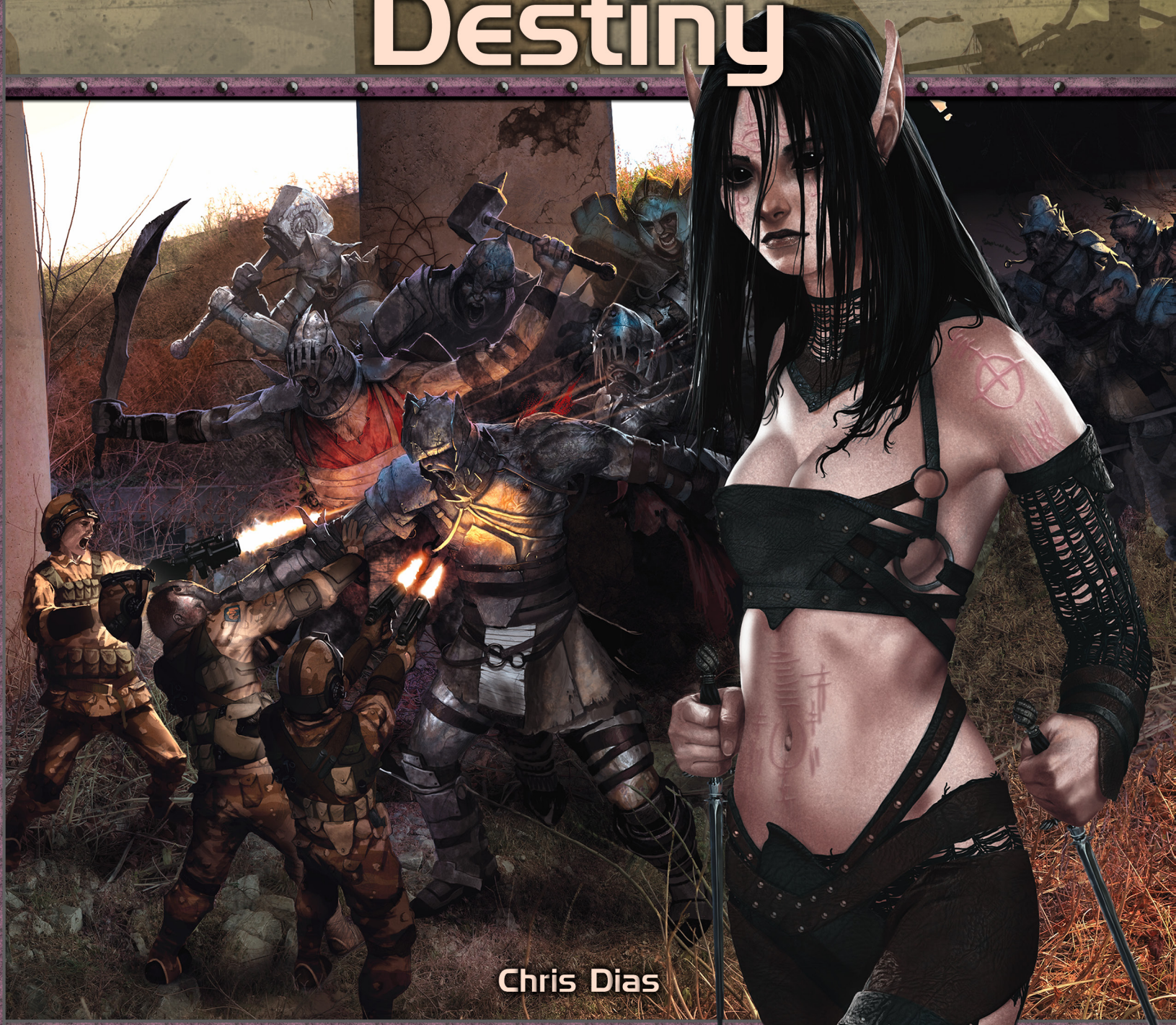
AMETHYST

Destiny



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CONTENTS

1: FUNDAMENTALS **6**
Glossary 19

2: FATE OF AMETHYST **22**
The Basics 23
Character Sheet 25
Taking Action 28
Character Creation 32
Character Development 37

3: SPECIES **40**
Line of Fae 41
Relations and Traditions 42
Fae Descendants 43
Chaparrans 44
Damaskans 48
Gimfen 53
Laudenians 56
Narros 60
Pagus 62
Tenenbri 65
Tilen 71
Humans 74
Kodiaks 77
Interspecies Romance 80
Fae Mixed Blood 81
Half-Fae 82
Custom Species 84

4: VOCATIONS **86**
Professions 88
Alpha 89
Ancient Wuxia 90
Crimson Leaf 91
Cryphtaron 92
Custodian 93
Darawren 95
Death Hunter 96
Doppelshido 97
Experteering Engineer 99
Fargon Disciplined 100
Grenadier 101
Groundpounder 102
Gunslinger 105
Halfmaster 106
Herbalist 106
Juggernaut 107
Kavalier 108
Kinetassana 109
Kitarri 110
Knight of the Wall 111
Koana Scholar 112
Laudenian Magos 113
Librarian 114
Logian 115
Marshal 117
Martial Artist 117
Mechanic 119
Medic 120
Redcap 121
Rekii 121
Seeker 122
Selkirk Brawler 123
Sniper 124
Sworn Hand of Vengeance 126
Thuggee 127
Traffic Hunter 129
Supernatural 130
Blood Royal 131
Bottled Beast 132
Gneolistic 134
Incarnate 135
Krysallis 136
Mystic 137
Paladin 138
Spirit Bond 140
Vivicator 140
Organizations 142
Abidan Missionaries 143
Crimson Starlight 144
Free-lance 145
Iron Sons 145
Guild of Ilm 147
Logos Lance 148
Ministry of Foreign Affairs 148
Order of Abraham 149
Order of the Cloth 151
Orobas 152
Retinue 153
Slaver Caravan 154
Techan Mercenary 155
Train Guard 156
Watcher 157
York Self Defense Force 158

5: THE WORLD **160**
Alien Similarity 161
Cultural Landscape 162
Languages 163
Religion 165
Medieval Trappings 170
Travel 171
The Changing Earth 172
Bastions 173
Angel 174
Mann 177
Selkirk 179
Sierra Madre 182
York 184
The World Beyond 186
Abidan 186
Baruch Malkut 189
Continental Cross 191
Dawnamoak 193
Fargon 194
The Finer Fire Pits 196
Free Houses 198
Gnimfall 200
Kannos 202
Laudenia 204
Limshau 206
Salvabrooke 208
Seliquam 210
The Wild 212
Wastelands 214
Community Creation 218

6: EQUIPMENT **222**
Equipment Rules 224
Acquiring Gear 225
Tech Levels 227
E.D.F 228
Gear Descriptions 230
Echan Wargear 232
Techan Gear 234
Techan Weapons 235
Pistols 238
Rifles 241
Heavy Weapons 243
Techan Melee Weapons 246
Injections 248
Grenades & Explosives 249
Armor 251
Exo-Armor 254
Techan Tools 258
Boosters 260
Special Materials 261
Vehicles 263
Aircraft 269
Thermals 272

7: MAGIC **274**
The Gates 275
Spellcraft 276
Casting Magic 277
Totems 278
Attricana Spells 280
Enchantment 281
Ixindar and Mengus 281
Sample Spells 282
Magic Items 285
Alchemy 285
Artifacts 286
The Eight Shards of Amethyst 288

8: MONSTERS **294**
Monsters and NPC 295
NPC/Monster Types 295
Fae Anathema 299
The Fall 300
Spawn 301
Mythological Creatures 301
Bogg 303
Dojenn 304
Dragons 305
Hags 312
Iron Sons Company 313
Kodiak 313
M.A.X. 315
Merfolk 315
Neriisa 316
Pagus 317
Pugg 319
Satyrs 320
Shapeless Wild 321
Shemjaza 322
Skegg 323
Thornshroud 325
Werebeast 326

9: CAMPAIGN **328**
Themes 329
Running the Fate System 332
Adventure Building 336
The Single Stone 340

INDEX **356**

CHAPTER ONE: FUNDAMENTALS

When Aiden Camus was twelve, his watch stopped.

He sat frozen on a field of broken glass, eyes fixed on the sky. Screams filled his ears coming from the wounded, the dazed onlookers at the edge of the devastation, and from the fallen boy beside him.

He was older than Aiden by several years, with mottled chin stubble and crewcut hair. His eyes were shut as he wailed. He reached for Aiden, still locked out of time as the events of the past minute began to sink in.

Blood dripped from deep slices across Aiden's palms as he held up his weight. Pain started to jostle his attention. His eyes fell back to the destruction surrounding him. The overturned cars, the shattered windows, the buckled pavement, the memories that would never fade.

On its surface, his watch looked undamaged. It hadn't broken when he fell. The battery hadn't died. It had a miniature electric motor powered by the motion of his arm, intended to keep perfect time forever.

Both children lay crumpled in the middle of the street, flanked by splintered wood and twisted steel. A fountain sprayed from a broken hydrant at the intersection corner a few yards away, trickling water over Aiden's matted brown hair.

He noticed survivors at the periphery desperately attempting to rally support. The vehicles on the fringe had stalled, blocking traffic into the scene. Traffic lights had gone dark. Cellular phones refused to turn on. Scores of people were still fleeing from what they saw, or rather what they refused to believe they saw.

Aiden remained still, even when the surrounding yells blended into sirens or when the aircraft began swarming above. He felt emergency workers attempting to rouse him from his daze. He repeated the last few moments over in his mind, trying to find some rationale for what had happened and why. It wasn't that it shouldn't have happened, rather that it couldn't have.

His watch's balance wheel which charged the battery had seized. The ratchet and rotor locked the hands three seconds into the third minute past ten o'clock.

It was a Sunday.

Aiden's life until then had been filled with concessions—moments of happiness he accepted only because his dreams could never be fulfilled. He preferred aspirations over practical goals. Aiden, like all children, desired the impossible, until reality forced its way in.

The recovery would be orderly. The damage would soon be repaired. The dead would be mourned. The events of the last few minutes would be reported and then forgotten. Everything would fall back into place.

Except Aiden and his stopped watch.

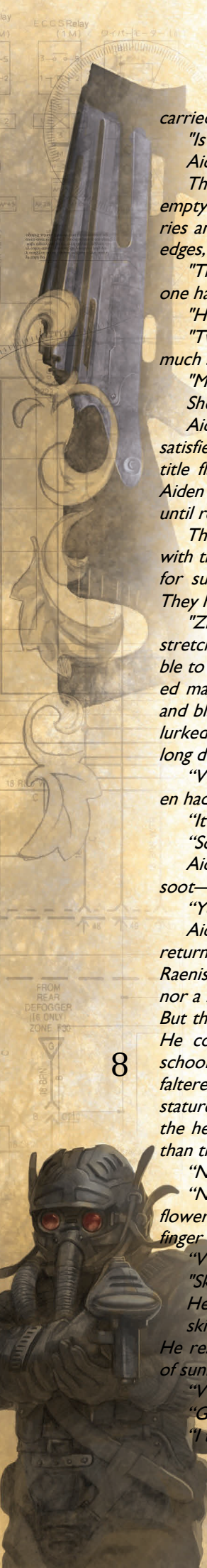
• • •

It wasn't his birthday. Aiden could tell it was a book. He knew to be careful in unthreading the burlap knot and tearing the hemp paper away. He rolled his fingers across the swells and dimples of the embossed cover, then rattled his nails across the uneven pages, thick with coarse edges. Aiden was impressed. It looked recently unearthed from an ancient tomb, brushed of errant dust, and dropped into a shopping bag. The pearl-shaded dragon on the cover had perfectly enmeshed scales, making its skin a uniform matted silver. Only the spine showed the title.

The Codex Dracontis.

"Where do you find these?" Aiden asked his mother.

Aiden had passed that age when parents read to their kids. He missed that. From her, every word was impeccably pronounced, never a slur or stumbled phrase. Through his mother's lips, those stories had



carried the weight of gospel.

"Is it good?" his mother asked.

Aiden kept his eyes on the book. "Best one yet."

The window was open. Between them and Martin's empty bed sat his own collection of books, modern stories and science fiction. Aiden liked the ones with frayed edges, bent spines, and old words.

"This old, must be magic," she teased. "Looked like no one had touched it in a century."

"How much did this cost?" He turned to her.

"Twelve year olds are never supposed to ask how much something is."

"Mom?" he pushed.

She patted his lap. "Come on, read me one."

Aiden swung the wooden cover open; it groaned like a satisfied lion. The first cockled leaf repeated the book's title flamboyantly, like it was hand written on the page. Aiden rolled it over carefully. He flipped several more until reaching the first illustration.

The dragon was sketched in graphite and accented with thick strokes of India ink. The image's title was fitting for such a beast, The Death Dragon, Zmey Gorynych. They held the book between them.

"Zmey was a sickly creature," Aiden started. "Muscles stretched tightly around his bones. He appeared too feeble to flap his pitted wings, let alone fly. This dragon needed magic to take to the air. He belched soot and flame and blackened the ground when he landed. Where death lurked in abundance, one would find him. He required the long deceased to feed upon."

"Well that's…appropriate," his mother muttered. Aiden had weathered far worse stories.

"It's a story, Mom," Aiden replied.

"Sorry, go on."

Aiden scanned his finger to find his spot. "He belched soot—"

"You read that part."

Aiden smirked. "It was worth mentioning twice." He returned to the story. "But he was no match for Willum Raenis. Willum was a farmer's child. Neither a favored son nor a fond sibling, he dreamt himself as a knight of legend. But the only thing bigger than his dream was his appetite. He couldn't run. He couldn't he lift great weights. In school, brothers above and below excelled where Willum faltered. He desperately wanted to be special. Without stature or charisma, there was no way for Willum to win the heart of one to suit his wishes. He looked no higher than the nice—"

"Niece—" his mother interjected.

"Niece of the elven lord, Elisa Stormbringer, a petite flower of golden petals. She was…" Aiden fell silent as his finger continued to run down the page.

"What are you doing?" his mother asked.

"Skipping."

He flipped a page. And then another. His finger skimmed through the paragraphs.

He resumed, "Zmey's shadow was peppered with breaks of sunlight—"

"Wait, wait. Why did you—" his mother started.

"Girl stuff," Aiden answered.

"I think I'd disagree with that—"

"Can I continue?" Aiden interjected with a smirk. His mother shrugged and pointed back to the book. "Zmey's shadow was peppered with breaks of sunlight, piercing through the cracks and holes in his leathery wings. He swooped down and sliced open Willum's brothers as they tended the crops. Willum knew the legend of the dragon of death as well as its appetite. It had already turned its sights to the nearby castle. Willum offered no deal to the kingdom."

"You know the rest of the story would probably make more sense if you knew what the elf princess was like--" his mother said.

"Nope," Aiden interrupted. Cut to the dragon. He flipped a page. "Willum's father, a once proud servant of the realm, owned a blade of refined steel and nobility. Willum took his father's blade and wielding no skill, cut down his farm's livestock. The meat rotted until the aroma was irresistible to the mighty creature—"

"It takes days for food to spoil," said his mother.

"Wouldn't the dragon have killed them all?" Aiden gave her a frustrated look. She chuckled, shook her head, and beckoned him back to the book.

"The beast turned from its pillaging to enjoy the impressive feast placed before it by an obvious admirer," Aiden continued.

"Little did Zmey know that in the stomach of every corpse, Willum had sewn in fresh food. Berries, plums, turnips, even a bushel of green bananas. This meal didn't sit well. Zmey tried desperately to spit up its meal, but the food sat. It gripped the beast in unbearable pain. When the creature breathed its last, all Willum had to do was pull on the withered carcass to tear the head from its body. Willum then carried his trophy to the castle."

Aiden closed the book. He looked to his mother.

"Awesome," he admired, then rolled more pages by. "Dozens more."

"Yes, but enough for now," said his mother. She closed the book and placed it among his collection.

"I missed it when you read to me…but I know I'm too old."

"Doing quite fine on your own," she replied.

"But they sounded real coming from you."

"Well, stories don't need a voice to be any more real." She patted his lap. "They don't even need a reader."

He slumped into the bed and rolled on his side. She kissed his cheek. His eyes were closed, but he wasn't close to being tired. His mother exited quietly.

As she slinked to her bedroom, she noticed the stern look Martin was giving her from the end of the hall. Four years older than his brother, with pruned hair and optimistic goatee, he already resembled their late father. He inherited the same stare mixing bewilderment with annoyance. She paused to offer a forehead kiss and made for her room. He didn't respond and waited for the door to close before returning to the computer and his blog that no one read.

Aiden opened his eyes moments later and stared through the open drapes to the night sky where a thin film of orange pollution garnished the skyline. The view, half way up a strata juggernaut of a thousand apartments, the city appeared to spread to the vanishing point. Aiden

couldn't see the city wall.

Bright lights and a narcissistic waning moon blotted out the stars, except for one brilliant white spark hanging off the edge of a lunar sea.

Aiden stretched out his arm to the shelf and dug his nails into the headband of the codex. He held it precariously by the edge of its spine and carried it back to the bed. The glow bleeding from the window precluded the need of a nightlight.

Aiden flipped to the first story, past the sketch of Zmey, past the introductions, to the part about the elf.

Elisa and Willum married. The magic of an elvish bond gave him centuries of youth. And she bore him sons for a new kingdom they would create.

Aiden turned another page, before the start of the next story, to a pencil sketch of the fictional couple. Willum on his knee, the tall elf princess smiling upon him. Aiden angled the book under the window light to illuminate the girl. Unlike the rough interpretation of the dragon, lacking features from a deficient imagination, the elf showed detail like she had posed for the artist. Flawless skin, a pointed nose, almond eyes, and a delicate figure. The sharp ears were subtle, barely nudging through straight uncolored hair.

Aiden just remained there a moment, hoping for that impossible chance when her eyes might meet his.

• • •

A close second to Aiden's obsession with books was his affection for video games. Martin's favorites had guns, robots, and tanks vaporizing whatever monsters moved before the reticule. Aiden favored sword-wielding and spellcraft, but those were growing difficult to find. His mother located a free download from an obscure website.

"Hey! Homework!" Martin barked as he approached behind Aiden.

"Done," Aiden replied, attention fused to the screen. His warrior dodged and flipped in burdened armor, cleaving with a blade that never wore down. The hero's meal was some generic ration devoured in a single swallow and supplying energy for another twelve hours of continuous movement. Wounds sustained vanished with a moon's pass.

"Where?"

"In the kitchen," Aiden replied with a nudge.

"I have to get on there, by the way." Martin poked him.

"Mom said I had until 5:00."

Martin stepped closer, offering a distracting shadow on the screen. "How many hours you into it?"

"Last save was sixty five."

Martin coughed a laugh. "Why don't you go out?"

Aiden's retort was worth him breaking his focus from the monitor, "This is more interesting." Aiden returned to his game.

"You're going to have to do something with your life eventually, you know."

"Honor roll. How are your grades?"

Aiden's hero's clothes were always comfortable, the romance always willing. The woman the champion had won was a meagerly decent falsehood with long lines of exposed skin and the brassiere of a medieval dominatrix. She never complained of the cold and fell at the hero's feet when the programmer deemed it appropriate. Death was as quickly resolved as one's finger moved to the hotkey. Castles were a minute's walk apart. Money was easily acquired from the bellies of wandering beasts.

Before leaving, Martin reached a foot across to the machine's power supply and turned it off.

"Marty!" Aiden screamed. Martin laughed as he was chased from the room. Aiden had only lost a few minutes progress. The hero and his world, secured within the last save file, waited patiently for his player's return. The sprite never complained to its god about the lack of refrigerators, central heating, or proper medicine.

• • •

Aiden's eyes followed the passing lights of the tunnel in the Underground Transit Rail. While the train wasn't moving, a flush flat panel television on the outside of the train played through various ten-second commercials, most involving the necessity to improve one's appearance with cosmetics or the latest synthetic drug made to placate the anxieties of modern life.

The transit system was meticulously controlled, with stringent fines against litter and vandalism to keep it and the city above clean. Walls were unspoiled by graffiti, the floor was practically hygienic, and the air was conditioned. Aiden's mother sat beside him, holding his books under her arm. Aiden saw a portable electronic game in the hands of a boy half his age on an opposite seat. The boy's father ignored him as he held onto the railing.

Aiden leaned forward to see the inside of the train bending through the tunnels at speeds he couldn't comprehend. He imagined the transit rail was a giant serpent, gnawing its way through the rock. Aiden embraced the creature's course mane, or perhaps boney frill, and commanded the monster to burst from the shell of the Earth. It lifted the child on its head, taller than the tallest tower in the city. Maybe it dangled little legs behind so it could shuffle about the ground. He would trick the beast to dig too deep or breach a barricade to the canal and drown. Then Aiden could follow the tunnel to the monster's lair and rescue his own princess.

• • •

Mother and son scaled the crowded stairs and exited the UTR station into downtown. Pine trees genetically altered to survive in the shadow-plagued skyscraper forest flanked the sidewalk. The cars whizzing by them hummed like single-note violins. The sun was bifurcated by the dagger-tip of a corporate monolith looming several blocks down. The ivory tower, covered in a checkerboard of white tinted windows and photovoltaic panels, paved a shadow ahead of them.

Aiden asked for bubble-gum at a passing vendor. His mother relented but told him to choose quickly. Between cherry, apple, watermelon, long-lasting, sugar-free, and extrachewy, there were a hundred varieties. Eventually,

his mother stepped in and snagged a cinnamon and paid with a bank card. He didn't want cinnamon but didn't object.

They walked leisurely down the walkway. Occasionally, the cloudless sky would be invaded by a passing aircraft—helicopters mostly—hopping between the peaks.

An elderly man with clean skin and weathered eyes stood at the summit of the ashen citadel, breath slow and calm. He was topped with unkempt white hair which blew madly around his face. The people below looked only as a mélange of reds, oranges, and blues.

The noises below resonated up the spine of the building. The stranger smiled as he leaned forward. Workers, prioritizing their own safety, crawled upon the ridge, screaming for sanity. The stranger spread his arms wide and drifted over the edge. Swollen white garbage bags flopped firmly in his grip. They were stuffed but nearly weightless in the wind. The workers failed to catch him.

From the altitude, his descent resembled a crawl. The wind didn't slam him into the tower or drift him away from its shadow. He fell straight, the rushing torrent rupturing the bags in his hands. Thousands of wisps of paper fluttered away like feathers from a dying bird.

At ground level, iron-gilded stone supports lent themselves to some dictator's dystopia. Two storey glass shutters opened quickly and effortlessly for customers. The crowds shuffling about the entrance didn't notice the body until the stranger disintegrated through an empty bus. Screams followed, and people gathered quickly.

Aiden's mother noticed the swarming onlookers before her son did. She could see the crushed vehicle and stopped a block away. Aiden was an inch too short to catch the commotion.

His mother guided him down another street. "Honey, let's…let's walk around that."

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Let's just avoid it."

Aiden spotted the falling shreds of paper.

"Mom, look!" he shouted, waving his hands to swat the tatters around. One wrapped around his finger. "Like snow…" He noticed hand writing. "It's raining words."

"What's it say?" He showed it to her. She read it, and then grimaced. She pulled him down the side street. "Let's go, we'll be late."

Aiden stroked the paper in his hand as he read it again. Our dreams are a prison.

• • •

Aiden's school was separated from neighboring skyscrapers by an alienation of white walls, heavy iron gates with brass balls atop the posts, and a stretch of genetically engineered, perfectly permanent emerald grass. Aiden's mother fixed his clip-on tie under his brown sweater. "I know it's a Friday but no walking home this time," she said. "Wait for Marty."

"Gotcha."

"You didn't lose the essay did you?"

"No. There's not going to be a test on it, you think?"

"Test? What do you think this is, school?" She smiled; he smiled. "Here." She reached into her pocket. "I got something for you." She pulled out a necklace, a delicate silver chain. Hanging from it was a coin bearing an embossed image of an elderly man wielding a staff in one hand and an infant in the other. The letters that ringed the coin were in an old tongue that few people in the city could read. She dropped it around his neck. "It's a charm. He protects children. Especially brave ones."

Aiden lifted it to his eye and could tell it was old. "Is it magic?"

She tucked it in his shirt. "It's a flashlight to remind God where you're standing."

"He can see us all the time?"

"Every second, every step. Where you've been and where you're going."

"How can he know that?"

"He knows everything."

"But he can't control everything."

"No...You're right." She pointed at Aiden's chest. "He can't control you."

"Then how can he know where I'm going?"

She thought about it. "Because he knows you so well,

he knows where you'll go, what you'll do and what you'll see. We all have a place."

Aiden looked at the pendant again and whispered, "But what if I want to do something else?"

"All right, enough of that." She eased him past the gate. "Off with you and for everything you learn, teach something."

• • •

"Camus-kun," interrupted the teacher.

Aiden snapped his attention back from the window, the scrap piece of paper still rolling around his fingers. His thoughts had been on the bedtime story, about the parts he skipped. What was she like? Did she read books or play sports? Would she finish Willum's sentences and laugh at his jokes?

"Yes...sorry, Leach-sensei," Aiden answered.

It was a class for advanced students, and Aiden was the youngest by a year. Unlike Willum Raenis, Aiden Camus was exceptional. "You know, you might actually find this subject interesting."

"I was following," Aiden lied.

"Eyes on me then, please." Leach shifted across the front of the small class waving a thousand page opus in his hand. The blank digital tablet hanging behind him had the color of a chalk blackboard. "What defines a civilization?" He let the moment linger, the students wondering if it was rhetorical. "It could be said that the author believes it's based entirely on its builders and thinkers, and not the kings and presidents at the top or the consumers and peasants at the bottom. You take them away, civilization collapses. A society is worthless if it doesn't develop...both socially and technologically. So what causes a civilization to stop growing?"

As in every class, the students looked to each other and waited for one of them to break the silence. "War," Lara popped up.

"War. I don't think so," Leach corrected. "Actually war, and the prospect of it, encourages change. War gave us nuclear power. The potential of war gave us computers, rockets, the internet."

"Segregation," spoke up William, another student, the oldest and largest. Leach nudged for clarification. "The separation of upper and lower class," he continued.

"Peasants farm, soldiers fight, nobles rule...and sometimes think."

Leach nodded. "That can cause a civilization to slow down."

A fourteen year old girl across from Aiden asked "Religion?" Leach waited for her to continue. "Burned libraries," she continued, "executed or imprisoned anyone questioning the church."

"Absolutely. We've had famous libraries burned, technological breakthroughs suppressed as being too dangerous… all from religion. They may claim to encourage scientific progress but they've always been its rival." Leach made his way back across to Aiden's side. "A great author once said that if suppressed breakthroughs and progressive ideas had been embraced by their societies, we'd be living in an era 3,000 years advanced from where we are now. Civilization has to expand. It can't help it. We teach our children, and they learn and better our achievements. Something like religion can slow progress but can't stop it. For one, the world is big. You halt the progress of a civilization on this part of the planet; it won't stop another civilization on the other side.

"Take pasta. It wasn't Marco Polo that cultivated it across the world. Pasta just appeared naturally around the same time across the globe. It's necessity that forces us to build and expand." Leach brought up the novel again. "This is why the book has that flaw. If you take away the builders, new builders will emerge from the rabble. You remove a ruler, someone else will step forward." Aiden was listening now, but his thoughts were to the books he had been reading, of ancient mythologies and empires that marked their progress by millennia.

"You can impose religion," Leach continued, "suppress dangerous knowledge, but you can't stop progress. Eventually, people will start building."

"Magic?" Aiden offered. The class turned to him. An awkward pause followed, broken by the larger William.

"Magic?!" William mocked.

"What do you mean?" Leach asked calmly.

Aiden cleared his throat, keeping his eyes on the teacher rather than the class. "If you can create anything you want out of thin air, you wouldn't need to build it."

"That's stupid--" William barked

"No," Leach interrupted, "that's actually a good point. In a fantasy world, thousands of years pass without even the hint of technology, beyond carts and swords. But that can never happen."

"Why?" Aiden asked.

William butted in, "Because magic isn't real!"

Leach flicked William's ear as he answered. "Because like I said, necessity forces us to build. That's why it's a fantasy." Leach worked his way towards his youngest savant. "I read one of those when I was your age. George-something. There was magic but it was uncommon. Kingdoms lasted centuries without ever changing. You can include a caste system, religion, ironclad traditions, some ancient law against the use of machines, but eventually, technology will develop. Fantasy novels don't need to explain why. It's fantasy. It doesn't have to make sense. The moment you apply logic to a fantasy novel, it falls apart. Their worlds are too small, timelines are too long. Monsters are too many and there's usually a frighteningly insufficient lower class. And if that world has magic, there'd be chaos. If any child could be raised to wield a wand, you'd have anarchy. But even considering that, those without magic would still build. In our history, there were empires which lasted beyond a thousand years, but even those had moments of social and technological innovation." Leach was imposing but lowered his voice to not impose. "You simply cannot suppress the desire for humans to grow. I'll also say that I would loathe any civilization that existed for thousands of years and not be able to figure how to make a machine that washes my dishes."

The class laughed, and Leach returned to head of the room.

Aiden could still see a few eyes on him from the older students. From Lara, smiling at him. From William, an-

noyed at the time wasted.

As the class ended, Aiden filed out last, avoiding William's hex-vision stare. As he passed the teacher's desk, Leach called out, "Aiden?"

"Yes, sensei?" Aiden answered, noticing the teacher beckoning him back. After the last student departed, Aiden stepped back to the desk. "Was I out of line?"

"Nothing of the sort," Leach answered. "But perhaps it's best you keep such talk about magic private?"

Aiden furrowed his brow. "Why?" he asked.

Leach prepared a detailed answer, but then paused and answered simply with, "It's just best…for now." Aiden still didn't comprehend the issue. Leach leaned forward and spoke, "The people around you, parents, teachers, engineers, they need the world around them to work…in a specific way. They lay down rules and permit only a narrow field of thought. Nationality, technology, theology, they can't allow something rejecting those tenets."

"I don't understand," Aiden replied.

"Do you believe in Santa Claus?" Leach said suddenly.

Aiden shot glances about the room as he answered. "Of course not."

"Why?"

"Because he's not real."

"And what if he knocked on your door and said 'Hello'?"

Aiden's answer came quickly. "I'd ask for a bike."

Leach chuckled, covering his mouth to prevent a louder reaction. "And that's the difference between you and the rest of the world," he answered. "They would point and say, 'you're not real'. They can't allow something to break from what they know. They need order; they need a reflection of their beliefs." Leach pointed to the fantasy novel nestled under Aiden's arm. It was an old edition, and one of the last printed. Aiden glanced down at it. "And not to be reminded of what can't exist."

"That's odd," Aiden answered, still honestly confused. He knew there was something not being said. "I still don't understand the big deal."

Leach smiled and patted the desk in front of Aiden. "You'll have to ask your mother that one day," he said.

• • •

William expressed his dissatisfaction with Aiden after school, only feet away from the exit. "Don't waste the class's time, Aiden!" he snapped. He loomed inches over Aiden's face, ensuring a moderate amount of spittle landed in the boy's eye.

Aiden wiped his face and leaned back. "Okay," he answered calmly.

"You don't belong in that class. You're too young anyway. And why you reading this?" He snatched the novel under Aiden's arm and gave it a glance.

"Pratchett!" he snapped. Aiden jumped up to the taller student, flimsily pawing at the distant book over his reach.

"Magic isn't real!"

"Give it back," Aiden shouted, slapping around William's limbs. William pushed Aiden to the pavement with his free hand. The Pratchett novel fell to the fallen boy's lap as a pair of larger arms wrapped around William's collar and lifted him off his feet. Martin had three inches, twenty pounds, and two years on the bully.

"Bill!" Martin barked. "You're smart. Smarter than me. So, I'm going to start hitting you until you talk me out it. Good?!"

William wrestled free and made his escape. He grabbed his bag and ran for the gates. Aiden retrieved his book and accepted Martin's offer of a hand.

"Okay?" Martin asked.

"Thanks," Aiden muttered.

"What d'you say to piss him off?"

"I didn't say anything!" Aiden snapped

"Let's just go." Martin pushed Aiden ahead of him. Aiden check his book for damage. A corner had frayed and a new rip had appeared on the casewrap.

"So that's why?" Martin said.

"What?" Aiden replied.

"Aiden, I don't care for those books Mom gets you, and a lot of people would agree. And if I wasn't your brother, I migh act the same, so keep that stuff guarded. Don't tell anyone you read them, and don't show it off."

"What's the big deal?" Aiden replied. "Sensei said the same thing. How are mine any different than yours?"

Martin stopped and spun around to face his brother. Aiden instinctively dropped the book to his side in case Martin tried to reach for it. "Because mine deal with what can happen," Martin snapped, "They're about science, progress. Fantasies are not about that; they're about what can't happen. They're about dreams and myths."

"But…we go to church," Aiden muttered. Martin resumed his walk.

"Yeah, well, let's not go there," Martin grumbled. Aiden kept still, glancing at his book. He gently nuzzled it back into his pack and raced to catch up to his brother.

"I liked what you said to William, by the way," Aiden said.

"I've wanted to say that to him for like a year."

• • •

Their mother was not one for the kitchen. Dinner was prepackaged imitation parmesan cheese and powdered milk mixed with stabilizers and corn starch. It was layered over a bed of rock-hard tortellini softened after five minutes in the microwave. Aiden moved his eyes across the open book beside his plate as his mother followed the rhythms of an artificial cook.

The book was grey with green letters and gilded pages. Aiden read about the lives of pale skinned, subterranean fae called the tenenbri that lived in underground lairs and had vestigial cataract-covered eyes. Oversized pointed ears gave them the senses of a bat. They were an arrogant sort, clashing often the dwarvish people called the narros that shared some of the tenenbri's religious beliefs.

The book was advanced. Aiden had to look up some of the words. He didn't care. Octagon-shaped glasses edged precariously off his nose.

After the meal, his mother began to fill the dishwasher. Aiden remained at the table and stared at the cover of his novel. "Mom?" he asked.

"Yes."

Aiden ran his fingers around the crevices and grooves in the book. "...Someone died today, didn't they?"

She stopped loading and turned to him. "Yes." She never lied. "Yes, someone died."

"Why'd he do it?"

She placed a mug down and orbited around to sit beside him. He didn't look at her. "I don't know, honey. Some people have a pain that no medicine or words can cure. To them, death is the solution; but they don't realize how selfish and narrow-minded that solution is."

"But what he wrote. It was like he was trapped. Are we trapped?"

She smiled, patted his shoulder, and returned to her dishes. "You're only trapped if you can't find the door."

She cleared out half the machine when Aiden closed the book and made for the living room, dominated by its 47" liquid crystal flat-screen television. Aiden stopped and voiced another question. "Mom, is Santa Claus real?"

She stood up quickly, bewildered. "That's a strange…" she answered, "No."

"Just checking," Aiden said as he left.

• • •

A Sunday morning meant Sunday service. Aiden refused to set his alarm. Face crammed into his pillow, he rolled his head as his mother parted the blinds. The window was open and the sirens and screams of morning traffic were already polluting the city. The orange sun was poking between several distant buildings. Aiden could see the peaks of the tallest towers parting clouds. Solar cells twisted like blossoms. On the horizon, a forest of smokestacks belched pollution to be carried by the wind out to the ocean. A helicopter caused a mild distraction as it passed by Aiden's window.

Before Aiden had swallowed his morning yawn or flicked the crust from his eyes, his mother laid out the good clothes.

By the time his mother had returned, Aiden was still undressed, listening to the news broadcast from the screen in his bedroom. "Find out which food supplement is deadly, after the next break--" Aiden changed the channel. "Guilty is the verdict today in the murder of pop sensation--" Click.

"Get dressed, come on," his mother said.

"Just trying to find a channel while I change," Aiden pleaded.

"There's nothing good on. All this news." She left and called out from the hall, "You've got five minutes." Another channel showed green grass and tall trees put to old music.

"Aiden!" Martin shouted, already dressed with his head poking through the doorway, "let's go!"

• • •

Aiden, Martin, and their mother took the UTR to church. On the train, Martin sat on the left of his mother, Aiden on the right. Martin watched a rerun on a portable flat-panel screen.

Aiden watched the train. Their mother's left hand held a purse; her right played with Aiden's hair.

The church of the Sacred Mary was a five-storey wooden A-frame as old as the city. No ration was given to parking and every curb was filled with a variety of electric vehicles.

Aiden's mind wandered during the plodding repetitious mass. The priest was old with a comical lisp and mumbling words. Aiden ran grooves in the soft wood of the bench with his nails. A hand slap from Martin only discouraged Aiden for a short time. A prayer, a passage, and a Eucharist later, and Aiden was clear from his obligations for another week.

As they left the mass, Aiden pondered his day's plans. Part of it involved his armor-clad digital warrior slashing through an improbable number of foes in an equally preposterous dungeon built illogically to geometric precision.

The three of them quickened their pace from the church doors to the sidewalk to catch the street lights before they changed. Aiden checked his watch. It ticked two minutes past 10:00.

An air siren jolted the crowd, the high pitch oscillation bouncing off buildings. People ran blindly into the streets, some to their vehicles. Martin's instinct pulled Aiden and his mother close, wrenching them to the UTR tunnel entrance a block away. "Come on, let's go! Hurry!"

The second sound was not a siren, not a helicopter. It was louder, not mechanical, from an empty sky. People followed with their own yells. The source of the sound revealed itself as a silhouette unfurled its wings to eclipse the sun.

Daggers of daylight broke through the holes in its leather wings. Talons as long and sharp as swords tore the church peak apart as it landed. Wood splintered, and a poorly carved soapstone Christ shattered upon the pavement. Twice the size of the church, the beast roared and spit a torrent of liquid fire across the sky. Aiden was unable to look away as his brother dragged him by the cuff. The creature's black skin was drawn tight across its body. Its eyes like drops of cream in strong coffee. Its teeth were jagged and jumbled. Lips were too thin to close around its mouth.

"Zmey?" Aiden whispered. He was sure of it. He had pictured it larger and more pestilent. The stream of flame struck an approaching military helicopter. It melted the craft instantly. The vessel toppled to the ground as a forged chunk of glass and iron.

"Aiden! Come on!" his mother snapped.

The creature looked down at the scattering masses before it. Leaping from the church peak, it crushed a half-dozen of them underfoot. It snatched more from across the road, throwing them against the walls of nearby buildings.

Its rampage migrated down the street towards the crowd rushing to the safety of the UTR entrance. Martin held his younger brother's collar, pulling vigorously, indifferent to the monster gaining ground. Aiden's curiosity forced his gaze back.

If it was Zmey, why was it not dead? How much of that story was wrong?

"Is that Zmey, mom?" Aiden shouted.

"Shut up!" Martin snapped.

"Mom?!"

"Aiden, I'll explain everything later!" she answered. Her heel broke, and she fell to a knee behind her boys.

"Mom!" Martin shouted, turning quickly back. Aiden stopped as well, but his attention was still on the dragon. The more he stared at it, the more real it became; the less Aiden believed he was dreaming. Perhaps then he could be frightened of it.

Zmey's claw came down in front of them. Martin fell back with a slash suffered on his arm. The concussion of air brought Aiden to his knees. Martin ignored his wound and clenched his fists. He closed his eyes waiting for his end.

Aiden could smell the putridness wafting from the dragon, felt the heat of the inferno brewing in its belly. A part of Aiden kept reminding him that this couldn't happen. This was a normal world and a dragon can't fly, can't spew flames from its mouth. Aiden believed he would awaken, perhaps in his bed, perhaps in a pew.

As Aiden fell, he cut his hand on a shard of glass. The quickness of the pain pulled the air from his lungs. The numbness, the detachment that accompanies a dream, started to pass. Aiden began to notice what had happened, what was happening. People had been killed. Buildings had been destroyed. Crowds were fleeing. Aiden felt a cool sprinkle from a broken hydrant. He heard his brother wailing. Like a shock through this spine, Aiden saw the beast for what it was, the monster he should fear. It was real.

As Zmey's brought its claw back up to claim another victim, the beast fell back from a tackle, tossed into the empty church. The cathedral collapsed from the weight of two monsters.

No one had seen the other beast slam into Zmey.

Zmey's opponent pulled away to plot another attack. The new arrival was longer with smaller wings. Its gold and blue scales broke light into colors. Long white whiskers flapped like gravity had no control of them. Each of its four arms ended in four ivory claws. The monster snaked in the air, and its jaws opened wide enough to swallow a car. Its forked tongue sparked a flame, but it only bellowed. As the echo bounced off the buildings, lights within rooms went dark. The traffic signals went dead. Cars drifted to a stop.

The newcomer's eyes were those of a man's, soft blue and brilliant. Its body twisted around Aiden and Martin. It blocked them from harm as Zmey slashed with a bladed tail. The monster of gold and blue scales kept its defense and suffered a deep gash to its belly. In its counterattack, it leapt across the road and dug talons and teeth into decaying flesh. The creatures coiled around each other, but the black beast could not match the dexterity of its rival. A solid bite and its golden opponent had torn off an arm. Dark molasses dripped as blood from the wound. The black beast tore itself free from gripping claws, causing more damage as it took to the sky.

The one with golden scales swiveled its head to look at the boys. Its eyes were the same shape but the size of a child's head. Aiden couldn't help it. He raised his bloodied palm from the pavement and offered a feeble wave.

The dragon smirked back. It winked.

It twisted its form again and leapt back to the sky to chase down its opponent. It pursued the cripple around a distant building where Aiden lost sight of them. A dozen military fanjets slipped overhead to take up the chase.

Martin shouted Aiden's name and repeated it until the syllables merged to a wail. Aiden's attention drifted back to where the beast had come down. Aiden's daze had begun to lift; his breathing quickened. Whatever lingering strength he had bled away, and Aiden felt a sharp tightness in his chest. His fingers began to tremble as he realized what had happened.

She was gone.

Martin crawled to his brother. He lost the strength to pull Aiden to him but refused to let go. He slumped to the ground.

Aiden turned his attention back to the sky while Martin cried.

• • •

The brothers had barely talked since the morning. Aiden sat on his bed with the opened Codex Dracontis on his lap.

Aiden ignored the clothes he was supposed to take. He rummaged in his coat pocket for his glasses. He curled them around his ears. He tried to ignore the stabbing pain from the stitches in his palms but couldn't avoid the tension in his chest when he thought of his mother. When he thought about the dragon, about the questions he had, the weight would lift slightly.

Aiden had blisters over his lips and rings around his eyes from previous breaks in concentration. He sniffed and rubbed his nose as he frantically flipped through the pages.

Finding the entry for Zmey, he studied the sketch. There were differences. Its head was larger in proportion to its body in the drawing. Eyes were white, not black. Aiden was positive the book took inspiration from the real beast, which was then altered by the artist's foggy recollection. Aiden slumped upon his bed and stared at it. He flipped through the other pages, other dragons, some with white feathers, others with silver scales. He searched for the one that saved him. Aiden glanced at the other books he had acquired, ones on elves, sorcerers, and sword wielding.

"What are you doing?" Martin asked from the doorframe, an empty suitcase under his arm.

Aiden looked up from the book. "I can't find it."

"What?" Martin responded, quickly and cold.

"The gold and blue dragon. He's not here. It has Zmey but not the other."

"Mom's dead, Aiden."

Aiden paused. His bottom lip quivered and this throat clenched. He didn't want to cry in front of his brother. "I know...But--"

"Enough..." Martin whimpered. "Just leave it. Please...leave it. Pack and let's go. People are waiting." He left his brother alone, staring at the book. Both brothers had wanted to remain home, but Martin wasn't old enough, and there was no one willing to stay with them. Cousins willing to take them in lived half way across the city, closer to the "crown".

Martin lingered on his locked softside suitcase and did so for five minutes. He crammed and crinkled five changes of underwear, three dress pants and five shirts, leaving substantial space for a pair of albums and a photo of him and his mother from his Confirmation. He had previously wedged in more photos but realized he hadn't packed any shirts. He always considered himself the surrogate adult, the proxy for his father, someone that Martin knew but Aiden never did. When Martin returned to his brother's room, he noticed the half-full holdall occupied by one change of clothes and topped with the codex.

"Leave the book," he said.

"No," Aiden replied, still focused on the tome.

"Aiden--"

"You knew." Aiden could discern with his brother the difference between fear and surprise. Martin was frightened of the beast, but its existence was not a shock to him.

"Please Aiden," Martin answered.

"You knew."

Martin opened for a lie but couldn't. "Not everything. Just that…this city…is all people like us have left."

"And what's past it?"

"I don't know."

"Has anyone left?" Aiden asked.

"No one leaves," Martin replied. "They only try to get in."

"Then someone knows. There are dragons." Aiden reached for the book.

"They killed mom--"

"And saved us--"

"They took everything Aiden," Martin snapped. They took...everything we were and could ever be."

"You never wanted to look?"

"Don't have to."

"Why not--"

"Aiden!" Martin shouted. "It's not our world. She wanted you innocent. Everyone is…for a while. That's over. I'll make sure we stay together. It's just us now."

"But the other dragon?"

"Who cares?! It's done! No more of this!" Martin stepped forward hastily to snatch away the book. Aiden instinctively clutched it to his chest. He grasped it tightly as his armor, tears rolling as he began to cry. Martin tried to wrest the tome from his brother's grip. He shouted as he tried to separate book and boy. "Burn them all! They killed mom!"

Aiden curled fetal around the book. He stayed tightly wound in a bundle of clenched limbs. Martin pinned one leg on Aiden's shoulder and pried an arm free, ripped the book from his brother's hand. Martin was hurting Aiden; cries turned to yells.

Martin felt it had to be done, like tearing a bandage off or striking a disobedient child, the act of an adult. "It's not a fantasy, Aiden! Grow up!" Martin stormed out of the room. "Two minutes! I'll drag you if I have to!" Aiden could hear the sound of the kitchen garbage can opening and the loud thump as Martin dropped the book into it. Martin knew Aiden could just take it back from the trash, but Martin knew rules needed to be followed and he expected Aiden would respect that.

He didn't.

Aiden waited until hearing the slam of his mother's bedroom door down the hall before shuffling quickly to the kitchen to take back his book. Martin fell upon the queen mattress and began crying while Aiden stroked his fingers across the front cover of the codex, at the embossment, at the image of the dragon's eye.

Aiden glanced across his arm to his watch. There were no cracks or scratches, no signs of impact damage. It had stopped three minutes past ten.

He opened the book again and noticed the stamp at the bottom of the inside cover. It was printed in two languages, English and Sinitic, but Aiden only knew a few of the Asian characters. The ink had faded. Aiden read the book's origin: David Obatala Chen's Biblio, 23C Huangxia Street, Genai.

A STORY

Don't check your brain at the door.

Don't settle for the dream.

This is real.

Amethyst is a role playing game that postulates what would occur if a true-to-book fantasy setting was forced upon our reality. Our world is populated by many people wanting more from their lives. Our fantasies are filled with nymphs, valiant knights, and fire breathing dragons. We dream about being carried away by the fancies our mothers tell us every night. But what if it was real for everyone? What if it invaded our society? How would humanity truly respond?

This is not some stylized fanciful view of Earth seen in books and on TV. It is a world with all the problems, both social and political, intact. Would we welcome the world of fantasy into our lives or would we fear its very presence? Magic cannot exist; there's no scientific basis for it. How could these creatures of whimsy exist and match so closely to our mythology and religious canon?

This future emerged from the world we know— a world where books and movies written about fantasy existed. People that survived into this new age saw firsthand what they had previously thought to be fiction. The new world matched so closely to their imaginations. How would major religions respond given such a massive shock to their dogma?

On top of this dilemma, magic breaks down many of the normal rules of the universe which technology requires to operate. It is a chaotic system that overwrites itself on reality, and although this influence won't destroy life, it does retard the progress of civilization, preventing technology from operating beyond simple mechanisms like windmills and bicycles. Where magic is prohibited, normality returns and evolution and technological advancement can continue.

What remains of our modern society and its technology survive in cities resembling those of the previous age, walled in against the encroaching magic around it. Here, they have their cars, their central heating, and their televisions. Outside, the fantasy world may be wondrous, but it is also real. People die from the simplest calamities. Despicable rodents with weapons and wicked brains prey on the innocent and unarmed.

Will mankind be able to retake the planet and push the fantasy back into the realms of our imagination, able to resume our blind passion for consumerism and industrialization?

Or is this world better than the one mankind squandered?

From the fantasy world rises a mythology suggesting that there are two realms of magic: one dark, the other light. The source of this energy originates from two powerful gates, the white star of Attricana and the black gate of Ixindar. The main axis between evil and good is not one where the law-abiding, civilized nations of good battle against the destructive force of chaos, but where the chaotic tendencies of life clash with the controlled and methodical might of syntropy. The conflict – at its root – sets anarchy against order, uniformity against unpredictability, and determinism against free-will. Where life needs a level of uncertainty to blossom, homogeny breeds only death. The fantasy world is not some singular entity, but a complicated multi-layered world of warring nations, political strife, and monsters clever and powerful, as well as stupid but numerous.

AMETHYST EVOLVES

Cities collapse, heroes rise, and the future falls into the hands of a few. The world alters, grows, and plummets into shadow. These heroes encounter their greatest fears and challenge true evil in all forms. They find depth in an easy situation, complexity in a single idea. A world that changes around a band of adventurers. A setting with a point and a climax. A world where an ending waits. Solve it and discover the truth. Fail and the planet crumbles underneath.

The setting of *Amethyst* relies on the clash between magic and technology. Many fantasy worlds blend the two, usually with magic gaining the foothold and technology falling behind. *Amethyst* presents a world where the two sides stand almost at war and – from a metaphysical point of view – actively disrupt each other's existence. This is not to say that individuals from both sides cannot coexist: it is the differences between people that make them stronger when together. Although an individual might not be able to wield both a spellbook and a gun, this does not extend to the limits of the group. Perhaps, despite growing tensions and mounting enmity, a balance between the two worlds can be found.

Player characters in *Amethyst* are neither sitting on the sidelines nor are they following braver and more powerful leaders into glory: they are meant to change the world. They do not dig ditches or hand out food while armies march into combat, but command legions, infiltrate empires, save princesses and slay kings. The end of the game should be different from the beginning. Of course, a player can claim a kingdom after vanquishing his enemies, but the real journey takes one's soul across the world, to meet one's final destiny after a very long crusade. A GM is encouraged to plan out her strategy for the game—whether the characters will travel to their final destinies in Canam (the continent described herein) or only progress part of the way before tackling the next chapter in a foreign land.

THE HISTORY

The history of the world begins with the conundrum of the chicken and the egg.

Millions of years ago, a fracture occurred in the fabric of space and time. It exhibited traits that were scientifically measurable, yet it broke many acceptable rules regarding electromagnetism, gravity, and quantum mechanics. Scientists later deduced that this rip, called Attricana, was a bridge between two universes. The alternate side contained a cosmos with rules of science abnormal to our own. As this universe spilled into ours,

the conflict of two orders of nature encouraged aberrations upon the Earth, impossible until that point.

But what opened the gate?

Amethyst is a modern name given to a dragon from this age—the first creature of fantasy born upon the Earth. Legends also maintain Amethyst was the architect of the gate's creation. But if Amethyst created the gate, then what created Amethyst? Creatures born from magic require magic to survive. If Amethyst came before, then he would be the single exception in this world. Some historians believe he is not a dragon at all but something else.

Some proclaim him a god, but gods cannot die.

For millions of years, before Earth was called Earth, the denizens of the planet called it Terros—a land of magic and wonder, spared from the wrath of malevolence. Dragons flew overhead while fae creatures scurried below. Attricana encouraged life in every possible form. Monsters did emerge but never with the coordination to form an organized civilization. Meanwhile, the elder races were witnessing a slow degradation of enlightenment. The fae were not evolving; they were degenerating. Their descendants were begetting feral beasts. At the bottom of this inverted tree were uncultured boggs, violent skeggs, and veracious and swarming puggs. The chaparrans hid in their forests. The laudenians took to the sky. Damaskans recorded knowledge and history. Narros defended the cities. This left the gimfen to ignore such concerns and remain forever at play, remaining innocent against the encroaching violence.

Whether or not this could have endured would never be known.

The residents of Terros never questioned the origin of Amethyst. He was the greatest and wisest of them. They called him a god. They called him an avatar. He was connected to Attricana more intimately than any other entity. No one really knew the truth.

This changed when Ixindar arrived.

Unlike Attricana, records on the black gate's arrival are detailed. It drifted over the planet, sweeping across the night. From it spilled the corruption of order. If Attricana was a wellspring from a chaotic universe (perhaps one in the founding minutes of its creation), then Ixindar was the fountainhead of syntropy. It led to a realm of perfect harmony, perhaps to a cosmos of death and tranquility—a universe in its final moments. This gate had its own avatar, its own god to warrant worship. This was Mengus, a disembodied entity that whispered corruption without creating anything on its own. In one night, Ixindar had distorted a million fae to follow it. Servants gathered at the place where Ixindar came to rest, a spreading expanse of black glass later dubbed Kakodomania.

The noble forces of chaos had difficulty forming an army while their opponents quickly expanded and reproduced into battle lines. Within a thousand years, war had torn the planet apart. It would be several millennia before both sides realized mutual attrition was the only possible outcome. But elements from beyond the world would prevent this ultimate fate.

Mankind knew this incident at the K-T Extinction event—when a ten kilometer bolide impact off the Yucatan Peninsula created the 180 kilometer Chicxulub crater, wiping out the vast majority of plant and animal life on the planet. The fae called it the Hammer of God. Both sides of fantasy agreed separately to seek refuge on the other side of their gates, within dream realms formed by those gate's avatars. Mengus faked complicity in order to ambush Amethyst when isolated, believing Ixindar would survive the calamity to come.

The forces of chaos gone, Amethyst found himself surrounded by the soldiers of order. The general of this army, an intelligent construct known only as Gebermach, inflicted the killing blow, driving the dark sword Dogurasu into Amethyst's heart.

In his reprisal, Amethyst sacrificed his physical body. The resulting eruption of chaos wiped out the armies of Mengus and shattered the sky above them. A single beam of light from the gate before its closing drove Ixindar deep underground, sealing it under impenetrable stone. Attricana closed upon Amethyst's death. All remaining constructs and creations of magic fell to dust. All evidence was washed away. Earth belonged to no one.

With nothing to compete with, the principles of our universe regained control. The natural order of evolution took root, leading eventually into mankind. Through his history, he told stories he could not possibly know, about mythical monsters and warring gods. These tales came from the whimsy of imagination but all carried a portion of truth, some more than others.

These stories became myths, books, films, and religions. This influence from a time no man had seen carried onto crests, flags, and banners. Their origins were explained, connected to other stories and faiths. Some were tied to science—seeing a manatee and believing it to be a mermaid. Fantasies remained locked in the dreams of a real world. Pushed aside as fancy, mankind continued his evolutionary drive to build, understand, and conquer. Society advanced as did the machines in servitude. Gaining a full understanding of science in all its unchanging rules, there was nothing man could not achieve given enough time.

History unfortunately would repeat itself.

A second bolide impact occurred, this time directly over Ixindar. To this day, no one knows the cause, as there was no warning before impact. It was a smaller event compared to the last but enough to reveal Ixindar to the world. The forces of syntropy emerged and corruption followed.

The following events are muddled, another case of a chicken and an egg. Ixindar opened, and some indeterminate time later, Attricana followed – but did Attricana's first stirrings perhaps provoke Ixindar's reemergence, or was some mechanism in place to open the white gate if Ixindar were ever exposed? By the time of the white gate's reappearance, mankind had already been reduced to less than a tenth of its peak population, though whether due to disasters born in the

wake of the Second Hammer or through wars over resources or ideologies, no one is truly certain.

Mankind did not have the luxury of philosophy. He was fighting a losing battle on two fronts, from order and from chaos. To make the situation even more desperate, the technology mankind had been relying on for hundreds of years had begun to fail. From the fountain of Attricana flowed rules of nature antithetical to the science machines required to function. The more advanced the technology, the greater the chance of disruption. Surviving humans had to make a choice: wall themselves in from the flood of encroaching enchantment, or settle for a primitive life surrounded by the wonders of fantasies they once could only read in fiction.

Five hundred years later, the humans that clove to their machines have built immense cities of technology. These bastions are the last bulwarks of a time these men and woman refuse to surrender, a world run by science where mankind held dominion. Some of these cities have grown to the size of small countries. Outside the bastions live the empires and wastelands of fantasy. Dragons and elves have returned to lay claim to the mountains, woods and fields. Monsters hide in dungeons and prowl in mirky forests. The wilderness has become dangerous but at the same time all the more romantic. Magic will always be a lure to those willing to wield it.

Order versus chaos, science versus magic; these conflicts make fanatics of everyone. An unspoken stalemate has arisen, with none gaining the upper hand. This may change with the proof of a once forgotten legend. When Gebermach slew Amethyst, the dragon's crest of stone fell upon the ground and shattered. For millions of years, the fragments drifted to the far corners of the world. Now, one has been found, and the crusade to find the others has begun. The legend claims that if the pieces of Amethyst's crown were brought together at the place of his death, one could call the god back to life, or take the mantle of command from him. With such a power, one could resurrect the most powerful creature to walk the Earth, or close the gate of magic forever. Who will find these artifacts?

Who will emerge victorious?

And, ultimately, will it be worth the cost?

THE CONFLICT

The world is not engulfed in war, but widespread peace across the land is still a distant dream. Not only are the remaining bastions of pre-Hammer mankind fighting a desperate and seemingly hopeless struggle against encroaching enchantment, but the individual bastions themselves are also paranoid about their own technological sovereignty over rival bastions. Further, the world of fantasy is not all of wonder. There are two realms of magic, flowing from two different breaches in the normal universe: the white gate of Attricana floating high above the sky, and the black gate of Ixindar half-buried in rock in the land of Kakodomania. Their influence and the armies loyal to them provoke conflicts whenever both sides meet. While Attricana encourages creation and chaos, Ixindar promotes order and syntropy. While many people directly involved in this conflict do so from an obsessive desire to protect their ways of life, others have been tempted to cross over, embracing an alternative way of thinking.

MAGIC AND FAITH

In *Amethyst*, there are only three ways magic can be focused, and thus, at least partially, controlled:

- **The Language of Dragons.** The power of these god-like creatures is to create something by naming it—the magic possessed in the language of the greatest species. Even the script extends itself into multiple dimensions. Wizards utilize this for all their magic. This language is called Pleroma.
- **Magical Reactivity.** There are thousands of elements and combinations of elements that produce different magical results. The practices of alchemy and metallurgy have returned. Those with such knowledge forge items of enchantment by simply being aware of the exacting ratios of components required. Fae iron, coruthil, and angelite are such examples as well as the myriad forms of magical potions. Nearly every magic item features this to a degree.
- **Inborn Magic.** Fae beings and monsters are magical by their very nature, even if they cannot consciously wield magical forces. Some, be they fae, monster, or even human, possess magical abilities on their own from birth. A few claim this power as divine, but many others refute that. Just as it was with man's time, god or gods are as silent as he, she, or they always were. There are no proven sanctified or blessed users of magic in a world with a silent and unproven god. Still, the rare priest or druid often finds no other reasonable explanation.

Religion does exist in *Amethyst*. Most are old-established, dating back through humanity's history – Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and the like; others are far older and yet new as well, reconstructed from the memories of the fae; still others blend disparate elements as it suits their practitioners. Every faith can claim to possess one or two folk supposedly blessed with the spark of divinity. There are also those with no faith able to wield magic purely from a natural endowment they cannot explain. Others know very well where their power originates and understand there is no intelligence or deification beyond said gift. Because of this doubt, there is still no proof of god in *Amethyst*, despite the claims of many who believe.

REAL MAGIC

Despite appearances, the world of *Amethyst* is a low-magic setting; powerful spells are rare and obtained only at great cost and difficulty; major magical items are just as rare and hardly ever to be found outside the hands of the great and powerful; true artifacts are the stuff of legends, and most are completely mythical.

All magic, whatever its supposed provenance, comes from the gates, but spell casting techniques are unique depending on the caster. Those who claim to have a spark of the divine, called either gneolistics or vivicators, gain their power directly from Attricana. Whether this power is granted to them by some unknowable intelligence, drawn into their soul by the power of their belief, or merely a quirk of birth is unknown. Druids and shamans also obtain their power from the gate, though not directly. They receive their abilities from a conduit, namely the Earth. They worship nature and the world around. In their belief, the world channels the power from the gate and casters gain their power from below, not from above. Shamans harness the wind, earth, fire, and water as well as the animals and plants around them, shaping and controlling them as they wish.

Mages disregard channeling and mysticism, approaching the gate with an almost scientific eye. They claim while clerics and druids blind themselves to the mysteries of the gate, mages dive head first, taunting the cosmos to reveal its darkest secrets. Long before man or even elves, the first power from the gates was channeled through the immense capacity of the draconic language, known as Pleroma. This practice continues today and remains the most popular form of spell casting. Only with lifelong persistence and an innate gift for understanding such intricate mysteries can the extremely rare few channel anything more than cantrips.

GLOSSARY

After Enchantment (A.E.): The progress of time in this new era. The game begins for many in the year 508 A.E., just a little over five-hundred years from when the white gate reopened. Note that many communities retain their own system of reckoning, and there is no consistent calendar accepted by all.

Arkonnia: The region occupied by the continent of Africa and the Arabian peninsula in old Earth.

Alternate Quantum Vibrational States (AQVS): The generic term for any physical state out of phase with our own. Some scientists refer to the realms beyond the gates as AQVS and claim the Enchanted Disruption Field (EDF) derives from this. They also claim Attricana and Ixindar are portals to different dimensions or different universes. AQVS may also be the source of incorporeality. Those without a mind for acronyms call it 'aether.'

Amethyst: The first intelligence to emerge on Earth, Amethyst was a powerful dragon-god whose death ended the time of magic millions of years before man.

Anathema: Devolved fae, most of limited intelligence, generally regarded as monsters by all civilized folk.

Attricana: The term given to the enchanted realm existing beyond the white gate. It hovers in high orbit between the Earth and the Moon and is bright enough to read by at night.

Bastions: Sanctuaries of men and machines. These are technological enclaves heavily fortified and densely populated. Most are echaphobic and forbid the use of magic within their walls. Each bastion stands as its own country, with very little to no contact with either the outside world or other bastions.

Blinder: A common derogative nickname mages and other magically imbued individuals call techans.

Canam: The continent previously occupied by Canada, the USA, and Mexico. Mostly pristine wilderness, with a number of large kingdoms and free houses loosely connected by a few well-maintained roads.

Chaparran: One of the oldest species of fae, who inhabit the woods and wild places of the world and are known as peerless archers.

Corpus Continuity: This is the belief, mostly spiritually-based, that the humanoid form shared by humans and fae descends from a common origin. While some claim it related to echalogical influence—that humans look humanoid because of a lingering echo from the fantasy age—others claim a divine origin, proving the existence of God.

Damaskan: A younger branch of the fae, dedicated to the accumulation and preservation of knowledge and the principles of settled civilization. They are the only fae species who respond well to being called 'elves'.

Disruption: This is magic's capacity to disrupt the laws of nature that technology requires to function. This process only occurs in one direction—technology cannot disrupt magic. The entire planet is covered in a disruption field (see EDF), though the risk of disruption is not uniform, meaning certain areas have a higher rate of disruption that others. Disruption is at its minimum within bastions.

Echa: The slang term for magic or 'enchantment'. It often refers to visual use of magic (spells and magically infused items) as well as being used as a blanket term for the fantasy world. Someone touched by magic or using magic is commonly called 'echan,' although this term mostly refers to humans specifically embracing the path of enchantment, and occasionally to fae in mixed communities. Some still consider this ugly bastardization of 'enchantment' derogatory, but it is now too widespread to do anything about.

Echagenics/Echalogy: The study in both echan and techan cultures of the similarities between humanity and its recorded history against the fae, dragons and their recorded history. This analyzes the obvious physical similarities between fae and man in conjunction with historical coincidences in their religions, legends, and mythologies. Theologians studying echalogy are referred to as echalogians.

Enchanted Disruption Field (EDF): The enchant-

ment disruption field prevents radio communication beyond a few miles, inhibits electrical conductivity and disrupts electronic circuits like an electro-magnetic pulse when extremely powerful magic is nearby. It also has the tendency of jamming mechanical devices above a certain complexity (the limit of which varies based on the strength of the field). While most early industrial-age technology up to (approximately) the level of the steam engine is usually safe from disruption, anything that relies on moving parts or electrical current (no matter how minor) can be affected with sufficient exposure.

Echalogical Influence: The belief that the history of the fae and dragons inspired human fiction through an immeasurable, unproven, undetectable echo which somehow resonated through sixty million years of evolution until minds advanced enough to understand that echo listened.

Fae: A catchall term for the several humanoid species which inhabited the Terros age alongside dragons millions of years ago, and reappeared in the modern age with the reopening of Attricana. As creatures of magic, they are antithetical to the technological societies of Mankind.

First Hammer: The first impact that destroyed the dinosaurs and ended the first reign of magic. It initiated the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event.

Gimfen: The youngest branch of the civilized fae, and the only ones who can handle technology without risk of disruption.

Inosi: The region of Earth previously referred to as the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia.

Indoaus: The region of land previously occupied by Australia and Indonesia.

Ixindar: The name given to the realm existing through the black gate. The gate is across the world, sitting half buried at the center of Kakodomania.

Kaddog: The general term for the three most common branches of damaskan anathema (and the most prolific monster species in Canam): puggs, boggs, and skeggs.

Kakodomania: A smooth obsidian glass which spreads radially from Ixindar. This realm envelops most of central Slav in permanent darkness.

Kodiak: Intelligent, bipedal grizzly bears native to northern Canam.

Laudenian: The oldest branch of modern fae and the most magical, who fled from contact with the ground for fear of devolving into lesser beings.

Lauropa: The term given to the region covering the lands of Europe west of the former Ural mountains. Consists mostly of neo-feudal kingdoms, with the fae empire of Damaska occupying most of the central landmass.

Mengus: The disembodied intelligence that resides within Ixindar, whispering corruption to any creature disposed to hear her. The most implacable enemy of Amethyst.

Narros: The middle fae, short and stocky, dwelling primarily underground and obsessed with tradition and perfection.

Pagus: Corrupted fae of ages past who answered the call of Ixindar and were transformed into huge, brutally effective warriors.

Second Hammer: The second impact that destroyed the technological empire of man. It struck Siberia, exactly where Ixindar lay buried and exposed its influence to the world.

Shemjaza: The proper term for the fae-like creatures known by humans as 'demons,' the ultimate servants of Ixindar. Although all look practically identical, each shemjaza is designed for a particular purpose.

Slav: Often separated into Western and Eastern Slav, this region on Earth covers the majority of China and the entire former Eurasian region east of the Urals. Rendered mostly uninhabitable by the Second Hammer and the subsequent spread of Kakodomania, most of the survivors of the eastern region migrated to Canam centuries ago.

Southam: The region of Earth formerly known as South America. Consists mostly of feuding underground kingdoms, and rainforests populated by ogres who hunt primitive humans for food and sport.

Syntropy: The principle of infinite static existence, embodied in the power of Ixindar. It is the antithesis of magic, and indeed, of the fundamental principles of life itself.

Techa: The slang term given to the technology of man and is usually reserved for the bastions and their machines. Its wielders use the title 'techan' as a badge of honor.

Terros: The era before man, from when the dragons and fae appeared until their disappearance 65 million years ago.

Tenenbri: Blind, but hardly handicapped cousins of the damaskans, masters of an underground theocratic empire beneath the mountains of Southam.

Tilen: Another cursed fae line whose ancestors embraced the power of Ixindar to transform themselves into free-willed undead. Their modern descendents, freed by Attricana's resurgence, struggle against the urges of their blood and fight for the survival of their species.

U.C. (Universal Credits): A currency that most bastions and wandering techans trade in. Only techans accept and use uc. Unlike fantasy currency like gold and silver coins, uc has no face value.

Experts in dressing death had reconstructed what was left of her body. They placed a plastic smile on her face. The waxy finish of the skin convinced Aiden this was less his mother and more an imitation. Friends of his father, military veterans, brought the closed casket up. Father Tom, like the church, was new. One by one, friends neither he nor Martin knew offered hands and hugs. The mass was long with prayer passages reminding the mournful of god's

grand purpose. Aiden ignored them. He never paid attention during regular mass; the words felt equally hollow now. Aiden hoped the blue eyed and golden scaled dragon would rip off the roof and whisk him to a new life. The church's packed capacity marched to the casket, touching, praying, crying.

Aiden was relieved to see the afternoon light as he followed the pallbearers out of the church. Martin offered tears for each weeper and wailer walking by. Aiden nodded and hugged but remained dry save an occasional sniff. More words of divinity leapt from a priest's lips as the casket slipped through the open maw of the marble wall at the necropolis.

Aiden looked scornful at the cross at the entrance. He wondered if God was real as well. An omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being, benevolent and divine? Then why was she dead? Did the dragon break the rules? No creature shaped like that could fly, yet it did. No animal could breathe fire, yet it did. They couldn't exist, but there they were.

Father Tom's words, though carefully chosen, were no more uplifting than the compassionate whispers of distant family members.

"Men pale in the wisdom of God," he said to Aiden. "Not even I can understand why things happen when they happen. There is a reason for everything, Aiden. God has placed you on a path; there is something to learn from this. Even the worst of times are intended, by his will, to guide us. Occasionally, his hand must be firm. In times like this, our faith in his plan must remain strong."

"She was killed by a dragon, father." Aiden emphasized dragon as much as killed. Father Tom didn't say much after that.

As they exited the mausoleum, Aiden glanced at the wall, the periphery of the city. The monstrosity stood twenty stories and topped with battlements. It enclosed all ten thousand square kilometers of the city. It was only the latest iteration, with monuments of previous walls counted like tree rings to mark age and expansion. The last one was the tallest, the longest to build, and the most resolute in keeping everything that wasn't in, out. Aiden heard people calling it the crown. Years ago, when Aiden asked Martin what was beyond the wall, his brother had said, "Nothing you should care about."

He'd lied.

Aiden wished he had asked his mother. He wished he had discovered the truth by her telling him, by closing the codex and whispering, "It's all real." He should have followed what Leach had suggested and just asked her. Aiden wished that if the cost was to be that great, he would've preferred ignorance a few more years. Wishes kept Aiden a child. Wishes separated Aiden from his brother. Wishes were magical and romantic and had a peculiar tendency of coming true. Aiden wished his mother would come back, but that could never happen.

• • •

After a week, Aiden was back in class. The students kept their distance, even William. Lara was the only one that attempted to console him, offering a hug and asking how he was. No one else bothered, keeping a wide berth as the orphan passed them. To acknowledge his loss would be to admit that it occurred, that something abnormal could happen in an ordinary world. Were all the victims that day as disregarded? If only it had been cancer like Aiden's father, something average, common, and predictable. Lara offered him a half sandwich at lunch.

Martin sat with Aiden on the UTR. Such a wonder was lost on Aiden. He wanted to open a book and read but was afraid of Martin's reaction. Aiden just leaned forward, feeling the breeze across his face. He didn't close his eyes and imagine a dragon. He thought of when his imagination was all that was required.

What about magic and Elisa the elvish princess?

Aiden pondered what other fictions could invade his life. Martin reached over and began to coddle his brother's hair.

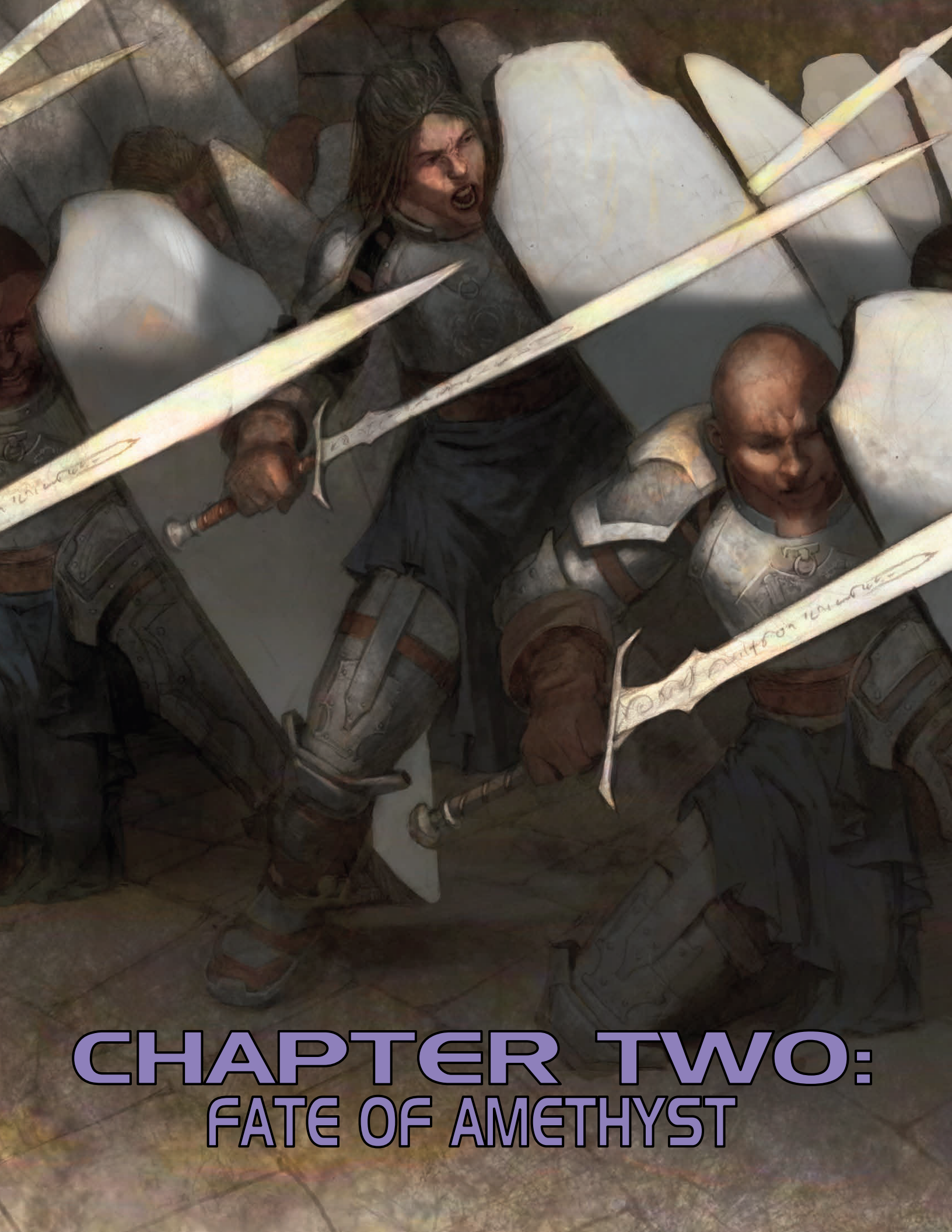
• • •

It was a week before Aiden could sneak out of his new house. He waited until everyone had settled. Their house was cast in an early night as the sun dropped behind the crown. Past 10:30 pm, Aiden saw the crack of light peeking under the bottom of the bedroom door go dark. He heard his relatives conclude their evening bathroom rituals. The opposite bed was empty; Martin was hanging with friends that weekend, drinking and forgetting his problems. Their guardians offered him a wide berth. He would have taken it either way. Aiden knew Martin was doubtful to return for several hours, if at all, until morning.

The UTR station was a two-block walk. The few coins in his pocket would get him to Genai. The navigation screens were easy. The ride was forty minutes in an empty car. Each time the train stopped, Aiden leaned out to see if anyone was boarding. He tapped his feet uneasily, waiting for the seconds to pass before the doors closed. Just as Aiden's imagination had turned the train into a serpent, it was now unwillingly generating various subway denizens, none of them terribly friendly. The doors closed and shuffled Aiden to the next station, where he had to change lines, forcing a five minute wait alone on the platform. His head twitched in the direction of every little snap or pop. Distant laughs from drunken teens faded as they diverted down another street.

The next train contained a single passenger, an elderly olive-skinned man that stared incessantly at Aiden. Aiden looked up occasionally, wondering who would break the silence. Neither did. Aiden disembarked twenty minutes later.

He finally stopped at the concrete barricade that sealed Genai from the rest of the city. Every road had a gate any card-carrying member of the city could cross. Pedestrian walkways were seldom watched with turnstiles installed to monitor traffic. Aiden wondered if the gates were meant to keep out or in. He dodged under the ratchet bar as there was no guard on hand to prevent him.



CHAPTER TWO:
FATE OF AMETHYST

Amethyst has seen many revisions and adaptations since its original appearance as a campaign setting for the third edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game. This rendition uses the *Fate Core* system as its basis. *Fate* is an incredibly simple, yet powerful and flexible rules system that derives its game mechanics from the narrative, rather than forcing the world to adhere to the system. This edition of *Amethyst* has been designed such that the rules of the game intrude as little as possible on the stories your table wants to tell. Statistics and tables are kept to a minimum, and every rule is optional. **Your story always comes first.**

THE BASICS

If you've never played a roleplaying game before, here's the basic idea: you and a bunch of friends get together to tell an interactive story about a group of characters you make up. You get to say what challenges and obstacles those characters face, how they respond, what they say and do, and what happens to them.

It's not all just conversation, though—sometimes you'll use a special deck of cards or dice and the rules in this book to bring uncertainty into the story and make things more exciting.

NEW TO FATE

If you're a new player, all you really need to know is in this chapter and on your character sheet—the GM will help you figure out the rest. You may want to check out the cheat sheet that comes with the Deck of Fate just to save your GM some effort, but otherwise, you should be good to go.

If you're a new GM, this is just the tip of the iceberg for you. You should read and get familiar with the whole book.

FOR VETERANS

Amethyst is what is colloquially termed a 'hack' for *Fate Core* – a tweaked version of the essential rules, with some rules added or expanded, others cut back or removed entirely, and in some cases, terminology changes for aesthetic reasons. We provide sidebars explaining our changes in context, along with suggestions for how to tweak our tweaks or even revert to the standard rules if you want. In general, the rules have been slimmed down to further minimize the impact of mechanics on story: we assume the most liberal interpretation possible of the lifting power of aspects, and stunts and subsystems are not given as much focus. There are enough changes to the basic rules that you probably should read this section fully rather than just skipping over it, or at least glance over the sidebars to get an idea of what you'll need to adjust to run the game using your preferred version of *Fate*.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Getting into a game of *Amethyst* is very simple. You need:

- *Between three and five people.* One of you is going to be the **gamemaster** (or "GM" for short), and everyone else is going to be a **player**. We'll explain what that means in a moment.
- *A **character sheet**, one per player, and some extra paper for notetaking.* We'll talk about what's on the character sheet below. (GMs, any important characters you play might have a character sheet also.)

- *At least two* ***Decks of Fate*** *(one for the players, one for the GM).* While normally *Fate* games are played using **Fate dice**, *Amethyst* uses a deck of cards that mimics the probability of Fate dice. Players draw a five card hand and play results from that, redrawing when their hand is empty. While ideally every player should have their own deck, you can play with a communal deck if necessary – just make sure someone at the table is *really* good at shuffling. If you only have one deck, the GM should use one of the alternative methods described in the sidebar instead. The Deck of Fate and Fate dice are available from Evil Hat Productions (www.evilhat.com).
- *Tokens to represent* ***fate points****.* Poker chips, glass beads, or anything similar will work. You'll want to have at least thirty or more of these on hand, just to make sure you have enough for any given game. You can use pencil marks on your character sheet in lieu of tokens, but physical tokens add a little more fun.
- *Index cards.* These are optional, but can be very handy for recording **aspects** during play.
- *A copy of Fate Core and the Fate System Toolkit.* These are also optional, but will help if you decide you want to tweak the system to your own tastes. Additionally, the rendition of the *Fate* rules in this book are only the bare minimum required to play the game – if you want more details on certain rules, there's no better source than the original.

WHAT'S WITH THE TERMINOLOGY CHANGES?

As you go through this book, you'll discover that certain terms from *Fate Core* are used differently (or not used at all). **Challenges, contests, and conflicts** are generically referred to as **encounters**. **Exchanges** are called **rounds**. The **create advantage** action is just called **advantage**, and **success with style** is now called **critical success**. **Rolls** become **checks**, **harm** becomes **damage,** and the term **shift** isn't used at all. Part of the reason for this is that, as *Amethyst* was originally a campaign setting for *Dungeons & Dragons*, we wanted to keep some of the familiar terminology, but most of it is that we just happened to like these terms better. At your own table, you can use whatever terminology you want, of course.

PLAYERS AND GAMEMASTERS

In any game of *Amethyst*, you're either a **player** or a **gamemaster**.

A **player**'s primary job is to take responsibility for portraying one of the protagonists of the game, which we call a player character (or "PC" for short). You make decisions for your character and describe to everyone else what your character says and does. You'll also take care of the mechanical side of your character—playing cards when it's appropriate, choosing what abilities to use in a certain situation, and keeping track of your fate points.

A **gamemaster**'s primary job is to take responsibility for the world the PCs inhabit. You make decisions and take actions for every character in the game world who isn't portrayed by a player—we call those non-player characters (or "NPCs"). You describe the environments and places the PCs go to during the game, and you create the scenarios and situations they interact with. You also act as a final arbiter of the rules, determining the outcome of the PCs' decisions and how that impacts the story as it unfolds.

Both players and gamemasters also have a secondary job: make everyone around you look awesome. *Fate* is best as a collaborative endeavor, with everyone sharing ideas and looking for opportunities to make the events as entertaining as possible.

THE CHARACTER SHEET

Your **character sheet** contains everything you need to know about your PC—abilities, personality, significant background elements, and any other resources available to your character.

Here's an example of an *Amethyst* character sheet, so we can show you all the components.

1 - NAME AND DESCRIPTION

While these are not mechanically significant elements of the character, the character's **name** and physical and personality **description** are vital parts of their identity and may be significant during play. Some players prefer to name their characters at the start of character creation and some at the end – it doesn't matter, so long as your name and description aren't merely meaningless ciphers.

2 - ASPECTS

Aspects are phrases that describe some significant detail about a character. They are the reasons why your character matters, the basic impact she has on the story. Aspects can cover a wide range of elements, such as personality or descriptive traits, beliefs, relationships, issues and problems, or anything else that helps us invest in the character as a person, rather than just a collection of stats. Aspects can describe things that are beneficial or detrimental—in fact, the best aspects are both. Aspects don't just belong to characters; the environment your characters are in can have aspects attached to it as well, or the aspect can represent a theme of the adventure.

Aspects are always true. Having an aspect establishes that aspect as an immutable fact of the character or scene. If you have the ***Knight of the Realm*** aspect, you are a knight of whatever kingdom you hail from, with all the benefits and obligations that entails. If you have the ***Filthy Rich*** aspect, you are filthy rich. However, not all aspects are permanent – they only persist as long as it makes narrative sense for them to persist. Some as-

AMETHYST

1 NAME & DESCRIPTION

ASPECTS

2

CONCEPT

ADVERSITY

GROUP

VOCATIONS

3

SPECIES/REGION

STUNTS

4

CONSEQUENCES

7

MINOR MODERATE MAJOR

MINOR MODERATE MAJOR

MINOR MODERATE MAJOR

MINOR MODERATE MAJOR

REFRESH

8

BASE

STRESS

6

1 2 3 4

1

ALIGNMENT

1 2 3 4

SATURATION [\ ]
CORRUPTION [/]

GEAR

5

FREE GEAR INVOCATIONS

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pects (known as **boosts**) may only stick around for a single action.

Aspects come into play in conjunction with **fate points**. When an aspect benefits you, you can spend fate points to **invoke** that aspect for a mechanical benefit. When your aspects complicate your character's life, you gain fate points back—this is called accepting a **compel**.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE DECK OF FATE

We chose to make the Deck of Fate the standard resolution system because it allows for more tactical play options, as befits a world originally designed as a campaign setting for a more combat-oriented game. If you don't have access to the Deck of Fate or just don't want to use it, there are a number of alternatives. You don't have to make any changes to the basic rules to use dice, but you may have to avoid or modify certain stunts.

- **Playing/Tarot Cards:** Use a standard poker deck with the jokers removed, or a tarot deck with the major arcana removed. Cards are worth their face value divided by two, rounded up: royal cards have a face value of 10. Black cards (or the suits of cups and coins/pentacles) are positive numbers, red cards (or the suits of swords and staves/wands) are negative. When using this method, draw a hand of six instead of a hand of five. To resolve an action, play one positive and one negative card for a spread of -4 to +4: if you don't have a positive and a negative card in your hand, play any two cards and treat the result as +0.
- **Fate/Fudge Dice (dF):** These are a special kind of six-sided dice that are marked on two sides with a plus symbol [+], two with a minus symbol [-], and two sides left blank [ ] (if you don't have access to special dice, you can use regular d6s - read 5 or 6 as [+], 1 or 2 as [-], and 3 or 4 as [ ]). Fate dice are usually rolled in fours, creating a spread between -4 and +4 (centered on 0).
- **d6-d6:** You can use two six-sided dice of different colors to simulate a toss of 4dF. One die is the positive die, the other is the negative die, producing a result ranging from -5 to +5. This tends to produce a wider variation of results than 4dF, but for most it is close enough.
- **d20:** This method is even less recommended, but may be more familiar for players coming to this rendition of *Amethyst* from *Dungeons & Dragons*. This variant uses a d20, with results determined by what range of the die the roll falls in.

  1-9 – Fail Range: If you roll in this range and your modified result is lower than the opposition, you fail. If it is equal to or higher than the opposition, you tie.

  10-19 – Success Range: If you roll in this range and your modified result is higher than the opposition, you succeed. If it is equal to or lower than the opposition, you tie.

  20 – Critical Success: If you roll a natural 20, you score a critical success (regardless of modifiers) unless your opponent also rolled a 20, in which case you tie. If you get a critical on an attack roll, you also gain a boost.

3 - VOCATIONS

Vocations are what you use during the game to do complicated or interesting actions. A vocation represents amateur or professional training in a given discipline, and encompasses all of the skills necessary to perform that discipline. For instance, a 'Blacksmith' vocation would cover not only working and shaping metal, but being accustomed to the heat of the forge, a strong hammer arm, smithing lore, knowledge of the engineering of arms and armor, handling horses so they keep still while being shod, and an appraising eye for metal and metalwork. A 'Crime Scene Investigator' vocation would cover observing and inventorying a scene, performing forensic tests, connecting clues, and using trace evidence to identify suspects. Vocations can follow from aspects (and thus benefit more often from invocations) or they can be side-interests or hobbies. Like aspects, **vocations are always true** – but are not always applicable in every circumstance.

At the beginning of the game, the player characters have vocations rated in steps from +1 to +3. Higher is better, meaning that the character is more capable or succeeds more often when using that vocation. Advanced characters and monsters can have vocations rated at +4 or higher. If for some reason you need to make a **check** for an action that none of your vocations apply to, you do so **untrained** – with a rating of +0, and you can't spend fate points on the check or use any stunts. Under certain circumstances, however, you can be considered **trained at +0**.

Every vocation rated +2 or higher must be tied to one of your aspects, so you can always invoke that aspect on important checks. The character sheet gives you a space to indicate which aspect is tied to the vocation – you can either write it in the space or use your own system of markings.

Your highest-rated vocation at character creation is known as your **lifepath**. Your lifepath is special because whenever you invoke the aspect it is linked to, you can use **momentum** instead of the normal benefits of an invocation, even if you are not using your lifepath on the check (for more on momentum, see below). Even if another vocation becomes your highest-rated through character advancement, your lifepath does not change.

4 - STUNTS

Stunts are special tricks that your character knows that allow you to get an extra benefit out of a vocation or alter some other game rule to work in your favor. Stunts are like special moves in a video game, letting you do something unique or distinctive compared to other characters. Two characters can have the same rating in a vocation, but their stunts might give them vastly different benefits.

5 - GEAR

In most fantasy games, a character's equipment is as important a part of their identity as their name, history, and profession, and *Amethyst* is no different. While most equipment is treated as mere background information that allows you to perform the tasks permitted by your aspects and vocations, special **gear** is represented by aspects in their own right. Every character begins with up to three pieces of gear, and can obtain more (or better) during play. You also gain between one and three **free invocations** of your gear aspects per session, depending on whether you follow the path of enchantment or technology.

SKILLS

The vocation system was born out of the need to consolidate all the various classes, prestige classes, character traits, lifepaths, and feat trees of the original versions of *Amethyst* into a system that was simultaneously simpler and more comprehensive. Its intent is to replicate some of the decision-easing elements of a class-based system without the limitations thereof, and to avoid some of the awkwardness that comes from a discrete, non-overlapping skill system.

If you don't like this system and would rather use the standard skill/approach method of *Fate Core/Accelerated*, you can do so without modifications, but note that the *Fate Core* skill system peaks at +4 instead of +3 (so adjust NPCs/monsters accordingly). Instead of being your highest rated vocation, set one of your aspects as your lifepath: vocation stunts, if you want them, have a related aspect as their permission instead. Instead of a species vocation, you have a species skill (or approach) which you can place anywhere in the pyramid (or default to +0).

6 - STRESS

Stress is one of the two options you have to avoid losing a conflict—it represents temporary fatigue, getting winded, superficial injuries, and so on. You have a number of **stress boxes** you can burn off to help keep you in a fight, and they reset at the end of an encounter, once you've had a moment to rest and catch your breath.
In addition to the general stress track, there is an **alignment** stress track, on which to record your susceptibility to the influences of the Gates. For more details on alignment stress (**saturation** and **corruption**), see **Chapter Seven: Magic.**

7 - CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are the other option you have to stay in a conflict, but they have a more lasting impact. Every time you take a consequence, it puts a new aspect on your sheet describing your injuries. Unlike stress, you have to take time to recover from a consequence, and it's stuck on your character sheet in the meantime, which leaves your character vulnerable to complications or others wishing to take advantage of your new weakness. Consequences have three rated severities (**minor**, **moderate**, and **major**) and each character has one of each, although it is possible to gain an additional slot with certain stunts.

8 - REFRESH

Refresh is the number of fate points you start every game session with to spend for your character. If you had more points at the end of the last session, they are carried over. However, there should be no incentive to hoard fate points, even for later in the session – there are always opportunities to gain more.

TAKING ACTION

Some of the things you'll do in an *Amethyst* game require you to make a **check** to see if your character succeeds or not: this usually happens when you're opposing another character with your efforts, or when there's a significant obstacle in the way of your effort. Otherwise, just say what your character does and assume it happens. You must make a check when you're attempting to **overcome** an obstacle preventing your character from taking another action; when attempting to exploit some **advantage** for your character, in the form of an aspect you can use; to **attack** someone in a combat encounter; or to **defend** yourself against any other character's action.

MAKING CHECKS

Each card in the Deck of Fate has a value of between -4 and +4. At the start of a scene, you draw five cards from your deck – whether you show these cards to anyone is up to you, but it's recommended that you don't. Whenever you are called on to make a check, you play one card (and only one, unless a stunt says otherwise) from your hand. Normally you can choose this card, but sometimes someone else gets to choose for you. The result on the card isn't your final total, however. If your character has a vocation that's appropriate to the action, you get to add your character's rating in that vocation to whatever card you played. If that isn't quite enough, you can invoke aspects or apply stunts to boost your result, as long as the aspect or stunt is relevant to the action.

WHICH VOCATION TO USE?

Vocations are deliberately broadly applicable, and chances are a character will have two or three vocations that could be used for any given action. Unless there is a compelling reason not to, you should always use the highest-ranked. There are very few limitations on *what* you can do with a particular vocation – the difference lies in *how* you do it.

If you aren't using the Deck of Fate, use your preferred method to generate a random result and add modifiers accordingly.

When you make a check, you're trying to get a high enough result to match or beat your opposition. That opposition is going to come in one of two forms: **active opposition**, from someone making an opposed check against you, or **passive opposition**, from an obstacle that just has a set rating for you to overcome. (GMs, you can also just decide your NPCs give passive opposition when you don't want to make checks for them.)

Once you have made the check, you discard the card. You reshuffle the deck whenever you play your last card, you play a card with face value of +/- 3 or 4, or when another effect tells you to.

OUTCOMES

Generally speaking, if you have a higher result than your opposition, you **succeed** at your action. A **tie** creates some effect, but not to the extent your character was intending. If your result exceeds the opposition by 3 or more, you achieve a **critical success**, and something extra happens. If you don't beat the opposition, you either **fail** at your action, you **succeed at a cost**, or something else happens to complicate the outcome. Some game actions have special results when you fail at the check.

ACTING AT A DISADVANTAGE

Amethyst vocations are very broad skillsets, and in real life, not everybody is equally adept at all elements of even their primary skillset. This isn't as much of a problem for verisimilitude as it appears when using the Deck of Fate – because you can choose the value of the card you play, you can reserve your good cards for uses that you are supposed to be especially good at and use your low cards to represent things that you are not so good at. You can also use compels to represent your deficiencies.

ACTIONS

All in-game activity ultimately comes down to three basic actions: **advantage**, **attack**, and **overcome**. Unless otherwise stated, any vocation can be used with any action. **You can only perform one action per turn** except in specific circumstances.

ACTION CATEGORIES

Some game effects will refer to things such as 'lore checks,' 'movement checks,' 'social checks' or the like. This is shorthand for 'overcome or advantage (and sometimes defense) checks related to *this kind of thing*'. Most of the time, a category applies to any action (other than attacks), but some types of checks will naturally limit what actions apply in certain situations – for instance, movement checks usually relate to overcoming physical obstacles while acrobatic checks usually involve advantage actions more than overcome – while others are always restricted to one or another type of action, such as recovery checks always being overcome actions.

Advantage: When you wish to create an aspect to aid yourself or an ally, or take advantage of an extant one (either already known or as yet undiscovered), you make an advantage check.

Fail: Either you do not create or discover an aspect, or you succeed at a minor cost (without gaining a free invocation).

Tie: Instead of creating or discovering an aspect, you gain a boost (if you are trying to exploit an existing

known aspect, this is effectively the same as a free invocation).

Succeed: You create or discover the desired aspect, and gain a free invocation of it.

Critical Success: As success, but you gain two free invocations.

Attack: When you wish to inflict direct harm on another creature (physical, mental, social, magical, etc.), you make an attack check. A melee attack must be against a target within the same zone: a ranged attack can be against a creature in an adjacent zone. Non-combat attacks vary according to the situation (an attempt to slander your rival at court doesn't even require them to be present, for instance). If you are attacking multiple targets, you make one attack and divide up your result however you like among your opponents (who then defend normally).

Fail: The attack does not inflict damage.

Tie: The attack does not inflict damage, but you gain a boost.

Succeed: The attack inflicts a hit and deals damage equal to the difference between your result and your opponent's (if attacking multiple targets, you divide the damage from the highest-value hit among all targets as you see fit, with each target taking a minimum of 1 damage). If the opponent is not able to completely mitigate this damage with stress or consequences, they are **taken out**.

Critical Success: As success, but some stunts may have additional effects triggered by critically succeeding on an attack. You can also reduce the damage you deal by 1 and instead gain a boost.

Overcome: When confronted with an obstacle that prevents you from performing a particular task, make an overcome check to bypass or remove that obstacle.

Fail: Either the obstacle remains, or you can choose to overcome it but at a moderate cost.

Tie: As fail, but you can overcome the obstacle at only a minor cost.

Succeed: You overcome the obstacle.

Critical Success: Not only do you overcome the obstacle, but you gain a boost.

When you wish to prevent any other action from taking place and are in a position to do so, you make a **defense** check. Defense isn't an action – you can do it whenever you are able to resist another character's action. You can even defend on someone else's behalf, but you must be able to explain how your character is in a position to interfere. You can always spend fate points on a defense check even if you have no relevant vocation. Additionally, you can take forego an action on your turn in order to gain +2 to all defense checks until the start of your next turn.

Fail: You do not prevent the action.

Tie & Succeed: You prevent the action.

Critical Success: As success, but you also gain a boost.

FATE POINTS

You use tokens to represent how many **fate points** you have at any given time during play. Fate points are one of your most important resources in *Amethyst*—they're a measure of how much influence you have to make the story go in your character's favor.

You can spend fate points to **invoke** an aspect, to activate certain powerful stunts, or to bribe your GM into letting you do something that they're on the fence about allowing. You earn fate points by accepting a **compel**, usually on one of your aspects.

GMs get fate points as well, to use for NPCs and monsters; at the start of each scene, the GM gains a **reserve** of one point per player character to this reserve. Compels against PCs don't come from this pool, but from the GM's unlimited supply – the reserve is only for the opposition's use. The GM can gain more points if the NPCs accept compels.

SUCCESS AT COST

Success at cost is a powerful tool: it promotes player agency by making failure less of a boring option; it prevents the plot from being derailed if a vital clue is missed; and it offers the GM another opportunity to introduce intriguing complications into the game. Determining an appropriate cost is, as always, a matter of negotiation, but there are a few guidelines. You will notice that costs are rated with the same terms as consequences: taking a consequence of the corresponding level is always an acceptable cost, as would giving your opponent some sort of mechanical advantage with a value equivalent to that level of consequence's severity (for instance, if you failed an advantage check, you could still create an advantage but give your opponent a free invocation of it instead). A minor cost might involve giving up your next turn: a moderate one might give the GM a free compel against you. In a less mechanical sense, a minor cost might result in a complication later in the scene (you have to forcibly break a lock, so you can't shut the door behind you to hide from pursuers), while a moderate one might result in a longer-term debility or a hanging threat (you leave a piece of evidence behind at a crime scene).

INVOKING AN ASPECT

Whenever you're making a check, and you're in a situation where an aspect might be able to help you, you can spend a fate point to **invoke** it in order to change the result. This allows you to either add +2 to your result, draw another card from your deck and then play it or a different card from your hand, or make a single use of one of your vocations' stunts that you don't have, whichever is more helpful. You do this after you've played the card, if you aren't happy with your total. You also have to explain or justify how the aspect is relevant to the action at hand in order to get the bonus—sometimes it'll be self-evident, and sometimes it might

require some creative narrating.

You can spend more than one fate point on a single check, drawing another card or gaining an additional +2, as long as each point you spend invokes a *different* aspect.

There are many ways to gain **free invocations** of an aspect. These have exactly the same function as invoking the aspect normally, but don't require you to spend a fate point. Furthermore, you can stack free invocations – if you have two free invokes of a given aspect, you can invoke both of them on the same check—*and* spend a fate point to gain a third invocation, if you wish. The kind of fleeting aspect known as a **boost** always comes with a free invocation, and disappears at the end of the action on which that free invocation was used – though you can still spend a fate point on it like any other aspect, if you need the extra push. Sometimes a game effect may call for you to spend a fate point for something other than a normal invocation. In this case, **you can also use free invocations or boosts** to power the effect, as long as the aspect being used is relevant to the effect.

Note that the aspect you invoke doesn't necessarily have to be one of your own – you just have to be able to justify how that aspect relates to your action. In the same way, you can invoke your own aspects on other peoples' checks, as long as you can justify your interference.

COMPELS

Sometimes (in fact, probably often), you'll find yourself in a situation where an aspect complicates your character's life and creates unexpected drama. When that happens, the GM will suggest a potential complication that might arise and offer you a fate point to accept it. This is called a **compel**.

Sometimes, a compel means your effort backfires, or your choices are restricted, or simply that unintended consequences cloud whatever you do. You might negotiate back and forth on the details a little, to arrive at what would be most appropriate and dramatic in the moment. Once you both agree, you get the fate point, and the complication happens. If you want, you can pay a fate point to prevent the complication from happening, but we don't recommend you do that very often—you'll probably need that fate point later, and getting compelled brings drama (and hence, fun) into your game's story.

Anyone at the table is free to suggest when a compel might be appropriate for any character (including their own), and speak up if they see that a compel happened naturally as a result of play, but no fate points were awarded. The GM has the final word on whether or not a compel is valid. Note that a compel is not actually on the table until the fate point has been offered: the suggestion and negotiation stages occur *before* the compel must be accepted or bought off – if the negotiations aren't going anywhere, the suggester should withdraw the offer to prevent the game being bogged down.

Note that a compel doesn't *have* to relate to one of the *character*'s aspects – it could relate to an aspect on the scene. It could also relate to an aspect that isn't technically on the table yet (but could potentially be). Just like the players can use fate points to bribe the GM to allow something she normally wouldn't, the GM can bribe the players to do something *they* normally wouldn't.

COMPELLING THE GM

Occasionally, a player is going to want to spring something unexpected on the GM, or introduce a narrative fact seemingly out of nowhere ("I drop from the gunshot, but the bullet gets lodged in the pages of the book I just happened to have in my coat pocket"). This follows the same process as a compel against a player: the player proposes the compel, explains how it relates to an aspect or how it would otherwise make sense in this context (or just why they really, really want it to be true), and if the GM agrees, or agrees with modifications, it becomes a fact and the player pays the GM a fate point. The only difference is that, as the GM has infinite fate points, it doesn't cost anything to refuse this kind of compel (compelling an NPC during an encounter is different – in this case, the point goes to the GM's reserve for the encounter, and the compel is bought off from that pool if the GM deems it a valid compel). Because proposing a compel is not itself an action, this can be done in response to another character's action, as in the example above.

This should not be used frivolously. Minor story details, such as there being a bucket in the corner of the tavern if you need one for a flashy maneuver, should just materialize if the table agrees they are reasonable. Even contrived coincidences that are nevertheless in line with your character's aspects (such as being able to speak the language of an obscure tribe if you are ***Fluent in Six Million Forms of Communication***) are still covered by 'aspects are always true,' although if the table at large thinks the coincidence is *really* contrived (such as if you were merely ***Polyglot*** in the above situation), the GM might apply some interesting caveats. Compelling the GM should only be used if you desperately need to pull a rabbit out of your hat.

MOMENTUM

Momentum represents player control of the flow in a scene. Whenever you invoke the aspect your lifepath is tied to, you can choose to forego the normal benefits of the invocation and instead gain one of the following momentum benefits:

- **Team Benefits:** You place one of the two inspirational phrases on the card you played as a boost for each member of your team (if you play a positive card, this usually represents some sort of general boost to morale – if you play a negative one, you are accepting a temporary setback now which can set up for a greater payoff later).
- **Husband Resources:** You gain a number of floating +1 bonuses equal to the number of sun symbols on the card you played. These bonuses don't expire until the end of the scene, and you can use them to improve any check except the one that generated them without requiring narrative justification.
- **Bad Karma:** You give the enemy team a (non-cumulative) -1 penalty to a number of consecutive actions equal to the number of moon symbols on the card you played (so, if the card showed two moon symbols, the next two enemy actions would each have a -1 penalty).
- **Reversal:** If the card you played has an eclipse symbol (even if the card is negative), you can immediately compel one enemy to do anything within reason (things such as running away when they're winning, or randomly stabbing teammates for the lulz, do not count as 'within reason'). You do not pay the enemy a fate point for doing this, but they can pay one to refuse it as normal.

MOMENTUM WITH ALTERNATE RESOLUTION SYSTEMS

If you aren't using the Deck of Fate, it's a bit more complicated to use momentum. These guidelines should help.

Playing Cards: Black cards generate a number of sun symbols equal to their check value minus two, with red cards generating an equivalent number of moon symbols. The King of Clubs, the Queen of Hearts, and the Ace of Spades are eclipse symbols. For inspirational phrases, consider the suits of the two cards played: spades = material conflict, hearts = emotional conflict, clubs = emotional harmony, diamonds = material harmony.

Tarot Cards: Positive suits generate a number of sun symbols equal to their check value minus two, with negative suits generating an equivalent number of moon symbols. The King of Coins/Pentacles, the Queen of Swords, and the Ace of Wands/Staves are eclipse symbols. For inspirational phrases, draw a single card from the major arcana (noting whether it is drawn upright or reversed) and use the traditional readings as inspiration.

Fate Dice: Treat every result of + on the dice as a sun symbol, and every result of – as a moon symbol (blanks don't count as anything special). A roll of -4, +4, or 4 blanks is an eclipse symbol. For inspirational phrases, you're on your own.

d6-d6: A positive result generates 2 sun symbols. A negative result generates 2 moon symbols. A roll of +5 or -5 is an eclipse symbol. For inspirational phrases, you're on your own.

d20: A roll of 1-13 generates 2 moon symbols. A roll of 14-19 generates 2 sun symbols. A roll of 20 is an eclipse symbol. For inspirational phrases, you're on your own.

TIME AND MOTION

Most of the time, you'll be able to get by just giving the distances between two objects as an approximate quantity (e.g. "about 10 meters"). If the distance is narratively significant, this may be expressed as an aspect (e.g. ***Thirty Feet Above the Ground***). If tactical movement is required, draw up a map and divide it into a number of **zones**. A zone can be any size you think it

needs to be, but it should represent the distance an average participant in the scene can cross in an undefined short amount of time (at normal scale, this can be anywhere from 10 to about 50 feet; in an encounter between large vehicles, or giant monsters, it might be a hundred or more). Each zone can have separate aspects assigned to it, or one aspect can cover multiple zones. Each character can move one zone (as long as there are no other obstacles) as part of another action: moving more than one zone, or evading an obstacle to movement, requires an overcome action. There is no limit other than common sense and the table's consensus to the number of zones that can be moved if you devote your entire action to moving.

The basic unit of time is the **turn**: the amount of time it takes one character to perform one action (although certain stunts allow you to perform more than one action per round). A **round** is the amount of time it takes every character (player and non-player) to act once. The order of turns in a round is not fixed and should be negotiated among the group based on the aspects, vocations, and stunts of the characters involved, but unless they have a special ability that permits them to act more than once per round, no character can take a turn again until everyone who still can has had a chance to act.

Actions take place in the framework of a **scene** or **encounter**. A scene only happens when there is a chance for player characters to do something plot-significant. Downtime, narration or 'cutscenes', training montages, etc. are not scenes. Audiences with the king, battles to the death against dragons, analyzing crime scene evidence for one elusive clue, on the other hand, are. Any stress incurred during the scene goes away at the end of it, and any minor consequences have a chance to be erased as well.

The next most relevant period of time is the **session**. This is exactly what it sounds like – one game session. At the start of a new game session, any recovering moderate consequences can be removed, and each player resets their fate point total to their refresh value unless their current total is higher.

The final timespan is the **adventure**. The best description of an adventure is 'one whole unit of plot'. At the end of an adventure, any recovering major consequences go away, and characters have a chance for advancement.

INITIATIVE

Fate Core uses a fairly traditional RPG approach to initiative: however, this is usually one of the first things that a *Fate* hack replaces (and in any case, it depends on skills that *Amethyst* doesn't use). The most commonly adopted method is for the first character to act being determined by what makes sense at the start of the scene (for instance, if the PCs walk into an ambush, their ambusher would go first, but if one of the characters ***Always Expects an Ambush***, that PC would go before the ambusher), and then that player chooses the next character to act.

If you want to use a more traditional fixed initiative sequence, have every character draw one card, add one for each aspect or stunt they have related to speed, reflexes, or perspicacity, subtract one for each aspect they have related to being slow or unobservant, and use the final number as their initiative count (negotiate ties, or draw a new card as a tie-breaker: if you are using playing cards or tarot instead of the Deck of Fate, you can also use a descending order of suits to resolve ties).

CHARACTER CREATION

The moment you sit down to make characters, you're playing *Amethyst*.

Character creation tells part of the characters' stories, just like any other game session does. It establishes where they've been, what they've done, and why they continue to act against the issues they face, together or in opposition. There's an ongoing story you're now stepping into—it's just that the most interesting parts haven't happened yet.

Character creation in *Amethyst* can be either individual or collaborative, but is best done as a group activity. Doing all of this together builds a strong foundation of communication between the players and GM, and this process establishes connections between the characters and the setting. Character creation can take a full session, allowing everyone to learn about the world and each other's characters. You and the other players will talk about your characters, make suggestions to each other, discuss how they connect, and establish more of the setting.

You'll want to keep good notes on this process. You can use the character sheet included in this book or downloadable at DiasExMachina.com.

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

- **Step One – Concept:** Come up with your character's concept and adversity aspects.
- **Step Two – Species/Region:** Choose your character's species and/or region of origin.
- **Step Three – Vocations:** Choose six vocations for your character, ranked from +3 to +1.
- **Step Four – Additional Aspects:** Choose your remaining three aspects, using either the phase trio or the individual method. Make sure that all your +3 and +2 vocations relate to one of your aspects.
- **Step Five – Stunts:** Pick or invent three to five stunts.
- **Step Six – Equipment:** Choose any special equipment you have.
- **Step Seven – Stress and Consequences:** Determine how much of a beating your character can take.
- **Step Eight – Refresh:** Determine how many fate points you start each session with.
- **Step Nine – Name & Description:** Name your character, describe what they look like, and elaborate on their backstory in line with your aspects and vocations.

  Step Ten – Group Concept (Optional): Collectively create a single aspect for your entire adventuring party.

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Character creation starts with a concept for your character. It could be modeled after a character from a favorite novel or movie, or it could be based around some specific thing that you want to be able to do (like break boards with your head, turn into a wolf, blow things up, etc.). In the first stage of character creation, you're going to take your ideas and turn them into the two central aspects for your character—**concept** and **adversity**.

Your **concept** is the overriding theme or motivation of your character condensed into a single phrase. Think of this aspect like your job, your role in life, or your calling—it's what you're good at, but it's also a duty you have to deal with, and is rife with problems of its own. It should be able to be invoked in almost every situation you are likely to encounter, although how it is invoked will naturally differ depending on circumstances. Don't stress out over the exact wording of your concept aspect now—the important thing is to have a clear idea in your own mind of what the character should be like. You'll come up with several other aspects after this one, and you're allowed to go back and revise later.

Examples: ***Fantasy-Obsessed Youth on a Quest; Elf Ninja Librarian; Devoted Warrior of Islam; Battle-Scarred Mercenary with a Heart of Gold***

Your **adversity** is a trouble, complication, or source of chaotic drama that is particularly significant to your character's life. This is likely to be the prime source of compels against you, and thus an opportunity to gain more fate points in play. Your adversity shouldn't be easy to solve: if it was, you would have already. Neither should it paralyze you completely: if the adversity is constantly interfering with the character's day-to-day life, he's going to spend all his time dealing with it rather than other matters at hand. You shouldn't have to deal with your trouble at every turn—unless this particular adventure revolves around it. Your adversity also shouldn't be too broadly related to your concept, but it can focus your concept in specific ways – if your concept is ***The Foremost Knight of Abidan***, for instance, ***Enemy of Baruch Malkut*** is a poor adversity because it's basically a given, but ***Darius Konig Himself Wants My Head*** actually tells us something new about the character. Adversity shouldn't be all bad, either – it's an aspect, so you should be able to invoke it when appropriate.

Examples: ***Self-Imposed Bastion Exile; Duty or Heart?; A Good Man in a Wicked World; Slave to Overweening Cynicism***

Concepts can have overlap among the characters, as long as you have something to distinguish how your character is different from the others. If concepts must be similar among all the characters, such as if the GM pitches an all-swordsmen story, it's crucial that the adversities differ.

SETTING BUILDING

As you're making stuff up for your characters, you'll also make stuff up about the world around them. You'll end up talking about NPCs, organizations, places, things like that. That's fantastic, but make sure that the stuff you're making up fits into the same world that everyone else is playing in. You might come up with a character concept that adds something fundamental to the world or which contradicts existing canon: when that happens, discuss with the group if that's a part of your setting and make any necessary adjustments. Unless someone is trying to be disruptive, the table's consensus on the setting should always trump canon.

STEP TWO: SPECIES/REGION

One of the biggest choices you can make in *Amethyst* is where you come from – whether you adhere to the side of technology or magic, whether you are human or belong to one of the ancient fae peoples, and where in the world you call home. These decisions will have lasting impact on your outlook and the opportunities available to you within the setting. You may have a good idea of the answer to these questions from the concept phase, but in case you don't, now is the time to choose. Look through the species descriptions in **Chapter Three** and the region descriptions in **Chapter Five**, and if you feel like working a bit ahead, you can go through the vocations in **Chapter Four** for some ideas of what special

skills and professions are available to members of certain species.

Species in *Amethyst* are represented as a special type of vocation. If you are a member of a species but don't take the species vocation, you are always considered trained in it at +0. You can choose to tie your species in to one of your aspects if you wish, making it more narratively significant and allowing you to invoke it (and if you take the species vocation at +2 or higher, you *must* tie it to an aspect). You can also choose to make your species more mechanically significant by choosing species vocation stunts. Even if your choice of species is primarily background flavor, though, you should keep it in mind as you progress through character creation.

SPECIES FEATURES

In most traditional RPGs, what a 'race' (as 'species' is a more correct term, we use it throughout this book) can do is defined by a checklist of mechanical effects. *Fate* is built on the assumption that anything 'the average person' can do doesn't need to be defined by rules unless it becomes narratively significant, so instead of a laundry list of abilities, consult the species' description to get a feel for what the average person of that species is capable of. As long as you have the species vocation, even at +0, you can do those things. Taking a species vocation at +1 or higher, or choosing a species aspect or stunt merely enables you to do something that you could already do better. All damaskans are ambidextrous and have a knack for languages, but damaskans who choose the *Advanced Ambidexterity* stunt can perform two tasks at once, and those who choose the *Rapid Polyglot* stunt can learn a new language amazingly quickly; all gimfen are short, but those that take the *Angry Leprechaun* stunt are better at leveraging their size to their advantage.

STEP THREE: VOCATIONS

Your aspects describe what you are, but your **vocations** describe what you can do, and how well you can do it. They represent your skills, your resources, your equipment, and your perspective. They give you permission for certain types of activities and lock you away from others. Having a non-zero rating in a vocation implies that you are possessed of (or can easily obtain) any relevant equipment that vocation can reasonably be expected to use, unless the lack of said tools has been compelled against you.

At character creation, choose six vocations (either ones detailed in **Chapters Three**, **Four**, and **Five** of this book or ones you create yourself): one at +3, two at +2, and three at +1. Any vocation rated +2 or higher must relate in some way (however distantly) to at least one of your character aspects. If the aspect later changes through character development, the vocation does not have to change to keep up, but if you later change your vocations, any new ones at +2 or higher must match your aspects at the time you take them.

You add your rating in one vocation to any checks you make where that vocation's skill set would be relevant: for instance, if you are attempting to navigate the complex web of laudenian etiquette, or if you for some reason find yourself falling a long distance, your Laudenian +1 vocation may be of moderate help. If you happen to have two vocations that overlap (such as a sweet-talking Bard +3 and a naturally charismatic Tilen +1), use the higher-rated one. Vocations are intended to be of moderate flexibility – not as broad as aspects, not as narrow as stunts – but it can still be difficult sometimes to determine which vocation is appropriate to a given situation. The natural instinct of gamers is probably to choose the one with the highest rating, and there is nothing wrong with this – as long as the player is able to justify it somehow. The more convoluted the explanation for why a particular vocation is used, the less likely it is that the vocation is *really* applicable. Generally speaking, if you have to think for more than a second or two to find a justification, you should pick a different vocation or default to +0.

ALTERNATIVE VOCATION SELECTION

With six vocations, a character can be very competent most of the time and at least broadly competent in *almost* any situation. If you would like characters to be a little bit more focused, you can reduce the number of vocations to five (+3/+2/+1/+1/trained at +0, not including an untrained species or regional vocation) and require all vocations rated +1 or higher to be tied to an aspect, instead of +2 or higher. This will make the character less broadly competent, but always have the option of invoking aspects to improve their chances.

If you want to fine-tune your vocations a bit more, you can do it this way instead: choose one vocation at +3 and one at +2. You then have 5 points to spend however you like to either improve those vocations or buy new ones. The only limitation is that you cannot take a vocation at higher than +4. When you select vocations this way, the vocation you initially designated as +3 is your lifepath… even if it is not your highest starting vocation after points are allocated.

A simpler alternative is not to use vocation ratings at all. Instead, define half of your vocations (round down) as things you're good at (choosing one of those as your lifepath, and making sure that all of them relate to at least one of your aspects). Whenever you make a check that would relate to those vocations, you gain +2. Any check that relates to your other vocations, you make at +0. Any check for which you don't have an applicable vocation, you make at -2. Instead of equipment having its own vocation rating, if you have a gear aspect that relates to the action, that counts as being good at it even if it isn't one of your good vocations.

STEP FOUR: ADDITIONAL ASPECTS

So far, you've only created two aspects, albeit the most important ones. Now it's time to create three more. A lot of character creation focuses on coming up with aspects—they may have different labels, but they basically all work the same way. Aspects are one of the most important parts of your character, since they define who she is, and they provide ways for you to generate fate points and to spend those fate points on bonuses.

CHOOSING GOOD ASPECTS

Aspects should be informative and poetic, descriptive and short. When in doubt, err on the side of poetic and short – you can always write a short paragraph to explain exactly what you mean by the aspect if there's any confusion. In general, try to make aspects no more than six to eight words long, and have them be something you wouldn't mind putting on a motivational poster or the title of a trading card. If you're stumped, each vocation presented in this book gives three sample aspects which you can either use as-is or take inspiration from.

When you're told you need to come up with an aspect, you might experience brain freeze. Therefore, it helps to have a framework to build them around. Two such methods are detailed below: the **phase trio** and the **résumé trio.**

THE PHASE TRIO

This method is a collaborative process. First, you come up with a starting point for your own character – an event where their adventure began. Next, you pass your character sheet to another player, who adds to that story showing how *their* character became involved, either to help resolve or to further complicate the story. Then they pass the sheet to yet another player, who gets *their* character involved. Finally, you look over all these stories, and come up with aspects descriptive of or derived from each phase and your relationship with those other characters.

The phase trio is the default generation method for techan parties, particularly those of a military or paramilitary nature, as it emphasizes their shared training and ability to work together as a team.

THE RÉSUMÉ TRIO

This method is likely to be more familiar to players of other roleplaying games, in which character generation is usually done privately with minimal input from others. Using this approach, choose your aspects yourself, using the following categories as a guideline:

Your **origin** describes where you come from: biologically, physically, or philosophically. It often contains some hint as to why and how you became an adventurer in the first place. If you have a species/region vocation at +2 or +3, this is a good aspect to relate it to.

