMS

A superior craftsman may produce items that are of even higher quality than normal masterwork items. Weapons and armor of superior quality are sought after by the wealthiest and most powerful members of society. The five levels of masterwork are:

- **Masterwork:** A masterwork item is especially well made and a fine example of the craft used to produce it. Ordinary artisans are capable of occasionally producing items of this quality.
- **Improved Masterwork:** An artisan with a natural talent can produce one of these items with a dedicated effort.
- **Greater Masterwork:** Only artisans who are dedicated masters of their craft are capable of producing items of this quality.
- **Advanced Masterwork:** Very few craftsmen can produce items of this quality. Their works are commissioned by the very wealthy and sought out by the very powerful.
- **Imperial Masterwork:** Craftsmen capable of producing items of this caliber are often employed directly by the Mikado or Shogun, and are prevented from producing items for anyone else.

Each level of masterwork increases the Difficulty and cost of creating the item by +5. For most items, each level of masterwork provides a +1 bonus when used. See the Equipment section for details on masterwork weapons and armor.

### KNOWLEDGE

In addition to the standard Knowledge specialties found in **Chapter Two: Skills** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*, scholars in Tsurukoku study:

- **Nature:** The ecology of Tsurukoku's varied flora and fauna, and how to live in harmony with them. This specialty replaces the science knowledge specialties in *True20*, since it represents the extent of scientific knowledge in Tsurukoku.
- **Nobility:** The customs and intricacies of the kuge, daimyō and samurai.
- **Philosophy:** The study of the wisdom of great philosophers and sages. This specialty replaces the Theology and Philosophy specialty from *True20*, which is essentially divided into this specialty and the Religion specialty.
- **Religion:** The rituals and liturgy of the major religions: Fenism and Darumadō. This specialty replaces the Theology and Philosophy specialty from *True20*.

## FEATS

The following are new feats available to characters in the Land of the Crane.

### MOUNTED ARCHERY (WARRIOR)

PREREQUISITE: VEHICULAR COMBAT.

You are used to launching arrows at your foes while on horseback. The penalty you take when using a ranged weapon

while mounted is halved: -2 instead of -4 if your mount is taking a double move, and -4 instead of -8 if your mount is running.

### KIDŌ (ADEPT)

You can empower your supernatural powers with the corrupting, black energy of Yomi. By fueling your power with this tainted energy, you gain a +5 bonus to your power check, and you increase the Difficulty of the saving throw against the power by +2. Powers that operate automatically or do not provide for saving throws do not receive the corresponding benefit from “the way of the oni.”

Each time you use a power in this manner, you must make a Fortitude save with a Difficulty of 20. If you fail, you acquire 1 point of taint.

### SPIRIT SENSES (ADEPT)

You can sense and observe objects and beings in the spirit world by using your normal senses. You can make Notice checks with regard to things that exist in the spirit world, including spirits themselves.

This feat does not allow you to manipulate features of the spirit world, nor does it give you the ability to communicate with spirits.

## EQUIPMENT

The Land of the Crane has a wide variety of weapons, armor, adventuring gear, goods and services that are specific to it. Some of these goods play an important role in its culture, while others are simply the result of a different take on everyday items.

The listed Cost is the purchase Difficulty of the Wealth check to acquire the item.

## CURRENCY

Tsurukoku employs a traditional form of currency in addition to barter. The following are the forms of currency that adventurers are likely to run into.

### KOKU

A quantity of rice sufficient to feed one person for one year. While not technically a currency, the koku measures land productivity, and therefore, a daimyō's wealth. Samurai are often paid in koku, which they then convert to currency.

### CRANE

A square of paper imprinted with the Mikado's seal, a flying crane. This is the standard unit of currency.

### MONKEY

A copper coin imprinted with the Mikado's seal on one side and a monkey on the other. The coin is scored down the middle so that it may be broken in two.

### BROKEN MONKEY

One half of a monkey coin - sometimes called a “Tail”.

## OPTION: PHYSICAL WEALTH

While the True20 system uses an abstract wealth system, a Narrator may wish to represent a character's wealth in concrete terms. In that case, the currencies described above relate to each other in the following manner. A koku is the standard of currency, and a crane is worth 1/10 of a koku. A monkey is worth 1/10 of a crane, and a broken monkey is worth 1/2 of a monkey.

## WEAPONS

Tsurukokan warriors place enormous emphasis on the quality of their weapons. Master craftsmen earn reputations that can rival that of the adventurers themselves, as the quality of their weapons is repeatedly displayed. Acquiring a weapon forged by a famous craftsman can be an adventure in and of itself.

## WEAPON QUALITIES

Tsurukokan swords are measured in *shaku*, which is very close in length to the *foot*. There are three length classifications: blades that are less than one shaku are known as *tantō*, those that are between one and two are known as *shōtō* and those that are longer than two are known as *daitō*. Unless specified otherwise, all Tsurukokan blades are single edged.

## MELEE WEAPONS

### BŌ

These wooden or bamboo staves are generally six shaku in length. The quality of bō varies widely, and they can be found in many different



## MELEE WEAPONS

| Weapon                 | Cost | Damage | Critical | Range Increment | Size   | Damage Descriptor     |
|------------------------|------|--------|----------|-----------------|--------|-----------------------|
| <b>Simple Weapons</b>  |      |        |          |                 |        |                       |
| Bō                     | –    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Large  | Bludgeoning           |
| Bokuto                 | 2    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Medium | Bludgeoning           |
| Jō                     | –    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Medium | Bludgeoning           |
| Kama                   | 3    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Small  | Slashing              |
| Nunchaku               | 2    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Small  | Bludgeoning           |
| Sai                    | 4    | +1     | 20/+3    | 10 ft.          | Small  | Bludgeoning           |
| Tantō                  | 4    | +1     | 19-20/+3 | 10 ft.          | Tiny   | Piercing              |
| Tonfa                  | 2    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Small  | Bludgeoning           |
| Unarmed                | –    | +0     | 20/+3    | –               | Tiny   | Bludgeoning           |
| Yari                   | 7    | +3     | 20/+4    | –               | Large  | Piercing              |
| <b>Martial Weapons</b> |      |        |          |                 |        |                       |
| Katana                 | 14   | +4     | 19-20/+3 | –               | Medium | Slashing              |
| Kunai                  | 2    | +1     | 20/+4    | –               | Tiny   | Piercing              |
| Kusarigama             | 9    | +2     | 20/+3    | –               | Large  | Slashing              |
| Naginata               | 10   | +4     | 20/+4    | –               | Large  | Slashing              |
| Ninja-tō               | 9    | +2     | 20/+4    | –               | Small  | Slashing/<br>Piercing |
| Nodachi                | 16   | +5     | 19-20/+3 | –               | Large  | Slashing              |
| Tessen                 | 9    | +0     | 20/+3    | –               | Small  | Bludgeoning           |
| Tetsubō                | 8    | +4     | 20/+4    | –               | Large  | Bludgeoning           |
| Wakizashi              | 9    | +2     | 19-20/+3 | –               | Small  | Slashing              |

forms, from sticks picked up from the side of the road to intricately crafted works of art. Bō can be used to attack both those 10 feet away and adjacent foes.

### BOKUTŌ

These wooden practice swords are carved in the same size and shape as a normal katana. They are used primarily by beginning students, as a safe and inexpensive alternative to a real blade.

### JŌ

These wooden or bamboo staves are half the length of a full bō. They can only be used to attack adjacent opponents.

### KAMA

Considered a peasant's weapon (and thus used extensively by monks), kama are sickles which have a straight wooden handle and a gently curved, metal blade. They are typically used to cut weeds and harvest grain.

### KATANA

One of the daitō class of swords, the katana is the most common blade used by Tsurukokan warriors. It is a curved, single-edged sword, and is constructed with a special steel-folding technique. It is properly worn with the cutting edge up, and while it can be wielded properly one-handed, a two-handed grip is most common.

The katana is considered the soul of a warrior, and great value is placed on acquiring and maintaining the sword. Additionally,

a complex system of etiquette revolves around how the katana is displayed and worn. For example, when encountering another warrior, placing the sword in a position that is easy to draw from implies distrust. By contrast, wearing or displaying the sword in a manner that prevents a quick draw is a sign of friendship and diplomacy.

### KUNAI

This straight, double-edged tantō is little more than a flattened and sharpened iron nail. Used almost exclusively by ninja, the kunai is easy to manufacture and conceal. Because it is fully metal, it can also be used as a climbing spike or substitute tent peg. You gain a +4 bonus to Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal a kunai on your body.

### KUSARIGAMA

This weapon consists of a kama attached to a metal chain, with a heavy iron weight at the other end. The weight and chain are typically used to bind or disarm an opponent, at which point the wielder can follow up with the kama. With a kusarigama, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

### NAGINATA

These pole-arms are used extensively by yamamori and female samurai. The wooden shaft is typically constructed to have the same length as the wielder's height, and the curved metal blade is between two and three shaku in length. The naginata can strike opponents 10 feet away, but it can't be used to damage adjacent foes. If you use a



## RANGED WEAPONS

| Weapon          | Cost | Damage | Critical | Range Increment | Size  | Damage Descriptor  |
|-----------------|------|--------|----------|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| Simple Weapons  |      |        |          |                 |       |                    |
| Shuriken        | 1    | +1     | 20/+3    | 20 ft.          | Tiny  | Piercing, Autofire |
| Martial Weapons |      |        |          |                 |       |                    |
| Daikyū          | 16   | +3     | 20/+4    | 100 ft.         | Large | Piercing           |
| Hankyū          | 13   | +2     | 20/+4    | 60 ft.          | Large | Piercing           |
| Manriki-gusari  | 6    | +1     | 20/+3    | 10 ft.          | Small | Bludgeoning        |

ready action to set a naginata against a charge, you deal +3 additional damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

**NINJA-TŌ**

This single-edged shōtō is the primary weapon of the ninja. It has a straight blade, unlike a wakizashi, and is typically worn strapped to the back. It often has a hollow hilt, where the ninja can store shuriken, blinding powder or other equipment. The ninja-tō is used as a piercing weapon as well as a slashing weapon, due to the close quarters combat ninja typically engage in.

**NODACHI**

The longest of the daitō, the nodachi resembles a very long katana and is used by samurai in the field to take down mounted riders. Because of its length, it is carried strapped to the back, though it is too long to draw from that position. It is not, therefore, possible to Quick Draw a nodachi.

**NUNCHAKU**

This weapon is comprised of two sections of hardwood connected by a chain or cord. The twirling motion is often found distracting by opponents, and the reach of the weapon is easy to underestimate. Therefore, nunchaku grant a +2 bonus to Bluff checks made to feint in combat.

**SAI**

These iron weapons are derived from an agricultural tool used to create furrows in the earth. They most closely resemble an unsharpened dagger, with two blunt projections attached to the handle. Skilled users can trap the blade of a sword between the projections, and with a strong twist, may even snap it. Sai grant a +2 on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

**TANTŌ**

These knives or short-swords are carried by a wide variety of Tsurukokans. Along with the wakizashi, they are considered a samurai's sidearm and could be used in battle if he lost or broke his katana. You get a +2 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal a tantō on your body.

**TESSEN**

See the entry in the **Armor** section.

**TETSUBŌ**

This special bō is made from hardwood (generally oak) and covered in iron bands and spikes. It is extremely heavy, and therefore is only used by the strongest of warriors. Oni are

also known to commonly carry the tetsubō. Like a traditional bō, it can be used to attack those 10 feet away as well as those who are adjacent.

**TONFA**

See the entry in the **Armor** section.

**WAKIZASHI**

This shōtō resembles the katana, but has a thinner blade, which boosts its cutting power somewhat. While it is used by a wide variety of warriors, when worn together with the katana, the pair of swords is known as a *daishō*, which is an exclusive privilege of samurai.

**YARI**

The straight-headed spear is commonly used by foot soldiers and samurai. It consists of a durable wooden shaft, at least six shaku in length, and a straight, double-edged, steel blade, half a shaku long, affixed to the top. You can strike opponents 10 feet away with a yari, but you can't use it against an adjacent foe. If you use a ready action to set a yari against a charge, you deal +3 additional damage on a successful hit against a charging character.

## RANGED WEAPONS

**DAIKYŪ**

This wooden longbow is designed to be used on foot and while mounted.

**HANKYŪ**

This wooden shortbow is designed to be used on foot and while mounted.

**MANRIKI-GUSARI**

This throwing-chain, used primarily to entangle opponents, is a favorite of ninja. It is a chain three shaku in length, with weights at both ends. If the manriki-gusari hits, the target must make a Reflex save (Difficulty 14). A failed save means that the target is entangled. See the **Condition Summary** in **Chapter 6** of *True20* for the effects of entanglement. You get a +2 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal a manriki-gusari on your body.

**SHURIKEN**

These throwing daggers are a favorite of both ninja and samurai. They are easily concealable and are used mainly to distract or intimidate an enemy. Shuriken can be thrown in groups (making

them autofire weapons). Although they are thrown weapons, shuriken do not add the thrower's Strength bonus to damage, due to their lightness. You get a +8 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to conceal shuriken on your body.

## MASTERWORK WEAPONS

The following chart gives the bonuses and increase in cost for crafting a masterwork weapon. The cost is passed along to the consumer in the form of a correspondingly increased price.

| MASTERWORK WEAPONS |              |             |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|
|                    | Weapon Bonus | Weapon Cost |
| Masterwork         | +1           | +5          |
| Improved           | +2           | +10         |
| Greater            | +3           | +15         |
| Advanced           | +4           | +20         |
| Imperial           | +5           | +25         |

## ARMOR AND SHIELDS

As with weapons, armor-crafting is considered a highly revered skill. Master craftsmen are treated with great respect and reverence, even by the haughtiest of samurai.



## ARMOR

| Armor               | Cost | Toughness Bonus | Other Traits |
|---------------------|------|-----------------|--------------|
| Kote (light)        | 5    | +1              | Subtle       |
| Hara-ate (light)    | 12   | +2              | –            |
| Haramaki (medium)   | 11   | +4              | –            |
| Dōmaru (medium)     | 15   | +5              | –            |
| Ōyoroi (heavy)      | 21   | +7              | –            |
| Tōseigusoku (heavy) | 27   | +8              | –            |

### DŌMARU

This medium weight armor is constructed of leather and steel scales laced to a leather plate. Due to its construction, it fits the body more comfortably than the ōyoroi.

### HARAMAKI

This medium weight armor is similar to the dōmaru, but is slightly bulkier because it is intended for mass production.

### HARA-ATE

This armor consists of leather scales sewn to cloth and then sealed with a lacquer.

### KOTE

This armored sleeve is used by ninja and foot soldiers, as well as appearing as a component of heavier armors.

### TŌSEIGUSOKU

While this armor looks similar to the ōyoroi armor, it is constructed from solid steel and opens like a clamshell. It is extremely heavy, but offers incredible protection.

### ŌYOROI

This heavy, boxy suit is the archetypical samurai armor. It is constructed of leather and steel scales laced together, which hang from the shoulders. A full suit also includes kote, leg guards known as *suneate*, armored tabi and a helmet, known as a *kabuto*.

## SHIELDS

| Shields | Cost | Dodge Bonus | Blocking          |
|---------|------|-------------|-------------------|
| Tessen  | 9    | +1          | +1 on block rolls |
| Tonfa   | 2    | +1          | +1 on block rolls |

### TESSEN

This iron war fan, which is an actual folding silk fan with six to eight iron ribs, is used both as an offensive weapon and as a small shield. If you use your tessen as a weapon, you lose its Defense bonus until your next action (usually until the next round).

### TONFA

These wooden instruments, used to manipulate millstones, are often used as weapons by peasants and monks. They consist of two parts: a wooden handle with a knob and, perpendicular to the handle, a wooden shaft just under two shaku in length. Like the tessen, tonfa can be used defensively to block an opponent's strike. If you use your tonfa as a weapon, you lose its

Defense bonus until your next action (usually until the next round).

## MASTERWORK ARMOR

The following chart gives the bonuses and increase in cost for crafting masterwork armor. The cost is passed along to the consumer in the form of a correspondingly increased price.

| MASTERWORK ARMOR |                       |            |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------|
|                  | Armor Check Reduction | Armor Cost |
| Masterwork       | 1                     | +3         |
| Improved         | 2                     | +6         |
| Greater          | 3                     | +9         |
| Advanced         | 4                     | +12        |
| Imperial         | 5                     | +15        |

## GOODS AND SERVICES

From tea, to silk, to the tools of the ninja, a number of goods and services are unique to Tsurukoku.

### ADVENTURING GEAR

#### BLINDING POWDER

On a successful ranged attack (range increment 10), the victim of blinding powder must make a Fortitude save (Difficulty 15) or become blinded for one minute.

#### JADE

This precious stone is used extensively throughout Tsurukoku. It is carved into inkan, jewelry and objects d'art, and is also used to ward off the effects of taint.

#### KAMI

Paper plays an important role in Tsurukokan culture. The word for paper, kami, is the same one used for the great spirits that permeate the world. Kami is essential for o-fuda, the magical talismans created by shinkan, onmyōji and shugenja.

## CLOTHING

#### GETA

This traditional footwear consists of a wooden board called a *dai* that the foot rests on. A cloth thong passes between the big toe and the index toe. Two supporting wooden teeth are fastened to the underside of the dai and make a distinctive "clacking" sound when walking. Geta are the most common footwear worn by non-field-working peasants.

#### HAKAMA

This article of clothing covers the lower body and resembles a wide, pleated skirt. It is tied at the waist and falls approximately to the ankles. It is divided like trousers, but nearer the bottom of the garment. Hakama are worn over short kimono.

#### KIMONO

These are the traditional garments of Tsurukoku. They are T-shaped robes with a straight line, collars and full-length sleeves. The sleeves

## GOODS AND SERVICES

### ADVENTURING GEAR

| Item            | Cost |
|-----------------|------|
| Blinding Powder | 8    |
| Jade            | 10   |
| Kami            | 1    |

### CLOTHING

| Item                      | Cost |
|---------------------------|------|
| Geta                      | 1    |
| Hakama                    | 3    |
| Kimono (embroidered silk) | 7    |
| Kimono (silk)             | 5    |
| Kimono (washi)            | 2    |
| Obi                       | 1    |
| Shinobifuku               | 13   |
| Tabi                      | 0    |
| Waraji                    | 0    |
| Yukata                    | 3    |
| Zōri                      | 6    |

### FOOD

| Item | Cost |
|------|------|
| Rice | 10   |
| Sake | 12   |
| Tea  | 4    |

### GOODS

| Item  | Cost |
|-------|------|
| Inkan | 6    |
| Fude  | 1    |
| Silk  | 15   |
| Sumi  | 6    |
| Washi | 2    |

are extremely wide at the wrist, usually hanging between a foot and two feet. The robe is wrapped around the body, always with the left side over the right, and secured by a wide belt, called an obi, tied in the back. There are several lengths of kimono, but the most common is a long version that falls to the ankles. A short version, which falls to the thighs, is often worn under hakama.

#### OBI

These belts are used to fasten a kimono. They come in a wide variety of forms and styles, from foot-wide colored silk for the formal kimono of wealthy women to the thin washi used by peasants.

#### SHINOBIKUKU

This outfit, traditionally worn by ninja, is made up of split-toed tabi, special trousers that tie onto the body, a jacket with overlapping lapels tucked into the trousers, protective arm-and-hand sleeves and a scarf that serves as a mask and hood. The



outfit is made of strong, loose-fitting, dark-colored fabric. This gives the ninja freedom of movement and an ability to blend in with shadows. A shinobifuku gives the wearer a +4 bonus to Stealth checks made to hide in shadows.

### TABI

These traditional ankle-high, divided-toe socks are worn with both kimono and hakama. The split toe allows them to be worn with traditional footwear, like zōri or geta. Tabi are worn by both men and women. The most common color is white.

### WARAJI

These sandals are made from straw rope and are the standard footwear of field-working peasants and monks.

### YUKATA

This is a type of casual kimono that is usually worn after or around the bath.

### ZŌRI

These sandals are made from rice straw or lacquered wood, and are worn with a kimono for formal occasions.

## FOOD

### RICE

The staple of the Tsurukokan diet is measured in a quantity called the *koku*, the amount necessary to feed one person for one year, or approximately 5 bushels. All judgment of wealth is based on this one item.

### SAKE

If rice symbolizes the body of the Tsurukokan nation, this alcohol made from the fermented grains of rice is the symbolic lifeblood of its people. Sake is traditionally sold in casks.

### TEA

While sake is considered the most revered liquid in Tsurukokan society, tea is the most commonly consumed. It is sold in blocks large enough to provide a family of four with tea for a month.

## GOODS

### FUDE

Shodō, the way of writing, employs this bamboo and animal hair brush. Exotic animal hair carries a high premium, and masterwork brushes are often sought after by practitioners of the craft.

### INKAN

These seals, carved from jade or, less commonly, wood are used in place of a signature. Peasants are prohibited from using inkan, and thus, from ever signing an official document.

### SILK

The techniques used to make this fabric were imported from the Xin Empire. Silk is sold in 20 yard bolts.

### SUMI

This ink, used in the art of shodō, comes in stick form and must be mixed with water on a whetstone. It is traditionally black in color, though samurai are permitted the use of red ink.

### WASHI

This is a paper made from the bark of the mulberry tree that is thicker and tougher than that made from wood pulp. It is used in a number of forms, including clothing, upholstery and toys. It is used in the arts of origami, shodō (calligraphy) and ukiyo-e (printmaking).

## SUPERNATURAL ITEMS

Known as o-fuda, the predominant supernatural item in Tsurukoku is a talisman made from paper and inscribed with magical calligraphy. When o-fuda are activated (a standard action), they discharge the power they contain and then are rendered useless.

Creating o-fuda requires the Imbue Item feat as well as the power the o-fuda will contain. It has a cost of 10 + the o-fuda's bonus with the power, which cannot exceed its maker's bonus.

# SUPERNATURAL POWERS

The prevalence of spirits, the ability to access the celestial realms and the balance of the five elements all play an important role in the use of supernatural powers in Tsurukoku.

## MENTAL ABILITY SCORES

In Tsurukoku, each of the mental ability scores is related to a specific source of power.

Intelligence represents power gained through an understanding of how the forces of nature interact. A character that chooses intelligence as his key ability gains power from the knowledge of how to manipulate those forces.

Wisdom represents the focus and mastery of *ki*, the vital force that flows through all living things. A character that chooses wisdom as his key ability score produces supernatural effects through the power of his inner will.

Charisma represents an interaction with the spirit world. A character that chooses charisma as his key ability gains his powers as a gift from the spirits, and the more charismatic he is, the better the spirits favor him.

## ELEMENTAL POWERS

In the Land of the Crane, the five elements are Earth, Fire, Metal, Wood and Water. This slightly changes the way a few powers work. Add Metal Shaping and Plant Shaping to the list of possible prerequisites for the following powers: Elemental Aura, Elemental Blast, Elemental Resistance and Elemental Weapon.

## POWERS

The following powers are new to the Land of the Crane.

## METAL SHAPING

### FATIGUING

You can shape, damage and repair metal objects.

**Corrode** (Difficulty 15): You can damage metal objects with a thought. A targeted metal object suffers damage equal to half your Metal Shaping rank (rounded down) unless it succeeds on a Difficulty 15 Reflex save. Carried, worn or otherwise attended objects can use their possessor's saving throw, if it is better. Metallic creatures are not affected by this use of the power.

**Mending** (Difficulty 15): You can repair damaged metal objects. This requires you to touch the object and make a difficulty 15 Metal Shaping check. If you succeed, the object is restored to its full Toughness.

You may also attempt to heal metallic creatures with this power. In this case, you can treat your Metal Shaping power like the Cure power.

**Metalworking** (Difficulty 10): You can mold metal into any shape you wish. You can affect 1 cubic foot of metal. Each additional cubic foot increases the Difficulty by 1 (so at Difficulty 30 you can affect 20 cubic feet). The Narrator may require a Craft (metalworking) check to achieve precise results. You perform metalworking crafts in minutes instead of the hours of normal Craft projects. A complex project, which normally takes 24 hours, would therefore take 24 minutes.

## SHADOW WALK

### FATIGUING

You can enter the shadowy realm of Yamiji, the Black Road, where you can travel at an accelerated pace. You must have a shadow (or an area of shadowy illumination) big enough to step into and to step out of at your destination. The Narrator determines whether such a shadow exists.

You may bring other creatures with you, but the shadow you use as a gate to Yamiji must be big enough to allow the entire party egress at the same time. You also suffer the standard penalties to your fatigue save from affecting multiple subjects.

You move toward your destination at a movement rate of 10 miles. You can make a double move to move 20 miles in one round, but you cannot run along the Black Road. Once you reach your intended destination, you emerge onto solid ground in a space large enough to hold you and anyone you may have brought with you.

Your power check determines the accuracy of your navigation. The Narrator may place you anywhere within the listed radius from your intended target.

### SHADOW WALK ACCURACY

| Difficulty | Radius    |
|------------|-----------|
| 10         | 10 miles  |
| 15         | 1 mile    |
| 20         | 1000 feet |
| 25         | 100 feet  |
| 30         | 10 feet   |
| 35         | on target |



**Action:** Shadow Walk is a move action.

## SUMMON SPIRIT

### FATIGUING, MAINTENANCE

You can summon a spirit to aid or engage in combat for you. The spirit will remain with you for 1 round per rank in this power, until you stop maintaining the power, or until it is defeated or destroyed.