Examples: ***Cosy World Shattered by a Death Dragon; No Nepotism in Limshau; Called by a Silent God; Wanderer from Across the Sea***

Your **relation** aspect is a significant connection you have with another person, usually another member of the party, but also potentially with an NPC such as a family member, mentor, or even a rival. If you have an organization vocation at +2 or +3, consider tying it to this aspect.

Examples: ***Everybody Thinks I'm Crazy; Tsundere Towards Everybody; Spiritual Psychoanalyst; As Good a Quest as Any***

Your **talent** aspect is something that is either unique to you, or rare enough that you are unlikely to meet another person with the same trait. It could be a special power, a prized possession, or merely a unique outlook on life. If you have a professional vocation at +2 or +3 that doesn't relate to your concept aspect, this is an easy one to hang it on.

Examples: ***Mysterious Sensei; Two Swords are Better than One; The Strength of my Convictions; Tougher Than Concrete***

The résumé method is the default for echan characters, because it more closely resembles the traditional fantasy approach to building a party, in which individual talents and differences are emphasized over collective experience.

Aspects which don't help you tell a good story (by giving you success when you need it and by drawing you into danger and action when the story needs it) aren't doing their job. The aspects which push you into conflict—and help you excel once you're there—will be among your best and most-used. Aspects need to be both useful and dangerous—allowing you to help shape the story and generating lots of fate points—and they should never be boring. The best aspect suggests both ways to use it and ways it can complicate your situation. Bottom line: if you want to maximize the power of your aspects, maximize their interest. Ultimately, it's much better to leave an aspect slot blank than to pick one that isn't inspiring and evocative to play. If you're picking aspects you're not invested in, they'll end up being noticeable drags on your fun.

STEP FIVE: STUNTS

Each vocation has several **stunts** associated with it, which give you permanent benefits in specific situations (which do not usually cost a fate point). Stunts are purely mechanical character elements, never narrative: you don't take a stunt to give you the ability to do something you couldn't before. Instead, stunts make you better at something you can already do, or focus your abilities in a particular manner. While you do not have to be using the particular vocation for a check on which you apply the effect of a stunt, you must actually *have* the vocation in order to select the stunt in the first place—or, if you created your own stunt, it should follow logically from one of your vocations.

As a rule, a stunt should provide the equivalent of +6 to +8 worth of bonuses over the course of a single

session. However, creating stunts is more an art than a science, and may involve a fair bit of tweaking during gameplay to make sure that the stunt is useful but not overpowered. The same stunt may also have vastly different power levels depending on the character it's used with. If you have problems during play with any of the default stunts or one you've created, feel free to change it on the spot in consultation with the GM and the rest of the table – even if someone else has the same stunt. It doesn't have to work the same way for everyone. On the same note, never assume that a stunt's appearance in an official book makes it suitable for every table and character: the same stunt may be nigh-useless for one group and game-breakingly powerful for another.

You can choose up to three stunts for free at character creation, and can buy more by reducing your refresh on a 1-to-1 basis. You are not required to use all of your free slots at the start – you can hold them in reserve until you find a stunt you like.

GENERIC STUNT EFFECTS

If you're stumped for stunts, consider some of the following rubrics:

"You gain +2 to (do this) in (specific circumstances)."

"When you invoke (specific aspect) for a bonus, you gain +3 instead of +2."

"When you (do this), you can discard one card from your hand."

"When you (do this), you can score a critical success if you beat the difficulty by 2 instead of 3."

"If you (do this thing where failure is normally bad), the worst result you can get is a tie."

"You deal +1 damage with (specific attack) in (specific circumstances)."

"When you invoke (specific aspect) to draw a new card, you draw two cards instead of one."

You can also browse through the sample stunts given throughout this book for more inspiration.

STEP SIX: EQUIPMENT

Most of the time, equipment is background information. It is generally assumed that you have access to whatever equipment your aspects and vocations would suggest, although occasionally, you might be compelled to deny you the necessary tools. There is no limitation placed on this kind of equipment beyond what you can reasonably afford and carry. Particularly significant equipment, such as advanced technology and magical items, are handled a bit differently. They can have their own aspects, vocation ratings, and even stunts, and accessing any but their most basic uses requires an investment from the character in the form of aspects, vocations or stunts. Technological items have a particular drawback: they can be **disrupted** by exposure to magic, rendering them erratic or completely non-functional. For more details, see **Chapter Six**.

Each character begins with three **gear aspects** representing their crucial equipment (their weapons, armor, and/or special tools) and can acquire more during play. Starting techan characters can choose technological items, up to tech level 2 (subject to the limitations of their bastion of origin). Starting echan characters can only choose magical items with the GM's permission, but can customize their mundane equipment within reason (a ***Short Sword*** becoming ***My Father's Notched Blade***, for instance, or ***Plate Armor*** becoming ***Bulwark Steel***). Most gear aspects have **modes** and **properties**: essentially, mini-aspects that grant extra permissions but which are tied in to the item's main aspect, not invoked independently. Also, gear aspects (unlike other character aspects) can be permanently modified during play by those with appropriate vocations.

Every character has one free invocation of any of their gear aspects per session: techan characters operating in environments where their equipment is likely to disrupt regularly instead have three.

STEP SEVEN: STRESS & CONSEQUENCES

When *Amethyst* characters find themselves in harm's way—a fairly common occurrence when you're highly competent, proactive, and facing drama at every turn—they have two ways to stand their ground and stay on their feet: **stress** and **consequences**. Whenever a character takes damage from an attack action (whether that attack be physical, mental, social, financial, or any other conceivable category), they can attempt to soak it with one or the other.

Stress measures fleeting damage: scrapes and bruises, momentary lapse of memory, short-term embarrassment, and so on. It is measured in boxes, which can absorb a sequentially increasing number of damage: the first box absorbs one, the second absorbs two, the third absorbs three, and the fourth absorbs four. These boxes do not have to be checked in order, but only one can be checked off for any given hit. By default, each character has **two** stress boxes, and can increase this to a maximum of **four** with appropriate stunts.

If stress is not enough to defray the hit, you can accept one or more **consequences**. Each character has a slot for a **minor** consequence (soaks 2 damage), a **moderate** consequence (4 damage), and a **major** consequence (6 damage) – certain stunts can give you additional consequence slots, which might be earmarked for physical, mental, or social (etc.) harm. When you take a consequence, you write a new aspect in the appropriate slot reflecting an injury or mishap appropriate to the severity of the attack (for instance, a glancing blow with a club might produce the minor consequence ***Dislocated Shoulder***; a moderate consequence in a courtroom battle might be ***Losing Credibility***). You can take more than one consequence from a single hit. If even that isn't enough, you can take an **extreme consequence** (absorbs 8 damage). Instead of taking up an open slot, this replaces one of your character aspects other than your concept aspect. A consequence is just like any other aspect: it can be invoked and compelled, and the person

whose attack created it gets one free invocation of it.

If you can't soak all the damage from the hit with either stress or consequences, you're **taken out** – you can't act anymore in the scene, and the *player* who took you out gets to narrate what happens to you at the end of the scene (even if the *character* that took you out is defeated). You can try to retain some agency by **conceding** before your opponent makes their attack. If you do so, you still can't act anymore in the scene and the opponent still gets what they want (unless what they wanted was you dead), but your ultimate fate is open to negotiation. Additionally, you gain 1 fate point for each consequence you already sustained in the encounter, as a nest egg for your eventual reprisal.

All stress goes away at the end of the current scene. At the end of the scene, you can also make an overcome check with any vocation you can justify to try to rewrite a consequence into a recovering consequence. The difficulty of this check is the severity of the consequence. A recovering consequence still occupies a slot but will eventually go away in time; like any aspect, consequences stick around as long as it makes sense for them to do so, so make sure that any consequences you take make sense for their degree of severity. A minor consequence goes away at the end of the scene in which it is overcome; a moderate consequence should stick around at least until the end of the session (unless the GM determines that it was incurred too near to the end of the session, in which case it persists through the first significant scene of the next). A major consequence ought to last until the end of the current adventure. An extreme consequence can only be removed by changing the aspect through character development.

Sometimes, consequences can be downgraded or removed by magic, but the most common magical healing only erases the damage without negating the physiological impact: it still requires the same amount of energy and time to heal a wound magically as it does naturally, but magical healing moves the benefit up-front (and prevents most scarring). Whenever a consequence benefits from healing that reduces its severity, it continues to take up the slot it currently occupies, but recovers at the appropriate rate for its reduced degree (so a major consequence downgraded to a moderate consequence would go away at the end of the session).

LOW STRESS?

In *Fate Core*, stress starts at 2 boxes but can be raised by high ranks in specific skills. In *Fate Accelerated*, everybody starts with 3 boxes. *Amethyst* uses two boxes for everyone and only allows for increasing that number with stunts because with ready access to magical or high-tech healing, low-level consequences are less extreme than the core assumption—and besides, consequences are just more interesting.

STEP EIGHT: REFRESH

A starting character begins with 3 **refresh**, meaning they start each session with 3 fate points. You can reduce your refresh to buy more stunts (1 refresh = 1 stunt, except for particularly powerful stunts), but you cannot reduce your refresh below 1. As you advance, your refresh increases, and you can either buy more stunts with the additional refresh or keep the fate points.

STEP NINE: NAME AND DESCRIPTION

Give your character a name, describe what they look like, and elaborate on their backstory if you wish. If you have left any of your aspects, vocations, or stunts blank up to now, developing your backstory may give you more ideas on how to fill those slots.

STEP TEN: GROUP CONCEPT (OPTIONAL)

If the whole group agrees, you can collectively create a single aspect that describes your entire group. Like the concept aspect, this should be double-edged. Possible group concepts include the party's allegiance, current goal, general attitude toward life and the world at large, present resources, or how you all came to be allies.

Examples: ***Seeking the Amethyst Relics; Iron Sons Assault Platoon; Penniless Mercenary Company; All Met in a Tavern***

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Characters in *Amethyst* change over time – not necessarily by becoming more powerful, but becoming more involved in the world. Your characters aren't going to remain static through the entire campaign. As their stories play out, they'll have the chance to grow and change in response to the events that happen in play. The conflicts they face and the complications they overcome will alter your sense of who they are and push them toward new challenges. In addition to your characters, the game world will change also. You'll resolve threats as you play, or change the face of a location, or make such an impact on the world that one of the issues may need to change.

Character advancement in *Amethyst* comes in one of two flavors: either you can change something on your sheet to something else that's equivalent, or you can add new things to your sheet. The opportunities you get to do this are collectively called milestones.

DEFINING MILESTONES

A **milestone** is a moment during the game where you have the chance to change or advance your character. We call them milestones because they usually happen at significant "break points" in the action of a game—the end of a session, the end of a scenario, or the end of

a story arc. Usually, those break points immediately follow some significant event in the story that justifies your character changing in response to events. You might reveal a significant plot detail or have a cliffhanger at the end of a session. You might defeat a major villain or resolve a plotline at the end of a scenario. You might resolve a major storyline that shakes up the campaign world at the end of an arc.

Obviously, things won't always line up that nicely, so GMs have some discretion in deciding when a certain level of milestone occurs. If it seems satisfying to give out a milestone in the middle of a session, go ahead, but stick to the guidelines here to keep from handing out too many advancement opportunities too often.

Milestones come in three levels of importance: minor, moderate, and major.

MINOR MILESTONES

Minor milestones usually occur at the end of a session of play, or when one piece of a story has been resolved. These kinds of milestones are more about changing your character rather than making him or her more powerful, about adjusting in response to whatever's going on in the story. Sometimes it won't really make sense to take advantage of a minor milestone, but you always have the opportunity if you should need to.

During a minor milestone, you can choose to do one (and only one) of the following:

- Switch the rank values of any two vocations, or replace one +1 vocation with one that isn't on your sheet. Any vocation rated +2 or higher must somehow relate to one of your aspects.
- Exchange any single stunt for another stunt.
- Purchase a new stunt, provided you have the refresh to do so (remember, you can't go below 1 refresh).
- Rename one of your character or gear aspects. You can't rename your concept aspect or any extreme consequence, and any changes you make to a gear aspect can't change the equipment's fundamental function.

This is a good way to make slight character adjustments, if it seems like something on your character isn't quite right—you don't end up using that stunt as often as you thought, or you resolved the ***Blood Feud with Edmund*** that you had and thus it's no longer appropriate, or any of those changes that keep your character consistent with the events of play.

In fact, you should almost always be able to justify the change you're making in terms of the game's story. You shouldn't be able to change ***Hot Temper*** to ***Staunch Pacifist***, for example, unless something happened in the story to inspire a serious change of heart—you met a holy man, or had a traumatic experience that made you want to give up the sword, or whatever. The GM is the final arbiter on this, but don't be so much of a stickler for consistency that you sacrifice a player's fun.

MODERATE MILESTONES

Moderate milestones usually occur at the end of an adventure or the conclusion of a big plot event (or, when in doubt, at the end of every two to four sessions). Unlike minor milestones, which are primarily about change, moderate milestones are about learning new things—dealing with problems and challenges has made your character generally more capable at what they do.

In addition to the benefit of a minor milestone, you also gain one of the following:

- Increase one of your vocation ranks by 1. The only limitations are that you can't increase a vocation beyond the campaign's skill cap (+4 by default), you can't increase the same vocation twice in a row, and any vocation rated +2 or higher must relate to one of your aspects.
- Choose a new vocation at +1.

Additionally, since most parties tend to take downtime between adventures, you can usually clear all your non-extreme consequences, although some (particularly non-physical injuries) might endure or be downgraded if it doesn't make sense for them to be completely cleared yet.

MAJOR MILESTONES

A major milestone should only occur when something happens in the campaign that shakes it up a lot—the end of a story arc (or around three adventures), the defeat of a main NPC villain, or any other large-scale change that reverberates around your game world.

These milestones are about gaining more power. The challenges of yesterday simply aren't sufficient to threaten these characters anymore, and the threats of tomorrow will need to be more adept, organized, and determined to stand against them in the future.

Achieving a major milestone confers the benefits of a moderate milestone and a minor milestone, and all of the following additional options:

- If you have an extreme consequence, rename it to reflect that you've moved past its most debilitating effects. This allows you to take another extreme consequence in that slot in the future, if you desire.
- Gain an additional point of refresh, which allows you to immediately buy a new stunt or keep it in order to give yourself more fate points at the beginning of a session.
- Advance a skill beyond the campaign's current skill cap, if you're able to, thus increasing the skill cap.
- Rename your character's concept aspect, if you desire.
- Change your lifepath vocation and/or the aspect linked to it, if you desire. The new lifepath must be rated +3 or higher, but does not have to be your highest-rated vocation.

Reaching a major milestone is a pretty big deal. Characters with more stunts are going to have a diverse range of bonuses, making their vocations much more

effective by default. Characters with higher refresh will have a much larger fountain of fate points to work with when sessions begin, which means they'll be less reliant on compels for a while. Monsters that took the entire party to take down before may start appearing as flankers to a more powerful menace. Most of all, a major milestone should signal that lots of things in the world of your game have changed. Some of that will probably be reflected in world advancement, but given the number of chances the PCs have had to revise their aspects in response to the story, you could be looking at a group with a much different set of priorities and concerns than they had when they started.

WHAT ABOUT RULE X?

Even a system as simple and light as *Fate Core* has more rules than are strictly necessary for all groups. The rules included here are the bare minimum required to play *Amethyst*. Thankfully, *Fate* is modular. If you want to add another rule from *Core* or another *Fate* resource, go ahead.

Genai bore no resemblance to any other district in the city. Unlike the rest of the city, organized and methodically laid out, Genai was a model of chaos. Roads split into dead ends; walkways looped around onto themselves. Buildings were built with wood and concrete, topped with ceramic tiles or gardens. The temple, a pagoda atop a pyramid, stood at the center of the town, towering the buildings around it. Aiden only caught it from the corner of his eye as he tracked the passing street signs.

Aiden found the address. Huangxia Street was an alley branching from the towering monument. The lights barely reached into the dark chasm Aiden had to venture into. Bottom lip quivering, Aiden forced himself deeper down the alley, waiting for his eyes to adjust.

A hundred feet in, he found it. The store was three stories, probably an apartment complex at one point. A large set of unlocked wrought iron gates stood ajar and portentous, like a patient basking shark. Behind them, tattered wooden doors tapped in the breeze. Aiden rechecked the address. From the outside it looked like either the place had been robbed or abandoned years ago. The sign above rocking like a metronome was in the same Asian type Aiden had read inside the codex. At least the number 23C was understandable.

Aiden realized that he hadn't considered what he was going to do next. He was half-way across town, past most adults' bedtime, staring at a store that appeared to have been forsaken. Even if it wasn't, it would still have been closed. He knew he wasn't being rational. Part of him was wishing he had stumbled on an elderly Asian man with a crooked wooden cane, round glasses, and a white fu-manchu beard running a 24-hour corner store stocked with a witch's brew of spices, frozen food, and bottled soda with a curtained-off backroom hiding wands, magic powders, and tiny creatures that looked adorable but acted as monsters if you angered them.

Aiden considered returning home. However, since the door was open, there was no harm in taking a peek. He saw only glimpses in the darkness as he peaked past the threshold. A few shelves sat in silhouette. Cheap tables and bamboo chairs lined one-half of the store. A dim lantern with a faint glow hung over an oak desk sitting at the other end. A few books waited open for a reader. Aiden willed himself through the iron jaw and past the tapping doors.

He squeaked a "hello" to announce himself but only managed a whisper. He snuck across the room and approached the oak desk. The immense open tome before him had broken its spine at the gutter like it sat at this page for a hundred years. The cover had the finish of marble and as Aiden scrapped his finger across the tail, he realized it was. He removed his glasses from his coat and tried to read.

Aiden could make out most of the words though a few were hidden in the shadow of the gutter. He was apprehensive about touching anything but fought through it to turn the nozzle on the lantern. The light grew bright and Aiden shifted his attention back to the book.

Humans suffer from the obsolete notion that they are the dominant species upon this world. Man's strength for conquest comes only from population. He exists in numbers. Using numbers, by all rights, puggs deserve dominion. The Earth requires penance from man for he committed sins against the world that gave him birth.

Aiden didn't notice the light form the lamp was growing brighter. He was engrossed in the words, wondering what puggs were, what sins the writer was referring to. The light began to drift slightly over Aiden's head, illuminating the gutter nicely. Aiden continued to read.

Nature offered man renewable resources, friendly denizens, and land uncontested by evil. He abolished this unwritten rule to care for the world. He committed unforgivable sins against nature when he embraced the machine. Technology offered man growth beyond what he could accomplish by natural means. He turned his back on life.

Aiden finished and then realized that the light on the page had shifted from his right to his left. He twisted slowly to spot the flicking flame hovering in the air beside his head. It had opened the lantern door, drifted gently from its cage, and moved closer to offer better illumination.

Aiden screamed and spun around, pinning himself against the desk. The spark of flame jumped from its spot and fluttered around him. It was no dragon, but Aiden's growing anxiety of being so far from home made him jumpy. He also didn't like bugs, and this thing moved very bug-like.

It floated to the book and then tapped the page repeatedly. Aiden didn't know how to respond, or even if he should. It didn't have legs or a head; it was just a lantern flame that had floated from its lantern. Aiden bent his head and leaned forward. It tapped the page again.

CHAPTER THREE: SPECIES

Earth remains a crowded place. Millions of humans survived the holocaust they may or may not have brought on themselves. Added to that is the flood of peoples only previously believed to exist in fiction, with their own cultures matching closely to those portrayed in human mythology. In those ancient tales, the interlopers went by many names. Humans, to this day, still often refer to them by these labels, sometimes thought of as endearing, other times taken as insult.

How these peoples respond to them is based strictly upon the individual. Some take it a compliment being likened to noble and whimsical creatures of legend. Others despise the comparison. None of them ever match the mold exactly. Some may look the part, but their personalities may differ radically. Some exhibit traits from a variety of different legends while others are wholly unique without a mirror in mythology. There are also creatures birthed from enchantment which are new to this era, possessing no history from the previous age.

The following species are broken up into three categories:

Fae: These are species naturally born from magic, with no original primordial form to track evolution back to. They began as the original fae, but have been continuously slaves to magic's whim. As time progresses, they continually "devolve" into more tribal, animalistic forms. It is believed the initial fae have long since vanished. Fae species include descendant species like damaskans, laudenians, and narros. Although some claim they no longer fit into the category, the tilen can also be found here. In truth, there are dozens of fae species and subspecies and only a few of the oldest fae actually know them all. Other variations are dealt with later as monsters.

Evolved: Humanity stands as the only example of an evolved species (at least on Earth) that has achieved intelligence without the assistance of magic.

Spawn: Spawn are species that were once normal evolved creatures that have succumbed to magic's influence and have been altered and enhanced. For the purposes of this chapter, spawn species listed here are those that have been pushed by enchantment into a form that possess enough intelligence to form a community. All non-natural creatures on Earth which are not fae or human are spawn. In Canam, only the kodiaks have advanced to the point of developing a culture.

THE LINE OF FAE

No one is certain how the fae appeared. Some insist they birthed from trees while others claimed the sky. Others profess neither, pointing to the soil as the source. Only dragons knew for certain and they regard such things as trivial, not worthy of remembrance. Considering the oldest fae peoples maintain a connection with nature, the exact specifics of their origin seemed inconsequential (though never state that to a laudenian or a chaparran). The word "fae" is another controversial debate. While the etymology points to a simple "touched by magic" description, it shares its root with "faerie."

Echalogical influence appears in numerous cultures, connecting threads from various human legends and myths to the time of Terros. The fae races would later influence mythologies previously thought unconnected. Though damaskans, laudenians, and chaparrans would fall under a wide range of Germanic elf legends, other distant cousins would appear in Greek or Egyptian lore, with no apparent connection between these influences. Even obscure concepts of Attricana found its way into Chinese and Japanese myths. Most fae are aware how they were represented in human literature. Oddly enough, the tradi-

tional prejudices of fantasy tend to match the new reality as well. The more dominant fae look down on their lesser brethren, thinking of them only as outcasts—uncivilized and primitive offshoots prone to violence. Few survived the exodus, but magic kept its persistence and they reappeared soon after in the modern age, as if their introduction could not be stopped.

As fae continued to grow and develop, a rising concern emerged as the newer races appeared less developed and intelligent then their ancestors. Though some claim a higher status, there is no denying the recent branch species exhibit a primitive mentality, preferring to pillage and devour rather than develop and civilize. Fae wonder if they are doomed to devolve into mindless animals while man continues to grow and expand. The fae take pride in their rich culture and a growing fear has taken root that it may all bleed away in time.

Then there are the pagus, appearing with the Ixindar migration when the black sun passed over the world and settled in its new home in the previous age. Pagus break most of the rules associated with fae. They are the oldest species without a deviation branch of their own. After Mengus created them, they never changed, as if Attricana stopped talking to them.

In the present, the descendants of the original fae continue their traditions and beliefs with hardly a hiccup from the old time. Tenenbri dig, laudenians fly, narros protect, and damaskans remember. Meanwhile, their new ape-evolved neighbors continue to expand.

RELATIONS AND TRADITIONS

Despite some common ground, there exist major cultural differences between human and fae nations. When the first fae encountered humans, they assumed that by understanding one group of men, they could comprehend the entire species, as there is little if any cultural deviation between fae of the same type. Disastrous initial encounters between fledging fae and human communities in southern Canam soured relations for decades. Early chaparran encounters with mankind were so dire, it curdled the entire race's opinion of the 'monkey-folk,' a difference that largely persists to this day; as the details of the incident are lost to human history, it seems unlikely ever to be resolved. Laudenians also share a resentful opinion of man after an unfortunate incident with the miners of Selkirk, the only bastion without an intrinsically adversarial relationship to the fantasy world. Selkirk had already benefitted from a successful first encounter with the narros years earlier. Though the miners were not immoral or wicked in any way, and tried their best to impress the elder elves, the humans' brash and unkempt nature fell foul of the decorous and conceited attitude of the laudenians. They judged the whole of the human race upon that single meeting as offensive and unpleasant, and isolated as they are, the majority has had little reason to change that opinion.

In Southam, where humans were a minority, their bitter opinions of the fae came from constant conflict. With the exception of the narros, most fae in Southam think of mankind as little different from an animal, to be hunted or domesticated like any other. Thankfully, other encounters in the north were not nearly as soiled. Damaskans and narros discovered kindness and loyalty among the humans in their first encounters. They also found to their initial shock that human traditions change with each nation and that time and distance encourage greater deviations. After only a few decades, two separate human societies populated with identical humans would create distinct traditions and even new languages. Unlike the chaparrans, laudenians, and tenenbri, inconsiderate and inflexible in their traditions and their acceptance of other customs, damaskans and gimfen grew to tolerate and even welcome cultural diversity.

Thankfully, echalogical influence preserved many of the social customs from the ancient past, allowing a certain common ground in basic relations even when there is no other common language. Though each nation has their own cultural standards, there has never been a major diplomatic incident between nations over traditional practices. Hand shaking is understood, though damaskans abhor unnecessary physical contact with strangers despite having no concept of personal space, and gimfen wipe sweat from their face before shaking hands. Waving one hand to another is a greeting to many human cultures, and in fae nations, though gimfen hate any hand gesture where the palm is exposed to them. The many variations of saluting and bowing are understood and even practiced by several fae races. Narros salute by touching the first knuckle of a clenched fist to the middle of their brow. Since damaskans don't officially recognize royalty (regarding 'king' as a mere job description) or religion, the concept of bending knee or prostrating before a lord or faith is unknown to them, causing accusations of disrespect. Meanwhile, gimfen kowtow to virtually anybody, including their own tools (considering how close their heads are to the ground, this is hardly an impedance or strain on their backs). Chaparrans will kneel but never bow.

Standards of politeness and decorum are also very different from group to group. Tenenbri curse and swear loudly during the course of their daily affairs, while laudenians are encouraged to speak diplomatically even in private. While damaskans are very reserved and frown on direct contact in public even between intimates, chaparrans and tenenbri are generally very exuberant and openly affectionate: chaparrans tend to limit their expressions to hand kissing and the brushing of noses and cheeks, but tenenbri think nothing of open public snogging. The basic kiss, thankfully, rarely changes and is still a sign of affection with both human and fae nations.

Laudenians never wear undergarments and usually keep to single layers, especially at home, regardless of company entertained; narros like to flaunt their self-

mastery by wearing silk in the bitterest cold and layers of wool in the fiercest heat.

These traditions, though many and varied, are not considered serious faux pas when violated; most human and fae cultures are aware that other cultures are varied and intricate and will not greatly begrudge another for not understanding every nuance of their own (except laudenians, who take politeness very seriously and consider that it is an outsider's responsibility to fit in, rather than theirs to make a guest feel welcome). However, there are many more serious tripping hazards. Holding one's hands up, palms open, is considered a sign of submission or greeting in many human cultures, and is repeated with both damaskans and laudenians. However, the narros take it as an insult, insinuating that one is "raising a wall" in defiance to the other. Other misunderstandings include the use of connecting the forefinger and thumb to form an "O" or the crossing of the index and middle fingers, both considered sexual insults with chaparrans and laudenians, though each sign insinuates opposite slurs between their cultures. To the tenenbri, all silent hand signals are considered rude, akin to talking about someone behind their back; even the most basic manual communication is frowned upon unless joined by a verbal accompaniment. On the other hand, laudenians despise noise and relish silence, thus screaming in joy is considered unforgivably coarse, regardless of the situation. Applause is welcomed among the tenenbri, accompanied by roars and foot pounding, while the laudenians show praise with simple bowing. Gimfen find both methods an inadequate expression of appreciation, and instead throw money. Showing only the middle finger is a human insult with no equivalent in any fae culture: however, one of the most bizarre misunderstandings involving hand gestures is the corna, or "horn" sign. This involves extending the two outer fingers from an otherwise closed fist. Though initially considered an insult and a symbol of the devil in many human cultures, it is well known throughout most fae nations as a sign of greeting, often used by fae to display racial pride. It is welcomed from humans, interpreted to saying "I respect you and your species." However, the thumb must be kept closed for this salutation, as extending it out the side indicates a request for intercourse. Since this discovery, some humans have created a variation, where placing the gesture unknowingly behind a human's head insults him or her as a "fae lover," a slur in some communities.

These are a few examples of the many cultural confusions that have arisen when fae mingle with humans. In places with extensive contact between cultures, boundaries tend to erode, although the fae nature is such that usually humans adopt fae practices rather than the other way around, though extended contact will wear away even the most hidebound fae's resistance to change. In Limshau, for instance, damaskans have adopted the practice of slapping the raised hand of another in celebration despite their general taboo on physical contact; this tendency has been exhibited by no other fae as far as anyone knows.

Most humans find the honesty of fae alarming. Damaskans display the tendency most, but all fae find the concept of untruth somewhat baffling (even the gimfen, whose fast-and-loose attitude toward fact is explained as being 'poetically true'). Though they might not answer a question directly or volunteer a secret willingly, they rarely lie directly (not that they are incapable, but it requires conscious effort; the closest thing the fae have to the concept of a pathological liar is called *aeshomu*, or 'mockingbird' – one who uses half-truths to mislead). The sometimes brutal application of this belief has ruffled more than a few feathers, especially among the noble human houses. This, accompanied by the fae's tolerance for alternate lifestyles and practices among their own people has made them unpopular with fanatical human religious movements. Many fae have been declared corrupt and wicked by church leaders. Some fae are guilty of this as well, considering mankind barbaric and primitive, regardless if he uses magic or technology. Some fae have accused man of being inferior, both in breeding and in brains. Humans have countered with similar accusations, adding that fae are tools of the devil, an image personified in the zealous ramblings of King Darius of Baruch Malkut and his disciples.

And yet, many fae nations maintain a positive relationship with humans in spite of the massive casualties the fae suffered at the hands of humans in the first century and their capture and enslavement by raiders and evil nations, a practice as prevalent now as it was when it began 350 years ago. With the fae's long life and even longer history, the intricacies of their culture are so extensive that the rare humans who marry a fae can take the entirety of their extended lives learning the details and still be surprised at the end.

FAE DESCENDANTS

After dragons, the first species born on Earth were the fae. No one remembers what they originally looked like or how many there were, for the original fae vanished hundreds of thousands of years before the First Hammer struck (though they must have had pointed ears and sharp features, as these dominant features still survive in all their descendants). Their susceptibility to magic altered their original form and they broke off into dozens of smaller offshoots relatively quickly. These offshoots remain genetically compatible and physically similar in basic ways, for all that they are commonly considered separate species. They are usually bipeds with ten fingers and ten toes, stereoscopic vision and hearing, no unusual organs (though they lack certain vestigial ones, and those they have often work in unusual ways) and sexual reproduction. Human scientists, even after a few centuries of examination, have always failed to determine how fae resemble evolved apes to such an extent. Although it has been commonly agreed upon that alien life would evolve naturally along similar lines, the parallels between fae and man are too numerous to be considered a coincidence.

Those believing in a creation by a divine hand take the numerous similarities in enchanted species of fae and the evolved species of man prove the existence of God, a philosophy known as Corpus Continuity. The humanoid form, consisting of binocular vision, binaural hearing, base ten appendages, erect stature, and mammalian physiology match the fae species exactly, a species not evolved from primitive animals but formed from magic itself. With the exception of the pointed ears and the variations of fae species when they adapt to their environment, there still remain remarkable similarities scientists cannot explain. Because fae arose first, many believers in Corpus Continuity also subscribe to Echalogical Influence. Those of faith on both sides believe in the idea that God liked the humanoid form but tried different ways to succeed at it. Scientists refuse to acknowledge this and believe a genetic reason exists for the similarity. To them echalogical influence may be the reason itself--the previous age influencing evolutionary paths to make humans resemble their long dead progenitors.

Another popular theory claims it to be a coincidence; base ten appendages, binocular vision and stereoscopic hearing simply makes sense and that all intelligent life will eventually move towards that end. Others cling to the prevalent theory that the fantasy world doesn't exist at all, only emerging because of man's desire for it to exist; thus, the appearance of man dictates the physique of fae, rather than the other way around.

Fae all share several common qualities. They are peaceful within their own species (i.e., laudenians never fight laudenians). They are also monogamous and loyal to their mates; divorce is virtually non-existent, and though remarriage upon the death of a spouse is not unheard of, neither is it common. When single, they are also known to be somewhat promiscuous. Even the laudenians, with their strict heritage and tradition, do not consider sex for pleasure either sinful or immoral between consenting non-bonded adults. Although they denounce the use of sex slaves by human masters, fae races do not prohibit pre-bonded (pre-marital) sex. Prostitution is rare given their sexual freedom, but it has been known to occur. There are virtually no crimes dealing with vices in fae cultures; as they are immune to the ravages of addiction, most things humans would consider vices simply are not harmful to them either personally or culturally. Additionally, they do not consider homosexuality a sin and bonded same sex couples occur openly in all fae communities. Some observers claim fae are all pansexual, though this is not entirely the case: most exhibit distinct preferences, but often these preferences are based on previous exposure rather than biological imperative. Some human nations frown on these freedoms and expressions, especially within those nations that use religion as a device of fear to keep the population in line (a tendency not exhibited in any fae nation).

These non-strictures apply when the fae cultures are allowed to govern themselves. In some locations, where fae are not in places of authority, they abide by the rules of the nation they inhabit, usually without complaint. As a rule, all fae abhor social conflict and will do anything they can to prevent it, though the extremes they will go to vary from type to type: laudenians and chaparrans will generally remove themselves (or the offender) from the equation, damaskans and narros will attempt to mediate, the boisterous tenenbri will turn the conflict into a formal debate with clear parameters for victory, and the accommodating gimfen will quite happily concede anything to an intractable enough opponent and find some way of making up lost ground later.

UNIVERSAL FAE TRAITS

There are several traits that apply to all of the fae descendants.

Echan: All fae are tied to chaotic energies of the white gate of Attricana. You disrupt technology on you and around you : the only exceptions are gimfen, pagus (bound or free) and those whose souls have switched from Attricana to the negative energies of Ixindar. Additionally, if enchantment once more disappeared from the world, you would vanish with it.

Immune to All Natural Disease: You are immune to all non-magical disease, and cannot be a carrier of such ailments. You are unaffected by all genetic diseases and disorders, but not mutated genes from radiation or enchanted viruses. Furthermore, you are unaffected by natural psychological or behavioral ailments such as addiction or schizophrenia, though concerted attacks on your sanity may still affect you. Enchanted diseases and conditions can still affect you, as can natural diseases that have been imbued with magic.

Light Sleeper: Unlike humans, fae require little sleep and they jostle awake with surprising ease. You can sleep comfortably in any position and maintain balance while doing so. You require only four hours of sleep every 24 hours, which may be non-consecutive. Like all living creatures, you require REM sleep, but this only requires four hours of consecutive, comfortable sleep every three days. If you are not allowed comfortable sleep in order to reach a REM state, sleep deprivation will eventually set in. You can sleep in heavy armor for three days before fatigue sets in. You are still susceptible to magical sleep, but are less vulnerable to it than a natural creature.

Vulnerable to Fae Iron: A specific ratio of lead and iron is extremely toxic to all fae. It is a forbidden substance, outlawed in most civilized communities. Fae iron painfully burns your flesh at the slightest contact, and wounds sustained from fae iron weapons take longer to heal.

CHAPARRAN

The Fair Folk of the Woodlands

The huntress sat perfectly still in the canopy above as the prey blundered carelessly along the forest path. Though they bore no signs of their allegiance, she recognized their

bearing: slavers, almost certainly from the despoiler nation to the east, invading her forest in search of chattel. The more fools they. The huntress stood silently, balancing effortlessly on the thin branch, and fitted an arrow to her bow. The first human died with the arrow in his throat. His companions turned sharply at his last gurgling scream, and then looked up at the ominous shadow perched among the leaves.

"Ambush!" the leader yelled, drawing a crossbow. "Get—" But his words were cut off as he suddenly felt the pressure of a knife at his throat. He could have sworn the elf hadn't moved, and yet somehow she had got out of the trees and crossed the clearing in the blink of an eye.

"Who's next?" whispered the chaparran as she melted back into the trees, leaving the slaver captain bleeding out onto the mossy ground.

Hiding in the deep woods across the world, the chaparran fae have evolved concealment to an art form. The chaparrans live almost exclusively among the woods, growing towers, temples, and whole communities from the soil and branches.

Chaparrans are the best species to play because they are the most like the traditional elves of legend. They

have the oldest history and the most exotic beliefs. They are proud and powerful and are the envy of many others. To play a chaparran is to wholly embrace the fantasy world and all of its possibilities.

Average Height: 5'8" – 6'3"
Average Weight: 80-120 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 100 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 3,000 years

CHAPARRAN ASPECTS

Chaparran species aspects are intertwined with their woodland habitats. You should consider your relationship to nature in general and your home forest in particular, as well as what could have induced you to leave your familiar environs and venture into the wide world.

Sample Aspects: ***Could Have Shot Him in the Dark; Defender of Dawnamoak; The Ghost in the Woods***

Sample Benefits: Moving quickly and quietly in the woods; using bows or thrown weapons; finding sustenance in the wilderness; setting cunning forest traps.

Sample Drawbacks: Unsociability or outright hostility to non-chaparrans; defending trees; being uncomfortable outside of the forest; fleeing instead of fighting against equal or superior odds.

CHAPARRAN STUNTS

Brachiate: While in woodland terrain, you ignore natural obstacles to movement and can move two zones as part of another action.

Listen to the Wind: The target of your bow attack cannot invoke aspects related to stealth or concealment on their defense.

Weald Walk: You gain +2 to movement and stealth checks while in woodlands.

Physical Traits: Chaparrans are only slightly taller than damaskans, on par with the average human, but give the illusion of much greater size due to their increased muscle mass and physical stamina. Of all the fae descendants, the chaparrans have the greatest spectrum of skin tones, from light tan to ebony black. Their ears are short and flush with their heads, making them almost indistinguishable from humans at a distance. A chaparran's eyes usually are of green and bluish hues and they will often pierce their ears in several areas and color their bodies with tattoos, especially around the face, shoulders, and back. Fae in general remain youthful in appearance throughout their long lives, but this tendency is the least pronounced among the chaparrans due to their constant exposure to the elements. While chaparrans spend most of their lives with an apparent age ranging from a human young adult to a healthy adult in their late 30s, those past their second millennium more often resemble a human in their sixties. Most chaparrans have brown hair (dark brown is most common, but any brunette shade is possible), though a few have black or even red hair. This is curly more often than not, and generally worn short or in tight dreadlocks to avoid catching on branches.

All chaparrans have superior eyesight and hearing, able to see two to three times as far as a human under low-light conditions (though pitch darkness is still an obstacle to sight) and to hear the faintest rustling of wind even at the furthest range of bowshot. All their joints are capable of hypermobility, and a chaparran's big toes, while not fully opposable, are significantly more dextrous and strong than normal, enabling them to grasp branches equally well with feet and hands and giving them improved balance in the tree canopy; a chaparran archer hanging upside down from a branch to set up a shot is a truly fearsome sight. There is no such thing as a clumsy chaparran, and even the largest of them move with an almost supernatural grace and stealth, making not a sound as they move through the forest, appearing suddenly where least expected and fading away just as quickly. Like all fae, chaparrans are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Mentality: Most chaparrans are downright paranoid and hostile to outsiders. Chaparrans seldom seek adventure outside their forests. Of all fae, they and the tenenbri are the least encountered outside of their regions. Since only a laudenian-chaparran crossbreed can result in chaparran offspring, few outcasts can be identified as such. Only in extremely rare cases do chaparrans brave the outside world. Only the young and curious disobey their culture and heritage to embark on such a voyage. Chaparrans in general have a propensity for solitude. Though some will obviously forge and protect friendships with outsiders, they still prefer fae to humans and seldom invest time or emotion in relationships with the latter. Chaparrans rarely bond with non-chaparrans and less so with humans. Occasionally a chaparran wishes to see what lies beyond the trees of home. They may still be skittish of strangers but brave enough to take chances where others would run away. Chaparrans have a flight instinct and will bolt instead of standing ground unless allies or the innocent are threatened.

Many assume chaparrans are utterly wild in demeanor and decorum. In truth, they are quite civilized and maintain good grooming and health. Unlike other fae, known for being austere, chaparrans wear their emotions on their sleeves—if they actually had sleeves. Everyone knows immediately when a chaparran is upset. Thankfully, this openness spreads to more upbeat emotions as well. Chaparrans enjoy the outdoors and need to see the sun to orientate themselves. Without this, they often grow confused about the time of day, sleeping at odd hours for random lengths. Chaparrans also have the dual disadvantage of being both agoraphobic and claustrophobic: they are intensely uncomfortable outside of a forest, edgy almost to the point of uselessness in a dungeon or town, but virtually unstoppable in their forest homes.

History: While nearly all descendants of the original fae believe that they are the true form of the ancient race, chaparrans have about as much justification of that claim as their laudenian cousins. Their people dates

back further than anyone can recall, including themselves, for they keep few records, and almost none of these written - where other fae species take pride in their books and scrolls, chaparrans seldom write anything down. Chaparrans believe most other fae have forgotten their origins. They believe that the original fae were birthed from the forests and should always remain tied to them.

Most chaparran communities are small. With such an obscure people, accurate numbers are impossible to come by. Estimates range from 80,000 to 800,000 chaparrans across the world (even the most optimistic guess falls just shy of a million), scattered among a thousand forests of varying size. Chaparrans mostly keep to themselves, refusing to become involved in the affairs of outsiders. One could walk through a chaparran forest without ever knowing of their presence. Unless threatening elf or tree, trespassers often cross without worry or encounter: more nefarious individuals vanish after entering. They defend the forests when necessary with their inestimable archery skills. Their bows and arrows grow naturally from wood, a result of their symbiosis with the trees around them.

Culture: Their outward emotional displays are reflected mostly in their music and dance. They pound beats into fallen logs with amazing speed and augment those sounds with kinetic syllables of phrases strung so fast as to make the words meaningless. Chaparrans' passion for dance knows no equal. A chaparran's heartbeat will increase to virtually that of a hummingbird in the grip of a dance. Bodies move almost violently, with fists pounding and legs striking, only their absolute discipline preventing injury to others. Watching a chaparran dance charges the soul and pumps the heart. Every move denotes a meaning others seldom understand. To outsiders, the dance looks chaotic with thrashing appendages and whirling bodies without care for people or objects around. Those involved in the dance hardly open their eyes, confounding outsiders as to how the dancers don't crash into each other. All chaparrans know this dance and practice it daily. The art connects to a form of martial art called Manora Chaparra, believed to purge the darkness from their souls, allowing them to fight with clean spirits. This form developed after the First War.

Chaparrans avoid heavy armor and favor wooden weapons over metal: if metal is unavoidable, the weapon will be crafted with a wooden grip. For most, the bow is the weapon of choice, followed by the spear, fighting knives, or even the scythe; while chaparrans will use swords, they prefer makana (a wooden club inset with sharp protrusions of stone or metal).

Chaparrans often wear furs and pelts, adding to their girth, but exposing a great deal of skin to maintain agility. They hate adorning themselves with gems or shiny rocks and seldom wear metal of any kind.

Religion: Chaparrans are highly religious and commonly profess a faith in Berufu, the fae mother god who gave life to their ancestors. Nearly all chaparrans openly pray to the woods every morning, noon, and night, thanking her for their life.

When chaparrans die, tradition decrees that the body must be dropped into a grave without a coffin. After prayers are finished and before dirt pushed over, a single acorn is placed in the mouth. This seed always grows, despite surrounding competition and available water. These trees grow taller and wider that any grown from nature and many claim the great temples of Jibaro and Libanus emerged from fallen chaparran priests. This tradition extends to wandering chaparrans as well, and travelers across the world always know where one is buried by the massive tree dwarfing all those around. Such lone sentinels have appeared in deserts, atop great peaks, and even in caves, declaring to all those who see it that a chaparran rests there. They contend that their souls will move from wood to flesh every generation. Killing one simply moves their soul to a tree for its lifetime. After an era, the soul returns to flesh.

Relations: The chaparrans believe the fae are not devolving, but becoming one with nature. Their descendant offshoots are not necessarily violent, but more xenophobic, becoming increasingly skittish of outsiders. They also grow more connected with nature, even to the point of exhibiting animal physical traits. Chaparrans respect their descendants and scold the laudenians for hanging onto what they call a "bankrupt obsession."

Chaparrans are insular and have no interest in outsiders who do not seek to interact with them. They have no real opinions on the other major fae species, wanting to be left alone by all of them. They are none too fond of humans, viewing them as despoilers of nature and dead to the life-force of the earth, but mostly this is due to bad experiences during first contact and chaparrans will not go out of their way to inconvenience humanity unless the humans go out of their way to inconvenience the chaparrans. The one species they have an unyielding hatred of are the pagus: the majority of the pagus created on the night of migration came from chaparrans and the fae left behind swore an oath to eliminate their cursed brothers from the world. Their obsession continues to this day.

Names: Unlike other fae, often taking human-like names to better associate with the human world, chaparrans refuse to do so. Their names, like all fae, are personal and are only meant to be heard by pointed ears. A chaparran's family name merges with their given name: this full name is usually four or more syllables long and always features both hard consonants and hissing sibilants (multiple instances of K, G, or S when spelled in the English orthography) interspersed with elongated, rich vowels. Since they don't adopt human names and refuse to let humans address them by their given titles unless they are true intimates, most simply ask that outsiders refer to them each as "Krysid" which means "Fae-Born" in their language (it was more than a century after mankind's initial contact with chaparrans before the humans figured out why they all had the same name). With proven comrades, the chaparran may permit a human to address them by an adopted title which describes their accomplishments or role in society. Un-

der no circumstances will any human, even the closest of friends, be allowed to use a shortened form of their true name.

Example Truenames: Brassekonnas, Jassakerak, Killikassawar, Marakenassa, Taneggoras, Satthrassin *Example Titles:* Darawren ("Earth-seer"), Hiinodorran ("Fire Dancer"), Kitarri ("Black Bow"), Merawrak ("Swift Birdcatcher"), Nathash ("Red-Bellied Salmon"), Shikkakarri ("Deer Stalker")

CHAPARRAN SUMMARY

As a Chaparran, you can…

…survive indefinitely in the wilderness.

…see perfectly in the sylvan darkness while remaining concealed in dappled shadows.

…call on the lore of the woods to trip up your enemies, misleading them into following the wrong path or falling into a natural trap.

…run through the tree canopy with ease, disappear like a ghost into the forest, and reappear in a deadly flurry of action when the foe least expects you.

…make limited requests for the aid of trees and plants; a particularly effective request might even convince a tree to give up some of its wood in the form of a small crafted item.

…attack from range with longbows, or up close with fighting knives, scythes, staves and studded clubs.

DAMASKAN

People of the Books

I sidestepped the bravo easily and delivered a precise chop to the back of his neck. He went down without a sound. The remaining thugs regrouped, hefting their tetsubo nervously. One came for me, but I ducked and threw myself to the side, one finger catching ahold of the shelf on the wall beside me. Twisting in mid-air, I scuttled backwards up the shelf, noting as I did so that I had been remiss in dusting this section of the stacks and reminding myself to attend to it once I had dealt with these hooligans. Drawing two shuriken from an inside pocket of my leather coat, I removed two of the remaining combatants with accurate strikes to the hamstrings, then drew my blades and looked down at the last one. His downed companions were moaning most annoyingly.

"Did you not read the notice?" I asked the band of ruffians. "It plainly says 'silence in the library.'"

Damaskans are the most common, most often seen, and most widely circulated fae in the world. They have the most artisans, the most diplomats, the most historians, and the most architects. Their wizards all employ the book as their totem, which makes them hard to distinguish from others since nearly all damaskans (at least in Limshau) carry books through their day-to-day activities. Because of their circulation over the globe, no one can be sure how many damaskans live on Earth, but it's probably between 4 and 5 million, although only about 1.7 million reside in Canam.

Damaskans are clearly the best species to play because they are built on the strengths of being a fae without the arrogance and xenophobia of other peoples like the laudenians and chaparrans. They are the easiest to get along with, are possessed of a wide range of talents suited for almost any vocation, and have a virtuous path ingrained in their soul—the pursuit of knowledge. What path could be more honorable? They are civilized, numerous, and are the least stigmatized of all the fae species.

Average Height: 4'8" – 5'7"
Average Weight: 70-100 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 100 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 1,500 years

DAMASKAN ASPECTS

Damaskan species aspects often relate to the pursuit of knowledge, and/or the use of acrobatic abilities in that search. You should consider what particular subjects interest you, or if you cannot be specific, what compels you about the general search for learning.

Sample Aspects: ***Curiosity Killed the Elf; Published Five Hundred Papers; Walker of the Stacks***

Sample Benefits: Recalling obscure facts; navigating in maze-like environs; performing insane acrobatic stunts; writing very fast; listening intently; ignoring obvious danger.

Sample Drawbacks: Telling the truth even when impolite or inconvenient; leaping into the fray in spite of personal danger; giving in to curiosity over good sense; braving danger to protect a book.

DAMASKAN STUNTS

Advanced Ambidexterity: While not in combat, you can spend a fate point to perform two physical actions as part of the same action, as long as they are actions that can be performed in the same place and one-handed. If you are in combat, this costs 2 fate points.

Gravity Focus: You gain +2 to acrobatic checks that defy traditional physics (such as wall-running or running on ceilings).

Rapid Polyglot: Not knowing a language is never an obstacle to your social checks, and by the end of even a short conversation, you always know enough of the language to communicate on a basic level with a native speaker.

Physical Traits: Damaskans are quick and dextrous in both mind and body, and uncannily patient. They have slanted, epicanthic eyes similar to humans of Asian descent: unlike most other fae, they do not have significantly superior vision, although they are immune to human complains such as cataracts, myopia, and the like (though some affect reading glasses or pince-nez based on the assumption that this makes them appear more scholarly). Their ears taper straight out the sides of the skull to a very sharp point and have a tendency to flutter and vibrate slightly depending on mood: like their vision, their hearing is not especially enhanced, save

that they have a technique of passive listening that enables them to recall a conversation accurately even when they are paying attention to something else. They generally have darker hair tones and seldom grow it beyond shoulder length. Their skin ranges from light tan to olive color with eyes of brown and grey. When reaching adulthood, damaskans still resemble human young adults barely out of puberty (17-19 in human years). Even at their most venerable age, damaskans don't often look a day past 30 and none look older than 40 when they finally shuffle on. Like all fae, damaskans are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Because of a peculiarity of the damaskan brain, they are able to employ both lobes both independently and concurrently, and their analytical and creative centers are diffuse rather than localized. This makes them functionally ambidextrous, as well as enabling them to work on one project while thinking about another. In addition to their aforementioned passive listening ability, this trait also makes them effectively polyglot, as part of their brain is able to parse and analyze even languages they have never heard before and interpret them with basic effectiveness after only limited exposure. Most damaskans are adept at writing with both hands simultaneously, enabling them to transcribe information very fast.

One physical characteristic in which damaskans surpass all other fae is in their sense of balance. They have a seemingly supernatural ability to balance on practically any surface and can gain leverage with almost any body part. They have a phenomenal spatial awareness that lets them judge distances with incredible precision which, combined with their natural dexterity and light builds, allows them to perform acrobatic feats which seemingly defy gravity. A chaparran might be able to fire an arrow accurately while hanging upside down from a tree branch, but a damaskan can fight two enemies at once with a sword in each hand while standing sideways on a wall holding on to the cracks between the stones with nothing but her pinky toes.

Mentality: Damaskans are often reserved, seldom speaking out of turn, but can be prone to sudden burst of emotion when finally pushed. Some might call them shy, often staying quiet during conversations, but really they merely prefer to speak only when having something useful to say. Until then, they keep back and avoid making their presence intrusive. This makes them appear distant, detached, and even cold. They are not actually emotionless, but prefer not to be demonstrative except in private or when not on duty. When dedicated to a task, they think of little else and speak only when necessary. However, get them started on raw knowledge or ask them to recite some nugget of

information and they talk like uncorking a champagne bottle.

In seeming contrast to this is the damaskan propensity for honesty, an extension of their general belief in discipline, order and cleanliness: they find disorganization of any kind unsettling, and deliberate falsehood sets their teeth on edge. While it is not true that damaskans do not know how to lie, it does not come naturally to them and they are intensely uncomfortable when forced to engage in deception or in the presence of a known deceiver. Most prefer to remain silent rather than utter an untruth. For that reason, if asking a damaskan their honest opinion about something, one must be prepared to hear that opinion bluntly and completely. Damaskans are generally regarded as somewhat tactless by other species as a result.

Damaskans seldom understand fear and often engage in fights they know they cannot win to save the life of another. They also place an unnatural level of security on the written word, putting themselves in harm's way to protect a book; even the less scholarly-inclined from Damaska find this urge nearly unavoidable.

History: The first Damaska, before the Hammer fell, was the oldest empire in history. After the gate reopened, damaskans rebuilt their civilization, though split into two different empires on opposite sides of the planet. In the ruins of the laughably termed 'old world', Damaska was remade to mimic its former glory. On the other, the fae erected the empire of knowledge,

Limshau. Because of the peculiar homogeneity of all fae, both nations looked initially similar. All damaskans favor stone or adobe for building, rather than wood. Most of their cities are built into tall mountains or next to cliffs and always facing a major river or body of water. Where they differ is that Damaska's cities expand with abandon across open fields stopped only by water and cliffs, whereas Limshau restricts its cities with stout walls. Damaska's cities scrape the sky with sharp spires—a landscape of porcupine quills—while Limshau's jigsaw of flat, interlocking, and tessellating buildings allow one to sit atop a roof and watch an unobstructed sunset.

Until the damaskans appeared, the fae seldom recorded anything. Their history was marred with inaccuracies, legends claimed as fact, or facts discredited as myth. This was part of the reason why fae history from the time of Terros is so vague and sporadic. Alas, damaskans could bring nothing with them to the new world and had to reconstruct their past from memory – and although their memories are good, they are not eidetic. Even though Damaska remains the largest fae empire, dozens of others appeared in a matter of decades of the gate's reopening. The Damaskan and Limshau empires still consider themselves a single nation with many branches, though there is little regular contact between the two. Though the people of both Damaska and Limshau are considered the same species, damaskans from Limshau often refer to themselves as 'Limshau fae' to emphasize their cultural distinctions. Damaskans are also one of the few fae species to permit the term 'elf' to be applied to them, often using it themselves.

Culture: Each damaskan possesses an encyclopedic knowledge on a subject defined by their individual tastes. Where those from Damaska prefer internal recall for this information, citizens of Limshau insist on writing all of it down. One distinction damaskans are clear to make is that they never volunteer their own opinion in their papers or journals, nor clog the books with judgment, sentiment, or meaningless diatribe. Where humans believe any individual can stand on a box and preach prose worthy of print, damaskans remain quiet, recording only objective events.

The damaskan written form is substantially different from other fae languages. Damaskans know both the classical cursive and a shorthand variation they invented called *sonna-eliano*, which has been translated into English as 'orthoglossy'. Every damaskan from both empires knows this writing style. Using orthoglossy allows a damaskan to write five times faster than any other scholar. With some effort, non-damaskans can be taught this writing style, but its intricacies require considerable study to master, and those without a damaskan brain simply cannot manage the mental gymnastics required to write it at full speed.

The Damaskan fae across the ocean in Lauropa wear looser clothes, wield different weapons, and are more open in public, whereas the Canam damaskans are more reticent, with clothing and weaponry largely influenced by the former Asiatic human cultures. Since fae never change unless branching into a new species, this deviation in Canam is solely due to their interactions with humanity, a species almost completely foreign to the Damaskan Empire in the East. Damaskans frequently wear new clothes, or at least pressed and clean. They abhor getting dirty. Due to the shape of their ears, damaskans avoid wearing helmets whenever possible, and because of their slight builds favor lighter armor over heavy plate. Limshau fae prefer light, form-fitting leather armor with a generally Asian cut, and their preferred weapons are similarly of oriental styling: all damaskans favor polearms or light weapons that can be dual-wielded whenever possible. They also rarely pierce their skin or adorn their bodies with tattoos, although this has little to do with any philosophy other than just not seeing the point.

Damaskan musicians prefer quiet, more subdued music as a rule, and favor woodwind instruments. Their preferences in the physical arts tend, naturally, toward calligraphy, followed by the arts of illustration: drawing, illumination, woodcuts, lithographs, and the like. Lauropan damaskans maintain a certain interest in architecture; Canam damaskans have largely substituted this for an appreciation for the aesthetics of craft and engineering.

Religion: Damaskans maintain a deep pride in whichever beliefs they profess and are known to defend their convictions to the death, but at the same time they do not consider it their place to criticize another person's beliefs. Due to their large numbers, damaskans follow several belief systems. The largest percentage worship the dragon god, Amethyst, believing his soul exists beyond the gate. Others worship the fae god Berufu, while others follow the earth god Oaken. A smaller number have even embraced a few human faiths. But regardless of their proclivities, a truly pious damaskan is a rarity: less than 10% of damaskans worldwide endorse any religious belief, and fewer still are inclined to proselytize what faith they do have.

For most, the pursuit of knowledge takes the place of other spiritual concerns. Damaskans welcome adventure for the sheer experience of it, and often engage on what has been sometimes termed a 'scholarly pilgrimage' to discover new learning. Some also embark on quests for their people. A common sight in open echa, damaskans are ever expanding and rely on the adventuring spirit of their people to establish a growing civilization. They react to threats to knowledge in much the same way that zealots react when their beliefs are challenged: threatening to put flame to parchment is the surest way to enrage such fae.

Regardless of their religious or philosophical bent, when a damaskan dies, their body is burned and scattered to the wind.

Relations: Damaskans loathe pagus, as well as the majority of the lesser fae due to their destructive tendencies, but if they encounter a free pagus with no overtly hostile intent they will not distrust him instinctively as another species might. They have a deep mu-

tual respect for dragons. Limshau places its trust in their proven alliances with the gimfen, chaparrans, and humans – specifically with the kingdoms of Abidan and Kannos. They are generally indifferent to other species in general, preferring to judge individuals on a case-by-case basis.

Names: Unfortunately, while phonetically pleasing to the ear, the damaskan language is somewhat difficult for those unfamiliar with it to get their tongues around. Damaskans often adopt a human-sounding name when in public: their contact with humans has been so extensive over the centuries that modern damaskan parents generally give this name alongside the traditional one at birth, even in all-fae communities. Some damaskan families, especially in Limshau, have adopted their chosen human name as their true name, nearly forgetting their heritage. Not just due to integration, many believe a new world requires a clean slate, and a new family name is a good place to start. Other fae frequently deplore this practice and a few damaskans without native names have been denied entry in fae-only communities on this basis.

Most damaskans keep their fae names if they have them, privately known only by loved ones and family. Even in situations where the damaskans use their family name, they still regularly select a human given name because the damaskan language contains many phonemes and tonal variances that sound similar to humans, and consequently their native names can be difficult to pronounce accurately. Their chosen human names are usually simple, with little cultural identification, and are often picked to reflect an attribute of the individual. Family names are very culturally specific and sometimes reflect an attribute of the family or important individuals within it.

Damaskan names are not gender-specific. While both Limshau and Damaska place the given name before the family name, a damaskan will usually adopt the name order of whatever community they are currently in (so a damaskan visiting Fargon or Genai will give their family name first).

Example Given Names: Demosin, Keeilian, Ourokess, Ravenar, Reivune, Zallamber

Example Family Names: Anaiquore, Ekka'Vraiul,

Hastalleiki, Kaixiu'Ooria, Talassezri, Uotha'Vuesti
Example Open Names: Damon, Chandleer, Hope, Peregrin, Raven, Salla

DAMASKAN SUMMARY

As a Damaskan, you can…

…use acrobatic skill to take the straightest line between two points, and take advantage of your natural ambidexterity and impeccable sense of balance to run up walls, balance on the thinnest supports, and traverse any surface that has the slightest handhold.

…know everything there is to know about a particular topic.

…speak at least three languages fluently and able to pick up enough of an unfamiliar tongue for basic communication in a matter of days or even hours.

…write five times faster than a non-damaskan, scribbling with a pen in each hand.

…fight using a variety of finesse weapons, usually with one in each hand or a single multipurpose polearm: the katana and wakizashi, tonfa, butterfly swords, and naginata are particularly common.

If you use **magic**, your totem is the book, and your choice of disciplines is limited only by your interests, even if you began your studies with a more limited magical tradition.

GIMFEN

Endlessly Fascinated Tinker Folk

He might have been small, but I've never seen anyone put away booze like Errrick. Yeah, that's how he spelled his name—he liked to roll it off his tongue, particularly around the ladies. And there were plenty of ladies crowding around him at the moment, at his table in the middle of the tavern, as he downed shot glass after shot glass of something pungently green. Across the table, his opponent, a big burly human, was starting to look a bit queasy as he placed another glass shakily upside-down on the table. The human burped, his eyes crossed, and he fell sideways off his chair.

"Well, demoiselles," said Errrick, "looks like I win. And with my winnings I'll buy a drink for any lass who wants a kiss—" he took a small tin out of his pocket – "after I freshen up, of course!" As he chewed the mint leaf, however, three of the human's friends, equally massive, got threateningly to their feet.

"Hold your horses, runt," one of them growled. "Your kind always cheats. I bet you got a bottle strapped to your leg or some other weird gizmo." The gimfen looked up, smiled, then reached down and pulled up his trouser leg. There was indeed a bottle strapped to his calf… full of a golden amber liquid, into which was set some sort of plastic straw leading up through his clothes and out his collar. He winked and took a swig from the straw. Then, as the giant blinked at him, he moved like a cannonball, bowling the man over and shoving the barrel of the plasma rifle which had, until that moment, rested against the table leg into his interlocutor's eye.

"'Tis not a manly thing to call a gentleman a cheater, dear fellow," he said evenly. "What say we all settle this outside?"

No one is sure how the gimfen broke off from the other fae, being only superficially similar in body and utterly distinct in mind. They possess at the same time a natural curiosity about the world and a near-total lack of imagination. They embraced many human customs when relationships blossomed between the two species, and are the second most common nonhuman species (after the damaskans) seen in echan human communities. The curiosity of gimfen eventually spread to technology. Most fae reach an impasse when encountering human technology: touching or even being in the same vicinity as any complex device inevitably causes it to break down sooner or later. However, the gimfen don't share this curse.

Gimfen are the best species to play because they have no inhibitions. They are not bound by foolish honor or some obsolete drive to survive. They are neither arrogant nor afraid. They don't worry themselves about the petty issues that absorb so many others. They are the best because they are the only fae able to embrace a new world while remembering the old one. No other fae can enter a town tavern with laser rifle on his back. They are the life of the party and the center of attention.

Average Height: 3'3" – 4'3"
Average Weight: 40-60 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 30 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 500 years

GIMFEN ASPECTS

Gimfen racial aspects often relate to their obsession with craft and technology, or to being short-tempered, or just plain short. Consider your relationship with technology in general and techans in particular, or how being literally looked down on by the rest of the world affects your perspective.

Sample Aspects: ***Cranky When I Miss a Meal; I Call Her 'Juliet'; Quintessential Fairy Tinker***

Sample Benefits: Repairing or improving mechanisms; squeezing through tight places; evading clumsy big folk; stealing or avoiding retribution after having been caught stealing; recalling facts about weird science.

Sample Drawbacks: Not being able to reach; giving in to uncontrollable curiosity; getting distracted by shinies; losing a favorite toy; being dismissed as a child; forgetting that non-gimfen fae can't use technology.

GIMFEN STUNTS

Angry Leprechaun: The first time in a scene you attack a larger opponent, you can draw a new card and immediately play it. You must take the second result, but if it is lower than your original card, you also gain a boost.

EDF Reduction: You can spend a fate point to immediately remove the ***Disrupted*** aspect from a piece of technology or reduce the ***Disabled*** aspect to ***Disrupted***.

Jump Charge: You gain +2 to your first attack of the encounter in close combat.

Physical Traits: Gimfen are the shortest of the major fae species, the tallest being barely larger than a human child of ten and being much the same in appearance. They feature thin, lightly slanted eyes of bright green and blue tones. Their hair is often vibrantly colored and their ears taper straight back, with the tips sometimes as much as an inch from the back of their head. Their skin is often lightly colored, and unlike other fae, they are known to freckle. Like all fae, damaskans are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron. Unlike all other fae (except pagus, but for different reasons), gimfen do not generate an enchanted disruption field. The reason for this is unknown, but because of it they are the only fae species capable of not only handling but using or even improving technology. Not only do they not disrupt technology, but any devices they hold or carry are strangely resistant to the ravages of EDF, though without special

shielding they are not immune, and once they leave the gimfen's immediate person they are just as susceptible as any other technology.

Gimfen look like pubescent youths through the majority of their lives. This makes many humans uncomfortable when dealing with gimfen adults. They only break from this in their final years, when their age rushes upon them, growing wrinkles and spots, aging decades in days. Most gimfen have difficulty growing facial hair, but that doesn't stop them from trying: a flamboyant moustache or goatee may be the work of decades and is seen as a major accomplishment.

Mentality: A gimfen always follows one of two paths: nature or technology, with technology being by far the most common. Their appreciation of it, however, is somewhat hampered by a profound lack of imagination. Gimfen innovators are rare: most only have the capacity to refine and improve existing designs. Whether this is due to a psychological barrier or simply to the fact that gimfen have a very eclectic attention span that does not support lengthy rumination is uncertain.

But despite favoring one approach or the other, gimfen are the first to try anything. They are naturally inquisitive, but this often gets them into trouble. Despite being great liars, an attribute the other fae dislike, gimfen share with the other fae a propensity for naiveté. They believe everything is safe and everyone is honest unless proven otherwise. One prevalent vocation is the thief, as gimfen look naturally innocent and inconspicuous (and are known to let their enthusiasm for baubles get the better of legal constraints, usually without malice; when confronted, a gimfen kleptomaniac will usually express surprise at their thoughtlessness and promptly return the stolen goods with a smile),

All gimfen leave their village at some point in their lives but seldom make roots. They leave for a variety of reasons including adventuring or the acquisition of treasure, fame, or technology (which for many *is* treasure). For them, adventuring is more of a career than an opportunity. Gimfen are curious, inquisitive, and extremely impulsive. They love to see the world and often feel other cultures should be gifted with the odd knowledge they alone possess. Gimfen come close to developing addictive personalities. They are happy to try new things, especially in regards to dance and food. Their unending curiosity makes them open to anything.

History: The gimfen's strange deviation from the fae norm with regard to technology, once thought to be a production of corruption from Ixindar, was later accepted by the other fae as another attribute of a later branch in the fae tree. It is not very well understood even now, but it has paid its dividends. After the return of magic, the first bastions were barely more than a few buildings. They grew slowly under constant attack from the outside. A few collapsed or turned to magic, abandoning the old ways of science. Others remained stubborn and fought against the enchantment. Such was the case with the eastern Canam city of York, under barrage from dragons and pagus. The bastion turned to a nearby growing civilization of gimfen for assistance. The gimfen were welcomed into the libraries to learn everything they could about human technology, sciences of the body, machine, and atom. With the help of the resourceful and inventive gimfen, York was able to defend itself against predators, and their expansion became reinvigorated. Despite their invaluability, this agreement with an echan people was unofficial and kept secret; the gimfen were not allowed to live within the population or enter through the main gates. After their usefulness expired, the gimfen returned to their homes leaving only a few behind in the city for maintenance. Thankfully, they did not mind being ostracized, and got a more than fair exchange for their labors: they now held the secrets of magnetism, electricity, and internal combustion – advances they would not have discovered on their own. The neighboring gimfen town, Gnimfall, accepted back its pilgrims and the nation flourished.

Despite lacking the spark of genius necessary for true innovation, gimfen knew one thing mankind didn't: how to insulate technology from magic. Although not perfect by any means, this clumsy procedure could help certain machinery operate without the constant fear of disruption. The gimfen combined what they discovered with what they already knew and within a century the landscape of gimfen communities changed. Where once there were tiny shops and garages surrounded by farmlands, now the villages were dominated by grind towers—oddities of mutated technology. They hold few people, designed primarily for defense, sound baffling, and temperature maintenance for underground factories. Gnimfall, the largest collection of towers, is not an open-air city, but hundreds of levels stretching more than a mile underground. The levels are a mixed lot of housing, factories, and processing plants so jumbled and seemingly disorganized that tourists often get lost without a guide. Grind towers now dot the globe, marking the presence of gimfen communities.

Culture: The gimfen desire to pursue technology in an age where machinery didn't work reliably turned into a fixation. Many of them obsessed about discovering a way to allow machinery to operate in a realm of magic. The gimfen eventually turned out numerous masterful technicians, engineers, alchemists, and inventors, though nearly always refining existing accomplishments rather than pioneering new ones. Where laudenians pioneered totem magic and narros the forging of magical items, gimfen took pride in alchemy, stumbling into potion brewing soon after. Their magpie-like fascination with new and shiny things often causes them to be labeled thieves and vagabonds, though some channel this characteristic into dungeon delving. An alternative approach is the techan enthusiast, walking around with a modified human firearm she can hold and fire safely. When brandishing such a trophy, a gimfen is no longer unassuming. There have even been gimfen spotted sporting a heavily insulated plasma rifles on their backs. What they lack are spell casters – not because they are incapable, but because for most the principles

of magic simply aren't interesting (and get in the way of the study of mechanism).

Gimfen are never content simply to observe the world, but believe it can always be improved. Even the most sedentary pursue constructive hobbies such as basic carpentry and metalwork, while others found a happy medium with minor gadgets and tools. Many a gimfen's home is adorned with never-used inventions. They have a flare for fine food, good tobacco, and comfortable clothes. Gimfen love dance from every culture but have never developed one of their own. Because of their quickness to adopt other cultures, anything goes when it comes to their attire and whatever else they do to their bodies. Gimfen enjoy their sense of humor as well as a desire to possess shiny objects. Their connection with nature has largely fallen by the wayside in favor of the new knowledge from man and their obsessive fascination with human machinery.

Not all have embraced the way of technology, preferring to keep a balance between nature and machine. Gimfen communities like Salvabrooke are laid back, agrarian places, possessing little technology beyond that known in the immediately pre-industrial era of humanity's lost history. Currently there are more than three million gimfen in various villages and colonies about the world.

Religion: Most of gimfen worship "Mecha," which they believe allows them and only them to operate machinery in the presence of magic (the fact that other fae who turn to the worship of Mecha in the hopes of obtaining the same grace do not lose their toxic effect on machinery is explained as them 'not doing it right'). Mecha's symbol of faith lies in the gimfen's tools, which he prays to every morning. They hold that Mecha, the Machine God, is responsible for all the devices the gimfen make.

Relations: Gimfen get along with the narros and damaskans, but their relations with other fae have strained since they have so often turned away from their roots. Gimfen often welcome humans, especially ones with a new toy.

Names: Gimfen have no language of their own. In the old world, they spoke damaskan; in the new, they are just as likely to speak English as a first language. Like the damaskans, gimfen adopt a human first name either at birth or when leaving an all-fae community, but – unlike the damaskans – they intentionally spell these names idiosyncratically, and think nothing of gender-bending names or adopting a human surname as a given name and vice versa. They also change their names every century or so. Family lineage means nothing to them. Because of this constant variation, some outside critics grow concerned with potential gimfen inbreeding. Gimfen never seem to worry about it. Their names sometimes reflect the cultures they integrate in, adopting narros and or human titles. They also frequently, but not always, use alliterations.

Examples: Glynn Glengarrie, Kimma Kutaming, Malachi Boomfellow, Maris Nippentuck, Roowyn Attakiss, Xris Jiggadaxion

GIMFEN SUMMARY

As a Gimfen, you can…

…innately overcome many of the complications surrounding disruption, sometimes before they have a chance to affect the device, or use your familiarity with mechanism to create innumerable useful devices or exploit flaws in machines.

…navigate underground, in cramped spaces or within heavily mechanized areas.

…use your open, honest face and distinctly un-fae -like ability to tell baldfaced lies to get the better of the other party, or simply talk their ears off.

…attack enemies when and from where they least expect it – often from underneath, and using weapons that nobody would expect to see in the echan landscape: you are also surprisingly handy with your fists, feet, and in a pinch, forehead.

LAUDENIAN

The Ancient Sky Dwellers

No railing separated the platform from the clouds below, despite the thousands of feet to the ground. Only a narrow path, scarcely wide enough for one to put two feet together, connected it to the tower behind. Yet Hassanan walked along it steadily, gliding from foot to foot so gracefully that he hardly seemed to take a single step. The clouds beneath him roiled in the mountain wind, yet not a flutter disturbed his flowing robes or a single strand of his long hair. He reached the platform and raised his long, spindly hand to the crystal staff that sat upon a plinth at its center. With his other hand, he made a gesture, and the pale, transparent image of a laudenian woman with a pinched face appeared in the air.

"You are certain of this?" the illusion said.

"Completely," said Hassanan. "This experiment will conclude my research."

The female wrinkled her nose. "But, such a noisome creature…"

The magos slowly shook his head. "Necessary, my friend. But fear not, I shall not let it touch me." From within his sleeve, he took a small transparent cube and tossed it across the plinth, where it hung in the air, turning gently. He made a gesture across the staff, and the cube seemed to fold itself inside out. From the distortion of space emerged a very large, confused and angry skegg, which had been minding its own business torturing a caravaneer when this weird silvery thing had come down and stuffed it into a tiny box. Now released, its eyes alighted on the laudenian, and it growled and went for his neck. Without seeming to move, however, the magos sidestepped the fuming beast, extended a finger, and spoke a single word. The skegg froze, eyes wide, and in an instant was transformed into a statue of pure crystal. "Hypothesis confirmed," the magos said, rubbing his cheek. "Ever to earth they do return."

Of all the fae, a laudenian would be the most pompous. Laudenians, like most of their cousins, believe they are the true descendants of the original fae. The difference

is that they might actually be right. Some claim their embracing of the sky made them immune to the physical changes brought on by interacting with the Earth. Before the First Hammer, most laudenians lived in a floating city no one could locate unless the laudenians wished it to be found. After their return after the Second Hammer, the city reemerged, then promptly vanished once again. Everyone aware of its existence knows the city floats around the Nankani Mountains, but steers clear of the sparsely inhabited lowland passes in favor of the virtually impassible high rocks. The city often remains rooted next to a mountain for years, then seemingly at random it uproots and drifts elsewhere. Since returning to Earth, the laudenians have retaken the skies, rebuilding a vast network of floating keeps shrouded in the clouds.

Laudenians are the best species because they are the oldest fae and the most proud. The wisest of them have their names etched in books in every library of every other fae species. Laudenians forged the first magical items, pioneered the use of totems and the language of dragons, and built an empire in the sky to look upon others below. They are arrogant and belief themselves always to be right…but that's because they usually are.

Average Height: 5'10" – 6'7"
Average Weight: 40-55 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 150 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: Unknown (10,000 years?)

LAUDENIAN ASPECTS

Laudenian aspects usually relate to their lineage, either within laudenian society or within the greater fae species. Give particular consideration to what could have possibly induced you to leave the lofty sky-cities in favor of the surface world's dross.

Sample Aspects: ***More Things in Heaven and Earth; Seeking My Mother's Lost Sword; Skyborn Bladedancer***

Sample Benefits: Leaping, falling, and balancing; performing ritual magic; recalling personal and family history and legend; swordfighting; intimidating lesser beings.

Sample Drawbacks: Antisociability and ignorance or disdain of terrestrial etiquette; difficulty in keeping footing in high winds; pride over common sense; unwillingness to act hastily.

LAUDENIAN STUNTS

Cloud Body: Aspects related to balance, falling, up to 10 feet of elevation, or intervening uneven surfaces (liquid or solid) are not obstacles to your movement.

Lineage Blade Style: Whenever you create an advantage related to adopting your ancestral sword style, you can make one overcome check per turn related to swordfighting as part of another action as long as the advantage remains in play.

Slide Waltz: When an enemy in the same zone makes a melee attack against you, you can spend a fate point to negate the attack and gain a boost which can only be used on a melee attack against that enemy.

Physical Traits: The more a fae species is connected to the earth, the more animalistic they become: chaparrans and narros are all on average stronger and sturdier, their later branches even more robust. Laudenians, by contrast, are almost impossibly slender and light-bodied, with subtly alien body proportions. They tower over all other fae and even most humans. They have olive to dark skin and often long and flowing dark hair. Their ears are smaller than a chaparrans, tapering quickly to a point. Their eyes, usually dark brown and grey, always reflect a glint of light as if a candle always hangs suspended over their eyes. Braided hair is common but tattoos and piercings are not.

Most fae are hollow-boned, but in the case of the laudenians, they have so little skeletal mass that were it not for the support of magic, they would be crushed by the weight of their own flesh. Some mysterious internal process fills the pockets in their bones with a lighter-than-air substance, which keeps them light on their feet and makes them capable of performing extraordinary leaps and easily sustaining falls that would kill a human and severely injure another fae. Unfortunately, this same trait also makes them vulnerable to forceful pushes and high winds, which can easily knock them out of place. Thankfully, their unearthly grace allows them to compensate for this, and like a cat, their pride will not permit them to look undignified in the process. Their senses are adapted in the opposite way from the common expectation of fae: while their hearing is acute (out of necessity, since sound carries far less well in thinner air), instead of superior vision in the dark, their eyes can see slightly into the ultraviolet spectrum, and thanks to a nictating membrane that both filters out harmful rays and guards against dust and dryness, laudenians need neither squint or shy away from a blinding glare, nor even blink. Their unyielding stares can be as disconcerting to outsiders as their strangely elongated frames.

There is a claim that no laudenian has ever died of old age. Some have been rumored to have lived for 15,000 years or more, though with a mere five centuries since the gate's reopening, it is impossible to verify this. They reach adulthood around 150 years and don't show any discernible growth for another 1,000. No laudenian has ever looked over 50. Like all fae, laudenians are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Mentality: Laudenians are known to be extremely arrogant. They are the longest-lived echan species outside of dragons and most of the elders date back to before the gate exodus. Their egotism refused to die when they lacked corporeal forms and only amplified when returned to the world. Laudenians consider themselves superior and often patronize those unlike them. They are often revered by other fae races, a fact a laudenian is sure to bring up. They command respect and believe themselves correct in every assumption. Laudenians are known to have the most powerful spellcasters of all fae. Because of their intimate familiarity with magic, laudenians are less vulnerable to phantasms, illusions, and other mind-altering spells than most. Familiarity does not exactly breed contempt, but it takes some doing to impress them.

Laudenians dislike nature. They have no problems wearing metal armor and wielding forged weapons, but they abhor the natural world and have lost their empathy for it. The only reason why they have been able to survive unchanged these thousands of years is by fleeing to the sky, since the magic of Attricana reflects off the Earth. Even essential natural resources are harvested for them by autonomous magic constructs, so a true laudenian never needs set foot on the corruptive ground. To meet a laudenian outside of the city is practically unheard of and few ever leave their home except under orders, on an extremely important quest that requires their undivided attention; only the rarest of the rare wish to see the world for themselves. Such a laudenian would be the only one in a group and probably would not have seen another of his kind in years. There would most assuredly be a reason, even if they withhold it from their companions, why this laudenian has taken the risk of walking on the soil. A laudenian who has gone adventuring could be more humble than her parents, whom most likely still live in the sky, but this would not mean they are not still arrogant.

History: Laudenians commit to their isolated, airborne life because of a fear of degradation. If they truly were the first branch from the original fae, then they have watched helplessly as their children turned into the chaparrans, narros and damaskans. This might not have alarmed them initially beyond the observation that the laudenians themselves were growing fewer. Then the chaparrans started to beget deviations, and then the narros. Damaskans followed shortly behind and with each branch, the emergent species acted more feral, more uncivilized then their ancestors. Fearing a fate similar to the original fae, the laudenians fled to the

sky, convinced the magical influence stemmed from the fae's interaction with the Earth. Their theory may have had some merit, for the dwindling of the laudenian population slowed—but did not stop completely.

Today, laudenians number less than 25,000, though some suspect this number is much lower, closer to 5,000. Despite near immortality, their population continues to fall. This is largely the product of the whispering influence of magic from which they cannot escape, resulting in children of lesser quality in their eyes. Laudenians reproduce extremely rarely and their eventual fate appears fixed, ultimately leaving a vast, sprawling empire of empty and forgotten castles in the air. Laudenians rarely mate with non-laudenians, and they strictly forbid bonding with humans under penalty of expulsion from the sky.

Culture: Laudenians wear long robes of white or green terminating just above the ankle. They never walk around in bare feet and cannot stand being immersed in water. Since they never perspire, the concept of washing only becomes necessity when dirtied from earth-walking. They enjoy the music of strings and their dance often involves slow, subtle movements. Their rituals, like everything involved in their culture, take several days to complete. One festival, the Kenaz Sky, occurs once every 500 years, lasting six months.

They almost never wear armor, and when they do it is almost always light chainmail constructed out of magically-infused materials – they find heavier armor unsufferably burdensome. The weapon of choice for nearly all laudenians is the longsword or rapier, and although they do not have the same martial traditions as the narros, laudenian philosophy holds the blade and the wielder to be one. Swords themselves do not run in families due to their wielders' long lives even compared to other fae, but each lineage has their own style which is never taught to outsiders.

As part of their claim to be the most ancient fae, the laudenians believe that they pioneered the modern study of magic, the use of Pleroma to encode spells, and the construction of totems to hold those spells. Their approach to the practice of magic reflects this attitude. While earthbound mages favor individual style and regard the method of magic to be largely a matter of personal preference, laudenians are very formulaic. They treat magic the same way that techan humans treat the principles of science, and for much the same reason: their entire culture is dependent on it, and most laudenians know at least the basics of magic even if they do not practice it themselves. A laudenian skykeep is almost indistinguishable on the surface from the more advanced bastions. The old adage that any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology is plainly at work in Laudenia, with magical constructs and enchanted barges taking the place of robots and vehicles, phantasm spells for communication and entertainment, and spell-coded items fulfilling day-to-day conveniences even for the non-magically adept; unfortunately, most of these devices do not work outside of the magical field of the aerial realm.

Religion: The laudenians worship a god of the ancient fae, Berufu, whom they believe lives not beyond the gate, but in the shadow realm where the universe was formed. Attricana to them is a source of power but is neither a divine entity nor the gateway to god's domain.

The few laudenians that ever die are placed in a gargantuan mausoleum at the base of their city. All laudenians, even the ones that perish far away, always wish their bodies returned to their home. Their faith dictates that is the only way they may find peace.

Relations: Most people have never seen a laudenian and could not describe one if asked. Laudenians commonly prohibit outsiders from entering their keeps. Their land is rich in natural resources and they use these riches to trade with the few other nations they find agreeable, Fargon being the chief receipient of their largesse. Few non-fae ever see these floating keeps. Their single city appears on the surface to be one of technology, but underneath the shine of the walls flows pure magic. Laudenia is a dream to many that swore they saw it.

Names: Laudenians refuse to adopt human names. Thankfully, their fae names are much easier to pronounce than a chaparran's or damaskan's would be, being softly sibilant and roll quite easily with the slightest effort, like all the words in their language. Instead of having a family name, laudenians list a roll of their ancestors, every generation adding a name. Most laudenians only mention one or two generations, but fanatics to laudenian heritage will often insist on announcing themselves tracking back five or six generations. The greatest elders, of course, do not have even five or six generations to trace back: if a laudenian names three generations of ancestors and proclaims quietly 'That is all,' it would be best to take them very, very seriously. The one bizarre aspect with laudenian names is that every name in a given lineage has exactly the same number of syllables. Most despise foreigners shortening them, though quite easy to do so.

Example Names: Brassana Halcyos, Massinan Lasseriss, Milanus Serani Lissero Renessan, Nazarini Kolbessito Thassatera Engiraini, Sirenus Fellerose, Sulei Kandoss Mentar

LAUDENIAN SUMMARY

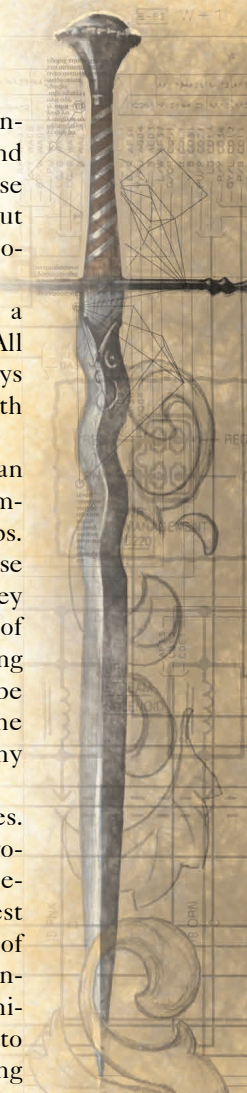
As a Laudenian, you can…

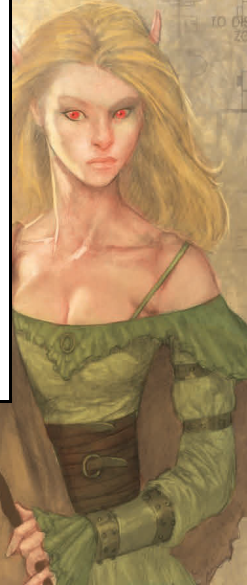
…use your knowledge of magic lore, even if you are no magos yourself: if you use magic, regardless of your totem or tradition, you favor spells of air that aid your maneuverability and phantasms that can deceive and discombobulate your opponents.

…make falls and leaps trifling considerations with your feather-light physique and balance.

…wield staff or sword as extensions of your body: magic is as natural to you as breathing, and the ancient sword arts are passed down in your family as a sacred trust.

…easily resist illusions and charms due to your familiarity with them.





NARROS

Honorable Warrior Folk of the Mountains

"Strike! Up! Hold! Strike! Low! Hold! Middle! Strike!" The drillmaster called the moves, and the students followed them, each warrior moving as one. Each stood balanced on one leg atop a small, sharp pyramid, and periodically the senior students would pass along the line, striking the examinees' shins with heavy wooden rods. Not one wavered, nor even flinched. But that was only to be expected. This was not a test of the students' dedication, or even of their technique. The ravnorra's eyes narrowed as she passed down the line. At last she came to one of the students, to the untrained eye seemingly no different from any other.

"You!" she declared. "Step out of line!" The young narros obeyed without hesitation. "Are you left- or right-handed?" she demanded.

"Neither, Tomannik-mir," the student replied, "but I am accustomed to write with my left hand." The instructor nodded to one of the seniors.

"Bind his left hand behind his back." She reached out her own hand and another of the older students placed her longspear in it. "Defend yourself," she said simply, raising the spear to the ready.

Despite ignorant stereotyping claiming them all to be squat, long-nosed dirty miners, narros don't really resemble the fantasy creature they're often compared to. While the majority live underground, they are not singular in their purpose of greedily digging for riches in the Earth. In fact, narros are among the most selfless of all fae, taking on the role as protectors for all their allies. Narros are well and beyond the best species as there is no subtlety behind them. They scoff adversity and seldom run from a fight. They are the strongest and take pride that the entire fae species would have been wiped out long ago if it weren't for them. They are soldiers from birth. In the end, why would anyone want to be anything but the greatest warriors of legend?

Average Height: 4'0" – 4'9"
Average Weight: 195-395 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 75 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 1,000 years

NARROS ASPECTS

Narros aspects usually relate to the honor of their clan, their personal discipline, or the mastery of their chosen weapon. Give especial thought to your greatest triumph and your greatest shame.

Sample Aspects: ***Fargon Temple Climber; I Must Avenge My Brother; Master of the Kirrak-Mazos Style***

Sample Benefits: Maintaining composure on the battlefield; giving extra effort to a focused task; physical exertion; seeing in the dark.

Sample Drawbacks: Antipathy to water; maintaining focus on a task at the expense of all else; obsession in the face of reason; cannot ignore a slight against honor.

NARROS STUNTS

Final Word: If you are taken out of a conflict, you can spend a fate point to take one final action before you suffer the consequences of being taken out. You can use your highest vocation for this final action, regardless of its usual function.

Stone Blood (requires Tireless): While you have at least one consequence, you can mark two stress boxes per attack instead of one.

Tireless: You gain an additional stress box. If you are already at 4 boxes, you gain an additional minor consequence slot instead (even if you already have one). You can choose this stunt more than once.

Physical Traits: Narros do not possess the heavy trunk torso many would expect though they are still much stronger than other similar bipeds (this is simply not immediately obvious). They are slower and less agile then their cousin races, but their every movement is made with utmost precision. Where all other fae have hollow bones, the narros claim their skeletons' marrow is solid iron. The proof is in their unbreakable physiques and shockingly heavy frames. Narros hate the water and are all tremendously bad swimmers, due to their size-to-weight ratio. A narros will avoid any body of water where he cannot keep his feet on the bottom and still breathe.

Narros' silvery skin reflects a glitter in sunlight. Their skin tones range usually between peach and pale white. Their ears are long but remain flush to their heads. Their eyes, seemingly always squinting, can open extremely wide and their irises loom large in their sockets, though their colors, dull browns and matted grays, don't shine even in the brightest light. Narros eyes can adapt between light and dark vision in an instant, and their vision extends far into the infrared spectrum, allowing them to see almost perfectly even in total darkness.

Narros insist on a high degree of personal grooming: thankfully they don't sweat, so their aversion to water is no obstacle in this regard. Males despise painting their bodies in any way but women often do: the same abhorrence does not apply to tattooing, but this is still a rare practice. Body piercing is unknown among them. Unlike their stereotyped equivalents, narros have a general aversion to body hair. Males sport tight trimmed beards, patterned sideburns or short braids when they grow them; the only moustaches considered fashionable are thin side-whiskers. Their hair is often pulled back to a tail, loose strands tightly controlled. Some narros males shave themselves completely bald. Unlike the legends they inspired, female narros neither grow facial hair nor look overtly masculine. It is only when narros dress for war that males and females become indistinguishable. Narros age proportionately to humans at an approximately 12:1 ratio. Like all fae, narros are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Mentality: A narros is not just some loud fighter with an axe. They can be anything they choose and commit themselves 100% to that duty, often ignoring other concerns. They are fanatical about any crusade they are on. A narros would be the first to awake in the

morning to tackle the day's goals. They will ignore fleeting pleasures like smoking and sex when committed a quest. When indentured to a lord or sworn to a friend or party, a narros will risk everything including his own life to protect them. This focused spirit is admirable but can sometimes make a narros a real drag at parties – unless they have decreed that it is now time to enjoy themselves.

The narros believe in hard work and hard play. It is common for a narros to work past the point of exhaustion during the day, party and drink until past midnight, sleep insufficient hours, and start everything again the following dawn, apparently none the worse for wear. They are extremely regimented in whatever direction they take in life. Mages own more books. Priests pray longer. Soldiers train much more fiercely. They are focused in their view – some human would-be wags claim that the name 'narros' is synonymous with their mindset.

Personal and family honor is very important to all narros, although their definition of it is a trifle unusual: a person's honor is defined by how thoroughly she dedicates herself to her task, and a family's honor is wrapped up in how thoroughly they have taught their scions to do this. A narros warrior's greatest shame is to lose his liege lord on the battlefield, for this means that

he has failed to perform the duty that should have been utmost in his mind, and he will likely never be able to find another lord with such stained honor. Warriors shamed in this way traditionally foreswear their family names and depart from narros society, in order to prevent their dishonor from reflecting upon the clan.

History: Narros do not keep historical records in the same sense that damaskans and humans do. They view life and time as cyclical rather than linear, and thus their histories record patterns rather than events. They mark time the same as anyone else, but their basic unit of historical import is not the year but the segment, a broad term which measures the zeitgeist of the time (much as humans measure 'decades,' without as many artificial limitations). While more historically-minded fae find this very useful for tracking trends, it is very inconvenient for those who want something more specific. The narros, alas, are not interested in accommodating such folk.

The narros estimate more than seven million of their kind walk the Earth. Narros live almost exclusively in Canam and Southam and rarely appear anywhere else. Their biggest concentration lies at Fargon in the uttermost north, with another collection in the western mountains of Southam, where the people often clash with the tenenbri over an ancient religious dispute: a smaller colony of about a hundred thousand resides in the Finer Fire Pits in Canam's midwestern region. By sacred law, narros caves never burrow beyond 1.25 miles below sea level. Their mines are like a labyrinth, covering hundreds of square miles. Part of their belief system demands that they climb the highest mountain in their city (every narros city is built around and/or within a mountain) every year to reaffirm their confidence that the sun remains above.

Culture: The narros are first and foremost a warrior people, and the disciplines of war are always utmost in their minds. Even when outnumbered, narros often win in open combat. They are the greatest soldiers of the fae, with only the pagus threatening the claim. Almost every narros citizen knows how to use a weapon. Soldiers enforce a strict discipline in the art of war, a reflection of the culture as a whole. There is a martial skill attached to every facet of their lives. The same techniques and movements used in warfare are duplicated in the mines, planned and coordinated with precision.

Narros favor medium to heavy armor, if they wear armor at all. Those from Fargon prefer heavy steel lamellar and crested helmets superficially similar to those of the ancient Japanese samurai, but they tend to prefer heavier weapons as a rule; though every narros has a particular favorite, spiked maces, hooked halberds, and double swords are in overwhelming evidence in narros armies. Rare is the narros mage whose totem is not the weapon, and most of those few instead favor the shield.

Narros love the horn and drums and their battle marches move to the sound of heavy bass from trumpets and skins louder than the footfalls of a thousand feet. Narros don't dance – they don't lack for physical coordination, but the wild abandon of dancing runs contrary to their cultural precision and discipline. Narros always uphold their discipline, even (or especially) on their own or outside of their community. A few leave because of dishonor encountered at home, departing on quests to redeem themselves. Those who lost their community or their lord often travel alone across the world as masterless ronin. All narros adventurers maintain an utter dedication to their chosen path, even without a crusade or cause in their hearts.

Religion: The few narros holy men worship an idolless god referred to as Oaken – the spirit of Earth. Oaken lives deep underground at the core of the planet. The narros dogma explains that Oaken, originally a fragment of a much larger being, drifted into the Solar System and the Earth formed around him. To them, the white gate created the fae, but Oaken provided them with a shape and a world. Narros believe their power comes from below, not above, which may explain why most narros hate to fly despite having no fear of high places. The root of their abhorrence for the tenenbri leads from a belief that their cousins dug too far and suffered Oaken's punishment. In the narros view, the tenenbri never got the message. Like man, most narros bury their dead.

Relations: Because of their polar opposite concepts of an appropriate attention span, the narros and gimfen don't always get along. They are otherwise at least tolerant of most other fae, and particularly of humans – indeed, the narros boast the only open trading agreement between a fae kingdom and a techan bastion. However, they overwhelmingly despise the tenenbri. The schism between the two races is rarely mentioned – its roots stem from a religious dispute, a divergence of dogma that can be tracked back thousands of years in the pre-Hammer age. Some have accused the narros of holding grudges far longer than socially acceptable. Still, this discord is a poor rubbing of the hatred the narros feel for the pagus. Not even the ogres, a lower fae branch from the narros, can match the loathing felt to the corrupted fae of Ixindar. Being the primary military force for all good and honorable fae, the narros have clashed with pagus more often than other races. A narros need not require a reason to fight them and the opportunity to do so would be reason enough to join a quest.

Names: Unlike gimfen and damaskans, who view the family as secondary to the individual, narros cherish their family names more than their given ones. They place their family names first when writing them down and announcing themselves in public. Because narros families are vast, many outsiders believe narros are not original with their names. Narros refer to each other by their given names only in private or when asked: using a person's given name without their permission is considered at best a breach of etiquette, at worst a deadly insult. Married couples call themselves by their given names in their homes. Friends and family members often refer to each other by the additional titles *Kar* (Father/Ruler), *Mir* (Mother/Mistress), *Lan* (Son, first born), *Sen* (Son, second born or later), *Jes* (Daughter) or the generic titles *Nor* (senior or social superior), *Kin*

(male equal), *Mon* (female equal), and *Dan* (junior or social inferior), appended to the end of whichever name is used. The given names are usually shorter than their family titles, thus making their full names somewhat front-heavy.

Example Names: Ballakoya Kasey, Kranerose Jibbs, Ragerrick Griff, Sollomas Karan, Sorannik Mogh, Ungnarona Mina

NARROS SUMMARY

As a Narros, you can…

…resist fatigue and attempts to move you against your will, and throw aside fear and doubt to keep going in the face of any adversity.

…treat the landscape as your ally: you are a creature of the cold mountain peaks and the fiery deep forges, equally at home both above and below ground, and have mastered using every piece of the environment against your foes.

…wield practically anything as a weapon and defend your body with strong armor and unparalleled skill in the martial arts.

PAGUS

The Corrupted Ones

Murok always sat by himself, away from the fire. We assumed it was because he wanted to spare the rest of us the sight of his ugly mug, but one day I plucked up the courage and went to ask him why, as he sat in the dark and the cold sharpening his notched blade.

"Because I don't want to look at your ugly mugs," he told me, and I went away satisfied.

The pagus emerged over a single night during the age of Terros—the era before man when fae and dragon reigned unopposed. When the black gate of Ixindar drifted over the sky on its arrival, the whisper of Mengus corrupted a million fae to its cause. They abandoned their families and friends. Most of these tainted creatures were chaparran, though no line was left unspoiled. They vanished on an unspoken pilgrimage to the land where Ixindar finally settled. Loved ones that followed who had not heard the whisper were killed by their own corrupted families or cursed themselves. When finally emerging in their initial raids against their ancestors centuries later, the fae no longer resembled the peoples they escaped from. They had grown in muscle. They had lost their hair. Their skin had grown pale. They looked nearly identical to each other and shared a single disposition, one single desire--to eliminate anything not blessed by Ixindar.

Pagus are the best species to play as they are committed and single-minded warmongers. There is no strategy when dealing with a pagus. You point him in a direction, let him go, and keep your distance.

Average Height: 6'3" – 6'7"
Average Weight: 200-250 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 9 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 40 years

PAGUS ASPECTS

A pagus' racial aspect should relate to their connection, or lack thereof, to Ixindar. Consider whether you are still bound to the black gate or you are free, and if so, how you became that way and what your freedom means to you.

Sample Aspects: ***Creature of War; I Am Not Like Them; Wanderer With a Death Wish***

Sample Benefits: Being violent.

Sample Drawbacks: Being violent.

PAGUS STUNTS

Focused Aggression: You gain a free invocation of each physical consequence you take in a conflict.

Steadfast (requires Focused Aggression): You can spend a fate point to prevent one of your conseqences from being able to be invoked by anyone but you until the end of the encounter.

Trained from Birth: You reduce all incoming physical damage by 1 while wearing armor (minimum 1).

Physical Traits: Pagus are taller than most men, looming over all other fae save laudenians. Pagus have pale, cracked skin marked with raised veins and bruises from rapid aging. The only recognizable feature from the old fae are their ears—still pointed, but short and flush to their heads. Although pagus don't appear "stretched" like laudenians, they still look thin given their height. They are muscular but not well built like the shorter narros. This is deceptive, as the pagus are among the strongest races. The arms of a pagus dangle nearly to his knees. Pagus are completely hairless, and there is no sexual dimorphism, with females as strong and as violent as the males. Like all fae, pagus are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Unlike all other fae, however, pagus are by default bound to the gate of Ixindar, and thus do not disrupt technology by their mere existence. Even free pagus are not inherently bound to Attricana, although they may choose to align their soul to it by associating themselves with magic. Few do, however – even those pagus who manage to avoid an early death in battle half a life expectancy barely two-thirds that of a human, and the practice of magic takes far too much time and patience for such folk.

Pagus have strong but animalistic senses of smell, hearing, and sight, but they do not process them separately as most creatures do; instead, all perceptions are fed directly into the centers of the pagus' brain that control their instincts. This strange synthaesia allows pagus to seem to be able to see in perfect darkness, detect even magically silenced enemies behind them, and track by scent creatures that normally leave no trail. It is not possible for them to relay this information to others, however, as they are incapable of processing it intellectually: all they can do is react to the stimulus.

Mentality: A little known fact about the pagus is

that Ixindar's control is lessened the further one travels from Ixindar. Mengus strengthens its influence by channeling the gate's syncretic power through the will of its loyal disciples, the shemjaza. Separated from that influence, it falls under corrupted dragons to enforce the will of syntropy, despite not always following their avatar's will. Without the control of these authorities, pagus act independently, though still bound by a compulsion for violence and a brutal culture that reflects that propensity. This is not helped by the tendency of pagus to degenerate into madness as they grow old (if they survive that long). Only a noteworthy few maintain their sanity.

History: When the black gate was unearthed again at the beginning of the new age, the pagus were the first to emerge, even before the whisper of Mengus could have tainted the nearby humans as well. Five centuries later, the pagus number in the tens of millions with concentrations on every continent. In Canam, the vast majority of pagus currently live in the landlocked region of Apocrypha. As creatures of syntropy, they find the overwhelming chaos of nature distasteful and generally avoid mountains and large bodies of water. This has kept them sealed in this region for centuries. Pagus that are found outside this are often raiding bands free from the will of Ixindar. They may also be expeditions seeking a safe route from Apocrypha. The enemies of pagus seldom ask for details. It is unknown how many civilized pagus have lost their opportunity to develop because of this. Pagus have no history worth speaking of, their lives being uniformly nasty, brutish, and short.

Culture: Most travelers upon encountering roaming pagus in Canam immediately assume an impending bloody encounter. This is a proper and entirely warranted assumption. The number of enlightened and peaceful pagus is miniscule, and they are seldom seen wandering on open roads. Every fae nation has sworn to their destruction and will not stop to consider whether the target of their ire be redeemed, although those who travel with companions of the 'civilized' fae are usually given the benefit of the doubt. While non-fae like humans and kodiaks don't always reflect this racial hatred, they all know to beware of the pagus. To see one is to assume combat; to see more is a portent to invasion.

The singular pagus elders gain an enlightened view of the role pagus are forced fill in this world. Their wisdom and strength of personality is such that younger pagus around them will bind themselves without thinking to any action the elder commands. Unfortunately, this usually entails the same bloody conflict forced upon them from demons and dragons. Even more uncommon are the elder pagus that preach a rejection of the ideals imposed by their creator and controllers. These pagus attempt an unpretentious life filled with hunting, revelry, and reproduction. They avoid the wars demanded by others, Regrettably, these pagus are often still called into conflict as they must habitually defend their lands from outsiders, often their own kind.

Religion: Pagus have no concept of godhead. The pagus of Kakodomania fear and worship Mengus and the shemjaza as powerful beings much stronger than themselves, and the same with the hordes of Apocrypha for their death dragon masters, but there is no apprehension of divinity in this adoration, merely the deference of a bully for an even greater bully. Even free pagus continue this tendency, holding warleaders and the few pagus elders (usually the two are synonymous) in almost fawning esteem. A few free pagus who fall in with more open-minded fae will turn half-heartedly to the worship of Berufu, but those few pagus who become truly devoted members of a religion tend to favor human religions – usually Islam (the tenet of absolute submission before God being a comforting familiarity for them), but there have been reports of at least a few pagus *Buddhists* who, by abandoning all worldly attachment, have managed to abandon the brutality and rage that is the pagus' birthright.

Relations: A pagus joining a party has an uphill journey. Where the tilen are unjustly pigeonholed as predators, the pagus' reputation has been well earned. Kodiaks carry no inherent grudge with pagus, nor do tilen or even most humans outside of Abidan, but all other fae are more inclined to decapitate first and ask questions later. This generally prevents pagus from being encountered alone in a tavern. Once the pleasantries of introductions have passed, a pagus can be a fierce and effective (as well as loyal) contributor to a party.

Names: Pagus speak a guttural language assembled from other fae tongues. Paggin borrows heavily from narroni and chaparran into a patois mixed with the shemjaza tongue of ignotan. This language forms the basis of their names, despite that pagus are forbidden to speak pure paggin in any village controlled or influenced by Mengus. Pagus place their given names at the end and their clan names at the beginning, forming it into a single title broken by clicks and glottal stops. Outside of pagus villages, these additional names are dropped in favor of a more fearful title like Manik the Malign and Kallis the Monster.

Example Names: Alik'asti-Kross, Bagga'kes-Naga, Ghraal-Shotek, Manik'kalik-Manik, Monko'Kallis, Zakka'shoon-Kagin

PAGUS SUMMARY

As a Pagus, you can…

…smash whatever needs to be smashed regardless of what stands in your way, resisting pain and any attempt to confuse you; you can even leverage your own pain into brutal retribution.

…survive on the foulest of fare and in the harshest of environments.

…use your species' reputation to put an opponent on edge, regardless of whether the arena of battle is physical or mental.

…fight with anything you can get your hands on, and if nothing comes readily to your grip, with your bare hands themselves.

TENENBRI

Blind Zealots of the Deep Places

On the far side of the wall, Mustafarnis could feel the human construction machines shoring up the barrier. She had no doubt that she could climb it faster than the snipers atop the wall could react to her presence – they had not seen her come this far, after all, and they were accustomed to watch the forest line rather than the base of the wall – but such was not her intent. The men in Limshau had said there were secret entrances, and none could find a secret better than a tenenbri. Patiently, she traversed the wall, feeling the vibrations from the machines through her hand and training her brain to ignore them, focusing all her attention onto her feet. There! A tiny opening, barely wider than a sewer grate, but no trouble for a slim fae to slip through. She made her way unerringly through the many branching tunnels until she emerged once more into the light, her sightless eyes unblinking. She lingered in the shadows until an unobservant peasant wearing a conical straw hat wandered near the alley where she lurked, and then emerged wearing his hat and tying a strip of silk torn from his sleeve across her eyes. Taking care to deliberately stumble every few feet as she tapped along the street with her sword-cane, Mustafarnis waylaid a passing yoriki and spoke in perfect, unaccented Sinitic: "Excuse me, but can you tell me where to find David Chen's bookshop?"

Many human cultures have tales of wicked creatures that live beneath the Earth, but all of them differ drastically on the particulars. As with most elements of human mythology derived from the age of Terros, it bears only a passing resemblance to reality. The tenenbri *do* live underground, but unlike the similarly subterranean narros, they seldom return to the surface: only one of many points on which they differ from their cousins.

Tenenbri are also completely blind, having adapted to the lightless depths; the narros call this a divine curse, but the tenenbri instead point to their enhanced hearing and spatial awareness as signs of their shared god's favor. As to their alleged wickedness, that depends on whom one speaks to. No one is sure how many tenenbri there are but estimations place them between three and six million, over ninety-eight percent of which live in the mountains of Southam.

Tenenbri are the best species to play because they have a single feature that sets them apart from all others; they can see without seeing. They can feel the beating hearts of those around them. They can notice enemies while all others are helpless. They look through walls, through crowds, and through deceit. They are bizarre and graceful without the petty naiveté that so many other fae exhibit.

Average Height: 4'5" – 5'3"
Average Weight: 50-75 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 55 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 500 years

TENENBRI ASPECTS

While blindness is central to the tenenbri experience, an aspect focused on it would be unusual – it is as normal for tenenbri as not being able to see infrared radiation is for humans, although those who capitalize on other species' perception of their supposed disability would act to emphasize it. Rather, a tenenbri's views on religious dogma and species superiority are likely to be far more important to them. Think about what would have induced you to leave your insular community, and whether it was voluntary or not.

Sample Aspects: ***Itinerant Blind Swordsman; Never Been Out of the Depths; A Rare Agnostic***

Sample Benefits: Detecting hidden things; religious debates; understanding the underground; revealing liars; high-pitched screaming.

Sample Drawbacks: Arrogance and conceit; religious dogmatism; disorientated when not in direct contact with the ground or on an unstable surface; intolerance of narros.

TENENBRI STUNTS

Micro Changes in Air Density: You cannot be surprised in an encounter.

Piezo Scream: You can spend a fate point when making your natural sonic attack to also place the ***Dazed and Shaken*** aspect on the target, regardless of whether the attack succeeds.

Zatou: You gain +2 to any opposed action where your opponent would reasonably expect blindness to be a hindrance.

Physical Traits: In size, build, and general features, tenenbri are almost identical to damaskans, albeit slightly shorter. However, their entire species is blind. Their eyes are glossed over; irises are faded to near nothing, concealed under cataracts. The slightest light reflects a glint off the back of their corneas, shimmering with a white glow in direct illumination. Their deathly pale skin feels cool to the touch and tastes salty, a sign in humans of cystic fibrosis, a condition the tenenbri would all probably suffer from if magic did not suppress the gene in their body. Like all fae, tenenbri are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron. Their long ears respond to vibrations in the air, detecting movement in total darkness, and like the damaskans, their ears are prone to twitch depending on their emotional state.

Though their enhanced hearing greatly assists them, it is their connection to the ground that offers them the greatest awareness of their surroundings. As long as they are physically touching the earth with at least part of their body, they can detect even the faint tremor generated by a person's heartbeat at a distance of nearly a hundred feet. This sensitivity diminishes drastically if either they or the source of the vibration is not directly in contact with the ground; for this reason, tenenbri tend to avoid horses, flying, and boats, as their perception range drops to barely a third of normal; underwater, however, it more than doubles. Obviously tenenbri cannot read traditional writing, though they themselves use a system of writing similar to human Braille, and there are a few tenenbri whose skin is so sensitive that they can feel the slight differences in texture between inked and plain paper precisely enough to be able to read other species' books. Pleroma is an exception: its glowing, multi-dimensional words illuminate even those who cannot see.

A tenenbri's vocal cords are considerably more flexible than most other fae species, and certainly more so than humans. Most are capable of perfect mimicry of any sound, natural or unnatural, and all are capable of emitting a high-pitched, piercing shriek that causes the listener's entire body to vibrate, a technique they often use to stun enemies and prey.

Mentality: Unsurprisingly, narros and tenenbri are almost polar opposites in their mentalities. Where the narros take pride in their discipline and military might, tenenbri play life looser, letting their emotions carry them; as warriors, they employ stealth and trickery more than a daunting shield wall. Tenenbri prefer talking their way out of fights or finding a way to trick two enemies into killing each other. Their extraordinary hearing and vibration sensitivity have allowed them an impeccable awareness of people's intents. Many humans get tongue-tied when dealing with them, for while most fae are merely uncomfortably honest, tenenbri can casually identify when someone is not telling the whole truth, thanks to their natural ability to detect deception and hidden emotions in others, and are not shy about telling the world. They are astoundingly selfish most of the time, thinking only of themselves or the group they travel with. While they often go to even suicidal extremes to protect their loved ones, the same individual might callously allow someone unknown to them to perish because it simply wasn't their business.

Regardless of their natural proclivities, a tenenbri willingly sworn into a group of adventurers will seldom steal from them or betray their trust. However, a tenenbri may invite trouble with her very presence because of her exotic appearance and unnerving behavior. If not, she is likely to cause a stir the moment she starts talking: tenenbri are the most opinionated and demonstrative of all fae and have even less patience for tact and diplomacy than damaskans.

History: The tenenbri mark a point in fae history where the naiveté of free-thinking fae was stained with bloody civil conflict. Although both tenenbri and narros share some common heritage and religious beliefs, the two peoples oppose each other on many fundamental values and had already been involved in smaller ethnic clashes by the time the pagus arrived. After the War of the Fallen—the conflict between the fae and pagus—had defused from immediate fear to daily concern, the clashes between the narros and tenenbri resumed. The narros are a much older fae branch than the tenenbri, having broken directly from the laudenians, while the tenenbri devolved later from damaskans. Tenenbri are in many ways more fanatically religious than the narros and worship the same god, Oaken. However, tenenbri differ on interpretation and several fundamental beliefs, including the approach to daily rituals, the formation of culture and government, and their views of those not sharing their beliefs.

The focal-point of conflict in the previous age revolved around the ownership of the Well of Salvation—a holy monument to all that worship Oaken. The well, a smooth, naturally-formed circular pit 345 feet wide and 1.25 miles deep, was said to have been formed by Oaken to be his voice. He commanded the fae to emerge into existence from this very mouth. Naturally formed steps allowed a long and dangerous trek to the flat and featureless bottom. Only the most devout narros were allowed to make the pilgrimage to its base. The well carried a breath of cold, moist air that continuously spilled from its mouth, felt by believer and unbeliever alike that lined the perimeter. Suicide was an unfortunate common side-effect of the experience (history does not relate whether this was considered a theological problem or a sociological one). The narros, long before the tenenbri had even been formed, forged

the great surface city of Antok to serve as the haven for all religious fae that endorsed Oaken as their creator and savior. One of the basic commandments of Oaken passed by the Antok cardinals was that no fae was to dig deeper than the depth of the pit. It was this sin the tenenbri had committed, and had done so willingly and repeatedly. While the tenenbri claimed they had already embraced the darkness when this occurred, the narros contend the tenenbri lost their eyes and their desire for daylight the moment they affronted God.

The smaller conflicts that broke out over minor religious disagreements continued until a tenenbri cardinal, Nihilochrysis, founded the Enos movement—a subset of tenenbri dogma that revolved around the guilt of being cast down by Oaken for the sin of digging too deep. This differed from standard doctrine that claimed the tenenbri were a master race and are the only ones with the right to venture into God's sworn land. Thousands of followers of Enos, including Nihilochrysis, marched upon Antok on pilgrimage with the peaceful intent of praying alongside their narros cousins, but the guards of Antok, on orders from the religious hierarchy, prohibited the tenenbri's entrance. The fall of the Hammer precludes an accurate account

of history, but what is known is that this refusal sparked a crusade, despite the peaceful intent of the original pilgrims. When the battles had ceased, the tenenbri were in control of Antok, and some say that they survived the Hammer's fall not by passing through Attricana but by hiding within the Well. By some miracle, the Well also reemerged into the new era, and the tenenbri and narros of Southam are now locked in a bitter struggle over the possession of the holy city of Antok.

Culture: Everything about tenenbri culture is a consequence of them losing their sight. The tenenbri are far and away the loudest fae one will ever encounter on any continent. Keeping one's voice low is considered impolite in their society, and whispering is downright rude; any sort of hand gesture, though not difficult for a tenenbri to perceive thanks to their ability to feel air currents, is seen as a deliberate snub. They stamp their feet when they walk (as long as they are not trying to sneak up on an enemy) and are constantly performing tiny non-vocal sounds, such as snapping fingers, clicking tongues, or whistling through their teeth even when not speaking; they also indicate that they are still listening through a variety of non-articulate vocalizations, sometimes overlapping with their interlocutor. Additionally, tenenbri don't rate physically attractiveness the same as other races with normal vision. Perfect bodies with perfect skin are boring to them. They find imperfections and physical flaws attractive, especially if they are natural or from accidental injury. Tattoos are worthless to them. Scars from combat or labor, missing digits, or simply hereditary features that are different from the norm are naturally attractive, an aspect the religious elite have been trying to train their people to reject. Since there are few humans in Southam and the majority of non-tenenbri races are in open war, it's an easy law to enforce.

Even though the tenenbri have no vision to speak of, they still maintain a surprisingly high level of personal grooming. Their clothing is rarely overtly ostentatious, as their aesthetic sense is attuned to texture rather than color: what to a tenenbri may seem like an outrageous costume is quite often puritanically plain to others. Tenenbri have little use for armor, preferring to strike from the shadows and then retreat before an enemy has the opportunity to target them. They favor light short blades, easily manipulated in tunnel fighting; tenenbri travelers, freed from the constraints of the underground, frequently adopt walking sticks with concealed blades, easily drawn and easily stowed. They do not care overmuch for ranged weapons, though some develop a taste for knife throwing or small, powerful spring-loaded crossbows.

Tenenbri outside of Southam are often outcasts. Some communities are so fanatical that even talking to a non-tenenbri may exact banishment, and even among more moderate societies expulsion is the preferred punishment for most serious offenses (unorthodoxy being considered a serious offense by most). Virtually all tenenbri found in Canam are those who have been exiled from Southam, usually for rejecting the dominant belief that the tenenbri are a master race others should serve.

Religion: The dominant tenenbri faith holds that they are Oaken's chosen people, all other fae having been failed experiments suitable only to serve the tenenbri. Exactly how humans, coming after the fae as they do, fit into this worldview is a matter of some theological debate which most tenenbri resolve by simply categorizing humans as unusually articulate animals. The tenenbri are passionate about whatever beliefs they hold and show their emotions visibly. Their faith, while self-aggrandizing and xenophobic, is neither evil nor overwhelmingly corrupt, but is also rarely seen outside of Southam. The Enos movement, though sparking a campaign that cost thousands of lives, never endorsed the use of violence in aggression, though its tenets do not preclude fighting to defend one's beliefs.

The few tenenbri that don't follow a specific belief system or are not fanatical about their faith are still notorious for being stubborn and close-minded about what they consider to be true. They are demonstrative with their preconceptions, and will often volunteer them freely even if not asked. Like the narros, tenenbri bury their dead.

Relations: In closed tenenbri communities like the kingdom of Vanaka, bonding and even consorting outside their species is strictly prohibited, although this runs entirely counter to most tenebri's natural preferences. When the tenenbri escape from their land and venture north into Canam, this often changes. Outcast tenenbri have bonded with a variety of fae and non-fae peoples, from humans and pagus, to oggraks and kodiaks. The rare cases when tenenbri marry outside their species are often described as avidly passionate. Other words to describe them in a relationship are hot-blooded, fiery, and lustful. Tenenbri are considered extremely exotic by those outside their own species.

The narros, of course, still hold a grudge, with the majority of the narros judging the tenenbri as dishonorable and untrustworthy. Even though the tenenbri would be valuable in mines, most narros refuse to employ them, though gimfen have no such prejudices except insofar as a tenenbri in a gimfen community would have to be kept away from sensitive equipment that can't be shielded. Canamite tenenbri find surprising acceptance in echan human kingdoms, considering the treatment that humans are subjected to in Southam. Limshau finds the tenenbri braille books fascinating additions to their collection and will always allow a tenenbri to settle within their borders.

Names: The tenenbri language is the strangest on earth, seemingly without any rhyme or reason. Tenenbri have no use for family names: they have only one name, using phonemic similarity to denote relation. For example, two names like Sharajaclypse and Lamaclypse, the ending '-clypse' denotes their genetic similarity. The common syllable may occur at any point in the name: siblings usually have the same sound on the same syllable, but the rules for other relations are byzantine and only make sense to tenenbri. Most chil-

dren are raised in communal crèches and some tenenbri children don't even know who their parents are (tenenbra has no generic terms for family members in any case, everyone being addressed by name). In larger cities, this is not always the case.

Example Names: Sianodell, Mianodell, Farianoda (These would mark similar genetic markings based on the "iano" in their names. Sian and Mian may be sisters but Fari could be an uncle or cousin), Mazicalatte, Ranasorrei, Tepsidra.

TENENBRI SUMMARY

As a Tenenbri, you can…

…use your keen senses to overcome such paltry things as invisibility, darkness, mist, or light cover.

…navigate underground and understand its opportunities and hazards.

…emit a focused stream of intense sound to disorient and deafen your enemies.

…attack your foes in close combat using the traditional arts of quick-draw swordplay or knife fighting.

…use your speed and reflexes to best advantage against foes that consider blindness to be a handicap.

TILEN

Repentant Pariahs With a Demonic Past

Kinien had told her there was nothing to it: just stare at them with wide eyes, smile, laugh at their jokes, and they would be putty in her hands. But Kinien wasn't here, and Sallah was becoming increasingly nervous surrounded by the three drunken aristocrats. She flinched as one of them put his arm around her bare shoulders, his fingers questing for the neckline of her elaborate dress. She fended him off with a forced coquettish giggle, and shuddered inwardly as she smelled the jealousy rising in the others. At this rate, they would start fighting over her no matter who she chose to dance with. She didn't think she could handle that… the shouting, the acrid smell of sweat, the blood pounding in the brawlers' hearts, the sweet, delicious blood she just couldn't help but imagine how it tasted how it felt she wanted it NOW… the tips of her teeth pricked her tongue and she realized what she was doing, hurriedly chastising herself. She had always been more sensitive than her brother; why wasn't he here to keep her in line?

As she sat there miserably, feigning smiles and wondering how to extricate herself from the trio of boors, a fourth man broke away from the crowd on the dance floor and came toward her. Sallah looked up at him as he held out his hand – one of her gallants looked like he was going to object, then recognized the newcomer and decided against it. Her breath caught in her throat. This man smelled nice… very *nice. She found herself unconsciously glancing at his neck, and forced herself to look up into his limpid blue eyes.*

May I have the pleasure of this dance, mademoiselle?" he asked. "Ah…" Sallah stammered, and then smiled genuinely.

"Of course, milord."

The tilen are scions of an ancient evil dating back to the First War. They descend from the servants and consorts of the Lords of Death, *ghulath* in the tongue of the ancient fae, who discovered how to take Ixindar's power for themselves and used it to create unspeakable undead horrors that served only their own selfish whims, and not the whisper of Mengus. The ghulath and their spawn walked the nights of Terros and used their mesmeric powers and colossal strength to drain the blood of the living to sustain their wicked unlife. When Attricana reopened, some of these unwilling slaves found their souls returned to them, and ever since they and their children have struggled to throw off the shackles of their dark legacy and return to the light.

Tilen are the best species to play because their colorful heritage will encourage role playing outside of combat. They are the best choice because they are the fewest on the planet. When a tilen enters a crowded room, they are the only ones of their kind in it, and heads will turn. They are a double-edged sword because of their dark past and kind nature. In the end, such a rich palette will create a more interesting character to play.

Average Height: 5'8" – 6'4"
Average Weight: 45-70 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 30 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 600 years

TILEN ASPECTS

Tilen aspects usually relate to their pariah status – as this is intimately tied with their tragic past, the influence of the ghulath will invariably play a part in any species aspect. Whether you seek isolation or engagement with the world will greatly affect your point of view.

Sample Aspects: ***Mysterious Red-Eyed Hermit; Seeking My Stolen Child; Undead Slayer***

Sample Benefits: Captivating others; fitting in with an unfamiliar society; intimidation when angered; opposing the undead.

Sample Drawbacks: Social stigma; slow healing; conspicuousness; sudden loss of control when provoked.

TILEN STUNTS

Blessed Body: You gain +2 to defend against attacks by undead, or against any attack with a necrotizing effect (such as certain kinds of venom, necromancy & nihilimancy, magically-infused ebola, etc).

Blood Vengeance: You can spend a fate point to force an enemy to take a consequence instead of stress against your physical attack. If you have an equal or lesser physical consequence yourself, you can immediately remove it. If the enemy is an undead, you do not have to spend a fate point to force a consequence, but neither can you remove one of your own.

Deceptive Strength: Whenever an enemy succeeds on a physical advantage check against you, you gain +2 to your next attack against that enemy.

TILEN BLOOD DRAIN

Tilen bloodsucking works the same as any other magical healing, except that instead of using an advantage action to prepare a spell, you use an attack action, and must inflict an equal amount of damage to the severity of the consequence. If the target is willing, you don't need to make the attack, but can take just as much as you need, and they can usually soak it with stress or with a lower-level consequence. Even though blood drain heals the wound completely, the consequence slot remains filled until it goes away naturally, although you can use the *Blood Vengeance* stunt to clear it sooner.

Physical Traits: Like their vampiric forebears, tilen have pale skin (though without the pallor of unlife), faintly prominent canines, and a sensitivity to light: they also cast no reflection and only weak shadows. They are generally thin, almost frail, but their strength is deceptive given their slender bodies. The elder tilen came from every fae species and retain their original basic forms, but all their descendents now have the same basic physique regardless of their lineage. This fact has brought accusations of corruption—believers claiming the tilen were intentionally released by the

darkness to convert the planet to their form. Tilen age at nearly the same rate as humans, reaching maturity in their twenties but then remaining in that state for nearly 200 years before slowly aging, though never appearing older than 50 human years. Their skin is cool to the touch but not cold, dry, or cracked. Their hair is usually bleached gold or white, often streaked with silver. Their ears taper long and straight up, though the edges tend to become jagged with age. Their eyes, which allow them to see perfectly in the dark, stand out from their monochromatic skin and attire, reflecting brilliant greens, blue, and even orange but seldom yellow or red. Their eyes often expose a tilen's presence from across a crowded room, as their radiance bursts from the shadows where they frequently try to hide. Though passionate and kind creatures in general, tilen are physically incapable of crying. The majority of tilen are female and are on average taller than the males. When tilen get profoundly excited, stressed or angered, their ghulath traits become more exposed. Their eyes glow bright red or yellow, their upper canine teeth sharpen and extend nearly to their lower gums, and their nails grow long, sharp and strong. They despise showing this side of themselves, especially to those they care about. Like all fae, tilen are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron.

Indeed, tilen are vulnerable to more than just fae-iron. Even weak sunlight hurts their eyes, and the direct glare of the summer sun causes sunburn in a matter of minutes. Worse, tilen do not heal as quickly as other beings. They take roughly twice as long as a human to recover from any physical injury, for their blood does not readily clot nor their flesh easily knit, and the lingering necrotic energies that sustained their ancestors impede even magical healing. The only way they can quickly restore themselves is by descending to the level of their forebears and draining the blood from a living creature – enough blood can restore even a grievous injury in seconds, but most tilen loathe to use this ability, as it is an indelible reminder of a past they would rather forget; if they must resort to such measures, they prefer the blood of animals, which is less potent, or of willing companions who cannot afford to give more than what is required to equalize their healing rates. Tilen, even the elder tilen, don't need blood to survive, but it is the only way they can heal major wounds.

Tilen claim the uniformity of Ixindar resulted in a shape closer to the original fae. Many damaskans, laudenians, and chaparrans view this as an insult, since each claims their own form to be direct descendants of the original stock. The narros and tenenbri never made an official stand on the matter, but secretly disapprove of the tilen claim. Most humans don't understand why this matters to the fae: gimfen know why it matters, but simply don't care. The tilen don't assert arrogance or superiority with their contention—in their view, it is only common sense.

Mentality: Tilen are extremely sensitive and avoid violence when they can, both for moral reasons and because the numbers of their species are so few. Most tilen are nomadic, hiding from the light and judgmental outsiders. They spend most of their time fighting against their own untamed natures, believing themselves one step from regressing back to the undead. They carry that fear to this day, though throughout their history, only one has ever fallen back to darkness, and that only temporarily. Tilen both fear and despise undead and many of them have vowed to remove from the Earth all mindless mockeries of life. They consider necromancers, nihilimancers, and their old ghulath masters sworn enemies. Living so close to the specter of death, they are not only driven to survive, but have a pathological abhorrence of causing an unnecessary death.

Tilen are emotional and expressive but rarely lose control of their facilities. Even when they do, their fear of a relapse that will turn them back to darkness is strong enough to prevent them from doing anything truly heinous. They loathe exposing their ghulath traits: it unmasks them, and tilen fear that, if others were to see them in that state, it would cause a violent reaction and endanger them and those they care about. Among allies, friends, or family, tilen are open, honest, gentle, and fiercely loyal. Once they establish a bond in any form, they honor and relish such attachment, knowing perfectly well how rare they are when images of tilen can be seen on so many city walls proclaiming them to be demons from a wide range of legends and religious books.

History: The birth and history of the tilen is marred with pain, suffering, and mystery. How they came to cherish a life from origins steeped in evil points to the tenacity of their spirit. The details of their curse and crusade for redemption are known only to a few, and they rarely speak of the past. Before the time of man, when the war with the dark forces of Ixindar was sweeping the planet, a group of corrupted rebels created a land that refused to follow either path. They embraced the negative energy of Ixindar but believed that death was the true gateway to everlasting power. Among these insurgents appeared the initial lords of decay, the ghulath (creatures of darkness that have gone by dozens of names throughout human history: draugr, vrykolakas, chupacabra, vampire). They created armies of mindless undead and forged a kingdom to call their own. They were despised by both sides. Requiring servants, allies, slaves, and lovers, these initial lords brought others into their fold. These disciples were horribly corrupted to the wicked will of their seducer. Ghulath may be creatures of the night, barred from the land of the living, but they never actually died. Like all the forces of Ixindar, the ghulath lords and their kin hid within the realm past the black gate, waiting for the opportunity to be brought to solid form again. Upon their return, they found a world very different from the last. They claimed their own patch of grass and soaked it with blood, starting the infection known as the Necrosea.

Their devotees followed their lords in their crusade to forge an army of death to even rival Kakodomania.

They were expecting neither the white gate to burst open nor the effect of its flood across the world. When the white gate returned, a deluge swept over the Earth. Records are vague on specifics, but the wave changed everything, sending the armies of Ixindar back into their realm of Kakodomania and destroying the undead hordes where they stood. It forced the ghulath to rebuild, but they would do it alone. When the flow of Attricana hit their loyal spawn, those who were not destroyed were forced back into the light. Those minions taken from Kakodomania and the ghulath lords themselves were unaffected, being willingly bound to Ixindar, but a precious few of those taken against their will awoke from their feral existence and remembered their lives. Many died trying to escape the darklands. The remaining survivors vanished from the sight of man or fae, but their determination allowed them to endure. These individuals became known as the elder tilen. They were the most powerful and the most shamed over past sins. Their children would resemble them, but exhibited only a pale imitation of their power. Elder tilen never die, only able to leave this planet through an accident or through the brutality of a deliberate death by another's hands. They are psychologically incapable of taking their own lives.

This curse of immortality is not shared by their descendants, of which there are not many; tilen pairings are almost always childless, with a birth rate of only three percent. This rises another few points if one parent came originally from fae stock and the other from human, and rises to nearly twelve percent when bonding with a non-tilen (there are no half-tilen: the child of a mixed union is always a pureblooded tilen). There are less than 10,000 tilen in the world but with their appealing nature and hospitality to outsiders, their numbers are beginning to grow.

Culture: Tilen have little culture of their own. Their desire for acceptance makes them quick to adopt the customs of whatever community is willing to welcome them. Contrary to the traditional view of vampires as beings of consummate style, tilen on their own will often adopt drab, unassuming clothing, preferably covering as much skin as possible to prevent sunburn, often adopting wide-brimmed hats, deep-hooded cloaks, or veils for good measure.

Being deeply opposed to violence, they have no native martial traditions. If forced to fight, they prefer heavier armor and reach weaponry, or better still, crossbows or magic, the better to minimize the chance of injury.

Religion: As religion is usually used as an excuse for expelling them from a community, most tilen have a

healthy distrust for any organized faith. This is more pronounced with human religions, as the fae faiths have no concept of 'hell' or 'demons' beyond the very real embodiments of Kakodomania, but even so, the tilen always harbor a suspicion that any gods they might pray to do not want them. Those who still yearn for the sacred tend to be drawn to religions that are more philosophy than faith: Buddhism in particular has a moderate following among tilen. Of course, those who integrate into another society will adopt the customs and religion of their adopted home—until such time as that religion is turned against them.

Relations: A tilen must accept that their species is stigmatized as much as the tenenbri – in some cases, even as much as the pagus. Tilen are executed on sight in some nations in the world (not just in Baruch Malkut, where all fae run this risk). They usually keep to themselves and seldom advertise their presence outside their own villages. Though almost entirely benign and peaceful, tilen suffer greatly at the hands of others. Most fae races avoid the tilen and several human villages openly hunt them. Despite this, tilen numbers continue to rise, as their demure nature and statuesque good looks are distinctly appealing, especially to humans—which in turn often provokes others (mostly humans as well) to accuse them of being evil tempters and servants of darkness, planning a clandestine campaign to destroy all children of God by breeding them out. They regard the tilen as demon masters of seduction—modern day succubi and incubi—whose only purpose is to tempt men away from chaste and loyal human marriages, to produce an army of cambion half-breeds. More than 85% of all tilen are female, which does not help this growing stereotype. Nevertheless, tilen continue to live their lives, willingly offering the hand of friendship at the risk of having said hand removed.

Names: The first tilen elders adopted new names when they were pulled back into the light, mostly human-inspired, to sever their connection with the past. Their descendants continue the trend, usually choosing a new name when they enter a new community (a useful practice, given their propensity for being driven out of town for perceived offenses). There is no consistent naming scheme among tilen, as they have no native language of their own, usually adopting that of the nearest community for their day-to-day business.

Example Names: Azula Jaheer, Lhamah Cyrose, Mira Diemasko, Naga Sorenti, Saleena Kaeris, Zacheria Korvek

TILEN SUMMARY

As a Tilen, you can…

…with great difficulty, overcome the urges of your blood, which makes any other mental trauma seem trifling.

…use the legendary grace of the fae together with the strength of the ghulath to allow you to easily bypass physical obstacles as well.

…see in the dark far better than you do in the light.

…drain a creature's blood to heal yourself – out of necessity only, since you heal half as quickly as other creatures.

…leverage your heritage by emphasizing your vampiric characteristics if you wish to be intimidating, or using the vampire's legendary allure.

…have an uncanny sense for the presence and weaknesses of undead creatures.

NON-FAE SPECIES

There are only two known intelligent creatures on Earth that do not descend from one of the fae species, and of those two, only one—humanity—has evolved to that point naturally. While it is theoretically possible that magic has uplifted other species elsewhere in the world to sentience, only the kodiaks are known to have been so in Canam.

HUMAN

The Children of Earth

"I do not understand, Nejima-san," said the damaskan child, her lip curling in distaste. "What is the purpose of

this exercise, if it is not combat training?" Nejima sighed and adjusted the straps on his boxing gloves.

"It's many things, Denka-chan," he explained. "I find it serves me better than meditating for clearing the mind." The little girl shook her head. "But, if you hurt someone—or if you get hurt—" Nejima smiled.

"That's part of the fun," he said. "You have to focus on your opponent so you don't get hit, and if you do you have to condition yourself so you don't feel it, and you have to trust that he'll do the same. It's almost spiritual, when you think about it." The elf still did not seem convinced.

"But… but... men… touching!" she stammered. "And in shiny underwear!" Nejima looked at the child's red-faced visage for a moment, and then burst out laughing. "Yes, well," he said, when he had regained his composure, "Perhaps I should try to explain again when you're older."

Evolution is the adaptation of a natural animal to its environment. Further generations of a species may not necessarily be superior, but those that survive would be better suited to their surroundings with an advantage over the competition. This process eventually resulted in humanity – with no signs that evolution has ceased. The fae continue to adapt to their surroundings as well, but their development degrades their form, making them more animalistic and feral. Even the laudenians, the most magically endowed of all fae, fled to the skies to prevent degradation. Some humans, especially those of echa, firmly believe mankind's turn to magic will be the key to their final path to perfection, able to master the world of enchantment in all its forms while fae continue to be slaves to it. Only humanity has arisen with any notable footprint as an evolved species, but they are broken into two groups: echan humans and techan humans.

With such a wide range of possibilities, humanity is the best species to play. They have the greatest variety of options. In this new world, they have the most to gain (and lose) with the coming events to follow. In the end, humanity will be the force that will decide the fate of the world.

Average Starting Age: 20 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 80 years

HUMAN ASPECTS

Humans do not require a species aspect, as their abilities are considered the baseline from which other species deviate (even though this is a profoundly inaccurate way of looking at the world). Those who wish to emphasize their humanity in a fantasy world may choose one: otherwise, most humans should select a regional aspect instead. Consider where you come from, and what your stand is on magic vs. technology.

Sample Aspects: ***Bastion-Born Exile; Seeker of Harmony; Techan Aspirant***

Physical Traits: Humans continue to be more varied than any other civilized nation on Earth. They possess virtually every possible skin color (including a few that were physically impossible in the old world), range in height from three feet to a towering seven, are thin and fat, and sport a variety of hair colors and styles. Almost every religion and ethnic group is represented on Canam, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Techan humans are the only ones who can safely use technology, and that only so long as they steadfastly refuse the touch of magic. Even so, fleeting exposure can cause their equipment to malfunction or break entirely. Most of those who would be considered 'echan' humans can still use technological devices, the simpler the more reliable, unless they have actively accepted enchantment into their soul by learning to cast spells, using magical items, or prolonged exposure to magical energies. In most cases, an echan can choose to become a techan by foreswearing and avoiding magic for long enough for the latent enchantment to bleed out of them (a process of many weeks). However, those who bond with a fae or the few who have an inherent supernatural ability cannot make this choice: they are bound to the path of magic forever and disrupt technology just like any other denizen of the fantasy world.

MIXED GROUPS

Of course, one could mix both echan and techan players together into one group. Why they would choose to unite is left up the imaginations of the players or GM. One idea could be a shared past between several characters (both raised in Angel, one in Genai, the other in the main city), a techan out of place in the world or even characters romantically linked. Either way, they attempt to survive together, flying in the face of convention insisting the worlds live apart. In this situation, the techan must exercise caution and not wield or use magic though surrounded by it. The techan or techans also must be careful to keep their more sensitive gear away from the powerful magic items in the group or risk disruption. This problem escalates as levels progress and more powerful technology shorts out more often and more severely, despite the shielding techniques some bastions developed. This struggle reflects in the rest of the world as well.

Mentality: Humans often seek excitement for the sheer thrill of it. Those with devout religious belief may venture out on a crusade, either personal or part of a national movement. Some escape their bastions while others dedicate themselves to entering one. Humans follow whims and dreams more than any other species. They are caught up on causes while others let things pass. Their short lives force them to condense as much experience as possible in a brief span of time.

History: Humans emerged millions of years after the last magical creatures escaped or fell to dust. Mankind grew from hairy apes to the form that walks with pride today. Since their peak in the age of technology, most of the human population had died off, leaving less than 3% to rebuild. The origins of this disappearance are not fully understood: some claim it was natural disasters

resulting from the Second Hammer, others blame the encroachment of Kakodomania in the early days of the gate's reopening, and there are those who believe that mankind had already practically destroyed himself through war, pollution, and overpopulation by the time magic changed the world. Some escaped into bastions while most embraced the ways of magic. Many more were killed in the first few decades.

Mankind emerged into the new dawn with nothing. The old cities were gone; not a shred of pavement remained. No corporations or organizations, no clubs or allegiances, nothing that defined mankind as a species, or anchored them to their fidelity to god or country, endured. Fragments of the old age were few and scattered in the few ancient ruins that somehow endured. Survivors had to set aside their ignorance and stubbornness. Many refused and died praying for a deliverance that never arrived. Suicide took many in the first few years. Later – when the first fledging communities encountered the first non-humans – hostilities followed. Many more humans fell under the blade in conflicts they often initiated. A pause in their fear and paranoia resulted in a stay of annihilation, preventing man's second near extinction. Eventually, these first communities grew enough to sustain themselves.

Though humanity is still the most numerous intelligent species on the planet, less than 400 million humans live today, most of them outside of bastions.

Culture: After five hundred years of living on their own, mostly xenophobic of outsiders, the citizens of bastions can sometimes be looked upon in a wholly different light than their magically infused brethren. Techa-folk often fear magic, claiming it steals their souls or changes them irreparably. The use of magic *does* change a human: he stops being a creation purely of nature, and his mere existence begins to break down the laws of the known universe just as the fae do. Techa-folk claim this removes them from the human race. Echa-folk claim this is how man is supposed to be. They are both wrong, but that's beside the point. Until magic infuses a human, by embracing it as a mage or accepting its touch in weapon or armor, she has a choice whether or not to let the enchantment into her spirit. Once one does, she is borne along with the tide, and it is very difficult to come down from it.

A techan is a stranger in a strange land. It might be Earth but centuries under the glare of Attricana have changed the landscape. Techans leaving the walls are truly entering a fantasy world they have little to no preparation for. Some may leave willingly while others are forced to because of obligations or because of an obsession that haunts them. Some may open their eyes, welcoming the wonder of this new world. Others watch with jealousy and resentment. Regardless, techans are loyal to their own kind and don't often welcome foreigners. While outside, they miss their refrigerators and computers. On the other hand, some techans have given up their central heating and televisions to pursue a path of magic, embracing the new world with a romantic naivete, unaware of the horrors awaiting them. Loyal techans strive for the day when the gates close, orphaning the fae to the ravages of the real world, a time where mankind could retake the planet as its true inheritors. The fae would be forced to escape back into the formless void of dreams and delusions. Those unable or unwilling to make such a journey would be subject to the harsh reality of natural laws and perish quickly. Techans fear the future of a world where magic reigns uncontested and humanity lives stagnant, in limbo, never changing, forever in a fantasy world without consequences.

Most echan humans have wholly accepted their path with no desire to settle within the walls of industry. They take on magic without worry of the consequences. They believe techans follow an obsolete conviction, frantically clinging to a dying mind-set. Echan humans insist this new world is as real as the one that came before and it deserves to exist as much as anything else. Those with a faith in the unseen believe it to be the ultimate solution to humanity's avarice. If man continued alone, he would have destroyed the world in his greed. With magic and disruption, it keeps mankind humble and in check—Nature finally striking back for sins committed on its soil. Even those without religion believe this new world is the proper one. At the very least, it's far more interesting. Some just don't care about the fate of humanity and have turned their back to selfishly embrace the romance and exotic nature of their new neighbors.

Then there are those on either side who simply have yet to make a choice. It must be stressed that though millions of humans would be considered 'echan' simply because they live in regions that accept the existence of magic as a reality of life, only those who actively use or expose themselves to magic are actually enchanted (and thus generate EDF). At the same time, there are plenty of so-called techans who hearken after either a simpler life or merely a less predictable one outside the bastion walls.

Religion: Humans have maintained most of their old religions, but virtually all religious zealotry disappeared when less than 200 million people survived to the new age. They quickly banded together, abandoning old bigotries and conceits from the old world. The holy lands many fought, killed, and died for were gone, and with nearly all of the ancient sacred relics gone with them, most took this as a sign to live for the betterment of all mankind and not die over the buried remnants of forgotten conflicts. Sworn enemies put aside their pasts in favor of rebuilding. Many of them found new enemies, as well as new friends, with arriving echan races. In this new world, the big five religions survived: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Chinese Folklore, and Buddhism. They remain the majority by an enormous margin. Smaller faiths – Judaism, Sikhism, Shinto, etc. – appear in certain regions. With 95% of humanity eliminated at the dawn of the new age, the survivors believed that Armageddon either had passed or was yet to come. The majority of man, even within the bastions, is still controlled by rulers professing a faith in an al-

mighty power. With the exception of a scant few, most use this belief to lead the people in wisdom and kindness, not in fear and lunacy. Those embracing echa believe in the gate as a lens of their faith and not necessarily a symbol. Faiths including a heaven believe it sits beyond the gateway of Attricana. Those without a heaven (or even a god for that matter) believe the gate to be either a reflection of nature or a mirror of their own soul.

Before the gate opened, the world was divided on the origin of man, firmly separated between a scientific theory and a religious belief. This all changed when Attricana opened. With this new angle on the world, many humans faced new facts: the introduction of the fae and dragons, and a past world and history unknown to them. Some elected to believe their dogma accurate despite contradictory evidence, concocting extravagant theories claiming the previous age did not exist at all, and the new arrivals were demons meant to be repressed or destroyed. Others took these new races and their similarities as the final proof of divine creation, still placing man atop this ladder of progressive superiority. Many older religions did adapt and changed their scripture based on the new world. Some still attempted to use fear to suppress their believers while others took this as an opportunity to start over. The vast majority of humanity accepts natural selection as the origin of humanity, whether or not they have integrated it into another belief system.

Relations: Though nations changed, ethnic groups continued to grow. Racism died in the face of other, very real bugbears. Bastions formed with wide spectrums of color and creed. Some cities (like Angel) did separate regions for specific groups, but this usually came at the request of the segregated group, wishing to preserve their ancient cultures against the melting pot. Outside of the bastion walls, any remaining propensities for racism were usually diverted onto other species. Humans have short memories, and there is nobody alive today who remembers the ancient hatreds and conflicts in times before the second Hammer.

Few nations advocate hatred of other humans, although techan humans often act superior to others. Echan human nations respond well to each other with Baruch Malkut being a notable exception. With Darius Konig's doctrine of Sapien Superiority and their murder and enslavement of thousands of fae and humans who don't share their views, no other human echan kingdom will trade with them. Other nations like Kannos and Abidan maintain good relations with their surrounding fae neighbors. Specific diplomatic ties depend on which species are found in proximity to the settlement. Outside of the major human nations, dozens of villages and communities dotted across Canam and even the world practice bigotry against the fae ranging from shunning or enslavement to expulsion or eradication, but there are just as many communities who simply welcome them with open arms.

The majority of bastion-born believe mankind earned his right for total dominion of the globe and wait for the day when technology will recover the planet again. A few believe in a shared future where technology can exist side by side with magic, though with mankind as the true proprietors of the world.

In echa, this belief is reversed. While some think the new races are intruding and should be eliminated or enslaved, many have embraced the new world, considering it the utopia and haven predicted in religious texts. Only when the dark hordes and their minions are eliminated and the hell gate closed will this world truly turn into Eden.

Names: Human names continue to evolve today. Now with the commingling of many ethnic groups, first and last names can (and usually do) represent several cultures. The degree of infusion of Asian blood and languages into the general Canamite population means that old Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian names are as common, if not more so, than those originally of European extraction.

Example Names: Chiaki Jones, Kim Jansen, Kiba Hebrus, Delacroix Lin-Wei, Miranda Okama, Robert Naseen

HUMAN VOCATION

There is no human species vocation. Instead, each human character chooses a regional vocation corresponding to their birthplace (which is considered trained at +0 if they don't give it a higher rank, just as a non-human can default their species vocation).

KODIAK

Intelligent Upright Bear Folk

In light above, I see fires by man and unman. I tell not apart. They better for sparking fires? I make fire here. No need to set them to sky. Here they cook and warm. We thank wood for burning. We plant again to make grow more. No wood in sky. Man pray fire. Seek fire. Wrong for this. No pray fire, pray wood. Wood better. Pray Wood.

In the north of Canam, influence from Attricana has forced the native bears upright. At first, these creatures remained lawless. They quarreled amongst themselves and raided neighboring communities for food. Even today, kodiaks still lack sufficient success at civilized society. Most cling to the quest for survival with such an obsession that they care for little else.

Kodiaks are the best species; there can be no argument. A kodiak enters the room and all eyes turn. Every mouth gulps its drink. Respect is bestowed without knowing anything further. It's a gigantic, bipedal bear. Its roar can be heard from across the room. Seeing one in battle fills enemies with dread. They are the biggest and the strongest. Who cares about anything else?

Average Height: 6'4" – 7'2"
Average Weight: 350-450 lbs.
Average Starting Age: 15 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: 80 years

KODIAK ASPECTS

Being a large intelligent bear is only part of a kodiak's identity, albeit quite a significant one from the perspective of most other species. Kodiaks can be as varied in their attitudes as humans, but their focus is usually defined by the band rather than the individual. Consider your relationship with your tribe, with the natural (and supernatural) world around you, and what you think about both humans and fae.

Sample Aspects: ***Alpine Nomad; Bogg-Slayer; Train Guard Berserker***

Sample Benefits: Intimidating people; cutting things to shreds with claws; finding food in the wilderness.

Sample Drawbacks: Lethargy in winter; impatience with chatter; doesn't fit into tight spaces; scares horses and small children.

KODIAK STUNTS

Imposing Build: Any bear-related advantages you create grant +3 when invoked rather than +2.

Natural Runner: When you run on all fours, you can cross any number of zones (as long as there are no obstacles in the way) as part of another action.

Razor-Sharp Claws: Your successful claw and bite attacks deal +1 damage.

Physical Traits: As their name suggests, most kodiaks are derived from northern grizzly bear stock, though there are a few bands whose ancestors must have interbred with polar bears or black bears from their size and coloring. Kodiaks are enormous, with many towering over seven feet. They are covered from head to toe in heavy fur with large eyes and articulate (and very, very dangerous) claws. Their snouts are shortened to fit a proper mouth that can articulate speech (albeit not terribly well). It is nearly impossible to tell a female from a male upon a cursory examination, or for that matter even distinguish one individual from another: kodiaks tell one another apart by smell more than sight. There are a branch of elder shamans revered by

the kodiaks as living deities. These are not true kodiaks, being proportioned more like normal bears, with shorter limbs and larger torsos. While normally bipedal, kodiaks usually drop to all fours when running. This enables them to cover the ground five times faster than normal, and keep up the pace for hours on end. Like their forebears, they are excellent climbers and swimmers.

While not dependent on magic to live, as fae are, kodiaks are still an inherently echan folk and disrupt technology just as the fae do. They are also immune to most, but not all, human ailments, although they can be carriers – but they also have their own unique disorders, which can be difficult for a non-kodiak physician to even diagnose let alone cure without the aid of magic. Kodiaks also retain some vestiges of their ancestral hibernation instinct, and although they can easily overcome it, they tend to be sluggish in the winter months: however, they also are able to survive on practically no food during that time, having stored up sufficient reserves during the summer and autumn.

Mentality: Kodiaks may be the strongest and most durable, but they are rarely the smartest. There has never been a kodiak wizard mentioned in any book, and even the darawren of Jibarro have only ever accepted four kodiak druids. Kodiaks are brought into a party for their strength and not their colorful conversation. They say little, making others skittish around them. No one dares cross a kodiak. They defend their friends with violent fervor, building themselves into a crazed frenzy like a mother bear with a cub. Kodiaks suffer from low intelligence but they should not be considered stupid. They are simple and talk in basic phrases but only speak this way because of apathy towards conversation. Kodiaks can't stand small talk. They despise politeness and rarely return courtesy. Words like "please" and "thank you" have no mirror in their tongue.

History: Kodiaks do not keep histories, not even oral traditions, as their culture does not value such things. They are a mostly nomadic folk, their wanderings having taken them from the farthest north into the central forests and prairies and throughout the mountains on the western coast of Canam. A few tribes close to the narros in Fargon or migrating into the sparsely settled lands down the Dianaso pass, understanding that their future depended on pushing past their fear of others, attempted a dialogue. The kodiaks developed into trained hunters and farmers. As they brought in food, the civilized folk repaid their allies with knowledge, clothes, tools, and finally weapons. Better armed, these civilized kodiaks overwhelmed their unfortunate rivals, whether they be boggs, skeggs, or other kodiaks.

Almost all kodiaks reside in Northern Canam with a few migrating through the rest of the continent. They are virtually unknown elsewhere. Their presence in any non-kodiak community is uncommon; the only place in Canam where kodiaks and non-kodiaks regularly mingle is in the confederacy of Seliquam, in and around the Dianaso Pass, and even there, most kodiak bands keep to themselves.

Culture: The development of culture is largely a facet of the capacity for boredom, something that kodiaks do not really exhibit. They have no arts, and their society elevates physical prowess and accomplishment over all else. Having tough, furry hides and razor-sharp claws and teeth, kodiaks rarely wear clothes or wield weapons. They only wear layers for protection. If they travel too far south, they stop wearing unnecessary clothes, except armor. They prefer loose-fitting armor to heavy plates. They avoid shields and relish two-handed weapons, especially heavy clubs and battleaxes. A kodiak on his own has likely left his tribe because of dishonor or less commonly because of a command or need to wander the world. He may even be the last of his family.

Religion: It would not be entirely accurate to say that kodiaks are not religious, but they display it in a substantially different way than humans or fae. Their belief system is essentially animist, with every thing in nature having a spirit. Where they differ from other animist traditions is that kodiaks do not believe that the spirits should be importuned or even bothered unnecessarily. Where a human tribal hunter might give thanks to the spirit of the prey, kodiaks descend from predators higher on the food chain; if they are able to catch something, that is proof that they deserve to have caught it, and no thanks to any noncorporeal power are needed. Their beliefs are more a means of explaining natural and supernatural phenomena to a culture that has no traditions of either science or magic, and they find other species' notions of gods and afterlives to be eccentric at best and delusional at worst. A few kodiaks who deal extensively with the narros have converted to the worship of Oaken, but this is uncommon and usually scoffed at by their brethren.

Relations: Kodiaks are a rare addition to any adventuring party. They seldom leave their tribes and when they do find themselves thrown together with non-kodiaks, they are often taken advantage of. When they do associate with outsiders, it's often with other races bound to nature (chaparrans being the noteworthy example). Other semi-feral races often take a liking to kodiaks. There have even been a few rumors of kodiaks taking changelings or nariissa as mates. Kodiaks rarely breed outside their species. Although not fae, like humans they can mate with any fae, but their children will always be a pureblood fae of the fae parent's species. Humans and kodiaks cannot produce children.

Names: Kodiaks speak in a series of grunts and whimpers known as Argose; they can manage other languages only with difficulty, and always heavily accented. Few non-kodiaks comprehend their language. Kodiaks do not have a great deal of use for language in any case. They can tell each other apart easily, differentiating sex, age, and family line. Because of this, they have no need for complicated names or family titles. They have single names of few syllables, which are easy to pronounce, and are not usually used within their own communities. One account claims the kodiaks only have thirty different actually names they continually

recycle, but this has never been proven.

Example Names: Donan, Goran, Hagga, Koa, Rogan, Warro

KODIAK SUMMARY

As a Kodiak, you can…

…overcome pain and extreme cold.

…locate and track creatures by scent.

…survive in the Alpinian wilderness.

…use your size, your strength and toughness, and your intimidating claws and teeth either to dissuade foes from entering battle or to rip them to shreds if they insist.

INTER-SPECIES ROMANCE

Each line of the fae is technically a separate species, and were it not for magic, they would not be genetically compatible with one another. Likewise they are genetically incompatible with humans. Magic, however, enables crossbreeding between fae lineages and even with evolved and spawn races, with varying degrees of success. The first issue in fae-human crossbreeding is time. Fae races are generally long lived, imbued with an amazing degree of patience. Most fae gestations take more than fourteen months, and their fertility cycle ranges from one to two years, not monthly as with human females. Additionally, many fae refuse to take non-fae mates not out of bigotry but fear of loneliness. Nearly all fae mate for life and the idea of outliving the short lifespan of their mate by hundreds or thousands of years frightens them. However, a strange side effect does occur in those rare situations where fae bond for life with a shorter-lived species. Throughout all fae species, the process of pair bonding forces both sides to sacrifice part of their soul to the other. The ceremony, differing with each species, can take less than five minutes in a private encounter, to several hours or even days in a public venue. The consequences are eternal. Humans and fae races cannot reproduce with each other without this ceremony. The bonded souls push past scientific barriers. Humans may not be born enchanted creatures, but they instantly become one when they bond with a fae. Although bonding is technically not necessary between fae races, many frown on married couples not bonding (and it does increase the chances of conception). Though a few have tried, no one has ever successfully forced a bonding in order to extend one's life. Both parties must be willing or the procedure can never finalize.

Unfortunately, there exists one exception to this rule: the pagus. They somehow found a way to mate with anything successfully, bound or not, and they do it often. Pagus can bond for life like all fae, but this situation is extremely rare and reserved for those embracing the path of good (bonding is strictly forbidden in Kakodomania and in any villages ruled by evil dragons, resulting in immediate execution of both parties). The pagus ceremony looks strangely alluring and involves hours of synchronized chanting from the couple and friends. The chants blend into a moan that shakes the ground. Compared to the usual negative views many have of the race, this remains one aspect of the pagus still beautiful.

The longest bonding ceremony (taking three days without sleep, exchanging thirty pages of vows) is with the laudenians, who rarely take human mates. Laudenians share magical spirit via a special chant cast by an arcane priest. The shortest ceremony, that of chaparrans, takes less than five minutes: a tree is planted and the blood of both sides drips into the roots. The tenenbri have no ceremony; their bond occurs merely by both sides allowing it to do so. Gimfen ceremonies involve some poetry and vow exchanging, drinking from enchanted waters, and prayers to whatever god/s they worship (if any). Damaskans include vows but also exchange colored ribbons, sashes, or scarves (depending on family tradition), which the married couple wear for life. Limshau custodians exchange small blades, not much use in combat, ornately decorated with merging family symbols. Sometimes offering said ribbon or blade is akin to a marriage proposal. Fae never jump into marriage and few fae marriages have ever ended in divorce. Even when elders frown and forbid the pairing, once it occurs, nothing more is said on the matter.

In the decades after first contact, many suitors attempted to woo fae maidens, some for conquest and others for marriage. This seldom worked: initially, the fae were skittish of mankind, and most initial meetings ended in violence. Eventually, saner minds began to reach out, but the mingling of breeds would not occur for many more decades. In the first century, the entire

planetary population of fae-human hybrids could be counted on a single hand. Most of the time the fae refused a human wooer, not because of racism, but because of a fear of being alone for the centuries after their mate died.

There is no record about which species was the first to yield, but the balance of probability is that it was a damaskan. As is usually the case, it probably occurred from shared experiences. Not a single fae nation condones arranged marriages, not even within their royalty. Fae establish a connection that overcomes personal beliefs and interests. Most of the time, this remains mere friendship, though this comradeship can be as resolute as any marriage. Occasionally, it continues to form an intimate sharing of souls, and the two sides bond for life. This surmounts such pesky hurdles as age, sex, or race. As humans and faekind shared their lives, bonded couples began to emerge.

In nations like Laudenia and Dawnamoak, pairing fae with human is frowned upon or outright forbidden (due to simple prejudice in the case of the chaparrans and an ingrained fear of degradation among the laudenians). This fanatical view is most prevalent at the core of their societies: chaparrans (more than laudenians) are often more approachable outside of their nations, and the farther one travels from the labyrinth of Vanaka, the more likely one is to find a tenenbri who appreciates a non-tenenbri partner as anything more than a novelty. Narros' discipline and their preferred environment have made interracial couples relatively uncommon. The same goes for gimfen, but with them, it's their visible age that turns most away. This leaves the vast majority of interracial couples from damaskan blood. Since Limshau permits and encourages mingling races on every level, the kingdom became the hub of romantic voyages. In the end, most suitors encounter failure. Despite being quixotic, fae are skittish to bond, especially damaskans, known for their distant emotions in public. Fae often act alien compared to common human customs. They are all brutally honest and find deception rather repugnant. Coupled with their long lifespans and aged wisdom, most wooers are apprehensive to speak up. Fae do not fall in love in a day like humans. For them, it takes time and most pursuers don't have the necessary patience. Those doggedly determined to win the favor of a fae's attention can be rewarded with a prize greater than the trophy of the exotic catch or the years the bond offers.

Because fae are immune to all human disease and without a bond are not capable of producing offspring with humans, females became sought after for slaves. Sexual merchants bought and sold stock from the backs of carriages for centuries. Many governing bodies attempted to close these crime rings, but rumors point to a few still circulating. Baruch Malkut, for example, still employs thousands of slaves. Some believe those are urban legends meant to scare fae from leaving their homes.

BONDING BENEFITS

Locator: Both mates know each other's exact position within 5 miles and general direction within 25 miles.

Life Sharing: The side with the lesser life span lives longer. 20% of the difference between their maximum ages is added to the age of the lesser-lived species. All other age quantities are unchanged. This information is uncommon and few outside of the fae know it. The longer-lived side loses that same 20% quantity from his or her age. It's the trade-off both must be willing to accept. This also applies to different fae races with vastly different age limits: for calculation purposes, assume a lifespan of 5000 years for laudenians. (Example: A tilen female bonds with a human male. The human has the capacity to live to 184 years while the tilen drops to 496 years.)

Whisper: Mates can both whisper messages and receive whispered replies from each other with little chance of being overheard. They must be within a mile of one another or be able to see each other by some means, directly or indirectly. Magical silence, one foot of stone, one inch of common metal (or a thin sheet of lead), or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks the whisper. The effect transmits sound, not meaning. To speak a message, one must mouth the words and whisper, possibly allowing observers the opportunity to read lips.

Dreamspeak: After two hours of sleep, both sides can carry on a conversation as if they were next to each other. The effect lasts for ten minutes and has no range limit.

Consequences: If one side dies for any reason, not only do all these bonuses vanish (sometimes resulting in the surviving mate dropping dead instantly if their time is up), but they also suffer a -1 to their Will and Fortitude saves for life. This cannot be removed by any means. Re-bonding to a new mate does not recover this penalty (although it does restore the other benefits) and another death compounds it. The shortened life of the longer-lived side stays shortened.

FAE MIXED BLOOD

Crossbreeding between fae species occurs relatively frequently, but the offspring of such a union, even though they may take equally after both parents in terms of appearance, are always the same species as the parent lower on the devolutionary ladder:

Laudenian > Chaparran > Narros > Damaskan > Tenenbri > Gimfen > Pagus > Lesser Fae (bogg, skegg, pugg, etc.)

A pagus mating with any other of the major fae can only produce a pagus child, for instance, whereas only a laudenian-laudenian pairing can produce a laudenian child. Tilen are an exception to this rule: any offspring of a tilen, even with a laudenian or a human, is a pure-blood tilen.

Human-fae unions are unusual. Instead of being wholly of one species or the other, the children of such a pairing are true hybrids.

HALF-FAE

Born of Two Worlds

Occasionally it bothers me that I'll outlive my father by two centuries at least, and that my mother will never be able to see the colors I paint on this canvas. My sensei tells me not to worry about it. Focus on what they made when they made me, he says, and the gifts that both have given me to bring their worlds together. And so I search the world for new pigments to astound the eyes of the humans who see my art, and new textures to amaze the tenenbri who feel it: two worlds wrapped up in a single canvas. I've made many friends on my journey, many of whom will outlast me, some of whom I'll say goodbye to long before I'm ready to go, not a single one of them like me. But I can't say that I regret getting to know a single one of them, for any of that. We just keep on going one day at a time.

When humans first found their world invaded by these pointed-eared humanoids, speciesism quickly followed. Most human communities openly hated them: indeed, the oldest may have resulted from just such a xenophobic settlement. But nearly all such populations without sufficient infrastructure to support their technology either destroyed themselves or were destroyed by predators, lacking allies to defend them. Most human echan civilizations that flourished did so by declaring no ill will to their new neighbors. Laudenia and chaparrans still hold the humans in distrust and seldom communicate, and the Southam tenenbri avoid everyone equally. Only damaskans, narros, and gimfen embraced their new fellow inhabitants, occasionally in more than one sense.

Many believe the half-fae are the future of the Earth, the eventual course for everyone. Together, as one mixed species, the planet's population can truly be in peace, to unite against the coming darkness. Half-fae often let the winds call them to the open country. Though longer lived, like their fae parent, they still desire to seek adventure like their human progenitor. This makes them the best species to play because they have the versatility of humans with the exotic strengths of the fae.

Average Height: Average of parents'
Average Weight: Average of parents'
Average Starting Age: 20 years
Estimated Life Expectancy: Average of parents'

HALF-FAE ASPECTS

Half-fae always arise from unusual circumstances. Consider the relationship of your parents, not to one another, but to one another's cultures. Think about whether you reject your heritage or embrace it, and how either of your ancestral species are likely to react to you.

Sample Aspects: ***Bringing My People Together; The Future of Mankind; You Gotta Have Blue Hair***

Sample Benefits & Drawbacks: As both parents.

Physical Traits: Half-fae share the most dominant characteristic of their fae parent. Their ear size is midway between the human size and the fae parent. They are also between their parent's heights. Their skin always favors the darker tone. Magic often forces submissive genes into dominance when humans and fae breed: blonde hair will sometimes surpass black, blue eyes over brown. Thankfully, the fae parent filters out genetic defects or inherited disease. Human physical features not seen in fae but considered appealing (like freckles or snaggleteeth) often pass on, but negatively viewed genetic traits such as a predisposition for baldness or obesity almost never do, for reasons which science is unable to explain. Half-fae may grow beards regardless of their fae parent.

Half-fae born of parents with abnormal senses generally have these in a reduced capacity – those whose parent can see in the dark may require the faintest glimmer of light, while those who see well in low-light conditions may not be able to distinguish shape and color as well. The exception is half-tenenbri, who retain their fae parent's vibration sensitivity (albeit only as accurate at about two-thirds of the distance) but have normal but highly light-sensitive vision: the way their brains process these stimuli makes them effectively able to see normally in pitch darkness. Like all fae, half-fae are immune to all natural diseases and disorders, but are vulnerable to fae-iron. They require sleep as frequently as humans, but can manage quite well on only five hours a night.

Mentality: Because a half-fae results only from bonded parents, raising one is a blessed affair, despite the feelings of the community. Half-fae rarely encounter abuse within the family and consequently seldom abandon their loyalties. Only acts of fate can result in a half-fae not having a normal childhood (this, of course, assumes both parents are good; evil parents can commit whatever atrocities they want against their children). Half-fae, like humans, develop their personality more from how they are raised than what their racial stereotype denotes. Ones raised in open and welcoming cultures like Limshau will usually retain more of their cultural roots, but with a general cosmopolitan attitude: those raised in isolated or insular societies will mostly conform to those cultural norms.

History, Culture & Religion: Half-fae have never developed nations or communities of their own. They either remain in their homelands, or venture to others if not accepted. Because a half-fae cannot be born except to a bonded couple (except half-pagus), if the child is expelled from their home culture, the entire family typically leaves as well. Most half-fae are brought up within a single culture and reflect most of the conventional attitudes of that culture: sometimes their mixed heritage makes them a bit more open-minded to alternative experiences than others, but just as often, they cleave entirely to the traditions of the society they are raised

in, often even more fanatically than those of unmixed blood.

Relations: Those born from the rarer species like tenenbri, chaparran, and laudenian often find their lives difficult, as their fae parent is almost always an exile from their native society (or becomes one shortly after the child's birth). Thankfully, this problem does not occur with damaskans, who embrace their children regardless of who they are, and value individual differences more than most fae (this significantly increased the population of Limshau in its early days, as the lack of stigma resulted in a migration of half-fae of other species to its cities). Nearly all half-fae in Canam reside in Limshau, but that still accounts for a very small portion of the kingdom's population (some say less than a thousand). Gimfen and narros half-breeds do not occur frequently, but when they do, they are treated no differently from their fae parents except insofar as allowances must be made for their height.

In human circles, feelings towards them depend on how the community responds to integration. Some fearing the fae ostracize the half-breeds as much as the laudenians do. The only bastion which tolerates the presence of half-fae is York, and even then, their movements are as tightly regulated as the infrequent fae visitors; half-fae generate just as much EDF as purebloods do, after all.

Despite a probable pleasant childhood, when a half-fae ventures into the world, she might encounter problems in traveling. Some nations accept those of mixed blood as no different as any other person while others revere or revile them as they would other fae. In locations hostile to fae, their unique heritage may be enough to prevent instant lynching (and, if nothing else, it is a lot easier for a half-fae to pass as a human), but the best they can hope for in such places is immediate ejection. Fae communities that deride mankind consider themselves too civilized for such harsh action, and merely shun an unwelcome interloper or politely ask them to conclude their business and leave swiftly. Half-fae, for the most part, tolerate this unpredictability.

Despite attempts to quash the use of the term "half-elf" as a racial slur, it still gets bandied about. Many half-fae try to use the term "minaan", which is damaskan shorthand for "gifted from two" or "mesinaan" which is similar, but comes from laudenian as "strengths with differences," though the laudenian term is not used in their language to that effect. Many half-damaskans actually do not object to being called "half-elf," many of them being familiar with human legends in which this was a term of respect. Unfortunately, in many communities, those of mixed human blood are labeled as half-castes or worse, half-breeds, a derogatory slur no "minaan" takes lightly.

Names: Half-fae will grow up with the language of their home culture – while they will generally know the languages of both their parents, only one will be used on a regular basis. Their names will also usually reflect the culture in which they are brought up, but there may be some influences of the other parent as well. In damaskan, gimfen, and tilen society this may well pass completely unnoticed – a half-damaskan's human given

name is indistinguishable from a full damaskan's open name, after all, and the other species have no particular cultural attachment to names.

HALF-FAE VOCATION

There is no half-fae species vocation. Half-fae are considered trained in both their fae parent's species vocation and their human parent's birthplace regional vocation, even if they default to +0 for both, and can take stunts for either.

CUSTOM SPECIES

If none of the provided species entirely fits what you have in mind, make up your own, following these guidelines:

Descent: A custom spawn species can be descended from any natural animal. A custom fae species must be an offshoot of the laudenians, chaparrans, damaskans, or narros. Laudenian offshoots are more likely to follow sidhe or high elven tropes; chaparran offshoots become more sylvan, adapting to a particular ecological niche (known offshoots include centaurs, dryads, fauns, and sprites); damaskan offshoots are an odd grab bag but tend largely toward the mythical 'little folk' (kobolds, leprechauns, and other mischievous household spirits); narros offshoots grow larger and more savage, along the lines of ogres and trollkin.

Aspect: Even if you are not intending to take the species vocation at a high enough rank to require tying it to an aspect, come up with a generic one (or several) anyway in case someone else wants to use the same species. Think of some general situations in which it might be invoked and compelled and write them down, just for reference.

Stunts: Come up with between one and three stunts for the species, even if you don't plan to take one. Do not fall into the trap of making a stunt a 'power' (such as a stunt that allows you to spend a fate point to merge with rock): instead, the stunt should take something the species can already do and let them do it better (in the above example, you could spend a fate point when you create an advantage related to merging with rock to move up to two zones at the same time).

Description: While you may be the first representative of this species, there will inevitably be others like you eventually. Write a description of the species so that everybody at the table knows what to expect from it (and so you don't forget what you had in mind as the campaign goes on). It's OK to change the description as you work the kinks out, but make sure everybody is on board with the changes. The description should include the generic physical and mental capabilities of the species (remember that all fae are immune to natural diseases and disorders but are vulnerable to fae-iron), and a few notes about their culture—although if you are the first one ever, this isn't necessary, as what you do with the character will define the culture.

"What?" Aiden asked.

Tap. Tap.

"You want me to read?"

Tap.

Aiden's heart started to temper. The light drifted up over the book. Aiden stepped back to the desk. "If… you…insist."

He was about to look back down, then it occurred to him that a flame with no fuel source was floating in the air in front of him. "You can't be real," Aiden whispered. It bobbed in the air, floating on an invisible ocean. Aiden didn't know if that was an answer. "You shouldn't… exist."

"Its life has no meaning unless it can light the way for others," spoke the tall figure approaching from the shadow. Aiden jumped upon hearing him. "If only all things had such simple ambitions."

The man wasn't a dumpy figure with almond eyes and shriveled skin. This stranger towered over Aiden by several feet. His eyes were a radiant blue, skin darker than the room. He had fuzzy grey hair with matching whiskers under his chin, thin with a granite physique.

Aiden backed away from the desk into the shelf behind him, jostling the heavy books resting upon it. The youth glanced back and noticed a hefty volume toppling over. It had a cover of obsidian, parading gold bosses of the gaping maws of dragons. Their front claws reached across the outer edge to the single oversized clasp keeping the book closed. Aiden righted it quickly—with considerable strain—and turned back to the man.

"I'm sorry," Aiden started, "I was just--"

"Quite all right, Mr. Camus," he answered. The spark orbited the two of them. "It likes you." His voice was deep and rough, with a heartening charisma in the way he addressed the child. Aiden couldn't place the accent but he had no problems understanding him. The man stopped opposite of the desk and looked down to the book. "The memoirs of Renar Alkanost, laudenian council leader, written 300 years ago." Aiden offered only a blink. "Though personally I think the fae is arrogant in his opinion. Most laudenians are like that."

"I just wanted to look..." Aiden trailed off. "You know my name--"

"I knew your mother. I sold her the books. She talked about you at length. Sorry about..." he paused to choose an appropriate word, "everything."

"Who are…" Aiden's voice faded and he mouthed the last word formed.

"I'm a collector. You may call me David…or Chen."

"You collect books, Davidorchen?"

"I share them," Chen corrected. He opened his palm and the spark flew obediently to it. A whisper from his lips and it leapt from his hand. It bounced and fluttering across the room, igniting every candle and lamp.

Aiden's eyes followed the spark as it made its journey. Aiden's mouth fell open as he took sight of the forty rows of books that encircled the chamber, every wall, floor to ceiling. Each volume looked as old as the book on the desk, like the books Aiden owned. They were magnificent. The only break in the books came from a glass showcase of old weapons modern man never used. They

were obsolete devices and implements from a time Aiden delighted to remember. They gleamed with polish as if forged and shaved into shape yesterday--broadswords, throwing axes, and a single longbow shaped from black wood. The flame finally returned to its home and closed the door behind it.

"How did you..." Aiden started.

"I asked it to."

"But it's not alive."

"First rule of Attricana: Anything you can think of...thinks for itself."

Aiden gathered his thoughts. "Attricana?"

Chen approached a window and opened the shutters to the moonlight. He pointed to the bright star brushing the crescent.

"By way that everything that can't happen, does."

"Can't happen…Dragons," Aiden said.

"Quite right. Hard to miss when they appear as they did."

"They aren't real," Aiden forced himself to say, "Can't."

"So says the normal world," Chen replied with a shadow of a smirk. Aiden was not smiling. Desperation had set in.

"I don't understand."

"Should you?"

"Was it Zmey?"

"Zmey?" Chen pondered the sudden question. Aiden could see the man rifling through old thoughts. "Zmey is a myth, based on several stories. What attacked you… was a death dragon."

"I couldn't find the other one in my book."

"Book?"

"Codex Dracontis--"

"Oh yes. I remember that one. There are better resources."

"That show the other dragon? The one with gold and blue scales, blue eyes, white whiskers and white talons. A long snake body. Four arms, four talons."

Chen circled around the desk, rolling his fingers across the spines on the shelf behind Aiden. "You know, they say spotting a Yok-ani is a good omen. Seeing two portends a blessed life." Chen found the book in question and pulled it out. It was almost as large as the one already on the desk, but with no cover art. There was only a single large Asian-sinitic letter and the English words underneath Myths of the Kuraukou-Puru.

"Yok-ani? Are they good?" Aiden asked.

"Some people certainly think so," Chen responded as he placed the book gently on the table. He respectfully slid the other to the side. "What do you think?" He unclasped the latches at either end of the new book.

"I think it was good."

"You sure it had four talons?"

"Yes."

"Good eye for detail, considering. They grow more as they age. Three to four to five." He opened the book. The heavy-stock pages were rough on the leaf, a hemp-pulp hybrid. The letters were pounded heavily into the stock. "This one talks of them. They are quiet, reserved, renowned for wisdom, and worshipped for the humility of their power. Under their guidance, lands see no war, famine, or grief. At least that's the claim. Reality, well…I guess they try their best." Aiden broke from the book to look at Chen. "Read it," Chen added. "Stay if you wish."

"My brother will kill me if he finds out."

"Yes, I imagine he will."

Aiden smiled and reassured himself. He thought of Martin's shoulder punches and whatever punishment his new guardians would inflict if he got caught. "I'll stay," he said.

"I'll make tea," said Chen as he walked to his kitchen.

"Uhh, Mister?" Aiden still wasn't ready to call him by name. "How much is true? Dragons? Elves?"

Chen looked back at the young boy. A quiver of a smile crept on his face. "All of it."

* * *

The other dragons grew to power and passed the Yok-ani in number. By the closing of the gates, only nine Yok-ani had been born (or perhaps created). None of them died by natural causes or fell by the hands of an enemy. Nine still remain today. In the five centuries since the re-opening of the gate, the Yok-ani made no attempt to increase their numbers. Although few, they are the most powerful dragons in the world, rivaled only by the remaining dragon kings, of which Shaka, a Yok-ani, is counted as a member of.

The tea was no simple drop-bag of disheveled twigs and bark. Chen had brought a kettle of scolding water, a saucer and cup, and a smaller kettle. Inside the smaller kettle was a collection of dried herbs, flowers, leaves, and honey. Chen poured the hot water in the small kettle, and then emptied the small kettle into the cup. Aiden repeated that process and emptied the larger kettle before finally speaking to the man again.

"Do you have more?"

"Tea or dragons?" Chen replied.

"About everything outside."

Chen waved to the room. "They're all on that subject."

"I want to read them all."

"There will be time for that. It's getting late."

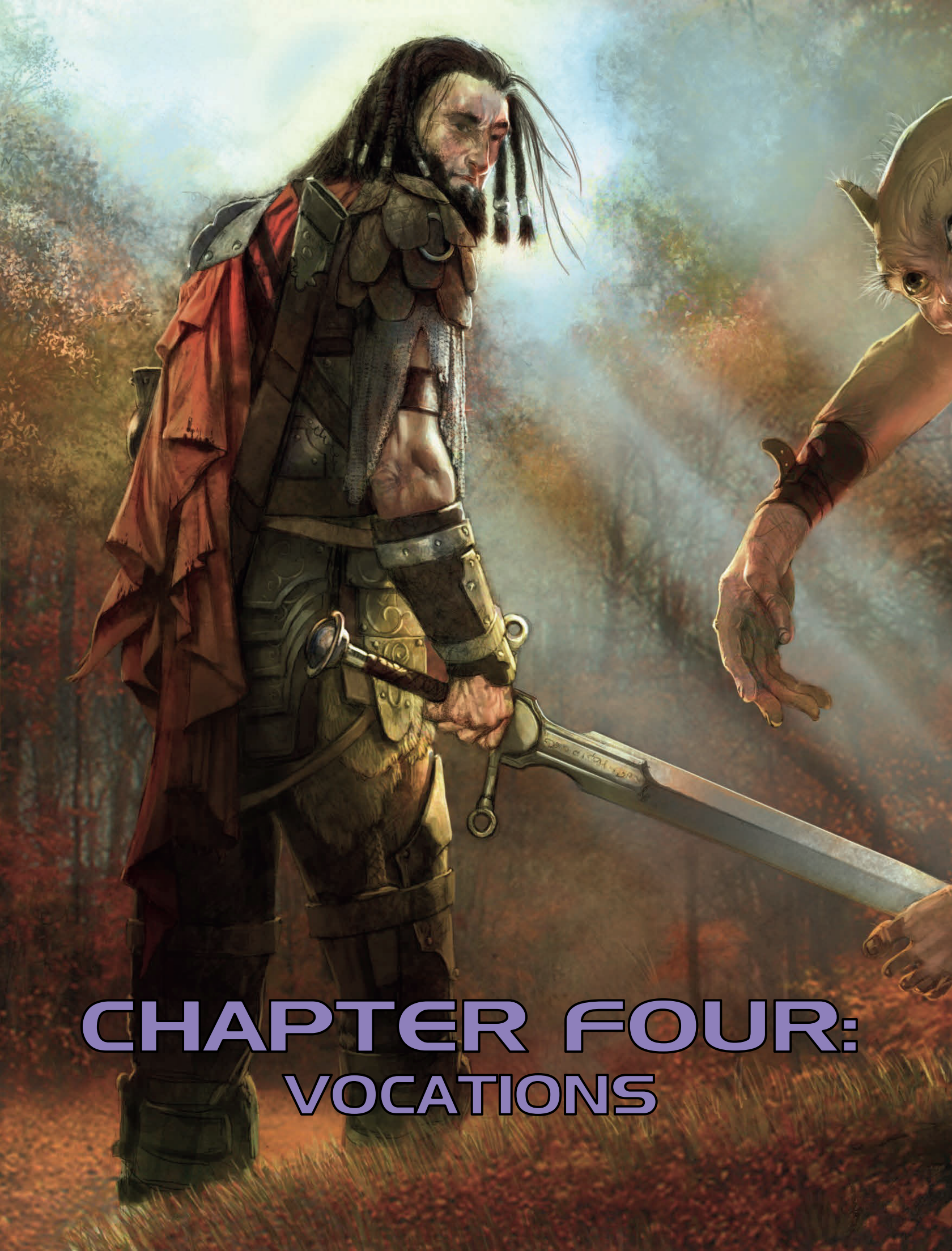
"Then I want to see it myself."

Chen raised a brow. "A zeal for adventure got you already?"

"It's just like the books. Just like the games I play." Aiden was getting excited. "I want to see it all, everything that they said wasn't real, castles, magic, fae."

"It may look the dream, child, but it'll carry the chill of reality. And what will it prove? Even if it feels like your fantasy, you're not the storyteller." Aiden didn't appear dissuaded. "How will you survive out there? Can you wield a sword, shoot an arrow?"

"Maybe," Aiden responded in reflex before realizing that the most strenuous physical activity he had ever done was avoid a soccer ball when playing goalie because he didn't want to get hit in the face. Chen saw through the boy's naivety.



CHAPTER FOUR:
VOCATIONS

A person's genetics represent only the tiniest fraction of their identity. They are also influenced by the place they grew up in, their education, the profession for which they are trained, and their particular hobbies. Each step on their journey gives them skills which may serve them well on their path through life, or which may be entirely irrelevant to their greater concerns. Every person has a slightly different experience, so two individuals pursuing the same vocation may have a completely different way of using those skills.

Whenever you attempt an action, decide which of your vocations is most suitable for it. A particular task may fall into more than one vocation: in that case, choose the higher-rated one. Occasionally, a task may not fall into any of your vocations, in which case, you can still attempt it, but untrained. An untrained check is made at +0 *and* you cannot spend fate points to improve the result (although you can use free invocations and boosts). You also cannot select stunts related to a vocation (either the ones provided or ones you create yourself) unless you are trained in it.

VOCATIONS AND ASPECTS

Vocations are sort of like aspects, in that they provide both narrative permission and plot leverage. While vocations cannot be directly invoked, every vocation rated +2 or higher must be tied to a character aspect (thus, it can be invoked by proxy). Furthermore, every sample vocation in this book has a generic aspect associated with it, which (while not considered a character aspect, and thus not available to invoke at any time) can be introduced as a situation aspect and used to justify compels.

For some, this may be too much mechanical overlap, 'skills' usurping the role of aspects. If you would rather remove a layer of complexity, you can use vocations *as* aspects: for any aspect slot except your Adversity, choose (or invent) an aspect related to the vocation you want and give it a rating. Using this method, you should have one vocation aspect at +3, one at +2, and at least one at +1. You can still invoke aspects as normal, even if you aren't using them for a given check. The downside of this approach is that it will not produce quite as versatile a character as our preferred method.

The vocations that follow are not an exhaustive list, but should serve to provide inspiration to invent your own if you wish. Vocations are broadly divided into several categories:

Species: The characteristics and proclivities of your genetic background. For the complete list of allowed species vocations, see Chapter Three. These are the only vocations that can normally considered trained with a +0 rating.

Regional: Skills, views, and tendencies common to the place you grew up. Any regional vocations for a particular nation are listed with that nation's description in Chapter Five. Humans choose one of these in place of a species vocation.

Profession: The background and training necessary to perform a particular job. The bulk of vocations are professions.

Supernatural: Exceptional abilities that cannot be readily explained. Only one individual in any party should have a supernatural vocation, and each requires a related aspect even if it isn't rated at +2 or higher.

Organization: Membership and training in a particular group. These often work better if all party members belong to the same organization.

LIFEPATHS

Your lifepath is your highest-rated vocation at character creation, the one that defines your abilities more than all others. Your lifepath (as with all vocations rated +2 or higher) must relate to one of your character aspects – if it could relate to more than one, choose just one that it is tied to. When you invoke that aspect you can choose to gain momentum benefits, which can be used to help you or your allies. Other effects may play off of your choice of lifepath as well. Your lifepath normally does not change, but you are able to change it at certain milestones: this may require changing which aspect it's tied to.

PROFESSIONS

Any vocation that relies more on training than innate talent is a profession. For some, a profession is merely a job; a means of putting food on the table. For others, it is a calling, a joy. For both, it requires hard work and dedication to master the skills of the trade.

BASIC PROFESSIONS

Some professions are well-known common archetypes, so basic that nearly everyone knows what they should do just from hearing the name. Such professions are not detailed here, but those looking to fill out the pyramid may consider the following list for inspiration. Those wishing to build their own vocations from scratch might consider these as a starting point, as well. All items listed are suitable as both vocations and as the basis for aspects in their own right.

Acrobat; Actor; Artist; Ascetic Monk; Assassin; Athlete; Beat Cop; Berserker; Blacksmith; Bouncer; Brewmaster; Carpenter; Courtesan; Detective; Demon Hunter; Driver; Exorcist; Farmer; Farrier; Firefighter; Fishmonger; Hawker; Hermit; Hunter; Knight; Man-At-Arms; Mercenary; Minstrel; Ordained Priest; Research Scientist; Rockstar; Scholar; Shaman; Shopkeep; Teacher; Thief; Tribal Warrior; Wizard; Woodsman

HOBBIES

Sometimes, a person is a dabbler rather than a true professional. Rather than developing a complete skill set, they focus on a particular element of a trade which they pursue as a side interest. Optionally, each character can select up to three hobbies at character creation in which they can be considered trained at +0, and can acquire any number of additional hobbies during play if they wish. You can also designate a hobby as a ranked vocation if you want to be better at it, but since any starting vocation at +2 or higher needs to be tied to an aspect, you may want to consider expanding your hobby into a basic profession or even a full-blown custom vocation at higher ranks. Some examples are listed below.

Accountancy; Arcane Studies; Biology; Debating; Dog Sledding; Echalogy; Fencing; Fishing; Horsemanship; Hunting; Jigsaw Puzzles; Juggling; Knife-Throwing; Logic Puzzles; Philosophy; Physics; Religious Studies; Riddles; Scrimshaw; Shooting; Tinkering; Tumbling; Whittling; World History

SPELLCASTERS

Spellcasting vocations represent specific magical traditions and training, and usually limit the types of totems a character can use and the types and trappings of spells they cast. Unlike other professions, a spellcaster *must* take at least one aspect related to the practice of magic, even with a +1 vocation. It is possible (though rare) to belong to more than one magical tradition: in this case, a relevant aspect and vocation is required for each (the aspects can be combined, but the vocations cannot). If none of the provided spellcasting vocations appeal, you are free to make up your own, or just choose the basic profession 'Wizard' until you can think of something better and choose any totem and spell focus you like. Almost vocation can be modified to become a spellcaster if you wish, although some may require more modification than others (for instance, turning an Alpha into a magical pack-master is just a matter of choosing a suitable aspect and spell effects, whereas turning a Gunslinger into one requires some way of explaining how the vocation's abilities apply to someone who can't use guns). In this case, there are no restrictions on the choice of totem, and the types of spells available are only limited by the normal focus of the vocation.

See *Chapter Seven: Magic* for more details on spellcasting.

CUSTOM PROFESSIONS

If none of the provided vocations entirely fits what you envision for your character, make up your own, following these guidelines:

Aspect: Even if you are taking the vocation at a rank that does not require it to be tied to an aspect, come up with a generic one (or several) anyway in case someone

else wants to use the same vocation. Think of some general situations in which it might be invoked and compelled and write them down, just for reference.

Stunts: Come up with between one and three stunts for the vocation, even if you don't plan to take one. By forcing yourself to think of ways to improve the vocation's innate skill set, you get a more solid idea of what the vocation can do. Remember, stunts should make you better at something you can already do, not let you do something you couldn't do before.

Description: Write a short description of the vocation so that everybody at the table knows what to expect from it (and so you don't forget what you had in mind as the campaign goes on). It's OK to change the description as you work the kinks out, but make sure everybody is on board with the changes.

ALPHA

The Leader of the Pack

Calypso didn't come home from the hunt today. She was old; nature takes its course. I am sad, but I understand the necessity. Tonight, my packmates feast all the more for one fewer mouth to feed. I will not forget her, but that will not stop me from finding another friend.

PERMISSION

Chaparran, kodiak, pagus, or echan human. If you want supernatural command over beasts, this becomes a supernatural vocation instead and requires a relevant aspect.

ALPHA ASPECTS

Alphas are defined by the kinds of animals they befriend. Consider whether you favor a particular type of creature or whether you are just generally good with animals.

Sample Aspects: ***Birdcatcher; Friend to All Animals; 'My Wolf Would Like a Word With You'***

Sample Benefits: Earning an animal's respect; defending an animal companion; tracking; wilderness survival.

Sample Drawbacks: Must aid of an abused animal; conflicts between predators or prey; dealing badly with civilization.

ALPHA STUNTS

Ambush Hunting: You or your animal companions gain +2 to attack a target from cover while another member of your pack is visible to that target.

Animal Speech: You can spend a fate point to treat any animal in the scene that is not actively unfriendly to you as your animal companion until the end of the scene, or make a hostile animal indifferent to you until the end of your next turn.

Pack Hunting: You can make melee attacks with your animal companion against targets in adjacent zones.

ANIMAL MECHANICS

There are numerous ways to handle animal companions using the *Fate* rules. The easiest is to treat the animal as a narrative conceit, effectively a tool of the vocation. Any action you take with the vocation can be explained as commanding an animal to perform the task.

A more involved approach would be to invest one of your aspect slots or one or more stunts in the animal. This is the method favored if you want the animal to be more significant to your character, more a friend than a servant, or if you have a particular mechanical idea for the creature. This way, too, the creature is somewhat protected from the vagaries of the narrative, as changing the aspect would require a milestone or an extreme consequence.

Some will prefer that the animal be represented by an NPC, in which case (although nominally under the control of the player) the creature's actions will ultimately be made at the GM's discretion. Such animal companions are average basic monsters.

The wilds of Canam are full of beasts both natural and supernatural. While an alpha does not have any magical hold over such creatures – she must persuade them to help her, or refrain from hindering, just like she might a more sapient being – the distinction may be lost on the casual observer. The ease with which an alpha communicates with her pack through subtle body language might be mistaken for telepathy by those who do not know better. She usually has one or more dedicated companions who travel with her, but she can work her ways on any creature of nature, timid or fierce, herbivore or hunter, from the tiniest finch to the stubbornest moose. The creatures of the wild can spy out the land for her, fight by her side, and most of all, keep her company in the lonely lands between settlements.

The alpha knows the ways of the wilds and can find food in the wilderness with as much ease as a native creature – some even prefer to eat in the same manner as their carnivorous companions, which can be disquieting to any traveling companions of a more 'civilized' bent. More often than not, the alpha prefers to fight alongside her pack, preferring hunting tools or even her own fists and feet, nails and teeth as weapons, although a bow, throwing knife or hatchet may serve for taking down prey from a distance – the alpha's preference is usually dictated by the hunting style of the animals they fight beside.

Chaparrans, naturally, are the most likely to take on such a role: although kodiaks are equally attuned to nature, the fact that they are descended from a solitary apex predator makes most animals uneasy around them, and there are few humans or other fae who are sufficiently comfortable in the wilds to want to dedicate themselves to them.

ALPHA SUMMARY

As an Alpha, you can…

…communicate with animals as effectively as with more intelligent beings.

…use the talents of your animal companions: many eyes (and noses) make spotting weaknesses easier, and many legs make it easier to corner the prey.

…fight alongside the teeth and claws of your animal friends.

ANCIENT WUXIA

Follower of the Oldest Martial Arts

Murnock stands upon the ridge of the temple's roof, perfectly still despite the whipping wind, untroubled by the chill of the Fargon winter despite his bare chest. He has stood there, deep in meditation, since the start of summer, taking no food nor drink, giving no acknowledgment of the world around – except once, when a roc tried to pluck him from his perch some months ago. His eyes never opening, he reached out and flicked the bird on the beak with his finger, and it fell dead in the temple courtyard. It didn't really taste all that much like chicken, to tell the truth.

PERMISSION

Raised in, or studied under a sensei from Genai, Fargon, or Limshau.

ANCIENT WUXIA ASPECTS

A proper Wuxia aspect should be more about inner peace and harmony than about wire-fu acrobatics and dance-like fight scenes, but there are plenty who start upon the path for superficial reasons only to find the true way later. Consider your relationship to your sensei, and your place within an ancient tradition.

Sample Aspects: ***Fight Without Fighting; Koan Master; 'My Kung Fu Is Superior'***

Sample Benefits: Running and leaping great distances; meditation; self-healing; philosophical riddles; unarmed combat.

Sample Drawbacks: Strict moral code; challenge by a rival school; need to honor sensei even when in opposition.

ANCIENT WUXIA STUNTS

Devout Belief: Whenever you successfully defend against a mind-affecting attack, you can immediately make an advantage check for one of your own aspects.

Point and Challenge: You can spend a fate point to designate one opponent in a conflict. Until you or the target is taken out, one hour passes, or you designate a different opponent, you gain +2 to advantage checks against the target, and they must succeed at an overcome action to make an attack that doesn't include you.

Ukemi: When you successfully defend against a physical attack, you can immediately move one zone. If you critically succeed, you can instead make an immediate maneuvering advantage check.

The narros love to take credit for influencing the ancient Asian martial arts, as well as their mythology and culture. They place a great deal of pride in this and were happy to see the pillars of their disciplines replicated and honored across the millennia, remaining virtually unchanged on their return. Some humans don't appreciate the assumption, claiming the narros had no influence in the development of human martial arts. Damaskans certainly make no such claim and only admit to a mild cultural inspiration; those from Limshau absorbed so much human and particularly Asian culture into their nation, it's hard to determine what was fae-influenced and what was originally a human concept. Despite this disagreement, three similar styles of unarmed combat emerged in three different regions in Canam. It is thought those from Limshau gleaned theirs from their Genai neighbors when so many residents of Angel left to help build the empire of knowledge. The narros from Fargon were too remote to make this claim. Their discipline stems back to the old age, where they perfected their art over thousands of years; despite their pride, it irritates them profoundly to know that humanity was able to create more complicated systems with greater physical and mental conditions in a tenth the time.

One trained in this practice may prefer weapons endowed with magic, but a follower of wuxia is not helpless while unarmed. This path does not encourage violence. Instead, it is designed for self-control and mental clarity. Many narros and humans teach this discipline alongside book studies and commit time to its practice as another might perform aerobics in the morning. Some practitioners refuse to apply their discipline in a violent fashion, believing to do so would be a failure of their philosophy. For others, to commit this practice to violence is a logical progression. Some take this to an extreme, using it only to benefit themselves. Others are considered heroes, fighting for noble causes and refusing to stand idle while the innocent suffer. These ad-

venturers love sparring and often duel aggressively with allies to test their mettle and skill. Though not a requirement for friendship, it goes a long way to match a wuxia in combat. Even enemies matching their skills in a fair duel will garner respect.

ANCIENT WUXIA SUMMARY

As a Wuxia, you can…

…master your body to such a degree as to seemingly overcome the very laws of nature: with a simple tap of your foot, you break the bonds of earth; with barely any effort over a run, you may leap vast distances, almost appearing to fly; you can balance on thin branches and with a little effort, even stride across water.

…deduce answers to many kinds of questions (especially logical or philosophical ones) even when you are not intimately familiar with the subject matter.

…use your knowledge of pressure points to disable your foes.

…fight with every part of your body, unarmed and unarmored or with a variety of exotic and improvised weapons.

CRIMSON LEAF

Dedicated Vigilante Assassin

This human would be considered a deviant by the standards of his own people, so he comes here to fulfill his needs. We had no problem with him, until he added nonconsensual torture to his perversions. Now, the leaves whisper in the wind, and his name is entered in my Book. I have seen him across the common, and I am prepared. I will bring him to justice. Nothing else matters.

"Evening, squire," I call out to him like the rustic farmer I pretend to be, chewing on a hollow wheat stalk. He nods absently as he passes, not realizing the 'mosquito' that just stung him will bring him death before the day is out.

PERMISSION

Gimfen from Salvabrooke.

CRIMSON LEAF ASPECTS

A Crimson Leaf always has a reason for joining the order, but rarely is it due to being the direct victim of a crime – indeed, a Leaf is never made responsible for punishing any crime that they may have had a traumatic past with, lest it cloud their judgment and make them freeze or act incautiously. Instead, consider how a friend or loved one might have been harmed.

Sample Aspects: ***Instrument of Another's Vengeance; "Nothing Else Matters"; Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Slaver to Live***

Sample Benefits: Appearing nondescript; gathering information; attacking with improvised weapons or poison; melting into a crowd.

Sample Drawbacks: Abandoning another mission to punish a crime; ignoring a crime that isn't in the book.

CRIMSON LEAF STUNTS

Nemesis: Enemies in violation of one of the crimes on your list cannot use stress to defray damage from your attacks.

Purposeful and Committed: You gain +2 to defense against criminals you have targeted for punishment as long as you make an attack or maneuvering advantage check against them on your turn.

Victory or Death, Hopefully Victory (requires Nemesis): You can spend a fate point to prevent a targeted criminal from defending against one attack or advantage check (they may still benefit from passive difficulty or a defense made by another on their behalf).

THE DEATH BOOK

Each Crimson Leaf should choose five to ten *specific and severe* crimes that they are dedicated to punishing. If the GM considers one of the chosen crimes to be too general, you should work together to refine it. Some sample crimes for the list are:

- Kidnapping to sell into slavery;
- Purchasing a slave without intent to immediately free them;
- Initiating sexual violence;
- Robbery resulting in injury or death;
- Spousal abuse;
- Incitement to violence;
- Treason;
- Warmongering;
- Cruelty to animals;
- Theft of an heirloom.

When facing down someone guilty of a crime in your Death Book, you are expected to pull out all the stops. You can invoke *any* aspect available to you to take them down, no matter how slim the justification.

Not much is known about the Salvabrooke assassin's guild, the Crimson Leaf. What marks them apart from other such guilds is that, despite being labeled a radical order against the greater good by the nation's ruling government, there is no bounty placed on their capture. One Salvabrooke state official labeled them in private statement as being "a humorous irritation." Despite calls for their apprehension from Limshau, Kannos, and Abidan, Salvabrooke has made no effort to rein them in, publicly or privately. Part of this may be because of Salvabrooke's laissez-faire view of law enforcement: gimfen don't consider something a crime unless it does serious harm to someone, and the worst the largest communities complain about are pickpockets and the occasional confidence scam, though both are practically an infestation across the land. The fact that a criminal organization has been tolerated for so long baffles those who don't know the full details.

The Crimson Leaf actually considers itself the final word of law in Salvabrooke. They are a ruthless vigilante force of trained gimfen whose sole purpose is to protect the innocent of the land from the greater evils that aim to exploit them. Every Malkut slaver that attempts to invade gimfen territory becomes their target and few

slaver caravans have survived the journey.

The Crimson Leaf claims a membership between 100 to 250 gimfen which travel throughout Salvabrooke and beyond, acting nonchalant and going about their lives until given a mission. This usually takes the form of a short, specific list of crimes, unique to each member, which the assassin is expected to punish immediately upon becoming aware of them. A farmer may be minding his crops and see a crime listed on his or her response list. He would leap into action and return to his duties before anyone knew he was gone. A Crimson Leaf may interfere to prevent in a crime not on his list if he actually witnesses it, but otherwise is expected to leave it to another of the brethren to avoid compromising the order's secrecy.

As a member of this group, you possess your own list of crimes to respond to. There is no jury, just an executioner. These crimes are not petty or trivial, but severe transgressions: slavery, rape, robbery with violence, and theft of sentimental treasures are common entries. Despite what other purposes you have in life, regardless of the mission you may be on or the job you have accepted, your duties as a Crimson Leaf always take precedence. Nothing else matters, even if it leads to the failure of your job and the abandonment of your friends.

CRIMSON LEAF SUMMARY

As a Crimson Leaf, you can…

...use your size and stealth to encourage people to overlook you, and deliver your judgment before the malefactor is aware of your presence.

…act with unyielding determination; once you have set your sights on a criminal, they are your nemesis, and you will stop at nothing to bring them to justice.

…be as patient as you need to be, willing to hold until the target's fate is certain… but when the course is set, nothing else matters.

…be ready to effect punishment at any moment, turning virtually anything into a weapon.

CRYPHTARON

Old and Tough

I can tell you the history of every one of my scars. I'm twenty-two years old – that's like a zillion in human years – and I've seen more battles than any of the knights whose skulls I've cracked open on the way. This one, here, across my collarbone – one of those Ixindar demons, shemjaza we call'em, tried to take my head off a few years back for mouthing off to it. This one, these ones here, and the one across my gut – I got those ones paying it back for its efforts.

PERMISSION

Pagus, over 20 years of age.

CRYPHTARON ASPECTS

Central to the Cryphtaron's experience is what battles she has been through to gain the honor. Consider your survival strategy and your accomplishments.

Sample Aspects: ***Battle-Scarred Elder; "I'm Just As Tough As I Look"; Killed a Dragon With My Bare Hands***

Sample Benefits: Enduring pain; battle fury; demanding respect from pagus; intimidating people.

Sample Drawbacks: Instant target for ambitious younger pagus; even less welcomed than normal pagus; intimidate people even when you don't want to.

CRYPHTARON STUNTS

Mark of Trust: You gain +2 to all social checks against pagus and +2 to attempts to intimidate non-pagus or impress them with your toughness.

Ritual Scarring: You gain an additional stress box. If you are already at 4 boxes, you gain an additional minor consequence slot instead (even if you already have one).

Strength Through Pain: You gain one free invocation of any of your minor or moderate consequences, and two free invocations of any of your major or extreme consequences.

Outside of pagus circles, a cryphtaron looks even more revolting than his cousins. To a pagus, however, the cryphtaron is a walking angel. In locations where pagus are allowed to develop their own culture and their actions are not compelled by others, they still often develop traditions based around the same levels of violence. One ritual coincides with a pagus reaching the Second

Age of Krenkallakoss. A pagus at nine becomes an adult and is assumed to be a warrior. Upon reaching the age of twenty, a pagus is permitted the opportunity to reach a higher level of authority within the village, the equivalent to a lieutenant. The subject undergoes repeated punishment under sensory deprivation. The pagus is blindfolded and rendered deaf. He is lowered into water and repeatedly stabbed. Salt is packed into the wounds to induce permanent scars. These marks (assuming the pagus survives) denote the pagus as a cryphtaron—a trusted warrior all pagus can respect. If a pagus encounters a cryphtaron in passing, it is automatically assumed the elder warrior is a free pagus, for those who serve the shemjaza and death dragons rarely last long enough to be so honored. Even pagus loyally following their demonic masters have a profound adoration for the order. Cryphtaron are rarely taken alive in combat, but if rival pagus do manage to capture one, the cryphtaron is permitted to take his own life; afterwards, his body and belongings are returned unspoiled to the rival village. Sometimes a captured cryphtaron is permitted the opportunity to fight for his freedom. He is given impossible odds against the village's greatest heroes. If he succeeds, the cryphtaron is permitted to either challenge the chief for control of the village (which he usually does) or leave with additional scars to return home.

If, by some miracle, a pagus passes the age of about 35, one of two unavoidable destinies presents itself: either they grow wise and steadfast in their cultivated ethics, or they go insane. With the latter, their innate rage possesses them more and more. Few pagus are able to manage their emotions. Pagus under the thrall of demon or dragon are killed in the unlikely event that they make it past 35, as their madness makes them more of a threat to their own kind than to enemies. If wise, they soon become respected leaders and spiritual guides, an equal if not greater threat. All free pagus tribes are lead by elder pagus. Unlike other races that drift into frailty, pagus continue to grow in size. A pagus has never died of old age and few ever maintain their sanity into their senility. They are often put out of their misery before becoming a threat to others. Only a handful of pagus have managed to keep their minds together, showing potential to lead their kind into an enlightened future.

CRYPHTARON SUMMARY

As a Cryphtaron, you can…

…rely on your brute strength, cunning and toughness.

… gain respect from pagus and fear from everyone else with your intimidating visage, silencing opposition with a single growl.

…weather a blow that would sunder another pagus and still split the attacker's head open with your bare hands.

CUSTODIAN

Defenders of the Realm of Learning

"Just one band of skeggs? That's nothing!" the drunkard bragged. "I once took down a chiggoth with one crossbow bolt. It lodged in the monster's eye and sent it crashing to the ground, crushing at least two, three dozen boggs underneath it!" One by one, the drinking companions added their own sensational boasts, becoming more and more overblown as the mead flowed. At last, the loudest of the bunch looked up at the last member of the common room's company, who had all the while remained quiet in the corner, scribbling away in a notebook. "Hey, you!" he called out. "Don't be a spoilsport. What's the biggest thing you've brought down by yourself?"

The custodian put away his stylus and looked up absently. "Hmm?" he replied. "Oh. Well, in terms of actual size I suppose there was that cancer dragon last week, but if I were truly pressed, I'd say it would have to be your reputation, milord."

PERMISSION

Trained in Limshau.

CUSTODIAN ASPECTS

A Custodian is a warrior first, but a librarian not far behind that. Your relationship to knowledge in general and your chosen focus in particular will influence how you perform your duties.

Sample Aspects: ***Geography is My Best Subject; Lotus Blade Master; Scholar Warden***

Sample Benefits: Navigating in confined areas; acrobatics; moving quietly; wielding two weapons.

Sample Drawbacks: Driven to protect knowledge; at a disadvantage over open ground.

CUSTODIAN STUNTS

Canonical Texts on Fighting: When you make an acrobatic check in close confines during a melee combat, you gain a critical success if you beat the opposition by 2 instead of 3.

Flow as Water: You ignore basic physical obstacles to movement (debris, low walls, ladders, jumps or wall-runs of less than 10 feet, etc), and you can spend a fate point to ignore *any* physical obstacle to movement.

Niten-do: If you initiate a fight against a target that is unaware of you or ***Quickdraw*** a weapon, you can make two attacks, or an attack followed by an advantage action, on your next turn.

Behind the white walls of Limshau, elite guardians patrol the stacks, defending knowledge and people against anyone wishing to destroy such riches. Because of the tight confines of narrow city streets and alleys, this elite force eventually developed a discipline revolving around fast movement and quick, decisive strikes at critical enemy weaknesses.

After an attack from a large and somewhat organized bogg force 300 years ago left a section of the geology branch in ruins, Ravenar Limshau IV decreed that a specific echelon of elite librarians be trained exclusively

in combat, relegating their librarian skills to lesser importance. Even before the custodians were formally commissioned, there was Stratos Stormguard, a master of all arms and trusted ally of Ravenar Limshau. He stayed behind to watch the flock when the leader went on crusade. Stratos developed the martial practice all custodians would soon follow. The martial art was known as *gorna sersannis*, though later masters would use the modern English term "Lotus Blade." Oddly enough, Stratos preferred the use of a halberd to the common twin swords employed by most custodians today. Stratos is one of the few to use both ends of his weapon without losing balance. He advanced his art to perfection before even attempting to train another. In the end, he required Ravenar to fill in the gaps in the defense Stratos could not satisfy. It would take 150 years before Stratos considered the discipline finished. The new discipline incorporated an agile battle stance, able to maximize maneuverability in a restricted field of movement. Heavy armor weighed down combatants and blocked the advance of reinforcements: shields also proved a hazard. Pure speed became the greatest ally, along with the insight to anticipate and counter a foe's every move and attack. Lighter weapons were preferred. In their natural habitat, the custodian finds no equal.

A custodian's priorities are on the freedoms of all. Free speech and the written word are both worthy causes for a custodian to die for. Some have abandoned those beliefs, turning away from their great city. These rogues seek adventure for their own satisfaction, but no evil soul survives the training process without being discovered, and it is seldom necessary to hunt deserters down.

A loyal custodian outside the walls stands ever vigilant to fight for the freedom and the retrieval of information. Being sent on fact-finding missions or quests to retrieve priceless tomes, a crusading custodian climbs the tallest mountains and digs into the deepest dungeons to seek their treasure. An independent soul still believes in the value of his training but seeks personal adventure more than the acquisition of knowledge.

CUSTODIAN SUMMARY

As a Custodian, you can…

…move with consummate speed and stealth, using your training in tight confines such as the tight stacks of a library: even if you are not damaskan, you are trained in parkour techniques to allow you to move swiftly and quietly to anywhere you are needed.

…fight with two weapons or a finessable two-handed weapon to bring swift retribution to the enemies of knowledge.

…call upon the lore of the section of the library you defend, both for the information itself and the physical layout of the stacks.

DARAWREN

Summoning the Magic of the Earth

The little boy shivered in the cold of the dark night. His papa had taught him how to light a fire, but he had also heard stories of this forest and did not dare try to make a light lest the trees swallow him whole for his transgression. He hadn't meant to wander so far in, but he had lost his way within moments of setting foot under the enchanted canopy. There was a haunting cry, the call of an owl, and the boy started, convinced a monster was coming to gobble him up. He pushed up against a tree trunk as a shape emerged from the darkness, wrapped in a long cloak… and then a light sparked from the figure's fingers, revealing a comely young woman.

"What are you doing here so late, child?" the woman said kindly. "The forest at night is no place for a human. Let me guess – you were playing that you were a mighty hero come to rescue the beautiful elf-maid?" The boy was too terrified to say anything. The fae girl laughed, and changed, her body reshaping itself into a wondrous white horse. "Well," said the horse, kneeling down, "consider her duly rescued. Climb on my back and I'll take you home."

PERMISSIONS

Magic aspect, trained at Jibaro.

DARAWREN ASPECTS

To a Darawren, the most important decision is whether they identify more closely with the animate or inanimate elements of nature – this does not impact their abilities, but their approach to magic. Consider whether your magic is more like the savage bite of a wild creature or the slow, inexorable push of growing plants and continental drift.

Sample Aspects: ***Borne Aloft on the Wind; Practised Therianthrope; Waking the Woods***

Sample Benefits: Summoning elementals; commanding animals and plants; wilderness survival; natural psychometry.

Sample Drawbacks: Defending the earth from despoilers; not doing the slightest harm to nature.

DARAWREN STUNTS

Friend of Trees: When you cast a spell to awaken or manipulate a tree, you can spend a fate point to allow the tree to act independently of you for one round.

Skinchanger: Choose one animal form: you gain +2 to advantage checks to assume this shape.

The Ways of the Wood: While in a completely natural environment, you can either draw a card or play one from your hand when making a spell preparation check.

DARAWREN MAGIC

As might be expected, Darawren tend to focus on elemental magic, particularly spells of earth, water and aether, particularly the latter: transformation spells feature heavily in the Jibaro curriculum, for the easiest way to attune oneself to the Earth, so the theory goes, is to physically transform oneself into a creature of nature and experience the world as it is seen by a plant or animal. The most common totem among Darawren is the staff, which is always taken from the branch of a fallen tree, never new-hewn. A few Darawren favor the book, which is usually made from strips of bark taken from dead trees or the large leaves of the enchanted forest.

Many wizards across the world classify the Towers of Jibaro as the greatest collection of arcane magic, even compared to the repositories of Limshau and Laudenia. However, the knowledge locked inside Jibaro is accessible only to a select few, the elite spellcasters of Jibaro, the darawren. With only one wizard graduating each a year, Jibaro is considered one of the most prestigious and daunting learning experiences in arcane wizardry on the planet, more so than even Laudenia. Where Laudenia's limited enrollment stems from its prohibition of non-laudenians, Jibaro's is due to a lengthy and unorthodox teaching model. Although still employing totems, the mandatory standard of all wizardry, Jibaro teaches an altered viewpoint of their purpose, being only a repository of words, and not the focus of magic. Jibaro instructs its students that magic rises from the Earth, not falls from the gate. The gate may be the ultimate source of magic in the world, but the chaparrans cite one observable fact—there's no magic in space. All

creatures rise from the soil, and it follows logically that magic, too, derives from Earth. Magic would not exist without the Earth. The wizards of Jibaro are taught to channel Pleroma—the language of magic—through material components brought up from the Earth. This can be as extravagant as jewels but often enough it only a handful of dirt or sand. A darawren often carries a pouch of soil when entering a dungeon or building.

The tests of admittance to enter the order of darawren are extremely taxing, and despite not forbidding non-chaparrans to enter, such exceptions have been rare. No laudenian, damaskan, or tenenbri has endured the opening trials. Several narros have claimed the honor, as have a few kodiaks. There have been stories of one or two humans managing to accept the title of darawren but no one has been able to confirm their names.

DARAWREN SUMMARY

As a Darawren, you can…

…transform into animals, or turn the trees, the rivers, the very ground to your side.

…call upon arcane lore equal to that of any university-trained wizard; your understanding of the world's mysteries is second to none.

…use your magic to confound your foes, bringing forth the roots and branches of trees to attack your enemies, and calling on the winds, the elementals of the Earth, the beasts of air and land to defend you.

…feel the life and power rising from the ground beneath your feet; you understand the true source of magic, and know that it is not to be commanded, but coaxed.

DEATH HUNTER

Those That Hunt Monsters Shall Become Monsters

They all drink together quietly in the corner when they come into my bar. They never speak – as far as I know, they don't even know each other outside of the hour every other week or so they come in to drink. You'd be hard-pressed to tell them apart: while they don't look remotely similar, they all have the same air about them, a hardness about the body and especially in the depths of the eyes. Their faces tell stories of sleepless nights and silver claws in the shadows. I avoid looking at them when I serve their drinks. I'd like to keep all my teeth.

PERMISSION

From or trained in Jairus.

DEATH HUNTER ASPECTS

Why a person becomes a Death Hunter matters little after their vocation has begun to infect them. Consider instead what the long-term effects of this work have been on you (or, if you are just starting, how it has already begun to change you).

Sample Aspects: ***Daredevil Demonslayer; Dead Man Walking; Reformed Criminal Seeking Redemption***

Sample Benefits: Resisting supernatural temptation; navigating in a festering marsh; slaying anything that looks like a monster.

Sample Drawbacks: Not always being able to tell the difference between what is and isn't a monster; bouts of depression and rage; not good in social situations.

DEATH HUNTER STUNTS

Corruption Resistance: You gain +2 to defense against undead, creatures of Ixindar, and necromantic and nihilimantic effects, including corruption checks.

Silver Crosses: When you create an advantage related to any special weakness of a monster, draw a card. If the draw is positive, you gain +2 to any attack on which you invoke that aspect until the end of the encounter. If the draw is neutral or negative, you must use that card on your next attack, but your next check against the monster after that gains a bonus equal to the absolute value of the card (+1 for neutral cards).

The Stains of the Profession: You gain a free invocation of any mental consequence you take.

DEMON HUNTERS

The Death Hunter vocation can be easily adapted to represent any hunter of supernatural evil: only the Death Hunters have a loose organization dedicated to their craft, but there is no reason why a lone, hardened hunter might not infiltrate another wasteland such as Apocrypha or Xixion to root out whatever darkness that lurks there above and beyond the usual hordes of violent psychopaths. The important thing to emphasize is the emotional toll the work takes on the hunter, and the supernatural horror of their foes. There are no swashbucklers who take up this trade, or if they do, they do not remain so for long. A hunter learns early on to use every trick in the book to take down their enemy, because if they don't, they don't live long enough to learn it.

Jairus was a poor mining village with a small but promising lumber industry. Centuries ago, word came from the lips of dying refugees from the south of the collapse of a great kingdom of men. The bravest and best of Jairus took it upon themselves to see the extent of the calamity. They expected to see razed buildings and scorched soil. They were not prepared for the Black Marsh of Sana. A curse had taken the entire land, spreading into the soil, flora, and the sky. Thick, black oil – unable to burn – seeped from the ground. The few plants that did grow had no color or leaves. The Jairus militia found only empty huts and keeps, no bodies. Then they saw the shadows move. Silver claws lashed from the darkness and only a handful of the group escaped to tell the tale.

The first legends of the marsh were born and generations later, brave warriors take it upon themselves to venture into the marsh in hopes of destroying the source of the corruption. The Jairus death hunters believe that if the shapeless wild of the Marsh are destroyed, the marsh would weaken. The true key to its elimination is the discovery and destruction of King Sana's old castle, Kardia-Gothas, the source of the plague. To prepare themselves for the traumas of the

marsh, recruits are taught to control their fears by undergoing a battery of ordeals to tax their mental stability. Outsiders claim this leaves emotional scars so cavernous that incoming terrors simply fall into the depths. They assert that death hunters are no longer stable and would be prone to sudden, unpredictable acts of extreme violence if they didn't temper that need with excursions into the Marsh. The hunters may possess some demented addiction to such horrors; if Kardia-Gothas were to be found and destroyed, and the Marsh was to fade away, the death hunters of Jairus may turn on their own people in some manic dependence on sadism.

Outside of their duties, death hunters are detached and unfriendly. They are not necessarily mean-spirited, but care nothing for manners or etiquette. They speak bluntly of their personal demons, ranging from simple addictions to the perverse pleasures of dominance and masochistic activities. They are neither welcomed at parties nor do they make a point to socialize with groups. Even those with a shred of charity left don't reveal those emotions and their rare acts kindness often come to the surprise of others.

Jairus death hunters skirt the line between nobility and wickedness and many admit – even to themselves – that they have crossed the line, believing only their oath to eliminate the corruption of Sana and other infections like Tranquiss, Ixindar, and the Necrosea keeps them from turning on those they swore to protect.

DEATH HUNTER SUMMARY

As a Death Hunter, you can…

…navigate and avoid the hazards of the Sana Marsh and its shadowy denizens.

…use your knowledge of corrupted landscapes to defeat monsters, identifying their weaknesses and bringing exactly the right weapon for the fiend you wish to slay.

…armor your mind against casual attempts to influence you with the horrors you have witnessed.

DOPPELSHIDO

Living Weapons Bound by Honor

When first I came to Fargon from Limshau, I was astonished how closely the warriors of this land resembled my own ancestors. They wore the same armor, wielded many of the same weapons, addressed each other with terms of respect not quite the same but of equal reverence, stood by their lords unto death as my samurai forebears had done, and yet they had done these things millions of years before the miniscule span of time that bushido ruled in the Land of the Rising Sun. I asked my host if the narros had any equivalent of the ancient rite of seppuku, and he looked at me strangely.

"No," he said. "That practice is a human barbarism. Mere failure is no excuse to waste a good fighter. Let him atone by giving his life in battle, that his shame may be turned to good use."

PERMISSIONS

Narros, trained by a ravnorra.

DOPPELSHIDO ASPECTS

A Doppelshido is defined by his weapon and his allegiance. Consider what quest or personal dishonor has sent you out into the world.

Sample Aspects: ***Master of the Krollish; Ravnorra; Wandering Ronin***

Sample Benefits: Wielding a chosen weapon; climbing and balancing while armed or armored; defending a lord or ally; overcoming personal discomfort.

Sample Drawbacks: Must defend master above all else; forced to fight with a different weapon; revelation of some personal disgrace.

DOPPELSHIDO STUNTS

Blade Balancing: You gain +2 to acrobatic checks involving a melee weapon.

Double-Form: If you tie or fail a melee attack, you can spend a fate point to immediately make an advantage check related to your combat style.

Hatamoto (requires one other Doppelshido stunt): Choose advantage, attack, defense, or overcome. You gain +1 to the chosen action as it relates to wielding your chosen weapon in combat, or +2 when used on behalf of another (a defense made for someone else, an advantage passed to an ally, an attack against an enemy that injured your friend, etc). You can select this stunt twice, choosing a different action the second time.

Normal narros circulate through many careers in their early life, only settling on their final calling after experiencing many others. Families support this for their youth and adult narros can often claim many feathers in their caps. A few find their calling early and desire no other. They take to weapons as quickly as their eating implements, learning early skills by swinging at shadows and driving their blunt wasters into benches and walls. When their talents are allowed to develop, they crave no other path. In a few cases, these narros are granted an audition to tutor under (and possibly become) one of the ravnorra lords. They undergo brutal training including walking and running for hours laden with heavy weights, as well as being beaten with sticks over their legs and arms until they no longer stumble or wince. They do not choose their own weapons: the master chooses the weapon best suited to each student. They learn every balance point, every edge with the capacity to kill. The narros learns to use every inch of the weapon in the art of war.

By the time they reach adulthood, they can perch upon their hilt, edge in the soil, and stand there for days without falling. They can twirl their swords behind their back, juggle them between their arms, and strike on the upswing as well as well as the downward cleave. These proud knights take positions as telokkrim, the honored guards of kings and favored guests. They climb the ladders of prestige and set themselves apart as the most devout disciples of combat.

Their path to perfection, however, is not yet over.

The final test still waits—becoming a ravnorra lord, the greatest and most legendary line of narros in history. These fae equivalents of ancient samurai are considered the greatest soldiers of all the fae and the envy of every doppelshido student from the moment they pick up their first blade. The majority of narros that join multi-cultural adventuring parties begin their lives as doppelshido. Whether or not they intend to pursue the final tests is dependent on their individual personality. Some find the final grueling tests too taxing and escape with only basic skills and little honor. Some may be masterless vorronar (ronin), their sworn lord or father felled by a coward's weapon: the lost student must now follow an unfocused path in search for vengeance, which might never be fulfilled. Most go on to become bodyguards and sworn defenders of their houses. Their defense of the house and realm take precedence over all other desires. To break these oaths not only brings dishonor to themselves, but to their house and family as well.

DOPPELSHIDO SUMMARY

As a Doppelshido, you can…

…act in perfect attunement with your environment and weapon, performing physics-defying feats when wielding your chosen armament.

…inflict as much harm with the pommel of your sword or the haft of your spear as with the blade or point.

…don your armor when you wake and seldom remove it save for sleep or death.

…shrug off most minor wounds, and view a mortal blow as proof that you have done your duty to the very end.

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER

If You Build It…

Somewhere in that disemboweled armor suit there's a gimfen. I can hear him alternately whistling merrily and cursing as something small and essential goes 'pling,' followed by frantic hammering and a chorus of "oh well, good enough" or "can someone pass me the duct tape?" The suit is now about three times the size it was when he started, covered with pipes and protrusions that don't seem to serve any useful purpose other than to either terrify the opponent or immobilize them with laughter. I'm just glad I don't have to wear the thing.

PERMISSION

Gimfen.

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER ASPECTS

Experteering Engineers tend to be remarkably single-minded: if it has moving parts, they want to disassemble it to see how it works. Consider what your most prized piece of technology is, and how you can make it even more impractical.

Sample Aspects: ***Can I See That for a Second?; Ooh Shiny!; Overcompensating Much?***

Sample Benefits: Repairing or rebuilding technology; bargaining for scrap; building or disarming traps.

Sample Drawbacks: Taking things apart that you aren't supposed to; obsessive need to test things; device doesn't work quite the way it's intended.

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER STUNTS

Adaptation: The TL of items you can immunize against

disruption increases by 1. You can select this stunt multiple times (to a maximum of TL5).

Boffin (requires Adaptation x2): You can stabilize your immunized items so that others can use them. The maximum TL of an item you can bestow in this way is three below the maximum TL you can adapt (with TL2 being the highest that can be transferred). Items immunized in this way still break down rapidly, requiring maintenance once a week, but anyone with an engineering vocation can perform that maintenance.

Widget Bag: You always have the parts on hand needed to repair a damaged or disrupted technological item. Additionally, you can spend a fate point when repairing a mostly-intact item to repair it as a single overcome action and make it ***Immune to Disruption*** until the end of the encounter.

GIMFEN THINGAMAJIGS

An Experteering Engineer learns how to reverse engineer technology and rebuild it with increased insulation and redundant electronics and gears for it to operate in ED fields, making it ***Immune to Disruption***. By default, only TL0 and TL1 devices can be affected, although the Engineer can take stunts that improves this.

The new item replicates the old in every way except it grows in size and weight. This new shape is no longer sleek or beautiful. It is ugly, clumsy, heavy, ***Bulky and Awkward***. It spits, whines, and creaks with every movement, seemingly on the verge of blowing apart at any second, though never doing so. The technology looks clumsy, with exposed tubes and cables running to backpack mounted insulated power packs. Goggles become massive helmet assemblies. Armor hobbles around quickly, shifting its weight left and right like a drunken narros. Worse, the style of adaptation is unique to you.

Only you know exactly how you adapted the item and attempts to teach others the technique results in utter confusion for anyone other than another Experteering Engineer. Even if explained, the exact supplies would be required, including the original item. Further, the adapted item is so fragile and requires so much fine-tuning that, if the item is given to another to use, it breaks after a single action. Not even another gimfen could figure out the eccentricities of the device before it fails. As a result, you can neither lend nor sell your monstrosities to anyone and they are only useful to you.

Only predominantly mechanical equipment can be adapted. Adapting an item requires one full day of work per tech level of item, and the item requires maintenance by you once per week or it breaks.

For reasons that are not well understood, gimfen do not short out technology by their mere existence. This permitted them to slowly build a technological industry. They were one of the very last species to break off from the first fae branches, and like to claim that their race's capacity to hold technology without disruption proves them to be the final form of the fae – the end result, the ones meant to escape the cradle of Earth.

The inherent problem with this theory is the fae's natural imperceptiveness of technology. The various fae peoples have developed languages, cultures, and even expanding empires. They have forged swords, laid down paths, and erected communities. After a certain point, however, they simply stop; even if their presence was not toxic to machines, the mere concept of industry and mechanization simply would not occur to a fae if they had not been exposed to it from outside. Some claim that because they did not evolve, they lack the instinct to better themselves that drove humanity to its technological peak. Despite their wisdom and creative brilliance with poetry and song, fae lack the drive to push and dominate their world, a natural byproduct of a short-lived evolved species. The gimfen, although not subject to their cousins' technical antipathy, still lack the drive to develop their own, especially in comparison to the fast pace of mankind. For thousands of years they languished with the few advances they stumbled upon through mere luck. All of that changed when they returned and discovered humanity. The short-lived hairless apes found industry and technology second nature.

Gimfen cannot innovate, but they can replicate and improve. After gleaning every nugget of information they could acquire, they started to adapt what they learned to operate outside the walls of bastions. The experteering engineer is the result of this growth. Instead of hiding inside or underneath the grind towers of Gnimfall or the dozens of other communities around Canam, experteering engineers embark into the outside world in search of even more knowledge. They travel the world finding technology they can either use outright, or return home to their people. Their greatest ability is their knack to reverse-engineer human technology they encounter and modify it to operate without disruption in the lands of magic. Most employ this ability in the field of high tech weapons, but some utilize it with standard gear as well. They are limited in what they can adapt, as the result is usually clumsier and substantially larger than the original. Experteering engineers are an unusual sight in Canam but their presence proves that technology's eventual dominance over magic is inevitable.

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER SUMMARY

As an Experteering Engineer, you can…

…prevent disruption events on even the most complex devices: the results aren't pretty, but they're definitely functional.

…take any gadget ever made and make it better (it will probably break after a few uses, but you can do it); the more complex and flashy the weapon or armor, the better.

FARGON DISCIPLINED

The Best of the Best of the Best

Every day for a year, Kezdell sat before the same blank sheet of paper, simply staring at it. He ate with his eyes closed, visualizing that sheet of paper every instant. At

night, he held the sheet in the eye of his dreaming mind. At last, on the final day of the year, he took up his brush and wrote a single character on the paper. He considered it for a moment, then crumpled up the sheet and threw it away.

"Not perfect," he decreed, and fetched another sheet. "I will begin again."

PERMISSIONS

Narros from Fargon; lifepath vocation tied to your concept aspect.

FARGON DISCIPLINED ASPECTS

Each Disciplined's aspects are different, as they all relate to their chosen path. Take the aspect associated with your lifepath and add to it, indicating your single-minded dedication.

Sample Aspects: ***Discoverer of a Foundation Spell; The Finest Swordsman in Fargon; Unsurpassed in Herb Lore***

Sample Benefits: Pushing your limits; holding your ground; impressing others with your knowledge and skill; concealing the true extent of that knowledge and skill.

Sample Drawbacks: High standards; drive to prove yourself; unwillingness to accept less than perfection; intolerance for the half-hearted.

FARGON DISCIPLINED STUNTS

Cornerstone Ability: When you invoke the aspect linked to your lifepath for a +2 bonus, it instead grants +3.

Life's Focus: Choose advantage, attack, defense, or overcome. When performing that action using your lifepath, you can spend a fate point to add your rating in this vocation to the check. You can select this stunt more than once to choose more than one action type.

Master Class (requires Cornerstone Ability): Whenever you invoke the aspect linked to your lifepath to draw a new card, you can draw two cards instead of one.

DISCIPLINED LIFEPATHS

By definition, the Fargon Disciplined can't make this vocation his lifepath. By itself, the vocation doesn't really do anything – its purpose is entirely to enhance *another* vocation and justify pushing that vocation's use to almost supernatural levels: an ordinary Doppelshido might reasonably cut an armored enemy in half with a single sword strike, while a Disciplined Doppelshido could slice through a stone wall with equal ease. While there are certain benefits to keeping the Disciplined vocation at a high rank, it doesn't have to be – even at +1, you can use it to make advantages to benefit your lifepath.

A Disciplined cannot completely change her lifepath or its associated aspect at a major milestone like other characters can (although minor rephrasing is allowed) – she must first give up this vocation if she wishes to change, and taking it again for a new lifepath would require a significant narrative justification.

As is their way, most narros dedicate the entirety of their energy in the application of the task at hand. They reserve nothing for the possibility of failure. They consider one plan, one option, one course for their life. There is no casual hobby. When a narros enters the military (which most are required to do for at least ten years in their youth), they think of nothing else. Waking at sunrise, they train until the fall of night. Others turn to spellcraft. Some embrace medicine. Many take to the mines. When they finally choose their preferred career, there is very little that will change their minds. And in turn, they throw everything of themselves into that path, rejecting hobbies or passing fads. Despite this being a common stereotype of nearly all narros, the ones in Fargon take this course to near fanaticism. Each city has a certain skew towards a certain path, but it hasn't changed a broad range of dedicated warriors and wizards coming from the sprawling kingdom in the North. These disciplined are so focused on their chosen path that they regularly perform feats that transcend the normal limitations of their craft. Mundane actions are made almost magical; magic is raised almost to divinity.

FARGON DISCIPLINED SUMMARY

As a Fargon Disciplined, you can…

…know more about your chosen discipline than anyone else who professes it.

…elevate your profession's skills to almost supernatural levels.

…defend your heart, mind, and spirit against anything that would sway you from your path.

Note: You cannot use the attack action with this vocation.

GRENADIER

Big Boom

The Colonel always took PFC Ward with him when he went golfing. The big man always stood back, never saying anything, carrying the Colonel's clubs. When they came to a new hole, Ward would silently pass the Colonel a club, and the Colonel would play, with never a word exchanged between them. When the PFC was put into the hospital for three months, the Colonel's golf game tanked. It was then that his the other officers realized he'd been relying on the long-gunner's talent for sizing up the range to pick the right club, and counted themselves lucky that the balls hadn't been rigged to explode as well.

PERMISSIONS

Techan human or gimfen.

GRENADIER ASPECTS

A Grenadier likes big guns, big explosions, and the big adrenaline rush that comes with them both. Consider what your first exposure to heavy ordnance was and how it affected your worldview.

Sample Aspects: ***Compensating for Something; No Such Thing as Overkill; Say Hello to My Little Friend***

Sample Benefits: Filling an area with lead; manning vehicle weapons; planting explosives; operating power armor; intimidating people using large guns.

Sample Drawbacks: Running out of ammunition; slowed or stopped by weight of equipment; friendly fire; responding to non-combat situations with unnecessary violence.

GRENADIER STUNTS

Burst Fire: Whenever you successfully attack two or more targets with an ***Automatic*** weapon, your attack deals +2 damage (to be divided among targets as you see fit).

Gaming Avatar (requires Burst Fire): Refusing a compel to be out of ammo does not cost you a fate point. You can also reload once per turn without taking an action.

Overwatch: Whenever you successfully create an advantage related to suppressive or covering fire, you can discard and draw one card per round that the advantage remains in effect.

GRENADIERS AND EXO-ARMOR

Using exo-armor normally requires special training, but Grenadiers are considered to be familiar with the basic applications of most exosuits. Having the Grenadier vocation is considered equivalent to taking the armor's TL as a vocation (limiting the maximum applicable bonus if the suit's TL is higher than the vocation, but supplanting it if the vocation is higher: of course, if you also take a Grenadier aspect, you can use the armor's full TL).

The grenadier's specialty is wielding the heaviest of heavy weapons, the ones that fire the most rounds per second, the ones that keep the enemy's head tucked firmly down in their foxholes and let the grenadier's teammates get into position or stop an attacking force from getting any closer. Grenadiers are called on to put big holes in armored vehicles, blow up ammo dumps with incendiary rounds, lob shells over enemy embankments, and plot the course of tactical missiles. Anything to do with really big guns and really big fireballs is the grenadier's area of expertise.

This may make the grenadier seem a bit of a one-trick pony, and indeed, even their teammates often see them as such. Grenadiers are usually large-bodied, well-muscled even if most of the actual lifting is done by power armor servos rather than brute physical strength, and with great size comes great condescension from those who believe that musculature squeezes out the brains. In fact, the grenadier rivals the sniper in his ability to apply complex mathematics to the military sphere. He must be able to calculate indirect fire trajectories with pinpoint precision, determine exactly how much explosive is required to blow an objective, compensate for distance and massive recoil at the same time, and most of all, keep track of how many bullets he has left. Nobody continues to poke fun at a grenadier after seeing him in action… if they know what's good for them.

GRENADIER SUMMARY

As a Grenadier, you can…

…use your instinct for trajectories and leading your target to bypass the pesky obstacle of distance.

…know exactly how much firepower it takes to blow something up and are happy to apply it if so ordered.

…use heavy weapons to lay down suppressive fire to pin your enemies and rip up the terrain with the most powerful weapons in your squad.

…handle every form of armor, up to the largest powered suits.

GROUNDPOUNDER

First On the Field and Last Off It

The drop team was dropped early when the transport had been knocked out of the sky by a passing dragon. Oswald bought it in the crash, but the rest of the team had rallied and managed to fight off the monster before it could feast on them. There would be time to remember their fallen comrade later – they still had a mission to perform. It was a forty-mile hike to the intended drop zone, and they needed to be there by 0800 the next day. Ammunition was low from the fight with the wyrm, medical supplies drained by the crash, but the troops soldiered on. To do anything less was unthinkable.

GROUNDPOUNDER ASPECTS

A Groundpounder's relationship to his team is of primary consideration, and his relationship to his kit always comes next: anything after that is gravy. Consider what made you join up in the first place and how this impacts the role you take in a unit.

Sample Aspects: ***Banner Head; Brother of Blood; Infantry Support Specialist***

Sample Benefits: Spotting ambushes; digging into cover; walking long distances with heavy loads; positioning in combat.

Sample Drawbacks: Helping a fallen teammate; being separated from essential equipment; getting pinned down.

GROUNDPOUNDER STUNTS

Brotherhood: Whenever you give a free invocation of an advantage you have created during a firefight to an ally in the same zone, it grants +3 instead of +2.

Fire Support: You gain +2 to advantage checks related to suppressive or covering fire.

Front Line Deployment (requires Fire Support): Spend a fate point and choose one ally. Until the end of the scene or until you choose a different ally, as long as you can see them, you can always make defense checks on that ally's behalf without taking the consequences yourself.

NON-TECHAN GROUNDPOUNDERS

The core of infantry training is endurance and teamwork, things that apply even in the absence of automatic weapons. Techans who lose their assault rifles to disruption, and even the few echan militaries that can afford low-tech firearms in reasonable numbers, can still take advantage of those skills. The vocation is equally applicable to teams of crossbowmen or even sling-wielders, as long as they've all been trained in the same squad tactics and have access to plentiful ammunition. Of the non-humans, narros are the most likely to adopt this vocation, as it parallels nicely with their natural talents and cultural training.

Modern military footsoldiers are referred to by many names, many of which start with 'gr': grounders, groundpounders, grunts. They occupy the largest ratio of the armed forces of any bastion. Occasionally, one stands out from the others, exhibiting a natural talent that could have paved the way for officer training, but for a variety of reasons, some decline the opportunity, preferring to be a member of a team than the leader of an army. Some take their army training beyond the military, as a mercenary or civilian contractor, whether because of disenfranchisement, the temptations of wealth, or personal pressures that make them a poor match for a national army.

More than any other soldier, the groundpounder

works as part of a unit, using covering fire to help the squad get into position to deliver a devastating coup to the enemy. Each soldier watches another soldier's back, trusting that someone else will be watching theirs. In addition to their gunplay skills and their intensive survival and endurance training, each groundpounder receives at least rudimentary training in every specialty, enabling them to serve as team leader, medic, comms, or even quartermaster if the designated member of their team is incapacitated. Groundpounders eat together, bunk down together, make rude jokes about their commanding officers together, and deal out brutal retribution to anyone outside the group who dares to criticize those same commanding officers. Even when they have personality conflicts off the battlefield, once the bullets start flying, each member of the team has the absolute trust of every other member. Like the medieval knights of ancient legend (and those that have taken their place today), groundpounders are the first and last line of defense. Their rifles are their swords and their faith absolute—faith that the group they have joined operates as a well-oiled machine.