The Difficulty for summoning a spirit is 10 plus the intended level of the spirit. All spirits use the combat and saving throw progression for Warriors, have 6 points to distribute amongst their abilities and have the Improved Strike feat.

**Spirit Traits:** A summoned spirit is immune to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease effects, mind-influencing effects (including Heart Reading, Heart Shaping and any supernatural powers requiring mental contact) and the Imbue Unlife supernatural power. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless it also works on objects or is harmless). It is not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue or exhaustion. It cannot be healed and is immediately destroyed when reduced to "dying" status on the damage track. A spirit with the fast healing quality still benefits from that quality.

**Special Abilities:** When a spirit is summoned, you choose what type of spirit answers your call. The spirit may have one or more special abilities depending on what level it is.

## SUMMONING A SPIRIT

When summoning a spirit, you can choose its abilities from a menu of choices. You can always substitute two choices from a lesser menu for one of its given abilities. Multiple selections of the same menu choice do not stack unless the ability specifically notes that stacking is allowed.

Some menu choices grant a spirit the ability to use supernatural powers. All such powers have a power level equal to your rank in this power, and use the same mental ability that you do. Because it is immune to fatigue, it does not need to make a Fatigue save when using powers that normally require it. A spirit does not need to meet the prerequisites for a feat granted by a menu choice.

## SPIRIT MENU A

Spirits of level 1 to 7 have one trait from this menu.

- **Aggressive:** The spirit has the All-out Attack feat.
- **Cleave:** The spirit gains the Cleave feat.
- **Deflection:** The spirit gains a +1 bonus to Defense.
- **Fly:** The spirit has physical wings and a fly speed of 20 feet (average).
- **Improved Speed:** The spirit has the Improved Speed feat.
- **Elemental Resistance:** Choose one of the following energy types: Cold, Earth, Fire, Metal, Plant, Water or Wind. The spirit has the Elemental Resistance power of that energy type. Treat the spirit's level as its adept level for purposes of this power.
- **Swim:** The spirit is streamlined and shark-like, and gains a swim speed of 30 feet.
- **Tough:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to Toughness.
- **Trip:** If the spirit hits with its slam attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the spirit.

## SPIRIT MENU B

Spirits of level 8 to 14 have one trait from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two special abilities from Menu A. These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu A.

- **Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms a hard carapace and gains damage reduction of +6/supernatural.
- **Elemental Slam:** The spirit's fists are wreathed in a particular element. It does an additional +2 damage of an energy type that you designate: Cold, Earth, Fire, Metal, Plant, Water or Wind.
- **Fast Healing:** As long as the spirit remains conscious, it may make a recovery check once per round.
- **Heavy Deflection:** The spirit gains a +4 bonus to Defense.
- **Improved Critical:** The spirit gains the Improved Critical feat with its unarmed attacks.
- **Improved Fly:** The spirit has physical wings and a fly speed of 40 feet (good).

- **Improved Grab:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat.
- **Improved Swim:** The spirit is streamlined and shark-like, and gains a swim speed of 60 feet.
- **Improved Toughness:** The spirit gains a +4 bonus to Toughness.
- **Muscle:** The spirit gains a +2 bonus to its Strength score.
- **Poison Touch:** If the spirit hits with a melee attack, the target must make an initial Fortitude save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Constitution score) or take 1 point of Constitution damage. One minute later, the target must save again or take an additional point of Constitution damage.
- **Smite:** Once per day, the spirit can make one attack that increases its damage by half its level.
- **Trample:** As a standard action during its turn each round, the spirit can literally run over an opponent at least one size smaller than itself. It merely has to move over the opponent to deal bludgeoning damage equal its normal damage. The target can attempt a Reflex save (Difficulty 10 + half the spirit's level + the spirit's Strength score) to negate the damage.

## SPIRIT MENU C

Spirits of level 15 and above have one trait from this menu. Alternatively, the spirit can have two traits from Menu B. (One or both of the Menu B choices can be swapped for two choices from Menu A.) These are typically large creatures. If you choose to summon a medium sized spirit, you may additionally choose one power from Menu B

- **Blindsight:** The spirit has blindsight out to 60 feet.
- **Constrict:** The spirit has the Improved Grab feat. In addition, the spirit may apply both the damage and pin effects on a successful grapple check.
- **Elemental Blast:** The spirit has the Elemental Blast power of the element you choose: Cold, Earth, Fire, Metal, Plant, Water or Wind. Treat the spirit's total level as its adept level for purposes of this power.
- **Extra Tough:** The spirit gains a +6 bonus to Toughness.
- **Extreme Damage Reduction:** The spirit's skin forms hard, armor-like plates and provides damage reduction of +8/supernatural.
- **Extreme Deflection:** The spirit gains a +8 bonus to Defense.
- **Natural Invisibility:** The spirit is constantly invisible, even when attacking.
- **Psychic Blast:** The spirit has the Psychic Blast power. Treat the spirit's total level as its adept level for purposes of this power.
- **Shadow Walk:** The spirit has the Shadow Walk power. Treat the spirit's total level as its adept level for purposes of this power.
- **On the Run:** The spirit has the Move-by Action feat.



# TAINT

Yomi, the dark realm, where the souls of the unenlightened go when they die, is a realm of negative energy. The energy permeates the land, slowly corrupting and devouring all that it comes in contact with. Where Yomi touches the mortal world, this Taint seeps though, twisting the landscape and corrupting all those who pass through it.

By coming in contact with this negative energy, a character may absorb it and carry it with him, thus becoming tainted.

## BECOMING TAINTED

Characters can acquire Taint in several ways. First, a character may come into contact with a tainted object or place. Second, a character may encounter creatures native to Yomi (such as restless spirits) that can inflict taint upon victims of their attacks. Third, a character may use tainted magic known as *kidō*.

## TAINTED PLACES AND OBJECTS

Places and objects may acquire Taint in the same way as characters. Constant contact with tainted objects, places or magic results in the object or location gaining a Taint score.

Any time a character encounters a tainted place or object, he must make a Fortitude saving throw (Difficulty 10, plus the Taint score of the object or place) or acquire 1 point of Taint. Places or objects encountering Taint are automatically assumed to fail their saving throws.

If a character remains in contact with a tainted object or place, he must make an additional Fortitude saving throw every 24 hours.

## DEATH AND UNDEATH

Upon death, the spirits of all intelligent creatures pass into Yomi, the realm of the dead, creating a link between it and the Mortal Realm. Negative energy flows back through this link, tainting the body and potentially causing it to spontaneously animate as undead.

Immediately upon death, a body is considered tainted. Brief or superficial contact, such as carrying the corpse to a ceremonial bonfire, carries a negligible risk of acquiring Taint. Prolonged or extensive contact, though, such as searching a dead body, results in the immediate accumulation of 1 point of Taint.

Additionally, the body has a 10% chance per level of the deceased creature rising as undead within a week, typically as a *gaki* (a Tsurukokan ghoul). A 10th-level or higher tainted creature *automatically* becomes undead after death.

The only exception to the above are the enlightened (see **Reaching Enlightenment** in **Religions: Darumadō**), whose spirits immediately enter Takama no Hara, creating a link to the Mortal Realm through which positive energy flows. This energy cleanses any Taint the enlightened might have acquired, and preserves the body against decay.

## PROTECTING AGAINST TAINT

To protect against Taint, a character may carry jade, which absorbs the Taint in his stead. The most common form of jade carried for this purpose is an ingot about the length and width of a man's finger, which costs 100 cranes (Wealth Difficulty 15).

As the jade absorbs Taint, it darkens, grows soft and eventually crumbles into dust over seven days. During that time, it absorbs all Taint to which the carrier is exposed.

Note that jade only protects from the effects of Taint acquired by venturing into a tainted area or carrying a tainted object. It does not protect from Taint gained as a result of employing *kidō*, being attacked by a tainted creature or touching a dead body.

## EFFECTS OF TAINT

A character's Taint score applies as a penalty to the character's Constitution and Wisdom scores. This means a character with Constitution +2, Wisdom +1 and two points of Taint has an effective Constitution +0 and Wisdom -1. These penalties reflect the impact of Taint on the character's physical and mental well-being.

A tainted character experiences the Constitution and Wisdom penalties in a variety of ways, from mild nausea, joint pain or disorientation to rotting flesh, severe skeletal warping and irresistible murderous urges.



A victim of Taint whose Wisdom is debilitated goes completely insane, as opposed to falling unconscious. A victim of Taint whose Constitution is debilitated dies, rising within 24 hours as a *gaki*.

## EMBRACING TAIN

A character who continues to acquire taint will eventually be destroyed by it. There are only two ways to avoid this fate: cleanse it or embrace it.

In the latter case, the character must swear fealty to the Jashin, or dark gods, which effectively means that he acquires an allegiance to the spirits of Yomi. This must be a conscious choice; it cannot be forced or coerced. Embracing Taint has the following effects:

- The character no longer suffers any Constitution or Wisdom penalties and, therefore, no longer experiences any physical or mental side effects. He appears to external observers to carry no Taint at all.
- The character cannot benefit from the Cure power when it is used by a non-tainted healer. The power simply has no effect. A healer who has embraced Taint can use Cure on other tainted characters, including himself, but the power has no effect on non-tainted characters.
- A tainted adept changes the key ability for his power checks to his Taint score.
- A tainted character cannot be raised from death. His soul travels directly to Yomi, and his body *immediately* rises as a *gaki*.

## CLEANSING TAIN

It is possible to remove Taint in several ways, including the use of supernatural powers, the performance of sacred rituals, the consumption of sacred materials or the act of bathing in sacred springs. Taint cannot be removed unless the tainted character wants to be cleansed.

### POWERS

The Cure Disease and Cure Poison powers can reduce Taint scores by one point per use when cast outside tainted areas. The Difficulty for either of the powers is 20 plus the character's current Taint score. No character can have his Taint score reduced by either of these particular powers more than once per day (though different powers still reduce Taint if cast on the same character in the same day).

The use of powers cannot reduce a character's Taint score below 1.

## SACRED RITUAL

By performing a sacred ritual, such as a sacred dance or intense meditation, at a Fenist shrine, Darumist temple or other holy place, a character may reduce his Taint score. The ritual must be performed every day for a week at the same shrine. At the end of the week, the character's Taint score is reduced by 1 point.

The character may continue the same ritual for another week to continue losing Taint, or he may venture to another shrine or return at a later time to perform another ritual.

Sacred rituals can reduce a character's taint score to 0.

## SACRED SPRINGS

Hot springs, considered sacred by Fenist practitioners, are found in remote locations of Tsurukoku. These springs are often difficult to get to and may require traversing mountainous terrain.

For each day a character spends resting and cleaning himself at a sacred spring, his taint score is reduced by 1 point. A character using this method to reduce his taint score can undertake no activities other than resting, sleeping, eating and normal conversation.

Cleansing at a sacred spring can reduce a character's taint score to 0.

## SAKE

Sake is considered a sacred liquid and is used in many traditional ceremonies. Consuming sake washes away taint over time; after one week of consuming sake each day, a character's taint score is reduced by 1 point. Sake is expensive and thus not available to the majority of the peasantry; the average cost of a quantity of sake necessary to eliminate 1 taint point is 100 cranes (Wealth Difficulty 15).

Consuming sake can reduce a character's taint score to 0.

## CLEANSING PLACES AND OBJECTS

A character may attempt to cleanse a place or object of Taint in much the same way as cleansing himself. He may attempt to use supernatural powers to drive out the Taint from an object (which is always assumed to fail its saving throw against the power) or perform a sacred ritual in a tainted location. He may bathe a tainted object in a sacred spring, or he may sprinkle an area with sake.





# NEVERMORE



**I ascended into a wondrous realm,  
Through waters dark and deep.  
I came ashore where dreams do dwell,  
And die...but I was not asleep.**

**– Poesi, The Poet Prince**

**Nevermore** is an ever-changing world where reason fades into the mists of slumber, and imagination emerges into a land of fanciful dreams and dreadful nightmares. It is a world where exotic and unpredictable encounters are as common as eddies swirling along a rocky shore. It is a realm of surreal landscapes awash with dramatic deeds and teeming with creatures both beautiful and bizarre.

Nevermore offers a plethora of possible and even improbable adventures for those who traverse its strange domains. It pushes its inhabitants and visitors far beyond the mundane and into a fantastic realm of near boundless potential for both good and evil. Nevermore amplifies and accentuates, twists and skews and is a place where nothing remains the same for long. Don't like the way things are here? Wait a moment. Things might just change.

## NEVERMORE CAMPAIGNS

Nevermore assumes Narrators are using it as a fantasy campaign setting. However, the setting can be used for any genre or time period with a few tweaks of the background material. In light of this, the rules have been designed in such a way as to fit whatever genre and time period a Narrator sets his campaign in, whether it is Horror, Modern Fantasy, Future Fantasy or something else entirely.

Once a decision on genre and time period have been made, it is important to make the world live and breathe by developing the adventure hooks, story lines and subplots presented in this material into a unique vision of the dreamlands. Make sure from the moment the campaign starts that the players understand that this is not just another dream. Their actions have consequences for

the world around them as well as themselves. Nevermore should have real effects on those who adventure and invest themselves in it. Life and death should be just as genuine in the dreamlands as they are in the mortal world.

If using Nevermore in tandem with another setting, make sure the events within the dreamlands foreshadow those within the other world, grant hints to the main storyline or prove to be an integral part of foiling an adversary's plans. This is where the ingenuity of a Narrator is needed most; the occasional side-trek to Nevermore is all well and good, but it is of greater importance to find a way to incorporate these side-treks into the main plotline of a campaign and thereby create a tangible benefit to the players' successes within the world of Nevermore.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF NEVERMORE

Nevermore was created for the fey as a refuge from the mortal world. Over untold years, it provided a place of rest and reverie for the fey, producing a golden age among them. However, envy entered the world with the sin of Queen Mab, and the seeds of discord she sowed thereafter fractured the fey into two conflicting courts. Open strife between the courts intensified as more and more fey shed their mortal coils, seeking a new life in lands unsullied by human hands. Nevermore's ground tasted blood for the first time during this Age of Rebirth, and what had been a sanctuary for the fey, now became a battlefield.

Centuries passed with neither side gaining advantage over the other, until humans and beasts fleeing a great flood in the mortal world entered Nevermore through the intercession of Poesi, Oberon's son. The advent of men created a clarion call among many of the fey for a war against the mortals. Seizing this opportunity, the Unseelie court convinced some of the Seelie court to join them and marched upon men. Angered by the infidelity of his children, Faehalig, the god of the fey, granted Poesi the power to summon forth the waters of forgetfulness. The waters released by the prince washed away the Unseelie army and lulled Nevermore into a long and wistful slumber.

No one knows how long this Forgotten Age lasted, but when the fogs of this era finally dissipated, the domain of the Wyrd surrounded the Heartlands of the fey, and within this new land,

mortals held power. Unable to destroy the humans through force of arms, the Unseelie sowed the seeds of strife in the hearts of men. They prepared the ground for war with subtle schemes and cunning intrigues, until one by one the mortals began to battle each other.

The world ignited in war and woe, forging the legends of the Age of Strife. During these centuries of struggle, many dreamlords rose and fell as vast armies were summoned from the mortal world. The age culminated in a terrible crucible of forty years, which brought the world to the verge of tearing itself apart. The revenge and madness marred the very essence of Nevermore, giving birth to the Dreadlands and the nightmares that torment the world. This era would have destroyed the mortals, and perhaps Nevermore itself, but as the dirge was nearing its last note, the sacrifice of Faehalig's son and the sound of a single child weeping for mercy amidst the cries for bloody revenge returned the land of dreams to its senses.

The blood of Menhalig and the tears of Mergia swept away the nightmares of the Age of Strife, and in their wake, two new domains were formed, the Hedge and the Eye. These places have become sanctuaries for the inhabitants of Nevermore in the new Age of Serenity. Unfortunately, the pool of peace has dried to its dregs, and enemies, both old and new, are preparing for a darker and more tumultuous age.

## ARRIVAL

The dreaming is the most common way for mortals to enter Nevermore and can bring them just about anywhere in the world, from a quiet tavern in the Eye to the haunted mires of the Dreadlands. The dreaming can come as a daydream, a fainting spell or something else entirely. Consequently, there is a constant stream of mortals who flow into this wondrous world, and no two tales of their arrival are ever alike. Regardless of the pathway taken into this world, when the threshold is crossed, the awakened are filled with surreal energies and an innate knowledge that they are no longer in the mortal world.

Those who come to Nevermore via the summons have quite a different experience. Some summonses are peaceful affairs, while others are cold and cruel, but all reflect the nature of the dreamlord who makes them. Those who are summoned arrive at a place determined by the dreamlord and may be placed under the effects of a Suggestion to serve the summoner for up to seven cycles (Will save Difficulty 24 or power check Difficulty 36 to ignore for one cycle). Once these seven cycles have passed, the dreamlord decides whether to return the summoned back to the mortal world or allow them to remain in Nevermore. If the dreamlord chooses the former, the summoned immediately depart the dreamlands, but if the latter is chosen, the awakened mortals are free to remain in this world or leave it.

Nevermore may also be entered through dream doors. These are places where the veil between the mortal and dream worlds is the weakest. Dream doors can be anything from an old oak tree to a

stone circle, but most are natural features. Some are unlocked under certain circumstances, while others are always open. Mortals may pass through these portals without noticing and some of these dream doors only permit one way travel.

## CYCLES

Due to the erratic nature of the heavenly bodies in this world, one cannot mark the passage of days with as much ease as can be done elsewhere. However, there is a stable unit of time within the ever-changing lands of Nevermore, and it is called the “cycle.” Each cycle lasts for eight hours and has the following properties.

### THE HOURS

The first hour of the cycle is called Burst and it is the most potent of all the hours of the cycle. Fresh dream energy flows freely, flooding into the realm and drenching all of its inhabitants with power. The first two hours, Burst (1st) and Gleam (2nd), are the most wondrous hours of the cycle and when Nevermore is most easily influenced. The hours of Shimmer (3rd), Flicker (4th), Pallor (5th) and Dim (6th), see an increased resistance to manipulation. During the last two hours, Murk (7th) and Gloom (8th), accidents and nightmarish creatures plague the land.

### THE TURNING

The last minute of each cycle is known as the turning, and during this moment, the entire world of Nevermore undergoes





an amazing transformation. The sky, the ground, even some of the inhabitants change, some slightly, others completely. Each domain is affected by the turning in its own way. In the Eye, the turning is hardly noticeable, whereas in the Wyrð it is a common occurrence for the landscape to change in the blink of an eye. During this moment of turning, all creatures are frozen in place and unable to do anything but watch the metamorphosis of the world before their very eyes and perhaps under their very feet. After the turning, creatures regain their ability to act, though perhaps under entirely different circumstances.

### TURNING EFFECTS

The turning of a cycle can have a number of effects, which are listed below:

- *Recovery*: Creatures automatically recover from all damage and fatigue conditions.
- *Dream Conviction*: Creatures regain all their Dream Conviction points. In addition, any non-permanent Dream Conviction effect has its duration end.
- *Dream Shifts*: Domain, progeny and atmospheric shifts occur (see **Dream Shifts** later in this chapter).
- *Will to Waken*: Awakened characters may choose to leave Nevermore, unless still under a dreamlord's suggestion or dream bound by Nevermore (see **Staying** later in this chapter).

### CYCLES ARE DAYS

Any reference in feats, powers, creature traits, etc. to the term "day" (or to 8 to 24 hour periods) should be changed to "cycle" while in Nevermore.

## DREAM SHIFTS

There are three typical types of dream shifts that Nevermore undergoes during each turning: domain, atmospheric and progeny shifts. These are the most common elements that are changed during a turning, but are not the only ones. One cannot always cover everything, and with this truth firmly in mind, the following shifts were chosen to illustrate what is meant by dream shifts. These should spark the Narrator's imagination and help draw players into the unpredictable and surreal feel of the world.

### DOMAIN SHIFTS

These are perhaps the easiest to portray and describe to players, as they affect the world around them, from a mountain range to a single stream to a kitchen table. Some changes are so insignificant that one would hardly notice the difference between one cycle and the next, but others could be so obvious that they seem impossible. Domain shifts provide endless potential for bringing sudden excitement to an adventure or an additional complication to an ongoing conflict. Narrators should keep in mind that domain shifts were designed to enhance the setting and should not be used to throw characters into hopeless situations. It is important to note here that each domain is affected independently of the others, so what might change in one might not be what changes in another.

*Important Note*: Realms within a domain make independent dream shift checks.

### ATMOSPHERIC SHIFTS

These are shifts in the climate of a domain. However, it should be noted that they not only affect the weather of a given domain, but also the heavenly bodies seen therein (which range from non-existent to the bizarre), and even the perception of colors and light. Shifts of weather and heavenly bodies are much easier to describe to characters than changes in coloration and light, but the latter are just as important to include in descriptions as they help to portray the unearthly environment of the setting and accentuate Nevermore's mood. As with domain shifts, some changes are insignificant in nature, while others can be quite striking and startling to behold.

### PROGENY SHIFTS

These involve changing the psychological, emotional and even physical forms of dreamspawn and nightmare creatures. Changes brought about by progeny shifts can be subtle; others are astounding and even disquieting. Though a conflict can spring from a progeny shift, Narrators should not use them to throw characters into hopeless situations. Like domain shifts, progeny shifts affect each domain independently of the others, so what might change in one might not be what changes in another.

### DREAMSHIFT CHECK

Roll a d20 for each type of shift to determine the magnitude of the change, and apply the following modifiers to the shift rolls: -10 in the Eye, -5 in the Hedge, +0 in the Heartlands, +5 in the Dreadlands, and +10 in the Wyrð.

Then, compare the results to the table and determine the magnitude and effects of the dream shift.

The **Example Shifts** table presents a rough guideline for determining the power of shifts and presents a few examples of



## EXAMPLE SHIFTS

| Die Roll | Shift Magnitude | Examples  |
|----------|-----------------|---|
| 1        | None            | No change.  |
| 2–6      | Insignificant   | Random items rearrange (Domain), there's a slight change of weather (Atmospheric), or some progeny have their features slightly changed (Progeny).  |
| 7–10     | Minor           | Random items disappear (Domain), colors are slightly more vivid (Atmospheric), or some progeny disappear (Progeny).   |
| 11–14    | Significant     | New items or areas appear (Domain), the season changes by one step (Atmospheric), or some progeny change their appearance and/or attitudes (Progeny).   |
| 15–17    | Major           | Random buildings rearrange themselves (Domain), a windstorm begins (Atmospheric), or all progeny increase in size one category.   |
| 18–19    | Massive         | An entire city/dungeon rearranges itself (Domain), the season changes by two steps (Atmospheric), or all progeny change their creature type (Progeny).  |
| 20+      | World Altering* | A mountain made of neverite rises from the earth (Domain), the sky is emptied of all heavenly bodies and all color is drained away (Atmospheric), or all progeny disappear or turn into nightmares (Progeny). |

\*World Altering shifts last until they are reversed or replaced by another World Altering shift.

appropriate results based on shift magnitude. It's important to note that the table barely scratches the surface of what is possible, and in the end, the turning can involve almost anything a Narrator can imagine.

## THE RECKONING OF TIME

Nevermore does not have weeks, months or years in the traditional sense of the words, since there are no stable moons or suns to base such things upon. In truth, beyond the cycles, there are few things that can be used to gauge the passage of time. Still, this did not stop the dreamlord Poesi from creating what the inhabitants of Nevermore have adopted as their method of reckoning time.

In Poesi's calendar, the cycles are grouped into threes called "triads," which parallel what is known as a day in the mortal world. The next measure of time, called a "phrase," mirrors a week and consists of seven triads. Four phrases make up a "movement" that can be compared to a month. Finally, Poesi's calendar groups thirteen movements into an "opus," which is the equivalent of a year.

The last triad of each opus is known as "Cadence" and is a time of renewal for Nevermore and its inhabitants.

Cadence, like the turning, has a number of effects, which are listed below:

- *Dream Conviction*: At the turning of each cycle of Cadence, creatures gain twice their normal Dream Conviction points.
- *Cadence's Boon*: During Cadence, creatures add a +2 cadence modifier to all attack rolls, skill checks and saving throws. In addition, Backlash checks have their Difficulty reduced by 5.
- *Dream Shifts*: No dream shifts occur during the turnings of Cadence.
- *Sifting*: During the last turning of Cadence, all creatures within Nevermore have their equipment sifted (see **Awakened** in **Inhabitants**).

## STAYING

Awakened can choose to return to the mortal world during the turning of a cycle, unless they are still under the effects of a dreamlord's summons or bonded to the dreamland's fate. Dream bonding is a rare occurrence, but has been known to happen, especially when a significant thread in Nevermore's history is unfolding.

Of course, barring these exceptions, mortals may come and go from Nevermore as they like. Some will stay for only a cycle and never return, while others find themselves drawn back into the dreamlands with clockwork regularity. There are even a rare few who forsake their mortal ties and make new lives for themselves in this land of boundless possibilities.