GROUNDPOUNDER SUMMARY

As a Groundpounder, you can…

…act on instinct as part of a unit.

…use team tactics with your squadmates, standing shoulder to shoulder against the enemy; you prefer solid maneuvers to frontal assaults, and the majority of your abilities assist the group as a whole rather than deliver the maximum damage to a target.

…fight with primarily light automatic rifles to maximize mobility and firepower, with a pistol as a backup and a combat knife or bayonet as a backup to that; you prefer to use maneuverability and covering fire to defend yourself, rather than heavy armor.

GUNSLINGER

Bullet Time

Some people say that the geometric distribution of antagonists in any gun battle is a statistically-predictable element. We like to call these people 'easy targets'. The only secret or trick to being a successful gunslinger is to shoot the other guy before he can shoot you.

GUNSLINGER ASPECTS

Whether the Gunslinger prefers one gun on the quick-draw or two guns in a cinematic blaze of fire says a lot about their attitude to combat and to life in general. Consider how showy you like your fighting style to be, and whether it is actually as effective as you think it is.

Sample Aspects: ***Both Guns Blazing; Gun Dancer; Sierra Madre Pistolero***

Sample Benefits: Attacking theatrically; sneaking through undergrowth; dodging attacks; trick shots.

Sample Drawbacks: Having to reload more often; becoming separated from allies; showing off unwisely.

GUNSLINGER STUNTS

Bullet Ballet: When you make an advantage check related to fighting multiple targets with a ranged weapon, you critically succeed if you exceed the difficulty by 2 instead of 3.

Gun-Fu: You can make an overcome check to traverse a single physical obstacle as part of a ranged attack.

High Noon: You gain +2 to your first ranged attack in an encounter.

NON-TECHAN GUNSLINGERS

Fortunately for those few without bastion training who have a hankering for the gunslinger's trade, the simplest automatic weapon, the double-action revolver, is the most complex firearm that is still more or less immune to disruption. It is also fiendishly difficult to come by, as there are few manufacturers who bother with such simplistic weapons, and those that do are generally earmarked as backup weapons for the military. Echans can purchase such pistols more readily from York (although they still have to go through the same background checks and waiting period as any York civilian, which complicates matters somewhat), and the inhabitants of Fargon and Seliquam receive a small annual disbursement of simple black powder weaponry in exchange for keeping Xixion at bay, but they are never plentiful enough, and are likely to be among their bearers' most treasured possessions.

Because revolvers can be fired far less frequently before they have to be reloaded, echan gunslingers usually supplement their gunplay with some sort of light blade, and adapt their fighting style to a mix of ranged and melee attacks.

Even though the concept of the old west only exists in ancient and half-remembered history, the tradition of the pistol-wielding gunfighter has endured the ages. One on one, the gunslinger capitalizes on that legend, using the reputation of their steel-eyed, cold-hearted forebears to strike fear into the hearts of enemies and make them slower on the draw. On the battlefield, the gunslinger specializes in infiltrating behind enemy lines before sowing confusion in the ranks, dancing acrobatically around the field dealing out point-blank death and disrupting the foe's cohesion.

At least two bastions have developed their own unique styles. From the flamboyant culture of Sierra Madre comes the natural successor to the ancient gunslingers of legend, the pistolero, who uses a single gun and martial arts techniques similar to parkour to maximize his maneuverability on the battlefield. From York, the so-called 'gun dancer' uses a more intellectual approach with two pistols, analyzing an opponent's weaknesses to predict their weakest point and where they will move, so as to put a bullet into the enemy's path while simultaneously placing herself out of harm's way. These are the only styles that truly come close to emulating the over-the-top gunplay of popular fiction and cinema: everyone else is a mere pretender.

As the gunslinger's fighting style is concerned more with causing havoc than actual damage, many prefer to fight with two pistols, despite the commensurate loss of

accuracy. The ability to output twice as much hot metallic death keeps the enemy from approaching too hurriedly and makes the job of keeping the gunslinger's own skin intact in a hostile environment much easier. Those that do not ascribe to this technique tend to pick their shots more carefully, taking a moment to set up each attack to ensure that one bullet always equals one kill, even if their pistol was still in its holster a moment before.

GUNSLINGER SUMMARY

As a Gunslinger, you can…

…use stealth and trickery to evade the enemy, to flank them and take advantage of their confusion with theatrical acrobatics, slipping by fallen enemies and dancing through battle lines to find your target.

…fight with one or two pistols and use your superior maneuverability to avoid counterattacks. You do not fear your enemies closing in – blades are clumsy and heavy and the pistol is deadlier at point blank than from afar.

HALFMASTER

A Stick with a Knife on the End

Modern culture has a strange love affair with the sword – a hero isn't worth much these days unless he has a magic sword. But really, what's so great about a sword? In order to use it, you have to let someone get close enough to hit you back. Go to Limshau and ask any librarian about Guan Yu, Leonidas, Zhang Fei, Cúchulainn, Achilles, Watanabe Hanzo, Poseidon, Lugh, Odin – dozens of legendary heroes and more than a few gods have favored the spear over the sword. With a spear, you don't need armor, you don't need a shield – you can move from an offensive stance to a defensive one in an instant. You can take someone's head off before they move within a half-dozen paces, you can pull horsemen from their mounts, and in a pinch you can throw it. Give me a well-made ordinary spear over a magic sword any day.

PERMISSION

From or trained in Kannos.

HALFMASTER ASPECTS

A Halfmaster is an individualist, though not necessarily a glory-seeker. Consider giving your style or weapon a grandiose name to be recorded in legend alongside the likes of Gugnir, Gae Bolg, and the Green Dragon Crescent Blade.

Sample Aspects: ***I Will Be Your Opponent; Naginata Ace; The Scarlet Lightning***

Sample Benefits: Fighting with a spear; daredevil acrobatics; skirmish maneuvers; avoiding traps; snarking at swordsmen.

Sample Drawbacks: Inferiority complex against mounted knights and sword-wielders; enemy getting within your guard; shortage of personal finances.

HALFMASTER STUNTS

Blunt Hit: If you critically succeed on an attack with a polearm, you can choose to deal only 1 damage and instead create an advantage related to limiting the enemy's movement.

Makisute: If you successfully defend against an attack while wielding a polearm, you can spend a fate point to immediately make an advantage check with a +1 bonus to ***Disarm*** your opponent.

Up Close and Personal: You gain +2 to defense against melee attacks when wielding a polearm.

Not everyone in Kannos is privileged enough to be trained on a horse since learning to walk. As Kannos lacks fruitful mines, their only other major donation to warfare is their renowned spearmen. There are dozens of different schools in Kannos, each teaching a different approach to spear and lance use. Some soldiers are trained how to use massive spears that root in the ground while others learn how to tuck a lance under the shoulder and brace for a solid hit. Some launch them against distant enemies while others prefer their use as thrusting weapons in close combat.

The most exclusive and taxing discipline is the art of *habaukeedo*, which involves using every inch of a polearm. This brings the weapon closer, holding it more like a quarterstaff. Like all soldiers in Kannos, halfmasters are usually forced to take to the field with inadequate armor; the need to deflect incoming attacks as best they could resulted in the evolution of the halfmaster's art.

A halfmaster can brace the weapon at its full length for a decisive kill before the opponent's weapon can sneak in, but then they may switch to a tight formation when surrounded. It is thought the art of *habaukeedo* derived from either the narros doppelshido technique or from masters of the ancient naginata skills who brought their art to Canam via Genai. Unlike a slow and disciplined spear wall, halfmasters often break ranks, running after enemy squads after the cavalry has broken them. They seldom form lines with other halfmasters, preferring to allow room for their wide range of attacks.

HALFMASTER SUMMARY

As a Halfmaster, you can…

…use your innate speed and flexibility, plus the leverage of your weapon, to vault physical barriers.

…answer questions about your style of combat, and much spear-lore from ancient legend as well.

…rely on your superior maneuverability compared with a more heavily armored, close-range warrior to force your opponent into a poor tactical position.

…attack up close or at a short distance with your chosen polearm: some spears are weighted for throwing as well, enabling you to make ranged attacks.

HERBALIST

The Local Wise One

It was said that Frère Dorian had once been the medic in a techan mercenary company as a young man, but he did

not speak of his past and nobody wished to offend the apothecary. He lived in an isolated hut near a waterfall on the western frontier, and every morning, rain, shine, or snow, he went out to gather the tools of his trade, lifting up his voice in praise for every leaf, berry and root. For the old and sick he made medicines; for the villagers' tables he grew spices; for the youngsters he made sweets. And always his lips wore a serene smile and his eyes were filled with a wondering light.

HERBALIST ASPECTS

For some, the Herbalist is merely a medieval man's medic, but that is not the only path available. Decide whether you follow the way of the healer, the poisoner, the academic, the chef, or any or all of the above.

Sample Aspects: ***Are You An Alchemist?; Master of the King's Kitchens; This Plant Will Kill You, This One Won't***

Sample Benefits: Concocting potions and poisons; cookery and brewing; recovering from injuries.

Sample Drawbacks: Medical complications; lack of necessary components; misidentifying similar plants; miscalculating dosage.

HERBALIST STUNTS

Ayurveda: You can spend a fate point to reduce the severity of a non-extreme physical consequence by one degree (including recovering consequences that have not been treated with magic). You can only affect a given consequence once in this way.

Ethnobotany: Whenever you make a social check in a community where your specialized knowledge commands respect (such as most echan communities), you gain a critical success when you exceed the opposition by 2 instead of 3.

Wildcrafting: You gain +2 to all recovery checks for physical consequences.

Passed from master to disciple, this old knowledge reappeared when the advanced technologies of MRIs and CAT scans fell apart in the world of magic. By using whatever is found or on hand, an herbalist can perform basic medical aid. An herbalist can create analgesics, sedatives, or even stimulants. They can sterilize wounds or simply determine which nearby plants are edible or poisonous. It is not uncommon for an herbalist or wildcrafter, as they are also known, to pick leaves, berries, or stones from the ground as they walk and this talent has earned some of them positions of authority in smaller or less developed communities. They are even revered in a few locations where they are given the title medicine man or shaman. A lesser accepted (and more derogatory) term is witch doctor. This is not a magical art, nor is it a pseudo-science like homeopathy. The techniques the herbalist uses are tested and proven knowledge passed down through centuries of trial and error. In this new age, more items of benefit can be found on the roadside, with more impactful effects, but the basic wisdom hasn't changed.

HERBALIST SUMMARY

As a Herbalist, you can…

…use your knowledge of natural remedies to treat many ailments and poisons.

…know what plants are safe to eat and which are toxic.

…craft poisons, from the lethal to the merely inconvenient.

…create natural infusions that promote energy, calmness, momentary bursts of strength, enduring stamina, and the like.

JUGGERNAUT

The Other Guy Will Break First

See that guy? The one with metal covering every part of his body and spikes on his shoulders and elbows? The one just disemboweling people as their swords bounce off his armor? Yeah. Don't attack that guy. Go for the squishy wizard.

JUGGERNAUT ASPECTS

A Juggernaut is all about being able to take the beating of a lifetime and still carve the enemy's heart out with a spoon. Keep it simple.

Sample Aspects: ***Big Guy in a Metal Shell; The Boulder in the Stream; Walking Tank***

Sample Benefits: Defense. Attack.

Sample Drawbacks: Falling and not getting up; sinking instead of swimming.

JUGGERNAUT STUNTS

Armored Sympathy (requires Juggernaut +2): You reduce all incoming physical damage against you by 1 while wearing armor (minimum 1). You can select this stunt twice to reduce the damage by 2 (minimum 1).

Cleaver (requires Juggernaut +2): You deal +1 damage with all successful melee attacks. You can select this stunt twice to improve the bonus to +2.

Expecting Trouble: You can play two cards on your first action when opposing any ambush or sneak attack, even if you have no warning of the attack.

The juggernaut cares nothing about nature or the will of gods. They may not believe in warmongering but do know the benefits of wielding such weapons in the modern age. Juggernauts simply wish to maximize their potential in combat. One must wield a blade to survive. A juggernaut is ready for combat at a moment's notice. They practice daily to hone their abilities, maximizing their capacity in a fight. They prepare their armor before sleeping, able to don it in less time than a lesser warrior takes to put on his shoes. Juggernauts are not ones for speeches or promotion. They are the heavy brutes brought forward to scare the front lines of the opposition, the ones beside kings to demonstrate the might of an army. When seen in a tavern as a possible hire, they never have to worry about being passed over. Even if their intelligence can't net glory or gold, a few rounds in an arena will do the task nicely.

JUGGERNAUT SUMMARY

As a Juggernaut, you can…

…overcome anything and anyone, given enough time and momentum; you don't need to outmaneuver your opponents when their efforts will inevitably break upon your shell like water on rock.

…defend yourself with a heavy carapace of steel.

…sleep with one eye open, ready to react with lethal force at a moment's notice.

KAVALIER

The Northern Horse Lords

When his father died, Patrik did not cry, for his father died gloriously defending his community from ravaging skeggs. When his brother died, Patrik did not cry, for his brother was disowned and executed dishonorably as a horse thief. When his son died, Patrik did not cry, for the child fell nobly protecting a half-fae stranger from slave traders. But when his horse died, Patrik did not emerge from his chambers for a year, and his sobs could be heard across the moors that surrounded the manor house.

PERMISSION

From or trained in Kannos.

KAVALIER ASPECTS

A Kavalier and his horse are one, in many ways. Consider dedicating an aspect to your steed to make them more than a simple mode of transportation.

Sample Aspects: ***Dancer the White Thunder; Mutaharrik Captain; Winner of the Sunward Path Race***

Sample Benefits: Equestrian acrobatics; fighting from horseback; defending and caring for horses; appraising horseflesh.

Sample Drawbacks: Danger to steed; to insult the horse is to insult the rider; unsteady when forced to ride a different horse.

KAVALIER STUNTS

Grace and Litheness: You can draw one card before you make any riding or equestrian acrobatics check.

Spare the Horse (requires Unbridled Loyalty): Whenever your horse takes damage, you can take some or all of the damage on its behalf.

Unbridled Loyalty: Your horse becomes an average standard NPC with a rating equal to your rank in this vocation.

MOUNTS

By default, a mount is just a narrative consideration, like any other basic equipment. Any action you take with the vocation can be explained as commanding your mount to perform the task.

A more involved approach would be to invest one of your aspect slots or one or more stunts in the mount. This is the method favored if you want the mount to be more significant to your character, more a friend than a servant, or if you have a particular mechanical idea for the creature. This way, too, the creature is somewhat protected from the vagaries of the narrative, as changing the aspect would require a significant milestone or an extreme consequence.

Some will prefer that the animal be represented by an NPC, in which case (although nominally under the control of the player) the creature's actions will ultimately be made at the GM's discretion. Such steeds are average basic monsters, unless you take stunts to upgrade them.

There are horsemen and cavalry across the world. Some are honored and have a long lineage. It takes an especially brilliant soul to be among the chosen of the Kannos cavalry, the elite kavaliers. What distinguishes a Kannos kavalier from other mounted military is the lack of heavy armor. Kannos is rich in fertile land; huge livestock populations result in the largest number of horses in Canam. They are weak, however, in mineral resources and must trade with the narros and their human allies in Abidan to the east. Since most farms have to survive on their own, every farmhand, stable boy, and wrangler learns to ride and control a steed the moment they could balance on two legs. By puberty, reins are an afterthought and the saddle an indulgence rarely taken. Armor – especially barding – was an extravagance few could afford in the early days of the kingdom. The front lines of a Kannos army are populated with such seemingly simple cavalry, offering the illusion of an inept and under-equipped host until it charges.

Kannos kavaliers ride light in armor and nimble in their saddle (when they use one). Their horses are lifetime partners and often share sleeping quarters. Some traditions match a young fighter to a steed early in life. The squire and mount live their lives responsible for the other, loyal to the end. They form an unspoken bond and never leave each other's side if it can be avoided. More often than not, kavaliers prefer the company of their animals to people and often sleep in stables, as horses make great alarms.

KAVALIER SUMMARY

As a Kavalier, you can…

…handle a horse better than any other, urging your steed to greater feats of equestrian acrobatics than any other; you need no reins, and such tricks as most riders require a saddle for you can perform bareback.

…fight with the sword and the shortbow and your mount's ironshod hooves; heavy armor would only burden your partner, so you learn to do without it, and to defend your steed as if it were part of your own body.

KINETASSANA

Enlightened Warrior of Shadows

Speed, perception, and position are all one. When I move, I do not move: I merely change the singularity of my position. When I draw my weapon, I do not draw: I only put what should be elsewhere in the place it belongs. My mind perceives what cannot be seen. I can taste emotions on my lips and smell the impulses of my enemies. With such perceptions of the world, nothing comes as a surprise, and I need never know fear. I will be aware of my own death moments before my final breath. My talents may appear magical to the uninitiated, but anyone who knows the world as it truly is could do the same.

PERMISSION

Tenenbri.

KINETASSANA ASPECTS

A Kinetassana's focus is always on diminishing the gap between themselves and their surroundings. Consider the unique ways in which your perception of the world has affected you philosophically.

Sample Aspects: ***Awakened One; Kinshoa Master; Precognitive Swordsman***

Sample Benefits: Perceiving the hidden; moving faster than the eye can follow; quick-drawing weapons.

Sample Drawbacks: Overindulgence in mysticism; answering questions with other questions; introspection.

KINETASSANA STUNTS

Iaodona (requires Snap-Draw): You can spend a fate point to defer the effects of an opponent's attack until the end of your turn. If you would have taken both stress and at least one consequence from the attack, you can make an overcome check on your turn to avoid one consequence, with a difficulty equal to the severity of the consequence.

Propriocepting Posture: Whenever an enemy in the same zone overcomes a physical advantage you have created but not yet invoked, you gain +2 to your next melee attack against them.

Snap-Draw: You always act first in any encounter. If you are unaware of the attacker, you can interrupt their action at any point, even after the result is known: any effects of their action do not take place until after yours.

The dominant religious movement sweeping the tenenbri nation of Vanaka endorses a xenophobic stance, decrying other species save their own, and prohibiting any contact with foreigners. This is despite the natural tendency of tenenbri to be interested in companions that differ from the image of perfection their priests claim tenenbri to be. The faction in power has convinced the masses to ostracize anyone not like them, even members of their own species that are slightly against the norm. This belief is encouraged more in cities than smaller villages and many traditional tenenbri denounce the practice. Even so, there is a small segment of underground fae that have no home to speak of. Some remain in the caves of Vanaka but many venture into the light to start anew. Tenenbri that are forced out or leave willingly because of a desire for isolation often spend years in the darkness of Vanaka, learning to hone their abilities to see without seeing, perfecting their body and mind and learning to place themselves in absolute harmony with their surroundings.

Most tenenbri encountered north of Southam are nomadic. Some are drifters that have gathered in a family caravan to escape their land or explore the world. A few are hermits, keeping to themselves and staying out of harm's way. When encountering such a recluse, passers are advised to leave them alone, for they may be a member of an exclusive order of wandering warriors, the kinetassana. Kinetassana may be wise, even friendly to outsiders, able and willing to lend their skills to the innocent. But compared with other tenenbri they are quiet and unsociable, seldom traveling shoulder-to-shoulder with others. Even when enticed or forced to accompany a party, the kinetassana trails behind and volunteers little. On the surface, a kinetassana appears nonchalant, almost unaware of her surroundings. She rarely brandishes weapons openly, preferring light varieties kept hidden, exposing them only the instant they are ready to swing and sheathing the instant the stroke concludes.

Kinetassana are nearly impossible to catch off-guard and rarely charge into combat, preferring to let enemies approach and attack. They don't play with targets during a fight. They don't dance, jump around, or tumble. They kill quickly and efficiently and do so with hardly a sound.

KINETASSANA SUMMARY

As a Kinetassana, you can…

…perceive the slightest sounds and air currents with senses sharper than even other tenenbri; you can even hear the slight increase in an opponent's heartbeat the moment before he moves to draw his weapon.

…defy attempts to confound either your mind or your body: once you realize the true nature of all things, not even self-doubt can impede you; an enemy's weapon cannot harm you if you are not where the strike will land; their jibes cannot hurt you if you allow them to pass you by; and they can have no hold on your psyche if you sublimate thought to action.

KITARRI

Master of the Black Bow

The humans have a legend about a peerless archer who attends a competition in disguise to escape a corrupt prince, and reveals his identity by splitting a bullseye arrow from nock to tip. What foolishness. Even our most ignorant apprentices can explain exactly why such a shot is impossible. To even attempt it would be to waste an arrow, and a kitarri makes every shot count. If this mad human were one of us, he would need no disguise: he would have put a shaft through each of his tormentor's eyes and vanished into the crowd before anyone noticed he was there.

PERMISSIONS

Chaparran, trained by a *kitarri-kansi* grandmaster.

KITARRI ASPECTS

A Kitarri's goal is anonymity, her creed silence, her name subsumed into her accomplishments. Consider your greatest triumph, and choose a name by which other chaparrans know you for this feat as your aspect.

Sample Aspects: ***Kinazakkagan (The Arrow in Darkness); Akurasshikas (From Above, Death Strikes); Hankethrissornaban (Three Hummingbirds with Clipped Wings)***

Sample Benefits: Shooting without being detected; aiming while moving; hitting insanely small targets from a long way away.

Sample Drawbacks: Must keep order's secrets; less effective without black bow; fame or infamy at inconvenient times.

KITARRI STUNTS

Birthright: You can use the Kitarri vocation instead of the Chaparran vocation for actions related to your species traits, and you gain +2 to all social checks against chaparrans while carrying your black bow or if they know your kansi name.

Great Pull: You can make ranged attacks with a bow at any distance. Range and visibility are never obstacles to your bow attacks.

Power Arrow (requires Great Pull): You deal +1 damage with successful bow attacks against targets in the same zone.

Many of the tales about chaparrans describe them as phenomenal archers, able to send arrows clear over the horizon to strike a bull's-eye. They carry bows of inflexible wood only they can coax to bend. When a chaparran fires his bow, the arrow flies with enough strength to pass through trees or skulls. When images of these archers come to mind, people are thinking of the Dawnamoak kitarri. Technically the order did not originate from Dawnamoak, having derived from a much older chaparran forest-nation from the previous age. With the immigration of echa, all the grand masters of *kitarri-kansi* (the chaparran name for their martial discipline) were gathered by Sylvanakassus to her three tower-trees of Jibaro and allowed to perfect their art. It was thought originally this effort was meant to compete with the emerging *gorna sersannis* style, but Sylvan insisted this was not the case. Regardless, chaparrans from all over the world converged to the towers to accept training. They returned to their people in hopes of passing their skills on to others, but in every situation, the sec-

ond generation kitarri was a pale imitation of the original student. Eventually, potentials were sent straight to Dawnamoak to complete their training under the grand masters, all of whom are alive today. They are Korrissessoro, Marrisikorna, and Skylenaskanna, the latter being the only one to have left the towers. Skylen took her knowledge to other forests to train their chieftains and splinter-hounds (the leaders of a splinter-pack). The other two grand masters have forbidden her to teach non-chaparrans the art, a directive she doesn't necessarily agree with but follows nonetheless.

Kitarri are rarely known by their own names in greater chaparran society, but every one bears a 'kansi name' – a nom de guerre which describes their greatest accomplishment prior to being confirmed among the order. Every chaparran in Canam knows these names, and everything the archer does after becoming a kitarri is expected to at least equal if not surpass this mark. With the exception of the rare kitarri trained under Skylenaskanna, all adepts of the discipline must embark to Dawnamoak (unless already living there) to receive the black-bow of the order. Most kitarri live in the nation pierced by the three tower trees but most chaparran villages across Canam can claim at least one member of the order. No chaparran would even think of wielding a black longbow fraudulently and a non-chaparran carrying a black kitarri bow is considered to have taken it from the original wielder's body, and is dealt with accordingly.

KITARRI SUMMARY

As a Kitarri, you can…

…ignore inconsequential obstacles such as distance, size, cover, and moving targets while attempting to shoot a running kaddog from a mile away through a stone wall.

…use cover, camouflage, darkness, and elevation to best effect when making the enemies of your people suffer for their intrusion.

…attack with the special black bow of your order. Should you need it, you can back this up with fighting knives or your bare hands… but you should never need to.

KNIGHT OF THE WALL

Defender of the Bulwark

Thousands of years ago, three hundred warriors stood against a legion so great their arrows blotted out the sun. They had no wall to defend them, only their courage and their stout shields. We have a wall, and for that reason we must prove ourselves braver than those ancient heroes. We must stand for what we hope to protect. Our shields must cover those who cannot shield themselves. If the enemy's shadow strikes the sun from Heaven, we must fight on through the night. We fight not for our pride nor our glory, but for the chance for our mothers and fathers, our sisters and brothers, our spouses and our children to live in glory and be proud of us.

PERMISSION

From Abidan.

KNIGHT OF THE WALL ASPECTS

The Knights of the Wall are the single most experienced military force in Canam: they protect the entire continent from the ravages of the pagus. Consider what drives you to your duty, what you want to defend.

Sample Aspects: ***Janoah Wall Captain; Knight in Shining Armor; You Shall Not Pass***

Sample Benefits: Fighting in a phalanx; standing your ground; exemplifying chivalry.

Sample Drawbacks: Cannot turn away the needy or helpless; attack pagus first and ask questions later; risk anything to recover a lost shield.

KNIGHT OF THE WALL STUNTS

Arm Extension: You gain +2 to defend against attempts to divest you of your shield.

Carapace: You reduce incoming physical damage by 1 while wielding a shield (minimum 1).

Shield Lock: When you form a ***Shield Wall*** with up to four allies, you each gain +1 to defense against physical attacks and forced movement effects.

On the bridge Tethuss, the holy warriors of Janoah live their lives in defense of a single cause—to hold the wall against the pagus hordes threatening to sweep down the continent. Bound in by mountains on one side and gulping waters on the other side, all but the bravest pagus see the isthmus as the easiest route to the unprotected south despite its towering fortress rampart.

The knights on the wall, standing atop the buttresses and manning the bridge, are rarely taken from their footing. Their defensive stance turns into an offensive one and opponents find themselves facing a stronghold of shields covered in spikes and blades. This knight looks to his shield as his primary ally. By combining their efforts, many knights can link to form an impenetrable barrier against attack. This practice began with the first assault across the bridge, with thousands of pagus battering the walls. The front line facing the hordes were ill equipped and the wall behind had yet to be completed. The phalanx held fast, with the front warriors standing guard with light shields on each arm while forces behind held onto long spears. The pagus could neither push nor break the wall and the battle was quickly won.

To date, few have ever bested a Janoahn knight in shield and sword combat. They are proud to stand on Tethuss and few ever leave the fortress. And yet some do, venturing either across the bridge, or south from the city. The reasons may be their own, but their shields represent their honor, so are never separated from them. They avoid mounted combat and prefer to be charged rather than the ones charging. An entire industry has stemmed from this art form. Janoahn shields are a highly prized commodity throughout Canam. Even some pagus have been seen using them, though only the knights on the Bridge wield them properly.

KNIGHT OF THE WALL SUMMARY

As a Knight of the Wall, you can…

…use your steadfastness and persistence and the collective pressure of your shield-wall to withstand your enemies' assaults.

…use the lore of the battlefield and of the court to gain respect in both arenas.

…fight with the sword and the lance against enemies of righteousness, whether they be pagus, evil dragons, or wicked humans.

…defend yourself with heavy armor, a stout shield and stouter shield-brothers.

KOANA SCHOLAR

A Master's Degree in Magic

"According to Valatthinen's Theorem, as well as the Thermothaumic Constant and Shinji Amakusa's work on polygrammatic energy states, my research into the seeking properties of magical missiles is a blind alley. However, the same reasoning and the same theorems apply to ninety-five percent of the work of the great wizard Kereptis Rifts. So I humbly request that the college reinstitute my funding forthwith, rather than deprive future generations of what may come to be seen as essential knowledge."

-- Letter to the Dean of Evocation Studies

PERMISSION

Trained in Limshau.

KOANA SCHOLAR ASPECTS

A Koana Scholar is a researcher and a theoretician, and like any scientist has her own specialties and interests. Her aspects should therefore parallel those of a research scientist, only covering an infinitely more chaotic subject matter.

Sample Aspects: ***Academic Wizard; Master of Fireballs; "My Thesis Research Covered This"***

Sample Benefits: Preparing and casting specialist spells; doing research; deciphering arcane puzzles or traps.

Sample Drawbacks: Insatiable curiosity; unpredictable spell results; need to defend magical theories.

KOANA SCHOLAR STUNTS

Arcane Comprehension: You can spend a fate point to force the target of one of your spells to play a lower card for their defense. If they do not have a lower card, they must draw and discard until they get one. If the card they played was -4, you can't use this stunt on them.

Comprehensive Specialist: Choose any magical discipline except phantasm, necromancy or nihilimancy. You gain +1 to prepare spells tied to that discipline.

Living Energy: Whenever you critically succeed on a check to prepare a spell, you can give up the second free invocation to give the spell a life of its own: it can cast itself on your turn (using your spellcasting vocation rating) without taking up your action.

KOANA MAGIC

Each Koana student will invariably specialize in one of the schools of magic. All academies teach the energies, but each also has their own particular focus, and students showing an aptitude for a particular school will usually be funneled toward the academy that supports that school. However, no Koana academy teaches the phantasm school as anything other than an academic curiosity: illusion spells are considered tasteless by most damaskans, while mind-altering magic is rightly considered an invasion of privacy and unworthy of the art (which is not to say that Koana mages don't know how to perform illusions – they just don't where any of their colleagues are likely to see it). Any aspect created as part of a Koana spell should reflect the glimmering of intelligence possessed by all Koana magic. All Koana students use the book totem.

It is said that Limshau's rise to prominence as one of the world's most respected and admired nations didn't hit its stride until it absorbed nearly 5,000 humans from Angel, thanks to Ravenar Limshau III's "Crusade of Knowledge." Until then, all damaskans were the same across the world. It was at that point the obsessive drive to record history reached a fevered state. Damaskans have always been social creatures with a preference for learning and acquiring knowledge, but bookbinding was a complicated procedure few of them had mastered in the Terros age, and the printing press was just beyond their capacity to imagine. The influx of mankind changed that, which explains why, after only 500 years, damaskans in Canam look and act slightly askew from those across the Ocean. The addition of movable type catapulted their society in a direction unheard of before. As no books or scrolls came with them when the gate opened, the damaskans only had their memories to work from and, even then, few remembered the details of their history. It was assumed they were similar to the damaskans of Damaska – towering spires filled floor to ceiling with color-coded scrolls with little else to differentiate them. It is thought the prevalence of the book totem didn't become fashionable until the damaskans began to have extensive contact with humans. Circulation of books in the ancient age was reserved almost exclusively for the early damaskan wizards. Today, Limshau sports the greatest number of wizard academies in Canam, though not the largest nor most respected actual schools. Larenoak and Jibaro in Dawnamoak, the Logos Academy in Abidan, and the Elsis Tower in Laudenia are all much larger and more prestigious, though all pale in comparison to Kirjath-Sepher on the other side of the world.

No particular school stands out from the crowd in Limshau. All of them are respected in different ways. Nearly three hundred years ago, they allied to found the Koana District—a geographically unbound organization of all the schools in the Limshau kingdom. They set a standard of quality control maintained by every

school. Despite different learning techniques and totem endorsement (though every damaskan student chooses the book), every Koana academy must follow strict guiding principles which includes heavy arcane study, daily lectures, and rigorous repetitive exams and workshops. Unlike other fae schools, which try to apply a theological approach to magic, supporting a "gut intuition" and encouraging natural talent, Koana schools maintain that true wizard mastery only comes with heavy research and exercise. A Koana student is expected to remain at the school for at least 12 years (although 'field study' is part of most curricula), though they are encouraged to remain longer if they wish.

Upon finally graduating, the Koana apprentice is believed to have a greater comprehension of the arcane arts than equivalent graduates do from other schools, endowed with the understanding that all power from Attricana attempts to encourage life in every possible form, from the beautiful to the revolting. Koana teachings encourage this ideal, which is why their spells have an unusual slant for being slightly whimsical. Instead of mere balls of fire or lightning leaping from fingers, Koana wizards create living, semi-intelligent beings that act apparently on their own in service of their master for the brief time they exist. They live for their creator and willingly die for them, happy that they were able to fulfill such a noble life in such a short time.

KOANA SCHOLAR SUMMARY

As a Koana Scholar, you can…

…wield magic of all sorts, with an emphasis on a particular discipline.

…cast spells that seem to come alive in your hands.

…answer academic queries about anything in your field of expertise and at least basic questions in most other disciplines.

…defend your academic reputation against those who seek the easy road to advancement by challenging existing research rather than performing their own.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS

Magic of the Skies

Kamillian wrinkled her nose at the contents of her plate. "What is this?" she demanded, every inch the high-born lady.

"Steak," said Rosh. "Top sirloin, the finest Kannos beef."

Kamillian's eyes went wide. "This is… flesh? Of an animal?!" She looked ill. With a wave of her hand, her staff flew across the room and slapped into her palm. Muttering a few words, the slab of meat on her plate flew apart into glowing particles, and reconstituted itself as a silvery sphere, roughly the same shape as an apple. Rosh stared at her as she daintily raised her knife and sliced off a piece of the shimmering fruit. She chewed, and grimaced. "No good," she said, disintegrating the sphere with a swift word. "I can still taste the sordid earth that spawned this creature. I will not dine tonight, thank you."

So saying, she rose from the chair and walked, supported by a cushion of air so as not to touch the ground, towards the stairs to the guest chambers.

Her host stared after her, before gingerly taking a bite of his own food.

PERMISSION

Laudenian.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS ASPECTS

Every Laudenian Mage has had centuries to master their craft. Consider one specific magical power that you are especially known for; you are no slouch at other spells, but this one is particularly significant to you.

Sample Aspects: ***The Astral Tornado; Quicksilver Puppeteer; Urmage***

Sample Benefits: Casting air, flight, and phantasm spells; crafting magical items; arcane lore.

Sample Drawbacks: Condescension towards other mages; especially helpless when separated from magical items.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS STUNTS

Magic Prescience: When you critically succeed on a check to prepare a spell, you can give up the second free invocation to cast the spell twice as part of the same action.

Totem Synergy: You gain +1 to defense against mental attacks while wielding your totem staff.

Trained Since Birth: When you prepare an air or phantasm spell, you gain two uses of it before you must prepare it again.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS MAGIC

In the modern age, nearly every nation uses every form of totem available except for laudenians, who still stubbornly use the staff. They have used this single implement for their totem since the dawn of their species. Laudenian Magoi as a whole do not have a particular focus, and even those who are specialized in other disciplines are adept at phantasm – and, of course, all have spells of flight at their spindly fingertips. One thing laudenian mages do not do is cast hastily, even in the heat of combat. While they do not neglect the energies, they do not prefer flashy but brief displays: even a laudenian fire magos will always prefer a streaming inferno over a quick-born and quick-dying fireball.

The arcane arts might have originated with the dragons, as all the words of power derive from their language, but it is the laudenians that created the modern concept of the wizard. They found a way to tap into the holy language of the oldest magical species and transplant the capacity of their written form into totems that wizards can use in the application of their art. Until then, all fae were in awe of the power of dragons and forever slaves to the whims of Attricana. Laudenians, frightened by the concept of being slaves to anything, even magic, tried to discover a way to control it. This path

began because of a dire need to prevent the degradation of their species. They hoped the words would uncover a way to control the chaotic power of the gate.

They failed in this endeavor but did discover a way to harness some of the gate's power through the use of the dragon language. They believed that by learning how the dragons direct their power by focusing on a single word in all its meanings, a wizard could replicate the same effect. The laudenians, ever disdainful of change, found the staff the most reliable totem and never supported another option. Eventually, the chaparrans would adopt the same when several of them stole the knowledge from acquiescent laudenians. It would not be until the damaskans arrived that alternative totems emerged. They embraced the book and soon after, the narros also developed a similar practice utilizing shields and weapons.

Laudenians are still known as some of the most powerful mages on the planet. Unlike any other casters, the laudenian mages are known to be the most numerous in proportion to their population and the most powerful on average. They know this and make a point of reminding those who know, don't know, or don't care. Their upper echelons of wizards are the urmages, the first masters of arcane power. Their home tower of Elsius stands higher in the sky than any other constructed object (though not actually the tallest building). They do have proof of design for nearly two dozen spells, and a full quarter of the magic items that scatter the landscape are theirs.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS

As a Laudenian Magos, you can…

…perform magical feats with a mastery of the Pleroma language and the arcane lore that comes with it that nearly equals the dragons themselves, even if you do not possess the absolute book knowledge and history of every spell.

…play with magic, make it dance to your whims, and even create new variations of spells no one has ever seen before.

…attack with air spells, infiltrate the mind with phantasms, and use your own particular arcane talents to conjure ever greater means of harm.

LIBRARIAN

Keepers of Lore

"Ano… sumimasen!" Strickon looked around to see a pair of glasses peering over a large stack of flimsy-looking books. The owner of the glasses was a shorter-than-average damaskan girl wearing what could be favorably described as a smock, covered with inkstains. Strickon looked at her suspiciously – since when did elves need glasses? The girl spoke hesitantly, in a babbling tongue that sounded mostly like Sinitic: the human could pick out a few words here and there, but her accent and the strange words eventually made him throw up his hands.

"Sorry, miss. I can't understand you. What do you want?" The girl shook her head and pointed at the upper shelf, before launching again into her incoherent jabber. Another librarian passing by rolled his eyes.

"Don't bother," he said. "She's what we call an 'otaku' – so focused on her discipline she forgets other people don't understand all the same things she does. She understands English fine, but only speaks Kodai-Nihongo. You're taller than her, so she's asking for you to help her put those books on the top shelf." The girl tilted her head to the side in a strangely cute gesture and nodded. Strickon shrugged and took the stack of books, then waited as the little librarian scampered effortlessly up the shelf. The covers were labeled in what looked like kanja, but there were many characters he couldn't read.

"What does this say?" he asked as he handed one to the girl.

*"*Moe Moe Megane,*'" she replied happily. "Atashi no aidokusho desu wa!"*

PERMISSION

Trained in Limshau.

LIBRARIAN ASPECTS

A Librarian is very dedicated to knowledge in general, but fanatical about the knowledge of their particular section in particular. Consider anything that would make you wax lyrical for hours, no matter how trivial.

Sample Aspects: ***Doujinshi Artist; Knows Every Inch of the Pol-Sci Stacks; Quotes Military Maxims***

Sample Benefits: Recalling specialized knowledge; recalling general knowledge; navigating in narrow confines; remembering landmarks; trivia.

Sample Drawbacks: Tendency to prattle on about favorite subject; forgetting to make allowances for ignorance; rattled by books being put back in the wrong places.

LIBRARIAN STUNTS

Branch Expertise: Choose an area of knowledge (such as a specific geographic/political region, art or science). You gain +2 to lore checks directly related to that knowledge and +1 to checks peripherally related. You can choose this stunt more than once to select more than one area of knowledge.

From the Books: Choose either attack or defense. Whenever you invoke an aspect related to knowledge on the chosen type of check, it grants +3 instead of +2.

General Knowledge: You default to +1 instead of +0 on lore checks for subjects you have no relevant vocation for (you still can't use fate points or other stunts on the check unless you are trained at +0).

Initially, the servants of Limshau, those responsible for the organization and defense of knowledge, referred to themselves simply as librarians, a title still in use today. The emergence of the custodian order freed them of part of their responsibility for defending the pages they index, and the librarians were delegated to the uninspiring but necessary duty of maintaining the treasures of the cities the custodians protect. Their combat prowess dipped significantly in the waning centuries.

Modern librarians have an encyclopedic recall of

every book they are exposed to in the wing they call home. Some librarians remain in a certain wing of the city for their entire lives, but like the custodians, the librarians are often found outside of the walls of the cities, having taken on a duty to retrieve some precious bit of knowledge. Perhaps a single volume among the thousands under their care has gone missing. Perhaps the final critical tome of a series has finally been located, a retrieval too important to be tasked to apprentice or mercenary. As always, simple curiosity may also possess them to leave, but most librarians are settled in their daily tasks, taking enjoyment in their duties behind a desk.

Even more so than the custodians, the librarians treasure the written word and will most certainly carry several books wherever they go. They are also prone to chronicling every moment of their excursions beyond the walls. Though they may certainly possess some combat prowess, they normally lack the extreme physical disciplines required of custodians. Often, the librarian has left because of a singular need. They are frequently not as prepared for the outside world, despite having intimate knowledge of its inner workings.

LIBRARIAN SUMMARY

As a Librarian, you can…

…exploit your knowledge of your favorite discipline: if your subject is dragons, you know the weak spots of every major wyrm; if it's chemistry, you know exactly what you need to mix to create a makeshift stinkbomb; if it's baseball statistics, the advantages you can build on it are not quite so obvious, but in the right circumstances it could be a lifesaver.

…use mobility and elevation to your advantage: even if you aren't a damaskan, you receive much of the same parkour training as custodians.

…always keep a few shuriken about you to discourage book vandals, and a tanto or wakizashi for use in extremis.

LOGIAN

Call a Miracle a Miracle

All of my best friends are atheists and agnostics. I often find that my fellow faithful grow complacent, content to quote the Word instead of analyzing it. Comforting for them, but useless for me. If nobody asks questions, there is no drive to search for answers. But when I speak with the so-called 'infidel,' they often raise points that my dogma has concealed behind rote, which allow me to make a new connection between the Words of God and the Words of Pleroma. Some in the clergy mock the unbeliever or are overly solicitous for their souls: but I cannot find fault with any who may possess a piece of the answer, even if they do not know it.

PERMISSIONS

One aspect related to faith, trained in Abidan.

LOGIAN ASPECTS

Faith is all that distinguishes the Academy of Logos from any other wizard. Consider the greatest questions of your faith and how they can be answered with magic.

Sample Aspects: ***Cubing the Mandala; The Gnostic Mysteries; Seeking the True Cross***

Sample Benefits: Recalling arcane and religious lore; casting ritual spells; healing and defensive magic.

Sample Drawbacks: Ethical limitations on spellcasting; need to pray; crises of faith; deference to a religious hierarchy.

LOGIAN STUNTS

Act of God?: You can prepare and cast defensive and healing spells as part of the same action.

Grace of God?: Once per round, when you succeed on a magical defense check on behalf of an ally in the same zone, they recover their lowest-value used stress box.

Illusion of Divinity: You can spend a fate point to give each ally +1 damage with successful attacks and -1 damage against incoming attacks (minimum 1) until the end of your next turn.

LOGIAN MAGIC

The Academy of Logos does not have a particular specialization – if Pleroma is the Word of God, it is hardly pious to neglect any of it. That said, individual Logians may specialize in particular disciplines, and the order as a whole favors calling and transfiguration spells for healing and defense due to their humanitarian focus. The order favors the book and the staff as totems, although some adopt the shield: very few Logians are of a warrior's persuasion, and none would ever consider using the weapon totem.

Very few wizards are actually religious. Since the study is based around a discipline that many have claimed as scientific, they usually prefer to explain the methods of magic through what they see and understand rather than depend on the unexplained. To wizards, the universe is still knowable, even if it appears to make no sense.

During the rein of Vincent Savarice, an order of priests in Abidan, with the support of their paladin king, began investigating the position of the magical Pleroma language in various fae faiths. They wanted to determine if Pleroma and its abilities might have any spiritual connection with the Abrahamic religions still widespread across the world. Some priests, clerics, and rabbis denounced the practice as heresy, but as one noteworthy and respected cleric supporting the practice put it, "God could wink out the sun and stop the Earth from moving – throwing a lightning bolt from a wand pales in comparison." A similarly modest Jesuit complimented the remark by adding, "Wizards are merely priests in denial."

Eventually, this small community of faith-bound wizards determined that the Pleroma language was most likely written by God and then given to the dragons. While some fundamentalist zealots have classified

dragons as the advocates of hell, many in Abidan, and especially those in the order, believe them to be generals of God's army, nothing short of angels that the mortals were taught to respect and fear. If so, then Pleroma is the divine language in which the words 'let there be light' were spoken. They called it the power of logos—the ability of God to create something by speaking it, given to His servants as a reward for piety and from thence bestowed upon man and fae for some unknowable purpose.

Within a decade of the Abidan investigation, the Academy of Logos was formed—an elite order of holy men that study Pleroma not as a path to controlling the universe but as a path to becoming closer to God. Though the majority are followers of the Abrahamic triad, they do not turn away any wizard who truly seeks

the divine. They exhibit unique powers known only to them, variations on common spells with abilities the casters have professed as divine. Other wizards, especially Koana students, consider them too highly specialized to attain true enlightenment: Logians claim that other academies cannot be properly enlightened because they do not know what lofty peak they seek to reach. There is still respect between the two sides, and conflicts don't break out when they share a room. Like most organizations born in Abidan, the Academy of Logos is one of the most humble, benevolent religious sects in Canam, with fingers in humanitarian needs and missionary duties.

LOGIAN SUMMARY

As a Logian, you can…

…use magic to treat injuries to the body and mind, and to fight with primarily non-lethal spells, magical barriers, and phantasms that bolster allies and dishearten enemies: while you are not necessarily an avowed pacifist, the order as a whole discourages using magic for violent purposes.

…answer questions about your religion and most others, and relate that knowledge to arcane lore.

MARSHAL

The Commanding Officer

"Ol' Wilhelm's such a stick-in-the-mud, never gets off my back," Theo groused, knocking back a brew and belching disgustingly. Skidwick took the empty aluminum can out of the gunslinger's hand and began carefully disassembling it with a pocketknife as Theo reached for another. "I mean, it's my job to think outside the box, right? I can't work if I've got to play by the book, 'sir-yes-sir' and all that crap."

The gimfen raised an eyebrow. "Why do you stay with this outfit, then?" he asked as he slotted a piece of the thin metal into a narrow opening in the partially disassembled gun.

"Innit obvious?" Theo said, taking another swig. "I'd do anything for that guy, and he'd do anything for me. He's the best damn commander I've ever had."

MARSHAL ASPECTS

The relationship between the Marshal and the soldiers he commands is of paramount importance. Consider whether you are loved or feared, whether you keep your people at a distance or spend every evening laughing around the campfire with them.

Sample Aspects: ***Captain in the Crimson Starlight, A Mother to Her Men, Overseer***

Sample Benefits: Conveying battle strategies; negotiating with the locals; handling logistics and intelligence.

Sample Drawbacks: Maintaining troop morale; most obvious target; poor communication.

MARSHAL STUNTS

Command Presence: When you critically succeed on an advantage check and give away one or both free invocations to someone else, the bonus granted by both free invocations increases by 1.

For the Good of the Team (requires Command Presence): Spend a fate point. Until the end of your next turn, the result your allies need for critical success on any check is reduced by 1.

No One Hits the Chief: Whenever you take a consequence, the next attack one of your allies makes against the creature that hit you gains a bonus equal to the severity of the consequence.

A marshal often begins their career in the same way as the rank-and-file, but moves into a command position either by accident in the field when the former commanding officer fall to enemy attack, or more often by taking classes on how to be someone responsible for a team. Perhaps they have a natural talent for leadership despite being a soldier like the rest. Alternately, they might be holding the team's purse strings, so leadership is assumed. Thankfully, any successful marshal is no rank amateur and has – or quickly develops - experience dealing with the expected issues of the outside world. Marshals have to be intelligent and adaptive.

A marshal has the same battle training as a front-line fighter, can use all the same weapons, but generally will favor lighter weapons and armor for greater maneuverability, flexibility and visibility to the team. In a pinch, the ability to convey orders with hand signals and facial expressions may mean life or death for the team. A marshal must also be persuasive, and above all, brave, for nobody is going to risk life or limb for a coward.

MARSHAL SUMMARY

As a Marshal, you can…

…use your battle savvy and your ability to inspire your troops to put them in the best possible place to achieve victory with minimal or no casualties.

…turn your confidence and the iron determination of your allies to dishearten and discommode your foes.

…fight with firearms and modern melee weapons, and keep yourself safe with well-made modern armor.

MARTIAL ARTIST

The Body is a Weapon

I learned my art from an old gouty man in Genai. When he died, I left Angel and traveled north on foot through Xixion and bartered myself a ride on the train to Thos Thalagos. They have an annual tournament there – the best unarmed fighters in Canam, any style, no holds barred. Some of the stonebones could kick your arse while balancing on a toothpick, and the human wrestlers from that other bastion are no slouches either. My art's nothing special – just practice and dedication, no fancy tricks, no cheap moves.

"Never strike except when you must," my sensei told me. "Then you will never miss."

The belt was mine that year.

MARTIAL ARTIST ASPECTS

As there are many different martial arts with profoundly different styles and philosophies, a Martial Artist's aspects will be influenced in some way by their chosen discipline (s). Consider your attitude to fighting – whether it is something you engage in at the first opportunity, or whether you regard it as a last resort.

Sample Aspects: ***'I Know Kung Fu'; Mixed Martial Arts Practitioner; Ring Fighter***

Sample Benefits: Defraying conflict through intimidation; avoiding attacks; delivering decisive blows; self-discipline.

Sample Drawbacks: Not supposed to fight needlessly; considered less dangerous when opposition is armed.

MARTIAL ARTIST STUNTS

Catch as Catch: An enemy engaged in melee combat with you must make an overcome check in order to disengage and move to another zone.

C-C-Combo!: Whenever you critically succeed on a melee attack, you gain a boost to your next attack (which does not have to be a melee attack, or used against the same target).

Unarmed But Deadly: Whenever you invoke an aspect related to your martial arts on an attack, you deal +1 damage on a hit.

MUNDANE MARTIAL ARTS

In contrast to the Ancient Wuxia, the Martial Artist is meant to represent the more down-to-earth, realistic practice of unarmed combat – the kind actually practiced by real people as opposed to the wire-fu of movies and legend. It is best for depicting those arts with practical military application: wrestling, tae-kwon-do, krav maga, mixed martial arts, and the like (most unarmed combat styles survived the Hammer in one form or another, although many don't go by the names they were originally known by anymore). The biggest distinction between the Wuxia and the Martial Artist is that the Martial Artist will always seek to end the conflict as quickly and directly as possible, while the Wuxia may take several turns setting up a cascade of advantages to be triggered only when they are absolutely ready.

The martial artist has been trained from an early age, by choice or by inheritance, to take the role of a close combatant. Their natural gifts are usually discovered early and focused into a lifelong dedication. This is not to assume that martial artists are warmongers, as such training comes early with the responsibility to know restraint: if a student gets into a fight outside of the dojo, they have the responsibility to report it to their teacher, who will challenge them to explain how they could have handled the situation without fighting. For many, having the skills is a means for self-discovery. For most, the martial arts are focused on unarmed and unarmoured combat or bare-handed fighting augmented by improvised weaponry, but almost every tradition can be performed with weapons or armor: there are even martial arts that emphasize the ability to use every part of a firearm in melee. A martial artist might have devoted their life to the implement of one craft or the broad use of many.

MARTIAL ARTIST SUMMARY

As a Martial Artist, you can…

…use your physical conditioning to defeat many physical impediments, though how you do it depends on your preferred style (a tae-kwon-do fighter might kick down a door, while a wushu master might go over the wall).

…pontificate upon the philosophy of your chosen school.

...use the fact that people don't consider an unarmed opponent as much of a threat to your advantage: your weapons cannot be removed, and there is no scanner or sensor to identify you as being dangerous.

…maneuver and force an opponent into an untenable position.

…suppress opponents without causing harm and remove a threat without making a sound.

MECHANIC

Mister Fix-It

"Ready yet?" I asked nervously.

"Hold your horses," he replied calmly, rummaging around in the axle shaft.

"Only, those whoops and howls are getting really close," I said, pulling my pistol from its holster. One of the creatures burst into the clearing: I let off a warning shot and it scampered back into the undergrowth, but it would be back in a moment. I tried to squeeze off a second shot, but the gun jammed. "And we're kind of defenseless now," I muttered.

He sighed. "Here," he tossed a weird-looking gun to me. "Don't press the button on the bottom." I looked at the thing.

"Why not?" I asked.

"I don't know what it does yet," came the response.

PERMISSION

Techan human or gimfen.

MECHANIC ASPECTS

A Mechanic is defined by her technology and her ability to keep it going in the face of all adversity. Consider what your favorite piece of equipment is, and the myriad different ways you might keep it running, the more unconventional the better.

Sample Aspects: ***Combat Sapper; Field Machinist; 'Give It A Good Thump'***

Sample Benefits: Suppressing disruption; modifying equipment; scavenging parts; confusing people with technobabble.

Sample Drawbacks: Not having the right parts; getting distracted by glitches in the middle of a fight; problematic prototypes.

MECHANIC STUNTS

Overdrive (requires Tech Savant): You can invoke a gear aspect twice on the same action, as long as you choose a different benefit each time.

Shiny Red Button: You can spend a fate point to make an advantage check for a gear aspect as part of another action.

Tech Savant: You gain +2 to repair checks for technological items or to overcome disruption effects.

GIMFEN MECHANICS

Normally, the Experteering Engineer vocation is a more appropriate choice for gimfen, but the focus is slightly different. Not all gimfen want to make technology 'MOAR AWESOMEZ' – some of them are quite content to tinker within the guidelines of human science, often in the hopes of finding out how to immunize that technology against disruption without the need to hideously over-engineer it. A gimfen Mechanic is therefore often a more studious researcher than the haphazard Experteering Engineer.

A mechanic has made their choice: they prefer air conditioning, the internet, and machines that automatically wash dishes. They wish to keep the technology of man functioning in the face of encroachment by the fantasy world, and improve upon it when they can.

In the modern world, the path of the mechanic is

more of a cutting-edge researcher than the mere engineer; those who merely design technology have nothing on the field operative who must keep that technology working in the face of an implacable, invisible enemy. The mechanic must constantly tinker with devices – restoring an item to its original state only causes it to break again faster next time. Mechanics play a game of bluff against the EDF, 'tricking' devices into failing in different and more easily manageable ways each time. This in turn lends itself to experimental modifications, so a good mechanic is also a consummate inventor.

There is no room for specialization in open echa. A mechanic must be able to field-strip and rebuild everything from a handgun to an APC. They must also have an understanding of the echan world itself, to be able to identify the most pertinent threats to technology and conceive of how to avoid or at least mitigate them. This makes the mechanic the equal in knowledge of any dedicated echa researcher, for they have hands-on experience that the mere academic can never hope to attain.

MECHANIC SUMMARY

As a Mechanic, you can…

…overcome many of the difficulties that cause technology to go on the fritz the moment it leaves the walls of a bastion.

…be confident, if not comfortable, dealing with the chaos of outside life and its fallout.

…use your mechanical expertise to make equipment exceed normal design specifications.

…use your souped-up technology to attack your enemies, or your technical skills to attack your enemies' souped-up technology and defend your technology against attempts to sabotage it.

MEDIC

MEDIC!!!!!

A doctor is supposed to do no harm, but when you're knee-deep in a companion's guts and he's begging for another shot of morphine, it's hard to stick to your resolve when confronted with the monster that did that to him. Some of those things out there might look like us on the outside, but on the inside, it's something else entirely – and I've looked inside enough of them to know.

PERMISSION

Techan human.

MEDIC ASPECTS

Medics generally come in one of two flavors: the healer and the researcher. Consider whether you took to this calling in order to make people better or because of an intellectual itch.

Sample Aspects: ***Field Medic; Hands of a Surgeon; Physician, Heal Thyself***

Sample Benefits: Healing wounds; analyzing monster biology; diagnosing disease or poison.

Sample Drawbacks: Hippocratic oath; wrong supplies; medical complications.

MEDIC STUNTS

Diagnose and Cure: You can spend a fate point to automatically succeed at a recovery check for a physical consequence, and another to reduce its severity by one step.

Do Science To It: You gain +2 to all lore checks related to biology or chemistry.

Weak Spot (requires Do Science To It): When you successfully create an advantage to identify a creature's physical weaknesses, its free invocations grant +3 instead of +2.

HUMAN MEDICINE ONLY

While at first glance it might seem strange to limit the profession of doctoring to techan humans, there is a reason for it. First, modern medicine is largely dependent on high-tech diagnostic equipment, and the most advanced medical injections use nanobots, which are the most easily disrupted technology in existence. Additionally, humans and fae do not understand each others' biology very well. Fae do not have vestigial organs, but they do possess numerous organs that human doctors do not understand the purpose of (since you can't put a living fae in an MRI scanner); additionally, each fae species has a different internal configuration. This is not to say that a human medic can't heal a fae patient, but doing so is a lot more difficult and usually requires guesswork. The fae themselves have little need for doctors, being immune to nearly all diseases and having no compunction against employing magical healing for any wound that requires more than a simple dressing or poultice. Fae find the entire concept of invasive injection, suturing and surgery somewhat distasteful.

With the GM's permission, a damaskan or gimfen might take the medic vocation (representing an academic curiosity), but the damaskan would have to take a supplemental vocation such as herbalist or mage in order to compensate for the lack of high-tech tools that this vocation assumes.

The medic's job is to keep people alive, usually after they've been shot, stabbed, trampled, gored, poisoned, infected with a hitherto unknown disease, or some combination of the above. For those operating in the field, this requires an extensive knowledge of biology, chemistry, pharmacology, and mythology. Human medical science continues to advance, but when it comes into contact with magic all bets are off. The medic might not understand why the necrotizing infection passed on by contact with a slavering undead horror is cured by an injection of colloidal silver and allicin, but the next time the team goes up against a nest of vampire spawn, he'll be certain to carry lots of garlic.

In addition to curing the team's ills, the medic is often called upon to identify the physical weaknesses of non-human enemies. After the casualties on their own side have been taken care of, it is often the medic's grisly duty to sift through the guts of fallen adversaries looking for clues as to how to more effectively handle them in the future. For the most common foes encoun-

tered by techans, the major weaknesses are well-known (and of course, all magical creatures are weak to faeiron), but each encounter carries with it the possibility of a surprise. And even if they know nothing tangible about the creature, an understanding of its echalogical imprint in human mythology may provide some clue that can make the difference between survival and being messily devoured.

MEDIC SUMMARY

As a Medic, you can…

…use your extensive knowledge of human biology to overcome minor annoyances like bleeding to death.

…use your somewhat less extensive but still formidable knowledge of other creatures' biology to pick just the right spot to hit, find something especially poisonous to them, or set a trap tailored to their specific traits.

…keep your head down and scramble as quickly as possible past anything between you and a patient.

…use your allies as shields if need be – you can always patch them up afterwards. Your duty is to preserve life, but you consider the lives of your team members more important than any others and will always choose your allies over other injuries on the battlefield.

REDCAP

Great Violence in a Small Package

Don't call him that. He hates people who call him that. And he usually kills people he hates.

PERMISSION

Gimfen.

REDCAP ASPECTS

Redcaps tend to follow one of three paths: slipperiness, brutality, or sheer cojones. Consider how your approach to the skirmisher's art reflects your personality.

Sample Aspects: ***Every Day is My Lucky Day; The Salvabrooke Chainsaw Massacre; Too Quick to Hit***

Sample Benefits: Skirmishing; close-range archery; sneaking; ostentatious violence; swashbuckling.

Sample Drawbacks: Reacting unfavorably to the name 'redcap' or to being overlooked.

REDCAP STUNTS

Between the Legs: Whenever you critically succeed on a defense check against a creature larger than you, you can make an immediate advantage check against the creature.

Bleeding Wound: The first time per scene that you inflict a physical consequence on an enemy in combat, you gain +3 from the free invocation of that consequence instead of +2.

Hip Shot: If you play a negative card on an attack with a bow or crossbow against a creature in the same zone and the attack fails by less than 3, you gain +2 to any kind of attack against the same creature on your next turn.

Before gimfen were renowned for their capacity for suppressing the disruption of technology, they were desperate to claim their own niche. They were a young people broken from the damaskans late after the emergence of the pagus, at a time when all the fae were coming to terms with the possibility of extinction at either the hands of their corrupted cousins, or from their own degraded forms. As the chaparrans were vanishing in the forest as nymphs and faeries, and the narros into the depths of the earth as ogres and trolls, gimfen emerged as a bright, bubbly light of playfulness. They fought for many years to find an area where they could excel. Because of their diminutive forms, several of them took to being fast, quick-strike hunters. They would squirm and wriggle through battle lines, striking targets as they passed through legs. They eventually chose the shortbow as their preferred weapon because of its versatility and compatibility to their size. It even adorns the Salvabrooke flag.

Gimfen, nearly as much as chaparrans, adore ranged combat, but where chaparrans prefer it because it keeps them away from the blood of the melee, gimfen favor it because it allows them to strike anyone they want, anywhere they want. These gimfen love getting close for the strike, and whether wielding a bow or blade, don't find it a satisfying kill unless blood stains their clothes. This gave them a disturbing nickname taken from human mythology, which most gimfen don't respond well to. Some hate the term on pedantic grounds because they don't wear hats. Others simply think it sullies a reputable profession as a close-combat warrior which commands as much respect as any chaparran ranger or damaskan fighter.

Regardless, the name stuck and some of the more renowned assassins and war heroes in gimfen history have been labeled as such. Gimfen that choose an honorable path prefer the term, "siddosamma", which they claim means "Warfueled" in the ancient gimfen tongue (the astute will note that there *is* no ancient gimfen tongue). The more wicked ones embrace the redcap legend even to the extent of donning a hat.

REDCAP SUMMARY

As a Redcap, you can…

…rely on bloody-minded tenacity, your small size, maneuverability, and tendency to be underestimated against larger opponents to evade, outlast, and deal the maximum hurt.

…get out of the way of lumbering bigguns and shoot them with your shortbow before they can hit you, or run through their legs and stab them in the back.

REKII

Watchers in the Shadows

Imitating the cry of birds is a very poor means of giving a signal. Anyone versed in wood-lore will be able to tell if you use a bird that is not found in the region, but if you

use one that is, you run the risk of a real one crying. Far better is to train with your team to keep half an eye on you as you spot for them, or if you must go further afield, to keep an eye on someone who can see you. Relay information with simple gestures with meanings impossible to miss. This way, you do not alarm your enemies or confuse your allies. And if those allies happen to be boorish louts who disturb the tranquility of the forest every night with their raucous carousing about the campfire, you can warn them of danger without actually getting close enough to smell their ale-stained breath. Everyone wins.

PERMISSION

Chaparran.

REKII ASPECTS

A Rekii is defined by the allies she aids. Consider your reasons for joining up with this party, and what you think of them.

Sample Aspects: ***Lone Ranger; No Harm Shall Come to My Friends; The Team's Eyes and Ears***

Sample Benefits: Communicating silently; spotting for attacks; moving stealthily; navigating.

Sample Drawbacks: Missed signals; being separated from backup.

REKII STUNTS

Coordinated Spotter: Whenever you give an ally a free invocation of an advantage you have created for the purposes of a physical attack, the ally gains +3 from the invocation instead of +2.

Hand Signs: Distance is not an obstacle to assisting allies as long as they can see you.

Through the Wall, Around the Corner (requires Hand Signs): Distance is not an obstacle to assisting allies as long as they can see an ally who can see you.

Chaparrans are nearly as xenophobic as laudenians, but where the laudenians abhor all other species for fear of being 'tainted', chaparrans simply prefer solitude. When they do form bonds, they swear oaths that transcend generations. A chaparran that has joined an adventuring party has learned to work within a group and has shared the key signs of her gestural language. All chaparrans possess the innate ability to communicate silently and once others pick up the important signs, a chaparran is able to pass her impressive eyesight onto others.

The rekii spots targets from a hidden position. She then passes critical information to an ally (via hand signs, animal calls, and whispers) in order to improve their accuracy or position. It's a unique gift few other chaparrans possess.

It only takes a few days of exposure among new friends for them to take full advantage of his gift. It also allows the chaparrans to maintain their oath of loyalty while also remaining away from the social circle. Chaparrans cannot stand the need of other races (especially gimfen and humans) to fill silence with the noise of conversation, and even those rekii that have elected to join with such raucous noise polluters still prefer to be on their own. Often enough, the rekii remains away from the fire and discourse; while ringing in the occasional comment, a rekii for the most part stays hidden and watchful.

REKII SUMMARY

As a Rekii, you can…

…overcome barriers to communication with body language.

…communicate the enemy's movements before they are aware of being observed.

…attack from a position of stealth, relocate, and relay the enemy's position to be attacked again.

SEEKER

The Spirit of Free Enterprise

There is absolutely no truth to the common perception that gimfen are a race of thieves and swindlers. Well, not much truth. Perhaps a little bit of truth. All right, quite a bit of truth, but we don't mean anything by it. You've read the tales about impish faerie folk always playing tricks, right? Those are based on us. We can't help it, it's in our nature to be mischievous – but it's all in fun. So why don't we put this all behind us and I'll give you back your watch. In exchange for a small finder's fee, of course. Oh, don't look at me like that – look at it this way, I've exposed the flaws in your personal security and you will now be much more careful with your possessions in future. I think that sort of service merits some compensation, don't you?

PERMISSION

Gimfen from Salvabrooke.

SEEKER ASPECTS

A Seeker pursues the freedom of the individual, for reasons both altruistic, selfish, and completely random. Consider the kinds of tricks you prefer to play to shake people out of their complacency, the more elaborate the better.

Sample Aspects: ***'Cat' Burglar; The Chivalrous Rogue of Salvabrooke; Thirty Shell Game Variants***

Sample Benefits: Acrobatics; pickpocketing; fleeing the scene; returning surreptitiously to the scene of the crime; talking yourself out of criminal charges; confidence tricks.

Sample Drawbacks: Distracted by the shiny; prone to taking the most complicated approach to a problem.

SEEKER STUNTS

Patter: You gain +2 to social checks to sweet-talk a mark prior to divesting them of their worldly goods.

Petite Larceny: Whenever you invoke an aspect related to your stature on a felonious enterprise and the check succeeds, you can discard and draw one card at the end of your turn.

Quick Recovery: You can spend a fate point to perform a movement check without taking an action.

Gimfen are overeager to try anything once. They live

their lives as the mirror opposite of narros. Where the narros eventually decide the path they would take for the entirety of their lives and never deviate, gimfen rarely settle. Many that grew up near machinery have embraced engineering as their chosen profession, but their shops are often littered with half-completed projects and ideas only partially realized. In Salvabrooke, most citizens are shopkeepers, shop workers, or members of the small but ferocious military. Others take to thievery or careers where similar talents can be exploited. Regardless of their path, they always add a zest to their performance. Messengers run over roofs, flipping and sliding in their sprint. Tricksters are theatric and take minutes setting up their scam, entertaining their marks, and making the ruse almost welcoming in the end. These unguided individuals love the chase – the pursuit of anything, either as the target or as the arrow.

If you point them, they will run. Some apply this in a respectable craft while many employ more nefarious ones. Occasionally, they steal just for the thrill of taunting a chase, abandoning their pilfered possession around the block or even returning it and thanking the pursuer for a good run. Some sell it back to the owner for a mild fee, claiming they are enriching the lives of those around by disturbing the order of their lives.

In the eyes of many gimfen, governments and rules are part of the corruption of the other side. As Attricana encourages its chaotic drive for life in all forms, said lives prefer the anarchy of an unpredictable existence and strive to introduce some chaos in the world around to ensure all the others remember that laws are part of a method of control and thus, part of the problem. To them, life is designed to rebel against conformities and laws need not be a requirement for civility.

These gimfen don't like being called anarchists, preferring the term 'seeker', as they are always searching for something they hope they never find, because the pursuit is the true purpose in life. For many of them, the chase ends when they die, hopefully a long ways away from where they started.

SEEKER SUMMARY

As a Seeker, you can…

…defeat such impediments to free enterprise (such as other peoples' pockets) with fine motor control and manual dexterity.

…use being small and nimble and surprising to divest clumsy bigguns of the shackles of material possession.

….avoid reprisal and maybe make a profit through smooth talking and sheer brazenness.

…inconvenience or incapacitate rather than damage opponents unless you have no other choice.

SELKIRK BRAWLER

Rowdy Ruggers and Wrestlers

After the third man left the bar with a bloody mess where his nose ought to be, I started to wonder if the cage champion was some crazed wolverine with claws instead of fists. I ordered another brew and slugged it back, waiting to see if any other humans would take up the challenge. None did. As the announcer was making his final call, I got up and sidled over to the cage, tossing two gold coins in the pot. The big man – I say big, he was actually fairly short and stocky even by Selkirk human standards, with thick sideburns and a cigar practically rammed down his throat – looked me down and further down.

"You ain't one of those woo-sha folks, are you, bub?" he asked me.

"Nothing fancy here," I told him. "What you see is what you get." He spat on his hand and reached out, and I did likewise, shaking hands after the Selkirk fashion.

"I like you guys," he said. "Always good sports. 's good to play against someone who don't complain when I mess up their face."

PERMISSION

Human from Selkirk or narros from Thos Thalagos.

SELKIRK BRAWLER ASPECTS

A Brawler can be a fast runner or he can be a slow brute, but every one of them is a tough sucker. Consider whether you are a good sport or a poor one, and whether you have developed your skills for the love of the game or for personal gain.

Sample Aspects: ***The Eightman; Speedy Scrum-Half; Thalagos Belt Champion***

Sample Benefits: Grabbing; running; carrying small packages long distances; enduring being piled on by overwhelming odds.

Sample Drawbacks: Perceived as a violent brute; actually being a violent brute; hard to relate to anyone who doesn't like professional sports.

SELKIRK BRAWLER STUNTS

Bear Hug: Opponents subject to any grappling advantage you have created must succeed on two overcome actions to escape.

Born in the Mines: You gain an additional stress box. If you are already at 4 boxes, you gain an additional minor consequence slot instead (even if you already have one). You can choose this stunt more than once.

Head-Butt: You can spend a fate point when you make a melee attack to force the target to take a minor consequence relating to being smashed in the face with your skull, regardless of whether the attack is successful or not – however, if the target already has a minor consequence, you can't inflict a more severe one. As the head-butt does not inflict an actual hit, the target cannot be taken out by it (although they can by the actual attack).

Isolated for hundreds of years, the miners of Selkirk have learned to make the most of what they have around, the greatest asset being their brute strength and unfaltering will. Nowhere was this reflected more than in their national sport: rugby. Every union in the bastion operates a team and the seasons never technically end. There is no downtime and seldom a moment's rest. Everyone plays; everyone wins; everyone loses; everyone gets plastered afterwards. The only time a Selkirk

citizen is not on a team is when they are 'traded' to the military. Fairly quickly, the same approach warriors took on the game field was adapted to the battlefield. Considering that the bastion is located in the middle of one of the highest concentrations of magic in Canam, little of the Selkirk technology could operate outside of their mountain. This forced them to adopt melee techniques as a standard military practice, a tendency strengthened by their association with the narros. Although many from Selkirk still insist on carrying heavy weapons and heavier armor, a few prefer to translate their game skills to combat. When the Selkirk miners first arrived in Fargon, the narros were impressed with the great skill of the miners in unarmed fighting, despite the apparent lack of discipline in the technique – a deceptive lack, for the brawler's style in application is as focused and precise as the wushu-like practices the narros have always held dear. The Selkirks brought over another pastime—wrestling—that the narros quickly embraced, to the point that there is now an annual tournament in Thos Thalagos in which echans and techans show off their skills on equitable terms. What distinguishes the Selkirk style from other bare-fisted martial arts is the focus on quick engagement, grabs and tackles, the deceptively random feints and dodges that the practitioner uses to catch their enemy off guard, and the sheer toughness of the brawler, earned the hard way on the rugby pitch. The Selkirk brawler has become a common sight on all caravans from the bastion and every citizen knows how to behave in a scrum.

SELKIRK BRAWLER SUMMARY

As a Brawler, you can…

…confuse your enemies with deceptive movements and exploiting your teamwork to best effect. It helps if the rest of the party is on the same rugby team, but you can easily teach outsiders the moves and signals.

…fight with grabs and tackles, and when all else fails, a swift forehead to the face.

SNIPER

The Cuckoo

The bell tower was the perfect vantage point. Even those parkour-ninja elves would have a hard time reaching her here before she could shoot them down, and Melissa expected that she would be long gone before they even realized what had happened. She began to fit the scope to

her rifle, and then decided against it. She was good enough not to need it, and even though it had been wrapped up tightly in the muffler bag to protect the sensitive tuning from being busted by exposure to the magical environment, better not take any chances. A centimeter to either side could be the difference between an instant kill and a slow one, and she couldn't risk the target lasting long enough to be healed. Silently, she checked each component of her rifle, loaded the fae iron round into the chamber, and settled down to wait.

SNIPER ASPECTS

There isn't a great deal of variation between one Sniper and another – merely a matter of degree of skill. Consider what the circumstances of your training were – whether you learned your craft in the relative comfort of the training camp or whether you earned it on the battlefield.

Sample Aspects: ***Angel Wall Sniper; Calculating Savant; One-Man Recon Team***

Sample Benefits: Judging distances; identifying targets at a distance; moving stealthily; aiming.

Sample Drawbacks: The target moves at the last sec-

ond; setting up in the path of scouting parties; getting separated from allies.

SNIPER STUNTS

Angel Sniper (requires Marksman's Talent, from Angel): When you hit with a sniper weapon, you can make an advantage check to ***Aim*** at a new target as part of the same action.

Magic Bullet: When you drop a target with a ranged attack, you can apply any damage in excess of that required to take out the target as if it were the result of an attack against another target in the same zone.

Marksman's Talent: Aspects related to range or partial cover are never an obstacle for your ranged attacks.

NON-TECHAN SNIPERS

In the pre-Second Hammer world, the sniper Simo Häyhä of Finland, nicknamed 'White Death' by the Soviet army, made a recorded total of 505 kills (the highest of any major war) while armed with an iron-sighted rifle not unlike the TL0 bolt rifle, hardly a specialized piece of kit like most military snipers can sport.

The disciplines of the Sniper can also be applied to some degree by the archer. It is therefore reasonable that anyone with access to sufficiently accurate but low-tech equipment can master the technique. The chaparrans have their own methods, of course, but these are largely focused around combat in and around trees, while the Sniper's craft is most efficient when there are plentiful vantage points for the shooter and a dearth of cover opportunities for the target. After chaparrans, gimfen and narros make the best Snipers – narros slightly more so, for although the gimfen have a naturally lower profile, the narros are experts at remaining still for long periods of time. Both peoples are also more easily able to obtain the requisite bolt rifles than other fae or even echan humans, due to the productive relations between Fargon and Selkirk and between Gnimfall and York.

The sniper's job is to find a vantage point with a good field of fire and then sit there as motionless and as invisibly as possible until the intended target comes into their sights, and then remove that target from the world. It is not an exciting job: it calls for more patience than most saints can manage, not to mention a head for complex mathematics and meteorology. A sniper must be able to compensate for wind, light levels, the curvature of the Earth, local gravity, angle to the target, his own breathing, and even minute variability in his equipment (including the constant degradation from EDF), and do all of this in a split second, as the target doesn't usually sit still and wait to be shot. It requires intense training, and it isn't a profession one should enter if they plan to make friends, for everyone is slightly afraid of a sniper even when he's on their side. Snipers tend to be the most stealthy fighters in any unit, as their efficacy is seriously reduced if the enemy knows they are there. Many are hunters in their off-time, honing their skill at moving unseen against creatures with much keener senses and instincts than humans and even most fae.

The finest snipers in the world are those who serve on the bastion wall of Angel, mastering the art of aiming and firing as a single smooth action. Most of the bogg raiders migrating towards the wall never see their enemies. The Angel snipers take them out while still deep in the forest. There is no time for aiming: they must take out as many of the little bastards as they can before they get too close to the city. Even the xenophobic city of Mann, for all their technical superiority, has been unable to duplicate the precision and skill of the Angel sniper, a skill forged in fire and frequent use. Rival bastions have copied their discipline and training, but the results have never been exactly duplicated.

SNIPER SUMMARY

As a Sniper, you can…

…compensate for wind, gravity, and even the curvature of the planet, using gut instincts and field experience to take out targets well beyond the range of most normal warriors.

…ignore wind, rain, or even wandering monsters: nothing distracts you.

…dig yourself in and become one with the terrain; an entire army could pass you by without noticing. Even your attack is as silent as a mosquito bite, though far deadlier.

SWORN HAND OF VENGEANCE

Slay Them All

"Pagus passed this way," Nalik'rik said, and spat. We all looked around, but the only sign of any pagus we could see was the gob of mucus our scout had just left beside the trail.

"You're sure?" Sannok said, hefting his axe.

"Of course I'm sure, eater of rats," Nalik'rik sneered. "I can smell the stink of Apocrypha on them. If that stub you call a nose hadn't been stuck to a grindstone as a whelp, you'd be able to smell 'em too." The narros glared, but did not argue. I didn't know what had happened to our ranger to make him detest his own species so much, and frankly, I didn't want to know – considering how badly he treated other people, something far worse must have befallen him.

SWORN HAND OF VENGEANCE ASPECTS

A Sworn Hand is in part defined by what they have sworn vengeance on, but equally by what prompted them to do so. Consider what could have been so heinous that you would have dedicated your life to the pursuit of genocide.

Sample Aspects: ***My Brother Was Eaten By Dragons; Pugg-Punter; Relentless Foe of the Undead***

Sample Benefits: Determining enemy weaknesses; wilderness tracking; predicting enemy actions.

Sample Drawbacks: Vengeance overwhelming common sense; reliving old trauma.

SWORN HAND OF VENGEANCE STUNTS

Implacable Foe: You gain a free invocation of any consequence you suffer, which can only be used on attacks against your favored enemies.

Vendetta: You gain +1 to lore checks against your favored enemy, +2 when specifically attempting to ascertain a weakness or predict the enemy's behavior.

Warpath (requires Vendetta): You can spend a fate point to force one of your favored enemies to take a consequence instead of stress when you hit with an attack.

FAVORED ENEMIES

Choosing a favored enemy is part of the trappings of the vocation (if you choose to also make an aspect out of it, that's a bonus). There are no hard limits on what can be a favored enemy or even how many an individual can have, but it should be kept fairly reasonable: one is enough for most starting characters, maybe two in special cases. As the game goes on, if you end up encountering the same kinds of foes over and over again, it's fine (if everyone agrees) to choose another favored enemy on top of your existing ones. Even so, you should still have a particular emotional investment in your first favored enemy – if you just hate puggs because they keep getting underfoot when you're trying to get on with a quest, that's much less interesting than hating them because they smashed your treasured family heirloom, or some other such offense.

Childhood can often be a wondrous time. But for an unfortunate few, it is the source of unrelenting trauma. Something no one should ever have to experience recurs every evening when the sworn hand of vengeance closes her eyes. A finger came down and destroyed everything she had. They wiped out every family member, maybe friends, or perhaps an entire village. Maybe she was on hand to witness the carnage, pushed under a bed or dropped in a basket; perhaps she arrived too late, ready for a fight, only to be tasked to digging graves. As the lone survivor, she thinks of nothing else but revenge to placate the nightly terrors. This rage is not intended for a specific nation, king, or thug: retaliation is unfocused, intended for an entire species. Not all who pursue this path are post-traumatic stress victims, of course. This world is populated by tremendous evil, minions of a gauntlet of shadow that stretch slowly over the land. Some have been meticulously trained from childhood to fight the traditional enemies of their people, but these rarely exhibit the same cold, implacable rage that a true sworn hand displays in battle against her favored foes… at least not until mentor or friend is taken from her by those same monsters.

The sworn hand of vengeance knows everything there is to know about one particular favored enemy, whether it be a specific type of animal, monster, or even sentient foes. In the lands bordering Apocrypha, chaparrans hunt the marauding pagus; the lands surrounding Sana Marsh are full of those specialized in destroying the undead; among the tribes of Seliquam, those who track and exterminate pugg raiding parties are held in high esteem; and in the lands between Limshau and Baruch Malkut there are those who will gladly take fae scalps when they can and those who will even more willingly take the scalpers' heads. And of course, in the wild lands in between, there are always those who specialize in hunting a particular kind of game, whether or not that game can fight back.

This is not to say that such warriors are incapable against other foes; indeed, the training and dedication that comes with such a focused calling makes them supremely dangerous no matter who or what they face. The sworn hand must be able to pick out the marks of his foe's footfalls out of hundreds, to recognize the signs of his prey's passage through an area that may be frequented by thousands of other creatures. He must be aware and vigilant, skilled with many different weapons, able to endure a hostile environment for days or weeks at a time in pursuit of the enemy.

SWORN HAND OF VENGEANCE SUMMARY

As a Sworn Hand of Vengeance, you can…

…use your knowledge of your enemies' ways to track them through forest, plain, and mountain pass, and even over ground that normally leaves no trace.

…know nearly everything there is to know about your favored foe, and use your knowledge to point out the enemy's weaknesses.

…choose weapons best suited to defeating your favored foe: if they excel at close-combat, you train in the bow; if they are strong but sluggish, you train in quick and evasive combat styles.

THUGGEE

Brutal Enforcer of Blessed Writ

Only fools do prefer ta fair fightin. Me once-brethren should be knowin tha, but intis their zealot-sense be trumpin their common-sense. The ringmailed figure they be so careful creepin upon now be but a mannequin. Up in the trees, I be waitin for the last of them ta pass by, then throw a loop of wire about his neck and drag him up inta branches with me. The third dispatched, I be droppin silent ta ground, be drawin the garrotte out ta spool on me wrist. You shoulda betrained your other hunters as well as me, your Holiness.

PERMISSION

Human from Baruch Malkut.

THUGGEE ASPECTS

A Thuggee's aspects will depend largely on whether or not he still serves Darius Konig. Think about how your calling puts you at odds with the rest of the fantasy world, and if you have left Baruch Malkut's service, what drove you to do so.

Sample Aspects: ***The Blessed King's Creed; Conscientious Rebel; Secret Strangler***

Sample Benefits: Ambushes and surprise attacks; wilderness survival; urban infiltration; fae hunting.

Sample Drawbacks: Death marks; threat of exposure; intolerant doctrine.

THUGGEE STUNTS

Militant Brute: If you invoke an armor-related aspect when defending, you reduce incoming damage from the hit by 1 (minimum 0).

Squeeze Until They Don't Move Anymore (requires Throttle Lock): Once per round (but not necessarily on your turn) you can spend a fate point to automatically inflict 2 damage on any creature you are grappling.

Throttle Lock: You gain +2 to advantage checks made with a garrote.

Marshes and swamps cover most of the countryside in the kingdom of Baruch Malkut. A massive landscaping effort connects distant towns and cities by roadways. This has led the more nefarious segments of Malkut society to adapt their skills to the surrounding environment. Bandits and outlaws master subterfuge and stealth, utilizing the natural cover of the landscape. A few have found a calling within the military, working as spies or assassins. These individuals are known as Baruch thuggees.

All thuggees receive the same general training and indoctrination, their organization being highly cultish even by the standards of Baruch Malkut. They are taught to revere Darius Konig as the earthly manifestation of God and to dispatch his enemies without mercy. They are trained in a variety of weapons and armor, but the iconic accoutrements of the order are medium to heavy armor (the weight of which serves to keep them hidden if they must submerge themselves in a swamp), a blowgun (so they can breathe under the surface of the marsh, and strike enemies from hiding), a concealed dagger strapped to wrist or leg, and most of all, a wire

garrote – for the preferred method of assassination by these vicious brethren is to take their prey from behind and strangle the life out of them before they can make a sound.

Thuggees leaving the "Blessed Kingdom" for any reason find their title a burden or a curse. Declaring oneself a thuggee in Limshau or Gnimfall may likely net a person jail time or expulsion. Openly wielding the title in a free house may get them executed. They must keep their identity secret, either because of a mission or to prevent a lynching. Most following this path by choice seldom have problems using their training to net themselves personal benefit, as their morals and values have already been stretched. The qualifying mission for the order is to sneak into a rival city and slay a figure of importance. A few rare cases found the final deed abhorrent to their nature and escaped, carrying their training with them into the outside world. Some try to find new lives pursuing a nobler course. These are declared traitors, with bounties are placed upon their heads.

THUGGEE SUMMARY

As a Thuggee, you can…

…navigate through the hazards of marsh and swamp.

…use stealth and ambush tactics to put an enemy at a disadvantage; whether bursting suddenly from the swamp like an alligator or moving unseen through a crowd until it is too late, you know never to let them see you coming before you are ready to strike.

…attack with a garrote, a hidden blade concealed on wrist or boot, a blowgun, or just your bare hands, eliminating foes silently before they have a chance to cry out and relying on your armor to stop them from hurting you while they struggle.

TRAFFIC HUNTER

Trader in Non-Human Suffering

"We don't serve your kind here," said the bartender with a glower.

Alessandro sighed. "I no be no slave-taker, goodmon, and I no be servin no king. I want only un drink anta answer to un pergunta. Have you no be havin a worry of pickpockets here of late?" He passed a gold coin, fifty times the value of the drink he had requested, across the bar. The barman continued to scowl, but his business sense overwhelmed his principles.

"Yeah," he said at last, pouring the drink and passing it over. "Started two weeks back. They say hundreds of people been robbed even of their jewelry while walking where nobody could possibly reach 'em."

Alessandro smiled, his dark eyes glittering. "Ten my road be leadin here after all," he said. "Tere be criminals of ta fae well as ta mon. An you judge all mon of Malkut ta same, you no be better than we. I be handlin your ladrões, you no fear." He put another coin down on the bar and left, his dearly purchased drink left untouched.

PERMISSION

Human from Baruch Malkut.

TRAFFIC HUNTER ASPECTS

A Traffic Hunter is defined by the extent to which his trade conflicts with his morals (if at all). Consider the extent of your human-centric prejudice, if you are at all: such things are rarely an all-or-nothing proposition.

Sample Aspects: ***Aids Escapees in Secret; Cold-Hearted Slaver; Taker of Ears***

Sample Benefits: Tracking and capturing fae (especially damaskans and chaparrans); status with Baruch Malkut.

Sample Drawbacks: Regarded as monsters by the rest of the world; regarded as traitors by Baruch Malkut if they rebel.

TRAFFIC HUNTER STUNTS

Know Their Tracks: You gain +2 to tracking checks against fae.

Know Their Tricks: When you are subject to a mind-affecting attack from a fae, you can discard and draw a card before making your defense check.

Symbol of Hate: You gain one free invocation per scene of any ***Fae-Iron*** equipment you wield.

There is a small but vocal portion of the human race that firmly believes that they are the true inheritors of the planet. The invading fantasy creatures either had their chance and failed or are the result of a breach in the laws of reality and don't truly exist at all. As such they are not afforded any dignity or rights. Any commandments or tenets that pertain to humans do not apply to fae; these creatures can be dismissed or categorized as demons, fiends, or any other evil force mentioned in religious and mythological texts. They must be more than just disregarded; they must be suppressed, dominated, or destroyed. After a few decades, this belief extended to enslavement, as the massive economic possibilities of an indentured population could not be ignored. King Darius founded Baruch Malkut on the elimination of the fae races, but relented in the face of the opportunities offered by the businessmen and landowners of the new properties he had conquered.

Slavers can be found across Canam, but most of their traffic leads ultimately to Baruch Malkut. Few take up the career out of choice: most are bequeathed it from a family's legacy. A traffic hunter learns to track and capture every type of fae, but chiefly chaparrans and damaskans, the closest and easiest prey to the southern markets. However, for reasons that are unquestionably complicated, many have moved away from this profession. More than likely, when faced with this birthright, they rebuffed the responsibility, appalled by the actions of their ancestry. Unfortunately, one cannot simply walk away from his or her duty. The kingdom knows everyone under its law. It never forgets, and it seldom forgives. Rejecting the traditions of their heritage, the conscientious few have escaped the kingdom, obsessed with making amends for actions they might never have

committed if their fate were their own. Some prefer to leverage their skills to more practical and less ethically questionable means, serving their adopted communities or themselves as thief-takers (for the legendary fae honesty does not mean they commit no crimes) or mercenary consultants, defending free houses on the edges of territory contested between man and fae.

TRAFFIC HUNTER SUMMARY

As a Traffic Hunter, you can…

…defeat most mental magic with minimal effort.

…use your knowledge of fae ways, limited in broad terms but incredibly exact in the means of finding and capturing them alive.

…fight with fae-iron weapons and even armor; even if you foreswear the slaver's lifestyle, old habits die hard.

SUPERNATURAL

Those with supernatural vocations represent those blessed (or in some cases, cursed) by Attricana with innate magical abilities. These people channel magic directly from the gate, and therefore require neither the words of Pleroma to shape arcane energy, nor a totem to focus it. Such individuals are rare: one could cross Canam from one end to the other many times in their lifetime and not be guaranteed of finding such a person. While scholars have attempted to find some sort of pattern in where and how many are born, the fact is there is very little consistency. A supernatural may be born in the midst of a bastion or the midst of the wilderness. They may come into their powers early in life, awaken to them when fully mature, or even go their entire lives without realizing they were special, attributing any bizarre effects around them to chance or the nature of a magical world.

Anyone with a supernatural vocation generates EDF, even if they normally wouldn't. The only exceptions are supernaturals who have fallen under the thrall of Ixindar. The extent to which their presence impacts technology is variable, however – for some, the effect is no greater than the average fae (shorting out nearby unshielded electronics, only actually breaking things with a touch), while others could be walking disruption flares. Some might even seem completely quiescent until they actually use their powers, at which point every device within a hundred feet goes poof. Each player of a supernatural should discuss with their GM the effects of their EDF, if it should prove to be relevant.

Because of the rarity of supernaturals, it is recommended to limit them to one character per game. While it is possible to justify more than one (mentor/mentee, mystery twins, escapees from a secret cabal of mad scientists that collects abnormals for unspeakable experimentation), overabundance would diminish the impact.

POWER SCALING (OPTIONAL)

Not all supernatural powers are equally potent. If a character has a supernatural vocation at a very low level, it is reasonable to limit the scope of their power accordingly – instead of having access to the full panoply of abilities, they might be able to manage only one or two tricks. Since the supernatural ability comes from the aspect you choose rather than your vocation, you're free to combine the effect of your powers with another vocation's rating if you want to represent being very good at a limited number of powers (for instance, a fire Incarnate with a rating of +1 might only be able to light sparks and manipulate natural fires… but combined with her +3 Kitarri vocation, she can turn ordinary arrows into flaming brands of doom). With the GM's permission, it might even be possible to take a supernatural vocation at +0, representing a fledgling power not entirely under the character's mastery. In this case, the relevant aspect should be adjusted to reflect this, so the character can benefit from compels against their power getting out of control.

SUPERNATURAL MAGIC

In addition to not requiring a totem, the other major difference between spellcasters and supernatural vocations is that supernaturals do not need to prepare spells – indeed, they don't actually cast spells (see ***Chapter Seven: Magic*** for more details on spellcasting). Supernaturals with overt magical powers just flavor their actions as being magic when they perform them. In some ways, this makes them more versatile than other magic-users, as it reduces the number of actions required to produce a magical effect – but on the other hand, it tends to make their magic less predictable, as regular spellcasters have twice as many opportunities to use fate points to improve their spell results.

CUSTOM SUPERNATURALS

Magic is chaotic, and not every magical sport or blessing from Attricana will be entirely identical. If you are intent on playing a supernatural vocation and none of the provided ones seems to fit, make up your own, following these guidelines:

Permission and Aspect: Every supernatural vocation must be tied to one of your aspects, so you'd best think of one in case you preserve the vocation for posterity. If you haven't quite decided on the exact phrasing of your own aspect, come up with a general guideline for the aspect and use that as a permission for the vocation. Think of some general situations in which it might be invoked and compelled and write them down, just for reference.

Stunts: Come up with between one and three stunts for the vocation, even if you don't plan to take one. Stunts for supernatural vocations tend to be a bit more focused on tweaking the rules in unusual ways, so it is

fine for a stunt to allow you to do something *mechanically* that operates somewhere outside the normal rules, as long as you bear in mind that the vocation itself is what grants you whatever superpowers you have. A stunt that allows you to fly would not be appropriate; a stunt that allows you to ignore certain types of obstacles *when* you fly would.

Description: Write a short description of the vocation so that everybody at the table knows what to expect from it (and so you don't forget what you had in mind as the campaign goes on). It's OK to change the description as you work the kinks out, but make sure everybody is on board with the changes.

BLOOD ROYAL

Scion of a Dragon-Blessed House

"Sir, please endeavor to control your cousin," the librarian said.

Ravenar did not look up from his book. "What has she done this time?" he replied idly. The librarian fumed.

"She's gone off to the ends of the earth with some naive human child who thinks he's a wizard," he spluttered. "Completely abandoned her duties in my stacks, all for some silly notion that they're going to save the world."

Ravenar looked up with a smile. "Well, isn't saving the world what young people are for?" he said. "Good for her. I wish I could go too."

PERMISSION

One aspect indicating that you are a member of a dragon-touched noble house (Alkanost, Limshau, Savarice, or Vakai, or as negotiated with the GM).

BLOOD ROYAL ASPECTS

The most pertinent aspect for one of Blood Royal is their relationship to the head of their house: player characters should not be in direct line to the throne, but the reason for this is rarely due to disgrace or treachery. Consider your role in the kingdom you hail from, and why a person of such exalted lineage would be adventuring – whether you act on orders from your house or seek your own fortune.

Sample Aspects: ***Bored Royal Cousin; Diplomatic Envoy; The Prince and the Pauper***

Sample Benefits: Court etiquette; rousing speeches; navigating feudal bureaucracy; access to goods and services.

Sample Drawbacks: Interference by secret bodyguards; bounty hunters seeking a runaway; treachery by hostile kingdoms; standing out in a less prosperous area.

BLOOD ROYAL STUNTS

Aura of Fortitude (requires Commanding Charisma): Allies within the same zone as you do not grant free invocations of their consequences.

Commanding Charisma: You gain +2 to all social checks, even against those who are unaware of your pedigree.

Natural Motivation (requires Commanding Charisma): You can give up your next action to clear the 2-stress box of an ally in the same zone, as long as you are both in the same zone as an active opponent.

OTHER ROYAL HOUSES

While the houses of Alkanost, Limshau, Savarice and Vakai are the only well-established lines of blood royal, there is nothing to prevent another house (whether pre-existing or wholly original) from being granted the same benefits, if players and GM are in agreement. The blessing would be recently granted, or possibly the character is intended to be the first of such a lineage, and is engaged on a quest to prove their worth to a dragon.

Canonically, only an Archon dragon (specifically a Holy or Noble dragon) can grant the true blessing, but the GM might allow a house to be given the mark of another type of dragon. Such a grant would not bear the same weight worldwide as the true blood royal, but mechanically would be more or less the same. In the canon game, the human Sheridan line of the House of Quinox has the endorsement of an elemental dragon: other free houses could conceivably have their own draconic patrons.

The history of royalty amongst mankind is marred with bloodshed. The bearers of crowns have always claimed themselves and their descendants as the chosen of God, but the path to reach such consecration was often paved with the bones of their competitors. Each conquering warlord claimed the mandate of heaven while their hands were still stained with the blood of the previous claimant, and earthly envoys professing to speak for the divine took their side, lest they fall under the same fate. This process continues today, despite the supposedly morally evolved view of modern man. As the old ways returned in the absence of true civility, new declarations of nobility emerged. Some of these first aristocrats and generals had no entitlement, but called themselves kings and queens regardless. Most of the first rulers of man either witnessed the collapse of their virgin kingdom, or were executed by those that despised them. These included Saron Sana, Avraham Torquil, and Darius Konig; of these, only the last has maintained his lineage (and his life).

The fae ascribe a much more humble approach to royalty. The title is not claimed, but given to them from a higher power – not from a silent god but from the endorsement of a dragon. This has only taken place with four such individuals in Canam and Southam: Renar Alkanost of Laudenia, Sharajaclypse of Vakai, Ravenar Limshau, and Vincent Savarice of Abidan, the latter being the only human (at least in this half of the world).

To receive this blessing, one must be in an esteemed position of authority and not be corrupted by the power it offers. One must show true humility and benevolence in the application of authority. Even then, such an exalted title is uncommon. If it does occur, the individual is approached in a brilliant fashion by a drag-

on of the Noble or Holy lines. That dragon announces that he or she has adopted that individual under the wing of protection. Said noble's name is now synonymous with the dragon's. It is even believed the first fae royals possessed dragon's blood from a pairing with a dragon taking elvish form. Their lineage carries through to today. Alkanost and Limshau are believed (albeit not by themselves) to possess such a pedigree, though Sharajaclypse and Savarice are most definitely not. As with all royalty, the mark continues through later generations, though with fae, this had only spread to a handful of offspring, though the dragon's blessing has been known to occasionally grace members of the ruler's extended family. Sharajaclypse is unmated; Alkanost has only sired a half-dozen over 5,000 years; Limshau has only two children, each with one child of his own. Savarice's line has sired many, making the dragon-touched human royalty the largest in Canam.

BLOOD ROYAL SUMMARY

As a member of the Blood Royal, you can…

…use your commanding presence, perfect etiquette, and supernatural grace, and if necessary your royal name, to conduct yourself with aplomb in social situations, to leverage favors and the resources of your house.

…have expert training in any of the weapons preferred by your family's court, from the rapier to the broadsword, and wear the best armor from angelite mail to heavy plate – but in general, you are expected to allow others to do your fighting for you.

BOTTLED BEAST

The Forbidden Power of Blood

"You really shouldn't walk home alone in this part of town, missy," the human jackal said, grinning to his mates. "All sorts of nasty people about. Come with us, we'll take good care of you."

Suzu looked from one to the other of the men – all big, hulking folk with multiple scars, tattoos and piercings. All of them were at least three heads taller than she was. Perhaps it would be best not to provoke them. "Why, thank you, kind gentlemen," she said timidly, "but I'm almost at my destination. It's just around the corner."

One of the other men leered. "No need to hurry," he said, endeavoring to look down the front of her dress. "The night's young, innit?" A chorus of laughter erupted from the thugs.

"Now, girl," said the first, "don't you want to stay and have some fun with us?" Suzu sighed, and looked squarely up at her assailants, and just as the moon went behind a cloud, they thought they saw a glint of red beneath her narrowed eyelids.

"Oh, you boys," she said in the darkness, the tremulous note completely gone from her voice, "I would."

PERMISSIONS

Tilen, one aspect related to your species.

BOTTLED BEAST ASPECTS

The defining characteristic of a Bottled Beast is what could have occurred to cause such a radical departure from the tilen's pathological revulsion for their heritage. Consider the extreme of what you are willing to tolerate, and go one step further.

Sample Aspects: ***Driven to Despair; Nosferatu; They Shall Take No More Children***

Sample Benefits: Using heightened senses; summoning vampiric traits; intimidation; fighting in melee.

Sample Drawbacks: Shunning by other tilen; fear from outsiders; loss of control; constant aura of danger.

BOTTLED BEAST STUNTS

Monster Uncaged (requires Regression): You can use the Bottled Beast vocation instead of the Tilen vocation for actions related to your species traits, and you gain +1 to attempts to intimidate using your vampiric traits.

Regression: You can refuse a compel on an advantage you've created related to calling out your inner beast without paying a fate point. However, if you accept the compel, you gain two fate points instead of one.

Over the Line (requires Regression): While you have awakened your inner beast, you can spend a fate point to either gain +2 to acrobatic and perception checks, or +1 to melee attacks and advantage checks related to identifying weaknesses until the end of a conflict.

VAMPIRIC RAGE

Tilen are naturally stronger, faster, more agile and more perceptive than even most fae, but not generally to supernatural extents. A Bottled Beast in her natural state transcends even this, but still is not usually too far out of the ordinary: perhaps she can lift a heavy weight without apparent effort, run a race in half the usual time without tiring, or overhear a whispered conversation from the far end of the street. But when she creates an advantage to ***Release the Inner Beast***, all the stops come out, and she is virtually indistinguishable from a true vampire. The only downside of this is that sometimes, the bloodlust can be hard to control: the beast advantage is more double-edged than most situational aspects.

Tilen loathe the idea of returning to their roots. The elders remember the old ways and detest their traits more so than their descendants. They preach the ways of redemption with an emphasis on the obligation to repair the damage caused by their hands and others in the name of syntropy. Although virtually every tilen follows this tenet, not all of them agree to ignore their inner strengths, despite the worry it may cause a regression to old habits. Some have embraced the dark side of their nature, dragging it by the neck into the service of good. When their blood pumps too quickly or if adrenaline starts to flow, their previous characteristics surface, though only on a visible layer. They remain themselves in every way that is important. Some think greater power sits buried within, and proper meditation and self-control could tap this resource without risking degener-

ation. Many tilen consider it too much of a risk and elders prohibit its practice. This hasn't stopped some from trying, often with noble intentions. During this moment, the tilen gains a heightened sense of his surroundings. He hears the footfalls of enemies, the beating of their hearts, their lungs heaving with exhausted breath. The tilen's blood pumps faster. Muscles quiver and spasm. He moves with speed and agility unseen, weaving through enemies, delivering quick and deadly blows, like a four legged predator racing through a herd of prey. While the beast is not completely unfocused, the tilen's most carnal nature is released, and his ethical compass can be easily overwhelmed. He can summon the rage as he wills, but must be ever vigilant to ensure that it does not consume him.

There is no set discipline, no books to read, and no teachers to find to learn this talent. Each tilen must discover the necessary circumstances to bring this inner power to the surface. Because of this uncertainly, some consider it too risky and many tilen would be prepared to kill a loved one if she went too far down this path. The tilen are a fragile people, few and scattered, dedicated to repairing the harm they inflicted centuries ago in another life, and they will not risk further damage to

their reputation.

BOTTLED BEAST SUMMARY

As a Bottled Beast, you can…

…use the rage within you to make yourself stronger, faster, more agile and more perceptive, at the cost of relinquishing a bit of your self-control.

…use your iron discipline to force the beast back into quiescence when you have finished with it. Compared to this struggle, little fazes you.

GNEOLISTIC

The Power of a Holy Spirit

Sakura walked among the wounded, her eyes sad. This was no bogg or pagus raid – this was the work of human monsters. Bloody hands reached for her: she stretched out her own fingers to meet them, but her bodyguards gently steered her clear. "There is nothing you can do for them but pray," her priest said. Sakura opened her mouth to protest, and then shut it again. These men were dying – the best she could do for them was strengthen their faith.

"My Lady!" came a distant call. Two of her soldiers came up, dragging a limp form between them. "We caught the bas—ah, the leader."

Sakura stared at the bruised and bleeding shape before her. "He was not in this condition when you found him, surely?" she said, perhaps with more sharpness than she intended. She knelt down and placed her hand on the man's forehead, and one by one, the bruises and welts melted away from his body. "Why did you attack us?" she asked softly. "We never did you any harm."

The man looked up at her and spat on her white robes. "You do us harm every day," he growled, as the soldiers dragged him away. "They don't tell you, do they? Ask your handlers there what they're hiding from you!" Sakura looked up at her priest, who merely shook his head sadly and gestured for her to walk on.

PERMISSION

One aspect indicating where you feel your powers come from.

GNEOLISTIC ASPECTS

A Gneolistic is usually easily led early in life, and is usually shaped by whatever organization is able to lay claim to them first. Consider your lifestyle growing up, and how you may have reacted to this power as a child.

Sample Aspects: ***The Anointed One; Avatar; Water Into Wine***

Sample Benefits: Sacred influence; defensive and curative magic; diplomacy.

Sample Drawbacks: Beholden to a higher power (literal or metaphorical); believing your own hype.

GNEOLISTIC STUNTS

Divine Retribution (requires Touched): You deal +1 damage with magical attacks related to one of your favored disciplines: however, you must spend a fate point to deal a killing blow with magic. You can select this stunt more than once, selecting a different favored discipline each time.

Indeterminate Consecration: You gain +2 to defense against creatures of darkness (undead, Ixindar creatures, anything that you perceive as representing ultimate evil). You can spend a fate point to extend this benefit to your allies in the same zone.

Touched: Choose one discipline of spellcasting (elemental or school-based): you gain +1 to all magical actions related to that discipline except attacks. You can select this stunt more than once, selecting a different spell type each time.

GNEOLISTIC MAGIC

Despite the popular conception of Gneolistics as warrior priests wielding divine power, healing the injured, and turning aside undead monstrosities with holy light, a Gneolistic's talents will generally develop along the line of her own preferences – or more frequently, along the lines of indoctrination that whatever organization that claims her lays down.

On the surface, a Gneolistic is essentially identical to a wizard, except that they do not require totems and do not have to prepare 'spells': they simply channel raw magic from Attricana and shape it by willpower rather than through the words of Pleroma. While this has certain advantages in terms of spontaneity and ease-of-use, it does mean that Gneolistic powers tend to be less potent than a wizardly equivalent. Of course, a Gneolistic can always channel extra power if they need more oomph (by taking the extra actions to create related magical advantages as normal).

The only consistency among Gneolistic magic is that as a manifestation of the raw power of life, it is extremely difficult for Gneolistics to kill anything with magic, and the stronger their connection to Attricana, the more difficult it becomes. Most are content to incapacitate their enemies, often with an exhortation to mend their sinful ways. If the sinner shows no sign of repentance, however, rare is the Gneolistic who will mourn if an ally chooses to dispatch it on her behalf.

Additionally, the Gneolistic is an exception to the normal rule about taking more than one supernatural vocation: as the Vivicator is considered to be a subset of Gneolistic, a single character can take both the Gneolistic and Vivicator vocations. Such a character should use the same aspect as permission for both, but this is not required.

From the moment of her birth, a gneolistic's gift is obvious to all who behold her. Gneolistics possess a natural affinity with the power of Attricana. They can alter the very order of nature and the universe around them, an apotheosis of the might of chaos. A gneolistic can create life, heal injuries, and even recall souls from the afterlife. She channels the spirit of Attricana in everything she does. Some have claimed this power is bestowed solely from a divine source. Others say faith has nothing to do with it. If all souls are siphoned from At-

tricana then a gneolistic is simply a channeler of life-force. Either way, gneolistics are a direct conduit for magic and require neither totem nor training to bring forth the miraculous.

A gneolistic is an exceptionally rare soul to encounter in worldly travels. Very often, a gneolistic is taken in (or captured) by a religious sect and convinced or conditioned to believe his power comes solely from the gift of God or gods. In these cases, their path is cleansed and rewritten by the place of worship, erasing pesky personal stains like social standing and ethnicity. They parade the gneolistic as proof of piety, convincing others to join the congregation. Even if a holy order does not locate a gneolistic early, very often the child's own family will assume such responsibilities and a village idol is born. This would often still draw the attention of said holy order, forcing the idol to convert. A church has also been known to alter its doctrine to retroactively accommodate the village's traditions in order to win over a resident gneolistic. On a few rare exceptions, enlightened individuals have located and raised these prodigies under the umbrella of secular tutelage.

A gneolistic is not a proof of divinity but another example of how Attricana's influence knows no limits. A study from Limshau revealed that the ratio of gneolistics to vivicators is almost exactly one in ten thousand, with a similar ratio between vivicators and normal individuals. These ratios slightly improve among laudenians and chaparrans, but a larger population leaves humans with the highest number of gneolistics.

GNEOLISTIC SUMMARY

As a Gneolistic, you can…

…channel magic the equal of any wizard's, without the disadvantage of relying on an unfamiliar language or a special implement. However, your magic stems from a primal force of life, and taking a life with magic is difficult and painful for you.

INCARNATE

Power Made Flesh

Maos casually stuck his foot out from behind a wall and the gimfen ran right into it, rebounding as if she had run straight into a brick wall. "Ow!" she protested lamely.

Maos snorted. "No less than you deserve. Give it back." Grumbling, the girl tossed him a leather pouch.

"How'd you find me?" she complained. "I'm the best snitch this side of the River. Nobody's ever caught me before."

Maos grinned, and with a stamp of his foot, he extruded a round section of the cobbled road and sat down on it. "I could hear you from a mile away. You ought to get that arrhythmia looked at if you do a lot of running, you know."

PERMISSION

One aspect indicating your element.

INCARNATE ASPECTS

Incarnates are defined in part by their elements, but mostly by how they choose to use them. Consider how your power manifests, and how it affects your personality.

Sample Aspects: ***Flows Like Water; Hot-Blooded Hero; Stony and Stoic***

Sample Benefits: Controlling and manipulating your element; mental or social behavior that would be amplified by your elemental affinity.

Sample Drawbacks: Eclectic behavior in keeping with the element; weakened when separated from it.

INCARNATE STUNTS

Descent from Harmony: You can make movement checks in a way that reflects your element as part of another action as long as you are in physical contact with that element.

Elemental Tuner: You gain a boost whenever you take stress or consequences from an attack corresponding to your element.

Embodiment of Flesh (requires Elemental Tuner): If you are hit by an attack corresponding to your element and the damage from the hit equals or exceeds the severity of one of your non-extreme physical consequences, you can spend a fate point to remove that consequence and reduce the damage by its severity. You can spend multiple points to remove multiple consequences if enough damage is left over.

INCARNATE MAGIC

An Incarnate's magic is greatly influenced by her other aspects and vocations. An Incarnate who is also a Wuxia or Martial Artist will likely have a 'mystic kung-fu' approach to elemental magic, focusing mostly on close-quarters combat. A ranged fighter might substitute their element for their usual ammunition. A more roguish type might have an elemental 'trick' that they use to get out of (or into) trouble, and a scholar or shamanic Incarnate might behave more or less like a Wizard (without the pesky material requirements and spell memorization). They are, of course, restricted to a single element, but what effects they can accomplish with that element are limited only to what they can justify to the table.

Many of the fae claim an intrinsic connection with the primal elements. Impossibly graceful laudenian children, and narros youth with an intuitive understanding of stone and earth are two examples of Attricana's whimsical influence. The incarnate are those rare individuals with the ability to harness these forces and direct them. Each incarnate generally reflects their bonded element in both personality and appearance. Chaparran fire incarnates can be very quick-tempered and rash, even for a chaparran, whereas earth-bonded narros would be even more stoic and reserved than the rest of their taciturn race. An air incarnate is generally flighty, imaginative, and difficult to pin down in conversation. The water incarnate is subtle and usually adapts to any society he or she is living within. It can be difficult to

discern an incarnate from birth, but the telltale signs begin emerging in early childhood. Earth-bonded children's voices are coarse, their skin easily calloused. Air incarnate are very light-skinned, where the fire-bonded are dark, almost bronzed. Of all the incarnate, only water is easily discovered, as not many children can swim underwater for hours at a time without surfacing.

INCARNATE SUMMARY

As an Incarnate, you can…

…change the elevation of the ground, burn apart a gate, part the waters of a river, or glide on a cushion of air.

…exhort the earth to trip up your enemies, call down fire to cut off their escape routes, cause water to rush faster and sweep them away, suck all the air out of their immediate vicinity so they start to pass out, or any more outlandish opposition you can contrive.

…wield firebursts, water whips, earth clods and stone walls, focused whirlwinds, and so on against your foes.

KRYSALLIS

The Green Man

The ignorant look at the great sequoias and see merely a tree: a thing of beauty to be protected or a resource to be exploited. Those with more knowledge understand that each trunk is merely a finger of a greater organism. But as my hand touches the bark and sinks beneath it, I can feel the roots questing beneath the ground and tangling with other plants, the branches mingling in the sky above, the birds and squirrels nesting above and the worms and mites tunneling below. Tree, soil, sky, water, all that live in them, and me – all are one. This tree is of my body as I am of its trunk; this bow grown from the tree is an extension of my arm as my feet are extensions of the sequioa's roots.

PERMISSIONS

Chaparran or Darawren, with one aspect indicating your species/profession.

KRYSALLIS ASPECTS

A Krysallis represents something much larger than herself. Consider whether you came by your transformations naturally or through effort, and how your peers respond to this.

Sample Aspects: ***Hope for a Green Future; Soul of the Wyld; Treestrider***

Sample Benefits: Teleporting through trees (or arrows); communing with the forest; communicating with creatures further down the chaparran branch; shooting arrows; magically manipulating wood.

Sample Drawbacks: Feel pain when nearby trees are harmed; difficulty relating to normal chaparrans; forgetting you aren't a plant.

KRYSALLIS STUNTS

From Wood to Soul: As long as you are in a wooded area or can freely fire a longbow, you can automatically overcome any physical obstacle without a check (but it still uses up your action).

Highest Plane of the Soul: Whenever you critically succeed on a check using a wooden weapon or a wood spell, you gain +2 to your next wood-related action.

Inner Light: Spend a fate point when you make an attack with a wooden weapon or cast a wood spell: the target cannot defend against this action (they can still benefit from passive difficulty or defense checks made on their behalf).

KRYSALLIS MAGIC

The element of aether is central to all a Krysallis' powers. While most chaparrans would look at you strangely if you used terms like 'quantum entanglement' around them, if you were to describe many concepts of cutting-edge physics to a Krysallis they would understand immediately, although they would couch their understanding in simpler, more naturalistic metaphors. Krysallis magic is all about creating a sympathetic connection between two objects or two points in space, so that affecting one automatically affects the other: in this way they can merge their form with wood, teleport from tree to tree, manipulate plants like puppets, deepen the shadows in the woods, infect enemies with primal terror, and suchlike. Krysallis magic is rarely used to directly affect animal life other than the Krysallis herself, and almost never involves non-organic materials.

Chaparrans accept chaos in all its forms. Their communities are often small. They act on instinct and allow emotion and personal morality to maintain the fundamental civility of their culture over the peskiness of actual laws. They also embrace the idea of the overall fate of the fae to succumb to eventual anarchy. They believe nirvana and true heaven in the Eden promised by Berufu awaits when the fae unreservedly accept their fate—to merge with the world around, to vanish from reality altogether. Each further branch takes them one step closer to understanding the purpose of existence and the chaparrans hold a devout faith that their descendant races like the narrissa and sylphids are one step closer to paradise.

Many chaparrans pursue this devotion through their children, hoping they are gifted as one of these cousin races. They think of their species as a whole and don't preoccupy themselves with the lack of their own enlightenment. A few radicals have gone to burying themselves in fertile soil for years at a time, never jostling save for the donations of food from family and passers-by. Others refuse to leave their named-tree for their entire lives and make its survival and development the only priority. Others decide to reach unity with nature by the absolute discipline of their craft. This can come in the form of adept magic use or the perfection of melee and ranged combat, of which the latter is the most common.

A krysallis, natural-born or created by exposure to magic, begins to exhibit strange properties, mostly

physical. Their hair may turn the color of grass, leaves growing from the strands; and when they curl their fingers around their totem or weapon, the hand vanishes into the wood and they feel every bend and twist of the item as if it was a complete appendage. They separate just as easily, but this is only the first step. Eventually, they may be able to push themselves further, to take the next step in fae evolution. An adept krysallis can persuade trees to bend and move with nothing more than a kind word or a wave of the hand, pass into the bark of one tree and emerge from another, or even pass their bodies into an arrow they fire from their longbows and reappear at the arrow's destination.

KRYSALLIS SUMMARY

As a Krysallis, you can…

…ask obstructing trees to move for you, or failing that, travel through the wood itself to your destination.

…speak to plants and the creature of the forest to learn about even distant things.

…use your connection with wood to exhort the trees to inconvenience your enemies, or by using the eyes of the forest to report on their weaknesses.

MYSTIC

Oracles and Soothsayers

"The auspices are not good," says Terence. He always says the auspices are not good. Our resident augur has never had a positive reading, and yet the catastrophes he has predicted never seem to come true, even if there was a better than average chance that they would. Possibly he would be more cheerful if he tried to read something other than albatrosses.

PERMISSION

One aspect indicating your mystic tradition.

MYSTIC ASPECTS

A Mystic is defined by her guiding tradition: whether she inhales burning leaves, casts rune-scribed bones, or reads the patterns in tarot cards, her methods will influence her outlook. Consider your visceral response to various forms of divination and find one that best resonates to you.

Sample Aspects: ***Reading the Bones; Secrets of the Stars; Vision Quester***

Sample Benefits: Choosing between options; performing fortunetelling; tweaking the future.

Sample Drawbacks: Destiny fights back; important people not liking what their fortune holds.

MYSTIC STUNTS

Inverted Reading (requires Lost Traditions): You can spend a fate point at any time to change any check result from a negative number to a positive number, or a positive number to a negative number.

Lost Traditions: You can spend a fate point at any time to look at another person's hand before they play a card and exchange one of your cards for theirs. If you are using dice instead of cards, you can instead have them reroll two of their dice: you can declare that they can't reroll one type of result (no negatives, for instance), but they choose which dice to reroll.

The Sun and the Moon: Choose the sun or the moon. When you play the last card in your hand under the appropriate celestial body, add the number of icons on the card of the type chosen to the size of your next hand.

MYSTIC MAGIC AND IMPLEMENTS

Mystics only use scrying magic. *How* they use it is far more interesting. While a Mystic makes checks in response to events just like anyone else, logically, she should know at least something about what's coming in advance, even if it isn't very far in advance. In practical terms, this means that the GM should allow a Mystic to make checks that retroactively change the narrative, assuming that this information is not already contradicted – for instance, if a Mystic is in a pinch after having gone alone into a den of thieves, she can make an advantage check to retroactively have a hunch that she should tell the guard captain where she was going, so that ***The Cavalry*** shows up in the nick of time. While normally this is the sphere of compels against the GM, the Mystic requires no additional justification (and shouldn't usually have to spend fate points) for doing so.

Many methods of divination correspond fairly well to traditional methods of task resolution in RPGs (possibly not so much the inhaling of smoke or the reading of entrails, but you never can tell with some gamers). Wherever possible (and clean) to do so, the mystic should use a resolution system that corresponds roughly to their preferred method of guidance, even if the rest of the group is using a different method. We assume cartomancy by default (thus continuing to use the deck), but a card reader might also keep a tarot deck on hand to draw a single card from before they take an action, and determine the details of their action (and which result card they choose to play) based on that draw. A runecaster ought to use dice. A particularly dedicated runecaster who mixes divination with traditional wizardry might come up with a rune bag and use that to determine what spells they prepare. Whatever your chosen implement, mystics tend to see omens in everything and will use any excuse to play with their toys – just like gamers will use any excuse to start stacking dice.

In the history of every culture, there have been practitioners and disciples of ancient rituals who call upon unseen forces to offer guidance when hope is fleeting or altogether lost. These conduits of wisdom employ ancient customs passed down from their ancestors, tracing back an unbroken line of hundreds or thousands of years. Mystic traditions have hundreds of different names. Although this may certainly be called a religion, it may also be based in the ethnic traditions of a culture. Some mystics claim their insight derives from an aware-

ness of the world and is not handed to them from a divine power. It is their own soul, the untapped potential of their spirit, which inevitably guides them.

Each mystic has their own approach, but many races and cultures have their preferences. Chaparrans credit spirits for their guidance. They study the fallen leaves off trees and the arrangements of their veins. Damaskans use bibliomancy and numerology, and gain understanding through the books they read. They gain wisdom through raw knowledge but also from the patterns of words and sentences, finding further enlightenment where others find nothing. Gimfen roll dice, but the type of dice and the images on their facings are unique to each sage. Laudenians have the longest and most complicated form, using both incense and drops of water in stagnant pools as their channel. Narros shatter stones and study the fallen fragments to hear advice straight from the lips of Oaken himself. Tenenbri, the most subtle, use their fingers to touch and feel every flaw and perfection in something to learn from it, such as reading palms or marks upon a skull. When pagus are allowed to develop their own culture, their mystics employ animal entrails. The way the creature was killed changes the outcome of the answer. A quiet, peaceful death is required when choosing a path or seeking answers to a question while a violent death is needed in matters of war. As for humans, throughout their history, they have tried them all, from the study of flying birds to the analysis of rat feces.

MYSTIC SUMMARY

As a Mystic, you can…

…preempt many future obstacles and opponents by avoiding them before they present themselves in the first place.

…use some foreknowledge of where an enemy is going to move to direct your attacks and those of your allies.

PALADIN

The White Knight

Arthur had grown up listening to the stories about the Caravan of the King, and the miracles that had transpired wherever Vincent Savarice went. Every day he went to the chapel and prayed that some day he might be blessed with the power to do such good as the Paladin King had done. One day, an old man in rusty armor came in and knelt beside him.

"What are you praying for, boy?" the old man asked in a creaky voice. Arthur looked up.

"I pray that I may bring light into dark places, honored sir."

The old man smiled. "I'm sure your mother would say that you already do," he said, standing and patting the young boy's head. In the light shining through the stained glass window, the old man's white hair seemed to glow. "You don't find the light by praying in a church, boy," he said wistfully. "You find it by going into dark places and seeing what shines."

PERMISSION

One aspect indicating your absolute dedication to a righteous cause.

PALADIN ASPECTS

Every Paladin has a quest: not necessarily something that he wishes to find, but something that he seeks in order to take him to places where he is needed. Consider what you search for, and what you do along the way to finding it.

Sample Aspects: ***I Seek the Holy Grail; Rescue Every Orphan; Traveling in the Caravan's Wake***

Sample Benefits: Helping the helpless; defending truth, chivalry, and the Canamite way.

Sample Drawbacks: Must defend innocents; drawn to injustice like a magnet.

PALADIN STUNTS

Armor of Glory: You can spend a fate point to reduce all incoming damage by 2 until the end of your next turn, even if you aren't wearing armor (minimum 0).

Line in the Sand: If you make a defense check on behalf of another, the attacking enemy must make an overcome check against you on its next turn in order to take any action that does not include you.

Virtuous Arsenal: Whenever you critically succeed on an attack while subject to an advantage related to your exalted might, you can change the attack into an advantage action to place a restrictive aspect on the target (the action remains a critical success). This aspect cannot represent physical harm, but can represent physical or mental restraint or psychological damage.

PALADIN POWERS

Paladins don't use magic in the conventional sense. While they do channel Attricana's power, it mostly serves to strengthen their limbs, provide them with oundless stamina, and enhance their perspicacity. A Paladin can actively attempt to channel their exalted power to boost their abilities by making an advantage check, but the power must be channeled *into* something – either a part of their body or something they are holding, wearing, or touching. The classic 'smite evil' is merely a matter of channeling exalted might into the Paladin's sword and using it to attack something particularly sinful. This kind of channeling is a particularly fragile use of Attricana's power – all such efforts are treated as boosts regardless of the result of the check, and if the Paladin is made to doubt the righteousness of his action, the aspect immediately evaporates.

Paladins don't *strictly* have to be good, although by default it's presumed that they are. What they do have to be is dedicated to a cause that promotes life – hence, 'evil' Paladins can only exist if they are absolutely, intrinsically convinced that what they're doing is for the greater good (in other words, completely insane). Additionally, Paladins cannot take corruption damage and cannot benefit from any effect bound to Ixindar. While there may be dark mirrors of the vocation in service to Ixindar, these are not Paladins, nor were they ever Paladins.

A paladin is the epitome of a knight in shining armor: a warrior seemingly divinely blessed, who fights only when necessary. Despite the stereotype that paladins are unreasonable, egotistical and vain, the majority are far from this cliché. Pride is a sin not often seen in the modern paladin. When one sees arrogance and condescension in a lowly warrior or even a fully knighted lord claiming membership in a paladin order, this declaration of virtue spills from a liar's lips. Whatever power taps the shoulder of a potential paladin, it is capable of seeing into the heart and finding the goodness that resides within.

In most respects, the paladin is no different from any other knight. However, when necessary, they exhibit strange blessings that cannot be entirely discounted as the results of training or luck. A paladin always seems to be able to tell when someone is lying, for one thing, and can detect a truly wicked heart with barely more than a glance. Their words bring comfort to the sorrowful and their touch brings solace to the hurt. They can channel their righteous fury into their weapons, or use it as a shield against the assaults of those with evil intent. Their power is formidable on its own, but is amplified to inconceivable levels when used in defense of the defenseless. A paladin might have no training at all in the arts of combat, and yet fight like a master when innocents are threatened. Furthermore, paladins cannot even hear the whisper of Mengus – they are completely immune to all the effects of syntropy and can never be drawn into Ixindar's hold.

Paladins are bound (they do not see it as 'constrained') to an unimpeachable code of compassion, honor, and loyalty – in that order, should these principles come into conflict. A paladin must defend those unable to defend themselves. He must seek out the foes of virtue and vanquish them, whoever and whatever they may be. If an enemy asks for forgiveness, a paladin must accept it unless the request is not genuine. They appear in the most unlikely of circumstances, rising seemingly spontaneously to confront the darkness. They may emerge unexpectedly in the midst of grief and loss as an avenger and guardian, or they may wander for years or decades, drawn towards their destiny before finally manifesting their abilities. This, combined with their relative rarity, propensity to wander, and short life expectancy, has made the source of paladin abilities almost impossible to study.

Though many of them may claim divine power and declare their actions were bequeathed from a higher order, few are true paladins. If one acts commonly

against his ethics on a whim or professes his honor justifies acts others claim criminal, chances are he is a paladin in title only.

PALADIN SUMMARY

As a Paladin, you can…

…channel your 'divine' power to strengthen your arms and make you a living bulwark against evil.

…fight the forces of evil with such weapons as befit a holy knight, and resist those same forces with a combination of strong armor and stronger convictions.

SPIRIT BOND

A Helping Paw

Cyan caught the square of chocolate in her mouth and purred. She didn't actually need to eat, but she liked the taste of sweets. While it shouldn't be possible for an imaginary friend to get fat, she was definitely looking a bit paunchy. When I remarked upon this, the big blue cat narrowed her eyes at me and batted the remainder of the chocolate bar out of my hands with one enormous paw, before padding over to it and lapping the whole thing up. "Glutton," I scolded. She sniffed playfully at me and curled up in a ball before fading into intangibility once more.

PERMISSION

One aspect describing the spirit animal.

SPIRIT BOND ASPECTS

The type of animal shape a Spirit Bond assumes will have a major impact on its personality, and correspondingly the mentality and physiology of its host. Consider the stereotypical traits of your animal and magnify them to extremes.

Sample Aspects: ***Aura of the Firebird; Cats Are Cute, Cats Are Mean; Strength of the White Stag***

Sample Benefits: Calling on the animal's abilities; summoning the beast; performing tasks that an animal would have an advantage with.

Sample Drawbacks: High concentrations of magic confusing the spirit's senses; temporary differences of opinion as to the correct course of action.

SPIRIT BOND STUNTS

Constant Companion (requires Manifest Spirit): Your spirit companion can materialize at will, without taking an advantage action (you must still spend a fate point to allow it to act independently of you).

Manifest Spirit: You can spend a fate point to allow your spirit companion to materialize without taking an advantage action, and act independently for one action.

Strike from the Aether: If your spirit companion's first action after materializing is to attack, it gains +2 to its check.

SPIRIT COMPANIONS

The Spirit Bond is an imaginary rather than a real creature: although it often duplicates a natural being, there is always something otherworldly about it, even when fully manifested. Therefore there is nothing preventing the Spirit Bond from taking the form of a mythical creature as well as a natural animal – a phoenix is just as likely a form as an eagle, a dropbear as possible as a koala, even a miniature dragon would not be out of place among more mundane shapes like cats, wolves, falcons, and crocodiles. Unlike the natural animal companion of the Alpha or the mount of the Kavalier, the spirit companion is an intrinsic part of the character's soul, and thus can only be represented by a combination of an aspect and this vocation. Materializing a spirit companion normally requires an advantage action, unless you take certain stunts. While materialized, the companion uses your vocation rating and actions, and damage to it comes out of your stress and consequences. A materialized spirit companion can be dismissed at will, or forced into quiescence by certain calling spells.

The animal that joins its spirit to another is not a normal creature. It materializes beside its compatriot, never venturing far, never getting lost, and always appearing in places it could never be. It finds its way into bedrooms, out of jail cells, and can find its bonded ally from anywhere on the planet.

At first, the animal is dream-like, only appearing to the mortal. Only with time and meditation can one pull the animal into the real world. The bonded animal is thought to be either a physical manifestation of the person's soul or a spirit from the magical realm, the dream-like expanse that flows from Attricana and covers the globe.

This spirit guide has its own personality and is not a slave. It will depart forever if abused. Often enough, the spirit tags along as a loyal pet, unassuming and innocent. It appears well trained and docile unless it feels the fear of its bondmate. Although the two cannot communicate through speech, they are able to detect each other's moods and emotions. Neither spirit nor bondmate would ever abandon the other unless their partner ordered them to.

SPIRIT BOND SUMMARY

As a Spirit Bond, you can…

…perceive things just beyond the sight of normal beings.

…rely on your companion as an invisible spy or as a corporeal ally.

VIVICATOR

The Hands of a Healer

The wound was deep: the field surgeon despaired of his master's life. The angry warlord threw the man aside. "Useless leechcraft!" he shouted. "Bring that slave to

me!" One of the guards hurried away and came back a moment later dragging a young woman, her hands bound by cruel chains. At a gesture from the dying lord, one of the shackles was released, the other remaining firmly clasped around her wrists. "Heal me, witch, if you value your life," the warlord commanded. The girl placed her hand on the man's bloody chest, then looked up fearfully. "Milord, I cannot close such a wound. It is too deep, even for me." The lord slapped her. "I didn't tell you to close it, I told you to take it away! You, seize him!" Another guard dragged the panicked physician to his feet. "Give it to this worthless excuse for a doctor." The warlord grabbed the girl's hand and placed it on his chest once more, while the guard that held her shackled wrist dragged her clenched fist toward the protesting surgeon. There was a bright flash of light, and the physician fell dead on the ground. The lord picked up a pitcher of water and washed away the blood from his torso, revealing a clean, unbroken expanse of skin. "That's my girl," he said with satisfaction. "Now, put her back in her cage."

PERMISSION

One aspect representative of your gift.

VIVICATOR ASPECTS

The Vivicator, like the Gneolistic, is largely defined by how her gift has been used (or misused) since childhood. Consider whether you regard your power as a blessing or a curse.

Sample Aspects: ***Court Physician; Doctoring Slave; Miraculous Pilgrim***

Sample Benefits: Healing wounds; assessing a patient's physical condition; detecting the flow of life inside and outside of the body.

Sample Drawbacks: Sought after by the unscrupulous; the urge to heal even people and creatures you don't want to.

VIVICATOR STUNTS

Hand of the Unspoken: You can spend a fate point when using your healing powers to reduce the severity of the consequence by one step before healing it.

Inner Light: You gain +3 to recovery checks.

Touch of Life (requires Hand of the Unspoken): When you critically succed on a recovery check, you can give up your boost to reduce the severity of the treated consequence by one step (for a maximum of two steps if you also used *Hand of the Unspoken*).

VIVICATOR HEALING

By default, vivicator healing functions like preparing and casting a ***Cure*** spell, except that no 'spell' is prepared: you simply make a normal recovery check for the consequence, rewriting it to make it almost impossible to invoke. The *Hand of the Unspoken* stunt allows the vivicator to duplicate the effect of a ***Restore Health*** spell when curing wounds, while the *Inner Light* stunt makes up for the lack of bonuses from free invocations that a spellcaster would have.

However, there is a more drastic alternative: the vivicator may completely remove the consequence with an overcome check… but it has to go to someone else – usually the vivicator herself, but it can be transferred to any other creature, willing or unwilling, that the vivicator is touching. If involuntary, the action of transferring the wound is a compel, although the fate point can come either from the vivicator or the person being healed. The exact nature of the consequence can change when it is transferred, but it always has the same severity (which sets the difficulty of the overcome action). Even extreme consequences can be transferred this way. However, once transferred, the consequence is considered to have been magically treated, and no further magic will affect it: it will have to be healed naturally.

Bringing someone back from the dead is a special case. There is no difficulty associated with resurrection: the check automatically fails, no matter how high the vivicator's skill or the number of invocations stacked on it. The only way to make it happen is to succeed at a *very* major cost. Who pays that cost is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Regardless of magic, despite position or lineage, death is still certain. Almost everyone believes that souls con-

tinue past their mortal prison. While some believe the spirit rises to an afterlife, others affirm that the soul recycles from animal to animal, only occasionally being blessed into one of higher intelligence. Some religions forbid the interrupting of this process for any reason. Forcing a spirit back to its original body interrupts the fate written for that soul when god blessed that baby emerging from the womb. This never stops the obsessed and the mournful from attempting any course of action to bring someone back from the dead.

Those that claim they are blessed with magic from their deity cannot prove their gift came from any divine power. In the end, most are con men or take shortcuts to god via some proven magic from an ungodly source. Stories began circulating in the past centuries of aberrations of magic, more so than the already numerous oddities covering the globe. These are creatures of higher intelligence gifted with a powerful magic with apparently no source or explanation. Several monsters already flaunt powerful magic, but these are limited to less potent spells. No magical beast can spontaneously bring the dead back to life. How is it then that a few humans and fae have been rumored to be able to generate great magic with no source? Some of these gifted individuals stumbled upon this talent in childhood or through puberty. Most lose control of their power, killing themselves and, unfortunately, others in the process. Some are killed by a fearful public, declaring the youths servants of darkness. A modicum hid their powers, turning to clerical and arcane studies to master and mask their ability with the accepted arts. No one would question how one spell is cast differently than others. This leaves a minute group that live their lives possessing a single immense power: the ability to manipulate the very essence of life, to heal or to harm. Casting it always comes with a heavy internal price, resulting in the eventual death of the user if the ability is abused.

A few have taken to being regular healers with no sworn deity with an uncanny ability to lift those from near death. All keep this power from the public eye, offering it in private to a select few with desperate causes or deep pockets. Most aware of the legends refuse to acknowledge these aberrations exist, for a hermit with life's dedication to his god could commit as great a power as the head priest of a temple. But what of the story of the child with a gift which could only be from a god? Echalogians believe this gift is the result of magical saturation. Since more humans are emerging with this power than fae, some echalogians speculate that mankind is undergoing a similar change as the fae, but in much more positive ways. The knowledge of these beings is kept silent and the majority of the world is unaware of their existence.

Though some claim to be gifted by a god or gods, there are others that boast the same abilities with no such faith. Despite the power to heal the diseased and raise the dead in this new world, God remains unproven.

VIVICATOR SUMMARY

As a Vivicator, you can…

…treat most wounds with minor applications of your power.

…move a wound from one body to another.

…raise the dead, though only at great cost.

ORGANIZATIONS

Rarely do adventurers meet in taverns or stumble upon each other on a dirt road. Many are not foolish to venture into the outside world alone and unprepared. Often, they've made friends and forged their alliances long before seeking adventure. They can be either part of a much larger organization or they can be independent, answering to no one but themselves.

ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

You can only belong to one organization at a time, but you do not necessarily lose the abilities of the vocation if you cease to be an active member: it just may be a bit more difficult to take advantage of them. If you have more than one organization vocation, choose one which represents your current membership. If three or more members of the group are active members of the same organization, the remaining party members are considered trained in the organization's vocation at +0, and the party gains a collective benefit from their membership (such as special access to resources, or the benefits of a particularly famous or infamous reputation).

There is nothing to prevent a group containing members of multiple organizations, even if those organizations have mutually exclusive goals – that is just something that the group will have to work out eventually.

ORGANIZATION DEMANDS

Belonging to an organization can be a double-edged sword. Most organizations have a particular agenda, and often call upon player characters to be agents of implementing that agenda. While this can serve as an easy adventure seed, there may be times when your organization's orders conflict with your own desires. In that case, you can either swallow your pride and acquiesce to your superiors, or you can defy them – with whatever consequences that brings. Either way, belonging to an organization makes you more accountable to outside forces than you might be otherwise.

CUSTOM ORGANIZATIONS

If you have a different kind of organization in mind than the ones detailed below, go ahead and make up your own, following these guidelines:

Permission: Many organization restrict their membership to certain species or regions. Some more esoteric ones have even more arcane requirements. Since a custom organization is usually designed around an existing group concept, this is less critical than the following elements, but it may help to give a common scope to

the organization. Not all organizations have these limits, so this step is not mandatory.

Aspect: Since organizations are often a party-wide option, come up with several aspects for it so that other members of the group have some variety if they want it. Think of some general situations in which the organization's aspects might be invoked and compelled and write them down, just for reference.

Stunts: Come up with between one and three stunts for the vocation, even if you don't plan to take one. Organization stunts often play off the group's reputation or access to certain resources, or aid allied characters in particular ways. If you are creating the organization as a group, everybody can either come up with their own stunts as they wish, or collaborate to provide a more focused set of mechanics.

Description: Write a short description of the vocation so that everybody at the table knows what to expect from it (and so you don't forget what you had in mind as the campaign goes on). You should specifically include where in the world the organization is based out of and what its major goals are. It's OK to change the description as you work the kinks out, but make sure everybody is on board with the changes.

Group Benefits: Determine what sort of benefits a party affiliated with the organization should receive. This can be fairly substantial, but bear in mind that the usefulness of the benefit should be directly proportional to how many bureaucratic hoops have to be jumped through in order to exploit it. An organization that dispenses equipment may need to have every piece accounted for and returned in proper working order at the end of a mission; one that performs research on the party's behalf does so on their own timetable rather than the characters' schedule; a group that teaches special skills may forbid their acolytes from using those skills in certain ways. Limitations on group benefits should be flavorful and provide plenty of opportunity for compels.

ABIDAN MISSIONARIES

Helpers of the Helpless

"Frère Mikal! Frère Mikal!"

The boy came running into the tent surprisingly fast considering the crutch under one arm. Mikal looked up gratefully from the quartermaster's report on the little camp desk. "What is it, Justin?"

The boy was out of breath and leaned on his crutch, panting, until he could get the words out. "There's a man to see you, Frère Mikal! A big grey man!"

The monk raised an eyebrow and got to his feet, following the halting child out of the tent and down to the edge of the refugee camp, where three halberdiers held their weapons to the throat of a large, grey-skinned and scarred fae, who stood impassively with his hands raised. At Mikal's gesture, the pikemen lowered their bills, but still remained wary. The giant looked down at Mikal as the monk hobbled up him.

"You are the headman of these… people?" he demanded.

Mikal shrugged. "Not really," he said. "They listen to what I have to say, and sometimes they follow up on it, but they are their own men. Now, mesieur pagus, what can I do for you?"

PERMISSION

An aspect indicating that you are a morally upright person.

ABIDAN MISSIONARY ASPECTS

A missionary need not actually be *from* Abidan, but must exhibit that kingdom's ideals of fellowship and fairness. Consider what calls you to this life: whether you believe your calling comes from your god, or you simply cannot stand by while suffering exists in the world.

Sample Aspects: ***The Bright Face of the Kingdom; The Humanist Crusade; Selfless Volunteer***

Sample Benefits: Fighting against evil creatures; healing the sick and wounded; teaching the ignorant.

Sample Drawbacks: Defending the helpless; losing supplies; opposing bigotry.

ABIDAN MISSIONARY STUNTS

Evil Must Be Fought: Whenever you take damage due to making a defense check on behalf of another, you deal extra damage with your next hit against the attacker equal to the amount you took.

Polygnosticism: You gain +2 to lore checks to dredge up information relating to any religion (not just your own).

Spiritual Aid: You can spend a fate point to negate a free invocation of any consequence suffered by you or an ally in the same zone. The person who took the consequence also gains a boost.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A missionary group gains the benefit of almost universal acceptance throughout the kingdoms and free houses of central Canam. Even most nations which regard fae or humans antagonistically will not question such folk working with the Abidan Missionaries. The party will almost always be given the benefit of the doubt and access to most reasonable facilities that they request (to the limits of the community to provide). Of course, being good and moral people, they would not even consider abusing this privilege. This privilege fades somewhat the further one gets from the Continental Cross, and a known member of the Missionaries within the borders of Baruch Malkut is in serious danger of his life.

Roughly equal parts warrior, healer, teacher and administrator, and tasked with protecting the innocent and encouraging hope and virtue throughout the kingdom, Abidan missionaries are gathered by a mutual desire to help others in need. They need not all be followers of the same faith, neither are they required to promote said faith to those requiring their help. These missionaries care nothing for political or theological agendas. They only concern themselves with helping the needy and serving the cause to defeat evil whenever they encounter it. Generally, missionaries are multi-talented;

they're not all just trained swords. Members are educators, leaders, and healers, just as equipped to stand at the forefront of a ragtag army against a horde of raiders as they are to coordinate the distribution of soup to the hungry. As the threat of an encroaching darkness looms, these missions have been found more and more often outside of Abidan borders.

As their name would suggest, most missionaries are actually from Abidan and carry with them that nation's spiritual message – that it matters not what god you worship so long as you live in a godly manner. The organization has the backing of the most universally respected human nation behind them, and there are few in the civilized world who will turn them away. Though they do not sit in judgement of any, most missionaries are extremely good judges of character and are able to discern the good from the wicked with a reasonable degree of accuracy – not that they will turn their backs on the morally decrepit who need their help, but they certainly will not allow such a person to take unfair advantage of themselves or any others.

ABIDAN MISSIONARY SUMMARY

As an Abidan Missionary, you can…

…using your knowledge (both spiritual and secular) to offer aid and succor against the hardships that afflict the less fortunate.

…use your experience of humanity (and fae) to separate the innocent and goodly folk from the blackhearted.

…interpose your weapon, shield, and body if need be between a wicked creature (be it man or monster) and a defenseless person.

CRIMSON STARLIGHT

Guardians of the Bastion Wall

The roar of the VTOL's rotors through the open hatch was matched by the shouting of the group captain in Rodriguez' ear as he scanned the streets below, illuminated by two roving searchlights.

"Two contacts! Ground forces show them somewhere at the northern edge of Genai. Intercept at tango delta three-three-one."

Despite being several miles away, Rodriguez gave a nod. "Si, taichou!" he replied, and switched over to the pilot's frequency. "Down by the torii, Nate. I think I see 'em."

The searchlights moved to scan the area, and Rodriguez got a sudden flash of green fire as two gigantic, furry hellbeasts stared up at them with the burning eyes of demons. "Madre de Dios," swore the pilot. "How'd those things get in?"

Rodriguez raised his rifle and sighted on the nearest creature. "Wakaranai," he said through gritted teeth. "But they aren't getting back out."

PERMISSIONS

Techan human, from Angel.

CRIMSON STARLIGHT ASPECTS

As the only residents of Angel who are regularly permitted to venture beyond the walls and come back again, any aspects related to the Crimson Starlight should take the security of the city into account. Consider why you stand to defend the walls and venture beyond them, and what you're really protecting.

Sample Aspects: ***CS APC Driver; Foe of Xixion; The Thin Red Line***

Sample Benefits: Tracking and fighting kaddog; operating vehicles; investigating echan smuggling.

Sample Drawbacks: Responding to threats to Angel; unexpected critical equipment failure; being stranded away from the city.

CRIMSON STARLIGHT STUNTS

Crax Team: You gain +1 to attacks against kaddog.

Genai Squad: You gain +2 to overcome checks related to investigations within Genai, or +1 if the investigation extends to echans outside the walls.

Give It a Kick: You can spend a fate point to automatically succeed at an overcome check for a vehicle against a disruption event.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A Crimson Starlight squad receives a ***Wheeled Truck*** **(TL1)** or ***Tracked APC*** **(TL1)** for their regular operations, and can request special equipment from the organization (whether they will receive it depends on availability and priority requests). The vehicle and any requisitioned equipment does not count against the characters' starting gear aspects. A squad operating within Angel or close to the walls always has plentiful access to batteries and ammunition and can quickly replace disrupted equipment.

The CS is the military arm of Angel, often taking missions outside of the city walls in all-terrain vehicles, ETVs, or VERTOL flyers. The CS operates from four immense towers situated around the outer perimeter of the city. Response time to an outside attack is measured in seconds. Recently, attacks on the wall have subsided, with boggs and puggs shifting their attention to those passing to and from the city. This has forced the CS to leave the walls and take a more aggressive stance on outside threats. They clash not only with surrounding raiders but with the growing armies of puggs and skeggs in the region of Xixion to the north. Of all the bastion organizations, the CS receives the most combat experience. Squads are often sent to patrol the great outer forests of Cyon.

Another branch of CS handles internal problems dealing with Genai. Rumors tell of a smuggling route under the city leading past the walls to the outside, allowing free passage for those wishing to avoid the main gates. Then there is the matter of the temple, a giant tower in the centre of Genai and the great beast supposedly living underneath it.

CRIMSON STARLIGHT SUMMARY

As a member of the Crimson Starlight, you can…

…field-strip a disrupted device and thump it back into working order, navigate a vehicle through hostile forests and wastelands, and capitalize on the strengths and weaknesses of puggs and skeggs.

…obtain allies and assistance in the field due to your relative open-mindedness and tolerance of echan folk.

…use a variety of advanced weaponry and enough low-tech weapons to get by when your technology fails. Considering your preferred method of dealing with a problem is to take it down with superior firepower from a distance, you shouldn't need to defend yourself.

FREE-LANCE

The Tarnished Colors

"Name?" I asked the new recruit.

"John Ca—" he began, but I cut him off.

"Not the name you were born with, kid. The name that you chose yourself. Nobody here has the name their momma gave them. We can't go home to our mommas no-how, so what good is it? Now, name?"

He thought for a moment, and then said "Rake."

I nodded. I didn't know what it meant, as long as it meant something to him. "Good name," I told him as I wrote it down. "Do it proud."

FREE-LANCE ASPECTS

The central concern of a Free-Lance is what occurred to cause them to leave their old country's service. First and foremost, did you really do what you are accused of doing? If so, would you do it again? If not, are you trying to clear your name?

Sample Aspects: ***Gone Native, Military Law is Inconvenient, Refused to Fire on Civilians***

Sample Benefits: Finding a contract; fighting as a unit; avoiding conflicts with the home country; exploiting the home country's military weaknesses.

Sample Drawbacks: A price on your head; homeland's allies won't work with you; driven to prove your innocence.

FREE-LANCE STUNTS

All In This Together: As long as you can see one other ally with this stunt, you gain +2 to defense against mental attacks.

Bad Rep: In situations where your less than sterling reputation would be to your advantage, you can draw and discard one card before making an intimidation or negotiation check.

The Star-Spangled Banner: You can spend a fate point to negate any attack against one of your allies.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A Free-Lance, regardless of its size, is accustomed to living off the fat of the land. The group begins every adventure with an assortment of ***Scrounged Supplies*** **+2**. However, every member of a Free-Lance, regardless of their original nationality, is persona non grata in the nation from which the Lance originates. The extent of this sanction will vary from place to place, ranging from low-key hostility to instant arrest (depending on the local attitude to law enforcement and the heinousness of the Lance's original offense).

Outcast or deserted from a lord or king, the free-lance travels from town to town seeking money or purpose. Often mistakenly dubbed mercenaries or sellswords, a free-lance began its life as military unit sworn to a specific flag. For reasons which may be good or bad, this lance found itself unbound from its original authority. Did they abandon their assignment? Did they violate doctrine, or challenge the word of a lord? Were they arrested, sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn't commit, only later to escape? Whatever the reason, wanted by their nation or kingdom, they survive as soldiers of fortune. They may be on the run from their homelands, where they are definitely persona non grata, although good-aligned nations like Abidan and Limshau rarely put prices on the heads of such expatriates, and bastions usually wash their hands of offenders once they have been put out of the walls. Nevertheless, if there's a problem, if no one else can help, and if they can be found (and paid enough for their troubles), a free-lance may be hired.

FREE-LANCE SUMMARY

As a member of a Free-Lance, you can…

…overcome a hostile world to do your job; it doesn't matter whether that hostile world involves poor commons and wild animals, or something as simple as a locked door that can be opened with a well-placed boot.

…pick up a lot of useful tricks, from bits of local gossip to unusual battle strategies.

…use of your reputation to get people to pay you to fight, which you do with proper military weapons and tactics; despite being disgraced, you are still a fighting unit and you continue to behave like one through thick and thin.

IRON SONS

Inexorable Enemies of Enchantment

"No prisoners," the captain said. "They've nothing to offer us, and they'll slow us down." I

bit back my instant response and appealed to his 'better nature'. "You sure, sir? There's places down south'll give us good gold for this lot." I know, I know, but better shackled up, harvesting rice in the swamps than left by the side of the trail for the coyotes to nosh on. But the captain just scoffed.

"No time for that. Besides, the hoodoos won't deal

with the likes of us, you know that. Put 'em down and let's get back to civilization."

Well, what else was I to do, other than try to make it as quick and painless as I could? Orders is orders.

PERMISSION

Techan human.

IRON SONS ASPECTS

The Iron Sons are mercenaries: most care nothing for the causes they are paid to fight. Their aspects instead relate to the organization in general and their own cell in particular: the ties between squadmates are stronger than anything else.

Sample Aspects: ***All Sons are Brothers; Faked Our Own Deaths to Escape; In It for the Money***

Sample Benefits: Defending an ally; finding echan weaknesses; negotiating contracts; field repairs.

Sample Drawbacks: Lack of adequate supplies; misinformation; arrested as terrorists; hostile reaction from most echans.

IRON SONS STUNTS

Know Your Enemy: Whenever you create an advantage related to finding a weakness in an echan, you critically succeed if your result exceeds the difficulty by 2 instead of 3.

Making Do: If your equipment becomes ***Disrupted*** but is not totally disabled, you can continue to use its aspects, Tech Level, and stunts as though it were a device of two tech levels lower.

Our Way or the Highway: When you take a minor or moderate mental consequence related to losing your resolve, you can spend a fate point to negate the consequence.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

An Iron Sons cell receives a ***Scrambler*** **(TL2)** as a mobile base of operations, and can rely on the organization for resupply (sometimes) and training. This does not count against the party's starting gear aspects. However, if the cell attempts to break from the Iron Sons for any reason (or attempts to sell the vehicle) they are declared traitors and all other cells in their area are contracted to eliminate them.

The Iron Sons is the largest techan free company operating in the world. They command thousands of troops through a decentralized control network connected via a series of mobile command posts. They operate fixed offices in both York and Angel, though their operations are outlawed practically everywhere else. Although able to function independently, each command node can receive directives from a central voice, known as General Chauk. Instructions from this authority are seldom relayed but when issued, all units are compelled to act. Only a few people in the world know where Chauk is at any time, and his location shifts daily.

Although the Sons are classed as mercenaries, and are easy to hire out, they receive their primary income through York and Angel service contracts. This does not account for their entire budget, and it's believed the company receives significant investment from unknown third parties using the Sons as their proxy in Canam. The objective of these third parties is shared by most others that hire out the Sons—destroy the world of echa

and return the planet back under control of man. While some cells are known to be lenient if not diplomatic in their relations with fantasy, most are ruthless.

IRON SONS SUMMARY

As an Iron Son, you can…

…use your squad training against the enemies of mankind and of your paycheck, and turn whatever knowledge you acquire of the outside world against it.

…fight with the best military equipment and tactics that money can buy… until they start to break, at which point you make do with what you can find or cobble together.

GUILD OF ILM

Raiders of the Lost Archive

"Monday: Dodged giant rolling rock trap. Tuesday: Returned ancient artifact to the vaults. Wednesday: Chased through a mine by Ixindar cultists. Thursday: Drakes... why did it have to be drakes? Friday: Found another Holy Grail. Saturday: Investigated possibility of alien influence on the evolution of humanity. Sunday: Lunch with the kid."

— Guild member's day planner

PERMISSION

Trained in Warraqeen (in Limshau).

GUILD OF ILM ASPECTS

The Guild is as much a philosophy as a profession, focusing on transcending borders both physical and imaginary. Consider the lengths you are willing to go to to protect knowledge, then go beyond those limits.

Sample Aspects: ***Awareness Has No Frontier; Prospector of Lost Knowledge; Scholar Warden***

Sample Benefits: Tracking down lost knowledge; dungeon lore; evading traps; deciphering riddles; academic archaeology.

Sample Drawbacks: Following a rumor of a lost book; dragging allies into an adventure with little tangible payoff; opposing closed-mindedness.

GUILD OF ILM STUNTS

Flow or Crash: You can give up your next action to automatically succeed at a movement or defense check in melee combat. If you do this on your turn, that check does not take up your action.

Lightning Strike: You can spend a fate point and give up your next turn to make an immediate attack against an enemy who attacks you on their turn. Your attack and its results happen first (possibly invalidating the enemy's attack).

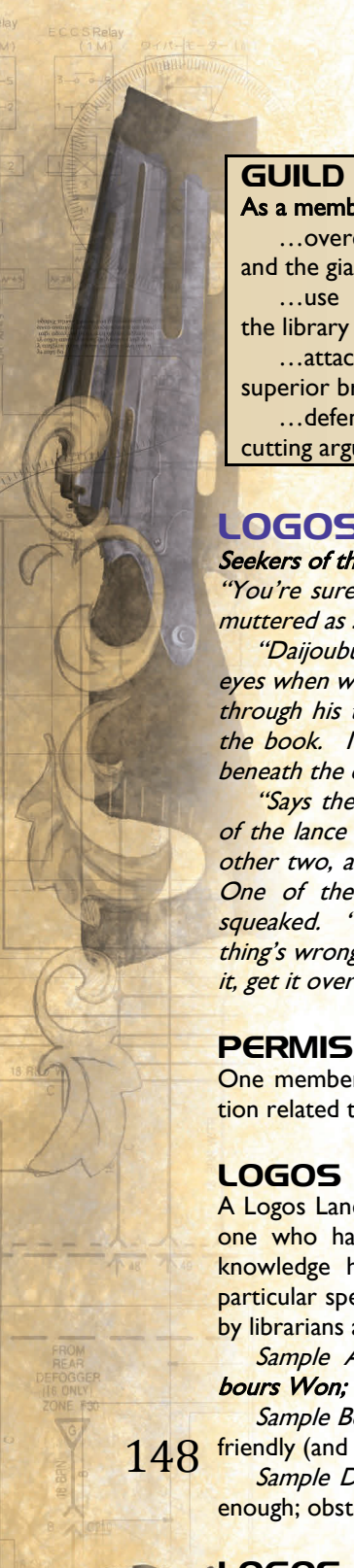
Reject All Restrictions: If you give up your next turn for any reason, you can still move one zone when it would normally be your turn (although you can't make overcome checks if obstacles prevent you from moving).

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Guild members frequently bring back more than knowledge from their adventures, and the Guild's vaults are filled with bizarre artifacts from this age and the last. While they don't actively hide these things away, neither do they advertise them, to prevent hostile foreign states from attempting to steal them. Guild members and their allies have access to the vault as they will, and are permitted to check out any item not under active study (one item at a time per group, and they must submit an official notice of where they intend to take it in case they don't come back). Additionally, custodian members of the Guild of Ilm can use this vocation as if it were the Custodian vocation.

The Guild of Ilm, formed in 365 A.E. by Fisher Calibannis, took on the duties to administer and coordinate the external operations of custodians on the periphery of Limshau and beyond. They operated from the Limshau capital until Calibannis's death at the ripe human age of 205, where he left his power and assets to his bonded companion, Lannis Aerialiss. Lannis was responsible for the aggressive push of custodians outside of the borders of Limshau. Before, the custodians would defend the cities and the farms but never actively seek out knowledge beyond their borders. Librarians would commit to such crusades all the time, though their quests usually took them to private collections and other libraries to seek their prizes. The Guild of Ilm was an elite order tasked with retrieving knowledge from riskier locations, dungeons, and abandoned (or not so abandoned) castles. The guild carries considerable respect in this field and has never been seriously challenged on the accuracy of their accounts. Librarians take the lackluster assignments: the Guild of Ilm sends their custodians only where a librarian's life would be in danger or if the situation itself requires a more aggressive hand. Of all the custodians in Limshau, those of Ilm are truly warrior scholars, earning the nickname, "Scholar Warden."

Technically, the Guild only consists of those who have received formal custodian training, but in practice they encompass all varieties of support staff, including librarians, transcriptionists, smiths, couriers, spies, and warriors with less specialized training than the custodians. Scribes are particularly valued, as guild members are expected to record their adventures and missions for later documentation and publication. Anyone is welcome to join the Guild's mission as long as they display the same dedication to knowledge at any cost. To be a member of the guild is to be nearly fanatical in the perseverance of knowledge and free thinking.



GUILD OF ILM SUMMARY

As a member of the Guild of Ilm, you can…

…overcome the poison dart traps of ignorance and the giant rolling rocks of philistinism.

…use extreme archaeology techniques both in the library and when hip-deep in snakes.

…attack the enemies of knowledge with your superior brain. And weapons.

…defend yourself against the unscholarly with cutting arguments. Also, weapons.

LOGOS LANCE

Seekers of the Treasure of Knowledge

"You're sure this is all right? We're guests here," Cailla muttered as she held the lantern steady.

"Daijoubu," Rascal assured her. "You saw the baron's eyes when we told him our mission, didn't you? He's lying through his teeth when he says he knows nothing about the book. I can't stand a liar." The lock popped open beneath the damaskan's nimble fingers.

"Says the thief," came the voice of the third member of the lance from somewhat nearer the ground than the other two, as Micklethwaite came hurrying toward them. One of the hamsters in the gimfen's breast pockets squeaked. "Sally doesn't like the smell in here. Something's wrong with this place. Let's just get in, get on with it, get it over with, and get out."

PERMISSION

One member of the party must have an aspect or vocation related to the Kingdom of Limshau.

LOGOS LANCE ASPECTS

A Logos Lance is usually a temporary assignment, but for one who has made a career out of it, the pursuit of knowledge has become all-encompassing. Consider a particular specialty, over and above that normally pursued by librarians and custodians.

Sample Aspects: ***Long-Term Researcher; Love's Labours Won; Raided Konig's Library***

Sample Benefits: Doing research; diplomacy; infiltrating friendly (and unfriendly) courts; dungeoneering.

Sample Drawbacks: Kingdom's reputation may not be enough; obstructive bureaucrats; wild goose chase.

LOGOS LANCE STUNTS

Crash Course: You gain +2 to lore checks involving your current objective.

Keys of the Kingdom: When acting in an official capacity anywhere within the kingdom of Limshau, the worst result you can get on a social check is a tie.

Priority One: As long as your objective is within sight, you can draw one card at the start of each of your turns, and you can discard one card at the end.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Members of a Logos Lance have broad authority to pursue their objective within the Kingdom of Limshau and can demand any reasonable assistance from any kingdom official with authority equal to or lower than the person who issued their objective. Such assistance includes (but is not limited to) fresh mounts, food and lodging, the assistance of local authorities in searches, medical treatment, and the like. This authority does not extend beyond the borders of the kingdom, although Limshau's allies are likely to offer such aid and succor as they can, assuming the petitioners are suitably diplomatic about their requests.

Additionally, the Logos Lance is an exception to the normal rule about belonging to more than one organization at a time – any character affiliated with Limshau can belong to a Logos Lance without giving up their current membership (for example, the Guild of Ilm).

It is not uncommon to see Limshau custodians operating outside of city walls. Clad in black kawabari armor instead of the city-white of most custodians, members of this group are often sent out to either retrieve a previously lost tome of knowledge or authenticate an important event. Although occasionally they travel alone, most join up with a group of companions with similar goals. Circumstances have occurred where an entire party of Limshau citizens is gathered together to venture into the open world. Not all have to be custodians, though one of them usually is (or perhaps a librarian). The logos lance, as it is called, is tasked for a specific mission. It is often difficult, involving a journey encompassing months or even years. This lance is commissioned by a higher authority, up to and sometimes including Ravenar Limshau himself.

LOGOS LANCE SUMMARY

As part of a Logos Lance, you can…

…use the influence of your orders against most bureaucratic obstructions, and your skill as a researcher to uncover clues as to your objective's location.

…use your flexible training to weed out distractions and focus only on what is truly important, retraining yourself as you go to better address your current task.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Special Responsibility for Tourism and Industrial Espionage

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance, Velasquez-san—ah, my apologies, I mean Señora Velasquez of course." Dolores smiled at the flustered man in the business suit and crossed her legs. "Please, señor, I am here to learn about your *culture, not to insist upon my own," she said lightly. "I am very curious, Rosenberg…san?—Rosenberg-san, about some of these entertainments your*

company produces. We have nothing like these three-dimensional images you show across your city: can they be made to play upon a flat screen?"

PERMISSIONS

Techan human, from Sierra Madre.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ASPECTS

A MFA agent retains much of her home bastion's flamboyance even when carrying out top-secret missions, and usually has her own unique style of accomplishing her goals. Consider adopting a trademark character trait.

Sample Aspects: ***La Gata Negra; Hotwiring Military Hardware; Sangria, Lightly Chilled***

Sample Benefits: Getting wanted attention; diverting unwanted attention; threat assessment; adapting quickly to higher technology.

Sample Drawbacks: Being recognized prematurely; devices with extra safeguards; cultural gaffes.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS STUNTS

Beginner's Luck: You can play an extra card when making a check to use an unfamiliar piece of technology for the first time.

Lost Tourist: You gain +2 to social checks made to defer suspicion from yourself.

No Substitute for Experience (requires Beginner's Luck): Whenever you play a negative card when making a check using non-Sierra Madre technology, you can draw and immediately play a second card. If the second card is also a negative card, it supersedes the first (regardless of whether it is a better or worse result). If the second card is positive, it is added to the first.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Sierra Madre may be somewhat backward in other technologies, but it has the most efficient EDF shielding of any bastion, even Mann. Any technological item the party obtains in Sierra Madre is not only automatically ***Shielded***, but is treated as one tech level lower for purposes of disruption checks. The downside of this is that it is impossible to reverse engineer the shielding technology to apply to other bastions' equipment, even for a master engineer: higher technology must be brought back to Sierra Madre, disassembled and studied by the bastion's scientists, and a new, Sierra Madre-specific model manufactured in order to get the benefit. And as Sierra Madre is even more difficult to get to than Selkirk, going home for an upgrade is a major undertaking.

This group from Sierra Madre is more interested in subversion and intelligence gathering than anything else. Even though flaunting advances few other bastions even dream of, Sierra Madre still lacks many developments even bastions like York claim. This comes from the lack of outside threats and from a naïve, narrow-minded population. Groups sent out from the subterranean bastion often travel north to 'acquire' technology from others, especially York and Angel (Mann remains a hard target and most attempting entry are killed upon discovery, and Selkirk is just plain hard to get to). The Ministry also tracks all movement above the city, intercepting and dealing with forces marching over their soil.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUMMARY

As an agent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, you can…

…use your exotic charms to your advantage against foreigners; while you may not be that different physically from other Canam humans, culturally few have ever encountered someone like you, even among the fae.

…fight with small, easily concealable weapons and hand-to-hand combat, but only as a last resort – you much prefer subtler approaches.

ORDER OF ABRAHAM

Knights of the Cross and Crescent

"You're going to laugh if I tell you we're on a quest to find the Holy Grail, aren't you?" Claudette said.

The librarian just looked back at her without changing his expression. "Antiquities section. Thirty-eight blocks north, then twelve blocks east. I can have an apprentice show you the way if you like."

The assembled knights shuffled their feet. "Um… it kind of defeats the purpose of questing if we don't find it ourselves," Claudette told the damaskan.

"My apologies," the elf replied.

PERMISSIONS

Any religion, trained in Abidan.

ORDER OF ABRAHAM ASPECTS

The Order of Abraham encourages each individual to find their own calling. Consider the approach you take to the holy duty of protecting the weak: whether you are a crusader, a champion, a missionary, or something else.

Sample Aspects: ***Crusading Champion, Knight of Abraham; Missionary Squire***

Sample Benefits: Standing in defense of the defenseless; prosyletizing; fighting the infidel; questing.

Sample Drawbacks: Questing; fighting the infidel; prosyletizing; standing in defense of the defenseless.

ORDER OF ABRAHAM STUNTS

Armor-Born: Whenever you play a negative card for a defense while wearing heavy armor, you gain a free invocation of the armor's aspect.

Devout (requires Order of Abraham as your lifepath): Once per scene when you invoke your lifepath aspect for momentum, you can choose to grant either yourself or one ally +4 to their next check instead of choosing another momentum option.

Walker in the Dark Places: You gain +2 to any check related to performing a good deed for a stranger.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A group affiliated with the Order of Abraham stands at the peak of Abidanian chivalry. They are welcomed in any house or hold in the kingdom, feasted like the heroes they are, entitled to fresh mounts if on urgent business, and given high honors even by lords of the land. They have the authority to dispense the king's justice (although it is considered polite to at least consult the local overlord before doing so) and to levy a militia in the king's name. In exchange, they are expected to act as paragons of virtue and knightly behavior at all times, to have no dealings with scoundrels and those of bad character, and to defend the ideals of the kingdom and of their faith wherever they go.

Abidan is the religious nexus of Canam, a nation where its constitution demands freedom of religion for all. Unlike the nation of Trinitas on the other side of the planet, Abidan's government is committed to a rejection of theocracy even as it embraces faith as a core value. Nevertheless, it does maintain a dedicated order of holy knights, an order known across the land for humility and valor. This is the Line of Abraham, and the envy of every apprentice in the kingdom. A knight fights only when necessary. They carry a strict faith in themselves or in the religion they are associated with and swear absolute loyalty to that devotion and its tenets. They believe the shields of truth and virtue protect better than any armor forged by man. A potential squire is selected young and trained alongside a great knight for many years, well into adulthood. Some of the most respected soldiers in the Janoahn army are still awaiting approval into the line. Eventually, one is asked to take a personal crusade—to find a personal truth and to discover one's soul in the exploration of the outside world. Only when students feel the path directs them home do they finally do so, in hopes of being accepted in the order. To be of this group is not to be some church bound priest or a zealot screaming from a soapbox. This devout disciple has taken it upon herself to preach the word of god to the unbeliever while also defending the tenets of faith against the heathen and infidel.

This champion could be a crusader to inspire the

masses, marching along the front line of an army, motivating troops and rousing faith in the cause. A crusader loves preaching the power of faith, usually reserving such displays for when potential combat occurs. Crusaders often lead charges, standing proud, commanding holy warriors into battle, and further solidifying their status among the others. Crusaders hope for the day when they control armies of their own. This champion could also be a fanatic. Fanatics think of nothing other than upholding their faith against the heathens of the world. They may even subscribe that redemption falls only to the worthy. A truly noble fanatic wishes to help the needy but believes destroying one's enemy is the best way to accomplish that. Finally, the champion could be a missionary. These followers of the faith don't consider themselves extremists. They seldom enlist others for the glory of combat and rarely join an army bent for war.

Surprisingly though, missionaries handle themselves almost or equally well in situations where they must protect themselves or those who need defending. Their calling forces them from the church to venture as nomads – with or without the assistance of other missionaries – into the wilderness of the outside world. There, they would not seek the believers but the atheists. One would appear not as the prancing paladin marching proud and tall, but as a simple follower, wise beyond their years. Missionaries frequently approach areas of need and depart without ever expressing a belief or preaching a cause. In their eyes, being loyal by the doctrine of their faith and helping those less fortunate, even to the point of raising weapons against evil, comes before attempting to preach to the potentials. They neither require conversion as a prerequisite for offering wisdom or assistance nor agreement with their beliefs as a condition for friendship and loyalty. They arrive to help first. Almost all settlements welcome the missionary. Of course, fanatics and paladins may enter claiming the same title. The missionary is well educated and survives alone in the dangers of the wild when others run screaming or die in the cold.

Regardless of the result, some squires never return, finding a calling far more important—a calling only a god could bestow. A few do return, shaped by the world into an either a broken soul bent for drunken tavern tales of better times or a noble knight of the Line of Abraham.

ORDER OF ABRAHAM SUMMARY

As a squire or knight of the Order of Abraham, you can…

…rely on your faith for the fortitude to defeat almost any hardship, your chivalric reputation as leverage when mediating disputes, and your knightly training to aid you in battle.

…fight the infidel with the weapons befitting a knight, and defend your body with the sacred raiment of your knightly calling and your soul with the iron conviction of your faith.

ORDER OF THE CLOTH

The Elect

In the midst of the sermon, a leaf of parchment floated down atop the preacher's book. He looked up, but saw nothing above. Glancing at the mysterious missive, he grew instantly pale.

In the front pew, the corpulent Lord Meralque spoke up. "Why be you whitefaced, Padre? What say tha you have? Out read it!"

The clergyman swallowed and spoke in a shaking voice, "By ta King, Lord Meralque be not true. He be a damned traitor, anta Cloth becover his eyes. God be have no mercy on his soul."

The lord's face grew red with anger, and then suddenly drained as white as the pastor's as a crimson-clad shape suddenly dropped out of the rafters, landing nimbly before the congregation. Lord Meralque shot to his feet and tried to run, but his obese form was no match for the assassin's speed. A red-garbed hand shot out, catching the hapless lord by the nape of his neck in a vicelike grip. Meralque's scream became a pitiful gurgle as the blade of a concealed dagger tore out his throat.

"By His will," the bloody cardinal whispered as he dropped the twitching corpse, and strode towards the doors of the church. By the time the congregation spilled out into the morning sunlight after him, there was no sign that he had ever been there.

PERMISSIONS

Echan human, from Baruch Malkut.

ORDER OF THE CLOTH ASPECTS

The Order of the Cloth has but a single purpose: to support the totalitarian theocracy of Baruch Malkut by any means necessary. It takes a lot to sway one of these fanatics from the path of obedience, so consider what could have shaken your faith… if, indeed, it has been.

Sample Aspects: ***A Blade of Crimson; God's Avenging Angel; Heretical Assassin***

Sample Benefits: Murdering enemies of the state in flashy ways; deception; veiled threats; stealth and evasion.

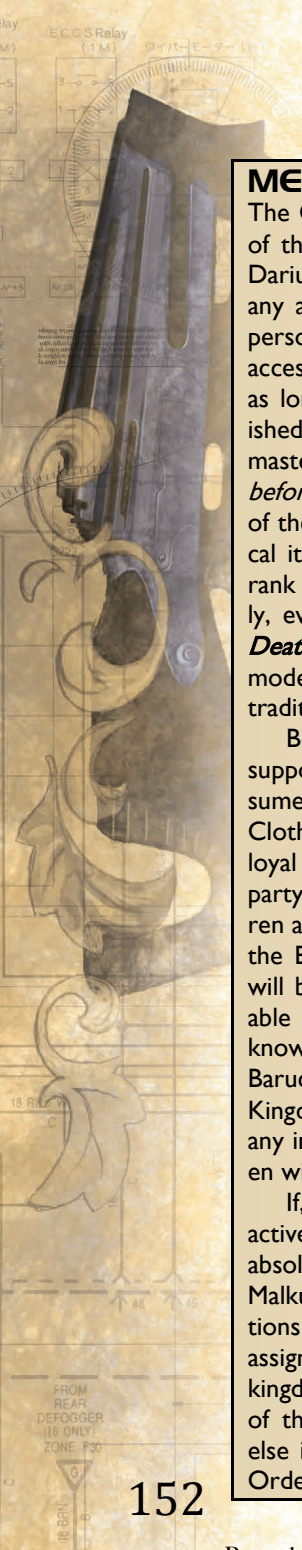
Sample Drawbacks: Price on your head (there usually is one somewhere); powerful enemies; betrayal from within.

ORDER OF THE CLOTH STUNTS

Death Grip: If you invoke an aspect related to grabbing on an attack, the invocation grants +3 instead of +2. If this increases the result to a critical success, you can choose to deal only 1 damage but force the target to take a consequence instead of stress.

Into the Shadows: When you take out an enemy in conflict, you can move up to one zone after the action even if you have already moved as part of this action.

No Negotiation: When entering conflict with a fae creature or a known enemy of Baruch Malkut, you always act first if you are aware of the enemy.



MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The Order of the Cloth carries with it the authority of the King, and with it one of the chief privileges Darius Konig reserves to himself: the right to claim any artifact of magic anywhere in the world for his personal use. Active members of the Cloth have free access to the King's storehouses of magical treasures, as long as they return the items when they are finished with them. Most who choose to betray their master are canny enough to obtain some useful item *before* their heresy becomes known. Each member of the Order (active or ex) can begin with one magical item of their choice with a rating equal to their rank in the Order of the Cloth vocation. Additionally, every member is issued with a ***Ring of the Red Death***, which can be activated or deactivated as a mode aspect to project an illusionary image of the traditional Cloth uniform over themselves.

Because most of the time, player characters are supposed to be heroes rather than villains, it is assumed by default that a group affiliated with the Cloth will actually be a band of traitors rather than loyal members of Darius Konig's retinue. Such a party will be marked for death by their former brethren and will be vilified in every pulpit from one end of the Blessed Kingdom to another. Their every step will be hounded by assassins and they will rarely be able to rest easy in their beds. That said, the knowledge they carry about the inner workings of Baruch Malkut would be invaluable to any of the Kingdom's enemies, of which there are many, though any information a traitor provides will always be taken with a grain of salt.

If, for whatever reason, the characters are still active members of the Order, they have near-absolute authority within the borders of Baruch Malkut. The only person they must justify their actions before is the King himself, and when not on assignment they are free to act in the interests of the kingdom however they see fit. Either way, members of the Cloth are hated by pretty much everybody else in Canam—especially by other members of the Order.

Baruch Malkut's inner circle is an elite order that traces their line back to the loyal guards of the king, when he traveled from Southam to stake his domain. The crusade consisted of him and a loyal retinue of oath-brothers that were referred to only as "cut from the cloth," forsaking even their individual names. As he claimed his kingdom, Darius Konig kept his guards close, and they wished for nothing else, neither land nor titles.

Since these humble beginnings, the order has grown in number, but their reputation has never faltered. Newer members are not so enigmatic. Keeping their names and accepting claims of property and treasure, they are still as devout in the faith as their founders. They are brought in from various military channels and trained separately in isolation to be the greatest line of assassins the land has ever known. A member of the Cloth is not one to play fair. To be of the order is to know every cheat, every dirty play necessary to eliminate the target.

Those that venture from their homeland do so on a mission for the betterment of the king's power. Their loyalty is to the king and the king only. Even other citizens of Baruch Malkut are not immune to the Cloth's wrath if they don't show total piety to the true authority.

Most of the Order comes from the ranks of the thuggees, and while the Cloth assassin shares the thuggee's fascination for easily concealable weapons, they also have more of a flair for the dramatic. Stealth is only one tool among many, and most of the time it is in the Cloth's best interests to eliminate a target as visibly as possible, to remind the world of the supremacy of Darius Konig. To that end, the public image of the Order is a flowing robe of crimson velvet with a deep cowl and a golden skull-shaped half-mask that conceals the face of the wearer, emphasizing their presence as a nameless, faceless instrument of the King's dubious justice. This, of course, is yet another deception: upon their induction into the Order, every member of the Cloth is given a ring with a single ruby stone which allows them to project this image of the Red Death over their own clothes at will, allowing them to disappear instantly into the crowd and avoid any potential repercussions from a public assassination.

ORDER OF THE CLOTH SUMMARY

As one of the Cloth, you can…

…use deception, lies, and rigorous physical discipline to ensure that your target is exactly where you want them to be before you strike.

…attack swiftly and suddenly using an array of concealed weapons suitable for close combat and the rapid dispatch of enemies.

…disappear into the shadows or melt into a crowd once the deed is done. If the enemy can fight back, you're not doing it right.

OROBAS

The Truest Servant

We'd been sitting there for three hours now, the big bear and me. Neither one had blinked. My eyeballs were on fire, but I wasn't about to let an overgrown fur coat get the better of me, not even one I was supposed to be fighting alongside tomorrow. One of us would have to give soon, though.

Very carefully, I tapped one finger on the table. "I'm told," I said deliberately, "that you can't tickle a kodiak. Shall we test that?" Never taking my eyes off of him, my fingers shot forward and waggled inside the gap between the kodiak's arm and the heavy plastic of his breastplate, drawing back just as quickly. To my relief, the bear blinked slowly, looked down at his arm, looked up at my hand, then hard at me and began to emit a weird, halting growl from the back of his throat. The other members of

my team reached for their weapons, but I waved them down as I realized: the kodiak was laughing.

*"Is true, most," he said. "No tickle kodiak. Most who try, lose arm. You, I buy drink this time." He stopped laughing. "*Next *time, you lose arm."*

PERMISSIONS

Techan human, from Selkirk.

OROBAS ASPECTS

An Orobas squad member has his specialty and trust the rest of his squad to fill their own niche. Consider what makes your role different from that of your fellows.

Sample Aspects: ***Door Go Bye-Bye; I've Got You Covered; Someone Ordered an Air Strike?***

Sample Benefits: Implementing squad tactics; excelling in your specialty; adapting to the situation.

Sample Drawbacks: At a disadvantage when a team member isn't there; the mission comes before everything.

OROBAS STUNTS

Focused Momentum (requires Focused Training): When you use your lifepath aspect to generate momentum, you can treat any sun symbol on the card as a moon symbol, and vice versa.

Focused Training: If you pass a free invocation created through your lifepath vocation to an ally, the invocation grants +3 instead of +2.

Mission Critical: If you are taken out during an encounter that directly relates to your present mission, you can immediately take one action using your lifepath vocation before suffering the effects of being taken out, and the action is an automatic critical success.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

While each Orobas member is expected to fulfill their niche, there is a fair bit of cross training between group members. While operating as part of an Orobas team, you can choose one non-lifepath vocation from any other member of the party, in which you are considered trained at +0. You can change this vocation at a minor milestone.

The Selkirk defense authority, unlike many other interdiction forces from bastions, doesn't consider echans their enemy. Most Orobas missions entail escorting and protecting Fargon and Seliquam patrols through the Selkirk controlled section of the Dianaso pass. Orobas personnel are usually selected from the mining population and trained separately. Orobas members are especially well trained in squad actions. Already used to working in groups, the operatives quickly learn to offset each other's weaknesses and operate as a cohesive unit. They seldom display internal personality conflicts and stay together, even when on vacation. Other missions include scouting and recon outside the Dianaso pass, as well as interfacing with the Train Guard to defend against encroachment from Xixion. A few groups are occasionally loaned to Angel for a short time.

While the name 'Orobas' is almost certainly an acronym for something (nobody knows what: it doesn't appear on any official documentation and if the members themselves are told, they don't bother to relay that information to outsiders) the organization shares its name with a goetic demon which always speaks the truth. Members of Orobas in turn can never be swayed from their objective. An Orobas unit will fight to the last man to fulfill a task even if the cause seems hopeless. However, the demon is also able to change its shape, and so the Orobas unit is given broad leeway to adapt its tactics: as long as the mission is accomplished, the unit's superiors don't care *how* they accomplish it. Some outside the organization find the demonic symbolism of the name somewhat sinister, and the straightforwardness and honesty of its personnel to be deeply suspicious as a result. To Orobas members, it's simply a matter of common sense: they deal with narros and damaskans (for whom honesty is pathological) and kodiaks (for whom it is a necessary survival strategy) on a regular basis, so it's only natural that they should be as straightforward as their allies.

OROBAS SUMMARY

As a member of Orobas, you can…

…focus on your area of expertise, and trust that your allies will do their part.

…interact with the echan landscape without the fear that besets more fragile techans.

…fight using the best equipment available in Selkirk.

RETINUE

The Entourage

"Sebastian, may we take it home and keep it for a pet?"

I looked over the enormous slavering crab-beast bearing down on us with a critical eye.

"No, milady," I concluded, "we may not."

PERMISSION

One member of the party or a supporting NPC must be a noble or VIP.

RETINUE ASPECTS

A member of a Retinue is defined by her relationship to the VIP. Are you a childhood friend, a paid bodyguard, a glorified babysitter, or something more significant?

Sample Aspects: ***Anti-Yes-Man; Loyal Bodyguard; Old Family Retainer***

Sample Benefits: Protecting and serving your charge; explaining the VIP's antics to dumbfounded outsiders.

Sample Drawbacks: Tied to the VIP (sometimes literally); beholden to a higher authority that may have conflicting orders.

RETINUE STUNTS

A Sympathetic Ear: You gain an additional +1 to any check whenever you invoke one of your charge's aspects.

Major-Domo: You gain the ***In My Master's Name*** boost once per scene, which can be used on any social check pertaining to your charge.

Yojimbo: As long as you are in the same zone as your charge, you automatically overcome any obstacle that would prevent you from defending on their behalf. This does not take up your action.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

While traveling with an aristocrat may be nerve-wracking and hectic, it does have one distinct advantage: the patron's purse strings and influence. Lords, diplomats, and their Retinue are accorded the finest fare and accommodations, and unlike most common customers, are usually able to make purchases on credit from reputable merchants. A Retinue's buying power is considered to be equivalent to their lord's relevant vocation rating +1 (if the VIP does not have a relevant vocation rating, the buying power is +3 if their authority is represented by their concept aspect and +2 if it comes from anything else). Of course, if they spend too extravagantly, they may have to answer some very pointed questions when they get home... and of course, all of this is contingent on keeping their charge safe and happy.

Willing or unwilling, this company are the cohorts of a noble. The aristocrat may be a childhood friend or a stranger, arrogant and pretentious or kindly and down-to-earth. Regardless, you are assigned to this task, sworn to ensure the safety of the noble, even at the cost of your life. The reasons for this undertaking can be varied. It may be part of some undisclosed diplomatic mission to a foreign land or a quest the noble is insisting on performing personally. It may be the beginning or the unfortunate end of a crusade. Rarely, the noble may be an outcast, the last living heir to a throne claimed by a usurper, the noble's allies being all that stands in the way of a hangman's noose.

RETINUE SUMMARY

As part of a Retinue, you can…

…use your most persuasive arguments (or steel, when that fails) to aid your lord's mission or comfort.

…use the lord's name and station when attempting to secure goods and services.

SLAVER CARAVAN

The Scum of the Earth

"Checkpoint. Keep your heads down," I whispered over my shoulder. "Try to look as oppressed as possible." I could feel Kassinen's eyes glaring at my back, but she was a good enough actor to lower her gaze as we drew near the guards on the road.

"Ho tha, goodmon!" they accosted me. "You be havin ta selos de tes diabos?" I passed over the forged papers with their plethora of stamps and seals. The guard looked them over and then eyed 'the goods'. "Where be you findin tha un?" he asked, pointing at Kassinen.

I smiled nastily. "Tha? Me got tha inta Miynos market, mon. Tha be no good farmin, tha un – be fore maid-guard deta casa-senhora, but ta senhora no like how ta new esposo-mon lookin atha. You be wantin tha, mon? Tha be more de you own on soldado pay, truth be!"

The guard raised an eyebrow, but stamped the papers and waved us on with a half-hearted 'Glória'. "You enjoyed that," Kassinen said sourly as soon as we were out of earshot.

"Not one bit," I lied, and urged the horses a little faster.

SLAVER CARAVAN ASPECTS

A Slaver Caravan is going to be defined, for better or for worse, by their stance on slavery: are they willing profiteers from the business, or are they actively trying to escape it, or are they conflicted?

Sample Aspects: ***Broken Breaker; Sheep in Wolf's Clothing; The Third-Oldest Profession***

Sample Benefits: Bribing officials; capturing fae; wielding fae-iron; appraising merchandise; smuggling.

Sample Drawbacks: Everyone hates you.

SLAVER CARAVAN STUNTS

Fair Market Value: You gain +2 to social checks when attempting to mislead menials and potential buyers as to the provenance and value of merchandise.

Suitably Insulted: You can critically succeed on bribery checks with a result 2 higher than the difficulty instead of 3.

Taste Cold Steel: Whenever you invoke a ***Fae-Iron*** aspect against a fae, you treat any negative final result on your check as a positive result.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A Slaver Caravan wouldn't be much of a caravan without ***Cage Carts*** and the ***Draught Animals*** to pull them, and wouldn't be very effective fae slavers without access to fae-iron. Any weapons a Caravaneer wants can be made of ***Fae-Iron***. Whether they are used for their intended purpose or merely to add verisimilitude to a deception is up to you.

The downside of this is fairly considerable, of course. Whether or not you still hold true to your despicable path, have turned aside from it and are trying to make amends, or are actively helping slaves to escape, if anyone anywhere else in Canam hears word that you are or were once a slaver, it generally won't matter what charitable works you may have done: you become an instant pariah, and few if any civilized people will trust you. Even among the prominent free houses that dislike fae, slavers are regarded as worse than animals and in many jurisdictions the surreptitious murder of slavers will go uninvestigated by the authorities.

Citizens of Baruch Malkut found outside of its borders are defectors, outcasts, or slavers, the last of which only leave the country on the hunt for chattel. They present a cold demeanor, mated to a desire for profit at the expense of the freedom of creatures they consider inferior. Regardless of the campaign they find themselves in, slavers are seldom noble. They care about themselves and their next payoff. Trained swords are bound only by gold. Barring this, loyalty is earned through family blood, a common occurrence with slaver caravans. Fathers train their sons to carry the tradition of racial superiority and malice that make the family name what it is. The only path of redemption lies with those that escape the life, but for those who are part of an active caravan, their morality has long since died.

There is an alternative for those who would rather do something constructive to atone for past misdeeds without instantly earning a death mark, however: as slaver caravans can travel with more or less impunity throughout the Blessed Kingdom (as long as they maintain the proper permits and bribe the proper officials), few will take notice if some of them happen to be traveling *the wrong way*. Penitent former slavers have sometimes used their chains and cages to transport escapees safely out of Baruch Malkut in plain sight of pursuers; some of those they have helped even agree to remain with the caravans to serve as blinds on the way back. Those rescued in this way are only a small drop in the barrel, but for their families and friends, they are all the world.

SLAVER CARAVAN SUMMARY

As part of a Slaver Caravan, you can…

…defeat a corrupt bureaucracy with sufficient lies and bribery.

…take advantage of years of experience in capturing fae and making profitable deals with corruption.

…in battle, wield fae-iron weaponry and dirty tricks.

TECHAN MERCENARY

You Bring the Money, We Bring the Rain

"So let me get this straight," Houston said. "You want me and my boys to take out a dragon – an effing dragon! – and what you're offering us in return is this… rock." He looked sidelong at the piece of transparent purple stone the narros woman had placed on the table. A squeaky gimfen attaché opened his mouth to protest, but the narros waved him into silence.

"Have you a watch, captain? Or a torch? Anything technical. Place it on the table." The mercenary shrugged, slipped the watch off his wrist and placed it in the middle of the table. The narros picked up the purple stone and waved it over the watch, then gestured for Houston to examine it. It was ticking away as usual. The narros woman then took the chunk of crystal in one hand, and with the other, drew her dagger and drove it hard through her forearm. Houston rose, startled, but the narros arrested him with a glance. "Watch," she said through gritted teeth, removing the knife. As the human watched, the trickle of blood stopped and the wound resealed itself. The narros wiped her arm clean, and it was as if nothing had happened.

Houston nodded slowly. "Well, ma'am, I think we have a deal."

PERMISSION

Techan human or gimfen.

TECHAN MERCENARY ASPECTS

A Techan Mercenary is defined by the kinds of clients they are willing to accept. Consider whether you contract

exclusively with other techans or are willing to open the field to any commission.

Sample Aspects: ***Anything for Money; On the Side of the Angels; Screw the Rules, We Have Tanks***
Sample Benefits: Finding and negotiating contracts; engaging in military actions; scrounging tech.

Sample Drawbacks: Can't find spare parts for the tank; cultural differences with clients; client reneging on the deal.

TECHAN MERCENARY STUNTS

Assault Platoon: Whenever you attack a creature, the next ally to attack the same creature gains +1 to their attack.

Expert Scrounger: Whenever you receive a treasure award, you also gain a treasure boost related to some useful find.

Schizo Tech: You can adjust the tech level of any of your technological items up or down by 1 at the start of each scene. The item uses its adjusted tech level for all disruption checks.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The downside of being beholden to no government is that nobody is obligated to provide for your needs. Therefore, Techan Mercenaries get very good at providing for themselves and bargaining for the best deals. When making bulk purchases (items or supplies for at least 3 party members), the party gains +1 to their buying power.

Some people prefer working alone. Though they receive no benefits from governments or corporations, they set their own clocks and answer to no higher authority. They are on their own in the face of a wild landscape of wonders and monstrosities reserved usually for bedtime tales. Some mercenaries work out of bastions, though many actually travel between them. Some consider themselves wandering souls, looking for a noble fight to join. Others seek only profit. Regardless of their motives, they have thrown their lot in with technology over magic. Alas, these groups often fail early on, unable to replace their technology fast enough when it disrupts or simply falling victim to enemies they have underestimated. Mercenaries, heroic or selfish (or both), must keep constant vigilance on the acquisition of funds. Jewels, gold and rare items fetch a high price in bastions and mercenaries need to keep themselves funded and armed.

TECHAN MERCENARY SUMMARY

As a Techan Mercenary, you can…

…use your military training, however haphazard it may have been, to make sure you know where your next meal is coming from.

…use your experience of the world to dispatch foes with all expedience, and use that same experience to intimidate potential clients into paying more for your services.

…wield the best technology you are able to buy, beg, build, or 'borrow'.

TRAIN GUARD

All Aboard

Kelso leapt over the low-hanging branch as the car passed under it. The boggs weren't so quick, and were swept off the roof with a chorus of squeals. Further down the line, Kelso saw Steil drive the spike of his krollish clean through one of the skegg boarders, but three more were climbing up the carriage as their companion fell off the other side.

"Cath, take the one on the far left!" he called back to the human girl lying calmly on the roof of the train, taking aim with a bolt rifle. The crack of the gun was lost beneath the sudden blow of the whistle, and Kelso looked over his shoulder to see another group of skeggs, mounted on enormous wolves, breaking from the cover of the trees and making their way toward the convoy. "Berufu's ten thousand tits, where's Latah when you need him?" the damaskan swore, drawing his revolver from inside his coat and taking aim at the lead skegg, but just before he pulled the trigger, there was a crash from the other side of the tracks and an enormous brown four-legged shape burst out of the undergrowth, passing in front of the onrushing engine with barely a body's length to spare and driving the lead skegg from its mount in a headlong tackle.

"Nice of you to join us," Kelso muttered, his left hand bringing the pistol around to dispatch Steil's second skegg while the saber in his right hand decapitated a lone bogg that had escaped the branch and was now trying to sneak up on Cathlamet. "They don't pay me enough..."

PERMISSION

One member of the party must have an aspect or vocation related to the Seliquam Confederation, Fargon, or Selkirk.

TRAIN GUARD ASPECTS

The Train Guard is one brotherhood, but each member comes from a wildly different background. Consider what you did to become one of the greatest warriors of your community.

Sample Aspects: ***The Fastest Gun in the West; Forensic Archaeologist; Scrambled Skeggs for Breakfast***

Sample Benefits: Eviscerating kaddog; exploring ruins; hunting monsters; crossing mountains; standing ground; guarding trains.

Sample Drawbacks: External politicking; can't resist a challenge.

TRAIN GUARD STUNTS

Cowcatcher: You can spend one or more fate points when you make an attack to target an additional enemy in the same zone for each point spent. Each enemy defends against the total attack value: you deal a number of points of damage equal to the highest failed defense which is divided up among all hit targets normally (if the amount of damage generated is less than the number of hit targets, each target takes 1 damage).

Locomotive Balance: Whenever you create an advantage related to keeping your balance or standing your ground, an opponent must critically succeed on their overcome check in order to move you against your will.

Shared Training: You gain one Doppelshido stunt of your choice (you must meet any other requirements of the stunt).

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The Train Guard is quite well-equipped for what is essentially a militia force. Every member starts with a ***Masterwork Bolt Rifle*** or a ***Masterwork Revolver*** (both TL0) in addition to their normal starting gear aspects, and a Train Guard group gains +1 to their buying power for purposes of obtaining Selkirk bastion exports.

Impressive as the Redoubt at Last Hope is, it is a mere fence compared with Abidan's Bulwark or the city walls of Angel, and it cannot completely hold Xixion at bay – there are far too many tunnels and lesser passes through the mountains to block them all off. The military order known as the Train Guard make regular patrols of the passes, exterminating any pugg bands and other predatory monsters that they come across. Though the order's training regimen was designed and perfected by the ravnorra lords of Fargon, only a fraction of the Guard is made up of narros (for all that they are often commanders) – in fact, the largest demographic are kodiaks, who make up fully thirty percent of the force. Joining the Train Guard is considered a highly prestigious career for all the people of Seliquam, but the high mortality rate of the membership keeps their numbers from growing too strong. Puggs may be no real threat in small groups, but they are hardly the only dangers of the region.

The Train Guard is the only truly cosmopolitan military force in Canam, consisting of the finest warriors contributed by the disparate nations of the Seliquam Confederation. When not wiping out pugg incursions, they often take exploratory and punitive expeditions into Xixion itself; occasionally, a unit will travel farther afield on orders from the Grand Council. Within the Train Guard, it is not uncommon to see humans and narros fighting side-by-side with kodiaks, damaskans, chaparrans, or even laudenians and tenenbri – the Guard will take anyone, so long as their blades are keen or their magic potent. The constant infighting that plagues the rest of Seliquam is totally absent from the Train Guard, a comradeship forged in fire that is not hastily thrown aside for any national loyalty. As the Guard's actions directly benefit Selkirk, the bastion is only too happy to trade disruption-immune equipment with them at a substantial discount.

TRAIN GUARD SUMMARY

As a member of the Train Guard, you can…

…rely on a superior training regimen developed by the ravnorra lords of Fargon.

…use your unit's reputation to push past the petty political squabbles of your homeland.

…use the terrain to the fullest, particularly when moving vehicles are involved.

…wield simple firearms and bastion-forged weapons provided by Selkirk, as well as the more common implements of echan militaries.

WATCHER

The Eyes of Abidan

Yusuf did not allow his eyes to move as the mark came out of the house, relying on his peripheral vision to keep the man in sight as he sat, dressed as a tired beggar, on a bench a little way down the street. He whistled a little tune, and above him came the sound of a chirping songbird of a species that could not be found anywhere near here. Two streets away, the mark was accosted by a provocatively dressed tilen woman, who he fended off with barely concealed disgust. The fae shrugged her shoulders and wandered away. As she passed the dishevelled beggar on the bench, she dropped a slip of paper into his proffered hat. Yusuf smiled and got creakily to his feet. His work here was done, and there were other houses he must watch.

PERMISSION

Trained in Taskin-Kada (in Abidan).

WATCHER ASPECTS

A Watcher usually adopts some sort of deep cover when fulfilling her duties. Consider what story you use to hide in plain sight.

Sample Aspects: ***The Hub; Observant Quartermaster; Professional Peasant***

Sample Benefits: Shadowing; analyzing behavior; detecting suspicious people; relaying secret messages; sneaking.

Sample Drawbacks: Lack of resources; isolated from allies; forced into hostile territory with no backup.

WATCHER STUNTS

Double Take: Once per scene, you can draw and play a new card for an action related to perception, stealth, or sleight of hand without spending a fate point.

Making the Most of Scarcity: The group gains one collective fate point per scene: any character in the group can use it, but in the event of disputes over who gets to use it, you have the final say. If this point is used by someone other than you to invoke an advantage you have created, it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2.

Patterns in Chaos: You gain +2 to social checks related to analyzing behavior patterns.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

A group affiliated with the Watchers has access to the most reliable surveillance network in all of Canam. They can put out a call for intelligence on a particular subject, receive an answer within days if not hours, and be assured that the information is at least mostly accurate. In mechanical terms, this allows the party to create advantages based on information that they themselves would have no way of discovering but which another Watcher may have unearthed – a lord's secret vices, the weaknesses of a rare monster, the location of one of the secret passages into Angel, and the like. The drawback is that apart from this information, the group has no support from home: they must make do entirely with their own resources, and if captured, they cannot expect to be ransomed.

The city of Taskin-Kada is the home of a very unique society charged with counter-intelligence for the entire nation of Abidan. The watchers are an echelon of individuals trained in the art of stealth to rival even the assassins from Baruch Malkut. They are not spies but observers. They never steal anything other than the unaltered history revealed before their eyes. With a reputation for honesty and accuracy, the word of a watcher carries weight in an Abidan court. Operations involve scouting in the pagus-controlled land of Apocrypha as well as extensive surveillance of Baruch Malkut. When the watchers are not observing within the kingdom, the majority are committed to external actions, dealing with neighbors both friendly and hostile. Dozens patrol lands north of the Tethuss Bridge, a necessary task though it costs the most lives. Very often, a mixed band of trained operatives will be sent on a long-term mission vital to the security of the kingdom. Although Watchers may comprise the majority of this unit, this is not always exclusive. The team consists of intelligence agents, military men, and operatives specialized in various scientific and magical fields. They can be tasked with espionage or sabotage, but Abidan has never officially sent the Watchers on assassination.

Watchers have a reputation for moving quickly without being noticed, escaping from any situation, and trudging on while others fall to exhaustion. They cannot rely on support from the home country if a crisis occurs. Should any member of the Watchers be caught or killed, Abidan will disavow any knowledge of their actions.

WATCHER SUMMARY

As a Watcher, you can…

…defeat any enemy attempt at concealment with your keen vision and insight.

…learn the answer to any question, either yourself or by knowing someone who does.

…take advantage of your skill at remaining overlooked and underestimated to uncover secrets and place yourself in an ideal position.

…fight with easily concealable or improvised weapons; you are at your most effective if the enemy doesn't realize you are a threat even if they acknowledge your presence, and unless your cover involves wearing armor, you are better off without it.

YORK SELF-DEFENSE FORCE

The Blue and White

"Hands in the air! Drop the staff and turn around slowly." The hooded figure slowly raised its hands to shoulder level and let go of the carven stick, which clattered on the pavement. The squad kept their weapons trained as the cowled shape turned around, its motions deliberate and unhurried. "Remove your hood and keep your hands where we can see them," the officer shouted over his megaphone.

The figure's mouth quirked in a smile, and the hood was pulled back, revealing a completely hairless head, sharply pointed ears, and eyes as black as space. "Silly humans," said the figure in a voice that oozed with disturbing harmonics as it kicked the staff aside, "what makes them think we need this*?"*

PERMISSIONS

Techan human, from York.

YSDF ASPECTS

Because the YSDF does not maintain differentiated divisions, they rely on individual specialty to handle unusual cases. Consider what out-of-the-ordinary situations your military/law enforcement career may have thrown your way.

Sample Aspects: ***Broad Way Beat; Dragon Patrol (Not As Exciting As It Sounds); Magical Victims Unit***

Sample Benefits: Convincing a drunken mage not to throw fireballs through the bar window; tracking wandering monsters; robot maintenance; finding the quickest path through the city.

Sample Drawbacks: Equipment failure; runaway robots; 'all units' priority response.

YSDF STUNTS

The Best of the Best of the Best: When you invoke your lifepath aspect to generate team benefits momentum and use your own momentum boost for a re-draw, you can draw two cards instead of one.

This Is My Beat: When within an area that could be described as your territory, you can draw an extra card at the start of your turn and discard one card at the end of your turn.

Zeroing: You gain +2 to advantage checks involving zeros or other robot drones.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Despite its somewhat loose structure, the YSDF *is* a government organization and as such, groups belonging to it can requisition any equipment they need at no cost to themselves. Of course, the equipment may not always be available, and even if it is they are expected to return it in approximately the same condition that it was when they got it.

The largest techan standing army in Canam is the York Self Defense Force. Where other bastions maintain separate military and municipal police, York does not bother with such distinctions. The YSDF walk the streets and defend the outlining fields from impending invasion. They break up drunken tavern brawls and lead assaults against dragons. Some escort echans through the city and forcefully eject others for unnecessary magic use in violation of the strict limits the city places on its echan visitors. The most boring job is patrolling the defense installations between York and Mann, which have never sparked a conflict. On the other hand, the northern barracks often suffer attacks from dragons. The YSDF works alongside the robotic zeros, but the droids are never allowed to depart the fields of Halyc surrounding York.

YSDF SUMMARY

As a member of the YSDF, you can…

…use your badge to get you past most obstructive people. If the badge doesn't work, you also carry a gun.

…use your broad experience of both echan and techan threats to keep the streets safe.

…fight with much bigger weapons and sturdier armor than police normally handle. You'll need them.

"I don't mean to turn you away," he said, "just understand that many people claim that world as home, and you would not be any more special out there than in here. You may wish to be a character in your own fantasy, but this is no work of fiction. It's real. You're not chosen by fate. Your parents were ordinary. No gods kissed you upon your birth. What do you do well?"

Aiden scrunched his lips, shrugged, and sighed. "I read books. Don't suppose that means much." The sudden wash of insight over his face was unmistakable. "Magic. I could do that."

"How?" Chen motioned to the lamps. "You've just seen that. How could you know? Maybe it's something I do naturally no one else can."

"If it's all real then magic can come from books! I can learn!" he begged. "I can do that! Just give me the right books!" The wide-eyed appeal of the youth showed his commitment.

Chen reached out and grasped Aiden's wrist. He pulled the boy's sleeve to reveal the broken watch. Chen pointed to the timepiece.

"This world," he said, pointing to the east, "and that world do not mingle. What you have here doesn't work out there--no cars, no computers, no phones. Once you commit to that path, you can't come back."

"I…" Aiden trailed off. He was about to say I understand, but he didn't. Why was it that way? Why were there walls around the city? Why did the mere presence of dragon make his watch stop? Aiden remembered books about the kid that discovered he was a demigod, or an heir to a kingdom, or a member of a secret order, or a wonder child with a wand. That's what he wanted; those characters never had to give anything up. He wanted his fantasy. "I don't like this place. I prefer the world I read about."

"Why?" Chen answered.

"Because…I don't know…because it's different, because it's amazing. Because…" Aiden felt a drop run out of his nose. He sniffed it up quickly and swallowed. "Because my mother made it sound so wonderful." Aiden held back a tear. "And I want my dreams to be real."

Chen placed his hand gently on Aiden's shoulder and a tear finally broke free from his eye. "If you run from a life, running will be your life. A fulfilling existence is defined by moving towards something, not away from it. You can read about that world for as long as you like, but I can't let you make that decision."

"Isn't it mine to make?"

Chen nodded. "But you need to know why you make it...and now's not that time."

Aiden's shoulders slumped and he tried to hold back in his emotions. He threw Chen's arm away and bolted for the door. He didn't look back. Aiden wanted to abandon his normal life, the one filled boring classes, imposing bullies, overbearing brothers, and callous gods, a life commonplace in the real world. He wanted to be like the characters he read about, like the computer avatar he controlled, someone of consequence, with a life ending in a happily ever after, not a number on a marble cover wedged alongside hundreds of others in a mausoleum.

Aiden slammed the gate open, and it ricocheted off the concrete wall. He was too angry and confused to be frightened of switching stations or running down streets with inadequate lighting. He darted across intersections without alerting the crosswalks and ducked into darkened paths between buildings to shortcut his return home. All the while he thought of what could be out there. He imagined the dragons, the fae, the princesses, and the possibilities that, until now, had only existed in fiction. Out there was everything he could not be in here.

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE WORLD

The world of *Amethyst* may be one of fantasy, but medieval it is not. The common knowledge earned throughout human history dealing with building construction, agriculture, medication, and sanitation has survived. Even though anyone with advanced knowledge to better a technological society was allowed entry into bastions, many people outside still possessed the general knowledge developed centuries before nuclear power, computers, and antibiotics. In addition, many on the outside soon progressed on their own, rediscovering advances their protected brothers and sisters embraced years earlier. A few possessing this knowledge used it as currency to earn themselves entry into bastions. Others realized this knowledge, primitive by the standards of advanced cities, begot more power and influence on the outside.

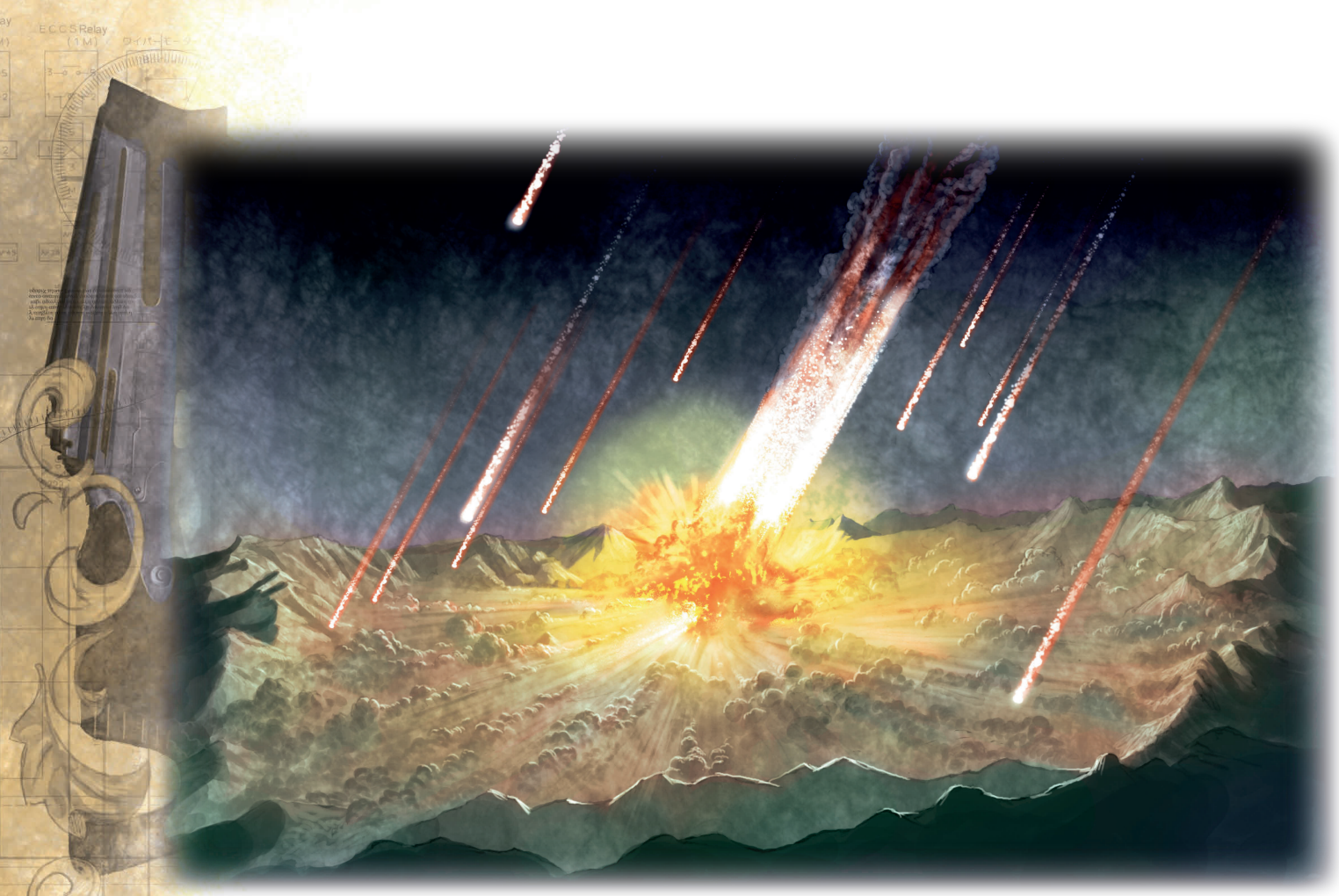
Of course, any technical knowledge past about the point when electricity comes into play is rendered more or less useless by surrounding magic, preventing progress and forcing immigration for those wishing to pursue this path. Still, every bastion and even the free cities have sprawling villages outside their walls of people either trying to get in or pandering to those entering or leaving. Outside, the world of fantasy still shares some striking similarities with the world of the past.

ALIEN SIMILARITY

One of the greatest examples of echalogical influence—the first after the shock of how human-like fae appeared—occurred soon after the first civilized meeting. It had been widely accepted that Angel was the first city to have contact with the echan world, making sense given the age of the bastion. Despite the vagueness of history, there was one known positive initial encounter between the elders of Genai and Ravenar Limshau III when he and his loyal retinue came before the fledgling walls. The human elders were modern and understanding, not obtuse and arrogant about tradition. Ravenar's group was open and thoughtful, despite the language barrier that Ravenar was quick to defeat with his astonishing skill. The Genai hosts opted for vegetarian food, believing it to be the most amicable, and not knowing the damaskans' traditions, presented an assorted selection of cutlery to use. How shocking it must have been when Ravenar Limshau chose the chopsticks without hesitation and handled them with a skill reserved for his mirrors across the table. Many said later the relationship that blossomed between humans and damaskans began in that room. Was he reading their minds? Had he been taught beforehand? No: all damaskans had always used them, as did chaparrans (though theirs were always formed out of living wood), while narros and tenenbri had always used utensils similar to those of the ancient Greeks. In the same way, the narros culture had always borne a surprising resemblance to that of the human civilizations of old Asia, and the more agrarian gimfen culture to the agricultural societies of the old British Isles. Even the cleverest scholars were at a loss to explain such similarity between peoples separated by millions of years.

ECHALOGICAL INFLUENCE & CORPUS CONTINUITY

Neither the fae nor dragons questioned their origins or the purpose of life. If Amethyst knew, as many believed he did, he never shared such knowledge, lest he wish someone to share his withdrawn disposition. Even after Mengus arrived, the world and how it worked made perfect sense. For better or worse, they knew enough of the universe



to be complacent, something an evolved species like man would never settle with.

The very appearance of man confused many fae upon their return. They discovered that without magic, suppressed rules of nature resumed their original function: species adapt to their environment and do so much slower and less drastically then before. Not only that, but this intelligent new creature evolved from a primitive form – a social animal with bestial ways. Fae could not understand how intelligence could arise through evolution: their experience of the process was as a spontaneous degradation rather than a steady improvement. Added to that, these creatures looked nearly identical to the fae on the outside, and layered throughout their history, this species had generated a vast literary canon professing the existence of fabled creatures as such that roamed the world in a time when their own ancestors had been nothing but tiny shrew-like creatures. Mankind encountered their own mystery, barely surviving the holocaust of the Second Hammer only to discover a sudden population appearing literally from nowhere. Not only that, but they coincidently resembled creatures from fiction and legends dating back for thousands of years.

Both sides suddenly faced the prospect of reexamining their belief system. Echalogians appeared offering answers and using ancient literature and modern observations as proof. Two new terms entered the lexicon in an attempt to appease the masses looking for an explanation: Corpus Continuity and Echalogical Influence.

Corpus Continuity is an overtly religious perspective, based on the assumption that God created mankind in his own image; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the fae were a previous creation in the same image. As this theological theory runs into a slight difficulty when considering that dragons were the first intelligent life form on Earth and look nothing like humanity, others prefer the theory of echalogical influence without recourse to an intelligent creator. This theory assumes that the influence of the Terros age was encoded somehow, magically or otherwise, in the genetic memory of the natural species existing at that time; humans, being the only evolved species to reach sentience, were the only ones to unlock that ancient potential. In essence, had lizards or insects become the dominant species of Earth instead of primate mammals, they would still have ultimately evolved to resemble fae and carried that ancient legacy into their mythology. Echalogians often point to spawn races like the kodiaks developing hominid traits such as upright carriage and opposable thumbs as proof of this theory.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The one attribute of man that fae find most surprising involves his capacity of adaptation beyond simple evolution. Fae adapt their forms to their surroundings spontaneously, their children assuming a completely new genotype according to the needs of their environment. Place them in darkness and they go blind, learning to see through sound and vibrations. Place them in water and they will grow gills and fins. Their language and their attitudes alter, and soon they even refer to themselves as a new species within a generation. Man,

conversely, prefers to adapt the landscape to suit his needs. Place him in darkness, and he will make a light. Place him in water and he will build a boat. Humanity is hardly bothered by the breakdown of the processes of evolution, since human ingenuity has the power to trump even natural selection. Furthermore, Man remains Man despite creating a new culture. Language, clothing, diet, architecture, cultural attitudes all may change, and yet they are the same people. Two human nations a distance apart with no means of communication will inevitably create completely different cultures. Yet despite differences in skin tone and minor variations in body structure, humans are still close to being clones, with less than 1% genetic variation between them.

With fae, cultural variation is the same as species variation: identical fae produce identical societies. Gimfen grind towers dot the world with no communication to share information on their construction, but they are all nearly identical. The narroni language is the same in Fargon as it is in the Finer Fire Pits, and the same as it was spoken in ancient Terros – not so much as a different accent impedes communication. Even Limshau and Damaska, separated by five hundred years and an ocean and showing the most marked cultural division within a single fae species, have similar beliefs and attitudes. Conversely, the human nations of Kannos and Abidan are separated by only a few hundred miles but have entirely distinct accents and cultural practices. The bastions of Angel and York both speak English, but with vastly different vocabularies drawn from different outside influences, and neither of them much resembles the language as spoken before the Second Hammer.

As the speech changed, so did values and motivations. Abidan became a bright light of peaceful religious equality while Baruch Malkut focused its energy in the exploitation and slavery of a species they considered inferior in the name of the very same god as Abidan. As these new nations developed, most grew tolerant of their neighbors and the various vices and viewpoints of their citizens, considered taboo or inappropriate in the past. Biases over ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion were subdued and silent. Controversial topics polarizing communities were no longer a serious concern in comparison to the essential issues of food and security. Given this, Baruch Malkut is considered an anomaly, though a large and dangerous one. Some fae and humans accuse mankind of only accepting his differences in lieu of finding new people to hate.

LANGUAGES

Many languages died following Attricana's opening. Others faded within a few generations while a few merged to create new variations. Before the gates, hundreds of languages dotted the globe: now, only a handful remain. Surviving vernacular soon divided into regional slangs and patois, eventually becoming recognized languages themselves with distinct lexicons, syntaxes, and phonetic pronunciations. English surfaced as the only surviving dominant language in Canam, though divided into dozens of regional dialects, coopting vocabulary from upward of a hundred different languages, from the old Latin languages to the tongues of Asiatic immigrants fleeing the spread of Kakodomania, to the few surviving pockets of native tribal speech.

While each fae species has its own distinctive accent if not entirely separate language, fae tongues sound similar to one another, though different enough that a speaker could not fake one if fluent in another. Narros and pagus tongues sound more jagged and sharp, while other fae races sound more fluid and poetic. Even though sounding similar to their languages, humans have found learning any fae tongue extremely difficult.

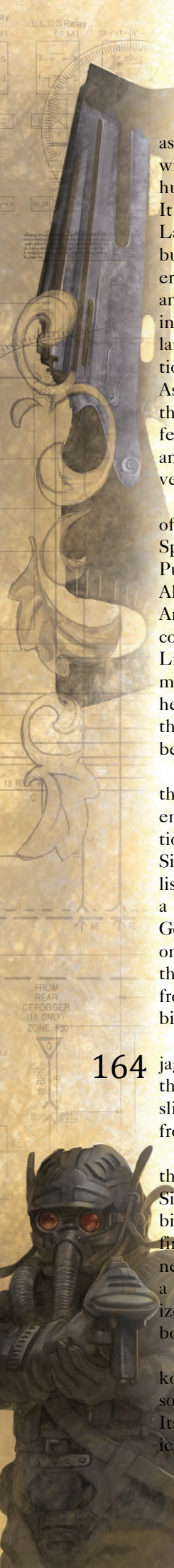
NO LANGUAGE RULES

Fate doesn't have any language rules, and for good reason: the game goes more smoothly when people can understand each other. This system treats languages the same way it treats equipment – as cosmetic elements that only become relevant if the narrative makes them so. It is generally assumed, therefore, that any character can understand any other character, unless there's an aspect in play that says they can't, and even then, some characters (damaskans, librarians, mages, and any other sufficiently learned folk) can make overcome checks to try to comprehend them, just like any other obstacle.

Realistically, English in Canam is so fragmented as to be almost completely incomprehensible to someone from a different region. Since this makes things awkward in play, as a compromise, we merely suggest that different accents be used to represent different dialects (preferably bad and unrealistically thick ones – we are talking about different languages with more than five centuries of linguistic evolution). Take care that you don't offend anyone at your table by sounding like a stereotype, however.

Argose: Argose is the primitive language of the kodiaks. Argose consists of growls and mumbles barely distinguishable to the untrained ear from the random noises of an unintelligent animal. The specific patterns are hidden deep in the inflections of those growls, a system few outside of the attuned ears of the kodiaks could even pick up, and which no other species can pronounce due to not having the right shape of vocal cords.

Chaparra: The chaparrans refused to alter their language from their roots and have been obtuse to adapt given the exposure from other cultures. Chaparrans believe their tongue is the closest to the original old language, Faena. Later chaparran branch species have an even more complicated version of this vernacular. Chaparran written form, an elegant and beautiful style known as Faen, has never been adapted or altered. It is also nearly impossible to translate unless one is chaparran. Chaparra is syllable-timed, making the speech sound like lasting poem of perfect rhythm though, unlike Laudenian, it is filled with hard alveolar and glottal sounds. The written form of chaparra and laudenian are nearly identical.



Damaskan: The language used by the fae of Damaska and Limshau, as well as all gimfen, is the most widely known non-human tongue in the world. More humans speak Damaskan than any other fae language. It is substantially easier to learn than Chaparra or Laudenian, though still presenting some complications, but is far easier to learn through exposure than any other fae tongue. The damaskan language is both compact and fusional, able to express quite complicated concepts in a short span of syllables, akin to old Finno-Ugaritic languages. Being a stress-timed language, the vocalization sounds similar to Sinitic: those fluent with the Asian tongue often find picking up Damaskan easier than English. Modern Damaskan has adapted in the last few centuries, amalgamating elements from Narroni and Sinitic into its syntax and vocabulary. Damaskan is very fluid language with soft sounds and few hard stops.

English: English is not really English, but a mixture of older English with fragments of French, German, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Punjabi, with a smattering of Salishan, Pueblo, Cree, or Algonquian thrown in (depending on the region). The Angel dialect of the language is the lingua franca of the continent, by dint of their early association with Limshau, and is one of the most frequently learned human languages by non-humans. This language is more heavily influenced by Sinitic and Spanish, to the point that nearly half the classical English vocabulary has been replaced by Asian or Latin equivalents.

Englo-Lingo: This bizarre patois popped up around the eastern bastion of York and is thought to have emerged from the bastion of Mann, where it is the national language. Englo-Lingo filters out most of the Sinitic donations that found themselves in modern English and added older French and German slang to create a bizarre phonology that shifts through three different Germanic languages every sentence. Dozens of villages on the east coast insist upon it and York accepts it as their second official language, being different enough from common English to make the bastion effectively bilingual.

Ferran: A simplistic version of Damaskan, Ferran is a jagged, rough tongue used by the lower branches from the damaskans like puggs, boggs, and skeggs. It differs slightly with every village, making a proper translation from any source difficult.

Guttoran: Even harder to learn is the sharp dialect of the narros branch species (like chiggoths and oggraks). Since they have no real culture and are extremely phobic of society, their language is chaotic and hard to define. Guttoran as a term is a misnomer since there has never been a consensus of the phonology to define it as a language. It is thought that every group has personalized the language intentionally to prevent even neighbors to relating to them easily.

Ignotan: The native language of all denizens of Kakodomania and servants of Mengus, Ignotan is a simple sounding language easy to pick up but hard to master. Its written form is perfection itself. Completely phonetic, one could learn the basics of its speech in a day. The language is complicated but every phoneme makes intuitive sense. Like all creations of syntropy, it is nearly mechanical in its application, and thus makes for lousy poetry. All shemjaza, typhox dragons, and most pagus speak Ignotan.

Indic: This is an amalgamation of old human languages Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. It is not often spoken in Canam but still pops up from time to time.

Laudenian: There is a seemingly never-ending debate between the chaparrans and laudenians about which species is closer to the original fae. The laudenian language is slightly more askew from its roots, an evolution of the original that would progress into Damaskan later. Their written form, however, is closer to the chaparran system. The language flows beautifully and is extremely poetic and fluid with a strong base in syllable-stress. Only laudenians speak laudenian: they are unwilling to teach it to anyone else, and find the mispronunciations of the few self-taught speakers highly distasteful.

Narroni: The narroni tongue is often confusing to linguists (though surprisingly easy to learn), its grammar being superficially similar to certain old Asian languages but with a sound system like a roughly equal mix of pre-Hammer Gaelic, Russian, and Turkish, despite being constructed out of wholecloth. The original narros' speech was a local patois of Laudenian, but as time went on, they found that the language was completely impractical for their present needs. Modern Narroni was constructed in committee and implemented instantly after it was cleared. As a constructed language, it is efficient and elegant in its simplicity, and is neither hard to learn nor hard to master. It is the simplest echan language to use and thus can be picked up easily by even techans.

Old Fae: Further chaparran branches continued to degrade the syntax of their parent tongue until finally, the lower species like faeries, sylphids, and dojenn began speaking in a bizarre language of songs and whispers even the chaparrans couldn't understand. Along with the holy language of dragons, Old Fae is impossible to learn by most mortals.

Onespeak: Similar to Narroni, Onespeak is a partially manufactured language devised by Baruch Malkut and imposed on the population. Using a regularized form of classical English as its structure, it borrows heavily from Spanish and Portuguese, and contains thousands of words with no known etymology. This language was devised to unite mankind but it ended up further isolating the kingdom from the rest of the world. It is the only official language of Baruch Malkut, and although the upper classes are usually perfectly conversant in Englo-Lingo, use of any language other than Onespeak by the general populace is harshly punished.

Paggin: This language formed secretly among the pagus that lived out of control of the shemjaza. Pagus in Kakodomania speak Ignotan only. Those in Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka speak only Paggin unless a shemjaza strolls into their village: any pagus that speaks paggin to a shemjaza is instantly executed (of course, any pagus

who speaks to a shemjaza unbidden runs the risk anyway). Rebellious pagus consider paggin the first mark of an independent pagus culture.

Pleroma: The language of the dragons, called Adonnaisis in all fae languages but having no name in its own, is considered the very first language spoken by any intelligent creature on the planet. The language and its written form are intrinsically linked with Attricana and it is thought that the dragon god Amethyst created the world of magic by speaking the correct words. This is the language all spellcasters use when casting magic but even they cannot carry a conversation with it. Only dragons are fluent. The language itself cannot be pronounced by any creature that doesn't have a prehensile tongue and an intrinsically pandimensional understanding of reality, so the intensity of magic with mortals will always be limited.

Romanic: Another language seldom heard in Canam, this merging of French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Spanish is thought to be the lingua-franca of Lauropa and the dominant language of the bastion of Porto.

Saeqaar: The mirror of the dragon language, this tongue has the same written form (albeit mirrored) and a similar pronunciation. It is spoken solely by typhox dragons and shemjaza for the purposes of spellcasting. Its actual name is not known (saeqaar being an Ignotan word), and it is probable that like Pleroma, the name for the language would have to encompass the entire language itself. There is no word for the tongue in any fae language and they refuse to create one.

Semitic: A growing dialect in Canam, this language underwent the fewest changes over the past few centuries. A descendant of Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew, it is a common second language to those in Abidan and its outlining villages. It is often heard in locations of religious importance.

Sinitic: A fast growing language in Canam, Sinitic came into being with the influx of various Asian refugees that appeared on the continent's west coast seeking an escape from the fallout of the Hammer and the growing power of Kakodomania. There, they combined with the already large Asian-derived population gathering in the fledgling city of Angel, and out of necessity their cultures and languages began to merge. Modern Sinitic uses the more regular grammar of old Korean and Japanese, with a roughly equal mixture of vocabulary from Mandarin and Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese. Most of the tonal features of the original languages have been abandoned, though a few remain. Written Sinitic uses a refinement of the old Japanese kanji and hiragana scripts called kanja, but can be written equally clearly in English orthography. It is the common second language in Angel and a common tongue for hundreds of miles around, including Limshau, where it was a popular choice among damaskans when first learning a human language, and Fargon (due to the inexplicable cultural similarities between old Asia and the narros).

Slavic: An extremely rare language in Canam, Slavic amalgamates Belorussian, Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatia, Slovak, and Ukrainian. There is no village in Canam that uses it exclusively. It is thought to emerge from several echan and techan nations in the similarly named continent of Slav, including the bastion of Krebet.

Tenenbra: The tenenbri (a lesser seen fae in Canam) are the sole speakers of this tongue, which stands clearly as the most bizarre of any fae language. Tenenbra is an agglutinative language that compounds flowing vowels, sibilants and fricatives with sudden and sometimes harsh dental and labial stops, interspersed with whistles, clicks, and chirps. This strange phonetic characteristic came from their voices' capacity to double as echo-location devices. Most words are three or more syllables long, but may encompass concepts that English would require four or five words to express. The phonology also deals with the stress level of voice, implying different meaning depending on the volume of the words. Other than Old Fae, Tenenbra is the hardest for any outsider to learn.

RELIGION

A common belief in many religions is that the Almighty, whatever form it may take, wrote the rules of the universe everyone must follow. Some say the only way to hear the voice of the divine is beyond the grave. Some also say the Almighty exists in the flotsam that keeps the universe from flying apart. Others think he lives within Attricana, and/or he may be the realm itself. Some others say he is a "they", as hundreds if not thousands of spirits or gods watch us from an identical world on the other side.

There is no right or wrong answer.

Catastrophes are good for religion, and the wave of enchantment sweeping away the old world was no exception. Religion offers hope and order in a world seemingly on the brink of destruction. It promises a plan stemmed from intelligence – that everything happens for a reason. As Earth falls more towards the realms of magic and enchantment, many have flocked to religion to answer their questions. In this age, miracles occur daily, and worshippers find proof of god everywhere. After more than 6 billion people died following the Second Hammer, the religions that survived found little reason to fight over conviction, and in any case the old holy lands were gone or made inaccessible, their idols and icons shattered into dust. Many smaller faiths died along with those who had once believed in them. When Attricana opened, newer beliefs arrived with newer populations. A few humans embraced these faiths while some fae embraced human ideology.

Given their immense power, it is no surprise that dragons are the focus of many faiths, either as gods themselves or as angels of a god. Those who still profess belief in a less tangible supreme power, though, still have no proofs one way or the other. God or gods remain as quiet and as elusive as before.

Atheism is surprisingly rare, even among bastion populations (although bastions have a higher rate of them). Agnosticism is far more common. Almost 60%

of all humans in the world, and a clear majority of the bastion-born, don't subscribe to any specific faith though almost all subscribe to some form of spirituality.

FAITH EVOLVED

Many religions of man survived, though none were unchanged. Most offshoots of major religions either merged or vanished, leaving only a handful. The modern dogma of these faiths rarely resemble their forebears in many or even most particulars, even to adopting certain traditions and conventions of their erstwhile competitors. Although many people embraced religion as an explanation of recent events, an almost equal number abandoned their faith, claiming the destruction of the world was proof of God's nonexistence. This led several splinter religions to claim God created this cataclysm to punish Man, or even (as with the faith endorsed by Baruch Malkut) to cleanse the Earth of the undeserving and bring forth the true Kingdom of Heaven for the survivors. Apocalyptic cults snapped up fanatical followers in the first few years, believing Judgment Day had occurred. As the centuries passed, such zealotry dwindled, leaving only a few begging for attention among the moral majority. Even fundamentalist sects of major religions rarely lasted long, with the sole exception being the bitterly intolerant Abrahamic offshoot endorsed by Baruch Malkut.

The only locations where the faiths of old have remained nearly unchanged are in bastions, which kept their faith as stable as possible (those that still followed it, that is). They still adapted to their environment, some in positive ways and some not so positive. Outside, in the open enchanted, faiths adjusted quicker and more severely. The Christian-based communities took the longest to accept the new world, as the Christian doctrine had always held that Man was meant to rule over all other beings of Earth. Islam, with its emphasis on submission to the divine and its ready acceptance of mala'ika and djinn as articles of faith, adapted much faster and more cultures rooted in that faith adapted to the new age than any other. Nearly all secular, agnostic, atheistic, and spiritual (but not religious) societies accepted the new world with few hurdles.

ECHAN FAITHS

Amethyst: Amethyst, the dragon god of the Terros age, fell to dust when the demon armor, Gebermach, plunged the Sword of Dogurasu into the dragon's heart. Many believe his spirit lives in the Gate, waiting for the time to return. In many ways, faith in Amethyst or Attricana is interchangeable, but subtle differences appear in the symbols. Amethyst represents all things good. He believes in creation and life. He frowns on destruction and those who wish to control others. In Canam sits an ancient temple as old as the Second Hammer. Its exact location has been lost to all but a select few. Mentioned in the Gospel of Greka, the temple stands atop a mountain, surrounded by a fortress of stone. Only a few know of the significance of this temple but refer to it as the Temple of Amethyst. Those following the faith hope to eventually locate it. Every decade or so, a crusade begins with as few as five or as many as five thousand to search the continent for this fabled temple. With little to work on, no crusade has ever succeeded.

The symbol of Amethyst is a chunk of Amethyst rock. To pray to Amethyst, worshipers place the stone to their forehead and repeat a non-magical Pleroma chant four times in different directions. Many fae races worship Amethyst. Amethyst himself never wrote any scripture or preached any gospel. He resented the deification of him or his power, though not of the dragons as a whole – who he always tasked with shepherding all the other souls of the world. One record quoted from Amethyst, "If there is a God, then he is truly infinite, and I am as far from his eternal greatness as any other."

Attricana: Like Amethyst, followers of Attricana believe in creation and despise evil in all forms. Unlike other religions, faith in Attricana does not presume a divine intelligence. Believing in Attricana translates to believing in a creation beyond science but not necessarily with a conscious design. Attricana followers consider their faith more a study of creation, the closest thing to a science echans have. Other faiths accuse followers of Attricana of being infidels, disbelievers finding a shortcut around faith to explain the new world. Worshiping Attricana proves that faith in an intelligent divinity is not required to rationalize magic.

Some right-wing religious groups have sworn to crucify followers of Attricana for betraying God's gifts. Across the ocean, an entire culture has developed with a population of Attricana-endorsing theists. When one who follows Attricana gains wisdom or power, he or she believes it derives from an internal source and not from a divine creator. Worshipping would be an incorrect word to even describe it. The Attricana symbol is an amulet of the white star itself. Followers do not exactly pray, but stare at the gate in the morning, studying it, and gaining wisdom from internal meditation. Being of no intelligence, Attricana is simply neutral.

Dragons: Many people worship dragons, the most powerful creatures on the planet. They are immortal, predating all others by millions of years. Most dragons refuse such responsibility, frowning on such beliefs. Others accept and respect such faith but remain humble to their mortal origins. A few embraced the belief and maintain active roles in the lives of their worshippers.

Evil dragons manipulate this belief to create hordes of followers to do their bidding. All dragon symbols resemble the dragon specifically being worshipped. The appropriate method of worship varies from dragon to dragon. Dragons are worshipped across the world.

Berufu: Many elves still follow their original faith in the creator of all things, Berufu – the mother of all fae. They believe Berufu lives in the shadow realm where the universe was formed. Attricana to them is a source of power, but not the home of God. According to legend, Berufu released the fae to hundreds of worlds across the universe through the gates. This view holds that shemjaza are alien fae brought into the world from

the black gate, and the Berufu legend explains that both tap into the same resource. Amethyst and Mengus are not gods to them and there is no dark opposite of Berufu in the faith. The concept of hell is a purely human invention.

Another variation claims Berufu was willed into existence by the god of all matter, Oaken, to be his mate. Together, they would create a species bound of both their strengths to populate the universe. The two gods formed the original fae, seeding billions if not trillions of fae in Berufu's womb, only letting a fraction upon the worlds they chose. This womb is a spiritual chamber in the ethereal realm known as Otsharus (which may be the echalogical root of the Hebrew word, Otzar). The number of fae souls released from Otsharus is fixed and when it is emptied, the species will no longer expand into new worlds. Nothing is listed in the books on Berufu about mankind except one controversial excerpt that claimed every human born steals a soul from Otsharus and the reason for the fae de-evolution is due to the dwindling souls in the chamber. Only fanatical laudenian and tenenbri priests hold this belief. Shemjaza also use fae souls, another reason why their destruction is paramount with followers of Berufu.

The sacred symbol of Berufu is a string of white pearls wrapped around one's arm. Praying involves a wide variety of chants in one's native tongue while rubbing the pearls between open palms. This procedure takes as much as an hour every morning. Every fae descendant culture makes her look like themselves, but all depictions show Berufu graceful and tall for the worshipper's species.

Ixindar: Opposite of Attricana, Ixindar promotes an ordered, uniform existence, everything under complete control. To believe in Ixindar means to encourage a state where the universe no longer changes. Worshippers obsess about control. They don't preach their faith; they enforce it. Their homes are perfectly organized. Though they may not wish to create a world devoid of life, they do believe a perfect society involves perfect order and absolute discipline without the pesky distractions of imagination, emotions, or independent thought.

Like Attricana, Ixindar possesses no intelligence, only an ideal. Worshipping Ixindar, like Attricana, may be incorrect wording. There is no deity, more the disciplined study of the phenomenon. Some of the most loyal followers of Ixindar are scientists, thinking Ixindar possesses a uniform, constant, and stable power source to help retake the planet for techa.

The symbol for Ixindar is a simple black pearl, featureless. Being of no intelligence, Ixindar is simply evil.

Mecha / Machine God: Only the gimfen worship Mecha or Machine God. Gimfen subscribe to the idea that the knowledge of technology is passed down by a powerful deity beyond the gate and only to a precious few. Only by worshipping the Machine God can technology be safely used alongside magic. Gimfen believe that most bastions fight against the word of Mecha and could solve all their problems with simple belief in their almighty.

Gimfen hold that Mecha was the firstborn of Berufu and Oaken and became so powerful that it began questioning the form of the universe. The parents forbade their child from giving precious knowledge to the fae, but it did so anyway. In response, Berufu took away Mecha's true name and Oaken robbed it of its gender. Mecha would only be a half-god. Though some devout followers have become eunuchs as part of their devotion, this is not widely endorsed. Mecha's symbols are tools, any tools. Everything the mechanic uses is laid out in the morning and the devout thanks the machine god for the tools and the knowledge, picking up every single item and expressing gratitude for its existence. For gimfen, known to have many tools, this sometimes takes half the morning before any work is done. Churches in gimfen communities are shops where followers can discuss their god and faith and pick up a few items at a divine discount.

Mengus: This spirit still exists beyond the black gate. Like Amethyst and Attricana, Mengus and the black gate of Ixindar are virtually interchangeable. Worshippers of Mengus believe in an overall plan for the world: not merely to reduce the universe to an unchanging state, but one ordered by a single infinite intelligence. Those who worship hope to share in her power, to combine with a greater intelligence and be one with a god. The Mengus symbol is a collection of tentacles curling around each other. Mengus is the sole deity of all shemjaza and typhox dragons as well as any pagus under their control.

Oaken: Narros elevate Oaken above all other deities, and though they acknowledge that Berufu has a place in their mythology, it is always a subordinate position. Oaken's myth claimed he arrived into this galaxy by breaking off a monstrous intelligence billions of years ago. This intelligence had no name but scattered to form all the planets of the universe magic would eventually appear on. The greatest segment drifted into the loose particles around the Sun before the planets were formed and the matter that drifted to Oaken formed the Earth. In this regard, Oaken is not one god, but hundreds, thousands, or even millions scattered across the cosmos. Some speculate Oaken is a hive mind, a combined gestalt of all the fragments. Either one or all of them together created Berufu (a singular entity no matter which version of the dogma) and decided to spawn the populations of the universe. Berufu however, wanted fae to dominate the worlds and Oaken wanted dragons. Eventually, Berufu and Oaken created the Otsharus and deposited the fae across the many worlds, while Oaken snuck dragons onto a few of them as a pet project. Oaken's mythos does not include Mecha except for one or two stories, all written by Mecha disciples.

Though technically part of the same religion, the dogma of the Oaken and Berufu faiths differ drastically and are full of inconsistencies. Both make huge assumptions on other fae species outside of the Earth with no evidence of their existence. Oaken dogma includes Otsharus but claims the souls from this great chamber exit via the black or white gates and thus both

fae, pagus, and demons all use them. Man is innocent in this and receive their souls from another power altogether.