## INHABITANTS

The inhabitants of Nevermore are made up of four distinct types: awakened, dreamborn, reborn fey and progeny. Awakened are humans brought into Nevermore from the mortal world via the dreaming or by summons, whereas dreamborn are offspring of those men who forsook their ties to the earth to escape the great flood. The reborn fey are creatures of folklore and myth who have made the dreamlands into their home. Finally, there are the progeny that manifest the divided essence of Nevermore as dreamspawn and nightmares. Given this diversity, it is distinctly

possible to find any creature imaginable in the dreamlands. In light of this, Narrators are encouraged to use the rules presented in the rest of this chapter to create their own unique races to populate this world.

## AWAKENED

Awakened mortals are the most common race within Nevermore, and can be ordinary people, valiant heroes or villainous knaves.

Their appearances are equally as varied, ranging from short to tall, from thin to stout, and from ivory to ebony skinned. No matter who they are or how they arrived in Nevermore, all mortals experience a revelation known as the “awakening” upon first arriving in the dreamlands. This transformation grants them surreal and extraordinary abilities based on their psyches, which the awakened can then use while adventuring within this world.

**Awakened Traits:** The following is a general explanation of the effects that awakening has on a mortal.

*Awakened Background:* Awakened choose a bonus feat and skill and two favored feats (or one favored supernatural power or aspect) that they gain while in Nevermore. These are in addition to any traits they have from their base background (typically their race).

*Sifting:* Awakened undergo the process of sifting when they enter Nevermore. Their equipment is sifted through with items kept, modified, replaced or simply taken from their inventory. Note that these items are not lost to the awakened, they are just set aside while they are inside Nevermore.

The sifting is meant to equip characters with what they need for their adventures in the dreamlands and should grant items appropriate to the current quest or that fit the character’s personality. If the Narrator is feeling especially creative, they could even come up with recurring items, such as an intelligent walking staff for a reserved adept, an animated thieves’ kit with an eccentric personality for an expert or a huge, but strangely light greatsword for a warrior. In fact, Narrators are

encouraged to work these sorts of things into their campaigns, as they can add to the atmosphere of the game and help draw players into the spirit of the setting.

For example, a character that had a longsword, a cloak, leather armor and a week’s worth of iron rations when he began the awakening, might end the sifting with a *supernatural longsword*, a *cloak of flesh shaping*, leather armor, a *cure potion*, a temporary *lantern of light shaping* and a *talking animated shield*.

## DREAMBORN

Mortal men and beasts born within Nevermore are known as “dreamborn.” They are almost indistinguishable from their awakened counterparts from the time of their birth till adolescence. However, once a dreamborn reaches maturity, it undergoes a transformation called “metamorphosis.” This process typically produces a startling change in appearance and augments the dreamborn’s physical form to reflect its psyche. To gaze upon a dreamborn in full aspect is like peering into his soul, beautiful or terrible as it may be.

### DREAMBORN BACKGROUND

Dreamborn gain Dream Blood as a bonus feat. They also choose one bonus feat, two bonus skills, and two favored feats (or one favored supernatural power or aspect).

## REBORN FEY

The fey were the first to dream of Nevermore and the foremost to walk its wondrous lands. For time without measure, they were the lone stewards of this realm and existed in peace and prosperity. However, the seeds of discord destroyed this Golden Age and split the fey into two opposing courts. Since then, the Seelie and Unseelie courts have consolidated their power over the Heartlands and influenced the weaving of Nevermore’s history for both good and ill.

The Seelie fey wander many lands, but most make their residence in the southern Heartlands and swear loyalty to King Oberon. Their personalities range from playful prankster to solemn councilor, but most are noble in nature and enchanting to behold. They are renowned for their uncanny understanding of the threads which weave their way through the tapestry of Nevermore’s past, present and future. Like their chief god Faehalig, they believe Nevermore is a garden to be tended and shared with mortals. The most common Seelie fey are the brownies, dwarves, elves, gnomes and sprites.

Like their brethren, Unseelie fey manifest in many forms, but in contrast, they are often misshapen and hideous in appearance. They are cunning creatures skilled in the arts of deception and infamous for their influence over the darker threads that run through the fabric of Nevermore. The fallen angel, Lilith, has corrupted Queen Mab and her court completely and convinced them that they are superior to their brethren and mortals and therefore have an inherent right of dominion over all of Nevermore. The most common Unseelie fey are the goblins, kobolds, ogres, orcs and trolls.

### REBORN BACKGROUND

Reborn fey gain Nightvision and Aspect (uses the reborn fey’s total level to determine its level-based effects and has Charisma



as its key ability) as bonus feats. They also choose one bonus feat and skill, and two favored feats (or one favored supernatural power or aspect).

## PROGENY

Progeny exist only as extensions of Nevermore's essence. They are agents through which the world interacts with its inhabitants. They populate almost every corner of the dreamlands, and like its landscapes, they change with the turning of the cycle. There are two types of progeny in Nevermore: dreamspawn and nightmares.

Dreamspawn populate the world from the tiniest ant to the tallest trees. They can be anything from the merchants one meets in the market to the animals one meets within a forest. Due to their connection to the essence of Nevermore, dreamspawn change with the turning of the cycle, and the captain of the guards in one cycle may become a street urchin in the next. Such progeny shifts can be confusing or even amusing, but usually follow some inborn logic, which only Nevermore can fathom.

Nightmares were created by the terrible trials of the Age of Strife and are living wounds in Nevermore's essence. Like dreamspawn, they are tied to the turning of the cycles, but unlike them, they are malevolent in nature and often frightful in appearance. They range from the malicious monsters that populate the wilds to the cunning fiends which plot the destruction of fey and mortal alike.

**Progeny Traits:** Progeny have the following traits, which are added to the base creature.

*Minion:* Progeny are considered minions and do not gain Dream Conviction.

*Disrupting Attack:* Creatures wounded by a progeny's natural attack lose a Dream Conviction point. Dream Conviction points lost in this way count against the character's Dream Conviction allotment for a scene and can cause a backlash.

*Progeny Skills:* Progeny may use the improbable deed and unbelievable challenge Dream Conviction abilities at will for skills they have ranks in.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF NEVERMORE

Nevermore is divided into five distinct domains. The Heartlands were created by Faehalig and are the oldest of the domains, while the Wyrld was formed out of the mists of the Forgotten Age. During the Age of Strife, the northern half of the Wyrld was warped by the death of Diabolus into the Dreadlands. Finally, at the beginning of the Age of Serenity, Menhalig's sacrifice created the Hedge, and Mergia's tears produced the Eye.

Over the years, a number of realms have been founded and lost within these domains, their landscapes and cultures rising and falling with the fortunes of the dreamlords who ruled them. However, the hopes and fears of the vast majority of mortals and fey rest upon thirteen greater dreamlords who are seen as the cornerstones of the coming age. The realms of these greater dreamlords are detailed throughout the rest of this chapter. Of course, Nevermore has never been predictable, so perhaps there is an unknown dreamlord out there who will fashion the future of this world in his own image. Only the turning of the cycles will tell the tale.

### DOMAIN AND REALM AURAS

Most domains and realms have permanent auras affecting their lands and those within them. These auras accentuate the atmosphere of a domain and reinforce a dreamlord's vision of his realm. Domain auras are always active and cannot be resisted. On the other hand, realm auras may be resisted, if they have a direct effect on a character. Resisting a realm's aura grows more difficult as one moves closer to the dreamlord's sanctuary.

- The outer half of the realm requires a Will save Difficulty 16 or power check Difficulty 22.
- The inner half of the realm requires a Will save Difficulty 20 or power check Difficulty 29.
- The sanctum of the realm requires a Will save Difficulty 24 or power check Difficulty 36.

A character is only allowed one Will save attempt per cycle to ignore a realm aura. If successful, a character ignores all the

effects of a realm aura for one cycle, whether they are beneficial or not.

Power checks are made against particular realm aura effects. A successful power check allows a character to suppress effects for himself which would be affected by the power for as long as it is active.

For example, if a 4th-level expert with a good Will save and +2 Wisdom rolls a 9 or less, he fails to resist the realm aura. If he rolled a 10, he would ignore the aura in the outer half of the realm, but not the inner half or sanctum. If he rolled a 14, he would ignore the aura in the inner half of the realm, except the sanctum. If he rolled an 18, he would ignore the realm aura completely.

If a 4th-level adept with Psychic Shield and a +2 Intelligence rolls a 12 or less, he fails to suppress a particular effect of an aura (Heart Shaping, Suggestion, etc.). If he rolled a 13, he would suppress a particular effect for himself in the outer half of the realm, but not the inner half or sanctum. If he rolled a 20, he would suppress the effect for himself in the inner half of the realm, except the sanctum. The adept would need to spend Dream Conviction (or have some other means of improving his power check) to have a chance to suppress the effect within the sanctum.

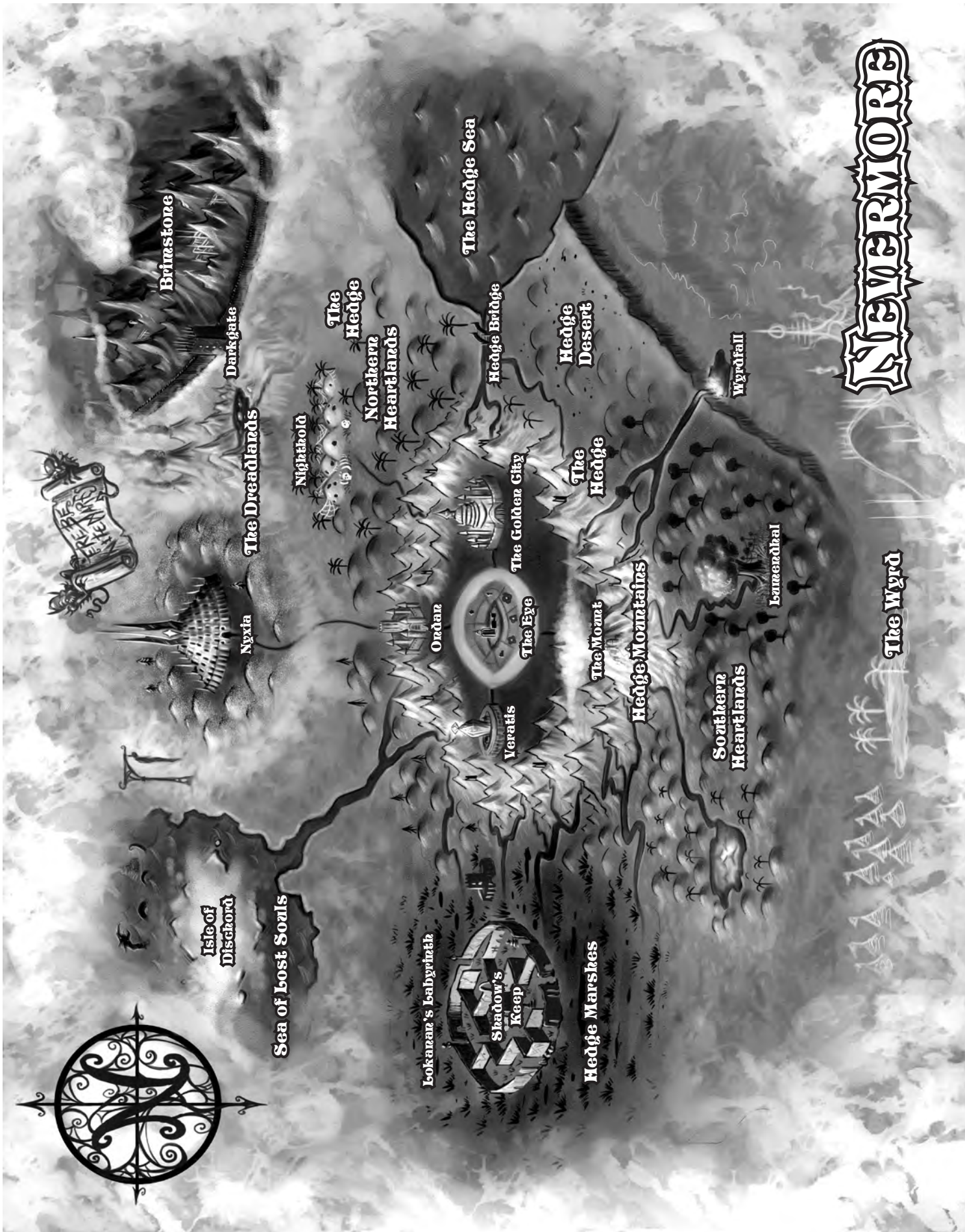
## THE DREADLANDS

The Dreadlands formed from the Northern Wyrld after the death of Diabolus corrupted it during the Age of Strife. Like the Wyrld, this domain warps with the passing of each cycle. The landscape, however, is often violent and vengeful in nature, ranging from menacing forests to deadly quagmires. Unlike the Wyrld, the realms of the Dreadlands remain set in place, making it possible to travel to them. However, the domain's nightmarish environments and beasts may make it nearly impossible to make such a trek safely.

### DOMAIN AURA

Apply a +5 domain modifier to Dream Shifts and a +10 domain modifier to Backlash checks. In addition, the escape certain death, remarkable recovery and second wind Dream Conviction abilities,





along with their less powerful versions, cost four times the normal Dream Conviction. This increase in Dream Conviction also applies to other Dream Conviction abilities used to heal or prevent damage or fatigue.

## Brimstone

Jagged peaks of obsidian mark the borders of Brimstone, and the smell of sulfur and death saturates the air with nauseating odors. Cruel creatures prowl the barren environment, while malicious monsters hide within crevices and caverns that mar the landscape. The Blackwall encircles Brimstone and is constantly patrolled by diaboli, while beneath it lays the heart of the realm, the city of Bal, where Diabolus rules over his nightmarish minions amid a frightening landscape of obsidian and magma.

### DREAMLORD

Diabolus, the Horned Lord, is a demented and vicious ruler, obsessed with revenge. Diabolus has slowly regained his strength since the Age of Strife, but his madness has left his wrath and minions without a focus. Over a generation ago, Lilith restored his mind and revealed to him the means by which to create diaboli. Since then, he has grown in power as a dreamlord, and his sinister servants have increased his influence over the inhabitants and events within Nevermore.

### INHABITANTS

Brimstone is populated by the undead and creatures who take pleasure in the misfortune and death of others. They celebrate the destruction of life and feast upon the spirits of their enemies. They are cunning and cruel, powerful and vicious, deceptive and corrupting, desiring nothing more than to see Nevermore torn asunder by turmoil and terror.

### AURA

All those within Brimstone gain a +3 bonus to Intimidate checks (+5 in the city of Bal) and come under the constant effects of Heart Shaping (despair) and severe heat (extreme heat in the city of Bal).

## Isle of Discord

Hidden in the mists of the Sea of Lost Souls lies the Isle of Discord and its malevolent mistress, the dreamlord Sirena. It is a forlorn island, populated by Sirena's sinister servants and the Order of Discordant Voices. It is from this veiled isle that Sirena schemes her return to power and her retribution against Nyxis and the rest of Nevermore. Those who are lured to this lonely isle rarely return, and if they do, it is as a minion of the Marred Voice.

### DREAMLORD

Sirena, the Marred Voice, crafts her cunning schemes from the Spire of Discord, shoring up a new power base upon the Isle of Discord. She, too, has received the assistance of Lilith, who has shown her arcane secrets that will help turn the tide of her fortunes. Her plots are soon to be realized, and she hopes to have her revenge against Nyxis and then the rest of Nevermore.

### INHABITANTS

Decadence and scheming are the pillars of life upon the Isle of Discord. Sirena's servants are constantly involved in intrigues

within the world beyond. It is with great lust and pleasure that they foment lies and deceit, and they revel in the chaos and confusion they sow. They are delighted by the corruption and suffering of others and celebrate each tainted or ruined innocent who is caught within their schemes.

### AURA

All those on the Sea of Lost Souls come under the effects of a Suggestion to sail towards the Isle of Discord and gain a +2 bonus to Drive checks to sail toward the isle and a -2 penalty to sail away from it. Those who set foot on the Isle of Discord come under the Suggestion to present themselves to Sirena and suffer a -2 penalty to Will saves.

## Nyxia

The frozen fields of Nyxia are barren and blizzard-swept, an unforgiving realm of snow and ice. Its inhabitants live under the rigid rule of Nyxis and are bound by a curse to protect their queen until their lives are utterly spent. It is a land of endless and desperate vigilance against the agents of Sirena and the nightmares of Diabolus.

### DREAMLORD

Nyxis, the Frozen Lady, is a forlorn and unfeeling ruler locked away in her Frozen Keep. She is haunted by her sins and the deaths of her sons and has spent the past century brooding upon her losses and contemplating the death curses she will make when her realm finally falls to the children of Mahr. She has prepared her realm to become a tomb for her enemies and awaits the tide of war, her own death and the retribution her dying words will reap. She has no hope of survival, but she plans to make her realm into a death trap for her enemies.

### INHABITANTS

None of Nyxis's servants expect to survive the coming storms of war, but they cannot abandon their posts without being destroyed by the enchantments that guard the realm. Even so, there are a few who remain fanatically loyal to their Frozen Lady. Their only expectation is to cause the minions of Sirena and Diabolus the greatest possible harm before the fires of their lives are snuffed out.

### AURA

Those within the realm of Nyxia come under the constant effects of severe cold (extreme cold in the Frozen Keep. Those in the outer half of the aura suffer blizzard conditions. Those who are sworn to Nyxis gain a +4 bonus to Fortitude saves versus cold effects, while those who are her sworn enemies suffer a -4 penalty (+/-8 in the Frozen Keep).

## Adventure Hooks for the Dreadlands

- A newly arisen dreamlord has created an idyllic realm within the Dreadlands in hopes of restoring some of its former glory. However, diaboli recently discovered its location and began to raid the realm, killing many of his followers. He has summoned and hired heroes to help defend his holdings, but can they hold out against a horde of nightmares?
- An emissary from Oberon is being sent to the Frozen Keep in an attempt to save Nyxis from her despair and perhaps form a





new alliance. Among those being sent is Nyxis's former husband, Alexan, who it is believed may still be able to reason with her. This expedition is dangerous for many reasons, with both Unseelie fey and diaboli seeking its destruction. Consequently, the Seelie have spent considerable resources to ensure it's safe, including the employment of adventurers.

- The vast ruins of the realm of Mahr have been found! Long thought lost during the Age of Strife, this place was once the home of Diabolus and Sirena, and it is wondered whether any secrets about them can be gleaned from these haunted halls. Those of both good and ill intent are seeking intrepid explorers to search the remains of this realm, even, if rumors are to be believed, the children of Mahr.

## THE EYE

The Eye is an island of calm and stability within the ever-shifting world of Nevermore. It is a modest domain where weary travelers can come for a respite from the volatile lands that surround it. Most of the Eye is a lush plateau of fertile fields sprinkled with peaceful manors and quaint villages. The stability of the Eye makes it the ideal place for commerce and culture to flourish in this ever-changing world. Owing to its predictable terrain, it is the most populated domain in Nevermore despite its relatively small size.

### DOMAIN AURA

Apply a -10 domain modifier to Dream Shifts and Backlash checks. In addition, double the number of Dream Conviction points needed to activate a Dream Conviction ability (see **Using Dream Conviction** in **Dream Conviction**).

## Golden City

The spires of the Golden City overlook the peaceful plains of the Eye, while the city below abounds with activity. The beginning of each cycle brings the opening of the city's famous markets, where permanent items are sold in greater numbers than in any other realm within the world. Neverite, the world's currency, flows through the Golden City as blood through the veins of mortal men. Crime, however, is nearly nonexistent within the city due to its aura.

### DREAMLORD

Mergia, the Golden Eyed, rules over the Golden City as a benevolent matriarch. She seeks to heal the wounds caused by the Age of Strife, and to this end, she has pursued an alliance with other like-minded dreamlords, including Justina, Ordo, Aeden and Oberon. She is an honorable and generous ruler and spends most of her time amongst her subjects, serving them in any way she can. This dedication to her people has engendered a deep devotion within her citizens.

### INHABITANTS

The Golden City is a prosperous and peaceful realm where commerce and leisure are pursued with good-natured persistence. The early hours of each cycle are dedicated to trade, while the later hours are often spent in recreation with family and friends. Hospitality is an important virtue to the citizens of the Golden City, and those who visit the realm will find more open doors than closed. The city's prominent leaders are approachable and more than willing to collaborate with those serving just causes and seeking good ends.

### AURA

The Golden City is warded against nightmares. In addition, those within the city come under the effects of Heart Shaping (friendship) and a Suggestion to do no harm (or through inaction allow harm to come to others). Those who enter the Golden Palace gain a +2 bonus to all social interaction skills.

## The Mount

A colossal city resides between the Mount's cloud-covered peaks and deep-delving caverns, spanning everything from the cliff face edifices of the High City to the great common halls of the Under City. The Mount is one of the only known sources for mined neverite, so it is heavily protected from those who might seek to steal from the realm. The craftsmen of the Mount are unmatched in their ability to forge dreamwrought weapons and armor, and its masons are adept at shaping stone.

### DREAMLORD

Aeden, the Stone Sovereign, presides over the Mount with a practical and principled wisdom. After the Age of Strife, he sought to create a mighty and impregnable fortress where mortals and fey might find respite from the torments of nightmares and the schemes of the Unseelie. This is why he founded the Mount and fortified it against the day those forces might strike at the Eye.

### INHABITANTS

Most of the denizens of the Mount are driven by a zealous work ethic and spend most of the cycle working in forges, workshops, studios, mints and mines. A number of citizens also provide a vast security network within the Mount. The residents of this realm



typically interact with outsiders within the Tradesmen's Court, as access to the Mount itself is restricted to only the most trusted of visitors.

### AURA

The Mount is warded against nightmares and Unseelie fey and grants a +3 bonus to Craft checks (+5 in the High City).

## **Veratis**

The ever-watchful Tower of the Eye emanates an aura of calm and truth that washes over the marble streets and buildings of the city of Veratis. Unlike her sister Mergia's Golden City, Justina's Veratis is simple and austere in design. All of the major streets radiate out from the Tower of the Eye, so that when one walks them, they are ever in the shadow of its gaze. Alleyways branch off of the main streets and out of the direct stare, but there is an ever-present sense that the tower still sees all that occurs behind the stone facades. Veratis is a place of discernment and wisdom, judgment and justice, and its magistrates and citizens are solemn and evenhanded in all their dealings with outsiders.

### DREAMLORD

Justina, the Even Hand, is a fair and prudent ruler, and unceasingly vigilant against the evils that prowl Nevermore. For the past century, she has fought against the foes of the Eye with every fiber of her being. She founded the city of Veratis and the Magi of the Eye to aid her in this pursuit, and since then, they have become beacons of justice in Nevermore and symbols of the common man's struggle against the corrupt.

### INHABITANTS

Many in the Eye say those seeking happiness go to the Golden City, but those seeking the truth journey to Veratis. The pursuit of justice and truth is a focal point of the authorities of Veratis, and the citizens have adapted their work toward this purpose. There are a number of private investigation firms that make their residence within the white walls of Veratis and sell their services to those who need a mystery solved or an individual watched. Still other citizens work as city guards and wardens for the Circles of Penance.

### AURA

Those within Veratis gain a +3 bonus to Knowledge checks (+5 in the Tower of the Eye) and come under the Suggestion to tell the truth. In addition, those who commit or aid another in the commission of a crime or lie come under the effects of a Mind Probe. The information gathered from this probe is usually used to track down and arrest the criminal.

## **Adventure Hooks for the Eye**

- A rash of unsolved crimes, from theft to murder, have been committed in the Golden City. The authorities are worried that a way around the enchantments which protect this realm has been discovered. They have hired a number of investigators to get to the bottom of this mystery, though none have exposed the perpetrators.
- A number of objects have been stolen from the workshop of a renowned gnome adept who lives at the foot of the Mount. He fears his inventions will be used for some nefarious purpose. He has spread the word of a reward around the Eye through various contacts.

One of the curators of the Great Library of Veratis has discovered a mysterious manuscript within one of the history sections of the library. This book grants visions of the future through its written words. Unfortunately, it only works for him, and after narrowly escaping a kidnapping attempt thanks to a warning from the book, he has decided he needs protection, at least until the book stops warning him about impending trouble.

## **THE HEARTLANDS**

The Heartlands are divided in two by the Hedge Mountains. Queen Mab and the Unseelie Court rule the northern Heartlands, while Oberon and the Seelie Court protect the southern Heartlands. Terrain in the Heartlands occasionally undergoes drastic changes, though it typically manifests as unspoiled wilderness ranging from old and blackened woods to rolling hills of emerald grass. Lakes and streams dot and cross the landscape, but their shape or course can alter with the turning of a cycle.

### DOMAIN AURA

None.

## **Lumendhel**

The Valley of Light rests within the rolling emerald hills of the Southern Heartlands and is home to King Oberon and his Seelie Court. The residents of Lumendhel make their home here, from the city of Dhel on the valley floor to the city of Lumen in the boughs of the great lantern trees. The Seelie are renowned for their love of life and merriment, but have a serious side to them that stems from their calling as the guardians of Nevermore. As such, travelers to this realm will find a strange mixture of nobility and vivacity within the populace, which lends itself equally to moments of sobriety and good humor. At the center of Lumendhel stands the Heart Tree, the most ancient living thing within Nevermore, planted by Faehalig himself before even the fey were brought into the world. It is a holy place under which the Seelie Court holds its council.