Narros and tenenbri (the highest ratio of believers) believe that Oaken tests the fae on his soil. If they don't prove worthy, they eventually devolve to dust. If all the fae eventually die, Oaken will verify to Berufu that dragons were the correct choice (oddly enough, no dragon professes faith or even curiosity in Oaken). The narros mythology contends that Oaken never agreed on the final form of the fae and since Berufu disliked dragons, Oaken eventually created the narros as his favorite children. Because Oaken lives underground, he forbids digging too deep into his realm. Narros believe the tenenbri dug too deep and were cursed; some tenenbri actually agree with this judgment and pray to Oaken for forgiveness, while others claim that their defiance of divine law was another test that proved their superiority.

Oaken loves picks and hammers and his symbol is each of them crossing against an unrefined rock. To pray involves kissing the soil and chanting straight into the ground, rising back up with dirt on one's lips.

Yok-Ani: Unlike most other dragons, yok-ani accepted and respect the faith granted them. They believe in nothing but balance. The majority believe in endorsing neither good nor evil; or rather, that the mere concepts of 'good' and 'evil' represent a fundamental misunderstanding of the truth of the universe. Despite this belief, yok-ani are kind and benevolent. A few enforce pure neutrality as the only belief, but most preach that their followers must be as a leaf on the river of life, flowing where it takes them without fighting the current. Yok-ani also despise unnecessary violence and believe drawing the sword to be the final solution. Most devotees seldom even see a yok-ani dragon. Most of them live across the planet in the mountains of Kuraukou; one, the dragon Genai, can be found in the massive temple at the center of the town which bears his name in the midst of the bastion of Angel. This enormous pagoda marks the focus of the faith for the entire continent, but few can brave the bastion walls to reach it, and fewer still ever receive an audience with the dragon himself.

Disciples must be able to speak Sinitic, considered by the yok-ani to be the most poetic and philosophical of human languages. The yok-ani symbol is the dragon shape, snaking around a staff or sword hilt. Praying to yok-ani involves striking the sword or staff into the ground and singing, in Sinitic, a poem declaring one's faith.

HUMAN FAITHS

It should be noted that the following pages are extremely brief summaries of extremely complex religions and belief systems. If you choose a real faith, you should research the details of the religion and make sure you understand the demands put forth. Don't insult half the world by not doing your own research.

Chinese Folk Religion: Also known as Chinese Traditional Religion, this encompasses a vast amount of practices including Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It involves the worship of animals, deities, the sun, the moon, and the stars (although the latter has depressed somewhat in recent centuries). This also includes the worship of legends, ancestors, gods, goddesses, and demigods. In all, there are hundreds of different figures for followers to worship. These include the Jade Emperor, Cai Shen, Tu Di Gong, Hu Yi and Zau Shen. The concept states that a mirror of Earth floats beyond Heaven with a social hierarchy in which all these spirits, gods, and legends live in peace and war. In the past, they often clashed over control of what once was called China. Most modern worshippers believe this double Earth sits beyond Attricana. One must research a path before choosing the right deity. Today, hundreds of temples dot the landscape, and the religion appears across the globe, but the single largest concentration of followers is found in Genai.

Christianity: Once the most schismatic faith on Earth, the Second Hammer put paid to nearly all sectarianism in Christianity; without the bureaucratic organizations that had supported it in the old world, followers of the Cross reverted to a state similar to that of the earliest days of the Church, with only their sacred writings to guide them instead of popes and patriarchs. Which articles of faith survived the transition are unclear, but as a whole, Christians adhere far more to the notions of tolerance and mercy than in pre-Hammer days. Christianity falls into two major camps on modern Earth: Techan and echan Christians. Echans believe the Second Coming has already occurred and this new world of miracles stands as a result of a new design. The existence of Ixindar places the image of Hell back into public acceptance, and many believe the purpose of all life on the new Earth is to crusade against this evil, to finally free the world of sin forever.

Some fanatics still exist. It is believed Baruch Malkut began initially as a Christian kingdom, though its tenets of faith have deviated so far from the original scripture that the only thing it has in common with mainstream Christianity are some of the names. Thankfully, this is the only real exception as most other Christian kingdoms are well respected with kind and fair rulers (like Abidan). The cross symbolizes everything and its placement dominates worshipper attire. Prayers have seldom changed, and morning mass takes just under an hour with a strict progression of prayers and actions. Christianity is found the world over.

Hinduism: One of the oldest religions of man, Hinduism maintains that the soul lives eternal, undergoing a continuous circle of life, death, and rebirth. The beliefs of Dharma, Samsara, Moksha, Jnana, Ishvara, and Karma remain unchanged. They hold Brahman as the eternal and all-powerful spirit to which everything stems and that Ishvara is the only way mankind can interpret Brahman. Several denominations of Hinduism place Vishnu or Shiva as the seat of eternal and omnipotent power. No matter the course, the faith encour-

ages virtue and acts of good, believing that will put a soul on the road to enlightenment, and that evil acts lead to darkness.

A soul's status at birth and their life is determined by their karma. Karma is more than just the sum and balance of your good and bad deeds: it is work or action and the results of that work or action. Karma is cause-and-effect on a cosmic scale. It determines what lessons you have to learn in this and other lives and what fortunes will befall you in this and future lives as a result of actions in this and previous lives. Gods and goddesses exist, but according to certain schools of Hindu thought, they are just another form of life, higher than humans but ultimately mortal. They will eventually die (some believe many have died in the intervening millennia). Even after the fall of the Second Hammer, Hinduism remains as much a complex religion as it ever was. Most believers of Hinduism live around the outside of Western and Easter Slav, but like many faiths, it can be found in smaller numbers everywhere there are humans.

Unlike Islam, which frowns on idolatry, Hinduism showcases several examples, the most common being the Aum, a symbol found throughout the faith. Many others embrace the mandala and even the manji (swastika), any last negative connotations of which were wiped away along with the old world.

Islam: Of all the human faiths, Islam has changed the least. Muslims share six basic beliefs: in the god Allah, in the books sent by Allah, in all the prophets and messengers god sends, in predestination, in angels (or mala'ika), and in the day of qiyama (Judgment Day). Sunni and the Shi'a branches (and many others), like Christian branches, amalgamated into modern Islam. They believe in the Towers of Islam (obviously related to the Five Pillars or Core beliefs of Islam), Shahadah (sole god worship), Salah (five daily prayers), Sawn (fasting during Ramadan), Zakat (giving charity), and finally Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca), the final one still mandatory to all Muslims once during their lifetime.

When Attricana reshaped the Earth, much of the eastern Mediterranean coastline sank below the waves, submerging the ancient city of Jerusalem and putting paid to the wars of faith for good. The city of Urtioch (part of the kingdom of Trinitas) sits on the new coastline. Founded by migrating Muslims, the city stands as a shining beacon of religious equality. The trek to Mecca is no longer simple or safe: the Hajj now tests all. No longer safely nestled in city walls, by a miracle of godly proportions, the Kaaba exists atop a mountain simply called Makkah. Dangerous peaks prevent a strong civilized foothold. Every year, tens of thousands attempt the voyage. Since many modern Muslims in Canam no longer know the specific direction to Mecca, many simply pray facing towards the east.

In modern days, some progressive Muslims have suggested that God may one day bless the world with another prophet. Though Mohammed was the greatest prophet of mankind, this new one would strive to unite all species of Earth under a common shroud of wisdom and guidance. This belief is not popular across the world and no one is sure how such a figure would be greeted.

Muslims are taught to reject idolatry, needing no symbol but their own articles of faith. Muslims are everywhere but many live in Arkonnia and Canam. In Canam, the largest population outside of bastions can be found in the city of Taskin-Kada in Abidan.

Judaism: Related to Islam and Christianity, Judaism, involves the worship of one, all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipotent, and everlasting god who created the universe and continues to influence its development. He created the Tora (or five books of Moses), which dictates the laws and commandments (613 in total) of the Jewish people. Following these rules and worshipping God earns merit, rewarding one in the afterlife. This afterlife exists in the Garden of Eden that many believe sits behind Attricana. What this afterlife looks like has never been defined.

Further, even though there are many rules and principles of faith, no official creed or dogma is recognized as fully binding. The common points are that God exists, is all-powerful, has no physical form, is eternal, and is singular in presence. God gave humanity purity at birth with a free will to choose his or her own path. Mankind may atone for sins through sincere acts of redemption.

Followers of Judaism must commit to prayer three times a day, although specifics differ with interpretation. They still recognize the Shabbat, the weekly day of rest, as well as all other Jewish holidays. Like all monotheisms, Judaism also operates temples in Trinitas across the ocean. In Canam, those of Jewish faith fight an unfortunate constant stigma. Since Baruch Malkut uses a distorted Yiddish translation of the term "Blessed Kingdom," some incorrectly accuse the kingdom of the south as being Jewish, when in fact they follow a hideously warped version of Christian doctrine. Thankfully, the fae – the greatest sufferers from Baruch Malkut's dogmatic excesses – rarely judge humans on the basis of religion.

Sikhism: Sikhs follow the teachings of the Ten Gurus, dating back centuries before the Second Hammer. Over one million worshippers still live today, scattered across the planet. The followers adhere to the thousand page-plus scripture known as the Guru Granth Sahib. Thankfully, this tome, like the Qur'an and Holy Bible, survived through the end of the last world. The book preaches a simple approach to spirituality, a message directly revealed by God (Waheguru), who is singular and all-powerful. All created by God stand equal in all ways, regardless of race, sex, or religion. After the gates opened, many Sikhs accepted the new races without question, being all created by God. A laudenian priest once spoke highly of the Sikhs and their faith, claiming it made more sense than all other human beliefs. All Sikhs defend life in all its forms, especially those of fellow human beings and fae. They also believe in reincarnation. Followers wake before the sunrise and meditate on God's name. They must live their life in peace, give

to those in need, and open their doors to all. Sikhs are encouraged to form communities where everyone is equal, and are prohibited from acquiring possessions based solely on greed, acting illogically, or treating any intelligent species less than they would treat themselves.

Shinto: The "Way of the Gods," Shinto still survives across the world today, often practiced alongside faith in the yok-ani. A few have even combined the two. Once one of the official religions of Japan, Shinto professes reverence and respect for nature and veneration of important spiritual figures from the mythic past of the adherent's nation. The religion lacks a specific dogma or a fixed way to act. One does not even need to profess a belief in Shintoism, as in many respects it exists purely as a way to express humanity's need for ceremony. Shinto believes in family and welcomes anyone. Its only simple commandment insists on a simple life unifying one's soul with nature. Spirits worshipped in Shinto are called kami. There are kami of various orders of power in all things, be they physical, metaphysical, or conceptual, but the most powerful remains the sun-goddess Amaterasu. Some believers claimed they found a connection between the dogma of fae and Shinto. They allege the Otsharus is the realm of the kami, the spirits of the kami are these unbirthed fae refusing to enter our world, and modern fae are, in fact, kami taking physical form in this world. The largest concentration of Shinto worshippers in the world is found in Genai.

MEDIEVAL TRAPPINGS

While every society is keen to claim its own system of government as right and natural, it cannot be denied that feudalism is one of the most enduring social systems ever contrived. As Attricana opened, the entirety of the planet was unclaimed. Those few flaunting influence over land or people took this opportunity to declare what they found as theirs. Calling themselves lords was an obvious next step. Even most fae, even the truly noble and chivalrous ones, would make such declarations on lands they deemed acceptable to build a nation upon, even if those lands were already populated. Generation passed onto generation, and a landowner would pass their holdings to an heir. Some claimed a lordship by simple right of wealth or military power, while a few arrogantly declared their title bestowed by a higher power. Eventually, the old titles returned. Some houses were led by lords, others by dukes, khans, counts, marquises, landgraves, or barons. A few humans even went as far to declare themselves monarchs of the highest order, kings and queens of divine royalty, defended by knights or royal guards.

Several changes did occur with the new age, influenced by the new landscape and people considering themselves "morally evolved." The concept of designating any gender or ethnicity as second-class citizens had been expunged by the years of travail, when everyone banded together on equal terms for mere survival. Furthermore, the fledgling aristocracy was of necessity forced to knight local landowners and betroth their children to lesser houses to increase their power. Added to that the fact that anyone could simply claim nobility upon the forming of a town, and the criteria for rulership became much more egalitarian. If the town became a city, the noble would become a ruler of grand stature.

Those human nations not declaring racial hatred to the fae would often embrace or even worship their neighbors as long-lived paragons of all things desirable. Many fae took this idol worship to heart, never having encountered such reverence before. This caused an increase in human-fae half-breeds as fae were often as romantic as the most quixotic humans. Powerful human monarchs sought marriages with ruling members of fae nations, desiring their patronage, their allegiance, and – more importantly – their popularity in keeping their own people loyal. When the positive side effects of human-fae pairing were discovered, many human aristocrats went mad pursuing a noble marriage with a similar classed fae. Alas, fae never bond for reasons other than love and these initial requests were always rejected.

A few nobles would eventually mix their blood with the fae lines, though this occurred more often by circumstance with lower class fae than by arrangement to forge an alliance. Human nobles having a fae spouse or being a half-fae themselves guaranteed respect and loyalty from the people. The public considered their rulers true royalty, for such long-lived sovereigns must contain stately blood. But to the fae, true royalty could only be bestowed from a higher power, one that could destroy kingdoms with its bellowing breath of fire.

In the history of all the fae and their descendant races, the highest rung of the social ladder was given to those blessed, metaphorically speaking, by a dragon's kiss. A benign dragon would declare the fae of noble heritage, to be one apart from the rest, exhibiting extraordinary charisma and moral fortitude. By such blessing, the dragon would swear to channel wisdom to the members of the family name, even beyond the end of its own life. The royal's family name would be synonymous with that of the dragon. This is not an act done lightly or on impulse: only one or two families in each major species have been so exalted across the world. The laudenians have Elrenar Alkanost; damaskans have Ellenthos Tellurian and Ravenar Limshau; chaparrans have Valentiarankerr, while tenenbri have Sharajaclypse. Despite some claims to the contrary, no narros or gimfen have been so christened.

This has not stopped several fae from declaring themselves king or queen or the land they control a monarchy, citing the righteousness of their conquests as proof of their royalty. No dragon needs to consecrate them as proof of their sovereignty. Furthermore, the blessing is by no means a guarantee of overlordship: even though Sharajaclypse is the only tenenbri gifted with a dragon on her crest, she is only a lord in Vanaka, ruled by Queen Karellanecrebet in the capital of Vakai. A few nefarious gimfen and humans have fabricated

such symbols upon their crest but dragons take forging their blessing seriously. Only archon dragons ever bestow such titles on others, reserving their endorsements to those with the charisma and benevolence to become great and wise leaders. Such titles are not given to beggars or shopkeepers, but to those already exhibiting promise, already leading others in virtue and gallantry. Many are already leading nations, but few ever declare themselves royalty. Assuming such a position guarantees no endorsement. Though most of these fae are appointed by word from a dragon's lips, some are thought to actually have dragon blood running through their veins, inherited from bonded love between crossed species generations ago. Such pairings are known to have occurred but are infrequent, only happening when a dragon takes mortal form and falls for its emotions and urges while in that state.

This knowledge was not known to humans and when the new world took shape, many materialistic and selfish leaders with too much power and too many men declared themselves royal only for the purposes of christening their land a kingdom. The most notable exception was King Savarice of Abidan, the only human in Canam to have ever received such endorsement from a dragon's hand. Savarice's blessing by the holy dragon, Silver River, guaranteed a stature other kingdoms could only dream of. The title did create controversy. Several great fae leaders like Thalagos Gin of Thos Thalagos and Karlis Kronas of Gnimfall expressed resentment for being overlooked and the laudenian archmagos Nacola Falconyr condemned the choice, declaring that the blessing of a human devalued the practice entirely. This view was not felt by Alkanost himself, who immediately accepted the king, further declaring Savarice and his noble line "the first true king of men and the only leader fit to guide his species." Ravenar Limshau agreed with the godly sanction and hoped it would rally a greater influx of immigrants to Abidan and threaten the stability of Baruch Malkut. King Darius Konig, upon hearing of the legend and of Savarice's title, snorted at the notion, arrogantly alleging that God himself—outranking any such blessing from a primitive dragon—hallowed his noble blood. King Darius pronounced Savarice's title a blasphemy, punishable by death. If the Savarice line is eliminated, it is unlikely mankind will be fortunate to receive such an honor again for many centuries. Thankfully, because of the necessity of expanding their control, royalty rarely if ever intermarry. Though some suspect other families of such controversy, no dragon-blessed royal family ever mixed sibling blood. The commodity of their lineage was too valuable to squander on selfish ideals.

TRAVEL

Most fantasy worlds in fiction present a world of expanding beauty but short distances, or else mystical means of traveling between far-flung locales. The real world is no less fantastical but far less forgiving. Travel time is a problem. Roads are few and far between, and overland travel between distant locations can take weeks or even months. Even on the Continental Cross, the only highway and reasonably maintained road in Canam, it takes just under a month to reach Limshau from Angel by horse, and another six weeks from there to reach York – assuming that travel is not marred by bandit or wandering monster attacks or the more mundane depredations of tollbooths and competing tax and excise collectors from the various free houses along the road. Most travelers who must traverse long distances, therefore, prefer to do it by air.

DRAGONFLYERS

The architects and engineers of the tower of Dromos across the sea designed and mass-produced an enchanted flying craft for use in the southern lands of Arkonnia, but a lack of population and financially viable investors prevented wide distribution in their homeland. However, when they reached Canam, the Dromos enchanters sold off all their stock and filled backlogs for two centuries. The dragonflyers resemble oversized ancient Asian boats referred to as "junks" with large eagle wings made from marble or limestone extending from the sides. They don't flap and appear to have no purpose other than cosmetic, but the boats cannot fly without them. Each one can hold between six and twelve people though a few larger ones have been known to hold up to a hundred. Most of them only require a single controller. They don't travel anywhere near bastions, Apocrypha, Ažhi Dahaka, or Baruch Malkut and severe winds prevent travel to or through Alpinas. They seldom accept charters to unknown destinations. In the century since the introduction of the dragonflyer, a network has formed in the skies over Canam, though most of the traffic is still comprised of thermals.

THERMAL SHIPS

The most common aircraft by far in echa is the thermal, a slang term for all buoyant, lighter-than-air aircraft. The term refers to their common attribute of using heated air instead of helium or hydrogen to supply lift. Before the Second Hammer, the progress of these aircraft was halted in favor of faster, mass-produced winged vehicles, but even in areas of increased magical disruption, hot air still rises in an atmosphere. Though a helium dirigible would be more stable, the gas is hard to come by in the modern day, and advances in thermal designs have offset the disadvantages of hot air. Their moderate flying altitude allows more people to see them in use and their presence in echan cities and even some bastions is relatively common. The mooring towers for thermal ships are easy to spot. Where there are thermal towers, dragonflyers often sit nearby, though flyers are more often employed for charter bookings, leaving the thermals for regular city-to-city travel. Thermals rarely travel to locations without a mooring tower, although exceptions can sometimes be made for the right price.

WAVECRASHERS

As the Moon was pushed into a closer orbit by Attricana, the swells and waves in large bodies of water increased in severity. This, along with Attricana's encouragement of ocean storms, has thrown atmospheric sciences out the window. Air currents constantly shift, making meteorology and climatology useless. Chaotic pressure systems have generated the largest oceanic storms ever recorded, separating the continents behind walls of weather. This maelstrom is continuous through every ocean and they dissipate only slightly when approaching shore. Massive coastal docks like those at York and Angel have installed immense breakers to halt the assault.

Nations from both techa and echa tried for centuries for a safe route across the water. The only real option was to travel above the clouds; Porto's Sail Galleons and Beluga carriers easily accomplished this task, but the altitude required was unrealistic for thermals and dragonflyers are not designed for such distances without the ability to restock supplies. For the longest time, therefore, contact with bastions across the ocean was sparse at best, and communication with distant echan empires was practically nonexistent. This lasted until only recently when the first wavecrasher appeared at the docks of York.

The sea is rife with monsters. Some grew from evolved oceanic behemoths like sharks and whales while others were unique creations of Attricana, grotesque or beautiful. Some were timid while others were hostile, swallowing anything they could wrap their impressive maws around. These leviathans were initially hunted for their meat or other resources. Short-range boats braved the weather to harpoon the mammoths and drag their hulks back to shore.

With the application of moderate magic and clever trapping, several of these goliaths were captured alive. Their wills were broken and they were trained to carry a load. This weight eventually turned into an entire vessel, built around the creature. Not a single wavecrasher looks the same, from monstrous sea turtles to whales larger than villages. The vessels dominate the waves by rolling effortlessly over or diving underneath them. Even with these audacious designs, the majority of wavecrashers seldom survive more than a dozen journeys before finally destroying the creature or the boat built around them. Some of the beasts near retirement are demoted to following coastlines, where they become shorerunners. It is thought there are less than a dozen of these beasts of burden roaming the oceans. Apart from the rare docking at York, they frequent only echan ports and rarely appear on the west coast of Canam, running exclusively across the narrow strip of Okeanos.

THE CHANGING EARTH

The world once went by the name Terros, dating from the beginning of Amethyst's emergence (or landfall, depending on the legend) to the falling of the First Hammer, when the planet fell back under control of nature. In geological terms this span of time was only an epoch of the Cretaceous period, lasting only a few million years and explaining the relatively normal development of reptilian and mammalian life in fossil records

throughout ancient history. Further, since fae developed their culture rather slowly, they never reached a point of creating materials capable of surviving 65 million years of erosion and decay. Any other evidence disappeared when magic dissipated. Even the bodies of these new creatures fell to dust with the closing of the gates, another odd feature of those birthed by magic. After only a few years, every remnant of what magic created was gone. Everything else escaped into the gate, into a deep slumber, hoping for a chance to return.

Man always knew a major bolide impact would be an extinction level event, but he hoped it would not repeat until his technology reached a level to detect and defend himself. The First Hammer, as it was later known, struck what was then known as the Yucatán Peninsula at the exact moment of Amethyst's death and created the Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event, wiping out many of the non-avian dinosaurs and planktonic organisms on the planet. It was followed by a massive environmental shift resulting in further losses over the next few thousand years. The planet never fully recovered and the impact, along with massive volcanic activity, shifted the entire ecosystem. It allowed other lifeforms to prosper and permitted natural selection to evolve to mankind. The collision, environmental aftereffects, and simply time itself, removed any surviving evidence of the old world's existence. Though some bizarre artifacts were encountered pointing to the possibility of a hidden history of the world, these discoveries were dismissed as aberrations or hoaxes.

The second collision, now dubbed the Second Hammer, occurred with apparently so little warning as to not warrant a single announcement. The few surviving accounts never reported the discovery or the anticipation of the impact. Modern views believe the resident population knew nothing of the collision until it masked the sun and shook the entire planet. The bolide struck a region of land once called Eastern Siberia. By seemingly pure coincidence, this impact occurred exactly at the location of the buried Ixindar gate. Though the rock coffin sealing the tear inside could never be broken by mankind's hand given his then-current level of technology, a two-mile asteroid easily succeeded. Fragments of the absolute rock scattered across the globe and Ixindar's wave of corruption flowed out like a broken dam. Coupled with Attricana's reopening, either shortly before or shortly thereafter, the world would never be the same.

The return of Attricana caused severe changes in the physical landscape of the Earth. Several large volcanic eruptions rocked the planet. Physical landforms became more extreme: mountain ranges rose higher, lakes grew deeper and vaster, disappearing glaciers replenished themselves, rivers burst their banks and expanded to many times their former size, while others dried to dust. Cliffs rose higher while valleys sank deeper. Fossil fuel deposits shifted: some sank to the crushing depths while others exploded upon the surface. According to The Final Word of Echan Influence on Geochronology, by Marikarma, magic disturbed the calm status of the globe by increasing the rate of seafloor spreading. For nearly a century, the amplified geologic turmoil destroyed every last fragment of mankind's presence. Harsh winds washed across skies. Earthquakes ripped the ground apart. Although the volcanoes and earthquakes eventually subsided, they never reached a level of calm like mankind was blessed with in the thousands of years prior to the Hammer's fall.

The wave of magic sweeping the globe altered nearly everything. When the enchantment saturated the world's every molecule, the planet convulsed and shuddered. The first century saw great loss of life, especially with man, already weathered and battered from the previous age. No one is sure how many humans survived the pre-gate turmoil, but many more lost their lives to the ravaging Earth. More fell victim to monsters choosing them as prey. Finally, after a century, the planet fell back asleep. The earthquakes stopped. The winds died down. Nature swallowed up nearly every machine and nearly every building. Even the scars left by industry were overrun by plants and moving dirt.

REGIONAL GROUPS

Most of the nations of Canam are small points of light in a wild and untamed world. Borders are not always well-defined: sometimes the lore and social values of a nation are valid beyond its immediate sphere of influence and sometimes the next village over has completely different social norms and cares nothing for the history of the neighboring nation. Broadly speaking, any regional vocation can be applied when dealing with lore or social checks anywhere in its regional group, although not always to its full effect. The regional groups are defined as follows (there may be overlaps):

Central: Kannos, the Finer Fire Pits, Limshau and Salvabrooke.

Dianaso: Alpinas, Fargon, Seliquam, Quinox, and Selkirk.

East Cross: Eastern Limshau, Gnimfall, Halyc, Mann, and York.

Kesakas: Sierra Madre, southern Nankani Mountains, and the Gloam.

Northern Shield: Abidan, Apocrypha, and Azhi Dahaka.

Sky Network: Laudenia.

South: Baruch Malkut, Skyrose, Laurama, and Tranquiss.

Western Reach: Angel, Crax, Laurenoak, Torquil and Xixion.

West Cross: Antikari, Dawnamoak, western Limshau, Orchis, and Plicato.

BASTIONS

After the massive birth pains of Attricana's opening passed, the aura of enchantment finally subsided to a less chaotic level. Something passing for normality began to reassert itself. With what was left of humanity banding together, those still possessing technology also

possessed the influence that comes with it. However, most of these initial communities could not expand that influence relying only on malfunctioning machines, and the majority eventually turned to magic, forgetting their heritage and the bulk of thousands of years of technological development. A few, however, grew fast and large enough to maintain their technological footprint. These surviving cities discovered caches or ruins from Earth's past intact enough to catapult the community to prosperity. The bastion of Sierra Madre discovered a colossal cavern and easily accessible thermal power; with Mann, an entire city pre-built by unknown hands was the catalyst to develop. Of course, the positioning of some bastions defies explanation: nobody, not even its current residents, knows what possessed the founders of Selkirk to build their society inside a mountain within one of the most magically active regions on Earth.

Like a weather map displaying topical zones and low and high pressure isobars, Earth displays regions of heavy and light magical saturation. Low disruption zones allow technology to function with virtually no side effects, although the EDF is always present and certain problems never cease. The more a bastion expands, the larger these dead zones grow. Most bastions have placed their highest technology or R&D facilities as close to the center of their cities as possible, to keep the EDF's effects on them to a minimum. If a bastion was to collapse (which has been known to happen), the background magical saturation would reassert itself very shortly after; and if the collapse was due to an invading enchanted force, the reversion could be instantaneous. Even a single echan in a bastion can cause havoc, if their inherent disruption field shorts out part of a power grid or disrupts a communications line. Some bastions are more concerned about this effect than others: in York, a main road through the bastion allows echans to walk freely to the docks, mingling peacefully with techans (though it is advised they don't linger); in Angel, an entire section of the city was partitioned for the residential echans that helped build the first walls of the bastion; but in other bastions like Selkirk, Sierra Madre, and Mann, echans are strictly forbidden. For some, the prohibition is strictly to protect technology, but some communities have migrated towards bigotry with an unfortunate scientific justification.

Magic shrouds the Earth, blocking both low and high frequency waves. This suppresses cosmic radiation but also suppresses radio signals, preventing bastions from communicating. The rapid expansion of gas and plasma is slowed, preventing explosives from detonating or even combustion engines from running. While theoretically possible to communicate by laser with a satellite outside of the EDF's influence, no individual bastion has the resources to place such an object in orbit or the knowledge to locate any that might still be in operation. Therefore, like human nations of ancient Earth, bastions progressed completely independently from each other, altering their beliefs, their technological profile, and even their language. Even after messengers finally revealed these bastions were not alone in the world, regular communication was still unfeasible. As long as Attricana remains open, there is no way for the techans' way of life to escape their cities.

BASTION-BORN

All bastion regional vocations require the character to be a techan human at the time that they initially take the vocation, but the knowledge and skills gained from this background do not suddenly disappear when embracing enchantment. If you later become echan, you can still make checks using your bastion vocation, although certain permissions may have changed as a result: while you might be able to convince an Angel gate guard that you grew up two streets away from him based on your +2 vocation, he's still not going to let you back into the bastion if you're carrying a glowing crystal staff on your back and have a dozen spellbooks in your baggage.

BASTION TECHNOLOGY

Bastions all flaunt a technological supremacy over their neighbors. Though their machines and electronics cannot survive long away from their city's borders without servicing, they still revel in such accomplishments as light bulbs, flat-panel televisions, and fuzzy-logic rice cookers. Still, not all bastions are on the same level of accomplishment. A bastion's listed tech level is the average degree of sophistication at which the majority of the bastion sits, but prototypes and cutting-edge developments will always provide exceptions: likewise, the existence of higher-tech variations rarely renders lower developments entirely obsolete.

ANGEL

Can't See the Trees for the Forest

Kieran looked at his watch. He was going to be late for school again, even though he'd taken the early train. But Xiu-lin wasn't here yet, and he wasn't going to leave without seeing her. He tapped his foot impatiently, looking idly across at the illuminated billboard on the other side of the highway. This close to Genai, the lower corner of the LED display always flickered in the wrong colors. The owners of the fireworks factory just across the way claimed that their work was entirely mundane… but Kieran was at a loss to explain the amazing shapes that they formed in the sky when Xiu-lin took him to the festivals, trees and flowers and twisting, snakelike dragons in the sky. He sighed, remembering, when a soft voice behind him spoke up.

"I didn't keep you waiting, did I, Kieran-kun?" He turned, a little too abruptly, his face bright red. Say what they would, the vision before him could not be considered anything but magic.

ANGEL ASPECTS

The mentality of a character from Angel will differ depending on if they are from the city proper or Genai; the one lives in an almost schizophrenic state of semi-denial regarding things of fantasy, while the other celebrates the

wondrous but understands that it is also dangerous. Both can become somewhat complacent about the protection of the city wall, not realizing how fragile that protection really is.

Sample Aspects: ***Follower of Shinto; Sheltered Bookworm; Utterly Without Imagination***

Sample Benefits: Dealing with other cultures without starting a war; fighting kaddog; scientific knowledge; bilingualism.

Sample Drawbacks: Doesn't really think of the outside as 'real'; getting fleeced by the natives; conditioned to shoot anything ugly.

ANGEL STUNTS

Shared History: You gain +2 to all social checks against residents of Genai, and +1 against Limshau citizens of Asian descent.

Well-Prepared: Choose one of your TL2 devices; it is treated as a TL1 device for purposes of disruption checks.

Worldly, for a Recluse: If you fail any modern lore-related check, you can reattempt it with a +1 bonus: if you succeed this time, your information is mostly right.

GENAI STUNTS

Good Neighbors: You gain +2 to all social checks against residents of Angel, and +1 against Limshau citizens of Asian descent.

Matsuri: You gain an additional minor consequence slot that can only be used for mental consequences.

Superstitious Nonsense: You gain +2 to lore checks involving one of the following: Chinese Folk Religion, Shinto, or yok-ani dragon worship. You gain +1 to lore checks for the two you did not choose.

Population: 55 million (Angel); 2.5 million (Genai)

Tech Level: 1 and 2; Genai is mostly TL0, but some TL1 technology can be found within it.

Angel is the largest bastion in Canam, is usually the image outsiders picture when they think of the techan cities. From a distance, it resembles an oversized fortress, hundreds of miles across.

Layout: Angel's central governing buildings stand in the center of Tower Park. The primary avenues spread out from this, intersected by thousands of circular streets. Fragments of the older walls can still be seen, circling the city like tree-rings. Genai resides in the southern corner, against the seaward wall. Outside the city are over a dozen satellite villages, home to hundreds of merchants and shops allowing visitors to buy horses or black market goods from echa or techa.

Unlike Angel, organized and methodically laid out, Genai is scattered, jumbled, and cluttered. Occupying 500 square blocks of Angel, Genai's roads split into dead ends, major walkways loop around onto themselves and buildings rise and fall weekly. Most buildings are constructed using traditional methods due to a scarcity of supplies, with the result that Genai's cityscape looks a thousand years out of date. Asian influences are dominant – Genai is the last lingering shred of anything anyone remembers from China, Japan and the south Asian peninsulae before the Hammer. Not a single building stands more than four stories, dwarfed by

the skyscrapers around, except for the Great Temple of Genai at the center, set atop an eighty-foot-tall stepped pyramid. A traditional torii gate, painted a bright crimson with two supports and two curving crossbars bordering the realm of the mundane to the magical, greets those preparing to climb the massive flight of stairs. Atop the long climb is a five-storey iron and red brick pagoda with eaves stretching out to shadow the base of the pyramid. The pagoda itself is hollow, as a double-helix spiral staircase orbits around a massive shaft leading one deep into the pyramid. Within the depths, it is said, the yok-ani dragon slumbers, though few have ever ventured into the pit to confirm this and none have ever spoken of what they found there.

Entering Angel from outside is not easy. Only techan humans can pass through the main door. Outsiders must prove they are free of enchantment and that they have some useful skill. Echans are only granted provisional entrance on a case-by-case basis due to extant treaties with Genai, and even this depends largely on knowing someone with clout on the inside. Such visitors are carefully shepherded from the gates to the echan enclave with all due expediency. Several secret passageways are said to lead from Genai to the outside world, forgoing the gates of Angel.

History: Angel's development was the most troubled of all the Canam bastions. Setting up on a shoreline rich in the necessities of life and devoid of neighboring contested territory, its population grew quickly, but it was unable to maintain a high technological standard for that population. When Angel erected its first buildings hundreds of years ago, bogg raiders emerged from the surrounding forests, and sporadic attacks and supply raids kept Angel struggling for more than fifty years, until the immigrants arrived from across the ocean. Arriving as if by miracle, in a makeshift fleet ranging in size from rowboats to tankers, came a legion of displaced humanity fleeing the no-man's-land that had overtaken the far east in the wake of Ixindar's opening. They had fled from the mainland to the large archipelago off the coast, and from thence across the perilous ocean, braving horrifying typhoons and ravening sea monsters in the certain knowledge that what they left behind was worse. When they arrived, they found another human population equally desperate for survival. Needing workers desperately, the governing body of Angel made a decision, controversial to this day: they welcomed the settlers despite the taint of magic that some of them carried, and offered them their own protected piece of land within the walls in exchange for a labor force. With this influx of manpower, Angel expanded to three times its original size and built a bastion wall worthy of the name.

Soon, the boggs found themselves incapable of harming the massive castle-city, but the lesser kaddog are not noted for their intelligence and they still frequently launch assaults against the walls, though all they can hope to achieve now is to rustle a few head of cattle from the outlying villages; the city's crack snipers and quick-response VTOLs make short work of any concerted attack. Angel's population grows each year and plans have been put in order to build a larger wall several miles out, doubling the effective size of what is already the world's largest bastion.

The unique aspect of Angel is not the city itself so much as it is Genai, the settlement within. Built by its own residents, Genai cares nothing of its isolation. Legally, Genai is a separate reserve within the city of Angel: it has its own government, its own infrastructure, and its own laws and traditions, but shares certain civic responsibilities with the surrounding bastion. Citizens of Genai are also citizens of Angel, and are issued government identification cards when dealing outside the township, but many residents are born, live, and die having never stepped foot outside Genai. Their heritage insists on recording their history as well as the names of all of those who have died in the construction of the great wall. But the greatest legend of Genai is the source of its name and the identity of its most illustrious resident. It is said the pilgrims could not have survived the journey across the sea and made their way safely to the land of techans without the protection of a great dragon, almost as old and as wise as Amethyst himself: the yok-ani, Genai. Whether true or not, the story holds that this beneficence resides inside the colossal pagoda temple at the center of the district. Only the good and righteous are allowed to enter in hopes the rumors are true and that the great dragon lives inside, out of sight from prying eyes.

Angel is surrounded by major deposits of magic. With enchanted forests on every side, Angel suffers from radiant disruption, and wandering monster attacks, more than any bastion in Canam despite its massive wall.

Government: Democratic republic. The ruling council sits at the center building of Tower Park and seats six people. Alan Miller holds the current Head Chair. He holds the power of veto but not the power to push legislation through on his own. Genai has no formal government, but is represented by the most respected community elders, with local neighborhood organizations keeping order in most of the district.

Military: Angel prides itself on how small its army is. Its distance from other bastions and from any significant echan community, combined with its great wall, make a large standing army unnecessary. Angel's military and police force are one in the same. The Crimson Starlight tower in the western side of Angel houses the aerial division. The police force is comprised of volunteers and trained professionals, working by choice to defend the walls. 95% of the armed forces on Angel patrol the outer perimeter. Internal crime in Angel is shockingly small for a community of its size and density, with fewer than fifty violent crimes being reported each year, but as the punishment for any violent offense is banishment, few are willing to risk repercussions. The Crimson Starlight Armed Forces (CSAF) operates mostly fanjet powered assault shuttles. In Genai, a volunteer police force using primitive weapons (and often, unusually fearsome martial arts) keeps the peace. Angel secu-

rity only crosses the threshold when a serious crime is committed or when a public crime is seen from their positions at the edge of town.

Religion: The majority of the population is not spiritual, but Christianity and Judaism are highly respected even by atheists. The people of Genai are, if not actively religious, at least willing to give lip service to their ancestral faiths (Buddhism, Shinto, Chinese Folk Religion, and yok-ani worship) and even those that profess no religion are highly superstitious. Dozens of Shinto temples provide for a myriad of festive events throughout the year, in which all residents of the district (even those with no Japanese ancestry) partake.

Relations: Angel has virtually no regular contact with other bastions, being isolated at the uttermost west of the continent. Communications to and from Selkirk amount to little more than a page of script every year, and though travelers to and from York are not uncommon, they rarely carry the weight of an official embassage. Unofficially, Angel maintains hundreds of spies and isolated outposts as near to rival bastions as possible, in the hopes of poaching some useful technological development from them. Angel often trades supplies via Porto Beluga Carriers which arrive once every five years. Genai has no formal relationship with any outside bastions, though the elders do exchange communications with Limshau as often as possible, but even their relationship with Angel itself seems distant at times; Genai prefers to remain as self-sufficient as possible and does not trade with the bastion if they can avoid it. Genai merchants accept gold but not (usually) uc. A few will trade even though their exchange rates can be atrocious. Almost any echan goods, including a few basic enchanted items, can be found in Genai's markets (legitimate or not), but attempting to bring these goods into Angel proper is usually stymied by tight customs controls.

Names: Angel's variant of English is the closest thing to a common tongue Canam has, as its wide-ranging influences (encompassing elements of at least four old European languages and six Asian ones) make it a very popular human language in Limshau. Angel's original population was drawn from every major pre-Hammer ethnicity and a few less prominent ones, so there is a great variety and intermingling of ethnic names, but names of Gaelic, Spanish, Greek, and Japanese extraction are most common. In Genai, where more than half the population is ethnically Chinese, even families descended from other Asian nationalities tend to adopt a Chinese-sounding 'social name' despite everyone speaking the same Asiatic creole. Both Angel and Genai habitually use the 'given name – family name' structure on a day-to-day basis and the reverse in formal circumstances and on legal documents. Despite Sinitic's primarily Chinese influences, everyone in Angel uses the old Japanese honorifics for most public interactions: -san for equals or superiors, -kun or -chan for friends and inferiors, -sama (or -dono in parts of Genai) for honored superiors, -sensei for teachers and doctors, -kaichou for political leaders and CEOs, etc.

Angel Examples: Aiden Camus, Joachim Annikos, Kimiko Ross, Martha Tsukigawa, Shelley Delacruz, Xavier Moran

Genai Examples: David Chen, Ji-hu Kim (Jimu Qi-Hu), Hiroyuki Nogoe (Nuoguo Xiaoyou), Mana Sieng (Xian Mana), Yeong-Sun Park (Pake Yun-Sung), Xiaolung Li

ANGEL SUMMARY

As someone from Angel, you can…

…understand the fantasy world better than most techans other than those from York, despite having been sheltered from it for most of your youth.

…compensate for the vagaries of EDF with careful preparation and redundancy.

…appraise both techan and echan goods, although not always with a good eye to value.

…speak the two most common human languages in Canam, enabling you to communicate with most of the continent.

MANN

Keepers of the Covenant of Mankind

Adolphus should be here. I keep worrying I may to say the wrong thing to these abominations. Adolphus knows how to talk to the filthy beasts without giving the game away. We have been out of the bastion for a month now, and he still has not told me what our true mission is. I wonder if he even knows. I feel myself tainted by our contact with these creatures, so like humans and yet nothing like us. Yet it troubles me even more to think that all my family, my friends, my comrades must think me a traitor to my own species. Some days I wonder if I will ever see them again – whether my interaction with these inhuman things will forever mark me as an undesirable. Adolphus assures me that our work is for the greater good, and I must trust in him. I feel my purpose more strongly when he is nearby. When he is gone, I begin to doubt. Glory to the Covenant, I pray – Glory to the Covenant. Yet some days, it does not seem as though I really mean it.

MANN ASPECTS

Mannites are raised to believe in a vaguely-defined religion enforced by a rigid totalitarian psychotheocracy. Those who venture beyond the city walls (either voluntarily, exiled, or on a secret mission) usually react in one of two ways to the concept of 'freedom of thought' – childlike wonder or neurotic paranoia.

Sample Aspects: ***Covenant Sleeper Agent; Everyone Is Out to Get Me; Refugee from the Thought Police***

Sample Benefits: Mixing technology and mysticism; keeping secrets;

Sample Drawbacks: Worse than most at dealing with non-humans; secret agenda; being hunted by black-clad goons.

MANN STUNTS

Broad Training: Choose one non-magical profession vocation you do not have. You are trained in that profession at +0.

Scientific Progress (requires Techan Experience): You can spend a fate point to make a scientific lore check as part of another action.

Techan Experience: When you make a lore check related to scientific or technological knowledge, the worst result you can get is a tie. However, unless you critically succeed, any lore you recall is intermixed with an equal amount of incomprehensible mysticism, which may or may not have a basis in reality.

Population: 12 million
Tech Level: 5

Whenever anyone looks upon the City of Mann, they blink—like staring into a great void. No one is sure how old the city is, only that it predates its neighbor, York. The most popular story tells of humans arriving to the east coast and discovering an island fortress standing empty, waiting for someone to claim it. Someone built it. It was erected for Man.

Unlike Angel, bristling with lights and life, Mann looks dead and deserted. The only time movement is ever evident upon its outer wall is when it fires on approaching targets. No one outside knows how the city was built, how it sustains itself with no external trade, or how the residents inside developed such a technological level surpassing all others on the continent. Those who leave it never speak of such things, out of terror that some day the city's masters may track them down and silence them if they reveal the bastion's secrets.

Layout: Mann sits upon an island and rises as a dark blemish on an otherwise colorful horizon. The construction mimics old human techniques, but to extremes. The buildings sport few windows and rise thousands of feet into the sky. A massive wall, taller than any other bastion, surrounds the island. The city includes a massive self-sustainable hydroelectric system requiring little service. Mann covers nearly every square inch of the island it rests on, enclosed by a massive wall bordering the edge of the water. Each building within stands at least a thousand feet, with the tallest towering almost a mile overhead. The blocks run uniform and everything fits to a perfect metric unit. The entire city represents a mathematical perfection unseen anywhere else in the world. The buildings all stand at a height of prime numbers to the tenth power. Leaving or entering Mann is difficult: there are no land approaches, no doors, no docks anywhere along the perimeter, and every square millimeter of the wall is defended by high-powered lasers. Stories abound of infiltrators somehow pushing back the rapids and sneaking in through the hydropipes, but these accounts are unlikely.

History: The first residents of Mann concluded that the city must have been built soon after the Hammer's fall by the initial survivors, but these had died off, possibly from a plague or echan army. This does not take into account that the city was left behind with no bodies or records.

Regardless, the humans living in the city found themselves isolated both from the outside world and

from each other. As the centuries trudged on, the native population grew more xenophobic and paranoid of the world beyond the walls. Few have ever left – few have even expressed even the merest curiosity about what lies outside. The majority of the population of Mann believes everything outside to be blasphemous and immoral. They abhor all magic in any shape and the use or presence of magic within Mann carries a death sentence, not only for the practitioner but for anybody unfortunate enough to witness it lest they be tainted by the experience. No non-humans are allowed to enter for any reason; they receive broadcast warnings to stay away as they approach the shoreline, and pulse lasers are put through their heads if they do not make a move to depart within thirty seconds. Even the wall is rumored to be covered in sheets of fae iron.

Government: Theocratic oligarchy. Mann's ruling body is known as "The Ghosts." They dictate all laws but no one is sure how many there are or their identities. They walk among the population as normal people but meet every day at random locations to decide policy. Their numbers have been guessed at between eight and sixteen. When one Ghost dies, another is brought it to replace him or her. No one knows how the selection process works. Three Ghosts appear in a judicial court every day to pronounce judgment: while one would expect that rulings would be handed down by majority vote, all three always render the same verdict in unison, without apparent consultation.

Military: The Kir protects Mann from anything that appears hostile. Trained for defense rather than assault, the Kir patrol the outer wall, tracking every moving object above, below, or on the water. The Kir uniform is black as the city they live in, and their duty is to kill any echan found in the city or anyone possessing magic without hesitation. They have created technological machines capable of detecting not only magical devices but magical effects as well. Behind the wall, for emergency reasons only, several large cannons have been built against York in case their neighbor falls too far into chaos. The majority of the weapons patrolling outside the walls are automated machines. Rumors of a clandestine organization operating outside the bastion, dedicated to assassinating those who reveal any of Mann's secrets to outsiders and destroying any technology that falls into infidel hands, are unsubstantiated (and to ensure that everybody within the walls knows about it, discussing the rumors is high treason).

Religion: The entire bastion population follows a single state religion, though its details are known only by its residents, and are extremely vague even to them: even members of the Covenant, the secretive inner circle of the faith, would be hard-pressed to explain most of it without lapsing into pseudo-scientific mysticism and technobabble. Based on Abrahamic roots, its central tenet is that the entire world of magic, without exception, is the corruption of demons trying to bring the world into a dark age of damnation. The only solution is the utter extermination of all magic, those who use magic, and those that associate themselves with magic users.

Relations: Mann seeks no relations with any other bastions. Only Sierra Madre is more isolated, but for Mann, isolation is by choice. They refuse contact with Angel and consider York and Selkirk anathema for maintaining friendly relations with outsiders and even allowing echans to enter their borders. York prepares for an inevitable invasion that may never arrive. Even though a few Porto aircraft have been seen entering Mann, no official relationship has been formed with the utopia across the ocean. Though they share with Baruch Malkut their hatred for non-humans, the southern nation is just as sinful because of their endorsement of magic. The loathing is mutual.

Those who leave Mann are not permitted to return without a signed permit from a "Ghost": otherwise, they are warned away like echans and shot if they do not comply instantly. The longer the resident stays outside, the less chance he or she will be allowed to return. All citizens' DNA imprints are encoded in the Mann supercomputer and are the only form of identification used within the city. It may be possible to temporarily place a DNA recorder that confuses the sensors to make a person register as someone else, but where someone with the knowledge to perform this can be found inside or outside of the city remains a mystery.

Names: Pure Englo-Lingo is the only language spoken in Mann, and their names have a strongly Teutonic cast to them.

Examples: Adolphus Rasmussen, Henrietta Schelber, Mila Eisdottir, Niermann Kessler, Olga Vandeker, Theodor Hanssen

MANN SUMMARY

As someone from Mann, you can…

…use the most advanced technology known in Canam (as long as you don't mind being on the run from men in black trying to repossess it, or even working for the men in black).

…preserve the history and knowledge of mankind against the encroaching illusion of the fantasy world.

…proselytize your incomprehensible faith, probably confusing people in the process.

SELKIRK

The Mountain Men

"C'mon! Call that a try? My old mother can make a better score than that!" the foreman shouted from the sidelines.

"That's not the only kind of score your old mother's made!" Jersey shot right back. "Why don't you come out here and put your money where your mouth is? When's the last time you won a championship?"

The foreman took off his cap and stamped on it. "Shut yer gob! I took fifteen points against the stonebones not two years back!"

Jersey's teammates laughed. "Yeah, and then they put you on the ground for a forty-wink penalty when you tried to tackle their mater around the chest!" they heck-

led their manager. It was all good-natured, but there'd probably be a fight in the locker room later. Good – this team needed to work off some steam before they went back into the mines. They'd lost two men in a cave-in just two weeks since, and tempers had been flaring on the line ever since. A good match should get things back to working order before they went back on military rotation. Even if they ribbed each other in here, they would need to be tighter than the foreman's sphincter to survive the bag of foulness that was Outside without a canary.

SELKIRK ASPECTS

Inhabitants of Selkirk are not reclusive by choice, and their dangerous, rambunctious lifestyle is not well-suited to introverts. That said, while they remain very social even outside the bastion, they can be very selective about who they socialize with. This makes Selkirk humans some of the hardest to read of any in Canam.

Sample Aspects: ***Hey, Some of My Best Friends Are Damaskan; It's Off to Work We Go; Thalagos League Rugby Star***

Sample Benefits: Seeing in poor lighting; mountain climbing; navigating underground; working with magnetic technology; playing rugby; interacting with narros.

Sample Drawbacks: Random gaps in knowledge of the world; very uncouth; tendency to use fists to settle arguments; dazzled by sudden bright light.

SELKIRK STUNTS

Combat Implements: You gain +2 to attacks with mining tools.

Military Service: All your TL0 weapons are Immune to Disruption.

Miner's Eyes: While in low light (but not total darkness) you gain +2 to all offensive and stealth checks against people who can't see in the dark until they become Accustomed to the Darkness.

Population: 8 million
Tech Level: 3

No one remembers when or how Selkirk erected itself on such an unstable precipice. The bastion is located in the midst of the most magically active terrain in all of Canam, carved into a towering mountain surrounded by equally impassible peaks. Although they have access to the pass of Dianaso, to reach it requires going through a jagged section of rock and would be virtually inaccessible but for the bastion's magnetic tram lines – which none can now remember being put in place. Selkirk's strength lies in its goal of continued expansion and wealth. Their loyalty is to the almighty shilling. Holding onto ancient ways, Selkirk represents a massive mining consortium. Internally known as TERMINAM – TERran MINing AMalgamated – the bastion's entire population works in service of the syndicate. Everyone works. Everyone serves. Everyone has a share.

Selkirk is the smallest bastion in Canam, sports no walls, and is not paranoid of its neighboring nations. They don't obsess over expansion or political domination like other techan nations. They only work to live and survive.

Layout: Selkirk sits half inside and half outside the mountain it was built upon. Large open areas sit under artificial lighting. Many of the mining levels supply minimal illumination, relegating some members of the population to perpetual darkness for nearly their whole lives. As one climbs higher, the construction appears more thought out, brighter with larger spaces. Colors blend in and the areas are more sanitary. The vibrations of the air circulators rumble through the whole mountain, the only real sounds until one dives into the catacombs, thousands of miles of tunnels where automated machineries buzz. Workers follow behind and dig up the treasures found by the mining machines. "Mags" are the primary method of transportation – vehicles of varying size that travel along iron-core beams that criss-cross through and outside the mountain. A massive lattice of rails covers the eastern face, the side most exposed. The magnetic vehicles don't connect to the "roads" but float alongside, allowing many vehicles to cross along a single rail. Some wealthy administrators utilize sports-car style single person speeders while the majority of the population runs on the magtracks (multi-segmented trains). One single bar travels miles from high in the mountains to the town of Gateway below.

History: Selkirk's farms, bountiful as they were initially, lacked the resources to supply the entire population when it grew past their initial estimates, so they opened negotiations with the narros to the north in Fargon. The Echan Trade Authority (ETA) was soon formed to regulate trade between the narros of Thos Thalagos and the miners of Selkirk. Surplus foodstuffs and exotic mined goods travel down the pass in armed caravans or loaded aboard a steam-powered armored train that makes a single run through the pass every month. The supplies are offloaded in the village of Gateway at the base of the pass: no echans, not even gimfen, are allowed to board the Mag-Trains to Selkirk. In return, the narros gain access to the massive gold and coruthil deposits under the Range of Rock. The ETA maintains the trade agreement and shipments usually arrive every week. Since the early days, ancillary treaties have been struck with the scattered echan settlements that grew up in the Seliquam river valley, ensuring that Selkirk will never lack for food and is defended against incursions by the puggs and boggs of Xixion, though these attacks grow more and more savage year by year. The agreements are beneficial to all sides and none has any reason to break this profitable exchange.

Government: Socialist corporation. The entire mountain is governed by a single amalgamated corporate entity, but the workers banded together more than two centuries ago into the four core unions: The South East Moles, The South West Rakers, The North West Boilers, and the North East Strykers. Each one competes with the other and often takes out their frustration on the field, playing a sports game reminiscent of rugby. Shop stewards lead their unions with the understanding that no one strikes or prevents the flow of goods: as everyone has a stake in the corporation, there is rarely any need to do so in any case. The supervisors monitor the lower levels of administration. The high levels of administration are run by chief superintendents, finally culminating in the main board of twelve with the president of the colony, currently Tyler Norton. The miners take up more than 95% of the population even though the majority of them don't appear in the top fifteen levels of the city.

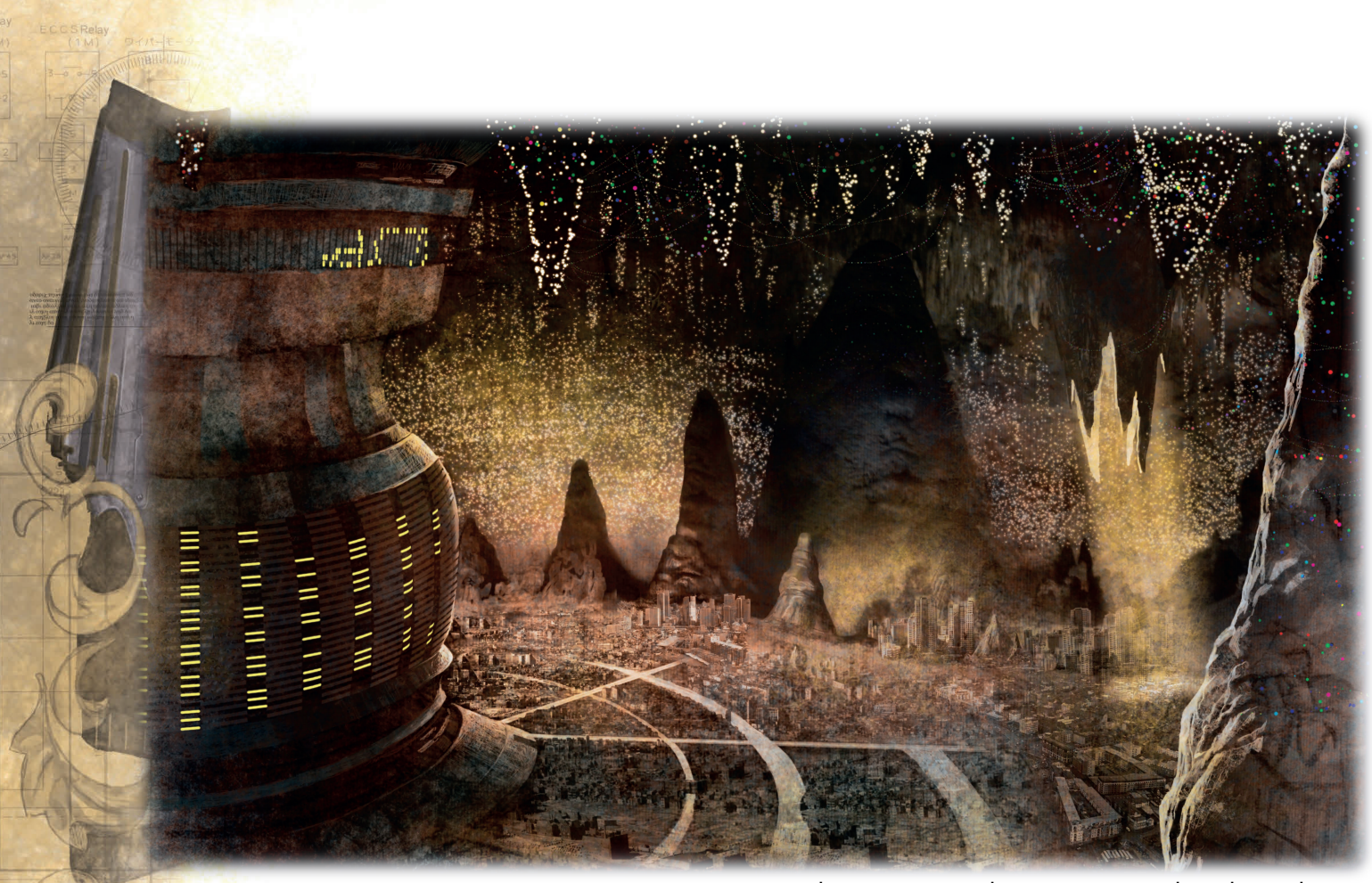
Military: Selkirk has no dedicated military force. The miners volunteer for service lasting three months to a year, allowing them to work on higher levels and even outside the walls. Few of them ever see action, as no sizeable force can easily approach the bastion and the raids that beset the lowlands and occasionally reach the Dianaso caravans are mostly driven off by the echans who live in the surrounding lands. The military operates a variety of hidden turrets and hard points along the outside walls. Most of the time, they perform escort duty when carry-alls are required to travel north to Fargon.

Religion: The bastion is driven by the principles of an ancient economic philosophy which holds a distrust of organized religion, believing it to be too easily swayed into a tool of worker oppression. Consequently, there are no churches or temples in Selkirk, and any spiritual beliefs a miner may hold are purely on their own time. Most would say they are far too busy to worry about such things.

Relations: If Selkirk were to vanish off the planet, it is possible no one far beyond the Dianaso pass would hear of it for several years. Isolated, the city barely appears on the radar of the other bastions. Selkirk's isolation works for and against it. It is the only bastion never directly attacked by any outside force with a chance of overtaking it. A one-time conference resulted in a modest technology trade with Angel, a relationship that has since dissolved from Selkirk's lack of communication, though according to that ancient treaty each bastion is bound to aid the other in dire need. Selkirk has a more productive relationship with echan civilizations. The continued trade with the narros of Fargon and the confederation of tiny nations in the Seliquam river valley keeps Selkirk alive. Occasionally, gimfen from the south are welcomed for their expertise and curiosity. Selkirk wishes to be more in touch with their neighbors, but their location prevents it. Other than their paranoia over disruption, Selkirk and TERMINAM do not hold the revulsion for echans many other techans exhibit. Since Selkirk primarily deals with narros (which basically look like short versions of Selkirk miners) and gimfen (who do not disrupt technology), the population has no reason to hate them.

Names: Selkirk's isolation and focus has made its population very homogenous and its language very utilitarian. Most of the original population was ethnically of Scottish, Irish, and Welsh extraction, with the result that fully fifty percent of the population has the surname 'Brown,' 'Jones,' 'Owen,' 'Smith,' or 'Walsh'.

Examples: Andrew Walsh, Maisie Nelson, Moira Owen, Patrick Kelso, Sean Smith, Tanith Westenra



SELKIRK SUMMARY

As someone from Selkirk, you can…

…see clearly in very low-light conditions.

…use your physical prowess equally well in the mines, on the battlefield, and the rugby pitch.

…get along better with echans than any other bastion-born.

…do just fine without technology when you have to.

SIERRA MADRE

Subterranean Paradise

"In my homeland, we have no poverty, no hunger, no prejudice," Marco said smugly. "Everyone has everything they need and is free to pursue their own self-perfection. I honestly cannot see why anyone would prefer starving, dirt roads, those horrible furry things with the teeth, and throwing crap out of the windows over safety, cleanliness and plenty for all."

Roka snorted. "You can see the sky, for one thing," she replied.

Marco grimaced. "I hardly call that a benefit," he said. "It is unnatural, living without a ceiling over your head."

The burly bodyguard raised an eyebrow, scratching the back of her head with her spiked club. "And yet, here you are," she remarked.

SIERRA MADRE ASPECTS

Living underground with virtually every need and most wants provided for would be a tremendously dull existence if Sierra Madre's society did not encourage its people to pursue a path of individual expression. While there are not really more artists (in the traditional sense) than in other societies, each citizen pursues their day-to-day activities with artistry and flamboyance: thus, Sierra Madre's residents tend to be more iconoclastic than most.

Sample Aspects: ***Battle Equals Dance; Counter-Camouflage; Master of Cultural Espionage***

Sample Benefits: Drawing attention only to what you want people to see; observation and deduction; sabotage; seduction; being outrageous.

Sample Drawbacks: Drawing unwanted attention; lack of support from home; wrong impressions of the outside world; skewed sense of priorities; cowardice.

SIERRA MADRE STUNTS

Fast Learner (requires Sierra Madre +2): Choose one of your lowest-rated vocations. You gain +1 to overcome and defense checks with that vocation. If the vocation ever ceases to be one of your lowest-ranked, choose a different one.

Hidden Purposes: The worst result you can get on a social subterfuge check is a tie: if the check is being made to conceal your origins, you also gain +1 to it.

Resistant Equipment: You gain +2 to all defense checks against disruption when using any equipment obtained in Sierra Madre.

Population: 15 million
Tech Level: 4

Sierra Madre enjoys its isolation but does not hate and fear the outside world as some do. Tapped into massive geothermal energies, the population of Sierra Madre lives with unlimited power and limitless promises for the future. Unlike many bastions, gripped in fear of the outside world and the encroaching magic, the people of

Sierra sleep safe at night. Armies could walk over them, completely unaware of the city underneath. With the Gloam to the south, few people travel needlessly within the region, so there is little chance of accidental discovery. Sierra Madre, like Porto across the ocean, strives forward with reckless abandon to develop new techniques and new advancements. Clean power and virtually no crime gives the bastion a virgin mindset. Those who leave are more unprepared than any other pilgrims into echa for the harshness outside. The majority don't outlast a month, dying in the wastelands between civilization or fleeing back to their homes.

Layout: The entire city is built throughout a single gigantic cavern. Unlike Selkirk, no conspicuous mountain marks the bastion's location, and there is no sign whatsoever that a thriving civilization exists beneath the ground. There are few exits to the surface, most being hidden service elevators. Without natural light sources, the bastion glows with a constant light of civilization. Over a controlled geothermal vent and blessed with an underground river, it continues to live off boundless energy. The presidential palace doubles as the power center and the focal point of the entire militia, small that it is. Every major street expands from that center, winding through the cavern and its branches. Sierra Madre's cavity is the largest enclosed space on the planet, stretching for more than 50 miles from one end to another with nearly a dozen sub-chambers radiating from that. The palace sits in a gigantic stone column almost a mile across. This makes the layout vulnerable, as the Column is also a major supporting structure for most of the bastion. Its destruction would not only cut the power of the bastion and send hazardous volcanic gas into the city; it would most likely crash more than ten square miles of roof above. The death toll would be catastrophic. Luckily, nothing short of a nuclear blast has the capacity of inflicting enough damage to compromise the stability of the column.

History: Sierra Madre could be the oldest bastion on the planet. Some believe it could be older than the new age, surviving the Hammer's fall, though how that can be considering the geological damage to the planet when the gates opened is unknown. It is believed Sierra Madre was originally some ancient vault or military base from Earth's past. The massive cavern the bastion was built inside may have formed later from magical influence, as it is simply too huge to form naturally and not collapse. The bastion made a point to reinforce their ceiling despite showing no signs of weakening.

Being isolated from all external contact convinced the population they were the only survivors of the last age. When they emerged from their vault, they found a wilderness populated by monsters with no other refuge in sight save for the caverns behind them. A few expeditions only confirmed their fears. A frightening fog covered the south and nothing lived for nearly a hundred miles north that didn't immediately attack upon seeing prey. It would be centuries before anyone from Sierra Madre even knew of other human survivors. When it was finally confirmed, they expressed delight at the prospect, and then promptly returned to their city. They were self-sufficient and had no capacity for sustained trade over such long distances; the knowledge that civilization was not utterly lost was enough for them. Underground and out of sight, they remain safe, which no other bastion can boast. The city continues per the status quo, hoping their solitude will continue until it is no longer necessary.

Government: Hereditary dictatorship. The Column houses the single ruling family. They are not considered royalty, but the rulership is nevertheless passed on from parent to child. If no heir apparent is available, a new family takes control. The current family is the Valterras who have ruled for more than 75 years. It is uncertain how long this method of government has persisted. Sierra Madre has the fewest codified laws of any bastion, and the rulers rarely abuse their power.

Military: Sierra Madre prides itself on having the best trained but smallest military, perfectly specialized in operating underground. The standing force is less than 1000, but with massive numbers of ceiling-mounted automated weaponry, to fight the Madrians on their home turf would be suicide. There are no surface patrols, as the bastion prefers invisibility to armament.

Religion: While the bastion's population has by and large abandoned faith, they have not turned aside from spirituality. Most embrace the power of the individual, channeling one's energy and maximizing their potential in society. Many embark on meditation and personal quests in order to fulfill their spirit. This philosophy is an incongruous mix of old-world Buddhism and Epicureanism, though neither term would be familiar to a Madrian. The updated expression they employ is "Spherist."

Relations: Sierra Madre sits below the radar of most bastions. With no exports and no communication with the outside, other bastions that know about Sierra Madre don't really care. However, with massive energy deposits and hardened workers, Sierra Madre could make a useful ally if anyone could find them.

Names: Much of the bastion's original population was of Latin descent, and their propensity for large extended families has resulted in almost every Madrian having a surname derived from Spanish roots even if they originally came from other ethnic stock.

Examples: Andre Semana, Cynthia Calabrea, Maria Jimenez, Sancho Milardes, Tomas Real, Zanetta Valterras

SIERRA MADRE SUMMARY

As someone from Sierra Madre, you can…

…use your individuality to support yourself and keep yourself going in the face of adversity, draw attention where you wish and conceal your true purposes.

…call on unique technology that protects your devices from disruption.

…adapt more swiftly than most to new situations.

YORK

Low-Tech Urban Sprawl

Blue light flickered across the nearby buildings as Gerard knelt over the body. Damaskan female, dressed in a pilgrim's dust-caked traveling cloak, but beneath which was hidden that distractingly tight leather armor those Limshau library ninjas wore. No signs of violation, which was good – there had been a rash of echan rapes and murders some months back, but the creep who did it was locked up tight. Still, best keep this one quiet. The last thing the department needed was another moral scare.

Gerard looked more closely. Actually, there weren't even any signs of struggle – the elf's fingernails were undamaged, a short curved sword at her back hadn't even been drawn, and the way she was laying suggested she had been walking along and then had suddenly fallen: the body didn't appear to have been moved, even. He pulled out a flashlight – dead fae don't disrupt anything – and looked for a gunshot wound. Sure enough, right between the shoulderblades – the entry point of a high-powered rifle bullet, probably fired from the upper floor of one of the abandoned warehouses at the back of the alley. "So the first question is," the policeman murmured to himself, "what was an elf doing so far from the Broad Way?"

YORK ASPECTS

Those from York are confronted with the existence of magic from the day they are born, and can't help but have some opinion on it. To some, it fires the imagination. To others, it is an evil to be shunned. Some others even react to enchantment in much the same way they would to drugs, overdosing on magic and then requiring some time to 'detox' so that their machines will work again.

Sample Aspects: ***The Enemy of My Enemy is My… Something; Secret Magic Collector; They Should Go Back Where They Came From***

Sample Benefits: Trading favorably with echans; repairing lightly disrupted equipment; ignoring or tolerating unpleasant things; driving a hard bargain; enduring temporary privation.

Sample Drawbacks: Hostility and suspicion toward Mann; irrational racial pride; unfamiliarity with higher-tech equipment.

YORK STUNTS

Going Outside: Choose one of your TL1 devices; it is treated as a TL0 device for purposes of disruption (if it is a weapon, it is also Immune to Disruption).

Tact: You gain +1 to social checks against echans.

Watchful Eyes: You gain +2 to defend against pagus, dragons, and enemies from Mann, Halyc, and Baruch Malkut.

Population: 35 million
Tech Level: 0-1

With no city walls to keep the outside where it belongs, the people of York welcome tourists and travelers. However, tolerance of magic does not equate to acceptance of it. Due to the prevalence of passing magic users in York, most residents neither fear nor loathe the echans: they just prefer living their lives with air conditioning, elevators, and parking meters. Unlike some bastions, which discourage even talking about the existence of magic, York's residents see it passing through the city to the docks every day. They have gotten used to not voicing their opinions of the world outside, even if they privately bemoan the enchanted world and what it has sullied man into. Other bastions look at York with distrust, believing one false step could send a massive ED burst throughout the city, demolishing the brightly lit bastion and causing it to crumble into the madness of magic.

York relied on old technology and building techniques to recover the lost glory of mankind. The second largest bastion after Angel, York never constructed a wall, despite the threat of the pagus and evil dragons of Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka. Thankfully, with Limshau, Gnimfall, and Abidan as their strongest echan neighbors, York has never had to worry about invasion from a superior force, and can easily repel attacks from the pitiful local bogg tribes.

Layout: York resembles a city of Earth past. Old style construction sped development and allows for quick expansion. The only clear sign of advancement is near the coastline, where the tallest and most advanced buildings stand. The coast also sports the largest dock in Canam and the tallest techan structure, the tower of Shinar (at 7000 feet). Beyond that, the western half of the city is somewhat disjointed and unorganized. Most tourists get lost in the jumble of roads and highways. A single eight-lane freeway passes in a more or less straight line through the city to the port, with a wide verge separating it from buildings on either side. Those travelers that generate the most EDF are gently encouraged to restrict themselves to the innermost lanes and not to linger within the bastion.

History: Like Angel, York relied on echan means to build their city, but where Angel coopted the hard labor of human refugees, York turned to the technical services of the gimfen. A self-repairing robotic force known as zeros run all of York's hard labor and defenses, a system designed and built in concert with the gimfen of Gnimfall. In the earliest days of construction, York and Gnimfall signed an agreement whereby York would supply the gimfen with precious raw materials and knowledge of the advanced sciences which mankind had acquired over the centuries, and the gimfen would use their ingenuity to apply that knowledge to the problem at hand, advancing York and helping them build a power system based on tidal energy. This required the construction of massive generators deep underground that, according to rumor, still contain gimfen technicians, living for hundreds of years without ever seeing the light of day. Many in York's hierarchy refuse to acknowledge the gimfen's connection, insisting human expertise single-handedly built the city; Gnimfall

does not care whether they are given credit or not, since they have already been amply paid for their services.

With no walls to hem them in and no serious threats from outside, York expanded quickly but could do little to resist the constant magical influx into the city from other races and magically endowed humans. With the largest port on the east coast, York became the mouth of the vital corridor between Canam and Lauropa. As a result, the bastion's progression became severely hindered and could not advance as quickly or as consistently as other techan cities. The only notable exception to their technological footprint was the zeros, which being derived from gimfen designs remained somewhat resistant to disruption.

Government: Judiciary democracy. York does not separate its legislative, executive, and judicial processes, the entire city being governed by a High Court, headed by an elected President who governs with no fixed term until recalled by a vote of no confidence. Any citizen has the right to argue a case or propose a motion before the High Court, and any citizen can be chosen to serve on it by appointment from the President or by garnering enough signatures on a petition. All motions are carried by a simple majority. Laws are enacted by judicial precedent and can be overruled by the Court with sufficient justification. The ruling body battles constantly with the problem of crime in the city. The current President's priority is keeping the populace stable and on ways to minimize the city's dependence on its robot workforce.

Military: The York Self Defense Force (YSDF) is tasked with defense of the city and is the largest standing techan army in Canam: however, 85% of the law enforcement in the city is robotic. Should the YSDF ever be called upon to operate extensively outside the bastion, they would find their manpower seriously reduced as the zeros do not work reliably far beyond the periphery.

Religion: Various. York is the only bastion with cathedrals dedicated to echan faiths. These churches are permitted as long as no magic is performed within and no illegal acts are witnessed. Beyond this, virtually any human religion has a representative in York, with the various Abrahamic faiths dominant due to the bastion's proximity to Abidan.

Relations: The relatively low technological level has allowed some mingling of magic and science, although relations between the two groups have never been smooth. York exhibits the widest variety of attitudes toward echans, some decrying them as defilers of humanity's destiny and others accepting them as signs of Earth's progress, with the majority remaining guarded but noncommittal.

Paranoia lingers between Mann and York, and many fear armed conflict is inevitable. Besides Mann, York's other relations are strong, though many other bastions look down on them for their tolerance of echans within their borders and the commensurate limits this has placed on their technological development. York maintains good relations with Gnimfall in spite of downplaying the echan nation's role in the construction of the bastion, remains on reasonably good if somewhat distant terms with Limshau, and while they have no official relationship to the other echan settlements nearby, they neither interfere with them nor prevent their entry for trade or transport. Unfortunately, racism and crime

often follows those non-humans who enter unless protection is provided.

Non-residents must purchase a day pass to enter and remain in York. The fee is nominal for non-magical humans, but four times higher for non-humans and mages. Those found without a pass or resident identification is politely escorted to the bastion's borders and instructed to go through proper channels for entry.

Names: York's population has always been ethnically diverse, but with a large population that speaks Englo-Lingo as a first language (even though it is not the primary language of the bastion), most names have a strong French or Germanic influence.

Examples: Celeste Dupont, Clement Morel, Jeanne Milokovic, Konrad Tombs, Marie Kandler, Theo Vandersaar

YORK SUMMARY

As someone from York, you can…

…rely on your lifelong experience to overcome many basic problems interfacing between techans and echans, including the basics of overcoming disruption.

…take advantage of your comparatively greater opportunities with the world to impress echans with your open-mindedness and techans with your knowledge of fantasy.

…attack and defend yourself with comparatively low-tech but, because of that, more disruption-resistant weapons and armor.

THE WORLD BEYOND

While bastions represent beacons of humanity's ancient legacy, they are not the dominant forces in Canam. The majority of what would commonly be considered civilized life on the continent falls under the dominion of several major kingdoms, communes and confederations. Because of the great distances between them, diplomatic and trade relationships between these nations are sporadic at best, but by the same token open warfare between them is also rare. Most of the major nations are connected by tributary roads to the Continental Cross and thus are relatively easily reached by travelers, but a few are isolated by hostile wilderness, only safely traversed by thermal flyer.

ABIDAN

The New Holy Land

The bucket chain ran from the fountain at the center of the courtyard, up the steps leading to the crenellated wall – a line of mostly townswomen, passing the water from hand to hand to put out the balls of flaming pitch that flew over the Bulwark, keeping their husbands, brothers, sisters and children on the wall safe from fire to focus on holding the line. Two days ago, the fountain had been abuzz with chatter and laughter. Today, the chapel bells tolled the alarm, and every citizen of Janoah was either safe indoors or lending what help they could to defend the city. God willing, in another two days only the burn marks would indicate that there had been a battle here – and there would not be many new crosses scratched into the wall's unyielding stones as silent memorials to the fallen.

ABIDAN ASPECTS

Abidan is a land where faith is encouraged, but it is not mandatory, and none can be punished for their faith – although if those who adhere to the hateful religion of Baruch Malkut cause harm within the kingdom's borders, they are punished for their actions, not their beliefs. It is the sense of community religion creates rather than the beliefs themselves that defines Abidan as a sacral nation.

Sample Aspects: ***God Is Everywhere; True Believer in 'Something'; Wandering Chevalier***

Sample Benefits: Interpreting religious texts; behaving in a manner befitting a knight (even if you aren't one); standing firm in the face of adversity.

Sample Drawbacks: Inclined to believe the best of everyone except pagus and Baruch Malkut; can't turn aside the needy; tendency to get preachy.

ABIDAN STUNTS

En Garde: Whenever you spend a fate point on a defense against a physical attack, until the end of your next turn the worst result you can get when defending against attacks is a tie. If you make the check on behalf of another, you gain +1 to it.

People of the Holy Land: You gain +2 to lore checks for your own religion (if you are a Christian, Jew, or Muslim, the bonus applies to all three) and +1 to lore checks for any other religion.

True Nobility: You gain +2 to social checks in situations where your nation's reputation for chivalry and honor are important.

Abidan, land of faith and chivalry, is located in northeastern Canam in the crux between the Grand Lakes and a yawning gulf leading out to the sea. It guards the land bridge of Tethuss, the only safe route into the civilized lands of southern Canam from the darklands of Apocrypha. Its capital Janoah is a massive fortress stretched across the bridge's entire breadth, whose doughty knights man the Bulwark keeping the pagus armies at bay.

The nation was founded by the Christian Paladin King, Vincent Savarice, who gathered fleeing refugees throughout the north and personally oversaw the guard of the city until his death at the ripe age of 134. It is said his longevity was due not to any magic, but to divine purpose – one of the few individuals in history to have this claim almost universally acknowledged.

History: Savarice's true origins are lost to legend. According to the tales, he washed ashore on the eastern seaboard, battered and bruised from rapids and rocks, his armor rusted, cracked, and falling off his body. He offered the salvageable pieces of refined steel to a nearby forge in exchange for nothing more than a loaf of bread and a lump of cheese. The fragments contained pieces of a symbol, a great crest of a house of prominence from across the ocean. The man cast them aside

easily and watched the seals melt in the fire. Then he traveled north along the shore, never lingering more than a day at any dock or village. He lived simply, not wishing to impose and accepting only the barest fare he was offered, always insisting on paying for even this largesse with his own labor. He wore rough clothes, simple boots, a rough, uninspiring metal shield at his back, a notched and pitted blade with a wrapped leather hilt his only weapon, yet wherever he went his charisma shone out like the kings of legend. Wherever he walked, he spoke, and crowds gathered to listen. He spoke of nobility and truth. His tales told of bravery and kindness. In a land of slavery and spite, his words resonated with people praying for dignity and chivalry. Though a cross hung from his neck, Vincent never preached his faith and contended that kindness from the heart surpassed any grace from heaven. He spoke simply of kindness of the soul and the capacity of civilized men to rise above what the animals inside told them to do.

Followers followed, as followers do. Savarice refused to call himself their prince or even their commander, but did not turn away any who came to him with chivalry in their hearts. These few men and women remained at his side as they made their way up the coast. The King's Caravan, as it came to be known later, was hardly any legendary ride: merely a dozen-odd warriors in mismatched armor on mismatched steeds, leading a great refugee camp away from lands wracked by slavery and intolerance. Among them were such storied names as Nobah Kohein, a brave holy warrior from another faith, and the Monster of Mauron, an enormous gladiator with a gentle soul, forced to fight until Savarice freed him. The caravan clashed with slavers and defeated monsters both mythical and modern. They freed the oppressed and championed virtue and honor to those in fear. In one town, outside of York, Vincent would meet Devorah Miller, a steel-eyed woman of fierce will and his future wife, though they would not marry for many years.

Throughout this journey, Savarice never accepted any title from his followers, despite the legends that have grown in the subsequent centuries. Besides, a king needed a kingdom and Savarice had only people, not yet a nation. But as his caravan grew to the hundreds, Savarice felt a calling. He knew a destination waited at the end of his unnamed crusade. When the caravan, after many years, at last came to the lands surrounding the mouth of Tethuss, every fiber of Savarice's soul told him this land was to be their home. Here was a land empty of settlers, but showing all signs of being rich in natural resources. A kingdom needs growing land, mineral wealth, stone and timber more than faith. It also needs allies, but these Savarice's caravan had earned in plenty with their good and selfless deeds. From Limshau and Finer, he hired carpenters and engineers, miners and architects. The Bulwark on the southern side of the bridge was erected in less than a year, though it would undergo extensive renovations over the next century. Behind the fortress wall, the town (later the city) of Janoah grew just as quickly. Though Savarice insisted the homes and agricultural networks of the realm be built first, his closest friends and most loyal subjects put pencil to parchment almost

immediately to design a great keep for their new ruler, named after the wall.

It was not until Savarice and his order of knights, the Line of Abraham, took it upon themselves to rescue a Limshau caravan attacked by a superior force of boggs, however, that the king's legend was spread throughout the continent. Though the Line suffered losses, the fae were freed and carried back to Janoah for tending. When they returned to Limshau, they spoke of the courage and charisma of the knights and their Paladin King, the first time Savarice had been referred to by such a title. Several well-regarded librarians traveled to the city to record the many tales of the knights' bravery, which they later edited into a hefty book that found circulation across Canam, Accounts from the Caravan of the King. The book became a prized possession of many libraries and found distribution among thousands of shops and bibliotheca across Canam. A copy of this book eventually came to a powerful holy dragon, whose name was never revealed and would be further referred to as Silver River, on account of his long mane of burnished hair.

Silver River arrived dramatically at the bulwark and informed Savarice that, whether he wished the honor or not, his actions had earned him the grace of blood royal. The dragon claimed to speak for Lazarus and placed a seal upon Savarice's palm, which would forever render the human immune to any disease, natural or magical. Silver River then decreed since the paladin had no heritage he could recall, the holy dragon would adopt the human as its child, making the name of Savarice a symbol of power and faith. The dragon's proclamation echoed throughout the skies of Canam, and Savarice, though ever humble, could no longer deny the title laid upon him. The Kingdom of Abidan was born in truth. Within a few years of its founding, the kingdom expanded to encompass more towns and thousands more people. Immigrants to Janoah ballooned to such an extent that even a few nearby communities with no prior connection to the blossoming nation raised Janoahn flags, voluntarily annexing themselves to the new kingdom. Savarice and his Line of Abraham were inundated with requests for patronage and blessings.

The king died as he had lived: not from old age, but defending his people on the Bulwark against the death dragon Laban of Miserere. Laban, critically wounded, his army wiped out, fled into the uttermost north and was never seen again.

Culture: On the surface, Abidan is much like any other echan kingdom, though it has a distinct old-world feel to it reminiscent of the pre-Hammer classical romances – a characteristic, incidentally, very rarely found in modern Lauropa. Some cynics have suggested that the only reason the country sustains its 'fairytale kingdom' aesthetic is because of how clean it is, and such commentators would not be far off the mark. Abidan has a strong tradition of civic service, and consequently is a great deal cleaner and better tended than a truly medieval kingdom would be. Streets in the towns are well-maintained – some are even paved – and public parks and gardens are plentiful. The old Abrahamic traditions of constructing great edifices to the glory of God are very much in evidence throughout the nation. Every major city contains at least one great cathedral or mosque, usually both (often situated on the same square and designed by the same architects); the city of Taskin-Kada also bears an impressive Hebrew temple modeled after the long-lost Temple of Solomon.

Because of its alliances with Limshau and Gnimfall, Abidan is also a center of learning and progress. Its people push the boundaries of what is possible in a world saturated by EDF. The larger farms use horse-drawn combine harvesters to bring in their crops, and even smaller homesteads boast early industrial conveniences. The cities even maintain a rudimentary sewer system and coordinated public sanitation. Unlike many echan nations, Abidan maintains a public school system, free to any citizen, where the kingdom's youths are taught to read and learn at least the basics of mathematics, literature, the arts and sciences. Though some nobles hire private tutors for their children, all royal scions attend the same schools as the children of burghers, merchants, and farmers, and so most of the nobility follows their example. Dozens of faith-based schools exist as well to educate their followers on the finer points of their own, and neighboring, religions.

To this day, the kingdom remains strong. Its current king, Claudas, prefers his knightly duties than his kingly ones, but his siblings maintain the image of complete authority and wisdom. Other noteworthy towns in Abidan other than the capital of Janoah include Clarvus, Pilbara, Sclavia, and Taskin-Kada, this last being home to the largest Islamic and Jewish populations in Canam and the center of operation of the Watchers, the closest thing Abidan has to a secret service.

Religion: Though its founders variously followed the three Abrahamic faiths, and many of the immigrants also professed one of these religions, the king insisted that no single faith be allowed to dominate: Abidan would be a haven for all faiths and philosophies. All its ruler demanded of his people was kindness. Savarice, a devout holy man, also believed in logic and his teachings, although derived from old Christian books, promoted more flexibility and acceptance of new ways and theories on life. That said, other human and fae religions do not have a strong presence within the kingdom. The advantage of the Abrahamic triad is that they are founded on the principle of the Word of God, and their doctrine is revealed through holy texts which have been reinterpreted and debated by scholars for millennia. Such religions naturally lend themselves more to the philosophical and scholastically-minded people of Abidan than ritualistic animist faiths or contemplative spirituality.

Relations: Abidan's nearest neighbors are the human kingdom of Kannos, the gimfen of Gnimfall, damaskans and humans of Limshau, and the narros from the Finer Fire Pits. Abidan has a strong relationship with all of them, with oaths of brotherhood with Kannos and Limshau. Baruch Malkut, however, is anathema to all

their traditions; the so-called 'Blessed Kingdom' placed a price on the head of the Paladin King during the march of the Caravan, and the rulers of Abidan have always considered the southern nation to be the greatest threat to peace in Canam, not the pagus and dragons of the north. Kannos and Abidan have shared noble blood, but in keeping with the fae traditions of the blood royal, the kings and queens of Abidan have never matched for political purposes. Abidan is strong in farmland and livestock, but is nowhere close to Kannos. They have rich mines but nothing compared to Gnimfall or Finer. Abidan is only extraordinary in the wills and dedication of its people and the goodwill of its allies; should open war ever erupt in the south, Abidan's knights will be there to defend the innocent.

Names: Englo-Lingo and Semitic are the dominant languages in Abidan, albeit more archaic and formal dialects that emphasize the classical French and Arabic elements, and it is not uncommon, especially among the nobility, to hear names that would not have sounded out of place in the ancient pre-Hammer crusader states. Given that the kingdom still sees a constant stream of immigrants from elsewhere in the continent, names of any ethnic extraction (or combination thereof) are possible.

Examples: Claude Guiscard, Elise Beauchamp, Fatimah Mosoul, Mahan Vaaris Farcon, Roland Amuad, Sarah Minaschent

ABIDAN SUMMARY

As someone from Abidan, you can…

…quote at least one set of scriptures like a scholar, even if you have no faith of your own.

…rely on (or exploit) the nation's reputation as the fairest and noblest in all of Canam.

…find a welcome almost everywhere on the continent.

…take inspiration from the dedication of the knights of the Bulwark to stand your ground in the face of any sort of adversity.

…offer your strength in the defense of those who falter.

BARUCH MALKUT

The Blessed Kingdom

Caleb sneered. "You be thinkin all siesta on ta verandah, sippin mint juleps, lookin out atta diabos toilin inta fields and zappin they wita lightnin wand when they get stroppy, no?" He spat. "You be watchin too many puppet shows. Ta be nothin like tha, even for ta ricos. You plain never had sleep hip-deep in mud, hopin ta heat don kill you before ta mosquitos do, prayin your toes don get chomped by thievin caimans, thata chaparrans won come take your head off while you sleep, and thata succubus won steal your caralho in your dreams. Tha what real life be like. An our bastardo of a king has ta bolas to call it ta 'Blessed Kingdom'—though he slept rougher in his time if you believe ta legends." Instinctively, he looked shiftily back over his shoulder. "Anta worst of it be," he went on in an undertone, "me own mãe'd probably turn me in jus for sayin all tha."

PERMISSION

Echan human or enslaved fae.

BARUCH MALKUT ASPECTS

There are three kinds of people from Baruch Malkut: those who believe wholly in the twisted doctrine of Darius Konig, those who rebel against the theocratic state, and those who have doubts but keep them hidden out of fear, confusion, or because they lack the drive to take a stand against what they have been taught their entire lives. The third group is often pushed by circumstances into one of the extremes if they become adventurers.

Sample Aspects: ***His Blessed Majesty, My Savior; Only Mouths the Words; Underground Conductor***

Sample Benefits: Dealing with swamps and hurricanes; keeping secrets; lying as second nature; rote learning (since you're forbidden to read).

Sample Drawbacks: Hated by absolutely everyone else in Canam; difficult-to-conceal accent; hunted if an open rebel.

BARUCH MALKUT STUNTS

A Certain Point of View: The worst result you can get on a deception check is a tie.

Just Business, None Personal: You can draw one card before making any check involving a morally dubious business transaction; any transaction involving raw goods within Baruch Malkut qualifies (as all harvesting and basic industry is performed by slave labor).

Be No Trustin Ta Diabos (requires human): You gain +2 to out-of-combat defense checks (including against surprise attacks) against fae.

The greatest threat to Canam, and maybe the known world, is the growing fanaticism of the humans of Baruch Malkut. A prosperous nation in the midst of swamps and saltwater marshes, dependent on slave labor to work its fields while its populace indulges in the twin national pastimes of luxury and bigotry, Baruch Malkut is a land held in the iron grip of a seemingly ageless prophet, who uses his peoples' religious ardor as part of a scheme to rule the world – a world of magic, in which only humanity has a right to exist.

History: Southam is not a hospitable terrain for humans. Between the ravening monsters that suddenly populated the jungles and rivers, and the more civilized monsters who viewed humans as just another strange animal to be hunted for food or sport, those humans who stayed after Attricana's opening were almost wiped out. A few managed to find respite with a few narros and ogre towns, but these were rare occurrences. Thousands attempted to migrate north, but many failed attempting to cross the Gloam, and others were devoured by sea monsters attempting to follow the shoreline by boat. However, four hundred years ago, a small population reached the shores of southeastern Canam. Exhausted, unable to travel farther, they settled into the

swampy lowlands and began the slow work of recreating a civilization.

Then Darius Konig arrived.

Legend tells that Konig came from Southam or at least near the border of the Gloam almost two centuries ago. He gained a few avid followers, captivated by his charisma and physical discipline. With life dangerous for humans, Konig and his people (the Cloth) immigrated north through the Gloam. They passed through the darkness, but only half survived the journey. Few reports tell of Konig's disposition before the pilgrimage but many tell of the fanatic that arrived in Canam. Konig believed himself the new prophet of God. During his eastward trek, he wrote the Helios Codex. The book does not teach followers virtue or kindness, but preaches a rabidly xenophobic view of the world. According to Konig, God deemed technology a sin no longer welcome in His kingdom, rejected man's old ways and brought the Rapture. To those that remained, He granted the secrets of magic, but also brought forth inhuman demons from Hell to test Man's faith.

As they entered the southeast of Canam, Konig and the Cloth were welcomed into the small echan town of Faustis. The people there lived in the shadow of a small bastion called Sebring. Sebring resembled Angel in many ways, although smaller, with less than 150,000 residents. They lacked advanced technology, being like York limited to the most basic of conveniences. Even though Sebring never harmed or suppressed the people of Faustis, Konig created a feeling of fear and hatred towards the techans. Zealots and fanatics flocked from surrounding villages. Sebring never realized how large this force had grown, and did not even anticipate an attack until magical bombardment brought the short walls of Sebring down in less than three days. The armies of Faustis ravaged the bastion, taking no survivors and showing no mercy. According to one report, Konig demanded the city be burned to ash, with the surviving population inside. Anyone trying to escape was crucified and their bodies posted around the bastion as a message to others. By the time the last flame died out three weeks later, a thousand grisly crosses surrounded the gutted bastion of Sebring. This fanatical hatred spread quickly through the land, the zealots founding new towns or subjugating existing ones. When all the land of the marshy peninsula was under his sway, Konig appeared once again to the masses. He revealed a new vision from God: the world still belonged to magic, but it also belonged only to Man. Fae creatures were nothing less than Hell-spawned demons, and only when the last fae had been exterminated would the Kingdom of Heaven come to being on Earth. The frightening pace on which Konig swayed the masses alarmed non-humans already living in the kingdom. Half-breeds were exiled or lynched. Pure blood fae were murdered wherever they were found, or captured by slavers and brought south to work the humans' lands as beasts of burden. Of all non-humans, Konig despised the tilen above all else, labeling them succubi dedicated to co-opting the pure blood of humanity. Tilen were never taken as slaves; whenever they were captured, they were marched to the sea under the blazing sun and ceremonially drowned. Within a century, the Blessed Kingdom claimed all the land of southeast Canam, from the Great River to Okeanos.

Culture: Though the kingdom can no longer expand its borders, its population continues to grow and it boasts some of the most fertile crops in all of Canam,

tended exclusively by enslaved fae. Though Konig preaches the eventual extermination of all faekind, he is unwilling to overlook the economic potential of exploiting them, though he prohibits breeding of fae slaves within his demesne. He also personally despises fae indentured prostitution, declaring it a sin against God and Humanity – however, there are no actual laws against it, and even if there were it would likely not stamp out the thriving trade in fae bordellos. Almost all towns, save for Itinera and Nassau, use and sell slaves though the prime exports emerge from Matronis and Tobias. They hardly refer to them as elves or even slaves, preferring more dispassionate, but equally merciless terms like merchandise, property, goods, or furniture. The Malkut slave markets move the most gold in a day of any place on Earth, which helped secure the kingdom as one of the most stable and successful in the world. Because of this, although few who live there would realize it (education being somewhat discouraged within the realm in favor of mass indoctrination) Baruch Malkut's way of life fairly closely mirrors that of the region's distant colonial past in the old Age of Man.

Noteworthy cities in Baruch Malkut include Archytas, Faustis, Itinera, Karum, Kavus, Maskell, Matronis, Miynos, Nassau, Orlov, Sykar, Tobias, and Vallis.

Religion: Baruch Malkut is, in some ways, more dominated by religion than Abidan – for that matter, more than any other state in Canam except Mann. Their entire way of life is dominated by the strictures of the Helio Codex – not that most of the population can actually read it, but they are told what it says by the kingdom's fanatical priests and missionaries in services that everyone attends at least once a week. The zealotry that characterized the early days of the Blessed Kingdom has largely died down, replaced by a low-key simmering callousness for all non-human life and a casual assumption that followers of Konig's way are inherently superior beings, but the spiritual atmosphere of the realm is such that Konig or his followers in the Cloth could easily whip the populace into another religious frenzy should it become politically expedient to do so. Baruch Malkut missionaries also travel extensively throughout Canam, preaching human superiority, the sinfulness of technology, and warning of the retribution to come if the local population does not submit to Darius Konig before his armies come for them. Other than these itinerants and other agents of the Kingdom, there are no followers of this religion outside of Baruch Malkut.

Relations: As Konig closed his grip on new lands, his eyes turned to nearby territories like Tranquiss, Laurama, and especially Limshau. The first delegation from Limshau was brought before Konig who had them executed on the spot, their books burned and the ashes sent back to the fae. The custodians of Zorahn (who sent the delegation) swore to avenge their brothers and books: a few small clashes have occurred in the following century but an official declaration of war has never been announced. Limshau remains alert to the Malkut threat, and is backed by powerful allies in Abidan and Gnimfall. Meanwhile, the armies of the Blessed Kingdom have been unable to stage a successful attack on Laurama, and Tranquiss demoralizes any army that looks upon it. Konig refuses to let such a setback hold him and swears Malkut will cover all of Canam in his lifetime.

Time has refused to claim Darius Konig after these years and the dictator continues his maniacal crusade against technology and non-humans, despite being more than two hundred years old. Not a stupid man, Konig has recently allowed plans to be set in motion for a traditional rail network ridden over by stream powered trains (steam power being, according to Konig's proclamation, the limit of God's acceptance of technology). Though it is estimated this effort will take fifty years to complete, Konig hopes the rail network will ferry troops and supplies to outer towns, allowing him to finally overcome the stalemate and subjugate Limshau once and for all. Limshau, in turn, hopes that over the next few years or decades, as society progresses united past Baruch Malkut, the native population would overthrow the man responsible for retarding their civilization's potential. Furthermore, many believe the kingdom's fanaticism will die with its king, though as Konig is over 200 years old and shows no signs of age, unheard of in any unbonded human, no one knows exactly how long they may wait for this deliverance.

Names: The official language of Baruch Malkut is Onespeak, which has a strong Portuguese component thanks to the most common background of its populace, but it also contains many terms with strange or completely invented etymologies. Names with a religious significance are particularly common.

Examples: Abel Medeiros, Carla Danassan, Eneas Ferreira, Fabia Albeirao, Henrique Araullo, Nathalia Victoris

BARUCH MALKUT SUMMARY

As someone from Baruch Malkut, you can…

…use your inherent suspicion of fae to protect you from their mind-affecting magic and secretive ways.

…lie effortlessly; the best of your countrymen can even deceive lie-detecting magic and technology.

…survive coastal hazards and catastrophes that would bury a less hardened human.

...endure being hunted and learn how to turn the tables on the hunters.

CONTINENTAL CROSS

Drifting Across the Land

"Wen y'caravaan beferren?" the man asked.

"Morgens, tomorrow," I told him. "Thirty…dreiten carmots to ferren mit us to Limshau, 'less'n you fancy yojimbo work." The man stared blankly, and I racked my brains for the right Englo-Lingo word. "Leifgarde – protecting, fighting den strikerovern. Tenanfive carmots off, demi-costen." The man nodded and opened his duffel bag to reveal a large sword with a cloth-wrapped blade.

"Ya, mia tu behelven," he said as we shook hands.

CONTINENTAL CROSS ASPECTS

A traveler is always going somewhere, although that somewhere may not always be a physical location. Everyone who walks the Cross has some sort of destination in mind, be it real or metaphysical.

Sample Aspects: ***Caravan Lorekeeper; Greedy Cloth Merchant; Legendary Bard***

Sample Benefits: Finding work along the road; communicating in an unfamiliar language; hunting and foraging; detecting danger.

Sample Drawbacks: Can't stay in the village after nightfall; bandits after your trade goods; ostracized for violating a superstition.

CONTINENTAL CROSS STUNTS

Always Ready: Opponents that take you by surprise cannot use free invocations of any ambush-related advantages or boosts against you (although they can still use paid invocations).

Survival Instinct: You gain +2 to checks related to finding food and shelter and enduring inclement weather conditions.

Unusual Childhood: Choose one profession vocation you do not have. You are trained in that profession at +0.

Many individuals are raised in a stable environment, dependant on reliable income from parents that are always present. Crossroad drifters are not usually among these lucky people. If they actually had a family, they were nomads or merchants, and more likely they were raised by a caravan as a whole rather than their parents. Because of slow travel time and the long distances between locations, thousands of children are born with no real home to speak of. They learn to walk early in life and never stop moving. They keep few ties: their loyalty is to their caravan or traveling companions. Their home is a temporary bed, wagon, or stable rental. Crusades, causes, or jobs they take on are often considered peripheral, and they never believe them obligatory. Drifters refuse to be tied down to rules or by the laws passed down by some egotistical government, despite any veneration of its rulers. They outlive their welcome early as they don't consider diplomacy a useful talent. If feathers are ruffled, they simply pack up and move on.

History: Technically, the Continental Cross does not completely cross Canam, as the road proper begins in York but ends some distance short of Angel: nevertheless, the common conception is that it stretches from coast to coast, and for most practical purposes it does. The Cross is also not a single highway, but a series of roads inconsistently maintained and patrolled by the nations that it passes through. Were it not for the substantial trade custom it brings, many free houses would not bother, for much of the Cross (particularly the western end) passes through difficult and dangerous territory, prone to monster attacks and bandit ambushes. The largest portion of the road passes through the Kingdom of Limshau, where it is most consistently guarded and maintained, and is even paved for most of the way with smooth paving stones in the western reaches and asphalt as one draws nearer to Gnimfall. Beyond Gnimfall the road is fully paved all the way to York, but through the fields of Halyc maintenance is lax – due to the expense, it is only repaved once every two years. Nobody knows for sure who originally began construction on the road: York likes to claim the credit, but it is far more likely to have been a joint endeavor by Limshau and Gnimfall to ease travel to York's docks and from thence to the Lauropan empire of Damaska.

Culture: In addition to the large merchant caravans that use the Cross, there are thousands of nomads, expatriates, and free companies that travel the road, settling down on the fringes of a community for a short time to look for work or to trade news and then moving on. Although these people come from every corner of the continent (and sometimes beyond) a kind of unified crossroad drifter culture has grown up. Travelers on the road learn to be wary of potential threats. If a traveler or caravan on the road meets up with another going the same direction, it is common for wayfarers to fall into step as far as they are going together, there being strength in numbers. Dozens of languages are spoken along the road, but somehow everyone who travels it is able to make themselves be understood by their fellows. You could hear many of the same campfire stories being told by itinerant thespians from Antikari and mercenaries from York, at opposite ends of the Cross. Of course, not everyone adheres to the unspoken code of the common good, but those who develop a reputation for flouting it often find it more difficult to get work at the various ports of call along the way.

Religion: Crossroad drifters can belong to any religion, or none. Nobody they meet along the way is likely to pass judgement on them for their beliefs, though individual communities along the road may have preferences; even Baruch Malkut's so-called 'missionaries' keep their vitriol largely to themselves while traveling. One never knows when one might need a fellow-traveler's help, and it does not pay to offend anyone unduly.

In addition to whatever religious beliefs they may have, crossroad drifters tend to accumulate a large collection of situational superstitions, some rooted in fact and some wholly fantastical. Passing near known enchanted forests, it's common practice to place a saucer of milk just outside the firelight; travelers who speak the name or title of a dragon while on the road are generally expected to throw a pinch of salt over their shoulder or walk to the rear of the line for the rest of the day, regardless of whether the dragon is thought to be good or evil (or even to truly exist); when reaching one particular bend in the western road overlooked by a particular mountain, one is supposed to stop for exactly two minutes and offer a salute to the peak. Even techan travelers adhere to some of these superstitions, though few would be able to explain why.

Relations: There is a general agreement that travelers of all nations are permitted to use the Continental Cross, regardless of the patrolling nation's relations with

their homeland. Sometimes exceptions are made for obvious displays of military force, but usually such actions are detected well before they reach the borders and various means are used to ensure that a battle does not take place on the road itself. Some suspect that there is an enchantment laid over the road that ensures its neutrality, but the truth is far more prosaic – the fact is, the Cross is the only major trade route through Canam and virtually every nation is dependent on it remaining open. Although many nations, especially free houses, charge tolls for travelers along the stretches they maintain, very rarely is anyone actually turned away from the road: most toll stations are quite willing to take a trade of goods or favors, or even news, over coin.

Names: Because of the diversity of the Cross, pretty much any sort of name can be found among the drifters. The Continental Cross is the point at which common English and Englo-Lingo meet, and because of the number of cross-continental romances that reportedly spring up along the way, it is not uncommon for children born along the road to end up with a name derived from two or even three cultures, even non-human ones.

Examples: Anansitael deWitt; Claude Lo; Megumi Rosch; Salamander; Terry Mehzenta; Zazie Midnight

CONTINENTAL CROSS SUMMARY

As a Crossroad Drifter, you can…

…speak at least a little bit of three or more languages.
…make friends easily.
…always find work, somehow.
…be always aware of potential danger.
…know useful bits of lore from along the road.

DAWNAMOAK

The Enchanted Forest

Looking down from the balcony, her reaching hands draped over the polished railing that grew from the living wood of the tree, Valakkinye's keen eyes could pick out the newcomers even from this distance, despite the intervening tree canopy. From up here, the visitors' horses looked like ants, and the men themselves like grains of sand. "Why are they here, chichya?" she asked her father as he stepped out into the evening sunlight beside her. "They are here to study," he told her. "They want to know about our ways."

The girl's brow wrinkled in confusion. "But Mistress Kalkirrin says that the monkey-folk are brainless yahsor—" Her father rapped her sharply on the head.

"We do not use that word, even if Mistress Kalkirrin does," he said firmly. Valakkinye pouted and rubbed her scalp as he went on. "And it is true that humans are an ignorant people, but a few of them are just wise enough to realize that they know nothing. That is what brings them here – to learn a better way. With diligent teaching, we may grow them into better creatures before their brief time on this world is over."

PERMISSION

Chaparran, or one aspect related to earning the trust of chaparrans.

Dawnamoak is the largest chaparran civilization in Canam and what most outsiders – at least those who have ever heard of the place – think of when they envision chaparrans. Spotting the great forest of Dawnamoak is easy. The fields of grass and bushes stop abruptly, replaced by wooden behemoths. The trees of Dawnamoak stand many times taller than other forests. Many of them stretch more than 80 feet across at their base and tower a mile up, and yet even they are dwarfed by the Towers of Jibaro at the center, trees grown from the graves of the wisest elders. A fortress graces each peak, grown directly from the wood. Although most believe the trees to be oak, the majority are actually conifers, specifically cupressaceous variants like giant sequoias and dawn redwoods. While in a traditional forest, the lack of sunlight resulting from such a dense canopy would starve out lesser trees, a side-effect of magical saturation also allows smaller deciduous flora to survive and flourish beneath the huge cedars, and even a few grasses and wildflowers below them. Search hard enough and one could even find a coconut palm, a flowering cherry, or any one of a dozen species of flowering and fruiting trees not indigenous to the region (or even to the prevailing climate).

History: No-one knows whether the forest came before the chaparrans or the chaparrans before the forest. The woodland fae do not keep extensive historical records, and although there are a few chaparran elders who could probably remember, they consider such questions not worth worrying about. Certainly, if someone were to tell any human of the neighboring territories that the land where Dawnamoak now stands was once desert and scrubland, they would be met by disbelief, for the enchanted forest gives off the sense of unimaginable age, far older than five mere centuries. How long it has been inhabited, none can say. There are many human settlements just beyond the fringes of the forest that are not even aware that the woods are the chaparrans' demesne. Some time within the first century after Attricana opened, humans sent a delegation into the forest to make contact with its reclusive residents. What happened at that exchange has not been recorded, but the humans were soon thereafter escorted out of the wood and warned never to return. Since then, the fae of Jibaro have resisted any efforts by outsiders to involve them in the affairs of the outside world.

Culture: Dawnamoak is the heart of the chaparran civilization, not only in Canam but the whole world. The definitive chaparran culture is exemplified by the woodland nation. The three towers are the geographic and cultural center of the wood: Strongwood, Berustar, and Larenoak. Berustar is the heart of the chaparran religion, with their highest priest, Sylvanakassus, governing the tower and its inhabitants. The tower Larenoak holds the chaparran scroll library and the Darawren academy, with Ramankasagranthos maintaining order.

The last, Strongwood, is home of the military and governing body. From here rules the highest chaparran and leader of Dawnamoak: Valentiarankerr. No one is sure how many chaparrans live in the forest but numbers guess between 35,000 and 65,000.

A strange attribute only seen by the chaparrans of Dawnamoak is their family attachment to specific trees. Every child born in the forest is given a tree to care for. Although this is not uncommon for all chaparrans across the world, in Dawnamoak specific species of trees seem to equate to specific chaparran ethnicities: those with the darkest skin tones always bond with the sequoiadendrons, while the lighter tan chaparrans always choose giant pines. There are more than a dozen other connections made between the various families of chaparrans and specific species of trees.

Chaparrans become more agreeable to the outside world the farther away they are encountered from the three towers. Although those residing in the towers claim all forests they see as theirs, there are dozens of smaller villages hidden in the woods that claim no loyalty to them. Their beliefs can often be different than those in the capital. Noteworthy villages include Koanas, Kerrana, Ulknas, and Widdig.

Relations: Visitors are not automatically turned away, but they will find no welcome unless they speak chaparra (even if they know another language, the residents will not speak anything else). Those who speak the proper language may stay… for a short while. This is not to say that outsiders are entirely unwelcome, but they have an uphill struggle ahead of them. In 355 A.E., the human wizard Sugi Gantilanna entered the great forest in hopes of establishing a sociable relationship with the fae, something no human had ever succeeded in doing previously. Though the chaparrans of Dawnamoak still regard mankind as a whole with mistrust, Sugi struggled against the stereotype for many months and eventually earned acceptance. Despite sending occasional correspondence, Sugi would never leave the forest in his lifetime. During the following fifty-five years, Sugi found a greater respect offered to him than to any human before or since.

DAWNAMOAK REGIONAL VOCATION

Because most of Dawnamoak's (PC species) residents are chaparran and Dawnamoak chaparrans represent a substantial majority of the total number of their kin throughout the world, any Dawnamoak regional vocation would largely duplicate the normal abilities of chaparrans. Any non-chaparran that counts the region as 'home' is generally unique, warranting a custom vocation. The GM may even permit a non-chaparran to take profession or supernatural vocations and stunts that normally have a permission of 'chaparran'.

FARGON

The North Kingdom

Lorrask grunted as he pulled himself up onto the ledge. It wasn't that he resented the obligation of climbing the mountain – if nothing else, it got him out of earshot of his younger sister, who talked like a tenenbri and had about as much tact as one – but he had been perhaps overly

dedicated to his last piece of work and had ended up putting off the pilgrimage until the middle of winter. Narros were supposed to be hardy folk, but sometimes Lorrask secretly suspected that this was partly an act that his people put on to impress the other fae with their dedication, and had made the mistake of buying their own hype. His sister would say that he was a disgrace to the family for thinking so, and the thought of her disapproval made him feel warm again. Only a little further to go. He gritted his teeth and climbed to the next ledge and then the last few feet to the worn pinnacle of the mountain. Balancing atop it, he exhaled into the thin air and looked about him, just as the sun rose over the eastern horizon. Moments like this made it all worthwhile – the whole vastness of Fargon spread out before him, from the mountains to the tundra to the sea, the rooftops of the great temples further down the mountainside flaring red in the morning light. He gave a sniff of satisfaction. Now, to climb back down…

PERMISSION

Narros, or a vocation with 'narros' or 'Fargon' as one of its permissions.

FARGON ASPECTS

Fargon's inhabitants are not what people usually think of when they envision the narros. A Fargon resident is usually more reserved, more dedicated, more uptight, and more selfless than their southern cousins. Even those who do not adhere strictly to the path of discipline tend to be very focused on mastery of a particular skill.

Sample Aspects: ***Champion of the Thalagos Belt; Meaner Than a Polar Bear; Trainer of Sled Dogs***

Sample Benefits: Climbing and delving; craftsmanship; meditation; complicated etiquette; wielding polearms.

Sample Drawbacks: Stickler for propriety; uncomfortable around anything they consider 'luxury'; gets homesick easily.

FARGON STUNTS

I Like These Odds: When outnumbered, you gain +1 to either melee or ranged attacks (choose one when you select this stunt: you can select the stunt twice to gain the bonus with both).

Mountain Soul: If you successfully defend against being moved against your will or persuaded to abandon your current position (physical or philosophical), you gain +2 to your next action.

They Are All Perfect: While in a state of meditation, you can draw a card before making any art or craft check.

History: When the fae returned to the world, each lineage appeared in a place that suited their kind best, whether by some subconscious desire or merely by fortuitous chance. Most of the narros fell in the north. They must have wished for isolation, as they landed in an area that virtually locked them off from the rest of the world. Being stalwart and rugged, they easily could have crossed the Nankani Mountains and joined their cousin fae to the south, but they chose to remain and gladly planted roots in a land still chilled but no longer wracked by permafrost, slowly made more habitable by the influence of magic. By the end of the second cen-

tury, half a dozen cities and twice as many villages had emerged. This land was still far from being entirely hospitable, however, and every city contains a monument to the thousands dead in the creation of their nation.

Despite the isolation of their distant country, Fargon narros can be found everywhere in Canam. They find pesky obstructions like rivers and mountains a welcome challenge rather than an impediment. A featureless desert would be more of a barrier to narros expansion than a mountain range, though no more difficult to circumvent. Their first contact with outsiders occurred shortly after their largest and most southern city Thos Thalagos was formed. After Thalagos Gin finished erecting his castle, he sent a dozen pilgrim convoys to search for allies or treasure. Travelers east found kodiaks, who wanted little and had less to offer, and also boggs and skeggs, who wanted exterminating. West found nothing but rivers and rumors. South stumbled into a safe crossing of valleys and plateaus later called the Deep Pass at Dionaso, and followed it until they reached the fledgling bastion of Selkirk. After sharing knowledge and company with the resident humans and discovering the unfortunate side-effect of their nature on technology, the pilgrims returned to Thalagos with something better than treasure: a trade agreement and a firm alliance that has never faltered in the intervening centuries. Eventually, these narros would push past Selkirk to finally encounter fellow fae in Limshau and Salvabrooke. As they traveled, they would build waystations to mark their passage, some of which grew into small settlements centered around some monument or temple, and yet when their exploratory phase was concluded most of these were abandoned by their creators, to be filled by humans or fae stragglers of other species. Sadly, the greatest of these structures now lie under the thrall of Xixion, their stately halls defiled by puggs.

Culture: The harsh environment created a people of unshakable will. The narros of Fargon are the most relentless in the application of whatever path they embrace. They work hard and play even harder. Unlike those in Finer, living their lives in the mines and getting dirty with the spoils of hard labor, Fargon narros are far more spiritual, taking pleasure in a cold breeze or a frigid waterfall with no other noises to distract them. They are also a proud folk even by narros standards, quick to anger and slow to forgive.

Narros don't dig and mine only for the sake of mining: they are builders as much as they are warriors. Although they use wood, they do so only when stone cannot be employed. Narros were bitter at the lack of artifacts and ruins from the previous age. Of all the nations, the narros are most obsessed with leaving their mark upon the world. Narros cities are the greatest of all the fae. They boast perfection in construction. Every corner is a sharp edge. Every line is without fault. Every building is a mark of mathematical precision. Every tower is an avatar of the narros' faith in their own skill. Narros fortified themselves and created a nation of stone.

Noteworthy cities in Fargon include Hardstone Sig, Mag-Farg, Majed, and Thos Thalagos.

Relations: In addition to the treaty with Selkirk and informal agreements with Salvabrooke, the Fargon narros maintain regular diplomatic relations with the Seliquam Confederation, most of the nations of which (at least the human and damaskan ones) sprang up in the wake of the narros' explorations, moving into abandoned narros camps and deciding to expand on them. Narros ravnorra train the elite warriors of Seliquam, and often travel with them on expeditions into Xixion to explore or cleanse narros-made monuments of the kaddog's filth. They maintain less frequent relations with the kodiaks of Alpinas, although they are happy to fight beside them against the boggs and skeggs who infest north-central Canam. They have few trading relationships with the rest of the continent, as the southern nations find the Finer Fire Pits more convenient. Their sworn enemies, the pagus, dare not approach the northern lands unless they arrive in the thousands in preparation for war. All narros mines in Fargon feature thermal mooring towers but no dragonflyer posts.

FARGON SUMMARY

As someone from Fargon, you can…

…scale cliffs, mountains, and edifices even better than most narros.

…improve your mental clarity through meditation.

…endure extreme cold.

…be familiar with a wide variety of weapons.

THE FINER FIRE PITS

The Forges Never Cool

"So, can you make it for me or not?" I looked back at the human through narrowed eyes, not stopping my work. "Oh, I can make it for you. But it comes with a price."

He frowned. "I already said money was no object—"

I shook my head. "I ain't talking about money. The properties you want placed on this thing – you must be hunting some pretty big game. Big, scaly game by the look of it." I hefted my hammer, the forge-fire glinting in my eyes. "I want a piece of that action."

PERMISSION

Narros.

FINER FIRE PITS ASPECTS

Finer narros fit the stereotype of fantasy dwarves to a tee (or would if they had elaborate beards) although they do not think of themselves as avaricious: rather, they are dedicated to the twin principles of industry and profit. A resident/employee of the Pits often continues to care for his work after it has been sold and will sometimes travel along with the buyer to ensure that their product is being well-used.

Sample Aspects: ***Armorsmith to Kings and Prelates; Multipurpose Hammer Wielder; My Blades Will Become Legend***

Sample Benefits: Industrial crafting; swinging hammers; enduring extreme heat and pressure; pushing yourself while working.

Sample Drawbacks: High standards; workaholic; poor people skills; underselling an item if the buyer is worthy.

FINER FIRE PITS STUNTS

Like it Hot: You gain +2 to defense against heat and fire.

Look for the Shiny: When looking for small or shiny things, the worst result you can get is a tie.

The Pits: You ignore mundane underground obstacles and gain +1 to all defense checks while underground.

The narros from Finer fit the stereotype of their fictional parallel. The city's founder, Garach Glim, desired an underground kingdom to rival anything found in Fargon. When he stumbled upon an astounding treasure of unmined minerals in the Finer Vallis, he knew his search was over. Three centuries later, Glim can still be found in any one of the thousands of miles of tunnels that branch off the colossal Finer Cavern, a single chamber large enough to fit the entire city of Limshau. From there, huge smelters constantly burn, laying heavy deposits of grime and heat over everything inside. Over a hundred thousand narros call this gargantuan underground metropolis home. In total, twelve forges are found within the cavern, each as large as a human castle, dwarfed inside the colossal cavern that has never fallen despite a lack of supports.

History: The founder (and still ruler after four centuries) Garach Glim still digs alongside his people. He has shown no signs of senility or exhaustion. When asked why he put down roots so far from Fargon, Garach's answer was simple: "I hate cold." Huge deposits of coruthil and titanium can be found in the Pits, along with practically every other mineral necessity in the modern age.

Above the mines, the narros settlers carved out an immense cave, miles across with the only exit being a single massive staircase leading to the surface. This massive construct, more than 300 feet wide, descends for almost a quarter-mile before finally reaching the Fire Pits. A consistent and uncomfortable red glow radiates over the cavern, which the narros continue to hollow out. Inside, ovens a dozen stories tall work overtime constructing materials and smelting precious ores. The city grows from the walls and roof of the cavern as well as from the ground. In the dark, with only the slight glow of the smelters, the city resembles a Christmas tree turned inside out and spread across every available surface of the cave. Ugly, utilitarian box-shaped buildings grow down, up, and out. Many live out their whole lives without ever seeing the sun, in spite of the strictures of the narros faith. Despite four hundred years of constant digging, the pits continue to be fruitful and were the most profitable narros mines in the world until a recent windfall at Thos Thalagos. Though many in Fargon look down on the Finer Fire Pits, Thos Thalagos is the exception, with Thalagos himself expressing admiration for the tenacity of the narros of the Pits, though also expressing concern that the name is false advertising (the forges are called 'Finer' not because they are in any way superior to other narros cities, but because of the local humans' name for the valley from which the Pits were excavated).