### DREAMLORD

Oberon, the King of the Seelie, rules over the lands of Lumendhel with a light, but firm, touch. Oberon has spent hundreds of years as a dreamlord, and during that time, he has dedicated himself to the protection of Nevermore and its inhabitants. He has made mistakes, but has learned from each one and hopes he has become a better king as a result. He recognizes his enemies have also grown wiser from their own defeats, and he has spent the last hundred years preparing for them and trusting in the guidance and aid of Faehalig in the battles ahead.

### INHABITANTS

The Seelie are almost always in high spirits, and they maintain a taste for revelry and playful mischief that is unrivaled in Nevermore. They have an innate love of the courtly lifestyle of courtesy and dignity, but temper it with good-humor. In spite of their seemingly capricious nature, the citizens of Lumendhel recognize the need for sincerity of action, and once given, their word is their bond.

### AURA

Lumendhel is illuminated by the bright light of the Heart Tree. In addition, during Cadence, the Heart Tree releases a supernatural sap which adolescent fey must drink in order to receive their

powers. At the end of this ceremony, there is always a single drop of sap left over, which has the power to return one mortal or fey to life. This sap is reserved for only the most important figures and can only be used once upon any individual. Those within Lumendhel gain a +3 bonus to Medicine checks (+5 in the city of Lumen).

## Nightwood

The Nightwood is a tangled and twisted forest constantly concealed within the gloom that emanates from the realm itself. The inhabitants of this realm are as cruel and misshapen as the woods and caverns they call home. A palpable hatred for outsiders lurks within the Nightwood, and those who enter without Mab's leave find themselves beset by her minions and ill luck.

### DREAMLORD

Mab, the Queen of the Unseelie, is the clever and vindictive matriarch of the Nightwood. She has spent the last hundred years marshaling her forces and rebuilding her strength from the safety of Nighthold, her underground fortress. She has an intricate network of spies working within other realms, some in positions of great influence, and has begun to set her latest gambit into motion. She awaits only Lilith's order to unleash her vipers and plunge the land into chaos and confusion.

### INHABITANTS

Denizens of the Nightwood are as spiteful and cruel as the queen they serve. They have a deep seated hatred for the humans and other races that have usurped the lands of Nevermore. They also despise the Seelie Court for its support and protection of these trespassers. There is nothing that would be more satisfying for the inhabitants of the Nightwood than to conquer the rest of

Nevermore and cleanse it from those people who have tainted the world.

### AURA

Nightwood is concealed by shadowy illumination. Unlike the Seelie, an Unseelie adolescent must eat a seed of discord from the Obsidian Tree during Cadence to obtain their powers. Fey gain a +2 bonus to Disguise and Stealth checks in the Nightwood, while mortals suffer a -1 penalty to all their saves (double these bonuses and penalties in Nighthold).

## Adventure Hooks for the Heartlands

- The Heart Tree is dying! The watercourse that feeds its roots has been poisoned, and a way to cleanse the stream must be found soon. Oberon has called adventurers throughout the dreamlands to the aid of the Seelie in this time of need. It is rumored that the only way to heal the Heart Tree is to find the five springs which once fed its roots at the beginning of time. Unfortunately, these springs are now scattered throughout the domains, and finding them will take great persistence and luck.
- There are reports that Mab has discovered a cavern of neverite within the northern Heartlands; if this is true, she must not be allowed to hold onto it. Other stories say she is grooming a select force of Unseelie dreamlords to wreak revenge upon the world. There are even tales she has discovered a means of creating soulless servitors to do her will. However, with so little solid information available, many of the dreamlords are seeking out agents who are willing to risk their lives to uncover the awful truths of Mab's next scheme.

## THE HEDGE

The Hedge weaves its way through the central portions of Nevermore. It is slightly less stable than the Eye, though it rarely changes in any drastic fashion, allowing for relatively predictable travel routes. The general terrain of the Hedge is mountainous and hilly, though portions of it range from desert to marshlands. The Hedge Mountains are the most prominent feature of this domain, encircling the Eye with a wall of white-capped peaks and splitting the Heartlands into two.

### DOMAIN AURA

Apply a -5 domain modifier to Dream Shift and Backlash checks. In addition, double the number of Dream Conviction points needed to activate Dream Conviction abilities (see **Using Dream Conviction** in **Dream Conviction**).

## Ordan

Known as the Gateway to the Eye, the fortress city of Ordan stands in the middle of the only established pass through the Hedge Mountains. The entire city is organized in such a manner as to become a giant killing field for hostile forces. The buildings are constructed like keeps, with arrow slits and battlements, rather than windows and doorways. In addition, they are placed in such a way as to funnel enemies into murderous wards where arrows and siege engines can take a vicious toll. The citizens of Ordan are martial and orderly by nature, with strict rules and regulations regarding almost every aspect of their lives. They believe that honor and duty are more important than their own



personal freedoms, and most have sworn to defend the Eye from all who would do its inhabitants harm.

### DREAMLORD

Ordo, the Hedge Lord, is an accomplished and resolute defender of the Hedge and the Eye it protects. He founded Ordan and its Hedge Wardens to protect his sisters, Mergia and Justina, and has dedicated his life to ensuring nightmares and other corrupting influences do not gain a foothold in the Hedge or the Eye. He understands that no amount of patrolling and hunting can uncover all of the agents of evil, but believes without such vigilance, the world would fall into a nightmarish time of sorrow and destruction not seen since the Age of Strife.

### INHABITANTS

The inhabitants of Ordan are fiercely loyal to Ordo and dutiful towards the purpose he has set before them. During every cycle, the citizens spend at least one hour training in melee and bow, and at the beginning of each movement, there is a Grand Tournament held in the city. At this fair and friendly competition, men and women test their mettle against each other in mass melees, one-on-one duels, archery contests, jousting and other martial pursuits. At the end of the triad long tourney, Ordo crowns the champions and feasts them within the Hedge Hall.

### AURA

Ordan is warded against nightmares. In addition, those who commit or aid another in the commission of a crime are teleported, as per the Apport power (though with no weight limit), into one of the holding cells within the Circle of Penance. These cells are organized according to the offense perpetrated by the prisoner, and it is next to impossible to escape from them, as they are warded against all powers. Those who are sworn to Ordo gain a +1 bonus to Toughness saves (+2 in the Hedge Tower).

## Shadow's Keep

Hidden in the heart of the Hedge Marshes, Shadow's Keep is almost impossible to find without the help of the Silent Watchers or some other servant of Lokanan. It is surrounded by a confusing maze of half sunken ruins filled with dangerous traps and beasts. Only the citizens of Shadow's Keep know how to navigate Lokanan's Labyrinth without harm, and many make a lucrative business as a guide. Shadow's Keep is a realm shrouded in shadow, with inhabitants as secretive as their king, who often deal in alchemical wares that cannot be found anywhere else. One can also find a number of freelance spies and assassins for hire within Shadow's Keep, though their reliability is dubious at best and only procured with substantial sums of neverite.

### DREAMLORD

Lokanan, the Shadow King, is a secretive and enigmatic figure that few understand, which is exactly how he prefers it. After the Age of Strife, he settled in the Hedge, where he cultivated an intricate web of informants and spies throughout Nevermore. His network keeps him informed of the plots and plans of the other dreamlords, and he often has a hand in the failure or success of them.

### INHABITANTS

Shadow's Keep fosters a great deal of cleverness and opportunism in its inhabitants. From idle gossip to full-blown spying, the citizens of Shadow's Keep are well versed in the arts of intrigue.



### AURA

At the end of every Cadence, Lokanan may choose to move his realm to a different location within the Hedge Marshes and change the layout of the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth and Shadow Keep are warded against Scrying. Those within the Labyrinth suffer a -2 penalty to Search and Survival checks, while those in the Shadow's Keep gain a +5 bonus to Gather Information checks.

## Adventure Hooks for the Hedge

- The preparations for the next Grand Tournament are underway and there are posters plastered all over the city of Ordan. However, some of the current champions have been murdered, and no one has appeared within the Circles of Penance to be condemned for the crimes. This is concerning not only to the authorities who want to get to the bottom of this mystery, but also to the organizers of the tournament who not only need new champions, but now it seems they need guardians for those who are left.
- An artifact collector needs an escort to protect him as he weaves his way through Lokanan's Labyrinth. He has a detailed map of the maze, but does not completely trust the person who sold it to him. He hopes to bring enough brains and brawn along with him to make sure even if there is a wrong turn here or there, he eventually will make it to Shadow's Keep and his contact.

## The Wyrd

Nothing is constant in the ever-changing lands of the Wyrd, where terrain, atmosphere and even inhabitants can be radically altered in the course of a single turning. Almost every conceivable landscape, skyline and creature can be encountered within this domain. Realms



within the Wyrd are rarely found in the same place twice and seem to roam its amorphous constraints without a hint as to where they will be from cycle to cycle.

### DOMAIN AURA

Apply a +10 domain modifier to Dream Shifts and a +5 domain modifier to Backlash checks. In addition, all creatures may use the improbable deed and unbelievable challenge Dream Conviction abilities without expending Dream Conviction.

## Isle of Poesis

The Isle of Poesis hovers high above the lands of the Wyrd, suspended upon a cluster of incandescent clouds with changing hues. Those few who find the floating island home of Poesi are likely to be treated to a fantastic and entertaining realm where performers of all types ply their trade, and even the very buildings and objects within them participate in the merrymaking. The isle is alive with sights of wonder and amusement, sounds of laughter and song, smells of flowers and honeyed cakes, tastes of sugar and spice, and the tender touches of love.

### DREAMLORD

Poesi, the Poet Prince, is a benevolent, if sometimes melancholy, ruler. Since the Forgotten Age, he has searched in vain for his wife, and until the Blood of Menhalig and tears of Mergia were shed, he remained but a shadow of his former self. However, the end of the Age of Strife opened his eyes, and since then, he has begun to live his life anew. He founded the Wordsmiths to be his eyes and ears within the world, while he worked to bring hope once again into the hearts of mortals and fey. Thus far, in this Age of Serenity, he has succeeded in doing so, but he senses the future holds dark tales for dark times.



### INHABITANTS

Life upon the Isle of Poesis is spontaneous and good-humored, and rarely does a cycle go by without something wondrous happening. As such, the inhabitants of the island have become extraordinarily imaginative and adaptable in all that they do. The citizens of the Isle of Poesis are also exceedingly witty in their usage of the spoken and written word for which they are renowned throughout Nevermore.

### AURA

The isle of Poesi is warded against nightmares. In addition, those on the isle of Poesi come under the effects of Heart Shaping (hope) and gain a +2 bonus to Acrobatics and Perform checks (+4 in the Poet's Palace).

## Free Camp

The Free Camp is populated by fierce and loyal fey who cast aside their oaths to Mab after the Age of Strife. This realm is made up of two distinct areas. The Warrior's Ring is centered upon Gwynudd and is often led on raids into the Dreadlands where his warriors test their mettle against nightmares and other agents of evil. The Ward's Ring resides within the Wyrd and migrates around the Wyrd from cycle to cycle, which makes it nearly impossible for enemies to find.

### DREAMLORD

Gwynudd, the Untamed Chieftain, is the strong-willed and animated leader of the Free Camp. He spends most of his time within the Dreadlands, even though his realm is considered a part of the Wyrd. His Free Riders are the most feared cavalry in the dreamlands, and their excursions into the Dreadlands are legendary.

### INHABITANTS

The Warrior's Ring fosters an ardent loyalty and fierce courage within the Free Camp's warriors and sharpens their martial skills through its constant struggles against the Dreadland's nightmares. On the other hand, the Ward's Ring encourages communal responsibility and the nurturing of the young. When the Free Camp is united, these two aspects fuse and form a people united in their fervor for the freedoms they enjoy.

### AURA

During Cadence, Bhblendhl and Gwynudd can unite their realms into one. This combined realm comes under the effects of Heart Shaping (friendship and hope) for the duration of Cadence.

The Warrior's Ring is treated as if it was in the Wyrd. The Ward's Ring is warded against nightmares. As a full-round action, Gwynudd may return the Warrior's ring to the Ward's ring. When this is done, both rings unite into the Free Camp where both warriors and their wards (wives, children, etc.) mingle together for a time of rest and revelry. Those within the Warrior's Ring gain a +5 bonus to Ride checks, while those in the Ward's Ring gain a +3 bonus to Medicine checks.

## Wending Refuge

The Wending Refuge is a pristine and breathtaking sanctuary where exotic animals and plants reside around an enchanted oasis. The inhabitants of this realm range from elves to orcs and everything between, but no matter what race one belongs to, those who claim

residence in the Wending Refuge are dedicated to removing the taint of nightmares from Nevermore. They live in harmony with the Wyrd and its ever-changing landscapes and enjoy the fresh discoveries that each new cycle brings.

### DREAMLORD

Bhlendhl, the Blind Wanderer, wanders the Wyrd within his Wending Refuge and speaks with wisdom woven from ages of experience. He has sworn to protect the Wyrd from corruption and seeks the destruction of Diabolus and his minions, especially nightmares and diaboli. He uses the supernatural powers of the Seer's Spring to keep an eye on his enemies and guide his followers where they are most needed in the dreamlands.

### INHABITANTS

The inhabitants of the Wending Refuge are as dedicated to cleansing Nevermore of the taint of nightmares as their dreamlord. His followers are fanatically devoted to Bhlendhl and believe him to be a prophet of Faehalig's will. Most of the populace of the realm was drawn here, as if by the hand of fate, after suffering a great loss at the hands of nightmares or diaboli. Many believe their arrival in the Wending Refuge is a calling from Nevermore to heal it of the poisonous presence of nightmares and diaboli, and they spend their every moment preparing for the struggles ahead.

### AURA

During Cadence, Bhlendhl and Gwynnudd can unite their realms into one. This combined realm comes under the effects of Heart Shaping (friendship and hope) for the duration of Cadence.

The Seer's Spring grants the Scrying power to those who look into it, and the Vision and Object Reading powers for one cycle to those who drink from it during Cadence. All of these powers are granted as an adept of the character's level. In addition, those within the Wending Refuge gain a +3 bonus to Medicine checks (+5 at the Seer's Spring).

## Adventure Hooks for the Wyrd

After the last Cadence, a strange mansion appeared upon the Isle of Poesis. Its front door and windows are magically sealed, and only awakened can enter it. Prince Poesi has set a prize for those who discover the secrets of this mysterious manor. Some believe Poesi put it there, while others suspect some sinister purpose behind the mansion, but whoever's hand shaped its halls has not come forward, nor have any returned to tell their tale.

Gwynnudd's son is dying, and after consulting with his seers, he has sought the help of humans in securing the cure. It lies somewhere within the Wyrd and may only be touched by mortal hands. His seers have written down their visions and the signs by which the adventurers will know they are upon the right pathway through the dreamlands, but time is running out, and they must hurry if they are to succeed.

The lone survivor of a diaboli raid is seeking out the Wending Refuge, but fears the minions of Diabolus are following her. She believes the raid was meant to capture or kill her because she had recently manifested the ability to destroy nightmares, even diaboli, with her voice. Since her escape, she has been drawn to the Wyrd and keeps having visions of the Wending Refuge.

## NEVERMORE RULES

The following rules help create a framework for heroes to realize their surreal potentials in Nevermore. It introduces the concept of Dream Conviction, the Dreamer role, Dreamer feats and Nevermore's unique item creation rules. With this section, players and Narrators will be able to get their Nevermore campaigns off the ground and into the airy heights of their imagination.

## NEVERMORE HERO CREATION

Normally, characters do not change their ability scores, backgrounds, roles, characteristics and the like when they enter Nevermore. However, with the Narrator's approval players may change one or more of these details when they enter the dreamlands. These changes should explore the secret aspirations or fears which the characters have and play some important role in their adventures within Nevermore.

## DREAM CONVICTION

Dream Conviction represents the subconscious energy a character possesses and his ability to enhance himself and influence his surroundings in Nevermore. The spending of Dream Conviction is similar to that of Conviction, but represents bending the essence of Nevermore to the character's will to produce some extraordinary effect.

## Dream Conviction Points

A character has a base number of Dream Conviction points equal to twice his normal Conviction, though this can be modified by certain Dreamer feats. Dream Conviction points replace normal Conviction points. Characters regain all their expended Dream Conviction points at the turning of each cycle.

## Using Dream Conviction Points

Unless otherwise noted, spending a Dream Conviction point is a reaction, taking no time, and can be done at any time. You may spend up to half of your Dream Conviction points per scene without causing a Backlash check (see **Backlash** later in this section). Note that the following uses of Dream Conviction are slightly altered from those for normal Conviction. You can spend Dream Conviction for any of the following:

### ACTIVATE INCREDIBLE CORE ABILITY

As *activate core ability*, with the following changes.

### DETERMINATION

In addition to the normal benefits, you also immediately recover from your worst damage or fatigue condition.

### EXPERTISE

Instead of the normal benefits, you gain 8 temporary skill ranks in the chosen skill, for one scene.

## THE TALENT

When spending Dream Conviction to access a temporary power, you gain the power for one scene. When spending Dream Conviction to eliminate fatigue modifiers, you also recover from one level of fatigue.

## AMAZING RE-ROLL

As *re-roll*, except you gain a bonus equal to 2 plus 1 for every four character levels (+3 at 4th-level, +4 at 8th-level, etc.) to your re-roll.

## APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE

You can call upon the assistance of Nevermore when in need, especially in desperate and dire situations. The following are three types of assistance Nevermore might offer to you:

### PLAUSIBLE ASSISTANCE

An item, location or creature turns up that is both appropriate to the scene and needed by you, such as a cart spilling its contents behind you as you are pursued down a busy street, a narrow alleyway to duck down or a guard answering your call for help. You must spend one Dream Conviction point to obtain plausible assistance.

### IMPLAUSIBLE ASSISTANCE

A item, location or creature appears, but is not appropriate to the scene, such as a bottle of holy water in a graveyard crawling with undead, a blessed sanctuary in the middle of the Dreadlands or a beast tamer appearing in the forest just in time to calm the wild beast that

has cornered you. You must spend four Dream Conviction points to obtain implausible assistance.

## DESPERATE ASSISTANCE

A solution or opportunity to escape a desperate situation you are in is discovered, such as when you are hopelessly lost or stranded, stuck or trapped without a tangible exit or escape, or faced with an opponent or opponents who are vastly superior to you. You must spend eight Dream Conviction points to obtain desperate assistance.

## NARRATOR FIAT

The resulting assistance a character receives from Nevermore is always at the discretion of the Narrator and may not always be exactly what the character wants, though it should always be helpful in some way. Narrators are encouraged to offer assistance to players when an adventure is stuck or has run into a bit of back luck, even allowing the party to spend Dream Conviction as a group, instead of individually.

## DREAM CRAFTING

You can spend Dream Conviction points to create items out of pure thought (see **Dream Crafting** in **Nevermore Equipment**).

## DREAM WEAVING

You may spend Dream Conviction to temporarily gain a power that can enhance your own abilities or change the progeny, atmosphere or landscape of Nevermore by sheer force of your will.





A power gained via Dream Weaving uses all of the normal rules for the power (including maintenance, fatigue, etc.), but the power can only be used for one effect before it is lost.

The following powers can be mimicked in regards to yourself: body control, cure, cure blindness/deafness, cure disease, cure poison, enhance self, enhance senses, flesh shaping, second sight and visions.

The following powers can be mimicked in regards to progeny (i.e. creatures created from the essence of Nevermore):

*beast link, bliss, calm, cure, cure blindness/deafness, cure disease, cure poison, dominate, flesh shaping, harm, heart reading, heart shaping, mind probe, mind reading, mind shaping, mind touch, plant shaping, sense minds, suggestion and truth-reading.*

The following powers can be mimicked in regards to atmosphere: cold shaping, fire shaping, illusion, light shaping, ward, weather shaping and wind shaping.

The following powers can be mimicked in regards to landscape: earth shaping, manipulate object, move object, nature reading, object reading and water shaping.

### ACTIVATING A DREAM WEAVE

You may spend one Dream Conviction point to be treated as having 1 effective level of adept in the power you are mimicking. You may increase your effective adept level by 2 for each additional Dream Conviction point you spend beyond the first, although you may only spend a number of Dream Conviction points in this way equal to 1 plus 1 for every odd level after 1st-level (2 at 3rd-level, 3 at 5th-level, etc.).

### ADEPTS, DREAMERS AND DREAM WEAVING

If you are an adept or dreamer and can already use a particular power, or gain it through an aspect, you do not have to spend Dream Conviction to gain access to the power, though you may temporarily increase your effective adept or dreamer level by 2 for each Dream Conviction point you spend. You are still limited to how much Dream Conviction you can spend to improve your adept or dreamer level with a particular power.

### QUICKEN DREAM WEAVE

You can lower the time required to activate a power by increasing the fatigue Difficulty by +8 to lower it by one category or +16 if lowered by two. The time categories in descending order are: hours, minutes, rounds (includes 1 minute powers), full-round action, standard action, move action and free action. If you fail the fatigue Difficulty by 10 or more, you suffer a number of levels of fatigue equal to 1 plus the number of categories you lowered the activation time.

For example, if you want to use the move earth power as a full-round action, you would need to lower the time category by two (from minutes to rounds to full-round) and increase the fatigue Difficulty by +16. If you fail the check by 10 or more, you suffer three levels of fatigue.

### AD HOC POWERS

The Narrator may allow ad hoc powers to be created when you are looking for an effect that is not listed among those normally granted by a power. These ad hoc powers should work similarly to other powers and have appropriate Difficulties.

## WORLD-ALTERING WEAVES

These dream weaves are the stuff of legends and cataclysms and have lasting effects on the world of Nevermore. Narrators should set the criteria a character must meet in order to accomplish a world-altering weave. These conditions should be storyline based and involve a great deal of preparation and sacrifice on the part of the one performing the dream weave.

A world altering dream weave may only be attempted if you have an effective adept level of 21 or above. In addition to the Dream Conviction spent to reach this effective adept level, you must spend twelve more Dream Conviction points to trigger the world-altering event. There is also an automatic Backlash check with the base Difficulty increased by 20.

## SPIRIT WEAVES

Whenever a character with the Dream Blood feat dies or is revived from the dead, it causes a spirit weave. Typically, spirit weaves involving death have negative effects on the character's environment and, in particular, the character's killer. On the other hand, spirit weaves involving rebirth are usually beneficial in nature. Either way, the spirit weave should reflect the inner psyche of the character. Characters who die or are revived can attempt to create a spirit weave with their remaining Dream Conviction points with no expenditure restrictions and no chance of backlash. Narrators may wish to restrict spirit weaves to player characters and important Narrator characters, to increase their dramatic effect. Characters that come under the effects of a spirit weave can make saving throws versus the effects, depending upon the power being mimicked. Creatures with supernatural resistance can also use it, if applicable.

## DREAM WEAVING EXAMPLES

**Example 1:** A 5th-level expert with +2 Charisma uses the *Calm* power against a progeny. He takes a full-round action and spends 1 Dream Conviction to gain the *Calm* power. At this point, he is considered to be a 1st-level adept with 4 ranks in the *Calm* power. The *Calm* power has a Difficulty 13 (10 plus half his adept level plus Charisma key ability) Will saving throw and lasts for 4 rounds (equal to his ranks) if it affects the progeny.

The expert chooses to spend 2 additional Dream Conviction points (he could have spent up to three) to increase his effective level in adept by 4, up to a 5th-level adept with 8 ranks in the *Calm* power. The *Calm* power has a Difficulty 15 Will saving throw and lasts for 8 rounds if it affects the progeny.

**Example 2:** A 5th-level adept with the *Calm* power and +2 Charisma uses the *Calm* power against a progeny. Because he already has access to the *Calm* power, he does not need to spend a Dream Conviction point to activate this dream weave. Instead, the adept only spends Dream Conviction points to increase his effective adept level with the *Calm* power.

The adept chooses to spend 3 additional Dream Conviction points to increase his effective level in adept by 6, up to an 11th-level adept with 14 ranks in the *Calm* power. The *Calm* power now has a Difficulty 17 Will saving throw and lasts for 14 rounds if it affects the progeny.

## ESCAPE CERTAIN DEATH

As *escape death*, except you may spend two Dream Conviction points after a failed Constitution check to automatically stabilize.

### EXTRAORDINARY FEAT

As *heroic feat*, except you gain the benefits of the feat for one scene, instead of one round. For feats that can be acquired multiple times, you gain the benefit of one acquisition of the feat for each Dream Conviction point spent. During a scene, you may gain a number of extraordinary feats equal to 1 plus 1 for every four character levels (1 at 1st-level, 2 at 4th-level, etc.).

### HEROIC SURGE

As *surge*, except you can spend two Dream Conviction points to take your standard or move action after another character's normal actions for a round, instead of before or after your own. If more than one character uses heroic surge at the same time, the actions are resolved in initiative order, with the highest acting first. This Dream Conviction ability may only be used once per round.

### IMPROBABLE DEED

You can spend a Dream Conviction point to reduce the Difficulty of a formidable or greater skill check by 10. If a skill does not list challenges of these Difficulties, then you and the Narrator can mimic powers, create ad hoc actions involving a skill or add challenges to the action. This use of Dream Conviction counts as an extra effort and causes a level of fatigue unless you spend an additional Dream Conviction point.

### POWERS AND SKILLS

A Narrator may allow certain skills to mimic powers, though in this case the Difficulties of these powers should be increased by 5 instead of decreased, and your ranks in the skill count as ranks in the power. For example, Medicine could be used for the Cure Power, Handle Animal for Beast Link, Survival for Nature Reading and Sense Motive for Truth-Reading.



### AD HOC IMPROBABLE DEEDS

The following are some examples of ad hoc improbable deeds for skills: balance on water (Balance: Near Impossible), walk on a perfectly flat ceiling (Climb: Near Impossible), use Jump to fly (Jump: Near Impossible), gain darkvision for a scene (Notice: Super Heroic), stand in the Saddle (Ride: Heroic) or swim up a waterfall (Near Impossible).

### REMARKABLE RECOVERY

As *recovery*, except you make an immediate recovery check and afterwards you may choose one of the following to occur:

- Immediately shake off a stunned or fatigued condition.
- If you are exhausted, you become fatigued.
- If disabled, you can take a strenuous action for one round without your condition worsening to dying.
- If during combat, you may automatically recover one bruise and one hurt.
- If used outside of combat, you immediately erase all bruised, hurt and staggered conditions.

### SECOND WIND

As *cancel fatigue*, except you cancel an additional level of fatigue (so you are unaffected by a fatigued result, winded by an exhausted result, etc).

### SURREAL REACTION

As *dodge bonus*, except you can choose to retain either your dodge or parry bonus until your next action. You can also expend a Dream Conviction point before an opponent's attack to gain a bonus equal to 2 plus 1 for every four character levels (+3 at 4th-level, +4 at 8th-level, etc.) to your Defense versus that attack.

### UNBELIEVABLE CHALLENGE

You can spend a Conviction point when performing a challenge. If you do so, you ignore up to a -10 penalty or +10 increase in Difficulty from the challenge. In essence, you perform the challenge as if it were a normal check. If the challenge imposes a greater Difficulty increase or penalty, you only ignore the first +/-10.

## Backlashes

When a character spends over half of their Dream Conviction points in a scene, he creates the possibility of a backlash. In effect he has pushed Nevermore beyond its normal limits, and it may have a reaction to him doing so. Depending upon the magnitude of the failure, the instability could cause anything from a minor inconvenience to a world-altering event.

The Backlash check is a Charisma check with a Difficulty equal to 10 plus 1 for every Dream Conviction point spent above the character's allotment. In addition, a character who fails his Concentration check while dream weaving adds +1 to the Backlash check Difficulty per point he failed his Concentration check by.

Once the Narrator determines the Difficulty of the Backlash check, the character makes a Backlash check modified by his Charisma. If the character succeeds at his Backlash check, then no backlash is suffered. A roll of a 20 indicates no Backlash (no matter the Difficulty), while a roll of 1 is treated as a roll of -10 modified by the character's Charisma modifier. If, however, the character fails his Backlash check, then consult the **Backlash** table to determine the severity of the backlash.

## BACKLASHES

| Failure By | Magnitude      | Min. Level* | Effect   |
|------------|----------------|-------------|--|
| 9 or less  | Insignificant  | 1           | 1st-level adept power (Character only).  |
| 10–19      | Minor          | 1           | 2nd to 4th-level adept power (Character only).   |
| 20–24      | Significant    | 4           | 5th to 9th-level adept power (Character or environment).   |
| 25–29      | Major          | 8           | 10th to 14th-level adept power (Character and/or environment).   |
| 30–34      | Massive        | 12          | 15th to 19th-level adept power (Character and/or environment).   |
| 35+        | World-Altering | 16          | 20th-level or higher adept power (Character and/or environment; these backlashes are the stuff of legends and cataclysms). |

\*Note that some backlashes can only be triggered by characters with a certain minimum effective character level; in the case of triggering backlashes that would normally be beyond those allowed to your effective character level, simply take the highest backlash allowable and apply it.

**BACKLASH MODIFIERS**

Apply both the hour and domain modifiers to the Difficulty of Backlash rolls when determining the magnitude of a backlash.

The hour modifiers are: -5 during Burst and Gleam, +0 during the hours of Glitter, Flicker, Pallor, and Dim and +5 during Murk and Gloom.

The domain modifiers are: -10 in the Eye, -5 in the Hedge, +0 in the Heartlands, +5 in the Wyrd and +10 in the Dreadlands.

**PURPOSEFUL FAILURE**

A character that sets out to purposefully fail her Backlash check by spending an amount of Dream Conviction points that will guarantee a major to world-altering backlash should experience backlashes that are exceptionally devastating to her character. She should still roll to see if a backlash occurs, after all she could roll a 20, but if she fails, Narrators should keep in mind why she failed when assigning the result of the backlash. Note that a character attempting a desperate action in order to save a life, or some other heroic deed, should not be considered to be purposefully attempting to fail a Backlash check, and Narrators are encouraged to come up with a suitable backlash reflecting such self-sacrifice. Of course, this is a fine line and the Narrator should be wary of it and the players not abuse it.

**TIME**

This check is a reaction.

**RE-ROLLS**

No, if unable to suppress a backlash on the first try, you lose the ability to stop it from occurring, even with the amazing re-roll ability.

**NARRATOR FIAT**

Do not let these rules run your game! Backlashes are meant to be a balancing factor for the benefits gained via the introduction of Dream Conviction points, but if you believe these rules cause too much of a disruption to your campaign, only have characters make Backlash checks at critical and dramatically appropriate times. You also might increase the Dream Conviction allotment for particularly tough scenes or choose not to use Backlash checks at all and keep characters strictly to their Dream Conviction allotment.

**BACKLASH EXAMPLE**

*A 5th level awakened character with +3 Charisma has 10 Dream Conviction points and a Dream Conviction point allotment of 5 per*

*scene before having to make a Backlash check. The character is in the Heartlands (+0 Backlash modifier).*

*If this character spent 6 Dream Conviction points during a scene, he would need to make a Difficulty 11 Charisma check. If he rolls an 8 or better on his Backlash check, he succeeds and suffers no backlash. If he rolls a 2 to 7, then he suffers an insignificant backlash, but if he rolls a 1, he suffers a minor backlash since he is considered to have failed by 18.*

*If later in the same round the character spends 4 more Dream Conviction points, he must make another Backlash check at Difficulty 15. If he rolls a 12 or better on his Backlash check, he succeeds and suffers no backlash. If he rolls between 3 and 11, he only suffers an insignificant backlash; if he rolls a 2, he suffers a minor backlash, but if he rolls 1, he would suffer a significant backlash since he is considered to have failed by 22 (-10 for his roll + 3 Charisma vs. Difficulty of 15).*





| DREAMER |        |      |     |      |            |
|---------|--------|------|-----|------|------------|
| Level   | Combat | Fort | Ref | Will | Reputation |
| 1st     | +0     | +0   | +0  | +2   | +1         |
| 2nd     | +1     | +0   | +0  | +3   | +1         |
| 3rd     | +1     | +1   | +1  | +3   | +1         |
| 4th     | +2     | +1   | +1  | +4   | +2         |
| 5th     | +2     | +1   | +1  | +4   | +2         |
| 6th     | +3     | +2   | +2  | +5   | +2         |
| 7th     | +3     | +2   | +2  | +5   | +2         |
| 8th     | +4     | +2   | +2  | +6   | +3         |
| 9th     | +4     | +3   | +3  | +6   | +3         |
| 10th    | +5     | +3   | +3  | +7   | +3         |
| 11th    | +5     | +3   | +3  | +7   | +3         |
| 12th    | +6     | +4   | +4  | +8   | +4         |
| 13th    | +6     | +4   | +4  | +8   | +4         |
| 14th    | +7     | +4   | +4  | +9   | +4         |
| 15th    | +7     | +5   | +5  | +9   | +4         |
| 16th    | +8     | +5   | +5  | +10  | +5         |
| 17th    | +8     | +5   | +5  | +10  | +5         |
| 18th    | +9     | +6   | +6  | +11  | +5         |
| 19th    | +9     | +6   | +6  | +11  | +5         |
| 20th    | +10    | +6   | +6  | +12  | +6         |

## DREAMER ROLE

Dreamers have the blood of dreams flowing through their veins. They are infused with bizarre abilities and capable of fantastic feats. Dreamers are renowned for their influence over Nevermore's surreal energies and are respected, and in some cases, feared because of this. A dreamer can control most any aspect of himself and his environment, which makes him both unpredictable and versatile, a potent combination.

### Dreamer Role Outside of Nevermore

When a character is not in Nevermore, the Narrator should decide whether his dreamer levels are kept or replaced with levels from another role, usually Adept. If the dreamer levels are kept, it is recommended that the character gain two free uses of a his aspect per day (these stack with the Improve Aspect feat) and for each Dream Blood feat he has he should have one additional maximum Conviction point and regain an additional Conviction point per day.

### Traits

Dreamers have the following traits:

#### ABILITIES

Mental abilities are usually more important to dreamers than physical ones. Intelligent dreamers manipulate their environment through analysis and logic, while wise dreamers use their will to

influence the world. Charismatic dreamers convince Nevermore to do what they want through personal magnetism and are less likely to suffer backlashes because of this. Dreamers may also find particular physical abilities useful, depending upon the aspects they choose to acquire.

#### THE FLAIR (CORE ABILITY)

The dreamer can spend a Dream Conviction point to make use of an aspect they do not possess for one scene. This works much like spending a Dream Conviction point to emulate a feat. A dreamer with the Flair can also spend a Dream Conviction point to eliminate any accumulated modifiers to fatigue saving throws for using aspects and recover from one level of fatigue. See **Aspects** for more information on aspect abilities.

#### ASPECTS

Dreamers can develop and use certain aspects, described in detail in the **Aspects** section. A dreamer gains one aspect at 1st-level instead of a feat. In addition, a dreamer can choose to acquire an aspect in place of one of the dreamer's normal feats, either starting feats or those acquired by improving in level. So, a starting dreamer can have up to three aspects (at the cost of the two open starting feats), two aspects and one feat, or two feats and one aspect at 1st-level. Each time the dreamer gains a level, the player has a choice of taking a new feat or a new aspect.

#### SKILLS

The Dreamer can choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum of 1). Dreamers gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level (minimum 1).



Important skills for dreamers include Concentration, Craft, Gather Information and Notice. In addition, dreamers often focus upon skill sets which mesh with their chosen aspects.

### FEATS

Aspect, Dream Blood and choose 2 others from General or Dreamer. A dreamer can also choose an aspect in place of a feat.

## DREAMER FEATS

The following are dreamer feats and are limited to dreamers.

### GIFTED ASPECT (DREAMER)

Choose one aspect. You gain a +1 bonus to aspect rank with that aspect. You can take this feat more than once. Each time, it either increases your current gifted aspect bonus by 1 (Maximum +5) or applies to to a different aspect.

### DREAM BLOOD (DREAMER)

You gain two extra Dream Conviction points. Choose a mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma) as the key ability for your backlash checks and aspects. Your total aspect bonus with any known aspect is your aspect rank + key ability score. Total save Difficulty is the base save Difficulty + key ability.

You can take this feat once every four dreamer levels (twice at 4th-level, thrice at 8th-level, etc.). Each time you do so, you gain two extra Dream Conviction points and may change you key ability score.

### IMPROVED ASPECT (DREAMER)

Choose one aspect. You may now use this aspect three times per cycle without spending Dream Conviction. You can take this feat more than once. Each time, you apply it to a new aspect.

### INNATE ASPECT (DREAMER)

PREREQUISITE: IMPROVED ASPECT

Choose one aspect. Your physical form is permanently altered to reflect your innate aspect and you may use its abilities without spending Dream Conviction. You can take this feat more than once. Each time, you apply it to a new aspect and modify your appearance accordingly. You are considered to have all the powers granted by an innate aspect for the purpose of prerequisites for feats.

## Adept Feats

A dreamer can choose the following adept feats, but applies them to his aspects, instead of powers: Empower, Erase Signature, Quicken Power, Shield Penetration, Subtle Power and Widen Power.

## ASPECTS

Aspects are supernatural powers that reflect an important facet of a dreamer's psyche. Aspects use the same rules as powers (see **Powers in Chapter 4: Supernatural Powers** of *True20*), except you must spend a Dream Conviction point to use them for one scene, though an aspect's effects can extend past the end of a scene. Aspects use all of the normal rules for the powers they mimic (including maintenance, fatigue, etc.).

## Acquiring Aspects

Dreamers acquire aspects like other heroes acquire feats. In fact, a dreamer can choose to exchange a feat to learn an aspect instead. Also like feats, some aspects have prerequisites that must be met in order to acquire them. A dreamer can meet an aspect's prerequisites and acquire it at the same level.

## Aspect Rank

A dreamer's rank in any known aspect is equal to their dreamer level +3. Choose a mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma) as the key ability for your character's aspects. The following are some example aspects.

## ASPECT DESCRIPTIONS

The aspects in this section follow the general format for power descriptions as presented in **Chapter 4: Supernatural Powers of True20**.

### ABILITY ASPECT

#### FATIGUING

Choose one of the following abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma.

*Personal Bonus:* Adds indicated bonus to your ability score.

*Aura Bonus:* Adds indicated bonus to the ability scores of all allies (including yourself) within a radius of up to twice your rank in feet.

*Aura Penalty:* All enemies within a radius of up to twice your rank in feet must make a Fortitude (for physical abilities) or Will (for mental abilities) saving throw or subtract the indicated amount from their ability score.

*Multiple Ability Aspects:* If you have more than one Ability Aspect, you may make one check and split the bonus or penalty, as desired, between the ability scores you have aspects in or make checks for each ability score.

### MULTIPLE ABILITY ASPECTS

| Result   | Personal Bonus | Aura Bonus | Aura Penalty |
|----------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Up to 14 | +1             | +0         | -0           |
| 15–19    | +2             | +1         | -1           |
| 20–24    | +3             | +1         | -1           |
| 25–29    | +4             | +2         | -2           |
| 30–34    | +5             | +2         | -2           |
| 35+      | +6             | +3         | -3           |

**Time:** Move action. The benefit lasts for 10 rounds (1 minute). If you take 20 when making this check, you spend 2 minutes and suffer a +20 increase in the fatigue Difficulty.

### ELEMENTAL ASPECT, PHYSICAL

Choose one of the following elements: cold, earth, fire, water or wind. You can use the Elemental Aura power (earth grants you a +2 bonus to Toughness).

*Elemental Strike (Fatiguing, Maintenance):* As a standard action, you can imbue your unarmed attacks with damaging elemental energy. The damage is equal to 1 + 1 for every four levels of dreamer. Elemental Strike is fatiguing, with a Fatigue saving throw of 14 (+2 for every additional point of damage).

*Elemental Movement (Fatiguing, Maintenance):* As a move action, you gain a movement speed appropriate to your chosen element. Air grants you a fly speed equal to 5 feet with perfect maneuverability. Cold grants ice-walking, which allows normal movement and skill use on icy surfaces and grants you a bonus to your base ground speed on icy surfaces equal to 10 feet. Earth grants you a burrow speed through dirt and stone equal to 5 feet. Fire increases your base ground speed by 10 feet. Water grants you a swim speed equal to 20 feet. Add an additional 5 (air or earth), 10 (for cold and fire), or 20 feet to the granted movement speeds for every four dreamer levels. Elemental movement is fatiguing, with a Fatigue save Difficulty of 14 (+2 per four dreamer levels).

### ELEMENTAL ASPECT, SPIRITUAL

Choose one of the following elements: cold, earth, fire, water or wind. You can use its Elemental Blast, Resistance and Shaping powers.

### EMOTIVE ASPECT

#### FATIGUING (SEE INDIVIDUAL POWERS)

Choose one of the following emotions: despair, fear, friendship, hatred, hope or rage. You can use the Heart Reading, Heart Shaping and Suggestion powers (with Widen Power) to detect and engender your chosen emotion in yourself and others.

*Heighten Emotion (Fatiguing):* Make an opposed check against the Will save of a target who is currently experiencing your chosen emotion. Willing creatures require no check. If successful, you increase the effects the emotion has on the target. Despair, Hope





and Rage double the bonuses and penalties associated with them. Friendship and hatred cause a two level shift in the attitude of the target (indifferent to friendly, friendly to unfriendly). Fear causes the panicked condition.

### LIFE ASPECT

Choose one of the following: life or unlife. If you are linked to life, you can use the Cure and Imbue Life powers (with Widen Power). If you are linked to unlife, you can use the Harm and Imbue Unlife power (with Widen Power).

### TOTEM ASPECT, PHYSICAL

Choose one of the following animals: bat, cat, dog, hawk, rat, snake (viper) or wolf. You gain the ability to use the Self-Shaping power to transform into that animal.

*Totem Strike (Fatiguing, Maintenance):* As a standard action, you gain natural attacks (and the training to use them). The cat and hawk totems grants two claw attacks (slashing) with damage equal to 1 + 1 for every four levels of dreamer. The bat, dog, rat, snake and wolf totems grant a bite attack (piercing) with damage equal to 2 + 1 for every four levels of dreamer. Totem Strike is fatiguing, with a Fatigue save Difficulty of 14 (+2 for every additional point of damage).

*Totem Movement (Fatiguing, Maintenance):* As a move action, you gain a movement speed appropriate to your chosen totem. Cat, dog and wolf improve your base ground speed by 10 feet. Bat and hawk grant a fly speed equal to 10 feet with good maneuverability. Rat and snake grant you a climb and swim speed equal to 10 feet. Add an additional 10 feet to the granted movement speeds for every four dreamer levels. Totem Movement is fatiguing, with a Fatigue save Difficulty of 14 (+2 per four dreamer levels).

### TOTEM ASPECT, SPIRITUAL

Choose one of the following animals: bat, cat, dog, hawk, rat, snake (viper) or wolf. You can use the Beast Link, Calm, Dominate and Heart Shaping powers in regards to your totem animal.

*Totem Senses:* You gain senses according to your chosen totem. The bat totem grants you the indicated distance of blindsight. The cat and hawk totems grant you Night Vision and the indicated bonus to Notice and Search checks. The dog and wolf totems grant you Scent and Track (+4 bonus to Survival checks when tracking by scent) and the indicated bonus to Sense Motive checks. The rat totem grants you Night Vision and Scent and the indicated bonus to Notice checks. The snake totem grants you Scent and a +4 bonus to Notice and Search checks.

### TOTEM SENSE

| Result | Blindsight | Bonus |
|--------|------------|-------|
| 10     | 5 ft.      | +2    |
| 15     | 10 ft.     | +4    |
| 20     | 15 ft.     | +6    |
| 25     | 20 ft.     | +8    |
| 30     | 25 ft.     | +10   |
| 35+    | 30 ft.     | +12   |

**Time:** Totem Senses is a move action. The benefits of Totem Senses last for 10 minutes. If you take 20 when making this check, you spend 2 minutes and suffer a +20 increase in the Fatigue check.

## NEVERMORE EQUIPMENT

Creating and acquiring items does not work the same way within Nevermore as it does in other worlds. Its market places are quite extraordinary to visit, as merchants and craftsman ply their trade with surreal skills. Both temporary and permanent items are available for sale, and if one does not see what one needs within a store's window, it is quite likely that they can make it in the blink of an eye.

In addition, Nevermore's currency is created out of *neverite*, which is the only stable element within the world. It is a rainbow-hued crystalline substance and has the ability to transfer its stability to other objects. As such, it is the sole reliable form of currency between the inhabitants of Nevermore and is a prized commodity among dreamlords.

## Wealth

A hero's wealth is based entirely upon the amount of neverite they possess. A character's starting Wealth score in Nevermore is usually equal to 5 + twice their total level (not including 1st-level) + Charisma (+4 per Wealth feat). However, the Narrator should feel free to increase or decrease this starting score to reflect the style of play he wants to portray in his campaign. Wealth checks work exactly the same when crafting or purchasing permanent items. However, when purchasing temporary items, lower the cost of the item by 5 (minimum 0; do not lower the cost of items which can only be used once, such as supernatural charms).



| CRAFTING ITEMS |                   |                   |                    |                            |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Complexity     | Dream Conviction* | Craft Difficulty* | Wealth Difficulty* | Examples                   |
| Simple         | 1                 | 15                | 5                  | garment, household item    |
| Moderate       | 2                 | 20                | 10                 | fine garment, lock, weapon |
| Complex        | 4                 | 25                | 15                 | plate armor, mechanism     |
| Advanced       | 8                 | 30                | 20                 | building, vehicle          |
| Fantastic      | 12                | 40                | 30                 | floating castle, airship   |

\*When creating permanent items, double Dream Conviction point cost, make a Wealth check and increase the Difficulty of the Craft checks by 5.

## Dream Crafting

You can spend Dream Conviction to create items in an instant from pure thought, though you cannot create neverite in such a way. The Difficulty of the Craft and Wealth check and the amount of Dream Conviction that must be spent to create an item depends upon the complexity of the item being created. Temporary items last until the end of the cycle, whereas items created with the aid of neverite become permanent.

### MAKING ITEMS

The Difficulty, time and resources required to make an item depend on its complexity and permanency.

If making temporary items, spend the appropriate amount of Dream Conviction and make your Craft check. Example Difficulties are given in the **Crafting Items** table. If your Craft check succeeds, you make the item. If the Craft check fails, you do not produce a useable result, and the Dream Conviction is wasted.

If making permanent items, make a Wealth check against the Wealth Difficulty to acquire the necessary amount of neverite, and then make your Craft check. You must spend twice the normal amount of Dream Conviction and increase the Craft check by 5. If your Craft check succeeds, you make the item. If the Craft check fails, you do not produce a useable result, and the Dream Conviction is wasted.

*Masterwork Items:* By increasing the Craft Difficulty by 5, you can make a masterwork item (see **Masterwork Items** in **Chapter 5** of *True20*). If creating a permanent masterwork item, increase the Wealth Difficulty by another 5.

*Supernatural Items:* When dream crafting supernatural items, increase the Craft Difficulty by the same amount as the supernatural item's cost modifier (see **Supernatural Items** in **Chapter 5** of *True20*). For example, a supernatural weapon would have its Craft Difficulty increased by 10 because the cost of a supernatural weapon is increased by 10.

*Repairing Items:* You can use Craft skills to repair damaged items. In general, simple repairs have a Difficulty of 10 to 15 and require no more than a standard action. More complex repair work has a Difficulty of 20 or higher and can require a full action. The repairs of a permanent item have a Wealth check Difficulty 5 lower than making the item (negligible for simple items).

*Hastened Temporary Items:* You may increase the Craft Difficulty to decrease an item's creation time. If you increase the Difficulty by 5, you can create a temporary item as a standard action or craft a permanent item in half the normal time. If you increase the Difficulty by 10, you can create a temporary item as a move action or craft a permanent item in one-quarter the normal time.

**Try Again:** Yes, though any Dream Conviction expended is wasted on a failed result.

**Action:** Full-round action for temporary items. For permanent items, it takes a number of minutes equal to the Craft Difficulty. Repairing certain items requires only a standard action, and hastened items require a standard action or move action.

**Special:** You do not need tools to use the Craft skill, although having the proper tools focuses your mind and grants a +2 bonus (+4 if masterwork) to Craft checks.



# THE RAZOR IN THE APPLE





"GOODNIGHT HONEY. SLEEP TIGHT AND I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING"

"LOVE YOU MOM. LEAVE IT OPEN A LITTLE, PLEASE?"

EVEN WITH THE THIN SLIVER OF LIGHT FROM THE HALL, SALLY WAS NERVOUS. HER ROOM WAS DARK, AND THE BRANCHES SCRATCHED ON HER WINDOW. THE WIND MOANED, RATTLING THE TREES LIKE BAGS OF BONES, AND THE MOONLIGHT CAST STRANGE AND SCARY SHADOWS ON THE WALLS. THOUGH SALLY COULD HEAR THE MUTED VOICES FROM THE LIVING ROOM DOWNSTAIRS, PUNCTUATED BY THE OCCASIONAL SOUND OF CANNED LAUGHTER, IT WAS QUIET, QUIET EXCEPT FOR THE TAPPING AND RATTLING OUTSIDE.

SALLY HUNKERED DOWN INTO HER COVERS. THE SMELL OF HER NEWLY WASHED BLANKET OFFERED LITTLE COMFORT. HER FEET AND PALMS WERE DAMP WITH SWEAT. THE SCRATCHING. THE TAPPING. THE MOANING. EYES WIDE, SHE LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, ANYTHING THAT WAS OUT OF PLACE... ANYTHING.

HER PRETTY PONY SAT ON HER NIGHTSTAND, HER RAG DOLL SLUMPED ON THE ROCKING CHAIR, AND HER DOLLHOUSE WAS DARK. THE ROCKING CHAIR... IT MOVED!

SALLY FELT A SCREAM TRY TO CLAW ITS WAY OUT OF HER THROAT. SHE SWALLOWED, KNOWING IF SHE DIDN'T SLEEP THE NIGHT THROUGH, MOMMY WOULD BE MAD. HAD TO BE THE CAT. THE CAT. YES. OF COURSE. THE CAT. NAUGHTY CAT. THE CLOSET'S OPENING. NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY CAT!