Culture: A narros from Finer often looks distinct from those from Fargon. While Fargon strives for self-perfection, Finer permits the occasional personal flaw, on the assumption that this frees the individual to focus on their work rather than themself. That said, few narros are disposed to take advantage of this mentality. Given a choice, most narros would prefer to remain isolated with their brothers and sisters in Fargon, and if the Pits weren't so profitable, the entire system would collapse. The Fire Pits maintains its success not so much because of its rich veins, but because of the diversity of its neighbors and the trade goods they can provide in exchange for Finer's metal and craftwork. They are able to bring in goods that narros in the north envy.

Traders, however, do not like to stay in Finer itself. The forges work nonstop and are built without adequate insulation, keeping the average temperature of the entire complex at 46 degrees Celsius, with only a 5-degree drop during the winter. Though the resident population is acclimatized to the severity, visitors are greeted by a wall of heat that hits like an ogre immediately upon entrance. Many of the few non-narros residents are opportunistic hedge wizards peddling heat resistance spells to the narros' customers.

The Fire Pits house the largest repository of narros weapons and armor: only narros gear are kept in storage, while other goods are crafted to order. Though finding magic items can be a chore, many mages from across the world seek out the Pits – not for items or armor – but for Galla Sagard, the famous spellcaster and her well-known Open Library for Arcane magic. Galla loves entertaining visitors even though she seldom gains the opportunity to share her wisdom with other casters.

Religion: One of the personal imperfections that Finer tolerates in its residence is a looser approach to spirituality and faith. While all narros give at least token credence to the worship of Oaken, many of the associated traditions of the faith are laid by the wayside by the necessities of life in the Pits. While thus far there has been no occasion to violate the narros' ultimate taboo, some have come to believe that given a rich enough vein, Garach Glim would not hesitate to dig below the proscribed depth. Whether his workforce would continue to support him in that event remains to be seen.

Relations: Most caravans travel through the Limshau city of Kodex before continuing north to the Pits, and few other allies take alternative routes. Even Kannos, their nearest and most profitable human ally, transports their supplies from Warraqeen to Kodex before traveling north. Most of the visiting population is

damaskan though a few humans have appeared time and again. Many of those are either independent merchants or wanderers looking for work. Since the narros here never developed a tight bond with humans like Thos Thalagos, the Finer populace considers humans another non-narros people best avoided when there is no business to be done. The Fire Pits feature a dragonflyer flyer service but no mooring towers.

FINER FIRE PITS SUMMARY

As someone from the Finer Fire Pits, you can…

…gauge the quality of a piece of smithing at a glance.

…endure extreme heat and pressure.

…work past the point of exhaustion.

…judge the true character of a customer by the way they haggle and handle the goods.

FREE HOUSES

The New Old Blood

The baroness tapped irritably at the arm of her throne as the querents loudly argued their cases. "All right, quiet!" she snapped at last. "So all three of you claim to be this child's mother, and not one of you can prove it. Well, there's only one thing to be done, then." She nodded to her seneschal, who stepped forward and picked up the basket. "None of you can have him. This boy is now a ward of the state, and will be raised not to annoy his baroness with foolishness. Now begone." As the guards escorted the protesting women from the courtroom, the baroness sighed. Such was the life of a ruler.

FREE HOUSE ASPECTS

Free houses are many and varied, and there is very little in common between them. Each Free House has something unique about it which a citizen of that House can use as inspiration for an aspect, if so desired.

FREE HOUSE STUNTS

The Local Color: You gain +2 to social checks in a particular free house and +1 in the largest neighboring kingdom.

Militia Training: Choose one military weapon, such as the longsword, halberd, or longbow. If you have no positive cards in your hand when wielding that weapon in combat, you can discard one card and draw one card before taking your action. You can only do this once per action.

Multiculturalism: You gain +2 to initial attempts to communicate in any unfamiliar patois of which you know at least one related language.

Canam's most distinct feature lies with its large number of independent houses. Lauropa's larger empires quickly absorbed every spare inch of land, brushing borders within decades of Attricana's opening. With Canam, more than a century passed before any nations encountered others. Those with slightly more power absorbed smaller adjacent villages, usually by oath of betrothal or by threat of violence, forming the first feudal principalites. But much of Canam remained unclaimed, and without the ability of the larger kingdoms to patrol and hold vast fiefdoms, many villages could declare themselves free from alliance or external obligation.

Hundreds of small villages dot the land, though most are tied to a larger house. Most free houses control one small town and perhaps a half-dozen villages, bonded to the ruling house because of a need of protection or by forced hands. Large nations usually don't directly border each other, most being buffered by several such small nations. Many of these houses are short-lived, especially if a larger nation sets sights on them, but even then, such empires rarely have the manpower to maintain their conquests and they often break away again within a few decades. The majority of the rulers of free houses (sometimes also referred to specifically as "free-lords") are human. Their culture, relations, and diplomatic standings are varied but seldom extreme. Those that follow are only the most noteworthy: there are dozens, if not hundreds more scattered across the continent.

ANTIKARI

Gateway to Civilization

Antikari is a small house, consisting of a single keep (more of a manor house), a small but relatively wealthy town surrounding it, and a few dozen outlying farms. What raises it above the inconsequential is its proximity to Angel, at the mouth of the only relatively safe road between the Continental Cross and the bastion. Most of the residents of Antikari believe anything non-human is responsible for man's fall from grace: while they will trade with non-humans (gold is gold), they make no bones about their prejudices and will usually run a fae visitor out of town if they linger too long. Many in Antikari wish to enter and live in Angel, but their lack of useful knowledge prevents it. Antikari has a thermal mooring tower, but the nearest outpost for dragonflyers is a small hut 50 miles north run by Abin Rhunefellow.

OGIUM

Wars of Succession and Faith

Ogium, like Abidan, is a nation ruled by faith – but unlike Abidan, there is no room in Ogium's faith for tolerance or dissenting views. Centuries ago, the heir of the Ogium family, a devout fundamentalist Christian, was convinced by his holy patriarch to overthrow the king and establish his capital as a new Holy See: a series of catastrophes in the wake of the usurpation resulted in the death of every immediate heir to the throne, after which the Patriarch claimed the reins of government himself and declared the Ogium line extinct. While he proceeded to rule the house in name until his death at the age of 95, his power never extended beyond the capital: upon news of the line's extinction, fifteen lesser royals of the Ogium line each claimed the throne and began a bloody struggle that continues to this day known as the 'War of the Cousins'. Ogium now consists

of several independent city-states, all of whom pay spiritual lip-service to the Patriarchs in Santachis but refuse to accept that he (or any of the other contestants to the throne) have any political authority over the House.

ORCHIS

A Blooming Desert Flower

The "sand-castle," as it is often mocked, can be first spotted on the horizon, flapping into vision from the waves of heat from dried desert soil. The Orchis family prefer the term "Desert Flower." The towering glazed walls look grown from the sand. Legend holds that the castle was born from dragon's breath and given to the human Orchis family on condition that none who bore the family name ever leave the limits of the castle, not allow it to deteriorate or be taken by enemies. They have kept the promise to this day, with the result that their keep is uncomfortably overcrowded. Several of the Orchis family have forsworn marriage to serve the house's unique religious order, a strange variant of the fae Berufu faith. Many lesser free-houses in Canam have an Orchis princess somewhere in their lineage. Beyond the castle itself, a handful of surrounding villages and ranchlands give fealty to Orchis. Cattle and cactusfruit are the house's principle exports.

PLICATO

A Fairy-Tale Kingdom

The land that now belongs to House Plicato was once a minor damaskan duchy, seized by a human warlord centuries ago. In those days, fae slavery and concubinage was far more commonly accepted than it is today, and the Plicato family was known to partake of such pleasures liberally. However, a century and a half past, the king's favorite concubine agreed to bond and marry him, and produced many half-fae children over the years, and subsequent intermarriage with other damaskan free houses has made Plicato's rulers fully damaskan once more. The general population of the kingdom is split fairly evenly between human and damaskan, with a sizeable half-fae population and a few chaparran communities. Despite its elven roots, Plicato has a poor reputation for magic, but a strong tradition of archery – unusual for damaskans, but understandable considering the house's proximity to Dawnamoak.

QUINOX

The Kingdom of Rime

For centuries, mankind took pride in his independence from magic. Being evolved creatures, humanity was especially resistant to dependency on enchantment. Though humans can allow magic into their being, they have been resilient against branching into sub species. The people from the House of Quinox may be a sign of a future to come. Their own history is a muddled mess of conjecture and flamboyant myth, but what is known is that they appeared out of the far north, chased south by weather and starvation. During the journey, their bodies became supernaturally immune to cold, and their spellcasters (of which there are more per capita than any other human kingdom) developed an affinity with the power of ice. The Sheridan family rules Quinox from their ice palace nestled within the Nankani Mountains, and the holder of the Winter Throne has the privilege of riding the frost dragon Rochka of Rime, an elemental dragon who vehemently opposes the grouping of her kindred with the typhox order and arrogantly proclaims the Sheridan line equivalent to the blood royal (although she lacks the power to grant such a blessing).

SKYROSE

A Land Besieged

Damaskan lord Rojjen Skyrose never felt comfortable declaring himself royal, and thus the House of Skyrose is technically considered a duchy in human terms. With such esteemed pedigree, the Skyrose line was sought after for alliance for centuries, but Skyrose, for a damaskan enclave, exhibits a surprising level of xenophobia: no member of the Skyrose line is allowed to marry any non-fae (even the alliance with Plicato that ultimately resulted in replacing a human lineage with a damaskan one was only permitted because the heir of the house was half-fae). Their pride in independence has also prevented them from forming an alliance with Limshau, despite the advantages such friendship would provide against slaver incursions by Baruch Malkut. Culturally, Skyrose resembles Damaska across the ocean far more than its neighbor Limshau, being a land of soaring towers and wondrous color.

TORQUIL

Ruins of Ancient Glory

Torquil, on Canam's rocky southwestern coast, is a house in decline. It has suffered under kaddog attacks for many years and lost much of its holdings in the last few centuries. It was once the oldest and richest free house in Canam, perhaps older than Angel: Torquil gold was practically the common currency of the westlands. The most traditional of the neo-feudal houses, Torquil's fields were worked by serfs, and slavery was condoned (though not openly encouraged) by its rulers. In time, however, Torquil's burgeoning empire fell to internecine squabbles and bogg and skegg invasions from Crax, and its once-impregnable keeps were divided up among the aristocracy, mostly descendents of the Torquil family line. The ruling family still holds the ruined Holace keep, all but destroyed centuries ago and never fully rebuilt, but the house's power in the region is almost completely broken. The royal line attempts to leverage its antiquity by practically selling its scions to younger aristocratic lineages, but this has never resulted in the kind of powerful alliance the house's rulers hope for.

FREE HOUSE VOCATIONS

The free houses listed above are all fairly generically medieval. The player is encouraged to take the sparse information provided and expand upon it to more fully develop their regional vocation. While the example stunts provided will work for any of the free houses, you are also encouraged to come up with your own, more specific options. More than any other origin, players of free house characters are encouraged to customize. If you choose not to belong to one of the above houses, consider the community creation rules later in this chapter to develop your own free house.

GNIMFALL

The Grind Towers

"Sure, I got a variable phase oscillator. You need the negative feedback loop or the diothermic exchange unit?" The gimfen plopped his ridiculous hat back on his head and went rummaging around inside a machine that occasionally made worrisome toots and springing noises.

"I need my tank to work," I said levelly.

The mechanic popped his head back out. "Sure thing, sport," he declared, picking up a tool that looked to me exactly like every other tool on the bench and carried it, along with a cylindrical object with numerous unidentifiable protrusions all over it, over to the defunct vehicle. He rolled underneath and began fiddling noisily with the undercarriage. Occasionally there was a loud banging and a metal plate would be rapidly ejected from beneath the tank.

"Hey!" I called out. "How long is this going to take?"

The gimfen stuck his head back out. "Hmm? Oh, not long, I imagine. Couple minutes?" He went back to his fiddling as he spoke. "The thing about these old models is that they're incredibly prone to overheating, you see, so if you just keep the main block—" There was a huge bang and a cloud of smoke emerged from beneath the treads.

The mechanic stuck his head back out, his hair standing on end and his face covered in soot. "Half an hour," he said lamely. "At least."

PERMISSIONS

Gimfen; or techan human from York (limited to +1).

If it weren't for the "Grind Towers," most travelers would trek over the gimfen capital and not even notice. Even if one were to miss the mechanical spires, their noise exuberantly announces them. These narrow but tall spires rise from the soil, often lean to one side and a few look crooked or nearing collapse. Grind towers feature exposed gears and machinery, ticking and spinning and groaning and thumping every moment of every day. There is no attempt to cover these mechanisms and most of a grind tower's machinery is exposed: amazingly, they never seem to suffer from disruption. They serve many purposes. For one, they expel the pollution from the underground factories. They also dispel heat, house the upper class, and operate as watchtowers to the surrounding hills. Their height also allows every single tower to operate as a thermal mooring post. The towers also carry the racket from the underground tunnels along with them.

History: Gnimfall wasn't always the cacophonous jungle of rusted plates and belching steam that it is today. While its origins are lost to time (gimfen have no real appreciation of history), it may have begun as a settlement much like Salvabrooke, a bucolic community nestled just the other side of a mountain pass leading to the fields of Halyc. Somehow, the people of this community encountered the fledgling settlement of York and offered their expertise to the primitive bastion in exchange for the accumulated scientific knowledge of mankind. When these earliest engineers returned from their clandestine arrangement with the techans, they

set to work, and shortly thereafter Gnimfall began to take on the beginnings of its modern form.

The two-dozen or so towers scattered over two hundred square miles are all connected by an underground network. More than 1,000- 3,000 gimfen call each tower home. Another 95,000 live underneath. Guests are offered rooms in the towers (which, happily, are soundproofed). Underneath, the gimfen work within the limits of the ambient EDF to create whatever technology they can make to function. Several deep levels forbid magic, where the gimfen explore avenues previously denied to them until their deal with York. While York officially denies that such an agreement ever took place, the gimfen don't care: they did their work, they got their pay, and now they are free to play with the proceeds.

Culture: All life in Gnimfall revolves around technology. The settlement features elevators, non-enchanted illumination, and ground transportation, usually run from salvaged human batteries or their own steam powered plants, the limit of their current technology in the field of power sources, with which they continue to struggle. Technology able to generate electricity is the most vulnerable to EDF, and despite their best attempts, the gimfen cannot seal out all the harmful effects of the world. Therefore, only steam power has hitherto been available and despite the whimsy of many writers with untapped imaginations and no grasp of reality, one cannot power a robot from steam.

Their proven steam power system, fed by magical fires heating water funneled from a nearby lake, has expanded through the city, running various machines, including the huge mining engines that do the bulk of the city's excavation. Natural gas-fed lamps burn with a nearly inexhaustive supply. But none of this would be possible without the accumulated knowledge gleaned from the humans. In the Terros age, the best they had been able to master was a printing press and a pedal bicycle. Because the gimfen are well aware of their limits regarding true invention, humans, especially those with even the slightest bit of technology, are invited in, entertained, and lavished with gifts, all in hopes of learning something new that could benefit the gimfen. Often this knowledge is held tightly by the one offering the bribe or favor, to be taken back to the family, which can then be used to raise the stature of their name. For humans entering Gnimfall, it very much feels like a beggar city, as every single attentive gimfen around will flock for even a glimpse at the smallest trinket in the hands of a newcomer. Some humans have developed this into a successful trade, bartering money and rewards for the retrieval of new and interesting technology. Gnimfall cares little for those humans not in possession of such gifts and many humans from echan cultures have accused the gimfen of being selfish. Though this is not exactly true, they are often one-dimensional in their pursuits.

Religion: Gnimfall does not have an 'official' religion, if only because the entire concept of 'officialdom' is alien to the gimfen mindset. However, nearly all of Gnimfall's residents worship Mecha, the machine god of their people. There are no churches or priests of this religion: every gimfen merely prays to his tools every morning, asking Mecha to manifest itself within them and continue to grant them the blessing of technology. Humans often find this worship irrational, to which the gimfen reply that if it were rational they wouldn't need to do it. Other fae also find the practice laughable, to which the gimfen reply that this is why they can't use machines.

Relations: Despite being publicly snubbed by York, the gimfen still wish to develop good relations with all humans. For one, the gimfen are well aware that the humans possess an imagination and an aptitude for technology all fae lack. The gimfen can replicate most technology they find and study, but they can't create anything really new. Only in the past few centuries has exposure to mankind vaulted the gimfen to levels they only previously fantasized about. They can adapt quickly but mankind still flies past them despite the gimfen working day and night with no sleep trying to keep up.

Although they trade often, Gnimfall gimfen care little about the political events within Kannos or Abidan, or even Baruch Malkut (although their trade relations with the northern countries include provisions for military assistance should open war ever break out with the Blessed Kingdom). Echan nations have little interest for them. With other races, Gnimfall maintains very good relations. They respect and enjoy a successful alliance with Limshau, Salvabrooke, and several narros communities. The gimfen admire the damaskan elves of Limshau for their pursuit of knowledge, and have offered some of their engineering expertise to such pursuits as are unlikely to be significantly impacted by EDF – asphalt roads, some limited plumbing, semaphore towers, and the like. The gimfen even claim the Limshau capital, from which all other Limshau cities are based, was designed by a gimfen (alas, this is not true since accurate records in Primmer clearly point to the architect being a half-damaskan). Gnimfall's engineering experteers are also happy to offer their services to any nation that can pay for them, either in coin or in an exchange of information.

GNIMFALL REGIONAL VOCATION

Gnimfall's culture is the default assumption for gimfen – although not all gimfen follow the path of technology, that is the mode for which they are best known, and the proclivities of the Gnimfall gimfen align fairly closely to the species stereotype. Since it is not physically possible for non-gimfen to live in Gnimfall (it's difficult enough for 'bigguns' to fit in when visiting), there is no need for a Gnimfall regional vocation. The only practical possibility for a non-gimfen to live in Gnimfall would be a human dwarf, who, with the right background, could justify taking gimfen-specific stunts and vocations.

KANNOS

The Horsemasters of the North

My master was too fat to ride a horse, yet he owned dozens. He never even came down to the stables to care for them – that was my job. I fed them, groomed them, mucked out their stalls, exercised them: as far as they were concerned, they were my horses. He just happened to possess them. Then the skeggs came and raided the ranch, and took the horses away. My master ordered me, then pleaded with me, then begged me on his knees to get them back for him. All his wealth was tied up in those horses, and without them he'd have to sell the land – he'd be ruined. Instead, I gave my notice, took down my grandfather's halberd and chainmail, and went north. If I find them, I'll take them back… for someone who will appreciate them. Finders keepers.

KANNOS ASPECTS

People from Kannos love two things above all else: horses, and money with which to buy land upon which to raise horses. Most Kannos citizens aspire to upward mobility, and most go on adventures explicitly for the purposes of gaining wealth with which to go home and buy their own ranch. Even the most altruistic have a keen eye for the potential rewards of any endeavor they embark upon.

Sample Aspects: ***Ambitious Ranch Hand; Money Can Buy Happiness; Tourist Trapper***

Sample Benefits: Riding horses; training horses; appraising horses; appraising grazing land for horses (you get the idea); making money; fighting with military weapons and farm implements.

Sample Drawbacks: Can't allow harm to come to a horse; will take unreasonable risks in order to make a profit; would rather fight than talk.

KANNOS STUNTS

Deal or No Deal: You treat the cost difficulty of any transaction you attempt as if it were one higher (if you're the seller) or one lower (if you're the buyer).

Expert Equestrian: When performing equestrian acrobatics, the worst result you can get is a tie.

Reckless Heroism: You can gain a +3 bonus to your next action in exchange for a -2 penalty to all defensive actions until the end of your next turn.

Kannos, along with Abidan and Baruch Malkut, are the three largest human-dominated echan kingdoms in Canam. Kannos and Abidan have approximately the same population, though Kannos claims nearly double the land area, with the same strengths in numbers and weakness in magic. Kannos is somewhat more cosmopolitan than Abidan, though not nearly as much as Limshau, and not nearly as obvious because of the kingdom's low population density.

History: Kannos formed from the remnants of a failed bastion, Appareci. Now the kingdom's capital, more towns flourished in the lands around and became steadily absorbed into the greater whole. The name 'Kannos' was offered by the damaskans of Limshau, meaning "Iron Will" in their tongue. The king at the time approved and adopted it as the name of his proto-empire. Despite their territorialism and proud cavalry traditions, Kannos has yet to be involved in any major war. As all of its civilized neighbors are staunch allies of the kingdom, the largest engagements occur between lance companies and swarms of puggs, boggs and skeggs threatening outlying towns, and the encroaching evil of the Sana Marsh to the south.

Though humans are on average weak with magic, Kannos is proud to name one of Canam's most powerful wizards as a past resident. Kereptis Rifts claimed a keep in Sarnathi, and even though that town was not absorbed into the kingdom until after Rifts' death, Kannos has given him posthumous citizenship (despite rumors that Rifts was a vile tyrant and that Sarnathi's people celebrated upon his death). Downplaying the rumors as baseless, the city of Sarnathi now cherishes the name of Kereptis Rifts, or rather the booming tourism industry that name brings in the form of adventurers tempted by the tales of treasures in the labyrinthine and treacherous tunnels of the Kereptis Catacombs.

Culture: Kannos is rich in land and precious materials, but lacks the population to properly maximize its potential. The kingdom's greatest treasure is its livestock. With rich farmland but without the military presence to defend it against migrating pagus from the east and boggs from the north, Kannos developed a profitable breeding program for a more mobile form of agriculture: cattle, pigs, chickens, and especially horses. Horses are more abundant than dogs in Kannos, with many children given a young steed as soon as they learn how to walk. These horses are treated as equals within the family. The kavaliers, Kannos' elite mounted warriors, spend the majority of their lives training their mounts and develop a bond with their steeds bordering on the telepathic. Compared to Abidan, trained in defensive warfare and the use of shield walls and castle bulwarks, Kannos considers the best defense to be a devastating cavalry charge, trampling down their foes and sending them screaming back to their lands.

Because raising livestock requires vastly more land than farming, wealth and nobility in Kannos are tied directly to how much land a person can control. The throne, as well as the most land in the kingdom, belongs to the Nezekin family of Appareci, and there has not been a significant threat to their seat of influence in 150 years. The first lord of any given city is the one in possession of the most physical acreage and the beasts to go with it. The kingdom's aristocracy is often considered very homespun and provincial by other kingdoms, as fine clothes and ostentatious jewels are considered lesser status symbols than good horseflesh and plentiful grazing land. Furthermore, Kannos values bloodlines more in its breeding animals than in its nobility, so a sufficiently wealthy merchant or businessman can simply buy himself a sizeable plot of land and a landgrave or count's title to go with it. Kannos has such a small population relative to its borders that often, an aspiring investor only needs to purchase unclaimed acres from the royal charter. Less scrupulous investors may build a

ranch or even a free house beyond the border and request, or most likely bribe, the reigning monarch to appropriate the claimed land into the charter and expand the borders of the kingdom. This has occurred several times in Kannos' history, but no major land grabs have occurred recently, as Kannos is reaching the limit of what it can safely annex: with allied nations to the east and hostile wilderness encroaching on its remaining borders, there are currently only three such houses awaiting the protection of the Kannos Kavalry, with as yet no royal word if their petitions will be accepted.

Notable towns in Kannos include Appareci, Golana, Jairus, Sarnathi, and Xiphos.

Religion: Some outsiders, especially in more xenophobic communities, believe the fae population of the kingdom is the reason for the notable lack of religion in Kannos. Fae tend to be private about religion, assuming that they have one at all, and those that do pray do so without ostentation. The human population follows suit; even those that are openly atheist or agnostic do not make a big deal of the fact, regarding other peoples' beliefs to be none of their business. The kingdom's mixed population and perceived atheism makes them an avowed enemy of Baruch Malkut, but Abidan counts them as one of their closest allies, even more so than Limshau and Gnimfall.

Relations: Kannos is on good terms with all of its civilized neighbors, although this stems not so much from the goodwill of its population as the wealth that comes from profitable trading partners. Like many horsemaster nations of humanity's past, Kannos generals glorify combat, but rarely have the opportunity to indulge in it; jingoism is thus a common failing of the Kannos nobility, and many have expressed a hope that Baruch Malkut does eventually invade Limshau so that they can be called upon to defend their damaskan allies. Of all the united nations of the north, Kannos places the most pressure on the others to preemptively declare war on Darius Konig, despite never having sustained an attack from the rival kingdom.

Names: With its nearest neighbors being Limshau and Salvabrooke, the dominant languages in Kannos are common English and Damaskan. Due to freely absorbing minor houses and smaller kingdoms in their formative years, there is little ethnic consistency within the kingdom, but their preoccupation with mercantilism and the record-keeping that goes with it has resulted in some idiosyncratic modification of the common alphabet, ostensibly for more efficiency (most immediately notable in the firm distinction between 'C'—now a 'CH' sound—and 'K'). Most common names reflect these changes.

Examples: Adryin Kesig, Karl Waldun, Kordylya Harkos, Sesily Mondavé, Shon Makavoi, Wilma Shyn

KANNOS SUMMARY

As someone from Kannos, you can…

…ride a horse as well as (or better than) you can walk.

…haggle like an expert.

…recall a vast amount of heroic lore, some of which is actually true.

…expound on military tactics even if you have no military experience.

LAUDENIA

The Sky Realm

Lannik goggled at the sight of the enormous tower, held in the sky by nothing more than a wish and a prayer. "Stop staring, boy," the wizard chided. "You are already attracting enough attention to me. Acting like a tourist makes it the worse." The boy hurriedly shut his mouth, but he still continually shot wide-eyed glances around him as they walked among the floating island, across white bridges draped with crimson like inverted sunsets. All around the pair, the graceful figures of the city's inhabitants passed by, very pointedly not noticing them—save for one; as they approached the tower, a willowy laudenian came forward and greeted the wizard with a bow.

"You have returned, Temmosus," she said. "But why have you brought this groundling here?"

The wizard returned her bow, his expression unchanging. "Lannik will be my apprentice. I am not inclined to explain my reasons. They will become clear in time."

The woman did not look shocked, but her porcelain features became even more masklike. "The council may demand those reasons of you," she warned.

The wizard gave an imperceptible shrug. "And I will give them the same answer."

PERMISSION

Laudenian.

Deliberately isolated from almost every other culture and guarded by enchanted shrouds, those few ground-dwellers who claim to have seen the city are often dismissed as dreamers or madmen. Its location is vague, floating among a hundred different mountains in the Nankani range, never appearing in the same place twice. On the surface, Laudenia resembles a city of technology, a marble-white floating bastion of towering skyscrapers; but underneath the shine of the walls flows pure magic. The city floats on air, connected to whichever mountain it currently anchors on only by a bridge of solidified cloud. The Alkanost, the massive dragon-shaped flagship the laudenians arrived in, floats atop a river of enchanted air alongside the city. The Council of Six runs Laudenia. Elrenar Alkanost, the oldest fae descendant alive and nominal king of Laudenia (although laudenians do not have the same concept of royalty as ground dwellers) still sits at the head of the council. Nacola Falconyr, the most powerful fae mage, also holds a seat.

History: Laudenian arrogance refused to die when they lacked corporeal forms, and has only grown stronger in the centuries since they were restored to them. After their arrival, they utilized their greatest magic and built a mighty city atop a mountain in the west. When they emerged from the gate, the laudenians found the land below remote and hazardous, an ideal place to build their floating city away from prying eyes. Laudenia was raised in a single day, using the combined magical power of the entire laudenian people, the city emerging right from the mountain stone smooth as polished marble. They ensured all surviving laudenians that did not arrive with the Alkanost migrated to the same point to help in rebuilding their society. Because laudenians have the most spellcasters of any species besides humans, and their magical prowess far surpasses that of other folk, they never endured many of the hardships suffered by other races. Anything they wished for formed itself from thin air before their thought could finish. Looms wove cloth by themselves; food and drink sprang forth from magical cornucopiae and endless fountains; crystals projected illusory images from one place to another, so distant friends could speak to each other as though they were in the same room; and for what they could not simply create, the laudenians built giant quicksilver golems to go down to Earth and mine and harvest what they needed.

Once their new capital was built and the ship's population disembarked to their new home, the Alkanost departed to begin the long journey of exploring the skies and the wilderness underneath. During this time, the magoi traveling aboard began forming the network of floating keeps. Applying the same power that made their city, the laudenians harnessed the ambient magic found in rare stones that enabled them to disobey gravity and elevated them above the clouds, laying down the foundation of an expanding empire. When they wandered too far east, they were turned back by increasing dragon attacks; traveling north or west, they struck an impenetrable wall of wind; and they possessed enough wisdom to turn back rather than brave a passing over the Gloam. After three centuries, the Alkanost returned to Laudenia and moored itself, having completed its work of building castles in the air across the whole breadth of Canam. The keeps peer down from high above, out of sight of most ground-dwellers, never offering the hand of friendship to anyone, rarely lifting a finger for those in need. The laudenian belief professes that to help would offer false hope to the needy, for they themselves are too few to offer any sort of reliable aid. They must choose their battles carefully, only rising to the call when they feel the time is suitable. Some would say that this is merely an excuse to justify the laudenians' fundamental distrust of the ground and all that live upon it, but the laudenians don't care what the earthbound think of them.

Culture: The city of Laudenia shines with its own inner light. Even at night, the towers glow with a soft white shimmer emanating from the polished stones themselves. The inhabitants have no need of torch or candle, and can control the light wherever they wish with the simple wave of the hand. As the sunlight refracts through the atmosphere and shifts the sky to different hues, the city often echoes those same changes. As the sky turns orange to red, the city's exposed stone flushes to a rosy tint. Beyond this, the glimmering white stone is carved to precision to build every step, every bridge, every building, and every vase: no cracks nor mortar foul the sheer, smooth surfaces of the fantastical structures. Flowers and fruit grow freely in the public walks and gardens that line the roadways and many of the roofs. Each building in Laudenia supports

itself on its own floating island, connected to one another via stone bridges. Seen from above, the city resembles a spider's web with buildings at the intersections and hundreds of bridges and roads connecting them all. The buildings range from short, expansive coliseums to thin and soaring towers scaling nearly as high as the city is wide. Red banners are the most common adornment of the walls, growing in complexity with the height of the building: the peaks of the greatest towers dangle tapestries of intricate designs or wave flags longer than a dragon's wingspan. Inside, the buildings reflect dozens of colors depending on the artistry of the designer, though white brick with red fabric remain the popular choice. There is no need of window glass, as no rains fall or winds blow except when and where the Council wishes it so, nor any need of doors, for there are no thieves nor vagabonds in Laudenia. No pollution from noise bothers anyone over the tinkling of endless fountains, the chanting of priests and sonorant utterances of magical ritual, and the clanging of bells in the cathedrals. Not a single piece of woodwork can be found in the city: close inspection of the flowers and fruiting trees reveals them to be magical constructs, hewn from the same stone as the buildings. Throughout the city, the white stone is carved with waves, circles, and inscriptions many forget to admire. The markings swirl like water through the supports and pillars, across the arches, and even through the seamless walks. Many of the designs flow towards the centre of the city-web, to the tallest tower of Elsius which spears through the cloud cover, dwarfing the highest skyscrapers. At the peak, the tower blossoms like an oak tree to a half dozen platforms and pedestals where the Council meets and the Alkanost docks. From here, the panorama offers little of the city through a veil of clouds. The city floats perfectly calm without threat or thrill.

Relations: Laudenians commonly turn those who do find their land away without even bothering to learn their business. The only culture they find even tolerable are the narros of Fargon, with whom they infrequently trade the rich resources of the western Nankani Mountains for those few commodities they cannot obtain themselves. Even then, the laudenians insist on bringing the narros traders into the sky with them and alter their memories afterwards, so that no ground-dweller has a clear idea of the skyrealm's true nature. Visitors are thus not only extremely rare but practically unheard of, and those who enter must adhere to a strict code of respect for the inhabitants: make fewer waves and an outsider's presence may go unnoticed by those who do not want her there. No evil acts are permitted within the realm of Laudenia, with 'evil' being defined

entirely at the discretion of the laudenians (who are, thankfully, fairly discerning when not being knee-jerk reactionaries). Voluntary isolation does not prevent those looking for rare items, both magical and not, seeking out the floating city.

With a city of such majesty, the laudenians seldom wish to show it off to anyone but themselves. A massive artificial cloud shrouds the periphery of the capital. From high, only the peak of Elsius is visible. The inhabitants appear to those they wish, usually reserving such an honor for the greatest dragons and the most powerful fae leaders. Those who leave only do so for one reason: to alleviate the unending boredom of living in a city without dangers, adventure, or responsibilities. Such malcontents are few and far between.

LAUDENIA REGIONAL VOCATION

There isn't a Laudenia regional vocation, because Laudenia is the sole province of the Laudenian civilization and non-Laudenians are not welcome there. Therefore, the Laudenian species vocation already covers everything that a regional vocation could. Should you opt to play the rarer-than-rare exception to Laudenian xenophobia, the circumstances would be so unique as to warrant creating your own vocation.

LIMSHAU

The Kingdom of Knowledge

The city looks very different from above than it does from below. Down there it's all mazelike streets, where you might find the walls beside you suddenly replaced by bookshelves at any moment; hawkers, harlots and storytellers vying for your attention from a hundred alcoves, librarians listening to travellers' tales and writing everything down, and overwhelmed tourists desperate to find a place to lose their money; intermittent areas of noise and silence, a crushing crowd only a corner away from a completely deserted street. But up here on the rooftops is a traceur's paradise: a wide open, boxy landscape of stone and adobe, criss-crossed with ropes, ladders, staircases leading to open patios, makeshift bridges across the crowded streets… it looks chaotic, but consider who built it. The drone of the city below filters up only dimly, and you can be free to ponder whatever mysteries you choose as you climb and jump. You could just run from one end of this city to the other forever and never get bored.

LIMSHAU ASPECTS

Limshau is the center of Canam – geographically, economically, and spiritually. This is the place in which all knowledge of the old worlds and the new are collated for preservation. Even those residents who are not librarians—the merchants, the innkeepers, the tax collectors and the prostitutes—see themselves as part of the shining light that leads all of civilization onward.

Sample Aspects: ***Biochemistry Otaku; Existential Pizza Delivery Ninja; Manuscript Illuminator***

Sample Benefits: Research; parkour; appraisal of books; navigating mazes; reconciling conflicting cataloguing systems; thinking in multiple languages at once.

Sample Drawbacks: Bad at making connections between disparate subjects; tendency to go over rather than around obstacles (literally and metaphorically).

LIMSHAU STUNTS

Cosmopolitanism: Whenever you create an advantage on an ally's character aspect for a bonus, you gain +3 to the invocation rather than +2 if the ally is a different species from you.

Half-Remembered Passage: Whenever you are in a situation where you do not have personal knowledge of a subject, you can spend a fate point to recall something you read once. If the knowledge is common, you gain +2 to all checks involving that subject for the remainder of the scene. If the knowledge is specialized, you only recall enough to be of immediate use (+2 to your next check, and you can make related lore checks as if trained at +0). If the knowledge is highly specialized, what you recall is fragmentary at best and possibly inaccurate (you can make related lore checks as if trained at +0).

Shortest Distance Between Two Points: The worst result you can get on a parkour-related overcome action is a tie.

Fae exist everywhere, and central Canam accommodates the oddest branch of them, the Limshau damaskans. They erected great academies and training facilities and then did something no fae expected: they invited others in – humans, narros, gimfen, anyone willing to teach and to learn. The Limshau librarians thus became the keepers of the largest repository of knowledge on Earth.

History: These damaskans first appeared on the vast field of Serapea, home to plentiful food stocks, verdant plains, wide rivers, ample supplies of limestone and the raw materials for adobe, and less violent wandering monsters than those that graced the forests and mountains. The leader of the damaskans, Ravenar Limshau III, left most of his followers behind to build the new capital while he himself traveled westward with a small embassage. He had many adventures in his perilous journey (now referred to as the 'Crusade of Knowledge'), and none are entirely sure how far he traveled, for these crucial records were lost, along with their transcriber, in the first major assault on the city. What is known is that he eventually came before the fledgling walls of the bastion of Angel, and there met with the elders of Genai. Upon his return to the plains, he brought no promises of alliance, but hundreds of Angel humans, mostly of Japanese descent, as loyal followers of a new age. The empire grew quickly upon these foundations. Ravenar, the oldest damaskan and one of the oldest living fae at the time, looked upon the new world and understood that a new path awaited him. He told his thousands of followers, both human and fae, to think of this new kingdom as the utopia all other future civilizations would look upon for reference. They would welcome all outsiders and respect their beliefs and laws. The realm would be bound by reason and compassion, with an eye towards knowledge, for in their eyes, knowledge separates the civilized from the barbaric.

Assisted by magic and enhanced by the perseverance of its population, the town's progress was unstoppable. Hundreds of kilns fired thousands of pale-white bricks every day, laid down while still warm. The roads spread out from the center, intersected by streets and avenues. The humans' planning gave the city structure and precision: the fae gave it personality. They painted tiles and mosaics across plain white walls and topped the tallest buildings with the grandest sculptures. At their root, the city would be a storehouse of all knowledge. Every wall in every house would support shelves for books. Where other settlements might have a central market or a grand bazaar, Limshau built the Central Stacks, the most expansive public library in the world, open to the air, protected by magic from the elements, and hosting at least one text on every subject known to man or fae as well as a catalogue of all other books to be found anywhere within the growing empire. Citizens were encouraged to donate works or words to the collections for all to share.

The number of books and scrolls arriving eventually proved too extensive for one town to handle, and Ravenar decreed that more cities be built, with each satellite city dedicating itself to a specific field of knowledge. A few towns expanded to a dozen by century's end. Ravenar did not share the paranoia of other fae and encouraged the uniting of the peoples, not only culturally but by blood. Limshau was not the first city to birth half-breeds between fae and human, but it did eventually possess the largest ratio of them. The humans were attracted to the fae's beauty, grace, and wisdom and the fae were attracted to the humans' spirit, determination, and enthusiasm. More than a quarter of the first human settlers took fae mates, and though this ratio dropped into the single digits after the first century, the human breeding cycle and the fae long life generated a massive population boost.

In response to the first concerted attack against the city by a large force of unusually organized boggs, Ravenar's successor, Ravenar Limshau IV, formed the custodian order, devout disciples of knowledge. The protectors of paper, these scholar-warriors would defend the walls and the words inside. With cities and an army, the sovereignty of Limshau was official, though Ravenar refused to be called a king despite being chosen by a dragon. Even today, publicly referring to the Limshau family as royalty is a serious faux pas within the kingdom, though in private nearly everyone calls them such. Ravenar IV has no official title, being referred to informally as the 'First Citizen' in public and simply 'Limshau' on formal documents; he is not even the head librarian of the Central Stacks, only of an admittedly extensive collection of historical texts located in his large and central but otherwise ordinary residence. Should the Limshau line ever become remiss in their duties, no doubt another family would displace them in prominence, but thus far none has ever challenged them.

Culture: Ravenar encouraged his fae brothers to mingle freely and accept his new human friends. Although the process took time, eventually a cosmopolitan community grew from the first seeds. Of all the fae,

damaskans are most physically similar to humans, and their peculiarly Asiatic features meant that the earliest human immigrants to Limshau were not that different on the surface from their new fae neighbors. These humans were carpenters, architects, hunters, smiths, tailors, bricklayers, plumbers, doctors, teachers, and civil engineers. They brought vital knowledge the damaskans quickly absorbed. Despite the fae's superior skill in art and song and their renowned mental and physical discipline, they were astounded by the breadth of applicable knowledge offered by the short-lived humans. Together, they truly believed their new nation would set an example for others to follow. As a community, they would learn from each other and strive to create a civilization based upon the freedom of choice and speech, uncorrupted by religious bias or corporate preference. Churches were not permitted within the walls of Limshau (though its citizens could worship privately as they wished), nor were merchants and shopkeeps allowed to expand into a chain. Ravenar promoted freedom with laws designed to protect those from others that victimize them, but otherwise did not impede the individual. If a vice caused no harm to society at large, it was permitted; if it could be controlled and regulated by the government to minimize or prevent harm, it was also permitted. Although such decisions mired the city in controversy for many years, the necessity of such measures was ultimately recognized.

Every Limshau city contains both a thermal mooring tower and a dragonflyer dock. Though Limshau is filled with hundreds of small villages, there are only a handful of walled library-cities. These are Abarbanel, Athenaeum, Enchridia, Escorias, Kodex, Limshau, Primmer, Serapea, Warraqeen, and Zorahn. Every city has its own proud division of librarians and custodians, save for Zorahn, which only has custodians.

Relations: Damaskans were and are known for being fearless and approachable. They neither fear change nor the unknown. They offer the courtesy of respect even to their enemies and expect the same regard in return. They welcome outsiders, but expect them to pull their own weight. Relations with other fledging nations took time to develop, as most grew much slower than Limshau. The first foreign ally was the failed bastion of Appareci, visitors from Limshau even giving the newborn kingdom of Kannos its name. Despite Limshau's stance on religion, they still opened a dialogue and forged a profitable alliance with Abidan. Damaskans and gimfen have always been friendly, and Limshau soon made allies of both Gnimfall and Salvabrooke. However, later clashes with Baruch Malkut stained the continent in blood, although instead of openly engaging in a costly conflict, Ravenar suggested to his people that they take refuge in the cities, whose fortifications rival the walls of Angel for security. Many fae chose to remain in their villages and often suffer at the hands of Malkut slavers, though fewer since the construction of the city of Zorahn to guard the border. A few fae now and again still vanish, especially from the free villages south of Zorahn. Ravenar is still unwilling to commit to open warfare, despite strong pressure from Kannos and promises of support from Abidan and Gnimfall. They all understand that, even though a conflict may result in a short-term victory over the outer towns and villages of Baruch Malkut, the marshlands and swamps of the south could only be taken after a long and costly war of attrition.

Despite being at the center of what may be the greatest brewing conflict between man and fae, most damaskans are trusting of humans, if for no other reason than that a large number of them are related to a human at some point in their family tree. Thanks to this multiethnic influence, a uniquely Limshauan culture formed away from the other damaskans across the ocean. Damaskan culture had always had superficial similarities with the cultures of old Asia, but these influences became more pronounced in Limshau, to the point that many Sinitic terms completely displaced the native Damaskan words for similar concepts, particularly in the fields of cuisine, weaponry, and fashion. The Asiatic propensity for reservation and propriety, interspersed by short periods of intense revelry, resonated with the Limshau fae, who became quieter and less disposed to levity than their brethren in Damaska. All damaskans, of course, abhor public physical contact, but the fae of Limshau also began to resist being referred to by their personal names except among close friends and relations. Most unusually, Limshau damaskans will voluntarily eat fish and certain kinds of meat, while those of Damaska and other fae nations are strictly vegetarian. At present, Limshau is the only place on Earth that a fae culture has altered so significantly without a corresponding species shift, and thus far nobody is able to propose a suitable theory explaining this.

Names: While damaskan naming traditions are fairly consistent with the rest of their species, placing the given name before the family name, due to the influence of Asian immigrants Limshau fae are less likely to use their given name than their family name in public (assuming they do not adopt an 'open name') and using a person's given name without their permission is considered rude. Limshau fae frequently draw their open names from old Japanese history and mythology. Limshau humans have tended to retain their original family names (Japanese-derived names still dominate by a large margin despite later immigration from elsewhere in Canam), but have adopted the fae naming sequence, and in the modern day there is no cultural consistency with given names: a Limshau human is just as likely to have an African, German, or Welsh given name as a Japanese one, or even use a fae-style open name as their given name. Limshau's gimfen population, of course, is as idiosyncratic as ever. Limshau residents do not usually use honorifics in general practice, with the exception of 'sensei' (which they apply to artists and researchers as well as teachers, doctors, and the like). Regardless of their cultural extraction, everybody born in Limshau learns to write their name in Damaskan rather than whatever writing system it originated in.

Example Human Family Names: Oda, Miyamoto, Nakamura, Suzuki, Yamada, Watanabe

Example Open Names: Enma, Grasscutter, Juubei, Raiden, Shinobi, Tetsubo

LIMSHAU SUMMARY

As someone from Limshau, you can…

…navigate between two points using the shortest path, even if that path leads over things that most people do not consider traversable.

…figure out where to find a bit of lore you don't know.

…have no difficulties dealing with people of different species or social class from yourself.

…speak competently on a wide variety of topics.

…sound like you know what you're talking about even if you don't.

SALVABROOKE

World's Greenest Tourist Trap

"Ten pebbles? Nine? Eight? C'mon, chipper, it's the deal of a lifetime..."

Waving the peddler away, Marconi dodged through the fairground crowd. Fortunately there were enough 'bigguns' here, even a few techans, that he didn't stand out. He stopped for a moment to haggle with a certain merchant over a string of glass beads, another to inspect and discard a pocketwatch of dubious provenance, and briefly bent down to tie his shoelace next to a completely insignificant stall selling takoyaki – he briefly wondered where they'd gotten the octopus from this far inland, and decided he didn't want to know. Then he made his way to a picturesque little tavern – deliberately picturesque, for he had seen the original pre-Hammer painting in a gallery in Limshau.

His diminutive contact was waiting at one of the human-sized tables, looking amusingly like a lost child. Marconi kept the smirk off his face – despite her appearance, he know she could gut him ten different ways before he could draw his revolver, if ever she felt like it. "The word is on the Books," he said, gesturing to the tapkeep for an ale. "Every leaf from here to Angel will be whispering in the wind."

The gimfen woman smiled, showing her perfect white teeth.

PERMISSIONS

Gimfen; or from Angel, Selkirk, or the Central region (limited to +1).

SALVABROOKE ASPECTS

Salvabrooke is a study in contradictions: on the one hand it is an idyllic, uncomplicatedly pastoral realm; on the other, it is the most flagrantly commercial and utterly lawless place on the continent. Those who call it home have no interest in resolving the contradictions – indeed, they believe that paradox is the spice of life.

Sample Aspects: ***Gentleman Farmer and Retired Badass; Innocently Plotting Your Demise; Just An Honest Thief***

Sample Benefits: Making deals; avoiding notice; being noticed; running; hiding; winning eating contests; separating tourists from their worldly wealth.

Sample Drawbacks: Nobody takes you seriously; considered either naïve or untrustworthy; no sense of danger.

SALVABROOKE STUNTS

Celebrate A Simple Life: If you experience ***One of the Simple Pleasures of Life*** (a good night's sleep in a nice warm bed, a well-cooked meal, a good book) at your leisure one or more times during a session, you gain an extra fate point at the start of the next session.

Mostly Beneath Notice: You can use your rank in this vocation +1 as the static difficulty of attempts to notice you, instead of making an opposed check (you must decide to do so before the check is made).

Special One-Time Offer: You gain +2 to fast-talking checks against people who aren't from Salvabrooke.

A lone oak tree that never changes with the season stands like a centurion to mark the gateway to the land of light-hearted gimfen, a huge expanse of spreading homes and villages. One seemingly continuous expanse of civilization spreads to the corners of the massive valley. Mountains line the perimeter, making the entrance marked by the Lone Tree the only safe passage to the inner fields.

History: Gimfen as a whole don't really believe in the concepts of past or future, and as life in Salvabrooke generally follows the same pattern year in and year out, they see little need to record their history. What is known is that the settlements of Salvabrooke predate the more famous grind towers of Gnimfall and elsewhere by at least half a century, but whether the gimfen appeared in the place that they now call home when the gate reopened or whether they traveled there afterwards is a mystery. Certainly the area is very well-suited to them, being protected by natural barriers from their most numerous enemies, kept at a comfortable temperature year-round by hot spring activity, and surrounded by greenery.

Culture: The population of the entire valley is more than 150,000 with houses spread thin along a flat land 150 miles across. There is no centralized government, leaving each patch of land under control of a clan elder or sheriff. The population shifts so much in the valley that naming the individual clans and their townships is pointless. Every year, all the headmen and women meet to discuss affairs. Little is actually accomplished at these meetings; most motions (particularly ones involving large and expensive construction projects) are proposed, planned, and then tabled until the next year, at which point everyone will have forgotten about them because nobody bothers to take the meeting minutes. The most powerful ruler is Lora Longfellow, peacefully running a community of more than 3,000 gimfen in the area closest to the Lone Tree and whose judgment represents the norm followed in the rest of the valley.

The farming soil in Salvabrooke is extremely fertile and fresh water flows from nearby mountains to large

clean lakes, as close to a natural paradise as one may find, corrupted by as little technology as possible. The majority of the gimfen wish to keep it that way. Celebrations are central to Salvabrooke's life, with revelry and festivals occurring every week. Gimfen welcome outsiders and treat those who enter as kings or queens with hopefully deep (but easily accessible) pockets. Crime is quite low across Salvabrooke, although this is due in part to the gimfen predilection for not considering anything a crime that can be dismissed as a harmless prank: pickpocketry is an epidemic across the land, with the culprits happy to return their stolen goods with a laugh and a wave if they happen to be caught (no gimfen considers this in any way illegal). They adore human exports, but they adore even more the propensity for humans to buy cheap knockoffs of those same exports in the name of tourism. In the larger communities, huge open markets begin business at the crack of dawn, peddling shoddy imitation trinkets to anyone interested. Tourists drifting through one of the many walking streets in a gimfen village should expect to be accosted by no less than a dozen different wandering merchants attempting to vend designer clothes, imitation gadgetry, or on occasion, legitimate pieces of folk art, though not of gimfen culture (since gimfen culture consists of wholesale robbery of other peoples' ways of life). All prices are negotiable and begin at an outrageous markup, since haggling is perceived to be part of the fun. There are a few respectable merchants, but these are not the ones harassing passing non-gimfen. What law enforcement a community might have (which usually amounts to only a couple of stout lads with shillelaghs) attempts to keep the dishonesty in check, but most of the time, the enforcers just break up the fights and shift the few homeless from the streets to maintain a positive image.

Relations: Salvabrooke is a common destination for echan tourist trips by techans. It's echan enough to shock them but safe enough to keep them at ease, and since most of its merchants are happy to take payment in barter, they don't have to find some way of turning uc into gold. Since such tourists rarely approach by land, they remain blissfully unaware of how precariously close Salvabrooke is to the ravening hordes of Xixion, and nobody in the valley is going to disabuse them. Salvabrooke features a thermal mooring tower and a dragonflyer flyer service.

SALVABROOKE SUMMARY

As someone from Salvabrooke, you can…

…avoid being seen when you wish, or monopolize someone's attention when it suits you.

…make best use of your childlike stature and disarming manner to swindle the unwary.

…enjoy yourself regardless of what misfortunes life throws at you.

SELIQUAM

The Cutthroat Alliance

Lelan looked nervously behind her. The shrieks and squeals were getting closer. "Hurry up!" she hissed to the third member of their band. "Nearly finished," Mescalos called back, calmly fiddling with the chalk. The damaskan had drawn a complicated series of lines from one end of the nearly hundred-foot-wide bridge to the other, and was now running down the length adding finishing touches. Lelan held her rifle at the ready, really wishing at that moment that she were a chaparran and could see the swarm coming in the dark. By the time the puggs entered the circle of light that was the limit of her vision, it would be too late to stop them. Of course, at that point the vermin would have overwhelmed Kobur, on guard at the bridge's entrance, so there wouldn't be much chance left for either of them.

"All right!' Mescalos shouted.

Lelan didn't wait before running to join him. "Kobur, get over here!"

There was a scream, a sickening ripping sound, and out of the darkness lumbered a huge kodiak, half of a pugg still grasped in his hand. Wordlessly he threw the carcass over the rail and carefully hopped over the line. Ten steps behind him, the swarm descended, crowding so close onto the bridge that many were forced over the edge into the deep waters below. Mescalos shouted a word that tried to force Lelan's brain out through her ears, and the puggs crashed against an invisible wall, piling up against each other, crushing and suffocating the beasts in the lead.

"Good, but it will not hold them forever," Mescalos said with an impish grin. "Now, shall we see what lies on the other side?"

SELIQUAM ASPECTS

A hero from Seliquam learns quickly to be both a warrior and a politician: everybody fights Xixion, but other enemies both human and fae are less obvious. Consider which member nation you come from, which neighbors they consider allies and which they look on as rivals, and whether you share your national prejudices or seek your own path.

Sample Aspects: ***Can't Trust Anything But My Rifle; Draconian Monk; Mage of the Obsidian Council***

Sample Benefits: Interacting with other species; politicking; wielding black-powder weapons; fighting puggs; navigating mercurial landscapes; using unusual magical artifacts.

Sample Drawbacks: Drawn into political wrangling; urge to attack puggs even if inconvenient; greed for bastion exports or recovered treasure.

SELIQUAM STUNTS

Bane of Xixion: You deal +1 damage on successful attacks against basic monsters as well as standard kaddog.

Friend of Bears: While you have a kodiak ally in the same encounter, you can split your free invocations or boosts into two +1 bonuses instead of one +2 bonus as

long as you pass at least one of the bonuses to your kodiak ally.

Machiavelli, Spinning In His Grave: Whenever you spend a fate point to draw a new card for an intrigue check, you can also discard up to two cards from your hand if you wish.

Though most travelers are quick to characterize the central west coast of Canam as a monster-infested wilderness due to the inhospitable expanse of Xixion, this is not entirely accurate. Amid the forested highlands of the northern mountains, the peninsula to the south, the islands that dot the coastal sea protected from typhoons by high cliffs and twisting fjords, and the fertile valley of the river that flows through the Pass at Dianaso can be found dozens of tiny tribal nations, minor houses, and small fiefdoms. These nations live in an uneasy truce with one another, having little in common except the threat of Xixion to the south and the covert support of the bastion of Selkirk to the east. Collectively, they are known as the Seliquam Confederation.

History: During the narros' explorations south from Fargon, they found the lack of impressive buildings to be galling, so as they went they built superb structures, which they then simply abandoned as they moved on. Many of these monuments found themselves inhabited by squatters, mostly descendants of human survivors from the region who had banded together into small neo-tribal groups out of mutual need, some turning to magic to survive while others held on to as much of their technology as possible (it is possible that the founders of Selkirk were one such group that got lucky). Many of these settlements were joined by lost damaskans and gimfen who had appeared separately from their kindred, and even by a few wandering narros who, for one reason or another, elected to leave Fargon permanently. In time, these camps coalesced into communities, counties, even a few moderately-sized cities, but limited numbers prevented any one nation from ever growing powerful enough to impose its will over the entire region. However, the growing pug and bogg raids on the settlers' farming and hunting lands eventually forced them to make common cause. Unfortunately, the strength of that alliance is far less strong than similar treaties elsewhere in Canam have proven.

Culture: The peninsular rainforest holds little of interest for the puggs, and by and large they leave it alone but for the occasional raid. More than twenty small tribes—mostly chaparran, but with a few human and mixed-race, even several kodiak bands—inhabit the peninsula, living largely by hunting and fishing, and trading with (and sometimes thieving from) their neighbors. Settlements in the rainforest tend to be seasonal rather than permanent – there are a few large, rooted towns (usually quite literally, as it is far safer to live in a tree than on the ground even for non-chaparrans), but for the most part each tribe maintains a summer and a winter camp, with certain grounds—such as the shellfish flats at Shiwoos, home of the largest kodiak settlement west of Alpinas—held in common between them. Though hardly on the level of the great forests to the south, the rainforest is home to several unique and highly valued creatures and plants. Legend has it that a guardian dragon sleeps beneath the mountain at the peninsula's core, but evidence of this is sorely lacking.

The central islands, home to some of the most impressive narros monuments, were once heavily populated by humans, but the growing strength of the pugg 'city' of Seelanus eventually drove them north to the coastal islands. Here, free as they are from the threat of a Xixion invasion (puggs do not like to swim and build no boats), can be found the most proud and carefree of the member nations. Consisting largely of free houses, pirate ports, and militant tribal groups, they trade their military prowess for food and finished goods from the mainland, although 'extort' might be a more apropos term in the case of some.

The valley of the River Seliquam, which flows from the mountains bordering Alpinas to the sea, is one of the most fertile farmlands in the west. Many believe the river itself to carry a potent enchantment that keeps the pugg hordes very firmly on the southern bank, but magical scholars have thus far found little evidence of this. As this region is at greatest risk of invasion, those living there have largely opted for a feudal lifestyle, but as they still greatly value their independence, the result is a motley collection of small baronies. Practically every hill worth the name hosts a castle, with a handful of tiny ramshackle villages huddled around it. Every year in the midst of the harvest season, the puggs swarm into the valley to plunder. Every year, the inhabitants gather their crops as hurriedly as they can, take what possessions they can carry, leave their homes to be burned by the horde, and travel upriver to the Redoubt at the city of Last Hope, a massive fortress wall built, with narros expertise, across the approaches to the mountain passes. The wall is manned by soldiers sent by every member nation of Seliquam, the central tenet of the treaty binding the confederation together. Last Hope is the one place where all of Seliquam stands united. The unofficial representatives of Selkirk are also in attendance, trading bastion-engineered goods, weapons and armor (including a limited supply of masterwork bolt rifles and revolvers) for the valley's surplus harvest and the assurance that the defenders of the Redoubt will continue to keep the puggs far, far away from the bastion.

Impressive as the Redoubt is, it is a mere fence compared with Abidan's Bulwark or the city walls of Angel, and it cannot completely hold Xixion at bay – there are far too many tunnels and lesser passes through the mountains to block them all off. The military order known as the Train Guard make regular patrols of the passes, exterminating any pugg bands and other predatory monsters that they come across. Though the order's training regimen was designed and perfected by the ravnorra lords of Fargon, only a fraction of the Guard is made up of narros (for all that they are often commanders) – in fact, the largest demographic are kodiaks, who make up fully thirty percent of the force (humans making up a quarter, and the remaining forty-

five percent being roughly equally divided between narros, chaparrans, and damaskans, with the occasional laudenian and gimfen). Joining the Train Guard is considered a highly prestigious career for all the people of Seliquam, but the high mortality rate of the membership keeps their numbers from growing too strong. Puggs may be no real threat in small groups, but they are hardly the only dangers of the region.

Each nation within the Seliquam Confederation has its own method of government, from tribal councils to rough democracy to feudal fealty, but each member nation sends a delegation to the Grand Council, which meets once a year, alternately in Last Hope and the floating city of Victrix on the Island. Ostensibly the purpose of the Council is to discuss the business of the whole confederation and to resolve grievances brought by one member nation against another, but in practice it is a hotbed of suspicion and corruption as councillors finagle and make backroom deals to advance their own nations at the expense of long-standing rivals. The people of Seliquam may stand united against Xixion, but they have a long history of raiding and swindling one another, and each nation clamors for a bigger share of the limited supply of bastion-produced goods. To prevent this hornet's nest from being completely ungovernable, the seven most prominent nations (Last Hope, Victrix, Shiwoos, Gwaii, the Abbey, Vanguard and Squalmos, plus Gateway as the unofficial face of Selkirk) set up the Inner Council, which enforces the few laws that hold over the entire confederation and appoint the commanders of the Redoubt and the Train Guard. Currently, the most influential people in the confederation are Elder Hogon of Shiwoos, an ancient kodiak who some say trained in magic at Jibaro in his youth; Lord Sorannik Mogh, a narros ravnorra and the current Lord Commander of the Train Guard, who has a secret enthusiasm for the techan vehicle known as the 'motorcycle'; and Castellan Leanna Graythvan, seneschal of Last Hope, a dour and unapproachable woman who distrusts both Fargon and Selkirk.

Victrix and Last Hope have thermal mooring towers. Most transport between the major regions of the Confederation is by boat, but most watercraft must hug the coastline to defend against storms.

Religion: Each member state of the Confederation has its own traditions, but the dominant religion in the region is a cult known as the Draconian Trinity, which mixes High Church Christianity with dragon worship and elements of local mythology. The Trinity holds that dragons are God's true angels, and that the most powerful of them are actually incarnations of the Holy Spirit: the religion makes no distinction between good, evil, and neutral dragons, believing that all are part of some divine plan. The headquarters of this religion/mystical movement is the fortress known as the Abbey, which has never been assaulted by any force from Xixion – a fact that its leaders attest to divine providence. A little over one-fifth of the total population of Seliquam adheres to the Draconian faith.

Names: Non-humans in the Confederation use their traditional naming systems. For some reason, the upheavals of Attricana spared much of the aboriginal human culture of the region, and while the actual original languages are long since extinct, the Seliquam dialect of English is liberally peppered with terms derived from Salish and Haida roots, including a disproportionate number of personal and place names (even though few remember what they actually mean anymore).

Examples: Bella Mallaquin, Gwenlitu Hosten, Kallumi Brown, Mahcut Rowan, Robert Jacks, Teqmut Caseway

SELIQUAM SUMMARY

As someone from Seliquam, you can…

…use your experience with cutthroat politics to best effect in the courts of your homeland.

…know a great deal of mystic lore from the region.

…call on your experience fighting the kaddog, especially gauging the ground and finding defensible positions.

…wield black-powder weaponry, strange magics, or both.

…fight for your reputation and political standing within your own nation as well as in the international councils.

THE WILD

The Earth Reclaimed

Even wrapped in furs, Tyson shivered in the bitter chill. He glanced at his companions. It made sense that the kodiak was not bothered by the cold, but the pointy-eared amazon across the fire was wearing barely more than a sarashi and loincloth, and she didn't even have goosebumps. Did elves even get goosebumps? he wondered. It wasn't fair, he moaned inwardly for the thousandth time since throwing in his lot with this pair. He shifted closer to the fire.

Ogrun looked at him and snorted. "Pinkskin is cold, yet thinks he better than us. We 'pri-mi-tive.'" He rumpled his muzzle in the way that Tyson had come to recognize as the kodiak equivalent of a grin, and leaned closer. "But fire was made for you, pinkskin. We no need it. Should just stand in it, be plenty warm then."

PERMISSIONS

Chaparran, kodiak, or echan human.

WILD ASPECTS

The wild is the domain of tribes that have yet to develop a more built-up civilization, who see no value in such a civilization, or both. Though groups from different parts of the world may have vastly different traditions and social structures, the thing they all have in common is a reverence, or at least healthy respect, for nature.

Sample Aspects: ***Barbarian Hunter-Gatherer; Neohippie; Mystic Nomad***

Sample Benefits: Not being eaten by wolves; knowing which mushrooms are poisonous before eating them; lighting fires; finding potable water.

Sample Drawbacks: Poor table manners; regarding 'civilized' folk with disdain; regarded with disdain by 'civilized' folk.

WILD STUNTS

Fletcher: You cannot be compelled to be out of arrows when wielding a bow.

Food, Water, and Shelter: The worst result you can receive on a wilderness survival check is a tie.

Smoke Signals: You gain +2 to attempts to communicate over a distance using primitive methods (such as smoke signals, sign language, bird calls, signal fires, and the like: does not apply to communication methods that require more special equipment than can be found or made in the wilderness, such as semaphore).

Canam has no specific borders between its nations. Kingdoms patrol as much territory as they think they can hold, but wide expanses between their territories prevent most conflict. Dozens of villages claiming no allegiance fall between them. This creates more of a wide blur instead of a defined line. The only way to know if one enters a specific kingdom is to ask the citizens of a village. There are no border markers or sentries on many of the trodden paths, though well-patrolled roads such as the Continental Cross and its tributaries leading into the major nations will maintain border guards, especially those along the roads controlled by the house of Skyrose and eastern Limshau because of their nations' proximity to Baruch Malkut. This leaves tens of thousands of square miles unclaimed, a sea of wilderness in which islands of civilization flourish. Many of these would dangerous locations in which to settle, thanks to the presence of magic or monsters.

The easiest way to check if a forest is enchanted is to look at the variety of trees growing. If the trees are of radically different species, growing in the same region without regard for light or temperature (conifers mixing with fruit trees, or cactus growing on mountain slopes), it is a forest populated by magic. Oftentimes, the creatures that inhabit the forests spill out into the surrounding scrub and plains, making open space only slightly safer to traverse than the paths under the trees. The upheavals caused by Attricana's opening also opened many spaces beneath the mountains and under the ground, into which less than savory new life-forms quickly descended. Some of these chasms even swallowed up artifacts of the old age, so it is not unknown (though hardly common either) for a dungeon delver to descend into a natural cave system and find an expanse of steel and concrete inside. These unchecked areas of the world feature the most dangerous life forms. Some rumors claim the largest percentage of chaparrans in the world is spread over the unclaimed forests in Canam. Beyond chaparrans, not known for their hospitality anyway, these forests, plains, and mountains showcase the greatest ratio of magically endowed life, from dire and elemental animals to monstrous beasts of ill will.

ALPINAS

The Great White North

The eastern slopes of the northern Nankani Mountains are covered with thick conifer forests that stretch far out onto the central plains, jutting up against the icy tundra of Ashur in the north. Even though kodiaks control this area in force, they have never formed an organized nation; instead, hundreds of villages and roaming bands dot the landscape for hundreds of miles. No town lasts more than a few years before being broken up or destroyed. The few open plains are cold and windswept, forbidding travelers from making roots. No one is sure how many kodiak camps there are. Few bands sustain a population of more than a hundred. The largest and only permanent settlement, over 1500 strong, is Makniculsh, ruled by Raknash.

Though animalistic and tribal, the kodiaks prefer to keep to themselves. They have a devotion to nature many other species admire but skeggs in particular do not share. The kodiaks of Alpinas are considerably larger and more savage than their kindred in Seliquam, and remain disdainful of the trappings of civilization which some of the southern lines have come to embrace. Nevertheless, many now wield weapons forged for them by the narros of Fargon to aid in their endless war against the skeggs of Dagron. This may eventually cause problems in the future if the kodiaks finally overwhelm their enemies; the narros hope the trading relationship will eventually civilize the northern kodiaks before their newly acquired weapons can be turned against their benefactors.

HALYC

The Old New Frontier

The western plains from York stretching almost all the way to Gnimfall were given the broad name of Halyc. While nominally York claims this territory as part of its domain, in practice it leaves most of it alone. Most of the plains are untamed grasslands leading up to mountain foothills, turning to dense forests in the north leading up to the Gulf of Tethuss. More than thirty small chaparran villages call the forest home, and defend it vigilantly against intruders of all sorts. Independent farms and villages along the road between Gnimfall and York sell to both echa and techa, with those nearer to York receiving the blanket of protection offered by the YPF. Most military patrols in this region are mere formalities to guard against the possibility of pagus crossing the water or to clear the road of wandering monsters. Less dedicated patrols roam the southern border, as York has never considered Baruch Malkut a serious threat.

KESAKAS

Canyon Country

The isthmus of land between Dawnamoak and the Gloam is a twisting labyrinth of mountains, deserts, mesas, scrub plains and savannah. Few people live here, as it is home to innumerable savage beasts. With the advent of magic, the land regressed to the Pliocene epoch. Dire animals of every description hunt each other through the canyons and grasslands, and most settlements in the area are either itinerant or perched precariously on and within the sides of cliffs. The bastion of Sierra Madre is located somewhere underneath this dangerous terrain, the terrors of which serve to protect the techan city far better than any artificial defenses could but which make excursions from the bastion a harrowing experience that discourages casual tourism.

LAURAMA

Danger Lurks Beneath the Trees

The chaparrans occupy a great forest and mountain range. Unlike their western cousins, the fae of Laurama are extremely militaristic – not surprising, when you consider their neighbors. To the north, they are bounded by the pestilent forest of Tranquiss; to the west, the holy but perilous wood of Skepsis; and to the east, the despoilers of Baruch Malkut, with whom the chaparrans have been engaged in an ongoing guerilla war since the first Malkut slavers came to their lands in search of fae flesh. Even before the Blessed Kingdom began to encroach upon their borders, the chaparrans lived in constant dread of the infection spreading from Tranquiss, and this fear altered their attitude towards life. No longer being content with patience and relaxation, they grew increasingly aggressive with each other and other surrounding lands. Their already reduced magical aptitude virtually vanished save for a few unique adepts and savants, most of which end up traveling to Jibaro to study due to the lack of avenues to learn at home. They do not grow cities, but spread their community out to cover a wider footprint within the forest. Their presence is quiet and looming, more hidden than even the fae of Dawnamoak. Many travelers through Laurama have no idea that a chaparran kitarri lurks in the trees above them, watching their every movement for the slightest sign of aggression. Laurama fae are intensely distrustful of humans more than any other chaparrans: Malkut slavers are usually killed on sight, and any others that the chaparrans even suspect of harmful intent never leave the forest. Even innocent travelers have been known to be attacked, stripped of their armor and weapons, and dumped at the borders of the forest, a clear sign that outsiders are not welcome in Laurama. Other nations do not acknowledge Laurama as a sovereign power – even Jibaro considers them a satellite colony of Dawnamoak – and so their open declaration of war against Baruch Malkut has thus far brought no allies.

NANKANI MOUNTAINS

The Spine of the Continent

A huge mountain range dominating western Canam, the Nankani Mountains stretch from Kesakas to Fargon, bisecting the western third of the continent. Several tributary ranges lead into it, particularly in the north, where the highest and most dangerous peaks sprout between Selkirk and Thos Thalagos. While many isolated echan settlements and even techan atolls can be found among the peaks and valleys, the most populous species within the range are puggs and boggs, who claim large cave systems and build ramshackle 'cities' inside them, where the strongest of the kaddog rule over their lessers with fear and violence, and send them out on raids into the lowlands to take food, treasure, and slaves. Dire wolves roam the forested slopes, and many a rogue dragon has been sighted among the peaks. The only safe path through the mountains is the Continental Cross, kept clear of monsters by the various free houses that claim portions of the road. The mountains are also full of ruins, including monuments from the days of the Fargon expeditions, as well as older structures locked away within the earth, some full of remnants from the last age of Man.

WILD SUMMARY

As someone from the Wild, you can…

…find food, water, and shelter in harsh environments.

…resist the extremes of wind and weather.

…hunt or avoid being hunted by wild animals.

…identify poisonous plants.

WASTELANDS

The Dark Places of the World

I thought I was a tough sonofa – twelve expeditions into Sana under my belt, lost count of how many big-ass monsters I've killed in and out of the swamp. But that was before I teamed up with Ghrom. There's me, creeping up slowly and carefully on a steelshrike before it could get a chance to peck out my liver, and the big grey bastard just walks up to the damn bird and wrings its neck.

"You scared?" the pagus mocked me afterwards. "Of that piddly watering hole? Where I come from, we go for a morning swim in worse."

PERMISSION

Pagus, or one aspect explaining how you survived.

WASTELAND ASPECTS

Nobody in their right mind lives in a wasteland by choice. Those adventurers who hail from such a region are the few who've managed to escape.

Sample Aspects: ***Ex-Dragon Cultist; Looked Into the Eyes of Death; Strangled a Shemjaza and Got Away With It***

Sample Benefits: Resisting fear; fighting or avoiding monsters; staving off debilitating effects; staying alive by sheer bloody-mindedness.

Sample Drawbacks: Unnerving presence; most mon-

sters attack you first.

WASTELAND STUNTS

Chill of the Grave: You treat -3 and -4 check results when attempting to intimidate people as +3 and +4, respectively.

Death Valley: Each of your consequence slots can soak an additional point of damage (3/5/7/9).

No Fear of Hell: The worst result you can get on a check to resist fear is a tie.

The wilds of Canam are full of many dark and dangerous regions. No goodly folk live in such places; they are the preserves either of monsters or wicked creatures whose 'societies' are born of violence and malevolent will. Often, a nameless and shapeless evil will infest a portion of the wild, turning into an unhallowed land of danger and death. Travelers learn to avoid such places, or tread carefully if they have no choice but to cross them.

APOCRYPHA

There Is Only War

After the puggs, the largest individual fae population in Canam is the pagus. They control a massive expanse of land dubbed Apocrypha by humans, or Sollasum by many fae. Most of the pagus armies on the continent fall under the control of typhox dragons, which brought them across from Kakodomania when the dragons discovered an unspoiled land across the polar ice and resolved to spoil it. Separated from the darklands by thousands of miles of ice and tundra, the dragons could enslave and ravage as they willed without needing to answer directly to Mengus. The recent arrival of several shemjaza in Canam threatens to disrupt the dragons' monopoly. The pagus are bound in their souls to follow the orders of the generals of Kakodomania, who outrank the dragons, though so far the shemjaza have not attempted to exert their authority on a grand scale. There is a growing number of pagus that have thrown off the influence of their masters and attempt to live free in the inhospitable wastes.

Pagus with their souls bound to Ixindar are not necessarily tied to its control. With the dragons killing and enslaving them to the east, the pagus must look elsewhere to expand. Cold and water awaits them to the north. Mountains, skeggs, and kodiaks sit over the horizon in the west, leaving only the narrow land bridge of Tethuss to the south, guarded by the Janoahn Bulwark. This great fortress of man has never fallen, even when a dragon lord attempted to storm the walls and was only repulsed at the cost of the Paladin King's own life. Since pagus fear the natural elements of earth (mountains, winds, water), they prefer to continue to slam against the Janoahn wall, plummeting to their deaths into the churning gulf when they cannot retreat. Though a massive land with rich potential, Apocrypha will, within 500 years, no longer be able to support any life thanks to the despoilment of dragons and pagus.

The best-known tribal leaders are Mennos, Nemis the Gatherer, Saemus, Amon the Nomad, Arrenna, and Kallis the Monster, leading camps named after themselves. The biggest issue with these camps lies with the pagus' short lifespans: since even the eldest seldom live past forty, most of the villages are equally short-lived. Their successors seldom follow the same ethics (or lack thereof) as their antecedent, and the village often tears itself apart in very uncivil wars with few survivors. Only a few rare exceptions have allowed certain villages to survive past a generation, and these mostly where power is maintained by a loyal cadre of the toughest warriors.

AZHI DAHAKA

The Black Land

The greatest typhox dragons, the Ažhi seven, claim this region under their direct control, though most of them are never seen, living out their lives in solitude within self-proclaimed kingdoms deep in the northern regions, leaving their lesser brethren to impose order and terror on the land. Pagus followers give most of their own food as offerings, or risk being snatched up as food themselves. There is no border between Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka; any land that falls beneath the shadows cast by the winged monstrosities is the evil dragons' domain. The only thing stopping the dragons from launching a full-scale invasion of Canam, other than their relative small numbers, is the lack of any centralized control of the region. No typhox dragon will bow before another, despite victories proven by scars, age, or size. Though they may respect and envy the power of their elders, they will not rally to any common cause.

The seven dragon lords of Ažhi maintain keeps of varying strength across the land, and none can be entirely sure where they roost at any given time. These dragon lords are rarely seen, but are known across the continent through tales to frighten troops and children: **Baenis of Gorge**, who forces his slaves to raise exotic beasts, feasting on them as he sees fit; **Balaur of Debauch**, who captures free pagus to engorge his numbers and maintain the high population of his slaves; **Goch of Wrath**, one of the surviving dragon kings who, with no citadel of her own, wanders the lands taking what she wills (though stories tell that she once gutted and claimed a laudenian sky keep as her throne); **Lindis of Avarice**, who keeps her storehouses of treasures hidden and never lingers in any one place for long; **Lotan of Scorn**, whose massive citadel, built around an entire mountain with walls as high as its peak, lies mostly empty due to constantly driving his pagus to war; **Verkelen of Spite**, who despises and distrusts all the other dragons and never reveals his location to anyone; and **Zilant of Indolence**, who is far too lazy to do anything other than lie on a bed of treasures brought to him by his fearful followers, and occasionally eat one of those followers who doesn't show sufficient deference to his majesty. Though each of the seven claims to rule the entire land, they do not fight each other for control

of it except by proxy, sending their pagus slaves to massacre and plunder the slaves of the others.

CYON

Into the Woods

Though not enchanted and tall like chaparran woods over the horizon, Cyon is still equally massive, encircling the entire northeastern wall of Canam. In their fledging first years, Angel clear-cut most of the landscape in their frantic construction, but the trees returned as dense and stout as before in barely a generation. Each time the trees were felled, they grew back just as strong, until the branches began to brush against the Angel wall; there are rumors that a few saplings have begun to spring up inside the walls themselves, but the Crimson Starlight suppresses these whisperings in the name of public morale. On their own, the trees don't appear to be magical at all, but they do radiate an ambient EDF far above that of the surrounding lands. Other than boggs, no other intelligent species are known to inhabit the woods, though the Angel snipers who patrol the outer wall pass locker-room stories that tell otherwise: not just boggs but puggs, skeggs, and even rumors of a chiggoth once. Along with the horrors, there are tales as well of the more obscure fae anathema like faeries, dawnlings, and sylphids.

DAGRON

From the Badlands to the Worselands

Over two hundred years ago, the kodiaks of Alpinas, trained and supplied by the narros of Fargon, drove a large swarm of skeggs out of the central Nankani Mountains into the unclaimed wilderness to the east. They adapted to the bitter cold very quickly and grew in size and numbers. They formed several large communities both underground and on the surface, and their disposition grew colder than even their brothers to the south. They became known as the "Bugbears of Dagron," making regular raids south into more temperate human lands and attacking travelers and undefended communities, even those of their erstwhile brethren. They leave few survivors of these raids, stripping their victims of valuables and taking them back as slaves, destined for the cookpots when they can no longer work. Only two villages are believed to have survived more than a few years: one, Lilecrog, is ruled by the despicable Numak; the other is Silcroge, ruled by Omerogroge, resting at the entrance of a large dungeon filled with stolen treasure. Despite their prosperity in their new homeland, the skeggs have not forgotten their defeat by the kodiaks and wage endless war against them, the longest sustained conflict in Canam's history. The skeggs' superior numbers and greater intelligence might have doomed the Alpinas kodiaks long ago but for the support of others; Fargon continues to supply the largest kodiak bands in the north, and many of the kodiak majority among Seliquam's Train Guard have kindred fighting in the ancient feud.

The skeggs are not alone in their land: trolls and various ice monsters also rampage throughout the region. Further north, in the frostlands of Ashur, frost dragons control and rule over a small fae population. The largest known frost dragon in Canam, a creature known only as "The Snow Devil," resides here, but its exact location is unknown. Above the tundra lies the great glacier Chronzia, worshipped and feared by all the denizens of the north, and somewhere beyond that the mythical titan city of Selmana.

SANA MARSH

Where Nightmares Lurk

A perpetual and permanent fog has spread for hundreds of miles in the land once called the Kingdom of Kardia. The Marsh is the single most dangerous place on the continent. Beasts shuffle into the black and vanish, waiting for an unsuspecting foe. Rumors tell of a terrible evil that lurks in the castle once controlled by King Saran Sana, gathering the power of the Marsh towards it.

Legends tell of one of the first kings of man in the new age, and how his arrogance and naivety reduced his empire to eventual damnation for him and his people. The legend claims that King Sana ruled over one of the first kingdoms in Canam after the opening of Attricana, Kardia. Older than any other surviving human realms, Kardia expanded to dozens of villages while Limshau was still building its first walls. Kardia used knowledge gleaned from the first bastions to create a stable, growing empire with well-paved roads, a reliable underground sewer system, plentiful crops and powerful magic. It is even said that the master mage Kereptis Rifts originally came from Kardia.

Sana, however, grew troubled over his own mortality. Unlike the bastions, afraid and xenophobic, Kardia embraced the new world, almost to a fault. As the fae and half-fae population of the kingdom continued to grow, with much of the population obsessed with magic and the elder folk who had mastered it, Sana came to realize that his own lineage was threatened with obscurity. Though already married, with two sons, he began seeking a fae bond – at first not for gift of long life it would bestow on him, but so that his heirs would receive the adulation that the merest peasant could command as long as their ears were pointy. However, every one of his invitations was rebuffed, and not long after, both of Sana's young sons given to him by his innocent wife fell to a rare infection, taking them quickly and painfully. Without heirs, Sana became paranoid about losing his lineage and set his wizards examining any avenue that might extend his life or grant him the fae bride he desperately needed. Finally, in his declining years, a great dark dragon with decayed skin, perforated wings, and a near-barren skull appeared at the gates of Gothas. The creature promised to return the empire to power and vowed to force the arrogant fae to kneel to true immortality. Though tempted by the offer, Sana had no desire for immortality, only the endurance of his

lineage. The dragon then offered him something else: his long-sought bride.

Her name was Umala. A tightly wrapped silk bandage covered her eyes, though she could still sense her surroundings with ease. She possessed the ears of the fae but little else Sana could recognize as chaparran, gimfen, or damaskan. The dragon declared its own blessing was proof of the fae's noble blood. Umala even possessed a great book of magic claiming to hold a power the gods feared to offer man. Though Saran's first wife objected to the pairing, the king agreed to the bonding.

The events that followed have fallen into obscurity; even the libraries of Limshau do not hold an accurate account. The public was not permitted to see the concubine of the king. Though elderly and near senility, the thrust of Sana's manhood returned. His old and faithful wife was cast aside quickly in favor of virginal pleasures. After Sana's lust was satisfied, one story claimed Sana would bellow a great exhalation of soot and smoke which would settle and float about the kingdom. A similar account, less popular but likely more accurate, claimed that the very citizens of the empire would fall asleep to awaken aged to the point of death, their bodies expelling a great darkness upon their demise which refused to evaporate with the morning dew. More people fell to dust, replaced by the growing mist, which wafted about the living, whispering dark thoughts in their ears, turning some to madness and violence and the rest to dull servitude. Little food grew in the mist-wracked land, and those who ate what what did grow turned into monsters and fed on those who remained. The castle of Gothas became infested with sourceless shadows. Where Sana walked, they followed, they watched, yet never revealed themselves. As more of his people died, the shadows increased; the fog thickened. Sana's forgotten bride perished in the empty halls, along with all who had once been loyal to him. Years passed into decades, finally leaving only a few souls lingering in the darkness, unable to change their fate. The fog seeped into the soil and salted the earth. Contaminated water rose from the depths. The castles and manors of the great houses collapsed to rot and ruin, until only the tower of Kardia-Gothas remained. The shapeless forms roamed the landscape as an army, raised from the ashes of withered corpses. A few soon spread from the dark shroud into the outer lands, encouraging others to enter the Marsh with similar promises of immortality and magic, knowing protracted stays ensured another meal for the king and the demon at his side.

It is said that Sana lives still, twisted and aged but refusing to die, an empty shell of a man driven by the twin curses of boundless sorrow and unquenchable desire. Umala, unchanged in those years, refused her husband's undying appetite unless new souls entered the Marsh. Those daring to breach the cursed land should exercise caution not to stir the attention of the mistress of Sana or her king, lest they fall victim to their lust.

TRANQUISS

The Dark Wood

Twisted with evil, blackened with corruption and cloaked in darkness, Tranquiss is, after the Sana Marsh, one of the most dangerous territories of Canam. It began with the infection of a single tree but soon spread to others, then dozens, and then hundreds. The trees lost their leaves and the sap turned to blood. Hairlike tendrils grew from the bark which gravitated toward living flesh, and anything they touched was sucked dry of its energy and left as a desiccated husk. The wood can neither be burned nor cleansed of its infection by any known magic. Even the most powerful spells only halt the spread temporarily rather than cure it. The plague

known as Trendance covered hundreds of square miles before any even realized the threat. The canopy of the central hive of the forest is so tightly packed with long, sharp branches, no creature has ever successfully found the first tree which started the calamity. Though some believe destroying this tree would cure the entire forest, there is no evidence for this.

The infection has taken most of the natural trees and now threatens both Skepsis and Laurama. Much of Laurama has already been taken though not enough to threaten the chaparrans there. Some believe enemies of the fae created the deadly forest in hope the infection would suffocate or consume them.

The only creatures that reside in Tranquiss are unnatural monstrosities that carry the infection with them like a symbiote, and the cancer dragons, one of the most notorious of which is Carcin of Pathos, a despicable creature known to belch living tumors that slither across the ground to attach and infect victims with their plague. Carcin is even more insane than most cancer dragons, and only a lingering sense of self-preservation keeps him from blindly attacking Laurama or Limshau directly. Cancer dragons feel welcome in the pestilence of Tranquiss and fear the holy, healing power of Skepsis, dreading that the fabled Skepsis Tree, with its power to cure all ills, might free them from the diseases wracking their immortal forms. Every year Tranquiss grows another few meters, spreading its claws about Laurama and Skepsis.

XIXION

A Wretched Hive

Puggs, even more than pagus and humans, are the fastest-growing intelligent species on the planet. They broke off late from the damaskans and are considered one of the least civilized of all fae races. They have little culture of their own, preferring to steal and corrupt the trappings of it from their more civilized neighbors, and reproduce at an alarming rate. Puggs spread across the globe quickly, though the highest concentration remains where they first appeared, on the central west coast of Canam. Their elder brethren, the more intelligent boggs, found that they could use their own size to subjugate the smaller kaddog and use their strength of numbers to amass great wealth and power, though most puggs live a feral life beholden only to the strongest of their swarm.

The pugg-infested region known as Xixion covers almost half of the land west of the Nankani Mountains, but no roads cross it. Their growing armies push ever to the north, south, and east, encroaching on the bastions of Selkirk and Angel and the lands around them. A brief siege of Angel resulted in the total annihilation of the attacking army, and they have not attempted it again. With the bastions' official policy of non-involvement in the realms of magic, it is left to the echans to keep the pugg population down, though both bastions have been known to offer covert support. In the north, the Seliquam Confederation formed to combat the menace, while in the south the various free houses and independent settlements take arms against the swarms' incursions. Narros and damaskans are particularly fierce in clearing out large concentrations of their evil little cousins wherever they occurred. To the east, the onward push is stymied by the unpassable evil of the Sana Marsh and a strange power that somehow prevents them from simply swarming over the mountains protecting Salvabrooke. Instead, they pushed south throughout the Nankani Mountains, burrowing into holes and filling them up with stolen treasure, piles of decaying garbage, and more puggs. Passing travelers in the lands surrounding Xixion still need to contend with raiders, but otherwise the 'nation' lies quiescent but for their annual invasion of the Seliquam river val-

ley, where they batter their oversized heads against the Redoubt at Last Hope for a few weeks before returning to their holes. This may turn out to be a sleeping lion, as their frantic reproduction continues.

Puggs do not coordinate or plan, only rage. They have no talents for strategy or stealth, and no appreciation for the things they steal. They are a mass of living death – a humanoid locust swarm that ravages terrain and then moves on. The central areas of Xixion are barren and lifeless. Even the trees have been stripped of their bark and burned. Several years ago, a bevy of custodians and librarians attempted to analyze the patterns of the pugg swarms and managed to distinguish four different masses of puggs, which all continually shift positions and are slowly approaching civilized neighbors. The Etaraki ('Cockroach') swarm comprises of 70,000 puggs while the Eletharius ('Grasshopper') swarm has 100,000 and the Ephesia ('Cicada') swarm has 50,000. But all these together are a mere pint in a gallon in comparison to the pugg 'city' of Seelanus ('Millipede'), dug into the crater of a slumbering volcano in the north coastal Nankani range and which, at last count, had nearly 1,200,000 puggs.

Puggs viciously attack anything that doesn't look like them, and if nothing immediately presents itself, they turn their violence on their own kind. They are one of the most primitive species and what many higher fae fear all faekind is destined to devolve into. Puggs paint no pictures, write no poetry, and carve no sculptures, though they will gladly carry such things off, deface them, and use them to adorn their foul pits (or, more often, use them as toilets). Their towns and villages are nothing more than huts of logs and mud, holes in the ground, or cliff faces strung haphazardly with rotting timbers and ropes. They despise farming and prefer to hunt or steal. If they run out of prey, they eventually turn on each other.

WASTELAND SUMMARY

As someone from a Wasteland, you can…

…survive many things that would kill lesser beings.

…stare fearlessly into the face of death.

…rely on your unrelenting will and catastrophe-reinforced strength to overcome nearly anything.

…intimidate the living daylights out of anyone less tough than you.

COMMUNITY CREATION

Though the world of *Amethyst* is already replete with fantastic locales for heroes to hail from and adventures to transpire in, they amount to a mere patchwork of civilized states surrounded by wilderness. Should your table wish to put their own touch on the landscape, the following rules will let you create your own kingdoms, free houses, bastions and techan atolls to supplement or even replace the existing nations. Players should be already familiar with the Amethyst setting before attempting these optional rules. If you wish to use them, community creation should take place before character creation, especially for techan parties.

STEP ONE: COMMUNITY CONCEPT

First, decide whether you are creating a techan or an echan community, and determine its species demographics and where on the continent you are placing it. Then come up with a single aspect that sums up the community – the 'travel brochure' heading, as it were. It should be descriptive and evocative enough that someone might decide to be from the place just on the basis of how interesting the concept aspect is.

When determining where the community is placed, don't worry too much about the existing geopolitical landscape – since so much of the continent is a blank slate, it's easy to fit additional nations into the mix, or carve them out of existing ones. You can even replace existing communities if you like – it's your table, and nobody's going to stop you.

STEP TWO: ADVERSITY

Just like characters, communities have an adversity aspect, representing a particular constant difficulty that besets them. Abidan has its ever-looming two-front conflict; Selkirk has its physical isolation; Baruch Malkut is despised by the entire continent; Mann despises the entire world. Your community likewise needs something compelling to force adventurers out into the wilds to try to better their lot at home.

While a techan community's adversity will almost certainly relate to echan relations, how it relates to them should be unique and interesting. Angel, with walls designed to keep the magical world at bay, shelters an echan community within those very walls; Selkirk actively courts echan trade, but is prevented from fully exploiting it by impassable rocks and strong magical fields; York welcomes echan traffic, as long as they do not linger; Mann shoots non-humans on sight; Sierra Madre views the outside world as a mere curiosity. When creating your own bastion, consider first whether your population views the fantasy world as a neighbor or as an invader, and echans as people to be traded with but kept at a distance or as abominations to be exterminated; then build your adversity based on the most interesting way you can think of to embody that attitude.

STEP THREE: VOCATIONS

Every community should have at least one vocation. This can represent many things – the technological footprint of a techan community (represented by its TL), the average competence of its military, an unusual talent possessed by most residents, a particularly strong EDF, the miasma of terror imposed by a dragon overlord, or anything else that strikes your imagination and would be best represented by hard numbers. Come up with up to three vocations for the community and divide four ranks between them. Like character voca-

tions, any vocation of +2 or higher should be supported by an aspect. A techan community must allocate at least 1 point to the Tech Level vocation, but otherwise there are no restrictions.

Special vocations (such as a magical mutation unique to the region, or access to a particularly rare resource) represent the average level of the population, not the constant level of every member. Player characters who come from the region may take a special vocation as a character vocation at any level they like, or they can fold it in to their regional vocation if they have one (a human from Quinox, for instance, could default to +0 when defending against the cold or ice damage, or could take the Winterfolk vocation at a higher rank to better explore the magical side of their nature).

STEP FOUR: ADDITIONAL ASPECTS (OPTIONAL)

If you feel that the community requires additional aspects to fully describe them, choose between one and three more. If you need to tie any of the community's vocations to an aspect, now is the time to do so. Community aspects might fall into one of the following categories:

Landmark: A particular topographical or architectural feature of the community which is significant enough to color its view of the world and its view by the world; for example, Genai would be one such for Angel, and the Temple would be one for Genai; the Sky Network for Laudenia; the Redoubt at Last Hope for Seliquam; the proximity to Mann for York.

Diplomacy: Special allies or enemies of the community; for instance, Limshau's treaty with Abidan or cold war with Baruch Malkut; Selkirk's trade relations with Fargon or military aid to Seliquam; Antikari's guardianship of the western Continental Cross; or Salvabrooke's status as the continent's biggest tourist trap.

Talent: A special trait possessed by at least a portion of the populace. This is a good aspect to tie any 'special' vocations to. Examples include Quinox's winterfolk; Selkirk's mixture of industrial unionization, militarism, and rugby; Gnimfall's greater technology base compared to other gimfen communities; Angel's easier access to echan goods.

STEP FIVE: STUNTS (OPTIONAL)

Create three stunts that a person from the community might take. Consider the community's aspects and vocations, and determine how an exceptional citizen might take their homeland's native proclivities and dial them up to eleven. Consult the existing regional vocations for ideas if you get stuck.

None of the characters needs to take any of these stunts, but since it is much easier to come up with stunts when you have a personal stake in them than when approaching them as an intellectual exercise, the end result may be better if you keep your own characters in mind when creating these.

STEP SIX: CHARACTER CREATION

Start making characters, using the community you've built as inspiration.

Aiden returned only minutes before sunrise. The door to the apartment didn't creak. He snuck into his room and navigated around the unpacked boxes. The moon was about to fall under the crown. Aiden slipped under the sheets and closed his eyes. Despite being tired, he opened them moments later and rolled back to see Martin's still empty bed. Aiden moved his attention to the window, to the setting moon and its companion, to that one bright star floating near the lunar horn.

Attricana.

It wasn't a star but a hole in the cosmos, a door to another place. From it flowed the chaos that shaped a new world while destroying the old one.

Aiden closed his eyes and dreamt, though not of dragons and elves, of knights and wizards. He dreamt of his mother.

* * *

Aiden looked at the passing businessmen, politicians, policemen, and teachers. They all knew. Maybe not of magic and monsters, but they'd known enough and hadn't told him. They didn't care. They didn't want to know, to be reminded about what wasn't normal. Children played the games. They dreamt. The avatars they took on in the digital world offered them the role they could never fulfill in life. Aiden looked over his classmates and wondered how many of their dreams had been denied.

"Computer programmer!" William shouted. Aiden realized that the books given to him were old and worn for a reason. No one wrote these stories anymore. No one wanted to be reminded about what they had lost.

"Nice, Jeffery. Lara?" Mr. Leach asked. Aiden wondered why his mother had made the exception. Why did she tell him those stories, search for that rare freeware?

"An architect," Lara answered.

"Good, that's productive, Aiden?"

Weeks before, Aiden had been daydreaming of riding dragons and rescuing princess, engrossed in forgetting the world around him. Now he wanted to know everything, every why and every how. Leach didn't repeat himself; he leaned in to force Aiden's attention.

"Hmm?" Aiden responded, oblivious to the subject. The class never taught him what he really wanted to know. He learned it because society expected him to, because he was adept at it, because eventually childhood must end. But fantasies were now fact, and Aiden could

learn of that without the mockery of embracing a dream.

Leach was about to scold him again, but stopped. "What do you want to do when you're older?"

"What I want?" Aiden almost mumbled.

"Yes...I mean we have an architect, programmer, doctor." He pointed to another child. "A janitor for some reason. What do you want to be?"

Aiden thought it over. He didn't care how the class would react. "I want...to be a wizard."

The students looked to him. A few chuckled. William gritted his teeth. He had been warned to keep quiet. "A...wha…Aiden." the teacher stuttered. Leach could piece together in an instant what thoughts had been circling like a maelstrom in Aiden's mind.

"Yes," Aiden answered.

"Why?"

Aiden tried to think of a better answer but his mind had been fixated on the how, not the why, so no better answer slipped out. "Because I can," he said.

* * *

Martin was leaning on a railing outside of Aiden's school as his little brother ran out.

"All good?" Martin asked. Aiden nodded. Martin led his brother away. He took the responsibility seriously, checking traffic and passersby.

"Aiden!" Lara shouted from a playground. The brothers noticed and stopped. "We're playing at the grounds, wanna come?"

Aiden looked back to Martin with his doe eyes on cue. "Yeah...it's ok?" Martin answered. Aiden smiled and hobbled with his heavy bag to the girl. "Be home by 4:00," he added. "Go nowhere else!"

Aiden finally turned back and waved. "Thanks, Marty!" he shouted. Martin watched them approach the swings with other children. Aiden placed his bag on the sand. When Martin was satisfied that Aiden wasn't walking into a bully trap, he continued walking. When he was out of sight, Aiden immediately turned to Lara.

"Thanks Lara," Aiden said, picking his bag back up and strapping it to his back for the long haul.

"You are invited," she answered.

"Thanks...I know." Aiden made for a nearby path that bisected two houses and led back to a main road.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

Aiden stopped and turned back. "Better you don't know."

"You're weird, Aiden."

"Thanks." He smiled. He stepped away to the path but kept looking at her. "Lara? Do you know about what's beyond the city?"

"Past the wall?" she asked. Aiden nodded. "It's wild and dangerous. Why?"

"No reason," Aiden replied, turned and upgraded his walk to a run as he reached the path.

* * *

David Chen held a paper bag of various fruits, purchased from Genai farms, grown under sunlight with rain fallen from clouds. They weren't genetically modified replicas designed to be cultivated in foreign environments. They weren't grown in atmospheric controlled multi-leveled greenhouses. The shop was still open, being tended by Chen's single employee, a fifteen-year-old Asian girl with trimmed straight black hair, oversized glasses, a long neck and a chest as flat as Ganymede--moon or myth. As Chen approached the open gate with his groceries, he heard Aiden's shout behind him.

"I don't want to be what they tell me!"

Aiden had gotten his attention. Chen turned around.

"Pardon?" Chen asked.

"I don't want to be like them, like my brother!"

"There are many things you can do to be different, Aiden."

"I want to be what I want!" Every sentence got louder. "Why do I have to settle for what they say I can be? I don't have to now! I don't want to be part of this! How can I go back, knowing what I know? I want magic! I want dragons! I want everything they said I couldn't have!"

Chen stepped forward. Aiden had also gotten the attention of Chen's employee, leaning in from her duties to see the commotion. "It will take a long time," Chen answered. "Not all the books were right. It'll be years before you're ready, and it doesn't always take."

"The sooner I start..."

"Even knowing what you'll have to give up. Cars?"

"Don't drive."

"Television?"

"Nothing good on."

"Computers?"

"I play games with magic." Aiden had an answer for everything, he though ahead.

"Refrigerators?" Except that one. "Central heating?" Chen paused and emphasized the next one. "Electricity?"

"Can't I make my own?"

Chen smiled with nod. "Yes, you may actually." He nudged his chin in the direction of the door. "Enter then."

Aiden approached the entrance and noticed the girl staring at him.

"Aiden," Chen said, "this is Min Xia Wen, my employee." The girl waved and Aiden, suddenly revolted by his school clothes, responded bashfully with a nod. Chen motioned Aiden to a desk. "Have a seat."

Aiden followed, dangling his legs over the uncomfortable stool. A fifty pound book weighted with gold leaf and wooden toggles slammed onto the desk. Chen unlocked it and flipped a few of the metallic pages. There was no artwork and the phrases were complicated and convoluted, containing numerous syllables with meanings beyond a twelve-year old's comprehension.

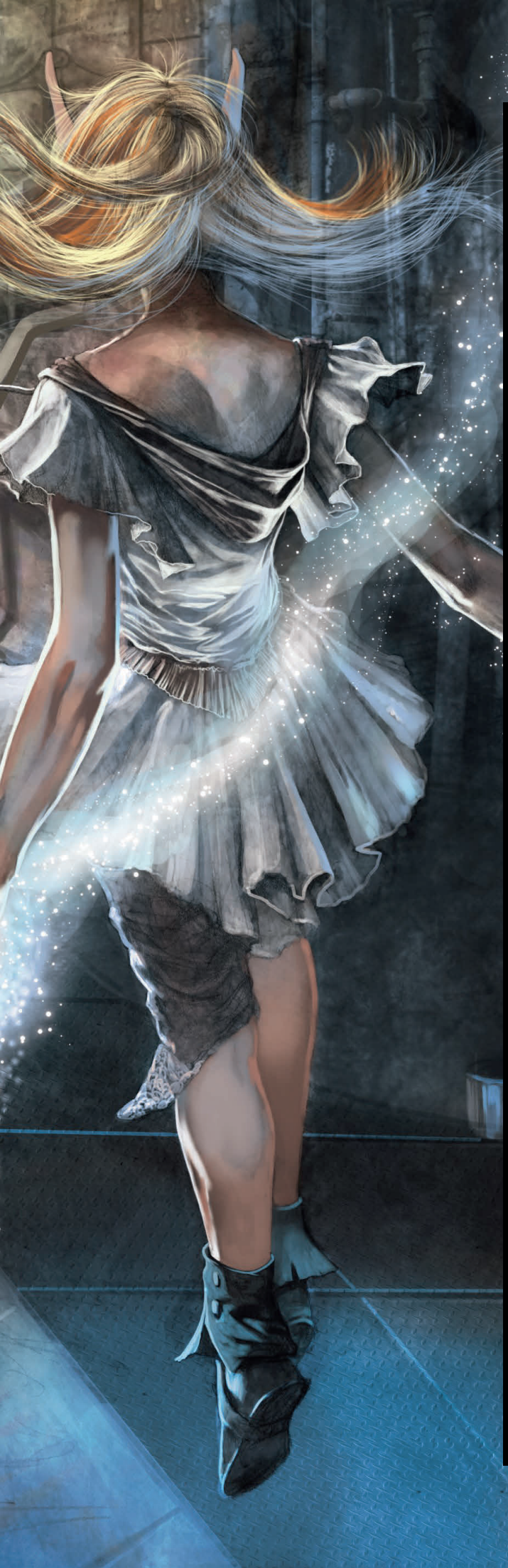
"What's this?" Aiden asked.

"The first of many," Chen answered as he walked away. Aiden shared a look at Min, who shrugged back.

Aiden examined the intimidating hardback. "You're only trapped if you can't find the door," Aiden repeated his mother's passing comment.

Aiden leaned in and began to read.

CHAPTER SIX: EQUIPMENT



Although Earth now resembles the ancient landscapes of fantasy, medieval it is not. The push for survival did not retard progress, and those building the first cities after gate-fall, even if outside the first fledging bastions, still possessed enough talent to build insulated housing and double-paned glass. Much basic technology still works most of the time, despite the occasional hiccup. Most of all, the knowledge from thousands of years of trial and error remained. The armor of today is lighter, stronger, and more maneuverable than the armor of legend. Swords are sharper and more balanced. Purely mechanical devices below a certain complexity, especially agricultural machinery, are retooled to accept animal or human power. Additionally, the functional limits of technology vary from place to place according to the density of the EDF. Prevented from developing complicated machines, many survivors delved into new areas, pioneers in alternative paths of development previously considered obsolete given the onset of the industrial revolution.

Alongside these innovations, bastions have employed their advanced expertise to weaving better clothes and forging better armor. Originally intended only for their own populations, word of the value of these goods has spread beyond their walls. Though their high tech weapons and devices are useless on the outside, bastions could still sell mass-produced, durable creature comforts, and even advanced versions of low-tech technologies, replacing tempered steel with carbon nanotubes, wood with advanced plastics, wool and cotton with synthetic fibers. This resulted in a torrent of new exports, boosting the economies of growing nations. The processes to create these items in bulk necessitates the use of bastion knowledge and machinery, methods only replicated where the EDF is low or virtually nonexistent; thus markets usually sell these items for outrageous markups. Bastions like Angel and especially York turned this into a substantial windfall as the money turned in (gold, silver, and platinum) could be converted into raw materials. Disruption-immune bastion exports have found their way across the echan countryside, employed by almost every manner of individual, though often only held by human hands. Many of the more old-fashioned fae, especially laudenians and chaparrans, despise these items.

The chief obstacle faced in open echa to a lifestyle not entirely unlike that of, say, the mid-20th century pre-Hammer is not lack of knowledge and development, but the lack of the dedicated infrastructure required to take advantage of it. The rare echans granted a peek inside the bastions (and allowed to come out again) often wax rhapsodical about two things: electric lighting and flush toilets. In fact, indoor plumbing is far from an impossibility in echan communities, powered as it is entirely by simple mechanical processes such as pressure and gravity – what most of echa lacks is the extensive sewage and water table management facilities necessary to maintain such conveniences (even so, many present-day castles are equipped with running water and modern lavatorial facilities). Electricity is more problematic: though the processes for generating it work normally, even simple batteries lose their charge two to ten times faster than in techan communities, and even the most conductive wiring is incapable of carrying a current more than five miles. Thus, electric power is rarely seen in echa except in a few enterprising mountain villages who have refitted their mills with simple hydroelectric or wind-powered generators.

The greatest distinction between technology and magic is progress. Technology improves as a civilization endeavors to better itself. The desire to advance from a primitive design encourages the

development of better materials, better processes, and better machines. There has never been a point where a society was content with what it had achieved. Based in the most basic evolutionary drive, a species must expand both in knowledge and in scope in order to remain competitive against rivals. These rivals include other nations as well as other species. This compulsory habit in humans is almost totally absent in non-evolved species like the fae, and even magically uplifted species like the kodiaks are slow to embrace this biological obligation to subsume or subjugate underdeveloped people, building upon a ruined foundation of past accomplishments.

Magic does not improve; when it changes, it does so on its own, and in random and unpredictable ways. Creatures of magic are the same the world over, except when they devolve, and even then the mutation usually takes the same form whenever it occurs from the same stock. The spells of yesteryear are the same cast today. Arcane knowledge and the ways of Pleroma passed down from the dragons in the previous age are finite. Though occasionally new spells are uncovered, they have not improved the knowledge of the language or how it is able to alter the world when uttered. No matter how powerful magic is, it does have limits, and only the most powerful dragons seem capable of transcending those limits. Additionally, the only creatures gifted with such enlightenment about Pleroma are creatures without the biological compulsion to better their species. Therefore there has never been an attempt by the fae to improve upon it, and a human lifetime is too severely limited to understand all the chaotic variables associated with magic.

With this impediment, many echalogians on both sides of the magical/technological axis have predicted that eventually, science will inevitably discover how to overcome their sensitivity to magical effects; theories of quantum mechanics already posit machines capable of making minute adjustments to their own inner workings to compensate for the vagaries of the EDF. Additionally, bastions like Porto and Mann have put forward proposals for creating a field that simulates a negative energy signature not unlike the energy from Ixindar. This would result in an "anti-magic field" that would render all magic within it inert. If successful, the retaking of the Earth by men and machines would be inevitable.

EQUIPMENT RULES

A techan is defined by her technology, and though the average echan might never see a legitimate magic sword in his life, equipment is nevertheless an important element of life for adventurers of both stripes. Ordinary equipment in Amethyst is considered background information, relevant to the character's aspects and vocations. A warrior is expected to have a weapon and armor of some sort. Thieves will have lockpicks, a law enforcement officer will have a badge and a gun, a knight-errant will have weapons, armor and a horse. These things are assumed unless someone creates an advantage related to their absence or compels the same.

Special gear is another matter. All but the most basic techan equipment is engineered to perfection, making light of simple tasks; and while echans may lack advanced machining and materials, the storied legacy of a sword may inspire the young soldier who wields it, or the ancient boots of a peasant yeoman may give aid and comfort to his grandson, forced by bitter necessity to walk the same path.

In mechanical terms, all special gear has its own aspects, vocations, and stunts. Equipment actually has two types of aspects: **general** and **mode**. A general aspect is always in effect: most equipment only has one

general aspect (its name, which is also its concept aspect). A character always has access to any general aspects and vocation ratings of their equipment: modes and stunts are restricted as indicated below.

Every character receives one free invocation of any of their gear aspects per session. Techan characters receive two additional free invocations if the adventure takes place primarily in environments where their equipment is likely to disrupt (see **Echan Disruption Field**).

MODES

Modes are equipment configurations that are quiescent until activated. Most of the time, these are aspects, although occasionally a mode can be a gear stunt. The difference between a mode and a normal advantage is that you do not need to make a check to activate a mode: you simply take a generic action and the aspect is placed (or for non-aspect modes, the stunt comes into effect). Of course, since you don't make the advantage check, you don't get the free invocation for a success: if you want to make a check anyway, you can, but then you run the risk of failure. You can also spend a fate point or a free invocation of a gear aspect (if you have one available) to activate a mode without taking an action.

GEAR STUNTS

Most gear has stunts associated with it which allow those trained in its use to get more from their equipment. Some **gear stunts** are free: in this case, anyone with the item can use the stunt. Otherwise, the stunt is restricted, and you must pay for it with refresh as if it were a normal vocation stunt.

If you can't (or don't want to) gain the stunt by reducing your refresh, you have two other options: you can use it as a one-off by invoking the equipment's aspect (the same as any other stunt you don't have), or you can take it as a permanent stunt without paying refresh – **but in exchange, the GM adds another fate point to her reserve for each scene.**

PERMISSIONS AND COSTS

Most special gear has specific requirements to use it. Most techan equipment, of course, breaks down more or less instantly when used by a non-techan, but even a magic sword might only work for members of a certain bloodline, or when its powers are activated by a particular ritual.

Technological devices do not explicitely require 'techan human or gimfen' as permissions, but anyone else will find it difficult to use them. While pagus do not intrinsically disrupt technology, neither do they regularly have access to it except in special circumstances (requiring a relevant aspect to justify the exception at character creation: gear acquired in play does not have this requirement). Other echans can use TL0 gear and weapons that are ***Immune to Disruption***, but as these are not always easy to come by, they too require a relevant aspect to justify.

All permanent gear stunts cost refresh unless they are specifically designated as being free.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

It is important to remember that in Fate, the story reality determines the words on the character sheet, not the other way around. Your aspects are not the only things that define you – they are merely the few things you deem significant enough to warrant providing mechanical benefits. In essence, anything in the game world is an aspect in potentia, but it doesn't get written up in ***Bold Italics*** until you decide to take advantage of it. A sword is always a sword, but if you decide at character creation to make it a ***Sword***, you are making a statement about how significant that sword is to your character.

Additionally, certain aspects and vocations presume the existence of particular equipment: having the vocation is the same thing as having the equipment. The kitarri vocation, for instance, assumes that the character is wielding a black bow. You don't need to designate ***Kitarri Black Bow*** as an aspect on the character sheet if you're a kitarri, unless you want the security of being able to invoke it.

Techan gear is something of a special case: even if you don't have gear aspects for your equipment, it still has a tech level and can still disrupt (see **Echan Disruption Field** for more information).

SIMPLE EQUIPMENT

If complicated equipment entries aren't your thing, just use simple aspects to represent equipment. Weapons, armor, and other equipment behave the way your table's common sense says they should behave. Anything that isn't narratively significant is just background flavor until you create an advantage that says it's significant. The story should always come first.

If you want to stick closer to the abstract equipment rules of *Fate Core* while still making gear 'crunchy,' treat all special gear as an extra. Each item should have a permission (even if that permission is just 'possessing related aspect' or 'finding the item in-game'), and the character must take at least one of the item's stunts (at a cost of one refresh). Any item that is not especially significant (normal armor, weapons, etc.) should just be treated as background equipment.

Instead of using the Resources skill for determining whether or not you have or can obtain a piece of mundane equipment, use your highest pertinent vocation (unless you are also using the *Core* skills instead of vocations).

ACQUIRING GEAR

All characters are assumed to have any mundane equipment that their vocations require: this includes basic weapons and armor, tools, vehicles or mounts, even

NPCs if appropriate (although such NPCs do not have statistics, merely narrative presence). As long as the gear has no special abilities associated with it, its possession can be assumed as long as there is narrative justification for having it and its absence has not been previously compelled.

Special gear is a different matter. Unless the character has invested character resources (aspects, vocations, or stunts) into the item, it must be acquired through gameplay – whether through being found in a dungeon or bartered with a shopkeeper.

IS THAT A PLASMA RIFLE IN YOUR POCKET?

Occasionally you may be in a situation where you absolutely need a piece of equipment which you didn't think you'd need the last time you were in the vicinity of a shop. In this case, you have two options. If the equipment is something that you might reasonably be expected to carry with you, you can justify it being background equipment (and can use the advantage action to make it a temporary gear aspect if you like). If the item is something less reasonable ("well, I just happen to have an energy shield generator in my pack"), or you want to turn it into a permanent gear aspect, you can compel the GM to let you retcon having brought it (of course, the GM is under no obligation to accept if the request is particularly ridiculous).

STARTING GEAR

Every character begins with three gear aspects representing particularly significant gear. Techan characters can choose technological items up to TL2 (unless their home bastion has a lower TL), which must be appropriate to the character's station in life: for instance, a civilian should not have access to military grade weaponry, and a pauper shouldn't have access to anything more than 2 tech levels below the bastion's maximum. You can exchange one or more of these slots to increase the maximum vocation rating of one other item (so, if you only took two items, you could start with a +1 sword without having to use your own vocation rating for it, or to get a TL3 pistol in a TL2 bastion). It is possible for groups to pool their resources in order to obtain more expensive items that would benefit the entire party: for instance, each member donating an item slot to obtain a vehicle. If you want more starting gear aspects, or gear with vocation ratings or stunts, you have to use your normal aspects, vocations, and stunts to buy them, or wait until you have an opportunity to obtain them in-game.

RESOURCES

As a rule, it is assumed that adventurers pick up enough coin on their travels to be able to afford decent (if not extravagant) food and lodging, to maintain their mundane equipment in good working order and acquire replacements, pay henchmen and provide for mounts, and so on. These things happen in the background and are not worth considering unless you choose to bring them to the forefront of the narrative.

If you have a vocation (usually professional) which you think you can leverage into purchasing power, you make an advantage check using that when attempting to buy goods or services. If you succeed, you gain the item as a new gear aspect, or the service as a new situation aspect: since this is also a normal advantage check, you gain a free invocation as usual. If you do not succeed, you can still obtain the item or service, but at a cost: you may have ***Tapped Out Your Credit*** and can't buy anything else for a while, or you ***Borrowed from Unsavory Moneylenders*** to be able to afford it, or the merchant gives you a substantial discount in exchange for performing a trivial errand, like retrieving a certain item from a ravenous monster's lair (in this case, you do not gain the free invocation of your new aspect: since it isn't really reasonable to rephrase a gear aspect and give an NPC merchant a free invocation of it, in this case the check simply generates two aspects – one for you, one for the GM).

The cost of a purchase should be equal to its vocation rating or the rating of the seller (whichever is higher), modified by 1-3 either way according to the rarity or difficulty of obtaining the item or service. All purchases should be opposed checks – whether dealing with canny coin-counters outside the bastion or slick salesmen inside it, barter and wheeling-and-dealing is the name of the game for anything worth spending narrative time on.

TREASURE

Treasure is treated as a kind of special equipment, with an aspect and a vocation rating. A good dungeon haul might provide the party with ***A Small Fortune in Gold and Gems*** **(+2)** which they can use to their advantage when they get back to town… unless it's stolen by raiders first.

A treasure can be used as its own vocation when attempting to purchase something, or it can be invoked to assist another vocation. Each time the treasure is invoked, or if you tie or fail when making a check with it, its vocation rating is reduced by 1 and its aspect should be rephrased to represent getting a little bit smaller. Once the treasure's rating is reduced to +0, it is totally spent the next time it is used regardless of the result of the transaction.

RESOURCE POINTS

If you prefer your equipment system a little less abstract, here is an alternative.

Each character has a number of resource points equal to 3 plus the rank of their highest vocation that would reasonably be their means of livelihood. Usually, this will be their lifepath, for a total of 6 resource points – however, a character who is a Beat Cop (+1) during the day and a vigilante Gunslinger (+3) at night would have 4 resource points. For each aspect you have that indicates greater access to resources (through wealth or connections), you gain an additional resource point.

All completely mundane tools and any equipment that the character cannot perform their vocation without have a cost of 0. Mundane weapons and armor, and any tools with basic special functions, have a cost of 1. Basic special weapons and armor, advanced special tools, mounts and vehicles have a cost of 2. Advanced special weapons, armor, and vehicles have a cost of 3. Unique items may have a different cost as determined by the GM. An item is considered mundane if it doesn't have a vocation rating, basic if it has a rating of 2 or less, and advanced if it has a rating of 3 or more.

When using this system, instead of being special equipment, treasure should just provide resource points equal to 1 + the vocation rating it would normally have

TECH LEVELS

Tech levels indicate the differences between the bastions. Some of these city-states reached pinnacles of advancement before others. Some struggled to survive while others flourished. With the EDF making near-instantaneous long-range communication impossible, the bastions grew and developed separately from their brethren. After 500 years, they are not about to start sharing. Bastions would not only fight for technology but for the people possessing the knowledge to build it. Tech levels indicate the possible origin of a weapon as well as its damage potential. Anyone finding and using high tech gear is skittish about flaunting it in a lower-TL bastion for fear it will be confiscated, dismantled, and reverse engineered.

Six tech levels exist. These are broad categorizations reflecting both how advanced a device is and how easily disrupted it is by EDF. There are often exceptions when a bastion develops a device higher then their stated tech level. Higher tech level bastions gain access to all levels below them. 'Tech Level' is not a term that is used in-universe, but most bastions are broadly aware of the tiers of distinction between one another and have their own methods of classifying those differences.

TECH LEVEL 0

This level covers all technological development from the early industrial level to the start of the microchip revolution. Most, but not all TL0 technology is ***Immune to Disruption,*** although this depends on the strength of the local EDF, and as always, the less advanced the machine, the safer.

Vehicles: Aircraft utilize aero-forms with jet engines or propellers. Vehicles roll on wheels but possess traction control and anti-lock brakes. Military craft flaunt armor and tank treads. Fly by wire.

Weapons: Bolt action and flechette rounds fire from most guns. Electronically stacked projectiles and caseless ammunition. Basic energy weapons are limited to short range electric shocks.

Medical: Natural healing mostly, assisted by EKGs and X-Ray machines. Surgery can cure most wounds, but recovery can last a while.

TECH LEVEL 1

At this level, almost every form of technology has integrated electronics and advanced computer control.

Vehicles: Ground vehicles now sport computer navigation, climate control, and electronic stability. Aircraft can now fly themselves if need be. Advanced aerospace has given way to vectored thrust and vertical-take-off aircraft.

Weapons: Computer tracking and targeting. Infrared and thermal imaging is available, but not standard. Firearms haven't changed but have grown more complicated with advanced reloading and higher firing rates. Advances in construction make them lighter with larger calibers.

Medical: Computer diagnostic beds, MRIs, and robotic assisted surgery.

TECH LEVEL 2

This is a liminal stage. Old technologies are simultaneously being advanced and refined at the same time as their inevitable (but still somewhat primitive) replacements are entering circulation. This is the last tech level that an observer from the 21st century pre-Hammer might still find familiar.