SALLY SLID DOWN A LITTLE MORE, PULLING HER BLANKET UP OVER HER NOSE, JUST UNDER HER WIDE, SEARCHING EYES.

THE MOANING, THE SCRATCHING-- THAT NAUGHTY CAT.

THE DOOR SLID OPEN, INCH BY INCH, LITTLE BY LITTLE. THE DOOR TO THE HALL DRIFTED CLOSED. THE ROOM WAS DARK. SALLY SUPPRESSED A CRY. AND THEN SHE REMEMBERED... FLUFFY RAN AWAY... SHE HADN'T SEEN HER NAUGHTY CAT FOR DAYS...

"MOMMY!"

## WELCOME TO SUBURBIA

It's ordinary. It's quiet and safe, with clean streets and streetlights that hum in tune with the chirp of the crickets. It's a town where everyone knows everybody, where Mr. Smith runs the family general store just off the square. Neighbors grill hotdogs and hamburgers on warm summer afternoons, light fireworks on Independence Day, have picnics in the town park in between baseball games and soccer matches. Here, no one worries about terrorists or politics. At Christmas, everyone decks out their houses in lights to celebrate the season, dropping off baked goods to their neighbors and giving a little extra to the poor starving kids in China. And at Halloween, all the kids dress up in costumes sewn by doting mothers or picked up from the local store, going from house to house armed with orange buckets to haul their ill-gotten gains.

It's a nice place to live, a great place to raise a family. It's perfect... except for one small, ever so slight, itsy-bitsy problem. It's so insignificant, no one pays attention, no one admits it, and certainly, no one believes it. What is it? Nothing... nothing at all really... well... nothing except for the monsters. They're real, you see.

*The Razor in the Apple* is a setting for the *True 20 Adventure Roleplaying Game*, inspired by a slew of great movies and books.

Those who've been around a little while probably have fond memories of *Goonies*, *The Sandlot*, *Silver Bullet* and just about every Spielberg movie with at least one smart mouth kid who knows more than all the adults around him. But *The Razor in the Apple* also stands on the shoulders of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys, as well as darker fiction like Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always*. With the rules presented in this mini-game, you can create all sorts of adventures. Whether you add more fantastic elements such as a world of wizards or of talking lions, or darker, more horrific elements, making the kids teens and pitting them against such awful villains as Freddy, Jason and Michael, *The Razor in the Apple* is your door to a weirder world of adventure.

In this game, the players take the roles of children in a small town. They must face the horrors of youth, squaring off against the thing in their closet or the monster under the bed. They might enter a haunted house on a dare, walk through a graveyard at night or talk to the spirits in the woods. *The Razor in the Apple* combines the essence of horror with the wonder of being a child. It pits the innocent (or not so innocent) child against the corruption of the world around them. While not great knights, nor powerful wizards, nor stealthy thieves, children are resourceful, quick and armed with incredible imagination.

## MEET THE KIDS

At the center of every *The Razor in the Apple* adventure is a group of kids. These children are different from others of their age. They've all had a brush with the supernatural, seen strange things that made absolutely no sense and when they told their friends and parents, nobody believed them. Perhaps the problem stems from an overactive imagination, a preoccupation with the fantastic, but then, maybe, just maybe, they really *are* seeing monsters.

When creating kid heroes, *The Razor in the Apple* uses a process similar to that used in the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying Game*. All kids have six ability scores. They gain skills, feats and all the other crunchy bits that make gaming fun. But while the process of character creation follows the standard hero creation rules, *The Razor in the Apple* has a few changes and adds a number of flavorful elements to help bring the setting to life.

### COMMON TRAITS

All kids have the following traits:

- Small. Kids gain a +1 Combat bonus and a +4 bonus on Stealth checks. However, they can only carry three-quarters of what an adult can carry, and they move about two-thirds as fast as adults do (20 feet).
- One bonus known skill at 1st level.
- One bonus feat at 1st level (chosen from any of your archetype's available feats).

### THE KID ROLE

Unlike other *True20* heroes, kids don't select a role at 1st level. Since kids don't have the same capabilities as other heroes, they all advance in the kid role. To provide some differentiation between characters, they also choose an archetype, which grants several special abilities and determines the starting number of skills and feats.

| THE KID |        |           |             |            |
|---------|--------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Level   | Combat | Good Save | Normal Save | Popularity |
| 1st     | +0     | +2        | +0          | +0         |
| 2nd     | +1     | +3        | +0          | +0         |
| 3rd     | +1     | +3        | +1          | +1         |
| 4th     | +2     | +4        | +1          | +1         |
| 5th     | +2     | +4        | +1          | +1         |

### POPULARITY

Like reputation in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*, popularity reflects how well-known a character is. It is a measure of the kid's personality, achievements and how well other students, teachers and parents regard her. Kids add their popularity bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks made to interact with teachers, kids and other kids' parents (though not their own). As well, a Narrator may make a secret popularity check to see if a kid is recognized.

## ARCHETYPES

An archetype in *The Razor in the Apple* defines a stereotypical kid. Since all kids use the kid role, archetypes help distinguish one kid from another by providing general information as it applies to the character's inclinations and interests.

Since kids are basically wee adults, they are slightly disadvantaged when it comes to assigning ability score points. All characters in *The Razor in the Apple* begin with the following scores: Str -2, Dex -1, Con -2, Int -1, Wis -1, Cha -1. They gain 6 points to distribute as normal.

**Example:** *Leslie wants to play a girl scout and decides to make her little hero a real charmer. She places +3 in Charisma and +1 in Dexterity, Intelligence and Wisdom. Her starting ability scores are Str -2, Dex +0, Con -2, Int +0, Wis +0, Cha +2.*

### BULLY

*"Hey dork! Gimme your milk money."*

Swirlies, wet willies and beating up the nerds are all good fun. Yours is the province of dispensing fear and terror. As the school bully, you have few friends, none of whom you can call real friends. The people you hang around tend to be more afraid of you than actually like you. That's ok though. You'd rather kids fear you.

**Abilities:** Strength and Charisma are your two most important abilities. Charisma is key because much of your power comes from the threats you level, while Strength lets you make good on them.

**Harass (Core Ability):** You may spend 1 Imagination point to add your level to Taunt checks. See the **Taunt** feat in **Chapter Three: Feats** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

**Saving Throws:** Bullies have a good Fortitude save and normal Reflex and Will saves.

**Skills:** Choose 2 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Bullies gain 2 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Taunt. Plus, choose 3 feats from the General or Expert categories.

### CHEERLEADER

*"So are you going to the basketball game? I am everyone who's a nyonewillbethere! I'm sure we can beat Northdale they suckc anyoubelievethethehomeworkwegotIlovecandyareyougoing to the basketball game?"*

It's all about school spirit! You love school! School is great! Basketball is great! Candy is great! Johnny is cute! Fun! Life for you is one great big blur. You delight in everything you do, and it seems you're never tired. Whether talking about boys, gossiping about the ugly girl, some stupid boy's striped socks, or what was on your show last night, it seems you never run out of things to talk about.

**Abilities:** Cheerleaders need a high Charisma to charm everyone. Dexterity is also important since cheerleaders need to do all sorts of acrobatics, dances and other nonsense.

**Cheer (Core Ability):** As a full-round action, you may spend 1 Imagination point to give all allies within 20 feet a bonus to one roll equal to your level. They may choose the roll, but if they don't add the bonus within 1 round, it is lost.

**Saving Throws:** Cheerleaders have a good Reflex save and normal Fortitude and Will saves.

**Skills:** Choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Cheerleaders gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Inspire. Plus, choose 2 feats from the General or Expert categories.

## CRIMINAL

*"Yeah, I took a dump in the teacher's purse, and I'd do it again!"*

It's really not like you're a bad kid, but you just don't give a damn about school, responsibility or anything, really. You're bored. All the time. And school and teachers, especially, suck. You'd rather sit in detention than have to sit through another boring class about something you don't care about anyway. So what if you burned down the gym? Who cares, really? You'd much rather steal wee little Sally's purse or spray paint "Poo" on the school wall.

**Abilities:** Dexterity is a good ability to help you pull off your larcenous stunts, while Wisdom, ironically, helps you watch out for those pesky adults who'd interfere with whatever devious plans you're hatching.

**Larcenous (Core Ability):** You can spend 1 Imagination point to add your level to a single Sleight of Hand check.

**Saving Throws:** Criminals have a good Reflex save and normal Fortitude and Will saves.

**Skills:** Choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Criminals gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Sneak Attack. Plus, choose 2 feats from the General or Expert categories.

## HERO

*"As class president, I promise to ban tuna surprise from the lunch menu!"*

You're going great places. You're the class president, the quarterback, a member of the young Republicans, and you have the love and affection of everyone at school. The teachers love you, your peers look up to you, and everyone knows that one day you'll be a senator. Ah, it's quite the life.

**Abilities:** Charisma, clearly, is the key to your success. You use your wit and charm to mask any deficiencies you might have.

**Blameless (Core Ability):** You can spend 1 Imagination point to remove a number of naughtiness points equal to your Charisma score.

**Saving Throws:** A hero has a good Will save and normal Fortitude and Reflex saves.

**Skills:** Choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Heroes gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Choose 2 feats from the General or Expert categories.

## JOCK

*"Indy may be favored, but I'm betting on Pitt."*

It's all about the game. When you grow up, you want to be a professional athlete. Baseball, basketball, football, whatever; it

doesn't matter so long as you get to do what you love. For now, you play every sport you can, from soccer to wrestling, though you prefer team sports. There's nothing quite like working with your teammates to crush the other school.

**Abilities:** As a jock, you need high scores in Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, but don't neglect your other abilities either since you need smarts as well as brawn to succeed in sports.

**Determination (Core Ability):** You can spend 1 Imagination point to immediately remove all bruised damage conditions and the associated penalties.

**Saving Throws:** A jock has either a good Fortitude save or a good Reflex save. The other save and your Will save are both normal.

**Skills:** Choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Jocks gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Tough. Plus, choose 2 feats from the General or Expert categories.

## NERD

*"OK. You're walking down a dark hallway, illuminated only by the light of your torches..."*

Math wiz, history buff, scholar, brainiac, geek, freak, spaz, tool and dork: you are all of these and more. You may not fit in with everyone else, but who else in your class skipped first and second grade? Sure, no one likes you, and the other kids pick on you, but your Mom says you'll be in a good college while the rest of your classmates will scrub toilets. In the meantime, you and your peers meet on weekends to play roleplaying games and debate the appropriateness of giants getting *five* attacks per round.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is your greatest asset. You have little need for your physical abilities since you aren't good at sports anyway. You likely sacrifice what little social skills you have to be even smarter.

**Genius (Core Ability):** You can spend 1 Imagination point to add your level to an Intelligence check or Intelligence-based skill check.

**Saving Throws:** A nerd has a good Will save and normal Fortitude and Reflex saves.

**Skills:** Choose 6 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Nerds gain 6 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Eidetic Memory. Plus, choose 1 feat from the General or Expert categories.

## NORMAL

*"I like ice cream."*

You're normal. You're just a kid, like everyone else. You make ok grades, may play soccer or baseball, collect cards and play with toys. You like comic books and cartoons. You want to be an astronaut or a doctor or maybe join the army. It doesn't matter right now, since you just picked up the new MMORPG, *World of Crafting Stuff and Killing*. Why, after just 2 days, your shadow killer elf with a red cape is 75th level, and thanks to that nifty +19 allebreian powerblade of goblinstuffing you bought with your dad's credit card, you pwnz it!

**Abilities:** A normal kid has no particular priorities when it comes to abilities. They can be strong, smart, fast or perceptive.





**Ordinary (Core Ability):** You are utterly normal and easily overlooked. You may spend an Imagination point to force a monster to attack another available target. If you are the monster's only opponent, you may not use this ability.

**Saving Throws:** A normal kid may select one of his three saves as a good save. The other two are normal saves.

**Skills:** Choose 4 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Normals gain 4 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Choose 3 feats from the General or Expert categories.

## OUTCAST

*"School sucks."*

You are a loner. They might call you a freak or a weirdo, and maybe they're right. You don't like sports, you hate school, and you have little respect for authority. But, you're no criminal. Rather, you are a sad little boy or girl, miserable because of your unusual looks, style of dress or economic level.

**Abilities:** Outcasts are self-reliant and must always be on the lookout for the bully or jock that would torment them. Outcasts do well to have a high Dexterity and Wisdom.

**Sneaky (Core Ability):** You may spend 1 Imagination point to add your level to a single Stealth check.

**Saving Throws:** The outcast has a good Fortitude and Reflex save, and a normal Will save.

**Skills:** Choose 6 + Intelligence score starting skills (minimum 1). Outcasts gain 6 + Int skill ranks per additional level.

**Feats:** Assessment. Choose 1 feat from the General or Expert categories.

## PARENTS

Since they're so young, kids haven't had the time to pick an occupation or develop much of an interesting back-story. Their parents play an important part in defining who they are and what they can do. So instead of selecting a background, starting heroes in *The Razor in the Apple* get parents.

Parents fill the same niche as a background, but instead of modifying ability scores, providing bonus skills, feats and determining favored feats, they grant kids a different slate of features. All parents use the following format.

### PARENT TYPE

#### SENSE MOTIVE

This is the average Sense Motive check modifier. Dealing with parents often requires shading the truth to put a situation in the best possible light. Better parents can see through these bluffs and ferret out the truth, while not-so-perceptive parents take their kid at their word.

#### CURFEW

Most kids have a curfew—that's the latest they're allowed to stay outside and play. During the summer, curfews are a bit more relaxed, but on school nights, you'd better believe your folks expect you home by curfew. Curfew has different levels: none (–10), light (–5), normal (+0), tough (+5) and grounded (+10). The number indicates the bonus or penalty the parents take to their Sense Motive checks to oppose your Bluff checks when coming home late.

## ALLOWANCE

This is a modifier for the kid's wealth score. All children have a starting wealth score of 0. When purchasing things with allowance, use common sense. A kid can't walk into a pawn shop and purchase a machine gun or get a credit line to buy a new SUV.

## DESCRIPTION

This section describes how this parental choice affects play and offers tips for defining your character in respect to his folks.

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

All parents give their kids one or more special abilities. They are described here. Many special abilities require that you spend Imagination points. See **Imagination** for more information.

## SELECTING PARENTS

All starting characters must choose one set of parents from any of the following. Kids could certainly have parents that fall into one or more categories, such as insane hippies, or dead and divorced. In such cases, you only gain the benefits and penalties of one type of parents. Choose the parent entry that best applies. So for insane hippy parents, select the features of either hippy or insane, but not both.

### DEAD

*"I see dead people!"*

**Sense Motive:** +10

**Curfew:** Normal (+0)

**Allowance:** +0

Your parents are... well... dead. Maybe Dad died in the war, and Mom took a few too many pills to help with the grief. Maybe a terrible hunting accident claimed both. Or, perhaps they met their end in a fatal car accident. In any event, you rely on the kindness of another relative to feed and clothe you. They might be nice, caring folk, but they're no replacement for Mommy and Daddy. They could be wicked, adopting you only to steal your inheritance. Or maybe they are grudging parents, who took you in out of some sense of obligation. In any event, you are a sad little boy or girl. But no worries, your parents visit from time to time, to smile and soothe when you're alone and weeping. No one believes you about them... the doctor says you should remember them, but not obsess about them. You don't like him much, though you like his candy, and he has funny hair.

### GHOSTLY GUARDIANS

As a full-round action, you can spend two Imagination points to conjure up one of your dead parents or four Imagination points to conjure up both parents. The summoned ghost remains for 2 rounds plus 1 round for every extra Imagination point you spend. Calling your parents in this way is very painful for them, so each time after the first time you called upon them in a single day, they take a cumulative -1 penalty to all checks for the duration of their manifestation.

A ghostly parent has all the normal statistics for ghosts (see **Ghost** in **Chapter Eight: Adversaries** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*). In addition to the manifestation and rejuvenation abilities, they also have the move object ability.

If your parents' ghosts are slain, they have a hard time reappearing. Each time you attempt to summon them, roll 1d20. On a 20, the ghostly parent appears. Otherwise, the expenditure of Imagination points is wasted.

Unfortunately, your Grandmother or adopted parents are not as helpful as other kids' parents. When you make an I'm Telling check, the Difficulty increases by +5.

## DIVORCED/SEPARATED

*"Mommy doesn't love you anymore"*

**Sense Motive:** +5

**Curfew:** Light (-5)

**Allowance:** +0

Your parents are divorced or separated. The reason is likely irreconcilable differences, but an affair, crime, abuse or simple disinterest can all be reasons why a couple might separate. Life is definitely different now that you're living with just one parent. You've had to become more independent, and you're a lot more mature than other kids your age. Your parent works all the time to support you and any siblings you might have. While other kids might play sports, you go to a therapist. You're a little sad, and you feel a bit guilty, but everyone says it's not your fault.

*Variant:* Instead of divorce, one of your parents could be dead. If so, you may select either Ghostly Guardian or Mature.

### MATURE

You've grown up quickly, so you're less susceptible to monsters' attacks. Monsters have a hard time affecting you and take a -2 penalty to all Attack rolls made against you. In addition, you may spend an Imagination point to gain a +4 bonus to any saving throw made to resist a monster's special attack.

Sadly, your Mom and Dad are not around as much as they'd like to be. When you make an I'm Telling check, the Difficulty increases by +5.

## EXCHANGE STUDENT

*"You're not from around here, are you?"*

**Sense Motive:** +10

**Curfew:** Tough (+5)

**Allowance:** -2

As part of an exchange program, you left your native country (pick one) to study in America! You speak English well enough, but you have a hard time with slang and curse words, much to the great pleasure of the other kids. America is a strange place. It's big and spread out. Crazy Americans have cheese on everything! But you're adapting, despite the fact that you're a bit lonely and miss your friends and family back home. Your American family seems nice enough, though it's clear the novelty of having an extra mouth to feed is starting to wear thin. Thankfully, you're just here for the year, and then you can go home.

### DIFFERENT CULTURE

You begin play with two Language skills, your native tongue and English.

Since you come from a nation far older than America, you have a deeper cultural understanding of monsters, being better skilled at defeating the things of nightmares. By spending 2 Imagination points, you conjure up a mystical suit of armor granting you a +3 Toughness Bonus that lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom score (minimum 1 round). You can extend the duration of protection by 3 rounds for every additional Imagination point that you spend. This bonus does not stack with other armor.

Your temporary parents are no substitute for the real thing. The Difficulty to make an I'm Telling check increases by +5.

### FOSTER KID/ADOPTED

*"If you don't behave, we're sending you back to the orphanage."*

#### (Sense Motive/Curfew/Allowance Varies)

You don't know who your parents were, but you believe they loved you dearly, and there was some sort of mistake leading you to wind up in this awful predicament. Maybe something bad happened, maybe they got lost, perhaps they're spies being held against their will by some evil super bad guy! At night, you think about how your mother must have been beautiful, how your father had to be a war hero. But such fancies are cold comfort, for you must live with the awful truth that they're gone and you're alone. There are three subtypes of parental circumstances for foster or adopted kids.

#### INTOLERABLE

**Sense Motive:** +10

**Curfew:** None (-10)

**Allowance:** -5

Life is just a shade better than prison. Your foster/adopted parents don't love you; they keep you for the check they get from the state. They make you sleep in the basement with the cave crickets, and you never get candy, birthday cake or anything good, really. All of your toys are broken, and your clothes are hand-me-downs from the 70's.

Each day you must succeed on a Diplomacy check (Difficulty 15 + 1 per level) to avoid getting a naughtiness point. You often get punished for doing nothing wrong. Also, you cannot make I'm Telling checks. However, you are also tough and resilient, accustomed to hardships. Gain a +1 bonus to Attack rolls and a +2 bonus to Toughness saves.

#### INDIFFERENT

**Sense Motive:** +0

**Curfew:** Light (-5)

**Allowance:** -2

There's no real affection in this household. They don't bother you as long as you don't bother them. They have no interest in your future, but they're not neglectful either. Make passing grades and don't ask them to attend your soccer games and they're happy to leave you alone.

The Difficulty to make I'm Telling checks increases by +8. However, you gain a +5 bonus to Bluff checks to reduce Naughtiness Points.

#### LOVE AND AFFECTION

**Sense Motive:** +5

**Curfew:** Tough (+5)

**Allowance:** +0

You're lucky. Your foster/adopted parents love you as if you were their own. They are keenly interested in your education and safety. They attend all your games and make sure you do your homework. They go to all your parent-teacher conferences, ask you about your day, have to know who your little friends are. They shower you with all the annoying parental affection your friends endure, but kicked into overdrive. Sure, it's great they care, but it's a bit stifling.

You gain a +5 bonus to I'm Telling checks. If your parents arrive, the monster not only vanishes, it cannot reappear for 1 day.

### HIPPIES

*"Hey man, why all the negativity?"*

**Sense Motive:** +5

**Curfew:** Light (-5)

**Allowance:** +0

Your parents embraced the 60's and everything that era entailed. They are more relaxed and calm, letting you call them by their first names and having little interest in traditional parenting methods. Your house smells of incense and is comfortable, and you have a good home life. But your folks are a little embarrassing. From time to time, they slip off into the basement to have adult time. Every time they do, you smell a weird odor coming up the stairs. You're afraid to ask what the heck's going on. Don't ask, don't tell, you always say.





**RAY OF SUNSHINE!**

Drawing upon the love and joy instilled by your folks, you can spend 2 Imagination points to create a ray of multicolored light that monsters find offensive. You must make an Attack roll to hit. The ray has a +5 damage bonus and has a 20/+3 critical. The ray loses potency beyond 40 feet. For every additional Imagination point you spend, the ray's damage bonus increases by 1 and extends the range by 10 feet.

**INSANE**

*"Johnny, don't forget your lunch. Do you have your coat? Homework? Foil cap?"*

**Sense Motive:** +0

**Curfew:** None (-10)

**Allowance:** +0

Your parents are nuts. They aren't just a little off; they are certifiably insane. Every day is a new adventure into the strange, and you have to wonder how long you've got before they're committed. Mom might believe the house is always filthy and spends 20 hours every day cleaning. Your Dad might fear the government and constructs elaborate theories from hundreds of different newspaper clippings. One day, the aliens hover over your house, waiting to read your mind and suck out your soul. And the next, the postman is a demon, coming to eat your soul by licking your envelopes. *Don't touch them, Stewart!* Then again, your folks could be into weird occult stuff, having black masses in their basement to conjure up Satan. Regardless of what freakish behavior they display, it's just a matter of time before someone sends them to the psycho ward.

**BELIEF**

Not only do your parents believe you about the monsters, they see them too! You gain a +5 bonus to all Bluff checks to remove naughtiness points. In addition, if you make an I'm Telling check to summon your parents when facing a monster, the monster doesn't vanish. Instead, your parents have a random reaction. Roll 1d20 and consult the following table.

| Roll  | Reaction   |
|-------|--|
| 1-5   | <i>Freak out and flee!</i> Your parent or parents run away shrieking. Take a -10 penalty to all I'm Telling checks for 1 day. Your curfew increases by two steps.  |
| 6-10  | <i>Faint!</i> Your parents are overwhelmed by fear and collapse into a heap on the ground. They wake once the encounter is finished.   |
| 11-15 | <i>Grab you and run!</i> Your parents snatch you up and flee to a place of safety, leaving your friends to deal with whatever is left. Increase curfew by one step.  |
| 16-20 | <i>Freak out and defend their baby!</i> Your parents fly into a psychotic rage and attack the monster. Use the statistics for a caliban from <b>Chapter Eight: Adversaries</b> of <i>True20</i> , although they do not have any mutations (that you know of...). |

**NORMAL**

*"We love you Johnny. You're our special little guy."*

**Sense Motive:** +10

**Curfew:** Normal (+0)

**Allowance:** +0

Blessed or cursed, your folks are thankfully normal. They have their quirks, heck everyone does, but they can more or less fit in without embarrassing you too much. Your Mom and Dad may both work or one may stay home; regardless, you have a well-adjusted home life. They make time to help you with your homework, they read stories to you when you were just a kid, well, you know, when you were a younger kid that is. Dad coaches your t-ball league, and Mom takes you to soccer practice. You'll probably grow up to be a senator or president, if the monsters don't get you first.

**SHIELD OF LOVE**

You benefit from unconditional love. Your parents' unwavering affection manifests as a protective aura, a shield of sorts. If you spend 2 Imagination points, you conjure up a mobile shell of pinkish energy that grants a +2 bonus to your Defense. This shield remains for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma score (minimum of 1 round). You can extend it by 3 rounds for every additional Imagination point you spend. Or, you can increase its protective bonus by +1 for every extra Imagination point spent.

**POOR**

*"I'm sorry Peter, you'll just have to share clothes with your sister. We can't afford to buy you clothes of your own."*

**Sense Motive:** +10

**Curfew:** Normal (+0)

**Allowance:** -5

Your family is as poor as church mice. You probably don't live in the other kids' neighborhood and probably have a tiny apartment, small house, trailer, shack, cardboard box just outside of town. You're close enough to play with the other kids, but live far enough away to know that you and yours are different from everyone else. More than likely, your parents had no fault in their financial plight; bad luck happens after all. Your Dad might have been laid off when the factory closed to go to China. Maybe a horrible work accident left your father a heap of ground meat, shuddering and moaning in between doses of his pain medication. Then again, your parents might be lazy, no good sycophants sucking off the teat of the government cheese machine. You probably don't know for sure, and it really doesn't matter. Poor is poor.

**NO TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS**

Being poor sure isn't a lot of fun. You take a -2 penalty to your Popularity score. Worse, you start with no toys. None. You might have a stick, or a cool bark collection, but no toys. But, being a kid, you use your imagination to play games and keep yourself entertained. You begin play with 4 extra Imagination points.

**REDNECK**

*"Bo, quit kissing yer sister!"*

**Sense Motive:** +0

**Curfew:** None (-10)

**Allowance:** -2

You come from a family of rednecks. It's entirely possible that your parents are cousins (or even closer branches of the family tree). You probably have lots of brothers and sisters, live in a

shack or rusty trailer in the woods and undoubtedly, everyone wears overalls. You started dipping when you were four and quit to start smoking when you turned nine. Your girlfriend is your first cousin, and your Dad's on his seventh marriage. Sure people call your parents cousin-f\*\*\*\*s, not that you know what that means, but you and your close-knit family are very happy together.

#### THE CLOSER THE KIN...

Rednecks breed. If slain, abducted by a monster or something horrible befalls your character, you may bring in another sibling immediately. Also, you never gain naughtiness points.

#### RELIGIOUS

*"Mary Loo, you stay away from that boy. He's the DEVIL!"*

**Sense Motive:** +15

**Curfew:** Tough (+5)

**Allowance:** +0

It's the end times. God and all his angels are coming to take the righteous into heaven and cast all the sinners down to the bowels of hell. The signs are everywhere—it says so right on the TeeVee.... Well, your Mommy cancelled cable after she saw demons on Sesame Street. You all purchased an expensive satellite dish to get God's own words pumped directly into your home. Anyway, birds are dying, frogs are vanishing, the seas are turning to blood, the moon is on fire, and all sorts of other really scary things are starting to happen. And you're more than a little frightened. Why, Mommy just told you about the Rapture and how she's got a bag packed and ready to go. You don't want your Mommy to go away, not without you. So you pray every night that God lets Mommy stay on earth with you.

#### PRAYER WARRIOR

You are a prayer warrior! Your strong religious upbringing has instilled certain heavenly qualities in you, giving you a close connection to God and all his friends. If you spend 6 Imagination points, you can make a special I'm Telling God! check. Treat this as a standard I'm Telling check, but if you succeed, the heavens open up and pour forth a ray of divine sunshine that makes all the monsters within 30 feet vanish. The ray of light remains for 1d20 rounds before withdrawing into the clouds. Monsters affected by this display of incredible power think twice before messing with you again! The monster takes a -5 penalty to all Attack rolls against you for a whole day.

#### RICH

*"But MOM, I wanted the gold plated Z-cubestation. Silver is SO last year."*

**Sense Motive:** +5

**Curfew:** Normal

**Allowance:** +5

Cars, credit cards, big house, you have it all. You want for nothing. Anything you ask for, you get. Your life is comfortable, pleasant and thoroughly decadent. You rarely ever see your parents, maybe once a month. Instead, you have a nanny or butler who makes sure you're dressed and get to school. Your private tutors make sure your homework gets done, and your personal trainer keeps you physically fit.

#### TOYS, TOYS, TOYS

You begin play with three toys; however, you have 2 less points of Imagination. As well, you take a -5 penalty to I'm Telling checks.

## SKILLS AND FEATS

Kids have access to the same skills described in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*. Feats, however, are a bit more restricted. The following feats are used.

#### GENERAL

*Animal Empathy, Assessment, Canny Dodge, Challenge, Dodge Focus, Eidetic Memory, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Defense, Improved Grab, Improved Initiative, Improved Pin, Improved Speed, Improved Throw, Iron Will, Light Sleeper, Lightning Reflexes, Lucky, Move-by Action, Prone Fighting, Run, Second Chance, Set-up, Skill Focus, Skill Training, Talented, Taunt, Tireless, Uncanny Dodge and Wealthy.*

#### EXPERT

*Defensive Roll, Evasion, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Evasion, Improvised Tools, Inspire, Jack-of-all-Trades, Master Plan, Skill Mastery, and Sneak Attack.*

#### ADEPT AND WARRIOR

These feats are not used.

## NEW FEATS

The following new feats are in addition to those presented in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

#### 4-H STUFF (GENERAL)

You're a member of the 4-H Club and know how to do all sorts of great things for your community. You gain a +3 bonus to all Craft and Diplomacy checks. As well, you reduce all naughtiness points gained by 1 (minimum 0) since you are such a good citizen.

#### BOY SCOUT (GENERAL)

You are a part of the Boy Scouts. Working hard to earn your merit badges, you have collected an interesting assortment of talents. You gain a +2 bonus to Survival checks. And because you are an honest boy, you reduce the effects of punishment by one-step (minimum disappointed).

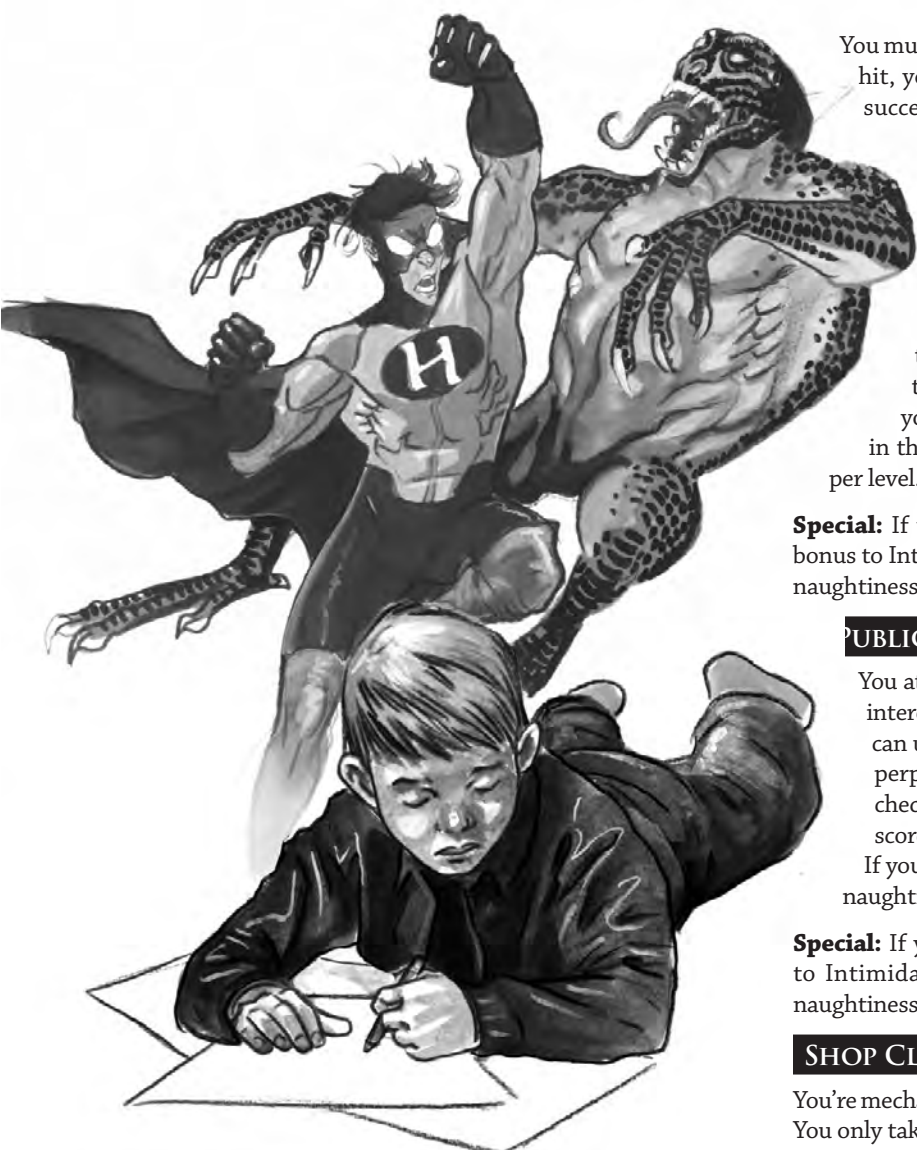
#### DAYDREAMER (GENERAL)

You are prone to flights of fancy and have a tendency to drift off when you should otherwise be paying attention, like during school or parental lectures. Gain 2 Imagination points, but take a -1 penalty to Notice checks. You may select this feat multiple times. The effects stack.

#### DODGE BALL CHAMPION (EXPERT)

**PREREQUISITE:** DODGE FOCUS.

From years of evading the wicked red rubber ball of doom in that gladiatorial arena called "gym class", you have honed your reflexes. Increase your dodge bonus by +1 and gain a +1 bonus to Reflex saves.



You must declare use of this feat prior to the attack roll. If you hit, you deal damage as normal, but your opponent must succeed on a Fortitude save (Difficulty equals your attack roll) or become nauseated for 1 round.

### PRIVATE SCHOOLED (GENERAL)

You attend a private school, where you've learned all sorts of interesting words and phrases. Once per day per level, you can unleash a torrent of blistering invective to confuse and perplex your foes. Resolve this by making an Intimidate check (Difficulty 10 + 1/2 target's level + target's Wisdom score). If you succeed, your target is stunned for 2 rounds. If you use this ability in the presence of an adult, you gain 2 naughtiness points per level.

**Special:** If you also select Public School Veteran, you gain a +2 bonus to Intimidate checks, the stunned duration stacks, and your naughtiness points gained when used in front of a parent stack.

### PUBLIC SCHOOL VETERAN (GENERAL)

You attend a public school, where you've learned all sorts of interesting words and phrases. Once per day per level, you can unleash a torrent of blistering invective to confuse and perplex your foes. Resolve this by making an Intimidate check (Difficulty 10 + 1/2 target's level + target's Wisdom score). If you succeed, your target is stunned for 1 round. If you use this ability in the presence of an adult, you gain 1 naughtiness point per level.

**Special:** If you also select Private Schooled, you gain a +2 bonus to Intimidate checks, the stunned duration stacks, and your naughtiness points gained when used in front of a parent stack.

### SHOP CLASS MASTER (GENERAL)

You're mechanically minded. You gain a +2 bonus to all Craft checks. You only take a -2 penalty when making a Craft check. And finally, when fast crafting, you need only increase the Difficulty by +2 and +5 instead of +5 and +10.

### SMART ASS (GENERAL)

Gain a +2 bonus to Bluff checks. If you have the Taunt feat, the shaken effect remains for a number of rounds equal to your positive Charisma score (minimum 1 round).

### SPOILED (GENERAL)

You're accustomed to getting your own way. Once per day per level, you may throw yourself to the ground in a fit of screaming and wailing and pounding of fists—a temper tantrum. All creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a Will save (Difficulty 10 + 1/2 your level + your Charisma score) or be overcome with embarrassment. Embarrassed creatures must move away from you on their next action.

Also, you gain “naughtiness reduction.” You reduce all naughtiness points gained by 1 (minimum 0).

### TEAM PLAYER (GENERAL)

You play sports. You play soccer, basketball, baseball, football and just about anything else you can. Your experience has made you a team player, giving you the training to work well with your teammates. You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls when you and another character attack the same target.

### FEARLESS (GENERAL)

You don't frighten easily. Gain a +4 bonus to Will saves made to resist fear. If you fail a save against fear, you may attempt another Will save on the following round, though without the +4 bonus, to remove the effect.

### GIRL SCOUT (GENERAL)

Regardless of protestations to the contrary, you are in the business of selling cookies. Having sold them for a number of years, you've become quite good at your sales pitch and persistence. You gain a +4 bonus to Bluff checks made when you “account for the day's deeds.” See **Naughtiness** for details. Also, once per day, you may re-roll any failed check.

### HOME SCHOOLED (GENERAL)

You don't go to school like other kids. Instead, your Mom or Dad teaches you at home. You take a -2 penalty to all Diplomacy checks made when interacting with other kids, but you gain a +2 bonus to Charisma-based checks made when interacting with adults.

### LOW BLOW (EXPERT)

Once per day per level, you may make a special unarmed attack to hit your opponent in the nards (or some other vulnerable spot).



## SPECIAL RULES

*The Razor in the Apple* makes use of several new mechanisms to best reflect the unique character of the setting and to define the capabilities (and limitations) of the heroes.

### IMAGINATION

The greatest asset children have in combating the forces of darkness is their imagination. In lieu of gaining Conviction, kids gain Imagination. All kids start with 2 points plus their Wisdom score. Also, they gain additional points from feats and toys.

### USING IMAGINATION

Imagination is used in all the same ways as Conviction: kids can spend Imagination to re-roll any checks, to retain dodge bonuses, cancel fatigue or any other use of Conviction as described in the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* rulebook. However, many of a kid's abilities require expenditures of Imagination to use. For example, a kid with dead parents can spend two points of Imagination to conjure up the ghost of a dead parent for a short time.

Though Imagination is the characters' biggest asset, players should use it wisely. Too much fun makes anyone tired. Anytime a character's Imagination point total falls to 0, they become fatigued until they sleep for at least one hour.

### REGAINING IMAGINATION

Kids regain Imagination when they sleep. A short rest of an hour can restore not only energy, but also innovation. A kid can take a nap at anytime to regain 1 point of Imagination, but they can only take one nap per day (lest it interfere with sleepy time). Kids who sleep at least 6 hours regain a number of Imagination points equal to their Wisdom score +1 (minimum of 1). Anything less counts as a nap.

### I'M TELLING!

The biggest defense a kid has against monsters is his folks. It's generally their job to protect their child, to make sure no harm comes to their cherished offspring. Of course, some parents are not as good as others are, or not as available, so the reliability of calling for help varies a great deal.

A child can call on his parents (assuming they're nearby and not at work, the store or in France) for assistance at any time by making an I'm Telling check. To make this check, roll 1d20 plus your level against a relevant Difficulty described on the **I'm Telling Difficulties** table. You can spend a point of Imagination to reduce the Difficulty modifier by one step.

| I'M TELLING DIFFICULTIES    |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Circumstances               | Difficulty |
| You're inside the house     | 10         |
| You're in your backyard     | 15         |
| You're in a neighbor's yard | 20         |
| You're in another yard      | 25         |
| You're far from home        | 45         |
| For each time you've "Told" | +5         |

On a successful check, your parent or parents show up after a number of rounds equal to your level. (The older you are, the less protective your folks become. You're supposed to be responsible, right?)

Arrival causes the monster to disappear instantly. Characters who called the parent must succeed on a Bluff or Diplomacy check against the I'm Telling Difficulty to explain what happened. If the kid succeeds by 5 or more, the parent removes 5 naughtiness points and takes the kid home. If the kid succeeds, the parent takes the kid home. If the kid fails, the parent blames the kid for the trouble, gives 5 naughtiness points and takes the kid home. If the kid fails by 5 or more, not only is the kid taken home and given 10 naughtiness points, but the parent blames the other kids (if any) for being bad influences; the parent calls their parents, giving each kid 5 naughtiness points.

### PUNISHMENT

The big deterrent for most kids is the fear of punishment. Whether it's time out, a spanking, grounding or the threat of military school, no (normal) kid likes being punished, and most, again normal, kids avoid it. But kids are kids, and invariably they find themselves in trouble, even if whatever it is that's wrong is not their fault.

### NAUGHTINESS

The ways of parents are inexplicable. Sure, there may be some ground rules, but who can really say *what* a parent's going to do when their kid does something wrong? The mysterious ways of punishment are reflected by the accumulation of naughtiness points. Whenever a kid does something wrong, he gains a number of naughtiness points depending on the severity of what he did wrong. Each naughty act has a severity. Depending on the circumstances, the Narrator grants a character a number of naughtiness points. The **Naughtiness Points** table provides some suggested acts that can grant kids naughtiness points. By no means is this table complete; children are inventive in coming up with ways to misbehave.

So long as the kid's parents aren't around, the accumulation of naughtiness points has no effect on game play, and there's no limit to the number of naughtiness points he can gain. However, when he next sees his folks, he'd best do some fast talking if he wants to avoid punishment.

Whenever a kid goes home, he must *account for the day's deeds*, essentially telling his folks what happened, what he did at school and anything else he did. At this point, if the character has any naughtiness points, he must make a Difficulty 15 Bluff check opposed by his parents' Difficulty 15 Sense Motive check (see **Parents** entries for check modifiers). For every 5 points of naughtiness, the parents gain a +1 bonus to their Sense Motive check. The kid and parent may have additional modifiers depending on the circumstances (Narrator's discretion) and the nature of the parents. Compare the results of the check to the **Avoiding and Gaining Punishment** table. Once the results of the opposed checks have been determined, it's time for the parents to dispense punishment.

## NAUGHTINESS POINTS

| Severity and Deed  | Naughtiness Points |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Minor Naughtiness</i><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie to a friend or sibling</li> <li>• Hit sibling</li> <li>• Lose a toy</li> <li>• Write on the walls with crayon</li> <li>• Spill something on the carpet</li> <li>• Refuse to eat what's on your plate</li> <li>• Phone call from another parent about something moderately bad that you did</li> </ul>   | 1–5                |
| <i>Moderate Naughtiness</i><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detention in school</li> <li>• Lie to an adult</li> <li>• Lose pet</li> <li>• Make Mommy cry</li> <li>• Get into a fight</li> <li>• Temper tantrum</li> <li>• Break something minor</li> <li>• Say a bad word</li> <li>• Phone call from another parent about something major-bad that you did</li> </ul>  | 6–10               |
| <i>Major Naughtiness</i><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension from school</li> <li>• Skip school</li> <li>• Lie to an adult family member</li> <li>• Get into a fight and someone gets seriously hurt</li> <li>• Shoplift</li> <li>• Spill something on white carpet</li> <li>• Break something important</li> <li>• Find Daddy's secret magazines</li> <li>• Phone call from another parent about something super bad that you did</li> <li>• Start a fire</li> </ul> | 11–15              |
| <i>Super Bad Naughtiness</i><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expulsion from school</li> <li>• Lie to parent</li> <li>• Get into a fight and someone dies!</li> <li>• Steal something expensive</li> <li>• Any illegal act not covered here</li> <li>• Break something Mommy loves</li> </ul>   | 16–20              |

## AVOIDING AND GAINING PUNISHMENT

| Check Result                   | Naughtiness Points  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Kid wins, parents fail         | Reduce by 5 for every 5 by which the kid's check succeeds       |
| Kid wins, parents succeed      | Reduce by 2 for every 5 by which the kid's check succeeds       |
| Kid and parents succeed, a tie | No change   |
| Kid fails, parents fail        | Reduce by 1 for every 5 by which the parents' check fails.      |
| Kid fails, parents succeed     | Increase by 2 for every 5 by which the parents' check succeeds. |

## EFFECTS OF PUNISHMENT

The severity of the punishment depends on how many naughtiness points remain after the kid makes his Bluff check. Once punishment is dispensed, the kid's naughtiness points drop by half for the duration of the punishment and go away altogether at the end of the punishment. If the kid gains any more naughtiness points during punishment, they may be removed through normal means, but if not, the kid must face additional punishment.

### ESCAPED PUNISHMENT! (0 OR LESS)

Either because you are actually innocent of wrongdoing, or you are just an incredible liar, you get away scott-free. Now do your homework.

### DISAPPOINTED (1-5)

Your parents are very disappointed in you. Take a -5 penalty to I'm Telling checks for 1 day. In addition, you have to go to time out for 1 hour, where you can do nothing but stare at the wall and think about what you did wrong.

### LESSER GROUNDING (6-10)

Your parents are not happy with you at all. They take away your toy for 1 day. Take a -5 penalty to I'm Telling checks. For the next week, your curfew changes to grounded.

### GROUNDING (11-15)

Your parents are pissed. You're grounded for a week, and you can't go outside during this time. Also, you lose your toy. For the next week after, your curfew changes to grounded. If friends were involved, they're labeled bad influences, and any time you gain naughtiness points over the next 2 weeks, you gain double the amount if you're with these friends.

### SERIOUS GROUNDING (16-20)

Your parents are super-pissed and you wonder if they regret having you at all! You're grounded for a month. You can't go out and play. You lose your toy. And for the next month after, your curfew changes to grounded. If friends were involved, they're labeled bad influences, and any time you gain naughtiness points over the next month, you gain double the amount if you're with these friends.

### REALLY SERIOUS GROUNDING (21-25)

You're in deep trouble. Your parents are so mad, they're seriously thinking about sending you to military school. You permanently lose your toy, and you're grounded for six months.

### MILITARY SCHOOL! (26+)

You're totally out of control. Your parents either take you to a talk show to tell the world how awful you've become and what bad parents they are, ultimately culminating in sending you to boot camp to set you straight, or they pony up the cash to send you to military school. Depending on the quality of your folks, other outcomes could result. Your parents might give you up for adoption (always a great solution), send you back to the orphanage, ground you for life, or they might just die from grief. Roll up a new character.

## CURFEW

Most kids are not allowed to come and go as they please. They have chores, school and homework, and a parent would be remiss to let their child explore the neighborhood at all hours of the night. To reflect this sensible restriction, *The Razor in the Apple* makes use of curfew.

Depending on the curfew described under the **Parents** entry, a kid has to be home by a certain time as shown on the **Curfew** table. A kid can try to stay out later if they succeed on a Difficulty 15 Bluff check, modified by the Curfew rating. So a kid with no curfew would need to succeed on a Difficulty 5 Bluff check to stay out later, while a grounded kid needs to succeed on a Difficulty 25 Bluff check. A success adds one hour to their curfew, and they gain an extra hour for every 5 by which they beat the Difficulty.



### CURFEW

| Curfew   | School Night | Non-School Night |
|----------|--------------|------------------|
| None     | 9:00 PM      | No curfew        |
| Light    | 8:00 PM      | 10:00 PM         |
| Normal   | 7:00 PM      | 9:00 PM          |
| Tough    | 5:00 PM      | 7:00 PM          |
| Grounded | 4:00 PM      | 4:00 PM          |

## SIBLINGS

Siblings are an unfortunate reality. Lots of kids have them, and it seems that no matter what you do, they're always causing problems. They're either older than you and are bossy and abusive, or they're younger and tag along, go into your room or cause all sorts of problems. To determine how many siblings you have, roll 1d20 and consult the appropriate row on the **Generating Siblings** table. For each sibling, roll another d20. If it's even, the sibling is younger and if odd, the sibling is older. If the roll is 10 or less, the sibling is a boy, and on an 11 or more, it's a girl.

### USING SIBLINGS

Siblings serve as extra "lives." If your current character dies, disappears or is eaten alive, you need not start over. Simply replace your character with a sibling. The sibling appears in 6 rounds and knows everything that your character did (sort of like a clone). The sibling has the same abilities, same skills and feats and has all the same equipment. If your sibling is older, you gain a +1 bonus to all checks and saves until you gain another



## GENERATING SIBLINGS

| Parents   | -----Siblings by Roll----- |     |     |      |       |       |       |    |
|-----------|----------------------------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|----|
|           | 1                          | 2-3 | 4-6 | 7-10 | 11-14 | 15-17 | 18-19 | 20 |
| Dead      | 0                          | 0   | 0   | 1    | 1     | 1     | 2     | 2  |
| Divorced  | 0                          | 1   | 1   | 2    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5  |
| Exchange* | *                          | *   | *   | *    | *     | *     | *     | *  |
| Foster    | 0                          | 0   | 1   | 1    | 2     | 2     | 3     | 3  |
| Hippies   | 0                          | 0   | 1   | 1    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 4  |
| Insane    | 0                          | 0   | 0   | 0    | 0     | 0     | 0     | 1  |
| Normal    | 0                          | 1   | 1   | 2    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5  |
| Poor      | 0                          | 0   | 1   | 1    | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5  |
| Redneck   | 2                          | 3   | 4   | 5    | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9  |
| Religious | 0                          | 1   | 2   | 3    | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7  |
| Rich      | 0                          | 0   | 0   | 0    | 1     | 1     | 2     | 2  |

\*Exchange students roll once on the Normal row for their American brothers and sisters and again on the Normal row for their real siblings back home.

level. If your sibling is younger, you take a -1 penalty to all checks and saves until you gain a level. Finally, since siblings are used to replace lost boys and girls, they face stricter curfews and more careful parents. For each sibling used, your curfew increases by one step, and your parents' Sense Motive checks increase by +2.

If you somehow regain your previous character (such as cutting the poor lass free from a monster's belly or saving him from the vampire's lair), you immediately lose all naughtiness points and gain a permanent +1 bonus to all checks. Recoveries beyond the first do not provide a bonus.



## TOYS

Most kids begin play with a toy. These items are more than just diversions in *The Razor in the Apple*; they are powerful weapons for fighting monsters. Since kids usually invest love and affection in these objects, they have great power. A kid can use his Imagination to make his toy do neat things and create special effects. What follows is a listing of sample toys, but these are by no means exhaustive. If you'd like a toy not listed here, work with your Narrator to come up with something appropriate, using the ones described here as guides.

Using a toy costs 3 points of Imagination and the effects last for 3 rounds + a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom score (minimum 1 round).

## ACTION FIGURE

G.I. Hero, Army Joe, Sergeant Stone or even Mark Starchaser, action figures are staples in kids' toy boxes. By using your Imagination, you can bring this action figure to life, creating a semi-real life-size duplicate of the hero. The action hero should be created using the normal rules found in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* and should be appropriate for the type of figure. For example, a toy knight will have skills, feats and equipment appropriate for the figure. The action figure has a level equal to twice your own. On the off-chance that your kid has a monstrous action figure, you should create a monster using the guidelines in the core rulebook, subject to the same level limitations as human-like action figures. In all cases, work with your Narrator to create these characters.

SAMPLE ACTION FIGURE:  
MARC STARCHASER

**Type:** 2nd-level warrior

**Size:** Medium

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +2, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0

**Skills:** Acrobatics 4 (+6), Climb 4 (+6), Jump 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6)

## COLLECTIBLE PLAYING CARDS

| Roll  | Result  |
|-------|---|
| 1     | <i>Aw, man, land sucks!</i> Nothing happens   |
| 2–3   | <i>Minor spell.</i> Shoot a bolt of lightning (or a similar effect) at target. Resolve with a ranged attack (damage +2, critical 20/+2)   |
| 4–6   | <i>I choose you!</i> You conjure up a small weird creature. Use the statistics for a goblin. It attacks as directed.  |
| 7–10  | <i>Heal injuries:</i> You remove 2 bruised and hurt conditions.   |
| 11–14 | <i>What the...?</i> You're really not sure what the card does, but neither does the monster. Choose a single target to become dazed for 1 round.  |
| 15–17 | <i>Major spell.</i> Shoot a ball of fire (or similar effect) at a target. Resolve with a ranged attack (damage +4, critical 20/+4)  |
| 18–19 | <i>Cool card!</i> Gain +10 feet to your speed and a +2 bonus to any two ability scores for your toy's duration.   |
| 20    | <i>Killer Combo!</i> You create some strange effect that summons a herd of glowing critters to swarm all over the monster. The monster takes a –4 penalty to all checks and saves and is stunned for 1 round. |

**Feats:** All-out Attack, Dodge Focus, Improved Critical, Improved Speed, Weapon Training

**Combat:** Attack +4 (+2 Dex), Damage +6 (plasma sword), Defense +4 (+2 Dex), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +1, Fortitude +4, Reflex +2, Will +1

## ARMY MEN

Bags of little plastic green army men have graced the toy boxes of many a child. When you use your Imagination, the army men come to life, swarming over your enemies, firing tiny green bullets and flying wee green helicopters and jets. A package of army men counts as a swarm of diminutive constructs whose level equals twice your own plus 1.

## ARMY MEN

**Type:** 3rd-level construct

**Size:** Large (swarm of diminutive creatures)

**Speed:** 10 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +1, Dex +2, Con —, Int —, Wis +2, Cha +0

**Skills:** Climb +0 (+1), Notice +0 (+2), Stealth +0 (–2)

**Feats:** Night Vision

**Traits:** Darkvision 60 ft., construct traits, swarm traits

**Combat:** Swarm, Damage +2, Defense +3 (+2 Dex, –1 size), Initiative +2

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +2, Fortitude +1, Reflex +3, Will +3

## BARB...ER...BAMBI DOLL

These proportionately incorrect dolls fill the heads of little girls with false hopes and impossible expectations. Through them, they enjoy a fantastic world of dating, pink cars, the life of an imaginary woman with perfect friends and a perfect boyfriend, to say nothing of bizarre anatomy lessons. By holding this doll aloft and using your Imagination, you can create a semi-real

life-size manifestation of the doll. The doll doesn't fight, but she distracts monsters by standing suggestively or offering kisses and batting her long lashes. All monsters within 30 feet must succeed on a Will save (Difficulty 10 + 1/2 your level + your Wisdom score) or take a –4 penalty to combat rolls and saving throws for as long as the Barb... uhm... Bambi doll prances about.

## BASEBALL BAT

While not so much a toy as it is a piece of equipment, dedicated baseball players spend more time and attention on the game than they do other toys. Under normal circumstances, a baseball bat can be used as a club, but when you put your Imagination behind your swing, it radiates incredible power. When you spend Imagination points on your baseball bat, the damage increases to +4 and has a critical effect of 20/+4.

## BINKIE

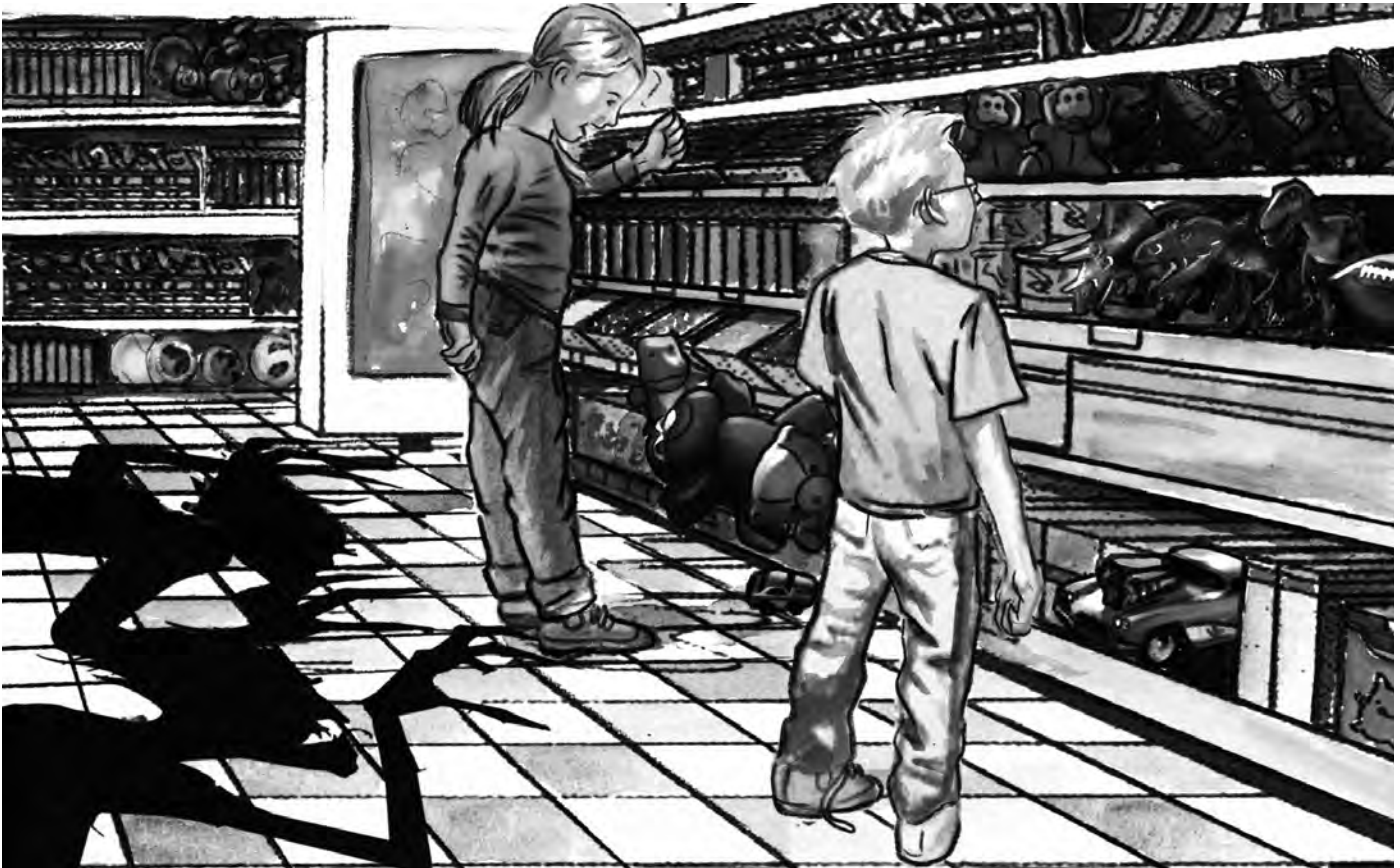
This is your favorite blanket. It's stained, torn, shredded and probably a bit smelly. You take it with you wherever you go. By spending Imagination points on it, you can wrap yourself in it and disappear, gaining a +40 bonus to Stealth checks.

## BOARDGAME

While it might seem a bit strange for a kid to be running around with a cardboard box filled with game pieces, some children have a favorite game that they play over and over again. Whether it's a land filled with candy or one that involves climbing ladders and sliding down chutes, this is your favorite game in the whole world. When you spend your Imagination on the game, you can retreat into its world, disappearing with a faint pop. For as long as you remain, you can't be attacked or affected in any way. For each additional Imagination point you spend, you may bring 1 friend along with you. Sometimes a monster might follow you, especially if it saw where you went. The particulars of the board

## PETS

In lieu of a toy, you can have a pet! Of course, pets are *not* toys and they must be fed, watered, loved and walked, but they are loyal, and they can do things. You may choose a dog or a cat (a fish isn't very helpful). A pet will defend you from monsters attacking if need be (though cats may need some encouragement). Also, you can spend 3 Imagination points to speak with your pet for 3 rounds + a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom score (minimum 1 round). Use the statistics for cats and dogs as presented in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.



game world are up to the Narrator to define, though you get to choose the game of course.

## COLLECTABLE PLAYING CARDS

These little cards have pictures of bizarre creatures, odd items and even stranger actions. Though you're not sure what the little yellow lighting rabbit thing is, you're sure he's cool. You can spend Imagination points to draw a card from your deck and create a strange effect. The deck remains empowered by your Imagination until you draw the card. Roll 1d20 and consult the table above to see what happens.

## DOLL

This doll is your friend and companion. It might be a baby or a rag doll. It could even be a Talking Sally. Regardless, it's never far from you. When you spend Imagination points to activate it, you can transfer any or all of your bruised or hurt conditions to it. If it takes enough damage to die, it breaks.

## HALLOWEEN COSTUME

You've developed an attachment to an old Halloween costume. You like to dress up in it all the time, sometimes even at school. The costume can be anything you like. When you spend Imagination points to activate the item, monsters see you as a fellow monster. They don't attack you, but they may speak to you as appropriate for the situation. If the monster learns that you are not, in fact, a monster, it attacks as normal.

## HANDHELD GAME DEVICE

You have a funboy or portable gamestation. When not forced to do homework, sleep or eat, you're pretty much absorbed by whatever game you're trying to beat. If you spend Imagination points, you can "tune out" the world around you, ignoring everything that happens.

Each round you may move but take no other action. Likewise, monsters cannot affect you with any of their abilities or attacks for the duration of the effect.

## MAGIC 8-BALL

This large black ball looks like an 8-ball from a pool table. When you shake it and turn it over, it gives you your fortune. Ordinarily, it tells you stupid stuff like "you will come into money" or "beware strangers with gifts." But if you invest a little Imagination, the magic 8-ball can tell your future. To use, you must make a Magic 8-ball check, rolling 1d20 and adding your level plus your Wisdom score. Compare the check result to the following table.

| Result     | Result  |
|------------|---|
| 10 or less | A vague vision of the future that may be accurate.                                |
| 11–15      | An accurate glimpse of the future.  |
| 16–20      | Awareness of how long before a particular event occurs.                           |
| 21–25      | Awareness of the people involved in a particular future event.                    |
| 26–30      | Awareness of the time, subjects and location of a future event.                   |
| 31–35      | Near-complete knowledge of a particular future event and everything involving it. |

## TEDDY BEAR

Your teddy is your friend and defender. It may be a bit careworn, but you don't care. When you invest your Imagination into the bear, it comes to life, transforming into a real bear. It fights



as directed. Use the statistics for bears as described in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

## TOY GUN

You have a plastic pistol or ray gun. Normally it just makes an irritating noise. But when you invest Imagination points, it functions as a real weapon. The weapon remains empowered until the duration runs out or until it's fired, whichever comes

first. See **Projectile** and **Energy Weapons** in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* for details.

## TOY SWORD

You have a plastic sword. Normally it doesn't do anything except swish through the air. But when you invest Imagination points, it functions as a real sword. Use the sword statistics found in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

# RUNNING THE RAZOR IN THE APPLE

Adventures in *The Razor in the Apple* are likely to take you Narrators into unexplored territory. While some published games do feature children as protagonists, for most groups, these games are new and perhaps a bit daunting. Furthermore, the idea of playing children in the face of mortal danger can be off-putting. Before you hunker down and construct the greatest campaign you've ever conceived, talk to your players to find out which themes they find offensive and tailor your games to challenge them, but within the boundaries of good taste.

Before you get started running a campaign, there are a few things to consider. Since *The Razor in the Apple* uses children as heroes, they almost certainly don't have the same access to weaponry, armor, vehicles and the other accoutrements available to heroes in other settings. Since these characters are somewhat reduced in power (though don't underestimate the power of Imagination), you should use monsters and adversaries with care. Monsters should be the looming, unseen threat. They may affect the world around the characters, but not directly interact with them until the adventure's conclusion.

In extended adventures, or ones featuring higher level heroes, you might add a few smaller, minor foes to keep the characters on their toes, leaving the "boss" for the end. For instance, in an adventure featuring a vampire as the principle villain, the characters might have to deal with vampiric children, possessed dogs or even a few goblins that hide under the floorboards.

## MONSTERS

Monsters are the things that live in the closets, lurk under the beds, haunt the crumbling house at the end of the street, stalk the woods behind the houses and live in the toilet, lying in wait to snatch you when you pee. Each monster defines an adventure in and of itself. The monster represents the threat the children must overcome and is the crux of their difficulty.

Nearly all the monsters in the *True20 Bestiary* and *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* are appropriate for *The Razor in the Apple*. But, many are more powerful than what a kid can reasonably handle. To address this issue, it's important to develop some extra weakness clever players can seize upon and take advantage of. A ghost, for example, might be undone if his bones are properly buried. A bogie in the closet might be destroyed if he can be surrounded on all sides by mirrors. A sewer wretch might be vulnerable to soap. A ginormous spider might be vulnerable to, or at least deathly afraid of, an old shoe. In short, look for something that's appropriate to the monster and give the players an opportunity to figure out what it is. Otherwise, you'll spend your sessions making up new kids to put in the grinder.

## HATEFUL, STINKING LIGHT

All monsters, that is creatures that aren't animals, are petrified by light. All of them. The big swaggering demon with the flaming axe and a loincloth made from the skin of dragons can't bear the touch of purifying sunlight. In fact, light is the one thing that can destroy these creatures. When exposed to light, monsters suffer effects as described on the **Light and Monsters** table.

### LIGHT AND MONSTERS

| Light Source          | Effect                                       |
|-----------------------|--|
| Match                 | —  |
| Candle                | –1 penalty to attack rolls and Notice checks |
| Lantern or Flashlight | –2 penalty to attack rolls, saves and checks |
| Table Lamp            | Frightened and sickened                      |
| Dawn or Dusk          | –2 penalty to attack rolls, saves and checks |
| Overhead lights       | Blinded, panicked and sickened               |
| Daylight              | Blinded, nauseated and panicked              |





## HATEFUL, STINKING PARENTS

Monsters also can't stand the presence of parents. Whenever a parent appears, a monster instantly vanishes. This tends to put the child into all sorts of trouble, especially when the monster breaks something important.

Some monsters should be exceptions. Vampires, for instance, can prey on parents, though they appear completely human, only revealing their monstrous nature to the kids. Imagine a scenario where Dad brings home his girlfriend to meet the kids. Much to their surprise, she's not the beautiful woman their father described, but is instead some hairy palmed nightmare, replete with glowing red eyes, fangs and an unquenchable thirst for blood. As the Narrator, it's up to you to modify the rules in a fair way that also serves the story you want to tell.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

Now that you have all the tools, what do you do with them? What kind of adventures does one run with *The Razor in the Apple*? Anything you want. Adventures in this setting can take whatever shape you wish, from adventures in the cosmic horror of ancient gods to haunted houses to twisted fairy tales that invert all the virtues of children's fables. Whatever your diseased imagination can create, you can do. To get you started, here are a few adventure concepts guaranteed to take your players into the realm of the strange, the wonderful and the macabre.

### ALIENS FROM OUTER SPACE!

*"What the hell is that thing? Oh, I know what that is..."*

The morning after a freakish lightning storm that hammered the town the night before, the kids wander in a field and stumble across a strange meteorite. Still smoking, it is veined in green

and stinks really bad. What the kids don't know is that the rock is actually a bizarre entity that lays in wait for some foolish critter to touch it. Its surface exudes a mutating disease and those who touch it transform into freakish horrors that spread the contagion to whomever they touch. Luckily for the heroes, the rock doesn't affect children. (Use the **Caliban** from *True20* for the freaks.)

When they bring the stone to their parents, invariably one touches it. Sometime in the night, they start to change. One by one, people throughout the town mutate, becoming disgusting wretches that want to spread the stain of corruption. The children must race to find an antidote or some other way to stop their parents from destroying the world.

### THE THING UNDER THE BED

*"Hey, where's Johnny?"*

At school, the characters notice that some of their classmates are missing. At first they think nothing of it; kids get sick after all. But the next day, even more are missing. And the next day after that, yet more are missing. The teachers look worried, and they spend time talking about safety and not talking to strangers. That night, the parents have a town hall meeting demanding the police do something about the vanishing children. Despite their best efforts, no one knows what's happening. The children are tucked into their beds at night, and the next morning they're gone. It's clear that their beds were slept in, but there's no sign of them at all.

What's really going on is that the town has become infested with a vicious monster known as a bed lurker. These foul things live in mattress factories and crawl in among the springs unseen by the factory workers. They lie dormant until sold and taken to a new home for a child's bed. Sometime later, the bed lurker awakens, very hungry, and finds a meal sleeping above. Once it's tasted flesh, it must have more, so it creeps about the neighborhood, looking for more children to eat.



## BED LURKER

**Type:** 3rd-level aberration

**Size:** Small

**Speed:** 20 ft., climb 40 ft.

**Abilities:** Str +3, Dex +4, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha -1

**Skills:** Intimidate 0 (+2), Notice 6 (+8), Stealth +6 (+14)

**Feats:** Light and Heavy Armor Training, Light Sleeper, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Training

**Traits:** Darkvision 60 ft., Icky, Stench Squirt, Tremorsense 20 ft.

**Combat:** Attack +7 (+1 size, +4 Dex), Damage +2 (tentacle), Damage stench (stench squirt), Defense +7 (+1 size, +4 Dex), Initiative +4

**Saving Throws:** Toughness +2 (+1 natural armor), Fortitude +3, Reflex +5, Will +5

*Icky:* The first time a character sees a bed lurker, she must succeed on a Difficulty 11 Will save or become panicked for 3 rounds.

*Stench Squirt:* The bed lurker can shoot a stream of foul-smelling fluid up to 20 feet away. Those struck by the fluid must succeed on a Difficulty 13 Fortitude save or be sickened for 3 rounds.

This strange creature is a mass of teeth and tentacles. Its amorphous body is covered in winking eyes and sphincters that release little squirts of pale yellow fluid that stink of urine. They pull themselves along with tentacles covered in fine suckers. During the day, they cling to the bottom of the bed, dropping to the floor when darkness falls.

## CLOSET BOGIE

*"There's something in the closet... I swear!"*

The next day at school, one of the character's siblings swears she saw something enter her closet, and claims that something has been coming in and out of her closet every day. Worried, she asks her brother or sister for help. The characters all set up camp in the child's room at night and watch the closet door. Nothing happens all night long, and they think the stupid kid's just having nightmares. Two days later, though, the sibling vanishes without a trace.

Indeed, there is something in the child's closet: a closet bogie (use statistics for goblins). At night, the closet serves as a doorway to the backwards world, where everything is strange and inverted. Closet bogies snatch children to serve as slave labor where they order them to work on some nightmare device that will suck dry the imagination of all the children in the world. Kids can go through the closet into the backwards world and try to rescue the lost children. However, from the other side, they learn they can enter any closet in the world, even into forbidden closets where still more awful things lurk...

## HAUNTED HOUSE

*"What's going on in there? What don't they want us to see?"*

A month ago, a new family moved into the neighborhood, taking residence in the old Haufmann house. Everyone knows the place is haunted, and kids have long dared each other to go inside. The

family seemed nice enough to start with, and you even played a game of baseball with the boy.

But after a few weeks, they all started acting strangely. At first, it was their isolation; the kids weren't allowed to go out and play anymore, and the family never attended any of the neighborhood parties. Later, the father stopped going to work, and the kids stopped going to school. No one ever left, though from time to time you could see a queer face staring out of a second floor window. All the parents have told their kids to stay away from the house, and for the most part, the neighborhood kids do. But tonight is Halloween, and the neighborhood bully is daring kids to go to the door and ring the bell. You're not a sissy, are you?

Whatever is going on in the house is up to you. Perhaps the spirits haunting the house have possessed the parents and now keep the children imprisoned. Maybe they all have some awful affliction that they must hide. Maybe they're vampires, but instead of feeding on blood, they feed on the tears of children!

## BURIED TREASURE

*"Yar! Gimme back me gold!"*

While exploring some caves along the coast, the children uncover an old treasure chest filled with gold coins. Thinking they've stumbled onto a fortune, they fill their pockets with coins and head home to share their treasure with their families. That night, however, a horrid fog rolls in, blanketing the entire neighborhood. And within its icy tendrils are the dead pirates, determined to get back their gold. The children must find some way to find all the gold coins and take them back to the hidden chest or face the cursed crew (who might be ghosts, skeleton, zombies or even all three!).





## ADAPTING THE RAZOR IN THE APPLE

The default game assumes that the children are basically normal kids with very active imaginations, but this need not be the only way to play *The Razor in the Apple*. With slight adjustments, you can change the character of this game to adapt it to just about any kind of game that features children or young adults as heroes.

### YOUNG HEROES

In this adaptation, the characters are children in a fantasy setting. Here, dragons, goblins and more are all real. The kids may be apprentices, the sons and daughters of a wealthy lord or even orphans in a gritty city overrun by thieves. They could be, perhaps, children in an isolated village where witches in the forest, talking wolves and worse hunt them.

To modify this campaign, replace toys with supernatural items. Maybe instead of a toy sword, a child has an actual magic sword. You should make use of supernatural powers and probably make use of the standard roles as described in *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*, making the kids young adepts, experts and warriors.

### A WORLD OF WIZARDS

Another option is to modify this setting to have it mirror that of a particularly famous young wizard with a scar on his head. The characters could all be students at some magical boarding school, contending with the challenges of growing up while facing a threat not only to them, but also to the world. Adventures could involve thwarting evil wizards, defeating terrifying monsters, uncovering sinister plots, finding and recovering stolen artifacts, and even taking part in fabulous magical games.



Again, you should remove toys, but grant each character a bonus feat to purchase a supernatural power. As they advance, they gain an extra bonus feat each level to expand their repertoire, perhaps representing the latest magic they've learned. Also, don't forget the young adepts can spend Imagination for one-shot uses of various powers, although things might not always work as they expect!

### TWISTED TALES

What if fairy tales were true? What if children could enter a magical world where there's a Little Red Riding Hood, Humpty Dumpty, Mother Goose and all the rest? What if this world was vastly corrupted, twisted and changed by the dark imaginings of a diseased mind? In this game, the children step from their world into one of dark fairy tales, where every creature craves their hot blood, wishes to enslave them or corrupt them. Can the children escape the clutches of wicked talking animals, thwart the plans of the evil queen and somehow convince the huntsman not to carve out their little hearts? And above all, can they find their way back home?

To run such adventures, you'll need to change very little. About the only thing you'll need to get rid of are the I'm Telling rules, since parents can't cross over into this world. Otherwise, Imagination should play a big part, and perhaps even alter the outcome of events and circumstances. The rules provided here should be enough to launch a dozen exciting adventures.

### FANTASY LAND

While exploring an old house, the children find a strange old cupboard, closet, wardrobe or maybe even just an old door. Opening it, they find it is a portal to a fantastic world of high adventure, of fantastic animals, magic and all the other exciting trappings of fantasy. Once they cross over, they find themselves thrust into a terrible conflict between good and evil. They must choose sides in the coming battle, and if they are pure of heart, good of spirit and worthy, they might survive the great war about to erupt.

As with Twisted Tales, the Fantasy Land approach is also easy to play using the rules presented in this setting. Parents and I'm Telling are not available, but you could change how naughtiness points work to reflect a child's purity. The only chance of surviving the coming conflict is to be good and virtuous, and only by adhering to one's morals is there any chance of saving the land. Naughty acts may lead to corruption and ultimately pitting the children against one another in the final battle.

Narrators familiar with Green Ronin's *Blue Rose* romantic fantasy game can use the world of Aldea as a setting for this type of *True20* game: children from our world might find their way into Aldea via a shadowgate, the stained-glass window of the Azure Plaza or some other Old Kingdom magic (perhaps belonging to an Old Kingdom adept who left Aldea long ago for another world). They can meet psychic "talking animals" in the form of the rhydan and come under the protection of Good Queen Jaellin. Of course, there may also be a prophecy or vision claiming these "children from another world" will bring about the downfall of the Evil Lich King Jarek, in which case the kids are in terrible danger, unless they and their newfound friends can help to bring the prophecy about!

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