Vehicles: Vertical take-off fan craft and wingless jets keep aircraft aloft, are much more stable, and can fly rings around more primitive craft. Aircraft designs are no longer dominated by their massive aero-forms. Ground vehicles still use wheels but now mass transit magnetic vehicles appear as an alternative.

Weapons: Bolt weapons remain the choice for most but the way they fire improves. Railcannons and self-propelled projectiles exist, but are not common.

Medical: Rapid healing injections, designer drugs, gene therapy, and beneficial viruses. Healing time cut in half with medical attention.

TECH LEVEL 3

Refinements in the manipulation of magnetic fields and energy levels characterize this stage.

Vehicles: Magnetic vehicles reduce in size and now replace wheels in common transport. Fanjets shrink and become more efficient.

Weapons: The beginning of basic laser weaponry. Advanced magnetics. Prototype power armor appears.

Medical: Most known diseases are curable. Healing time cut to one-third with medical attention. Nano healing

is in its infancy.

TECH LEVEL 4

At this level, energy is almost as freely manipulable as matter and nanotechnology is ubiquitous.

Vehicles: Robots appear beyond the role of "dumb tool." Power armor is mass produced. Wheeled traffic virtually nonexistent or, if it exists, can traverse any terrain. Ramjets shrink and provide massive thrust in small packages, revolutionizing transportation outside the magnetic-traffic.

Weapons: Laser weapons "tunable." Plasma weaponry. Bolt weapons are outdated.

Medical: Nanotechnology can heal any wounds and even regenerate limbs.

TECH LEVEL 5

Any sufficiently advanced technology would be indistinguishable from magic, if magic didn't break sufficiently advanced technology.

Vehicles: Antigravity replaces all previous transportation.

Weapons: Disruptors, vapor rifles, disintegrator weaponry.

Medical: Complete body reconstruction.

APPLICATION OF TECH LEVELS

An item's listed tech level can be used **in place of any vocation** as a bonus to its relevant application. A tech level 3 item, for example, offers a +3 bonus to its designed use. Tech level vocations do not need to be trained: if you are wielding the item, you can use its tech level vocation. Like any vocation, the tech level can be used for any action as long as that action is narratively justifiable. The tech level vocation can only be used for actions with that item, not any other items that may be used in conjunction: for instance, if you had no vocation relevant to sniping but had a TL3 sniper scope and a TL1 rifle, you could make advantage checks to aim at +3, but you'd still have to make the shot at a base of +1.

The item's tech level is also used for all advantage checks to use the device's modes, regardless of whether a higher-ranked character vocation is available: sometimes, we are as much limited by our technology as we are enabled by it.

The tech level also determines how easily the item is affected by disruption (see below) and affects the difficulty of repairs and modifications to the item.

ECHAN DISRUPTION FIELD (E.D.F.)

Magic retards the progression of technology. It breaks down lubrications. It jams gears and shorts out electronics. It overloads batteries. Everything more complicated than basic clockwork is vulnerable, given enough exposure, but the more advanced the technology, the more susceptible it is: in most places, anything up to a simple combustion engine can manage with minimal difficulty, but even something as basic as a bicycle will break down if caught in the backblast from a dragon's breath (of course, at that point, you have bigger things to worry about). Because magic grows as more people use it, bastions are relatively safe within the confines of their walls or city limits. The moment they leave their borders and brave the outlands, their machinery and electronics begins to degrade. As technology comes into contact with higher concentrations of enchantment, it becomes prone to interference. This leads some machines to become less efficient, cease working altogether, or – in some rare cases – violently destroy themselves. Whenever technology is outside of a bastion, there is little anyone can do to impede this disruption. At best, they can slow or delay the effects for a short time.

Magical energies and creatures generate what is called an **Echan Disruption Field** (or **Enchanted Disruption Field**), or EDF. Some bastions even rate an ED -I, or ED Index, which charts the hot spots in the world which users of technology need to avoid. The low level EDF saturating the entire world interrupts radio waves and nullifies the ability of anything other than gold wires to channel electricity over long distances, preventing communication between the bastions and limiting the lifespan of batteries.

DISRUPTION EVENTS

Disruption is a constant threat, even within bastions, but the rules applying to it usually only occur when they are the most inconvenient. Disruption events can occur under the following circumstances:

- The first time in an encounter that someone attempts to use the device;
- Whenever a creature that generates EDF touches the device (echans attempting to use the device always results in disruption of TL1 and higher devices, no check required);
- Any time the device or its wielder is directly affected by magic (any magical attack or advantage; any attempt to enchant the device always results in disruption, no check required);
- Whenever the device or its wielder fails a defense check against a magical creature by 3 or more;
- If the device or its wielder fails a defense check against an attack by a Pincher weapon;
- At the end of each turn sequence;
- Any time that the GM judges appropriate.

At this point, the GM makes an advantage check modified by the item's tech level, with the affected character defending using their highest character vocation that the device's use applies to (if they have no applicable character vocation, they defend at +0). If the check fails, no disruption event occurs. Otherwise, someone's tech becomes ***Disrupted***.

A targeted disruption effect (such as from a spell or being touched by a magical creature) always affects the item or character targeted. For general disruption events (at the end of a turn sequence, or when the GM feels like being perverse), the GM should offer the group at large the opportunity to volunteer to defend against it – if a disruption event occurs, that player gains a fate point as if they had accepted a compel. If no player volunteers, the order of disruption events is determined by the first undisrupted item with the highest TL in the following sequence; weapons, tools/utility items, armor, vehicles, with items actively in use being disrupted first. If there are multiple items, determine the affected one randomly (even if a player volunteers at this point, the disruption event is not treated as a compel – they had their chance). No player can be affected by another disruption event per scene until each player has been affected by one.

There is a dire exception, however. If the disruption check critically succeeds, something sinister occurs. A cataclysmic pulse courses through the unfortunate subjects of the disruption, causing more than a simple inconvenience. Every party member carrying technology suffers a disruption event affecting the highest TL item they have. Thankfully, in this event, every player receives a fate point immediately. Additionally, the GM only gains two free invocations of any ***Disrupted*** aspects created by this critical collapse, not a free invocation of each one.

EFFECTS OF DISRUPTION

A ***Disrupted*** item cannot be used as its own vocation (even at +0), and none of its aspects can be invoked or its stunts used. Additionally, the ***Disrupted*** aspect can be compelled to cause the weapon to malfunction in some way: weapons jam at inconvenient moments; powered armor loses power and immobilizes the wearer; utility devices short out, usually in the middle of attempting to use them. As a general rule, the item cannot be used at all until the end of the owner's next turn after the ***Disrupted*** aspect is invoked or compelled, or after the owner has a final result of +0 or lower on an action using the item. Worst of all, while the item is ***Disrupted***, the GM can compel it to become ***Disabled*** instead, necessitating repairs by someone trained in an engineering vocation.

The owner can attempt to remove the ***Disrupted*** aspect with an overcome action, opposed by the item's tech level: if they have no relevant vocation, they can make the check at +0. If the check succeeds, the device can be used normally (until the next time it is affected by disruption). If the check fails, the device remains ***Disrupted***. After the third failed check for the same item per session, the device is ***Disabled*** instead of ***Disrupted***.

Disabled devices cannot normally be repaired during the same scene they break, although certain stunts may allow it.

SCALING DISRUPTION

The basic rules above assume a low impact of disruption on your game. This is not entirely reflective of the setting but does keep the dangers of disruption low to streamline game flow. Disruption events can be made more severe in one of several ways (which can be used separately or combined, but which should remain consistent throughout the game):

Absolute Disruption: By default, ***Disrupted*** items continue to work, but at reduced efficiency and in unpredictable ways. Optionally, the ***Disrupted*** aspect prevents a device from working entirely until the aspect is overcome. Moreover, a single overcome action only allows the item to work again for a single action: you must succeed at three overcome checks before you reach three failures for the session in order to remove the aspect.

EDF Ratings: EDF is not uniform across the planet. Using this option, instead of just using the item's tech level as the modifier to the disruption check, the GM also adds the area's or attacking creature's EDF rating (from +0 to +5). Bastions have a base EDF rating of +0. Any zone with an echan creature or item in it has a minimum rating of +1. Wilderness areas without significant magical saturation are +1. The average echan settlement or magical wilderness area is +2, +3 for significantly magical areas. +4 and +5 should be reserved for zones containing artifacts or fundamentally magical creatures such as dragons.

Wild Surges: To make ***Disrupted*** technology especially unpredictable, whenever you critically succeed on an action with a ***Disrupted*** item, you also gain a boost – but the item breaks immediately. If a single invocation would be enough to push the result up to a critical success, you can even invoke ***Disrupted*** itself on the check.

ECHA-SAFE TECHNOLOGY

Not every technology is subject to disruption – only technology above a certain threshold of complexity. The maximum level of ambient complexity required to make an item immune varies from place to place. Various technological items are also more resistant to disruption: either the technology is so basic that there is nothing for magic to latch onto, or it is so heavily shielded that the EDF cannot affect it. The following cannot be affected by a routine disruption event:

- Items with the ***Immune to Disruption*** aspect;
- Any gimfen thingamajig;
- Any armor not requiring a battery cell for operation;
- Boosters and medical injections;
- All TL0 gear except TL0 weapons.

This does not mean that the item can never be disrupted, but doing so requires a targeted disruption event. Magic can get at anything that depends on moving parts

or variable energy states, even something as simple as a windmill or waterwheel, so it's best not to invite it in.

SHIELDING

The ***Shielded*** aspect does not make an item ***Immune to Disruption***, but it does make it harder to affect. Unlike gimfen shielding, which does make the device Immune to Disruption at the cost of becoming ***Bulky and Awkward***, techan shielding keeps the overall shape of the original object and does not add significant weight to the final design. If an item is ***Shielded***, not only can you invoke that aspect on checks to defend against and recover from disruption events, but you can spend a fate point to instantly remove the ***Disrupted*** aspect (this is a universal property of the aspect, not a stunt).

Shielding can be added to any TL1 or higher device, but doing so may push the item from being basic to being advanced (if using a gear acquisition rule for which that is relevant). Some items are shielded by default: if so, the above effects are folded into the item's concept aspect.

GEAR DESCRIPTIONS

The following are examples of the types of equipment available. This is by no means a complete catalogue: if you want a piece of gear for your character and can't find it (or something like it) here, feel free to make up whatever you need for your own table.

CURRENCY

Without an extensive system of banking and trade exchanges, each kingdom issues its own currency. Since the concept of paper money in any great quantity relies on a trust that market economies are simply unable to match, nearly all of these currencies are issued in coin. Long before man's evolution, the fae nations decided that regardless of what stamp was cast on the coin, the best way to ensure fair commerce was to make the value of the coin equal to that of the metal it is made from. It is not unheard of for travelers to pay their way in coins of equal value, but from a dozen different kingdoms. Because magic has difficulty forging valuable metals without the aid of a philosopher's stone (the holy grail of alchemy and still only legend), the fae restricted their coins to a small branch of metals: gold, silver, and copper. Gold is the standard, as it is completely impossible to transmute. This was standardized amongst the gimfen, damaskans, and narros (the latter is believed to have pioneered the practice). Chaparrans and laudenians preferred barter to money in their own communities (and still do). Narros eventually added two more to the range, a dull silver coin made from palladium and platinum, and an ultra-rare angelite mint. In the modern world, the fae continued this practice and have endorsed a set of standards for the production and circulation of currency.

Rather than deal with the complexities of money-changing in a culture where trade is sporadic at best, most human nations have simply adopted the fae tradition. Coins trade at the fair market value of their constituent metals. They are all properly stamped for authenticity and are distributed in near identical weight to other coins of equal value. Though each nation issues its own currency with its own unique signature, a coin from Abidan and a coin from Torquil are of more or less

equal purity and value. As the most prolific mines in Canam are operated by the narros and nearly all nations must deal with them for the raw metals necessary to make the coins in the first place, they alone have the economic clout to ensure the system remains equitable across the continent. Baruch Malkut is the only nation that still employs a standardized banknote system for higher denominations, issuing paper with no face value to represent stored riches. Baruch shopkeepers, though encouraged to report those passing unfamiliar money, often take foreign gold, as the coins can be melted and re-stamped. Despite a continued push to eliminate the exchange of this money within their borders, it still occurs. The Malkut slavers, for example, freely accept foreign coins.

ECHAN CURRENCY

For simplicity, all echan coins trade equally with each other. Many kingdoms take foreign gold, melt it, and re-stamp it with their mark. Because of this practice, the Limshau chryso is the most widely circulated currency in Canam, followed distantly by the Narros foot. Here are some examples of Canam currency:

Copper/Brass/Bronze Coins
Abidan/Limshau/Gimfen penny (plural: pennies)
Baruch Malkut copper
Kannos kuedo
Narros copper tooth
Orchis casten
Torquil penny (plural: pence)

Silver Coins
Abidan dagot
Kannos kroenan
Baruch Malkut silver
Gimfen pebble
Limshau carmot
Orchis noman
Narros silver finger
Torquil sterling

Gold Coins
Abidan sovereign
Kannos kannon
Baruch Malkut dollar
Gimfen gold stone
Limshau chryso
Narros golden foot
Torquil crown

Platinum/Palladium Coins
Limshau tollar
Narros pallis spirit

Unique Currency (Various)
Narros angelite opus (=500 gold)
Laudenian enchanted mark (=10,000 gold)
Gimfen pearl (=50 gold)
Quinox crystal (=5 gold)

Houses Antikari, Ogium, Plicato, and Solum all use various other nations' currencies. When Torquil was in its prime, it instigated a massive run of its coins, which was the dominant tender for nearly a century until the kingdom's collapse. Even after, it continued circulation for many decades and is still found today, though overwhelmed by the distribution of Limshau coins. Unique currency is often not accepted outside of the region of issue, except by collectors. The gimfen pearl is an actual pearl but with nearly pin-thin etch-work all over it, making its aesthetic worth far higher than the pearl's intrinsic value. It is often used when flamboyant purchases are made, especially in front of prospective mates. It is commonly considered a sign of arrogance if used for mediocre acquisitions. The laudenian mark, usually used only for rare dealings with other cultures, is merely a glossy disk of brass but is enchanted with a permanent magical endowment, making it completely weightless. It cannot be broken or bent nor can it be picked from its owner's purse: the coins reappear in the owner's possession until willingly handed to another. Though the magic can be pulled off it and used in a constructive way, only the laudenian elder casters know how to accomplish this. The narros opus does not have enough angelite to forge an item but enough coins gathered could be employed in such a way; however, the coins are worth more in their issue than they are in their content and the cost of extracting the usable angelite from the coin would increase the cost of forging the item by upwards of 10%.

Quinox has a unique currency used in the high court and in prestigious markets. It is a small monocrystal three inches across. The unbroken crystal is completely pure with no grain boundaries—a perfect crystal lattice. The ingot boules issued by the state are identical with no markings for their authenticity. None is required, as no single person within and without the House of Quinox knows how the treasury creates such perfection. Chaparrans and laudenians prefer a barter system, but when forced to use money they employ their neighbours' (in this case, Limshau).

Games need not employ this system of currency; just assume the gold they acquire is universal. As an optional rule, GM's are welcomed to include the currency titles above purely as flavor to a scene, or they may impose a rule system upon them, forcing players to track what kinds of money they have and its local value. If so, a few guidelines should be followed:

- Unique currency is only accepted by the government in question and they are often unwilling to trade it over to more acceptable legal tender.
- No one outside of Baruch Malkut accepts their money and no legitimate vendor in the "blessed kingdom" converts their coins or bills to foreign money.
- Banknotes are legal tender, but are usually issued in the form of custom letters of credit and have an accepted range from their bank. Usually, this

range is within 100 miles. Outside of this, the notes are refused. Several shops in large cities refuse to deal with large monies (over 500 gp) and will only accept banknotes from local banks. Banknotes are seldom exchanged back to coins unless given as loose change in a purchase.

- Gems and jewellery are not legal tender and must be traded for currency or banknotes.

UNIVERSAL CREDITS (UC)

It would be great to think that one could pass into the walls of a city of industry with a bag of gold and buy a laser gun. Alas, it is not that simple. Because of bastions' desperate need for resources, currency is printed on the cheapest of materials. They all commonly feature a half-plastic/half paper medium impossible to copy with more than 300 counterfeit measures including holographic imagery and computer encoding. Each has special imprinting from its home bastion. No bastion currency can be exchanged with any other bastion currency. For the sake of clarity, these moneys are given the term **Universal Credits** (uc), for they represent the legal tender of all bastion currency.

Various Bastion Currencies: Angel dollar, Mann credit, Sierra Madre bar, Selkirk pound, and York dollar.

Although you cannot trade one bastion currency for another bastion currency, they are all considered equal in value in regards to echan currency. Bastions are always happy to convert echan currency into their own denominations, because echan currency is worth the value of its metal, and bastions are always in the need for echan currency. Converting money the other way generally involves finding a black-marketeer, who will exchange uc for gold at a ruinous markup; most people leaving a bastion find it easier and more economical to convert their money into exportable trade goods and sell them at the first large market town outside.

Every bastion except Mann will accept echan currency regardless of its national stamp at its equivalent value in universal credits. There are no fractions or change and exchange banks will not accept lower value currencies unless they add up to a single uc. Banks will also not give out or return echan currency as they are smelted and put to applicable use; gold in particular is essential, as most modern electrical wiring is made from it due to its total impermeability to all but dragons' magic. No bastions accept unique echan currency.

THE TREASURE CONUNDRUM

Alas, unlike echans, techan characters will seldom (if ever) find their equipment in a dragon's lair. This means techans must return to a bastion or techan merchant to re-arm and upgrade their technology or depend on a trained engineer to build arms or armor over a long period of time. Nothing they find in field will be applicable to them (except as scrap).

Techans in the field will never conveniently find a more powerful weapon after they slay the next big monster, and restocking perishables such as batteries, ammunition, and the contents of supply kits is problematic when separated from industry. In long, protracted adventures, this may create problems. Vehicles are a wise base of operations as they may hold many times over the ammunition capacity of a single techan character. This may solve the problematic issue of ammunition but not about the eventual need to upgrade technology. Alas, the echan wilderness is not called a wasteland by the techans for nothing. The GM has options to offset this. In the end, very little is more satisfying than returning to a bastion with your holds overflowing with gold.

ECHAN WARGEAR

Most fae races remain steadfast in their traditions and techniques. A laudenian bow looks the same now as it always did; narros lamellar has not changed much over the years. Only the damaskans continue to evolve with knowledge collected from their human allies, and weapons from Limshau revel in a newfound understanding of the forge and hammer.

BASIC WEAPONS

Although the metallurgy techniques used by modern smiths have benefitted from centuries or millennia of development over their ancient counterparts, the types of weapons and armor that are commonly seen in medieval fantasy settings are all available here. As a rule, Limshau, Fargon, and some of the communities around Angel prefer Asian-influenced weaponry – everywhere else favors traditional Western fantasy fare. Mundane weapons have no special properties: if you wish to create a fighting style for your character focused on a particular weapon, treat it as a special item and give it one or more appropriate aspects and stunts. Otherwise, no weapon is inherently more dangerous than another.

Examples: ***Axe*** (battle, hand, throwing); ***Bow*** (short, long); ***Chain; Club; Crossbow*** (light, heavy, hand); ***Dagger; Dart; Flail; Halberd; Javelin; Katana; Kukri; Mace; Morningstar; Naginata; Nunchaku; Quarterstaff; Scythe; Shuriken; Sling; Spear*** (short, long); ***Sword*** (short, long, great); ***Tetsubo; Trident; Wakizashi; Warhammer; Yari***

BASIC ARMOR

Like weapons, armor has benefitted from developments over the centuries. While most echan armor isn't strong enough to stand up to high-powered techan weaponry, it can at least serve to turn a lethal blow into a flesh wound. Unfortunately, all armor is restrictive to a certain extend, and can be invoked or compelled against the user in the right circumstances. Basic armor is divided into two categories: light and heavy. What exactly qualifies as light or heavy armor is left to player and GM discretion, but as a general rule, any metal armor that provides more than 50% total body coverage should be considered heavy. Heavy armor is more inherently restrictive than light armor and has a tendency to ***Slow*** the wearer: some things that someone wearing light

armor would merely find more difficult (swimming, for instance) are simply impossible for someone wearing heavy armor.

Light Armor Examples: ***Armored Gauntlet; Half Chain; Hide Armor; Leather Coat; Padded Shirt; Ring Mail***

Heavy Armor Examples: ***Chain Hauberk; Lamellar Scale; Lorica Segmentata; Plate Cuirass***

Armor has no innate special properties, but the following stunts are available for those who want to emphasize its use.

Ease of Movement (requires light armor): Your light armor is never an obstacle to basic movement.

Glancing Blow (requires heavy armor): Once per scene, you can spend a fate point to negate a single hit against you.

SPECIAL GEAR

The following weapons are considered particularly exotic.

JANOAHN MASTER SHIELD

Though many from the Bulwark employ the standard fare from the armories in the kingdom, the front line, and most knights and paladins sworn to the Wall, guard with a more advanced shield exclusive to Abidan. The master shield is lens-shaped giving it increased rigidity. It is also wrapped with hide leather and additional steel belts for reinforcement. Most shields destined for the Wall are also spiked.

Wall of Thorns: When you critically succeed on a defense while in a shield wall, you deal 1 damage to the attacker.

KITARRI BLACK BOW

Legend claims that the wood inside of a kitarri black bow is partly infused with the spirit of dead chaparran. It is commonly known that when a chaparran dies, the body is placed in the dirt without a coffin, along with a single acorn. The tree which grows requires neither light nor water. Chaparrans have a secret technique of persuading wood to naturally grow objects for them to use, including weapons. It was at some point where these two traditions merged, and these trees enchanted with the spirit of passed fae were asked to create great structures and items for the elite of chaparran society. The temples of Jibaro are thought to be such examples. Kitarri black bows are believed to be another, capable of adapting themselves to any chaparran (or other worthy spirit) wielding them. Black bows do not bond permanently to a user but they have been known to "play favorites". Being a non-chaparran and gaining the benefits of a black bow is rare, but has been known to happen; however, chaparrans consider non-chaparrans wielding black bows to be a mortal insult against their people and will respond with lethal force to this affront.

Storied Weapon: Whenever you invoke the black bow to play a new card on a check that relates to your kansi name, any negative value on the card is treated as a positive value.

MAKANA

Chaparrans do not like using metal weapons if they can avoid it. While they will use swords if they have to, most prefer the makana – a thin, sharp-edged club made of very dense wood, studded with stone, bone, or occasionally steel rivets at regular intervals along opposite sides of its length. The makana handles similarly to a short sword under normal usage, but can be shifted to act as a heavy club (switching between the two is a mode).

Obsidian Teeth, Hardwood Jaw: If you critically succeed on an attack with the makana, it inflicts an additional effect depending on its current mode. **Sword** – The target takes an additional 1 damage at the start of their next turn. **Club** – You can spend a fate point to force the target to take a consequence instead of stress.

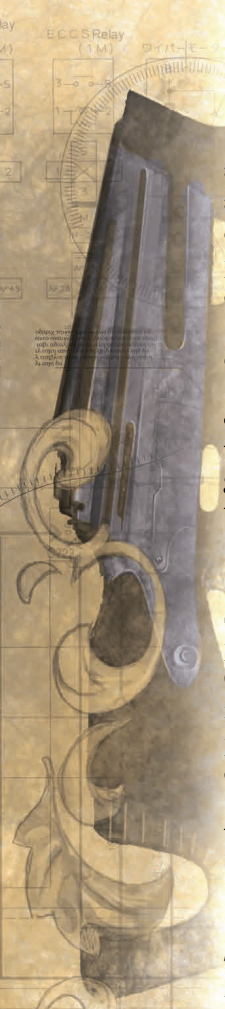
NARROS KROLLISH

The narros krollish was considered the standard weapon of choice for most narros serving in the military. This practice has waned in the centuries since the narros' return, and now only Fargon maintains the tradition: narros born or raised elsewhere might never pick one up in their lifetimes. The krollish is a multi-function weapon featuring no less than three different ways to inflict damage on a target. Its business end sports an axe, a hammer, and a fiendishly long spike, formed from a single block of steel and perched upon a long staff towering over most narros wielding it (switching between styles is a mode).

Trifecta: If you critically succeed with an attack with the krollish, you spend a fate point to immediately make another attack against a different target (with a different part of the weapon). If this attack is also a critical success, you can make a third attack (with a third part of the weapon) against a third target – the third attack does not cost a fate point.

BASTION EXPORTS

Some manufacturers in bastions employ advanced technology to create melee weapons of amazing quality. The materials melt at exacting points and are chemically combined to a perfect ratio, their edges shaved to almost an atom's sharpness. Bows are no longer strung animal hides around bent wood but cables wound around a mechanism of levers. All bastion export weapons are finely calibrated, lighter and sturdier than their echan equivalents. However, bastion exports look plain and somewhat ordinary: maker symbols offer some style, usually engraved in the steel itself, but are rarely ostentatious. Often enough, they are built to be effective rather than showy, so seldom do they strike fear in opponents when raised in anger. They won't rouse the masses when pulled from their scabbard. Because of the niche market for such items, echan weapons made and exported from techa fetch steep prices and rarely can buyers justify the expense. A prospective buyer can usually spot one of these rare weapons by their extravagant cost. They are still counted as echan weapons and



are not affected by disruption. Most fae (except gimfen and damaskans) disdain bastion exports, but anyone else who can get them wields them as proudly as if pulled from a narros fire pit, representing as they do the endurance of human ingenuity.

The ***Bastion Export*** aspect can be added to any mundane weapon or armor, and enables the following stunt:

Modern Construction (requires *Bastion Export* weapon): Whenever you use a free invocation of a gear aspect to gain a bonus with this item, you can choose to only gain +1 now and save the other +1 for a later action with the same item in the same encounter.

CARBON CROSSBOW

Super-light crossbows of this type were originally exported from York, but replicas can be found across Canam. The weapon is a sleek, smooth, multi-piece item of black and silver, constructed not of steel, but of plastics and carbon fiber. This makes the weapon less clumsy than ancient designs.

Range Finding Scope (free): You can make ranged attacks with the carbon crossbow from three zones away instead of two.

FORCED DEFENSE SHIELD

This techan invention has found use in echa, strapped to knights unaware or uncaring of its origin. It is a heavy titanium shield with grooves on its bottom, allowing for a firm root into the ground. There is also a locked slit which can open once it has been planted, allowing the user to make ranged attacks with a gun or crossbow while remaining in cover. If planted into the ground, the shield remains upright and acts as cover to anyone behind it.

Wave Breaker: If your forced defense shield is rooted, an enemy must make an overcome check before they can attack you.

LIMSHAU WEAPONS & ARMOR

Modern Limshau weapons are adapted from the traditional weapons of the primarily Japanese immigrants that Ravenar Limshau brought back to his city from Angel centuries ago, and still bear the same names. All Limshau weapons look plain and functional, sporting neither jewels in their pommels nor intricate weavings on their handles, but the swords are extremely sharp and feature holes along the blade to lighten the weapon without sacrificing tensile strength. Additionally, modern Limshau weapons benefit from advanced forging techniques and significantly higher-quality steel than their original namesakes, making them much less brittle and giving them significantly more longevity than an equivalent from the old world.

The ***Limshau*** aspect can be added to any Asian-themed weapon or armor, and enables the following stunts:

Kamae (requires *Limshau* weapon): While wielding a Limshau weapon, you can reduce the result of an attack by 2 (before any invocations) to gain +1 to your next defense check, and vice versa.

Kaze no Kinoe (free, requires light *Limshau* armor): Your light armor is never an obstacle to acrobatic maneuvers.

Kama no Kinoe (free, requires heavy *Limshau* armor): Your heavy armor is considered light armor for all athletic pursuits (you can even swim in it).

LIMSHAU BUCKLER

The Limshau buckler is not a common sight but it has found popularity with some custodians. The buckler occupies a hand and is designed for offense as well as defense.

Rapid Retaliation: When you successfully defend with the buckler, you can give up your next turn to make an immediate attack.

LIMSHAU KAWABARI ARMOR

Overlapping layers of leather pieces sewn together to form fit the wearer, Limshau kawabari looks as unique as it feels. A master leathersmith must individually fit each suit of Limshau leather to its owner, making Limshau kawabari distinctive against other leather armors. The most distinguishing features are the numerous belt latches over the whole body. It is only available in white (for within the city) or black (for outside missions).

Never Too Many Belts: You gain +2 to overcome checks made to climb while wearing your kawabari.

LIMSHAU REPEATING CROSSBOW

This unique weapon has found popularity recently with custodians in the outer cities, and has since spread into wider circulation. This single-hand crossbow carries a strap around the user's arm, allowing the weapon to be reloaded with a single hand, making it the only full-size crossbow that can be loaded and fired repeatedly with a single hand.

Bolt Ballet: When you make an advantage check related to fighting multiple targets with the repeating crossbow, you critically succeed if you exceed the difficulty by 2 instead of 3 (This stunt is identical to the Gunslinger stunt *Bullet Ballet*).

TECHAN GEAR

Techan weapons are listed by broad examples: if every variation from every bastion were to be detailed, the list would take up half the book. However, some unique weapons are included.

BATTERY CELLS

Many of the objects in the following sections require batteries. Batteries are considered background flavor in most cases (like ammunition), but they can be considered an attrition resource, and if their absence is compelled, finding the right type of batteries can be the basis of an adventure. Also, they have a tendency to explode when seriously disrupted or shot.

Battery Classes: The three different types of battery

cells are as follows:

Basic (B): These cells are for smaller items. Ten cells weigh 1 lb.

Medium (M): These cells power many weapons, smaller vehicles, and larger equipment. One cell weighs 0.25 lb.

High (H): These cells are large, powerful, and usually reserved for huge weapons and massive energy equipment. One cell weighs 2 lbs.

Optional Battery Rule: Outside of a bastion, all exposed batteries will lose their charge in a day unless protected (via muffler bags or crates, or mounted in weapons or devices).

A COMPROMISE IN THE SETTING

Although realistically, batteries and devices that use them are unique to each bastion, certain rules are in place to make a techan game actually fun.

- Bastion batteries are compatible with other bastion batteries.
- Buying a lower TL item from a higher TL bastion still counts as the lower TL item. Further, the item is exactly the same in mechanics (though not necessarily in looks) as if the item was purchased from a lower TL bastion (a TL2 weapon from Selkirk works and is built exactly the same way as a TL2 weapon from Mann).

AMMUNITION RULES

Fate Core does not have hard-and-fast rules for ammunition and reloading: such things are usually handled as advantage checks, but as the details are a little fuzzy, consider using one or more of the following variants. Do not track ammunition uses individually – it's usually assumed that you're firing more than one shot per action, and *Fate* doesn't like fiddly things that slow down the narrative. Regardless of which rule is used, you are always considered to have enough ammunition on hand to reload unless compelled otherwise.

Default: Reloading is background information, but you can be compelled to be out of ammo if your weapon is ***Automatic*** or you have fired it a lot (GM's discretion as to what constitutes 'a lot'). Reloading after being compelled isn't just a matter of fitting a new clip or cell – it means you're out of ammo, and you need to get some more from somewhere (usually just a generic action for someone to toss you a new clip and reload) before you can fire again.

Ammo Stress: Each weapon that uses ammunition has an ammo stress track: one box for single-shot weapons that can't be reloaded quickly (such as muzzle-loading guns or regular crossbows), two boxes for easily reloaded single-shot weapons (such as bows and breech-loading rifles and shotguns) or multi-shot weapons with clip sizes of ten or less (such as revolvers), and three boxes for high-capacity weapons. Each ranged action with the weapon deals two stress to this track (as usual, only one box can be marked off at a time). If the weapon is unable to absorb all the stress, your clip is empty at the end of your action and you need to take a generic action to reload.

"Crap, I'm Out": You can take a generic action to reload at any time. If you do so, you gain +1 to defense checks until the start of your next turn and you remove any remaining free invocations from hostile advantages placed on your weapons. You must use the weapon on at least one action before you can reload again.

Weapon descriptions list their default clip sizes, but this is mostly for flavor purposes. Higher-tech versions of the weapons can be presumed to have a proportionately higher clip size (approximately 10% per tech level).

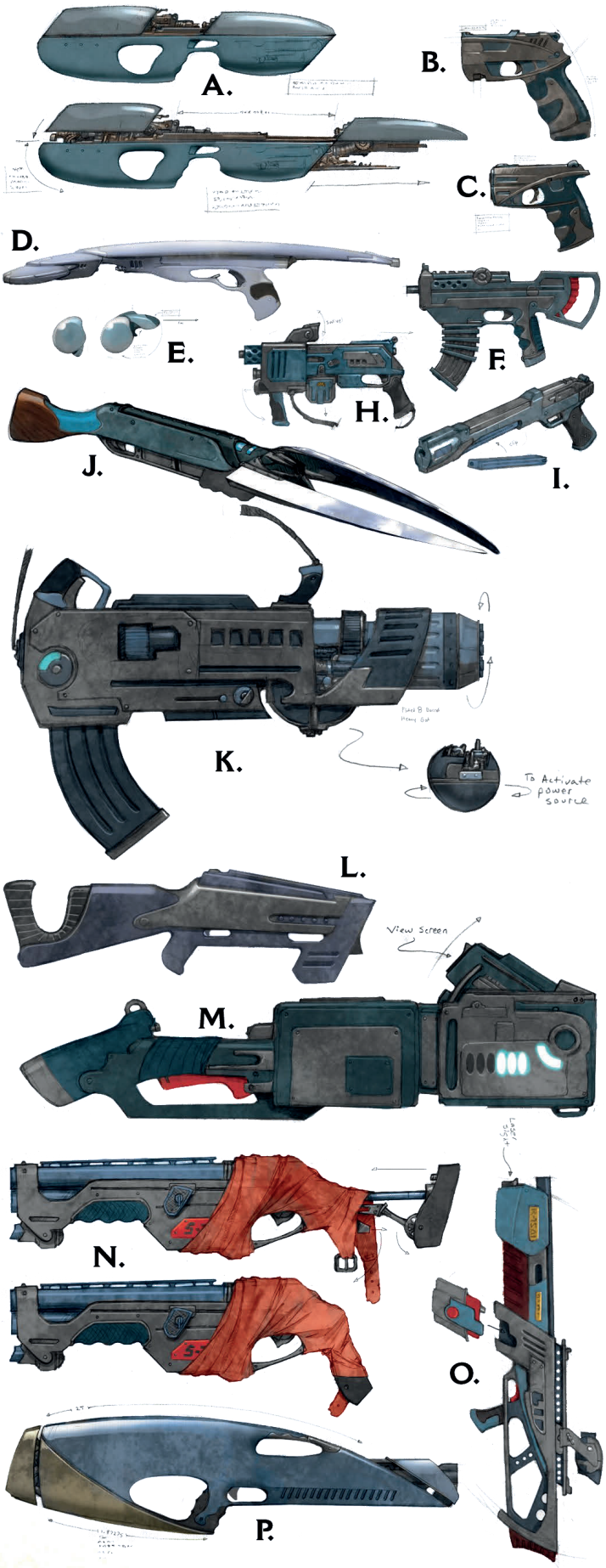
TECHAN WEAPONS

Technology has a tendency to be standardized, and much techan equipment has certain features in common. While these are presented here as aspects, they are considered to be folded in to the main item's aspect and thus can't be invoked separately (unless they are used as a mode).

AUTOMATIC (MODE)

An automatic weapon can be used in single-shot mode or on autofire: in autofire mode, the weapon is more

A. Plasma Rifle (Collapsed/Deployed)
B. Caseless Pistol
C. Pocket Pistol
D. Pulse Carbine
E. Plasma Grenade
F. Submachine Gun
G. SPP Rifle
H. Rail Pistol
I. Ion Rifle
J. Rotary Cannon
K. Thumper Laser Cannon
L. Vapor Rifle
M. Gauss Repeater (Medium & Large User Configuration)
N. Caseless Rifle
O. Pulse Capacitor Rifle



susceptible to running out of ammo. Autofire is most often used to create advantages related to covering fire.

Focused Fire: You can make an advantage check to invoke the ***Automatic*** property on a weapon and make an attack with that weapon as part of the same action. If the advantage check fails, you can instead succeed at the cost of using your next action to reload.

BASIC CHEMICAL PROJECTILE

The earliest firearms used chemical explosives to propel its deadly shell toward its victim. Although the chemicals evolved as knowledge did, the result remained the same. Requiring no energy cell, standard ballistic firearms seldom broke down. Even in the largest, most advanced bastions, chemical firearms are still popular among those leaving the safety of their walls. Assault rifles, autoloaders, bolt sniper rifles, all caseless weapons, light machine guns, machine pistols, all shotguns, pocket pistols, sniper cannons, and submachine guns utilize chemical projectiles. Chemical projectiles do not usually confer any special benefit other than being relatively resistant to disruption, but the ammunition for such weapons can be easily used to create improvised explosives.

CAPACITOR (MODE)

Capacitor weapons resulted from plasma bottle research, combining elements from both plasma and laser technologies. With a capacitor weapon, the shooter can dial up the strength of the energy burst. The weapon charges up by siphoning energy from its cell, and thus is more prone to running out of ammo when used at full capacity.

Charged Shot (free): You automatically succeed on unopposed advantage checks to charge up the ***Capacitor***.

CASELESS

Caseless weapons use unique clipless, caseless ammunition. A square-shaped round is the entire firing mechanism. The shell is encased inside a solid propellant coffin, connected to others, and fed as a clip. Each bullet, when fired, incinerates its case, ejecting the remnants with the bullet. This has two advantages: first, each clip can hold more shots, and second, the weapon does not leave behind an incriminating trail of shell casings.

Higher Capacity (free): The first time in an encounter you are compelled to be out of ammo, it does not cost you a fate point to refuse.

EASILY CONCEALED

Some weapons are specially designed to be easy to hide about the wielder's person while being instantly accessible. Holdout pistols are the most common, but many component sniper rifles are also designed with this in mind.

Hidden Weapon (free): You gain +2 to defense against searches for this weapon, and you can always actively oppose such a search.

ELECTRONICALLY STACKED PROJECTILE

No longer are bullets loaded from an external clip and launched via a firing pin. Now they are loaded directly into the barrel, separated only by the propellant. The concept dates back to traditional fireworks except the stacked projectile weapon does not need to fire its entire payload when ignited. Electrical pulses launch the bullets in the proper order. Misfires are pushed out by the next round, preventing backfire. This removes the need for a clip, a firing pin, or for that matter, any moving parts at all. The greatest advantage of this technology is a phenomenal firing rate, capable of discharging rounds literally as a stream of bullets.

Really Rapid Fire (free): The weapon can switch between standard and ***Automatic*** mode without taking an action. If you choose to make a check to change modes, you can do so as part of an attack action.

EXPLOSIVE

In addition to planted explosives, some weapons fire shells that detonate on impact with the target (or better yet, inside the target). As such weapons generally require greater rather than lesser precision to deal maximum damage to a target, they are more often seen as a form of covering fire or to soften up an enemy before a more straightforward assault.

Wide-Angle Dispersal: When you use an ***Explosive*** weapon to create an advantage against three or more targets, the difficulty of any overcome attempts against that advantage increases by +1.

GUIDED

These weapons assist in aiming after being fired and can even make a secondary attack if the first one misses.

Boomerang: If you miss with an attack with a guided weapon on this turn, you gain a free invocation of the ***Guided*** aspect if you make another attack with the same weapon on your next turn.

IMMUNE TO DISRUPTION

These items, and they are few, use deliberately archaic construction to overcome the effects of EDF. Only TL0 devices can be immune: the same device at a higher tech level will disrupt like anything else.

Immune (free): This item cannot be ***Disrupted*** by anything other than a targeted disruption effect or attempting to enchant the device.

LASER

Any condensed, well-defined beam of light can be considered a laser. In history, the initial weapons concentrated radiation to a focal point, burning the target with intense heat: such beams were usually invisible, which is useful for stealth but less so for accuracy. Later developments increased the size, damage potential, and visibility of these beams. Often, lasers are confused with pulse plasma weapons. The largest difference is that lasers cut while plasma splashes. Laser weapons give away their firer's position but deliver devastating damage few can resist. They can also track targets easier with subsequent attacks.

Tracer Beam: If you succeed on an advantage or attack check with a laser weapon on this turn, you gain +1 to advantage and attack checks with that weapon against the same target on your next turn.

MAGNETICALLY ACCELERATED PROJECTILE

After standard chemical firearms, coil weapons and railguns are the most popular guns for techan soldiers in the echan wilderness, given the rare tendency of chemical ammunition to explode when directly exposed to magic. Magnetic fields are not affected by disruption, a welcome blessing to those living under Earth's blanket of protection. The specific process of accelerating metal shells using magnetism is complicated, and coil-based and rail-based technology fire their shells using different means. Because of their high speed, coil and rail rounds can easily penetrate anything less dense than concrete.

Blow-Through (requires rail weapon): If you take out a target with an attack with a railgun, you can make another attack against another target in the same zone behind the first target.

NUCLEAR

These are directed energy weapons similar to plasma and laser guns. Where a laser inflicts condensed radiation and plasma inflicts severe heat, weapons with the nuclear property inflict damage via a high-energy beam of atoms. Upon impact, they disrupt the molecular structure of the target. Tissue damage and nausea from radiation is an often side effect. This technology has been dubbed a "dirty solution", as it emerges frequently before the advancement of high-powered lasers and plasma weapons.

Involuntary Chemo: Whenever you inflict a consequence with an attack using a ***Nuclear*** firearm, the target suffers 1 damage on your turn for a number of turns equal to the severity of the consequence.

PINCHER

These weapons deliver an electromagnetic pulse that disrupts electrical systems. The massive electrical discharge may also have a temporary effect on a living creature's nervous system.

EMP (free): If the target requires a battery or an elec-

tric current to operate, it becomes ***Disrupted*** (including devices that are normally ***Immune to Disruption***).

Tased: You gain +2 to advantage checks with pincher weapons when creating advantages related to the electrical disruption of a living body.

PLASMA

Any weapon employing ionized gas is considered a plasma weapon. This involves either using the magnetically conductive matter as a delivery device or as a weapon itself. Magnetism is one of the few scientific constants not broken by the EDF: a plasma weapon fires a toroid of superheated gas inside a magnetohydrodynamic bubble that is then accelerated from the barrel in the same way a railgun fires its iron-core shell. The bubble remains solid for a significant time, or until it strikes its target, at which point the bubble is dispersed and delivers its energetic payload as a cloud of intense heat. Plasma weapons are the most destructive weapon technology currently available.

Heart of the Sun (free): You deal +1 damage on a hit with a plasma weapon.

Splash Damage: You can spend a fate point when you succeed with an attack with a plasma weapon to make a secondary attack against another target in the same zone as your primary target, using the weapon's TL as your result.

SHOTGUN

Shotguns impact with tremendous force at short range, but this stopping power diminishes rapidly further out. They are fairly distinct and few models are on the market.

Blam (free): You deal +1 damage at ***Point Blank Range,*** but you cannot attack targets outside your zone even though this is a ranged weapon.

SNIPER

These weapons contain advanced targeting systems for long-range fire: as long as you can see the target through the weapon's scope, you can shoot it, no matter how far away it is. Obviously, a sniper weapon is most effective in the hands of a trained sniper, but a good scope can improve the aim of even a novice.

Long Shot (free): You can make ranged attacks with a sniper weapon from anywhere up to ***Extreme Range***.

SONIC

The first sonic weapon was no more than a simple high-powered oscillating pain siren generating 175 decibel (dB) acoustic waves in all directions, enough to deafen anyone who heard it (including the wielder, without protective equipment). Newer sonic weapons utilize high frequency ultrasound to carry the painful audio waves in a straight, focused path. This technology offers increased range with no adverse side effects for the firer. Sonic weapons generally have poor range compared with other weapons of their grade, but this only applies in the air: in water, or in any other dense medium, their range is slightly superior to an equivalent weapon in air.

Eardrum Violator: Whenever you inflict a consequence with a sonic weapon, it is treated as one degree more severe for purposes of any consequence-related effects other than what slot it occupies.

SELF-PROPELLED PROJECTILE

SPP weapons started emerging from Angel R&D and eventually found use across the world due to parallel development or stolen designs. They are small rockets fired from pistols or rifles that continue to accelerate after an initial air compression push fires them from the shell. Although more expensive than traditional firearms, SPPs proved useful for engagements when range mattered. The ammunition for SPP weapons sabot rounds, as the shell ejected breaks apart, and the contained self-propelled projectile ignites, breaking from its seal. All SPP weapons can fire underwater, though their range is halved. They are not common but have definitive advantages, such as explosive or guided warheads.

Cavalcade: You can spend a fate point when you attack with a SPP weapon to draw and immediately play two additional cards as part of the attack. These do not have to target the same creature as the primary attack, but you can only hit with one of these results.

RANGE

For the most part, range doesn't come up in a typical Fate encounter – zones are used to differentiate short distances, and distances longer than about 50-100 feet are generally outside the scope of an encounter. If it should become relevant, however, consider using the following general situation aspects to describe range. Generally, these aspects are only relevant if someone creates an advantage saying they are. Range categories beyond ***Point Blank Range*** are cumulative (so if the enemy was at ***Long Range***, you could invoke both ***Long Range*** and ***Short Range*** to impede their attack).

Point Blank Range: 0-15 feet (same zone).
Short Range: 15-100 feet (1-4 zones).
Long Range: 100-200 feet (5+ zones).
Extreme Range: 200+ feet (zones are no longer relevant).

Note that although a weapon may be capable of firing long distances, ranged attacks are still limited to two zones without a relevant stunt.

PISTOLS

Pistols are designed to be fired using only one hand, although the other can be used to ***Brace***. Most pistols are designed to be used up to ***Short Range***.

AIR DART PISTOL (TL0-5)

Property: *Immune to Disruption*

The air-dart gun resembles a standard pistol except it fires a small needle via an air compressor. The needle inflicts no damage but can deliver any number of chemical injections.

AUTOLOADER (TL0/1)

Property: *Basic Chemical Projectile*

A natural evolution of the old automatic pistol, this weapon loads the next round as soon as the previous one leaves the barrel. Most autoloaders use an 8-bullet clip, and many shooters manually chamber a ninth bullet if they are expecting trouble.

CAPACITOR PLASMA PISTOL (TL5)

Properties: *Automatic, Capacitor, Plasma*

The most condensed flaming death machine available in Canam. A single battery has enough charge to throw up to thirty pellets of superheated gas up to a hundred feet, but it is common to charge up the weapon two or three times per shot for maximal effect, making it far less ammo-efficient than equivalent rifle technology.

CAPSICUM SPRAY (TL0)

This item employs a chemical irritant like capsaicin (common in some fruits, plants, and most chilies), also known as a lachrymatory agent. When a target is struck, a sticky, waxy, colorless and odourless liquid adheres to the skin. The spray contains almost pure capsaicin, with a Scoville rating of more than 10,000,000 – double the intensity of ancient pepper spray, the better to inflict pain on the new magical beasts roaming the world. The exact formula changes with each bastion. Most are built with a compressed canister while others eject a breakable projectile. Although nominally a pistol, the weapon is only effective within ***Point Blank Range*** – beyond that, the spray is too diffuse to have much effect.

Right in the Eyes: Any advantage you create with this weapon related to causing pain or blindness cannot be removed (although it can be rephrased by an overcome check) during the same scene as it was inflicted.

CASELESS PISTOL (TL1-3)

Property: *Caseless*

This is the standard sidearm of most bastion militaries, being light, environmentally friendly, and able to put a huge number of rounds into an attacking monster's face before having to reload. The TL1 version manages a clip size of 25.

COIL PISTOL (TL 3-4)

Property: *Magnetically Accelerated Projectile*

Compressing a sufficiently powerful magnetic coil down to something the size of a handgun isn't easy. While the range far exceeds that of a chemical projectile pistol, the blow-through isn't nearly as powerful as an equivalent rifle – you won't be shooting through walls with this one, although softer targets are still fair game. Clip size is a bit underwhelming, with a mere ten shots, but it's expected you won't need all of them.

DISRUPTOR (TL4)

Property: *Sonic*

This sonic gun first emerged from a Porto beluga carrier from across the ocean. Since then, few people have been able to successfully reverse engineering them. Porto's Tilthe Intelligica discovered that certain high-powered focused sonic waves inflict severe pain on certain targets. Prototypes issued to test units proved effective as an alternative to beam or shell weapons. The almost inaudible wave-rifle discharge inflicts massive damage on physical targets and on enemy combat units. However, in one incident, a test group reported that the weapon was especially ***Effective Against Undead***. A single cell has enough charge for twenty bowel-shattering bursts.

Brown Note: If you critically succeed on an attack with the disruptor, you also place the ***Sick and Disoriented*** aspect on the target.

ELECTROSHOCK GUN (TL1)

Property: *Pincher*

This wand-shaped device fires air-compressed barbed darts attached to coils up to 30 feet towards a target. Upon impact, the coils conduct a massive electrical current, disrupting superficial muscle functions and paralyzing the target. The darts can penetrate enough to attach to anything, and are also magnetic. The electrical pulse does not need to penetrate skin to be effective. Tension springs recoil the darts back to the gun after firing, but the weapon needs a full minute to recharge its capacitor before it can be fired again.

Non-Lethal Takedown (free): You deal +3 damage with attacks with this weapon, but all consequences created by it are considered minor and you cannot inflict a lethal hit with it.

ESP PISTOL (TL2-4)

Properties: *Automatic, Electronically Stacked Projectile*

A light pistol with an exceptionally high rate of fire. The only thing that keeps this pistol out of more widespread circulation is how difficult it is to replenish its ammunition while in the field: the forty shots in its clip really don't last very long in a tense situation.

GRENADE PISTOL (TL0)

The grenade pistol is much like the grenade launcher (see below), except that it must ***Reload After Every Shot***. By default, the weapon fires Fragmentation Grenades.

Modes: You can change the loadout of the launcher to ***Flashbang***, ***Incendiary***, or ***Smoke*** grenades, or any other grenade you have access to; an advantage check to activate this mode has the same effect as reloading the weapon.

LIGHT MACHINE GUN (TL1-3)

Properties: *Automatic, Basic Chemical Projectile*

This weapon is really a snub-nosed submachine gun with the forward grip replaced by an optional bracing handle for use in full-auto mode. While it doesn't really have a single-shot mode, it is possible to limit the output to a short burst of bullets with just a squeeze of the trigger. Otherwise, it tends to burn through its 40-shot

clip very rapidly.

Modes: The default mode of the light machine gun is ***Automatic***. In ***Single-Shot*** mode, it deals +1 damage.

NUCLEAR PELLET PISTOL (TL3-5)

Property: *Nuclear*

Even by the standards of devices designed to kill things, this is not a nice weapon, nor is it particularly safe for the wielder. It functions by stripping radioactive particles from a uranium slug and using magnetic containment to fire them at the enemy at an appreciable fraction of the speed of light. The high-intensity radiation causes severe burns and tissue damage to the target, but there is also the risk of radiation leakage from the weapon itself if the fuel chamber is not properly sealed. Fortunately, the fuel rod only needs to be replaced once every 1-2 years, but the power cell that operates the magnetic accelerator must be replaced after 15 shots.

Gone Critical (free): You gain a critical success on an attack with the weapon if you exceed the target's result by 2 instead of 3.

PLASMA PISTOL (TL5)

Property: *Plasma*

The plasma pistol may be the most basic plasma weapon available, but that only means that it is a more advanced device than most Canamites will ever see in their lifetimes… if they're lucky. The plasma pistol's energy cell has enough charge for 15 shots, which is approximately 15 more than most sentient creatures will require when the barrel is poked into their eye socket.

POCKET PISTOL (TL0)

Properties: *Basic Chemical Projectile, Easily Concealed, Immune to Disruption*

The pocket pistol, also known as a 'holdout pistol,' is a small 3-shot pistol designed to fit easily in a pocket, purse or boot (or for the truly desperate, in far less wholesome places). Designed as a weapon of last resort, its primary drawback is that reloading it requires physically disassembling the casing (though modern construction makes this a matter of a mere five minutes as opposed to the half-hour ancient versions may have taken).

RESTRAINMENT FIELD (TL4)

This pistol-shaped weapon from Mann launches a balloon-like force field, capturing a target by warping its containment matrix around its victim and then compressing the field to restrain the target from moving.

High-Tech Zip Tie (free): You gain +2 to advantage checks to restrict a target's movement. This weapon cannot inflict lethal damage, or any consequences: any damage that cannot be absorbed with stress is ignored unless the target has no consequence slots open.

REVOLVER (TL0)

Property: ***Basic Chemical Projectile, Immune to Disruption***

The basic design of the revolver has not changed much over the centuries: a rotating drum behind the barrel holding between four and seven shots (six being the standard). Pulling the trigger both revolves the drum and pulls back the firing hammer as a single action. Despite being so low-tech, the revolver is a favorite for those operating in open echa because of its immunity factor and easy maintenance.

SOLID LASER PISTOL (TL4-5)

Property: ***Laser***

The basic laser pistol fires a solid beam of amplified light radiation far beyond the range of most pistols. Its power cell holds enough juice for 20 shots.

RIFLES

Strictly speaking, a rifle only refers to a longarm with a rifled barrel, but the term is used generically to refer to any two-handed firearm that doesn't require a tripod or mounting brace. Rifles are generally good anywhere out to ***Long Range***. You cannot combine a movement and an attack action with a rifle unless using automatic fire or the weapon is mounted in some sort of frame, although you can combine movement and overcome or advantage actions.

ASSAULT RIFLE (TL0-2)

Property: ***Automatic, Basic Chemical Projectile***

The simplest automatic rifle, based on the principle of filling the air with as many bullets as possible. Even bastions that largely prefer the caseless or ESP rifles continue to make use of the assault rifle, as the ammunition is far easier and cheaper to make. A single clip holds 50 rounds, but the average soldier goes through 2-4 clips in the course of a single skirmish. Higher-tech variants focus on improving the weapon's range.

BASIC SNIPER RIFLE (TL0-2)

Property: ***Basic Chemical Projectile, Sniper***

In essence, the basic sniper rifle is nothing more than a refined version of the bolt rifle with a high-tech scope mounted to it. Many snipers elect to do without the scope, relying on the iron sights instead to avoid a glint of light alerting the target to their presence. The rifle's clip holds five shots (which does not increase as tech level improves).

Modes: The scope can be removed from the rifle, reducing its effective tech level by 1. On a TL0 rifle, this makes it ***Immune to Disruption***.

BOLT RIFLE (TL0)

Property: ***Basic Chemical Projectile, Immune to Disruption***

The bolt rifle is one step up from a simple breech-loading firearm: although it does support a five-round clip, each spent round must be manually ejected from the firing chamber to cycle the next one in. Because of this, few militaries (apart from Seliquam's Train Guard) employ them even as backup weapons, although they still see heavy use by hunters.

CASELESS RIFLE (TL1-3)

Property: ***Automatic, Caseless***

The high ammo capacity and low waste footprint of this rifle makes it ideal for bastion militaries, although the difficulty in manufacturing the ammunition tends to keep it restricted to home guard actions and short forays into echa. Apart from refinements to its loading mechanism to accommodate the caseless rounds, it is essentially identical to the assault rifle, albeit with double the clip size.

CYCLOTRON RIFLE (TL3-5)

Property: ***Nuclear***

Unlike smaller nuclear firearms, the cyclotron rifle does not rely on a natural radioactive fuel source to generate its charged particle beams, and therefore is a lot safer… for the wielder. For the victim, not so much. The cyclotron is powered by a special power cell with alternating polarity that must be replaced after 20 shots.

Crossing the Streams: Whenever you hit a target that took damage from a nuclear firearm on the previous round, you deal +1 damage.

ESP RIFLE (TL1-3)

Properties: ***Automatic, Electronically Stacked Projectile***

Even more so than the caseless rifle, the high rate of fire of this automatic rifle tends to keep its use on long-range excursions minimal (80 rounds per stack doesn't last very long on full auto). It is often preferred, however, because the lack of moving parts makes it much easier to shield against disruption – most, though not all ESP rifles, come ***Shielded*** as a manufacturer standard.

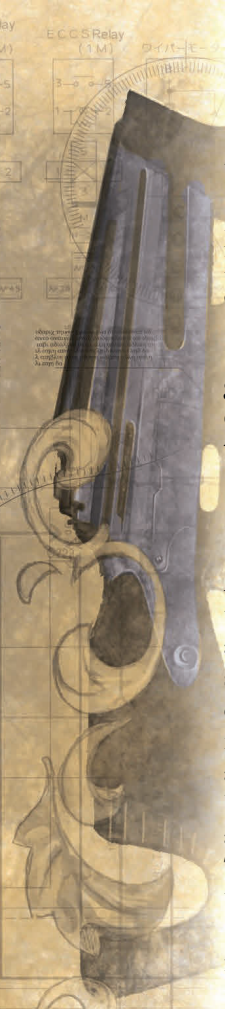
GAUSS REPEATER (TL4-5)

Properties: ***Automatic, Magnetically Accelerated Projectile***

Most railguns are restricted to firing a single slug, but by utilizing a unique ladder system of alternating charged coils, the gauss repeater is capable of a respectable rate of fire, and the lack of propellant allows for 60 slugs to be expelled without reloading. This comes with a couple of tradeoffs, however: first, the magnetic coils are ***Prone to Overheating***, and second, the system requires an H-type battery cell (more often seen in heavy weapons and vehicles), which makes the gun somewhat unwieldy.

GRENADE LAUNCHER (TL0-2)

Whether as a separate weapon or mounted to the underside of another rifle, the purpose of the grenade launcher is to dispatch indirect ballistic ordnance (usually either fragmentation or gas) without requiring the firer to go through the hassle of manually removing pins and



throwing them. By default, the weapon fires ***Fragmentation Grenades***. The launcher has a small magazine capable of holding 6 grenades at a time, which do not have to be all of the same type (although military protocol frowns on mixed clips).

Modes: You can change the loadout of the launcher to Flashbang, Incendiary, or Smoke grenades, or any other grenade you have access to. An advantage check to change the loadout is considered the same as reloading the weapon.

ION RIFLE (TL3-4)

Property: *Pincher*

Also known by the much flashier title of 'lightning gun', the ion rifle has no visible discharge: instead, it causes an electrical charge to build up around its target which shorts out electrical systems (including bioelectrical ones) once the charge reaches critical cascade, emulating the effects of being struck by lightning without the associated dramatics. Because the charge builds up both around and through the victim, standard insulation against electrical discharge provides little protection. The downside of the weapon is that the ion beam attenuates quickly, making it effective only up to ***Short Range***. The M-type battery cell holds enough charge for 20 shots.

LIGHT COILGUN (TL3-4)

Property: *Magnetically Accelerated Projectile*

The most basic magnetic weapon available, the light coilgun's ammunition is a small metal ball bearing about 1.5 cm across. It has a rate of fire comparable to a breech-loading rifle and a clip size of only 16 – but the speed of the projectile is such that by the time the victim's brain has processed the flash of the air combusting in its wake, they've already been gruesomely perforated.

MACHINE SHOTGUN (TL1-3)

Properties: *Automatic, Shotgun*

The number of situations in which a person might actually need an automatic shotgun are, thankfully, few. This model sees most of its service among the militaries of Angel and Selkirk, where having a high-rate-of-fire crowd-clearance weapon is especially useful for picking off hordes of hunger-crazed Xixion vermin. One clip holds 20 shells, enough to largely depopulate one small pugg swarm.

NET GUN (TL1)

A fairly straightforward method of restraining recalcitrant opponents, this weapon fires a weighted synthetic-fiber net over its target.

Got a Live One: The difficulty of the first overcome attempt against any ***Restrained*** or similar advantage you place with this gun increases by 2.

PLASMA RIFLE (TL5)

Property: *Plasma*

Internally, the only thing that distinguishes the plasma rifle from its one-handed counterpart is the strength of the magnetic bottle, which allows the plasma burst to be projected over a far greater range than the pistol. Otherwise, the weapon uses the same internal workings and requires the same 15-charge power cell.

PULSE CAPACITOR RIFLE (TL5)

Properties: *Automatic, Capacitor, Plasma*

Most 'automatic' energy weapons operate at reduced power to avoid straining the battery. In the case of plasma weapons, this is not necessary: rather, autofire is designed to take advantage of the splash effect of the magnetic bottle and thus deliver its effects over a wider area. The addition of the charging capacitor is just overkill, which makes gimfen tinkerers happy but puts a heavy strain on the weapon's normally 80-shot H-cell.

Firestorm: If you critically succeed on an attack with this weapon, you can deal 1 damage each to up to 3 other creatures in the same zone.

RAILGUN (TL4-5)

Property: *Magnetically Accelerated Projectile*

A railgun fires an ovoid metal slug, about an inch wide and four inches long, at supersonic speeds using magnetic coils. The velocity of the slug causes the air behind it to combust in a stream of flame, making the rail round look more like a rocket on high-speed cameras – but to the naked eye, it just looks like a flash, followed almost immediately by its target (and probably anything behind the target as well) evaporating in a red mist.

SHOTGUN (TL0-2)

Properties: *Basic Chemical Projectile, Shotgun*

The classic shotgun is the quintessential close-range antipersonnel weapon, capable of clearing a room in a single shot and holding 6-8 shells before needing to reload. Higher-tech versions provide only minor improvements on the basic model.

Mode: The shotgun can fire a variety of shells, with the most common being ***Nonlethal Shot*** (+2 to advantage checks against multiple targets, but deals 1 less damage on any attack), ***Buckshot*** (standard), and ***Slugs*** (the gun loses the ***Shotgun*** property and is treated as a low-powered rifle). The gun can be loaded with any mixture of ammunition, although military protocol frowns on mixing types.

SOLID LASER RIFLE (TL4-5)

Property: *Laser*

The basic laser rifle fires a solid beam of amplified light radiation. While its range outstrips most assault-grade rifles, it is among the heavier weapons of its grade. Its power cell lasts for 20 shots.

SONIC FOCUS RIFLE (TL3)

Property: *Sonic*

This weapon fires three independent ultrasonic waves.

It uses sonar imaging to paint a target and then automatically adjusts the beams to converge on a single point. Unfortunately, the beam cannot be precisely adjusted beyond ***Short Range***, causing its damage potential to rapidly attenuate beyond that even in water. It can also be downgraded to transmit a normal voice to a specific point up to four zones distant without fear of anyone else overhearing. At full power, the rifle can manage 20 shots; its transmitting ability uses a negligible amount of power.

Turn Up the Bass: For every consecutive action that you successfully attack the same target in ***Short Range***, you deal +1 damage on a hit or gain +1 to an advantage check with this weapon (cumulative up to +3).

SONIC STUNNER (TL3)

Property: *Sonic*

Very similar to a normal sonic weapon, the sonic stunner is designed only to be non-lethal. Some variations of other sonic weapons incorporate this configuration as an adjustable switch.

Mode: This weapon can be applied as a mode to any other sonic weapon. When used as a mode, it is not considered a separate item.

SPP RIFLE (TL2-4)

Property: *Self-Propelled Projectile*

The SPP rifle boasts the longest range of any personal assault-grade weapon, superior even to the coilgun. Like all SPP weapons, it can fire a variety of sabot rounds: the standard is ***Guided Explosive*** rounds, but most who wield this type of weapon carry multiple clips with various types of ammunition and switch between them as needed. Each of the gun's dual magazines holds 10 rounds, for a total of 20 when the weapon is fully loaded.

Mode: You can load two clips of different types in the weapon and switch between them as a mode.

SPP SENSOR GUN (TL3-4)

Property: *Self-Propelled Projectile, Sniper*

The sensor gun uses the range and guided capabilities of self-propelled projectiles to best effect for long-range single-target elimination. While it can load multiple types of sabot rounds, the standard is simple ***Guided*** slugs. While it only supports a single ten-round clip compared with other SPP weapons which typically allow for multiple ammunition types on the same weapon, for a sniper this is generally not a problem.

SUBMACHINE GUN (TL0-3)

Property: *Automatic, Basic Chemical Projectile*

An SMG is a smaller version of the basic assault rifle, usually lighter and often modular for ease of transport and concealment while disassembled. The tradeoff is that most such weapons have only a burst-fire mode instead of a full-fledged autofire, and even if they offer fully automatic, their lighter weight increases the recoil, causing the weapon to pull up with repeated firing. A standard magazine holds 80 rounds.

THUMPER LASER RIFLE (TL5)

Property: *Automatic, Laser*

The thumper, or pulse laser, uses a high-frequency interrupter to reduce the load on the system and thus allow for a higher-powered emission, delivering the full hurt of the solid laser's concentrated light beam in shorter bursts. Its name comes from the rhythmic pulsing noise the air makes as the gun is fired, as the beam ionizes the air and creates essentially a miniature thunderclap. The H-type cell contains enough charge for 60 shots.

VAPOR RIFLE (TL5)

Property: *Plasma*

No one is entirely sure who created this plasma weapon; an import first appeared in Angel several years ago, and examples still pop up occasionally, but all bastions but Mann have banned it. Porto refused to accept responsibility of the design, claiming a rival bastion known as Motego developed it in reprisal to Porto and to strike fear into a subservient population currently under their control. It fires a plasma bottle similar to other pulse weapons, but the gas inside is of a particular volatile mix. When struck, the victim is literally torn apart by the massive heat and chemical reaction some compare only to fluoroantimonic acid, as molecules are torn apart upon contact. The pulse appears to simply vaporize a section of the victim, sometimes the entire body itself, leaving nothing but vapor and a clean cauterized cavity.

Disintegrator: Whenever you invoke this weapon to add to its damage, the invocation grants +3 instead of +2.

HEAVY WEAPONS

Any weapon that is too large or unwieldy to fire without a tripod, mounting brace, power armor or vehicle is a heavy weapon. All heavy weapons are good out to ***Long Range*** and many extend to ***Extreme Range***. You cannot move and fire the weapon on the same turn unless it is vehicle-mounted or if using exo-armor.

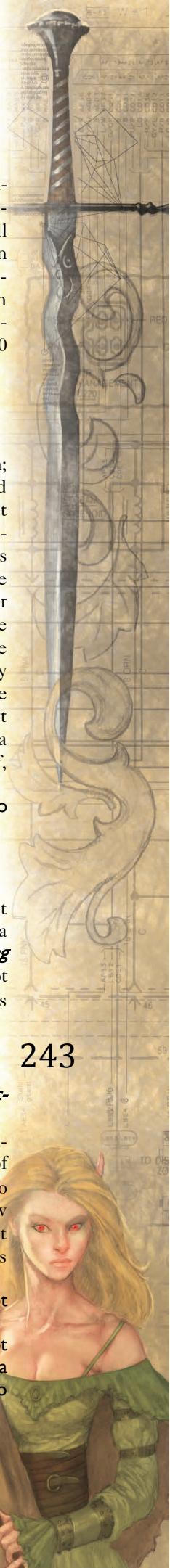
ESP MAELSTROM (TL2-3)

Properties: *Automatic, Electronically Stacked Projectile*

This weapon is a favorite for vehicle turrets, as it is viable out to ***Extreme Range***, has the highest rate of fire of any portable weapon and is very quick to reload – no need to mess with heavy ammo belts, just slap a new 400-shot stack into the breech and keep on firing. It enables a single gunner to do what more primitive guns require a crew of two or three to handle.

Mode: The Maelstrom does not have a single-shot mode.

Mosquito Cloud (free): You gain +1 to attack (but not damage; if you would inflict 0 damage you instead gain a boost) with the weapon. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you also deal +1 damage on a hit.



CAPACITOR APOCALYPSE (TL5)

Properties: *Automatic, Capacitor, Plasma*

A souped-up version of the pulse capacitor rifle, the Apocalypse isn't subtle, simply pumping so many plasma bottles into the target zone that it is virtually impossible to avoid the splash effect. Thankfully for any potential friendly-fire casualties, the weapon is good to ***Extreme Range.***

Mode: The Apocalypse does not have a single-shot mode.

Inferno (free): If you critically succeed on an attack with this weapon, you can deal 1 damage each to up to 3 other creatures in the same zone. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you instead deal 1 damage to every creature in the same zone.

COIL LIGHT GUN (TL3-4)

Properties: *Automatic, Magnetically Accelerated Projectile*

Automatic magnetic weapons are tricky to work with: because the coils cannot reverse their polarity fast enough to maintain a high rate of fire from a single barrel, multiple barrels are needed, and because the coils' magnetic fields interfere with each other, the weapon becomes severely ***Prone to Overheating***. The coil light gun can fire only 40 shots before it must both reload and take at least a few seconds to cool down. The weapon is good to ***Extreme Range***.

Mode: The coil light gun does not have a single-shot mode.

Deadly Ball Bearings (free): When you miss with an attack with the weapon and are in an environment with hard angular surfaces (such as metal or concrete) you can make a second attack at your original result -1 against one creature in the same zone (if the same as your original target, they make a new defense check). If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you instead make the second attack at your original result.

FLAMETHROWER (TL1-5)

This close-combat antipersonnel weapon has shrunk in size over the years. Though still two-handed, it no longer requires an unsafe nozzle to an even more hazardous backpack. Modern flamethrowers keep their tank mounted under the weapon stock. The tank is comprised of a relatively safe solid fuel, enough for about a minute of continuous usage. When combined with air, it reacts into expanding foam. A small battery compresses air in a separate chamber. The foam enters the final chamber and, when allowed to uncompress, sprays out in liquid form. A magnesium igniter at its barrel sends the superheated stream of flame to its target. Despite rumours and urban legends, neither older nor modern flamethrower tanks explode easily if ruptured or if a spark flicks nearby. If the weapon tank is ruptured, the foam would break and spray but not automatically ignite. Even older models would only burst like aerosol cans and not violently explode. Advanced versions release superheated plasma. But regardless of its construction, a flamethrower's only purpose is to set things *On Fire*.

Enduring Spray (free): You can always actively oppose overcome attempts by your victims to stop being ***On Fire***. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you can also spend a fate point to force the opponent to redraw and play a lower card for the attempt if they have one.

FIRE DAMAGE

By the rules as written, there isn't anything inherently damaging about being ***On Fire***. As far as the system is concerned, it's just another situation aspect that can be invoked as normal. So consider for a moment what the actual effects of being on fire are. First and foremost, your mind is filled with the desire to stop being on fire, and all your actions are focused on that. In addition to being unimaginably painful, the fire is quickly burning up the local oxygen, so it becomes difficult to breathe. You can't really see what you're doing and tend to flail around wildly, possibly setting other things ***On Fire***. Not to mention that if you let it go on long enough, it'll kill you.

Those that wish to emphasize the "it'll kill you" part of that paragraph are encouraged to treat the fire as a +2 basic monster with two stress boxes, which attacks the unfortunate victim at the start of each of their turns until it is put out. An overcome check against the fire aspect is treated as an attack against the monster, so a critical success is enough to put it out in one turn.

GLU GUN (TL1)

This large weapon, resembling a rocket launcher with an oversized ammo drum, utilizes a magnetic accelerator to launch metallic spheres which break apart upon impact, releasing expanding foam that solidifies soon after. This traps the target and anything else unfortunate enough to step upon or roll over it. The drum holds enough for 10 shots, and the weapon is only effective out to ***Short Range***.

What Did I Just Step In? (free): If you tie with an advantage check with this weapon, you gain +2 to an advantage check related to getting stuck in the glue on your next turn: this check does not have to be against the same target. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you gain the benefit if you missed by 2 or less.

GOD'S EYE SNIPER GUN (TL2-3)

Properties: *Basic Chemical Projectile, Sniper*

The "God's Eye" uses a proprietary digital scope that analyzes intended targets and determines weak points for improved stopping power. It is able to find holes in cover, faults in armor plating, and spots on a target to cause the most damage (axles, hearts, etc). However, the weapon was deemed too costly and now is only sold to private security agencies and mercenary groups. Without the scope, it's just an ordinary, if somewhat unwieldy, sniper rifle, and is only good out to ***Long Range*** instead of ***Extreme Range***. The magazine is good for 10 shots.

Omniscience (free, requires the scope to be active): You automatically succeed on your first advantage check

of the encounter per sniping target to identify a weak point. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, this check does not take up your action.

GROUND HEAVY GUN (TL2)

Property: *Explosive*

This light artillery weapon is designed to act both as a field gun for direct fire or a howitzer for long parabolic, indirect air bursts. It fires explosive shells out to ***Extreme Range*** and is able to eliminate most soft targets with a single shot. As it is a crew-served weapon that must be reloaded after every shot, it can only be mounted on a vehicle or a vehicle-drawn trailer.

Modes: The gun can either operate in direct-fire mode for ***Massive Single-Target Damage*** or indirectly for ***Wide-Scatter Burst***.

Fish in a Barrel (free): When you hit a non-armored target with the weapon in ***Massive Single-Target Damage*** mode, the target cannot use stress to soak the damage. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, the target also cannot use minor consequences to soak the damage.

ION CANNON (TL3)

Property: *Pincher*

Primarily an anti-vehicle/armor weapon, the ion cannon operates on the same principles as the ion rifle, the principle difference being the strength of the beam of charged particles and the ***Extreme Range*** over which it can be projected. The H-cell has enough charge for 40 shots.

EMPeror (free): You can always actively oppose overcome attempts by your opponents to overcome disruption imposed by this weapon. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you can also spend a fate point force the opponent to redraw and play a lower card for the attempt if they have one.

MACHINE LIGHT CANNON (TL0-2)

Properties: *Automatic, Basic Chemical Projectile, Immune to Disruption*

This is the most portable weapon that is still considered artillery. Variations on this model have made hell of battlefields throughout humanity's history – no infantry assault nor cavalry charge stands a chance against even the simplest and least disruptable such weapons. The gun is belt-fed (120 rounds per belt) and usually operated by a crew of two: one to aim and fire, one to keep the belt from tangling itself and to reload. The only thing keeping this relatively low-tech weapon from dominating the neo-medieval tactics of the echan world is that it is hopelessly inaccurate past ***Short Range***.

Mode: The machine light cannon does not have a single-shot mode.

MASS DRIVER (TL5)

Property: *Magnetically Accelerated Projectile*

The biggest railgun yet produced by human science, the mass driver fires a metal sphere the size of a bowling ball at high mach speeds even at Extreme Range, devastating anything that it hits or that even happens to be near its impact zone. The weapon is too heavy to mount on anything but wall emplacements (where it can tap into the regular power grid) or the largest mobile fortress vehicles (drawing power from the vehicle's battery), and requires two people to reload it after every ten shots.

The Biggest Gun (free): You deal 1 damage to up to three targets even if you fail an attack or advantage check with the weapon. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, any targets also cannot use stress to soak any damage from this weapon.

MORTAR (TL1-3)

Property: *Explosive*

The mortar is an indirect-fire weapon designed to lob explosive shells over enemy lines and walls. Because of their firing arc, they are only useful at ***Short Range***.

Modes: You can change the loadout of the mortar to ***Concussion, Electromagnetic Pulse, Fragmentation, Nerve Toxin, Smoke, or White Phosphorus*** as long as you have access to the appropriate type of shell; an advantage check to activate this mode is considered the same as an overcome check to reload the weapon.

NUCLEAR PARTICLE LANCE (TL3-5)

Property: *Nuclear*

The particle lance fires a stream of electrons stripped from the weapon's 'barrel'. This eventually necessitates replacing the barrel, but the weapon is virtually guaranteed to break from disruption long before that. A single M-cell provides enough power for 30 shots. Because the charged particles are not subject to air resistance, the weapon is effective out to ***Extreme Range***.

Reverse the Polarity of the Neutron Flow (free): Whenever you inflict a consequence with the weapon, it is treated as the next degree of severity for the purposes of recovery. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, the consequence is actually upgraded by one degree (if possible) but still only reduces the damage by its original amount.

PLASMA ARTILLERY (TL5)

Properties: *Explosive, Plasma*

Built on the same baseline as the ground heavy gun, plasma artillery operates at significantly reduced range due to its incapacity for parabolic indirect firing (instead, its indirect fire mode relies on the plasma splash effect). It more than makes up only being able to fire at ***Long Range*** with its damage potential.

Modes: The gun can either operate in direct-fire mode for ***Massive Single-Target Damage*** or indirectly for ***Wide-Scatter Burst***.

Gehenna (free): When you fire the weapon in ***Wide-Scatter Burst mode,*** you deal 1 damage to every creature in the zone. This is in addition to any damage from a hit. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you can attack every creature in the zone: you make one attack check, and each target defends against it individually.

RAILCANNON (TL4-5)

Properties: ***Automatic, Magnetically Accelerated Projectile***

The problems that beset the automatic coilgun are less prevalent on the upscaled railgun, which has a longer barrel to support multiple sets of coils. While still ***Prone to Overheating***, it doesn't have to cool off between barrages (which can consist of up to 120 slugs). It can demolish small buildings at ***Extreme Range***.

Mode: The railcannon does not have a single-shot mode.

What Wall? (free): You gain +2 to overcome obstacles related to cover with this weapon. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you instead ignore all cover-based obstacles.

ROCKET LAUNCHER (TL1-4)

Properties: ***Explosive, Guided***

When you absolutely must ruin someone's day, a rocket-propelled grenade is always helpful. Just don't shoot it at your own feet. The rocket launcher only holds one shot at a time, and the guidance systems on the rockets are most effective at ***Extreme Range***.

Mode: To fire at targets at ***Short Range*** or less, you must disable the ***Guided*** property or all attacks with the weapon automatically miss (this does not affect advantage actions with the weapon).

ROTARY CANNON (TL0-2)

Properties: ***Automatic, Basic Chemical Projectile***

At some point, someone must have realized the irony of referring to this massive weapon as a 'minigun.' The rotary cannon has eight revolving barrels and a 250-round ammunition drum which it can chew through in less than a minute at full auto. Higher-tech variants improve the ammunition feed and the rotary speed to boost the firing rate. The difficulty of aiming such a weapon makes it largely ineffective past ***Short Range***, however; even mounted on a vehicle or exo-armor, it is difficult to aim at ***Long Range*** and only really useful for suppressive fire at ***Extreme Range***.

Mode: The rotary cannon does not have a single-shot mode.

Say Hello to My Not-So-Little Friend (free): You deal +1 damage on a hit with the weapon. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you also deal 1 damage on a tie.

SOLID LASER CANNON (TL4-5)

Property: ***Laser***

Lasers are relatively straightforward weapons: the more power you put into them, the further they can fire and the more damage they do. Unfortunately, the equipment requirements needed to amplify a more powerful light beam are exponential, so a moderate increase in power results in a massive increase in size, making the weapon ***Bulky and Awkward***. Thankfully, photons don't have recoil. The solid laser cannon is effective at ***Extreme Range*** and can manage 30 shots on a single power cell.

Light Cone (free): You deal +1 damage on a hit against targets at ***Point Blank Range***. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, the bonus extends out to ***Short Range***.

SONIC DEVASTATOR (TL5)

Property: ***Sonic***

Originally designed as a demolition tool, the sonic devastator is the most up-close of any heavy weapon, being almost totally ineffective beyond ***Short Range***. Instead of the focused sound waves of smaller sonic weapons, the devastator projects amplified ultra-low-frequency sound waves along a conical path that reaches its maximal effectiveness at between 50 and 60 feet from the emitter. In addition to causing small buildings and poorly-reinforced walls to vibrate themselves to the verge of collapse, it proves remarkably effective against massed groups. A continuous-fire weapon when used for demolitions, the devastator's H-cell provides enough power for about four minutes of use, or 40 short bursts.

Sonic Boom (free): When you critically succed on an attack or advantage attempt with the weapon, the target is ***Knocked Prone*** and cannot stand or move until they succeed on an opposed overcome attempt as long as you continue to fire. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you only need to beat the target's defense by 2.

TECHAN MELEE WEAPONS

Close combat training is hardly obsolete since the development of chemical propulsion and large-clip firearms, but it is not the focus of the modern high-tech military. Though a knife will always be standard equipment, it is more often used as a utility item rather than a weapon, at least until the pistol ran out of bullets. As expected, the concepts of laser swords and monomolecular whips are constructs of pure science fiction, and are considered neither possible nor practical for a modern military. While a gun will almost always be the best choice for taking down a ravening monster, free companies and other technological-based organizations actively engaged with outside forces have often found themselves squaring off against foes able to reduce the effectiveness of ranged weapons, including invisibility, supernatural speed, or being able to ambush opponents from a concealed and inaccessible location. Add to that the cramped quarters of most dungeons along with the capacity of monsters to sustain significant punishment before dying, and the necessity of creating advanced melee weapons became an urgency.

The issue with employing active technology with close-combat weapons in a fantasy world is that, by their very nature, the weapon has to physically touch a creature that generates a disruption field in order to do any damage. As a result, these melee weapons have to be especially insulated against magical influence; hence the absence of the aforementioned energy swords, even in the bastions whose technology is only limited by the human imagination.

A ***Disrupted*** techan melee weapon still works as a normal melee weapon of its type – disruption side-

effects only occur when attempting to use any special features of the weapon.

BUZZ BATON (TL3-4)

Property: *Pincher*

The buzz baton is a non-collapsible truncheon with a point capable of emanating a powerful electric shock.

HARMONIC BLADE (TL2-4)

Beginning its life as a surgical scalpel, this device quickly evolved to accomplish the ethically opposite goal. The blade vibrates in excess of 75,000 Hz, enabling it to ***Slice or Penetrate Virtually Any Substance***. More advanced designs translate little of this pulsation to the user's hand, though it does still occur. As a result, using a harmonic blade for more than a few minutes generates significant muscle fatigue. Because a larger blade translates more of its energy to the wielder, there has not been a practical harmonic blade longer than a few inches. When its power source is deactivated, it functions as a (rather flimsy) dagger.

PITON-GAUNTLET (TL1-3)

These devices are not strictly speaking gauntlets, as your fingers are free to hold other objects. The gauntlet mounts to your forearm. This weapon is effectively a captive bolt pistol. When activated, it propels a titanium rod three inches from your fist (or as much as a foot for larger models). Spring action recoil returns the rod to its housing an instant later. The ejection system utilizes compressed air containing enough pressure for five minutes, and refilling the air tank requires one minute. The TL2 gauntlet uses a battery to maintain pressure in the system.

Aggravated Damage: As long as your unarmed attack deals at least 1 damage, you inflict +1 damage with the attack.

TESLA GLOVE (TL2-5)

Property: *Pincher*

This unique weapon is equipped with more than a half-dozen resonant transformers that conduct severe electrical shocks to a target when you impact with a physical hit.

Capacitor Charge: If you miss with an attack with the tesla glove, you can make an immediate advantage check to ***Charge It Up*** as part of the same action. As long as you keep missing, you can do this again, although the maximum number of free invocations you can gain in this way at any one time is equal to the weapon's TL.

ALTERNATE AMMUNITION

Certain weapons can have their standard ammunition altered with a more advanced substitute. Some variants deliver more damage while others fill a specific purpose against an enemy. Some ammunition can only be used with specific ammo types. You cannot mix alternate ammunition types in the same clip. Loading a weapon with alternate ammunition is a mode change and is considered the same as reloading.

ANGELITE

Angelite rounds overcome almost any physical damage resistances a creature may have, but as the metal is rare, such ammunition is prohibitively expensive except for the most specialty uses. Angelite also radiates EDF: any weapon using angelite rounds is treated as two tech levels higher for purposes of resisting disruption (even weapons that are normally immune).

Angelite Rounds (free): You ignore any effect that reduces incoming damage, including invocations of cover less than 4 inches wide (unless the cover is also made of angelite).

ARMOR PIERCING

Armor piercing rounds are designed for penetration rather than for direct damage. Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets, and heavy shells can be made armor piercing.

Armor Piercing Rounds (free): A creature or vehicle you target with this weapon cannot use free invocations of any aspect related to armor or cover to defend against your action.

FAE IRON

Rare, but some bastions made limited runs of fae-iron rounds, especially more xenophobic bastions like Mann. Bastions with positive echan relations like York and Selkirk prohibit their manufacture and sale. Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets, and heavy shells can be made of fae iron – however, most fae consider their use the equivalent of a war crime and will show no mercy on anyone caught even possessing such things.

HIGH EXPLOSIVE

While you can't use these to make something that isn't designed to go boom do so, they will make any ***Explosive*** weapon even more so.

High-Explosive Rounds (free): You can invoke both the ***Explosive*** and ***High-Explosive*** properties with a single fate point as long as you choose a different effect for each.

HOLLOWPOINT

Hollowpoint bullets are designed to expand when they enter a soft body, dealing more damage to tissues they pass through. The downside of this is that they are both more difficult to aim and even armor as basic as a folded-up piece of paper in the breast pocket can be enough to stop them. Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, sabot SPPs, and traditional bullets can be hollowpoint.

Hollowpoint Rounds (free): You deal +2 damage with hollowpoint rounds against unarmored targets, but deal no damage against armored ones (including if the target invokes an aspect related to solid cover on their defense, or has one invoked on their behalf).

RUBBER (Advantage actions only)

Usually used for crowd control, rubber bullets hurt like hell, but are not usually immediately lethal – although concussion and being crushed by a panicked mob are usual side-effects of being on the receiving end. Any BCP can be made with a rubber bullet, but automatic fire tends to shred them.

SILVER

Certain monsters, such as undead and therianthropes, are as vulnerable to silver as fae are to fae-iron. Contrary to popular myth, silver bullets made from holy relics are not any more efficacious against such beings. Any projectile weapon can fire silver bullets, limited only by the availability of the metal.

TRACER (Advantage actions only)

Tracers are usually packed at regular intervals among regular clips for automatic weapons (or, in more advanced weapons, in a separate clip that automatically injects the tracer round every few shots in full-auto mode), making it easier to aim at longer ranges and in the dark. Tracer rounds can occasionally be used to make volatile chemicals explode, but this is a lot harder than popular entertainment makes it seem.

INJECTIONS

Injections are an affliction similar to poison, and thus are delivered exclusively by an advantage action rather than an attack. Injections can be delivered manually with a melee attack or via an air dart gun. The dosages are only calibrated for use on human-sized or smaller creatures, and do not affect undead or incorporeal beings. Advantages placed with injections require two successful overcome actions to remove. Injections do not have tech levels, but are considered to have the TL of the seller's bastion of origin when determining their cost: injections are normally sold in cases of 5.

INJECTION EFFECTS

By themselves, injections are just the same as any created advantage: they don't have any objective mechanical effect. What they do is justify other actions and establish narrative truths. For instance, if you inject a creature with ***Narcosynthesis***, they're going to spill all but their deepest secrets without you even having to ask, and if you need those deepest secrets, you can invoke the injection for a bonus. Or, it would totally make sense for a creature injected with ***Detonator*** to be subjected to an attack with a bonus equal to the local EDF strength when they are subjected to disruption. The precise effect that the injection has in any given circumstances are dependent entirely on what you and the GM agree is reasonable.

If this seems excessively vague to you, try this instead: the injection gives you permission to give up your next turn in order to take an action related to the injection's effect whenever the circumstances seem appropriate.

DETONATOR

A vile injection, this introduces nanites into a subject which are exceptionally susceptible to EDF and detonate when ***Disrupted***.

ECHAN SUPPRESSOR

This fae-only injection, traced to Mann, uses the altered rules of science in echa against the subject. The injection is a toxoid vaccine against epidemic parotitis (the mumps); disruption (which occurs instantly when injected into fae) activates the suppressed toxin, eating the creature from the inside – and because the fae's magical immune system does not recognize the toxic bacteria as a threat, it makes no attempt to fight them off even after the initial toxemia wears off.

FEAR

This batch of pyschotropics will make the victim think everyone around him is a demon…unless the victim itself is a demon, in which case, it may see angels.

NARCOSYNTHESIS

Truth serum, multiplied by fifty.

OPEN MIND

This injection is a concoction of barbiturates, amphetamines, and LSD. When injected, the target becomes extremely susceptible to suggestion.

OVERDOSE

Just about anything can be a poison if you use enough of it. At the very least, this concoction of random chemicals will make the target muddle-headed – at worst, the effect might be lethal.

PAIN

This injection does not inflict pain, but rather hypersensitizes their dermal nerve network, making them feel all sensations with uncomfortable intensity.

PARALYSIS

This broad-spectrum mélange of neuromuscular-blocking drugs is able to inflict nearly instant paralysis in a target.

SLEEP

This heavy dose of diazepam and various opioids might actually kill a horse.

SLOW

This strange medley of drugs causes muscle relaxation by depressing the central nervous system.

VIRAL

It is common for doctors to inject a near-dead virus to improve a subject's immunity. This is just like that, but the opposite.

GRENADES & EXPLOSIVES

When you absolutely have to cause an obscene amount of damage to a wide area, turn to explosives. Most volatile chemicals are not inherently explosive and require some sort of detonator in order to explode (even if that detonator is a simple match, or being dropped on a concrete floor). Grenades come equipped with either an impact detonator or an eight-second timer detonator (chosen when the grenade is thrown), although a skilled demolitionist can refit it for use with another detonator. All other explosives require an appropriate detonator. Unless otherwise stated, any explosive can be used in grenades and vice versa. Explosives do not have tech levels, but are considered to have the TL of either the seller's bastion of origin or the detonator (if higher) when determining their cost per five 'bricks' plus detonators.

It should go without saying, but all explosives are ***Explosive***.

If you plan on working with explosives extensively, you may wish to consider one or more of the following stunts:

A Real Tosser: If you score a critical success against any target of an explosive, all targets of that action are Knocked Prone.

That Was Close: You can spend a fate point when you fail a check to set or disarm explosives to immediately reattempt the check. You cannot get worse than a tie on the second check.

Wilhelm Scream: You can spend a fate point when you make an explosive attack against multiple targets to make each target defend against your total check result instead of dividing it up among all targets.

ATTACKING WITH EXPLOSIVES

Attacking with grenades is pretty straightforward: you declare whether you are attempting an attack or advantage action and pick your targets, up to an entire (small) zone, then resolve the action the same as any other attack or advantage check.

Other explosives have to be placed first. This is always an advantage action. If successful, the explosive's aspect persists until disarmed (with one or more overcome attempts, depending on how complicated the explosive is and how dramatic the disarming should be) or until it detonates, at which point make the intended attack (or advantage, or occasionally overcome) as normal, and the explosive's aspect goes away. Planting an explosive takes up an action as normal, but exploding it does not.

When making an explosives attack, you can use the tech level of the detonator as the vocation for the attack.

COMPOSITION (Explosive only)

This soft, malleable explosive is also commonly referred to as 'plastic explosive,' and is the standard explosive for breaching demolitions because of its ability to be formed into shaped charges. It can be cut, formed, wrapped, and combined with others of its type. Composition explosive is more expensive than standard explosive but effective in its capacity. It is also extremely stable.

CONCUSSION

This light explosive uses air pressure as well as shrapnel to disrupt enemy lines. They are often employed as mines and in air bursts to break up dense collections of personnel.

ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE (Advantage actions only)

EMPs don't inflict any damage, but instead discharge an electromagnetic burst that ***Disrupts*** electronics.

FERTILIZER (Explosive only)

Fertilizer contains a mixture of nitrogen, phosphorus, magnesium, and sulfur, all elements frequently associated with explosibility. Many commercial fertilizers actually make more energetic explosions than purpose-built bomb explosives do, which can be problematic when attempting to limit collateral damage.

FLASHBANG (Grenade only; Advantage actions only)

Also simply referred to as a stun grenade, a flash bang reduces the combat effectiveness of opponents by ***Confusing and Disorientating*** them with a sudden blinding magnesium flash and a deafening blast. The grenade body doesn't actually fragment so no shrapnel is dispersed.

FRAGMENTATION

Frags are designed purely as an antipersonnel explosive by discharging dozens of plastic or steel flechettes blowing out along with fragments of the explosive's own shell. This deadly shrapnel shreds anything it touches. This is the most common form of grenade.

FUEL (Explosive only; Advantage actions only)

Despite what movies will have you believe, it's not easy to set jet fuel ablaze. Standard automotive fuel doesn't burn in liquid form, but fumes do, and the heat of a flame or the pressure of another explosion is more than enough to aerosolize the fuel. Once ignited, everything within the affected area is On Fire.

GUNPOWDER

By itself, gunpowder is not actually that explosive – it combusts energetically when exposed to the slightest flame, but without a pressure chamber of some sort to channel that energy, it doesn't have very much force. A patch of exposed gunpowder will only produce a quick flash and a cloud of smoke: an entire keg of it, however, is another matter.

NERVE TOXIN (Grenade only)
A deadly and illegal weapon, this grenade expels a potent gaseous mixture blending a batrachotoxin and taipoxin and several other agents produces a deadly gas that causes complete paralysis of all muscles by stopping the release of acetylcholine. By blocking nerve pulses to the muscles, the subject dies from asphyxiation or heart failure. The gas only affects living creatures, and the cloud persists for several minutes after initial release.

NITROGLYCERINE
One of the oldest explosives, nitro is not longer actively used due to its instability. Nitroglycerine will always detonate if caught in the blast radius of another explosive, if dropped from a height of more than 5 feet, or if ignited. Nitro can be combined with nitrocellulose and sawdust to create gelignite, which will not ignite when dropped a short distance (but will when subjected to a more energetic impact, such as being shot).

RIOT (Grenade only)
Riot grenades are used usually to disperse crowds and disorientate attackers. The grenade doesn't explode but rather opens valves, releasing compressed tear gas. In addition to creating an obscuring field of smoke, the gas causes skin and eye irritation on contact, throat and nose irritation if inhaled. The gas only affects living creatures, and the cloud persists for several minutes after initial release.

SMOKE (Grenade only)
Most smoke grenades are employed as signalling devices, though they can also be used to screen unit movements, conceal advancement and hinder enemy fire.

TRINITROTOLUENE
TNT is the standard explosive to which all others are compared. Although not employed in modern industry or military applications, it is still common in black market circles and in civilian use (e.g.: mining). Unlike mouldable explosive, TNT can accidentally detonate if caught in the blast of another explosion.

WHITE PHOSPHORUS (Grenade only)
The white phosphorus grenade is a smoke grenade with an explosive burst. Rather than burning to make smoke, the phosphorus ignites in the air after spreading. The brilliant yellow flame produces phosphorus pentoxide, the smoke, as a by-product. The intense heat allows the grenade to double as an antipersonnel weapon. The heat is devastating in close quarters.

DETONATORS
Explosives by themselves are not considered high-tech – the things that make them explode, however, are another matter. Most explosives are fairly stable and require a separate detonator to blow them up.

> **EXPLOSIVES & ASPECTS**
> Because a stable explosive without a detonator is pretty much a lump of inert putty, and a detonator without an explosive is just a bunch of loose wires, when the two are put together they should be treated as a single object with a single aspect, e.g. a ***Fragmentation Mine with a Pressure Trigger*** or ***Smoke Grenade on an Eight-Second Timer***.

FRIEND-FOE TRIGGER (TL3-5)
This detonator can be programmed to detonate the moment a specific monster enters its blast radius. It can also be programmed to detonate for everything but specific people. There is no limit on its parameters.

IMPACT TRIGGER (TL0)
After the safety is pulled, impact triggers detonate upon impact with any rigid surface. This detonator is rarely used except with grenades.

MAGNETIC TRIGGER (TL2-5)
These unique detonators only function on explosive payloads of 2 lbs. or less. When armed, the detonator detects any sizeable metallic object (such as a vehicle, exo-armor, or suit of plate) passing within 30 feet and is pulled (together with its explosive) towards it, detonating on impact. If anything gets between the explosive and the target, so much the worse for it.

MOTION TRIGGER (TL2)
This detonator detects movement in its burst area and detonates regardless of the target.

PRESSURE TRIGGER (TL1-5)
These trigger the moment a weight is pressed upon the detonator. The sensitivity of the pressure plate can be adjusted to only trigger for targets above a certain weight.

RADIO REMOTE (TL2-5)
The EDF suppresses radio waves, making remote detonators less reliable, but that doesn't prevent them from being useful within those limitations. The range limit of a radio remote is 500 feet, which cannot be boosted in any way. Both the transmitter and receiver require batteries.

TIMER (TL0 or TL2)
Timers utilize a mechanical clock to countdown compared to a digital timer (unpopular in echa due to disruption – the digital readout is available at a higher tech level, but its only advantage is being able to tune the explosion to the microsecond). The actual trigger is usually chemical or mechanical.

TRIP TRIGGER (TL0-5)
This detonator is a simple mechanical or chemical trig-

ger attached to an explosive with a trip wire up to 25 feet long: a creature passing through the wire pulls the pin and detonates the device.

WIRED REMOTE (TLO-1)

This simple form runs an electrical pulse that triggers the mechanical, chemical, or electrical detonator. Because the EDF increases the resistance of electrical wires, the maximum range of any wired detonator is 150 feet.

ARMOR

A popular chestnut is that the development of firearms made armor obsolete. In fact, armor technology and gunnery technology have played a complicated game of leapfrog since the first fire lance appeared on the battlefield. Modern science is able to maximize the protective value of armor while minimizing its impact on maneuverability: while most armor still limits movement to some degree, it is far less obstructive than the neo-medieval varieties worn by most echans (and thus commands a high price in echan communities, as most armor without powered components is ***Immune to Disruption***). Technology is even able to take things one step further and create armor capable of enhancing its wearer's natural capabilities.

LIGHT ARMOR

Light armor trades stopping power for speed and flexibility. Those who wish to maximize the use of light armor can take the following stunts:

Ease of Movement (requires light armor): Your light armor is never an obstacle to movement.

Specialized (gear stunt, applied to a specific suit of light armor): Choose one source of damage (such as fire, cold, laser, plasma, sonic, basic chemical projectiles, etc). You reduce all incoming damage from that source by 1 while wearing the armor (minimum 1). Certain armors may not be appropriate for certain damage types (GM's discretion), while some may have the stunt applied multiple times.

BALLISTICS ARMOR (TLO-5)

This is a light, but still somewhat clumsy, collection of ceramic and polymer plates placed strategically to withstand impacts without hampering maneuverability significantly.

SYNTHETIC WEAVE (TLO-5)

The predecessor to advanced aromatic polyamides, this full body set includes thicker pads for impact damage reduction from cuts and slashes, with the unfortunate side-effect of being more vulnerable to piercing attacks. Nevertheless, they are a popular basic outfit and the comfortable choice for many in the field.

Slice Resistant (free): This armor gains the *Specialized* gear stunt for edged weaponry for free. However, it grants one free invocation to an opponent per scene against piercing attacks.

MEDIUM ARMOR

A compromise between maneuverability and protection, medium armor is the most commonly seen in use. Medium armor can count as either light armor or heavy armor (whichever is more advantageous to the wearer) for purposes of external effects and stunt requirements.

ARAMID COMBAT SUIT (TL0-5)

The aramid combat suit is constructed primarily of heat-resistant synthetic fibers mixed with rigid plastic and metal plates. Additional layers of nylon separate staggered sheets of thin polymer plastic. The end result is a full-body combat suit insulated against extremes of heat and capable of, if not shrugging off, at least severely reducing the impact of most chemical projectiles.

ARAMID SURVIVAL SUIT (TL2-5)

This suit initially appeared in York. It employs a combination of flexible aramid fabrics and rigid ceramic and metal plates. The suit covers the wearer completely, sealing her from the outside environment and granting superior resistance to extremes of temperature. The survival suit has an edge over the combat suit in terms of maneuverability and range of environmental resistance, at the cost of having reduced stopping power.

Hazard Suit (free): This armor gains the *Specialized* gear stunt for both heat and cold damage for free. However, it grants one free invocation to an opponent per scene against any other type of attack.

FORCED BODY VEST (TL0-5)

An upgrade from basic ballistics armor, this variation is lighter, equally as resilient, and is offered in a modular configuration, making it far easier to provide a proper fit. The ***Ease of Movement*** stunt is considered free for this armor.

NANOTECH ARMOR (TL4-5)

This advanced suit emerged with refugees from Mann, but even they admit to not developing it. They claim it was taken from a Porto craft, confiscated while on a diplomatic mission to Mann. It is an extremely rare item and according to rumor, less than a dozen can be found in Canam. The suit uses molecule-sized machines to alter the composition of the suit at the instant of impact. Usually, the combat suit remains elastic and comfortable. Anytime any impact occurs the micromachines react with a response time of less than 0.035 seconds. The impact point becomes immediately inflexible and

COMBAT EXOSKELETON

solid, deflecting the attack.

Mode: The nanomachines are sensitive to disruption, and remain in the configuration they were last in if disrupted. You can manually disable the control mechanism while the armor is flexible to avoid being constrained by a disruption event.

Nano-Reaction: You can spend a fate point when you would normally take a minor or moderate consequence while wearing nanotech armor to negate the consequence.

HEAVY ARMOR

Offering the most protection in exchange for making the wearer Slow, heavy armor will turn aside even a dragon's horns. Those who wear heavy armor should consider the following stunts to maximize its potential:

Glancing Blow (requires heavy armor): Once per scene, you can spend a fate point to negate a single hit against you.

Shell (requires heavy armor): You reduce all incoming damage by 1 while wearing heavy armor (minimum 0).

CARBIDE ARMOR (TL0-5)

Super-strong plates of tungsten carbide are strapped inside a flexible nylon suit to offer remarkable stopping power. However, these plates are heavy and significantly reduce the user's flexibility.

FLAK LONGCOAT (TL0-5)

This clumsy but stylish piece of subtle outerwear contains a thick inner layer of flexible aramid patches able to resist cutting and piercing. It comes available in brown or black. It leaves the head vulnerable, even with the collar up. Most importantly, it ***Flaps Dramatically in the Wind***.

FULL COMBAT WARRIOR (TL2-5)

The full combat suit is a mixture of aramid padding and titanium plates in water-resistant layers of nylon and metallic fibers covered by patterned camouflage. It offers an insulated backpack-mounted computer system that controls various systems on the suit, including a night vision imaging system and onboard targeting system implanted in the suit's detachable helmet. While the helmet does not seal, the suit still offers significant protection against regular environmental hazards, including extreme heat.

Mode: Any of the armor's systems can be manually enabled or disabled. If disrupted, only the base armor is unaffected.

All-Weather Gear (free): You gain +1 to defend against extremes of heat and cold. If you allocate a stunt slot to this stunt, you instead gain +2.

TACTICAL BODY ARMOR (TL1-5)

This is a slightly detuned version of the full combat warrior armor. It offers similar protection in a lighter package. It sacrifices several of its carbide plates to make the suit less expensive for those on a budget, and does not have a computer system built in.

YOWIE SUIT (TL0-5)

Not designed for actual combat, this clumsy but effective piece of camouflage offers some rudimentary protection. It is not terribly heavy but its overlapping layers of fake foliage renders fast movement nearly impossible. Pouches and straps conceal various other camouflage patterns which can unfold or release to alter the appearance of the suit. Designed principally for forest and scrubland, the suit can be customized for any environment ahead of time.

Holography (Mode, requires TL4-5): When engaged, the wearer is completely invisible to anyone outside the holographic field. If disrupted, only this mode is affected.

SHIELDS

Shields aren't often used against other techans, since high-speed projectiles travel faster than the human body is able to react to them, but they do see some use against more primitive peoples.

ACTIVE DISSUASION SYSTEM (TL4-5)

The successor of the energy envelope, which projects an energy field that conforms to the wielder's shape, the ADS contains a more powerful capacitor to respond to outside attack. The resulting system does not actually offer superior protection; if anything, it is slightly worse, but is kept in production due to an unintended side-effect. The ADS capacitor prevents breakdown of its energy shield by temporarily overcharging the repulsor field a microsecond before impact. This maintains shield integrity, but also discharges a significant electric shock which can disable or kill nearby soft targets. The ADS takes two battery cells: one for its shield and one for its force feedback system. The shield is emitted from a backpack mount, and leaves the user's hands free.

Mode: The ADS can be manually enabled or disabled. If disrupted, the entire system is affected.

Force Feedback: Whenever your defense exceeds an attack check in melee while using the ADS, you inflict damage on your attacker equal to the excess.

DEPLOYABLE SHIELD (TL3-4)

This arm-mounted device remains concealed and unobtrusive until needed. When deployed (usually by a flick of the wrist), it instantly unfolds and slides into position to offer protection. A single energy cell is required for the deployment of the shield.

Mode: The shield can be deployed or stowed, and employed in either the traditional ***Buckler*** format or as a more cumbersome Tower configuration that provides better coverage. If disrupted, it becomes locked in its current configuration.

ENERGY ENVELOPE (TL5)

The most advanced active defense system available,

the energy shield covers its user only a centimeter from his skin, and thus is capable of protecting against all incoming attacks. Its only drawback is its tendency to temporarily neutralize when its user makes a melee physical attack. The shield is emitted from a backpack mount, and leaves the user's hands free.

Mode: The energy envelope can be manually enabled or disabled. When enabled, the shield grants 2 stress boxes that can be used to soak damage from physical attacks. However, if you make a melee attack, you cannot use these stress boxes until the start of your next turn. If disrupted, the entire system is affected.

EXO-ARMOR

Powered armor is designed to enhance the wearer's natural capabilities, boosting strength and enabling the pilot to move nearly as freely as if they were unencumbered: except for the most primitive models, exo-armor functions as if it were an extension of the wearer's body. By definition, exo-armor requires a power cell to operate, and when the armor's power is interrupted by disruption, the armor cannot move, immobilizing the wearer (fortunately, all exo-armor has quick-releases to allow the wearer to escape from an inert suit in under a minute).

Exo-armor requires special training to use effectively. A character wearing exo-armor cannot create advantages, engage modes, or use free invocations on their armor unless they either have an aspect that relates to exo-armor use, assign the armor to one of their vocation slots (using that slot's value in place of the armor's TL for checks), or take the following stunt:

Exo-Armor Training: You can create advantages, engage modes, and use free invocations on any exo-armor normally. Additionally, whenever you wear exo-armor, you reduce all incoming damage by 1 (minimum 0).

LIGHT EXO-ARMOR

A light exo is less bulky, and while not necessarily more maneuverable, it is able to fit into more places than heavier armor. Stunts that apply to light armor also apply to light exo-armor.

COVENANT (TL5)

Permission: Member of the Covenant of Mann, or finding the armor during play.

The most advanced armor currently available in open echa, the comparatively light covenant tracks its origins to a secret caste of the same name within Mann society. This organization is charged with recovering and/or eliminating dissident factions from their own civilization. They are among the few permitted to leave Mann with the sole objective to eradicating any possibility of their technology falling in enemy hands. Unfortunately, despite numerous failsafes in Mann hardware, a few of these armors have found themselves in the hands of those very same adversaries. The armor is equipped with an advanced gravity drive that can not only selectively adjust its weight, but also alter its center of gravity, making any plane equally stable for the wearer and making them capable of unbelievable acrobatic feats (further aided by the jump jets and thrusters implanted in the legs, back, and wrists). As it is constructed to operate in echan environments, it is ***Shielded*** against disruption and is sealed against all environmental hazards, making the wearer immune to external toxins and resistant to heat, corrosion, and electrical discharge.

Holy Sanction (Mode): When you engage the security system, the armor's internal systems short-circuit and melt themselves, electrocuting the wearer if they do not exit the armor or disarm the system within ten seconds.

Shadow Field (Mode): The armor uses an advanced cloaking device to remain stealthy. It is all but invisible when the field is engaged.

Gravity Drive Mastery: You automatically overcome any obstacle that can be overcome by physical maneuvering.

Shadow Field Mastery: You can engage the ***Shadow Field*** without taking an action.

GLADIATOR (TL3-4)

Originally built as a heavy lift assistant for use in the Selkirk mines, the gladiator found popularity later as a muscle augmenter for weapon applications by the defense division. Eventually a new suit, the tanker, was purpose-built for the role, but the gladiator's smaller size kept it in regular use, and it remains the more popular model. Depending on its loadout, it can serve as both a ranged weapons platform and a close-combat vehicle. The suit augments its user's strength, speed, maneuverability and durability, and has automatic stabilizers in the arms that compensate for the weight and recoil of heavy weapons without the need for a special brace (although the combat model also comes with an additional braced weapon mount). It is ***Shielded*** against disruption, but not against other environmental effects, as it relies on the Selkirk warrior's superior vision in place of disruption-prone electronic vision enhancers.

Rugby Uniform: You can make a check to overcome one obstacle to movement and make a melee attack as part of the same action while wearing this armor.

SKINPLATE (TL4-5)

This is a small powered armor, every suit of which is adjusted specifically to the user and conforms tightly to the contours of the body. It employs a combination of lightweight polymers and aramids reinforced with carbon fullerene rings. Solid limbs are made from silicon carbide ceramic which slide perfectly to allow movement via a magnetorheological fluid. The suit covers the entire body, with an attached helmet that seals it completely. Because of its size and maneuverability, it improves the wearer's natural speed significantly, and boosters in the legs allow phenomenal jumps. The suit is entirely sealed against the environment, providing the wearer immunity to outside toxins and resistance to extremes of temperature and to corrosive agents, and is ***Shielded*** against disruption.

Cave Cricket: You gain +1 to checks related to athlet-

ics and maneuverability, or +2 while underground.

HEAVY EXO-ARMOR

A heavy exo suit is more like a small walking tank than a suit of armor – it significantly increases the wearer's size. Heavy exo-armor can wield most heavy weapons like rifles, and many have dedicated weapon mounts. Stunts that apply to heavy armor also apply to heavy exo -armor.

AMAROK (TL3-4)

Angel developed its first powered armor after recovering a disabled Mann design some years ago. By a miracle of engineering skill, the Angel scientists successfully circumvented Mann's failsafes: before the armor destroyed itself, a basic understanding of compact robotic design had been gleaned. The amarok is the direct descendant of that knowledge. Angel being far less insular than any other bastion other than York, the amarok has since become the most common exo design seen outside bastion walls. The amarok has no external manipulators, only three heavy weapon emplacements. Otherwise, it has superb maneuverability, being able to traverse practically any terrain with ease, and due to advanced night vision imaging it can operate in almost total darkness. Intended for echan environments, it is ***Shielded*** against disruption. It is sealed against all environmental hazards, making the wearer immune to external toxins and resistant to heat, cold and electrical discharge.

Auto-Reload (Mode): The armor has a mechanism to reload its weapons (since it has no arms).

Alpha Strike: You can spend a fate point to fire all the amarok's mounted weapons as a single action.

APOSTLE MOTOR SLAVE (TL5)

The main front line defender of Mann, this intimidating armor requires its user to slip into a form-fitting suit that mounts tightly in the control area. The pilot's head fits only partially into the machine's helmet with most of the user sitting in the trunk of the armor. The pilot's arms extend to the elbows and the legs only to the knees. The apostle is banned technology outside of Mann: the secretive bastion has threatened dire retribution on any foreign government caught using them and considers their use outside of Mann's walls blasphemy, claiming the knowledge was bestowed upon them from God. Although this prevents their deployment in other bastions, mercenary units have no such loyalties to the fanatical city. The security systems of earlier models are also less advanced than later Mann developments, as nearly all powered armor technology in Canam is reverse-engineered from this design. The apostle significantly amplifies the wearer's strength and durability,

and is a lot faster than its frame would indicate. It has a single weapon mount in addition to reinforced gauntlets, and an advanced sensor net. As with all Mann-based technology, it is ***Shielded*** against disruption. It is sealed against all environmental hazards, making the wearer immune to external toxins and resistant to heat, cold, and corrosive agents. Additionally, the armor is self-repairing: superficial damage to the chassis and plating is restored within minutes, and more extensive damage may only take a few hours to be restored, as good as new, as long as the device has power and structural integrity.

Holy Sanction (Mode): When you engage the security system, the armor's internal systems short-circuit and melt themselves, electrocuting the wearer if they do not exit the armor or disarm the system within ten seconds.

Self-Repair (free): The armor replenishes one point of stress to your highest-value checked stress box at the start of your turn. You do not recover the stress box until its full value is replenished (so a 3-point box would be recovered in three turns).

COMBAT EXOSKELETON (TL4-5)

The combat exoskeleton initially appeared in Selkirk,

reverse engineered from stolen Mann technology. The suit resembles an oversized piece of medieval plate, reinforced by limbs of titanium and amplified by synthetic muscle fibers running through the entire assembly. Though not very pretty, the Com-Exo has proved its usefulness in combat, granting its wielder enhanced strength and durability, and although not nearly as fast as the design from which it was ripped, it still enhances the wielder's maneuverability far beyond what would expect from a large metal monstrosity. As with all technology stolen from Mann, it is ***Shielded*** against disruption. It also makes the wearer more resistant to heat and cold, though Selkirk has foregone the full-face sealed helmet and thermoptics of the original in favor of their warriors' own improved senses.

Knight in Titanium Armor: You either deal +2 damage on a hit with a melee attack while wearing the armor, or you gain +2 to the attack (but not damage: if you would deal 0 damage, you instead gain a boost).

RACK POWER SUIT (TL4-5)

Following the trend of virtually all other exo armors, the Rack resulted from Sierra Madre reverse engineering an apostle motor slave with the intent of creating an anti-echan armor specialized in close combat. Adding their own sense of flamboyance, the end result is smaller and more agile, though still not to the extent of the Skinplate design. The suit is large but thinner in areas to reduce weight. The catchy nickname comes from the positioning of the pilot within the frame, which to an outside observer looks profoundly uncomfortable (though it feels just as well-fitted as the Skinplate). The power suit provides its wielder with superior strength, durability and maneuverability (servo-assisted boosters make the pilot even more agile within the armor than outside it) and has reinforced gauntlets for particularly damaging melee weapon and 'unarmed' strikes. The armor is sealed against the outside world, rendering the user immune to environmental toxins and resistant to extremes of heat and corrosive agents, and like most Mann derivatives, is ***Shielded*** against disruption.

La Rana: You gain +2 to advantage attempts to use acrobatic maneuvers in melee combat while wearing the Rack.

TESTAMENT (TL5)

The most dominant and imposing suit in the known world, the testament appeared only recently as Mann started to take a more vested interest in external affairs. Often flanked by a lance of Mann military hardware, the testament isn't subtle: it is designed to take on the largest of targets or engage entire enemy squads by itself. There has not been a report of a testament being operated by anyone not in service of the fanatical bastion. If this were to occur, Mann would stop at nothing to ensure its retrieval or elimination. The testament is a massive piece of armor which significantly increases the user's strength and physical damage capability. It combines the pinnacle of all of Mann's exo-armor technologies: it has the covenant's advanced gravity drive to manage its colossal bulk and protect it from falls on any footing; it is self-repairing like the apostle motor slave, and has an attached robot drone to effect more rapid repairs; it has the same advanced sensors and even more precise thermoptics than other suits, enabling the user to see in perfect darkness; it is of course sealed against environmental poisons, corrosives and extremes of heat and cold, and is ***Shielded*** against disruption; plus, it has an additional trick unique to itself.

Phasing (Mode): The instant the mode is engaged, the gravity drive folds local space and displaces the armor up to twenty-five feet in any direction. Because the system is incredibly power-intensive, it must be activated manually for each transition.

Holy Sanction (Mode): When you engage the security system, the armor's internal systems short-circuit and melt themselves, electrocuting the wearer if they do not exit the armor or disarm the system within ten seconds.

Deus Machina Est: You gain a free invocation of the armor per scene while you are wearing it.

Gravity Drive Mastery: You automatically overcome any obstacle that can be overcome by physical maneuvering.

Rapid Phasing: You can engage the phasing mode as part of another action once per scene.

Self-Repair (free): The armor replenishes one point of stress to your highest-value checked stress box at the start of your turn. You do not recover the stress box until its full value is replenished (so a 3-point box would be recovered in three turns).

VULTURE SYSTEM (TL4-5)

This basic powered suit enables flight via a set of turbines, control surfaces, and vectored thrusters, but offers only rudimentary protection for its pilot. It also suffers from a limited range for each flight.

CUSTOMIZING EXO-ARMOR

Exo suits are frequently custom-rigged to their wearers' preferences. Rare is the suit in the field that operates purely by factory specs, and most are designed with moddability in mind. Modifying a suit requires access to someone with an engineering vocation, but requires no check: instead, for each full scene spent modifying the armor, you can apply the effects of a particular advantage to the armor's aspect. The modification should be of a tech level that the engineer is familiar with (though gimfen engineers, of course, can do just about anything if it can be described to them). If you don't want to fold in additional effects to a single aspect, you can instead make an advantage check or buy a stunt related to the armor as normal. Sample effects for customization include: ***Auto-Reload System (TL3); Disruption Shielding (TL2); Gravity Drive (TL5); Jump Jets (TL4); Maneuvering Boosters (TL3); Night Vision (TL2); Piston Gauntlets (TL2); Stealth Holography (TL4); Strength Enhancements (TL3); Structural Reinforcement (TL3); Target Analysis Software (TL3).***

TECHAN TOOLS

As many seeking adventure migrate closer to bastions, the saturation of bastion exports increase. More and more goods constructed by the simply skilled find themselves replaced by the refined exports of sophisticated manufacture. Most conventional trade goods and adventuring gear are available in both their traditional forms and as bastion exports. In addition to being considered status symbols due to their comparative rarity, such goods are often (but not always) more durable and better able to weather the hazards of dungeoneering. The base cost of such items is the same as their echan equivalent, but is usually subject to a significant markup by canny merchants well aware of the demand for such machined goods.

ANTI-ECHAN NETWORK (TL3)

This York-designed device exhibits a level of ingenuity many other bastions don't attest to the lower-tech city. It has found circulation across the world by mercenaries and military groups. While battery-powered, it utilizes the EDF to its advantage. The AEN consists of metal poles driven into the ground or supported by tripods: each pole cannot be more than 50 feet (ten squares) apart from another. They generate an electrical field which transmits a signal back to the base system at camp. If any creature that generates EDF passes through the field or interferes with one of the poles, the localized disruption is detected and an alert message is sent back to the transmitter. If the receiver shorts out, it breaks a connection to a backup mechanical siren, which goes off. Their only weakness is subterranean infiltration, assuming approaching echans notice the network. The receiver can locate where a break occurs. The AEN poles receive power from the transmitter so only one battery is required. Each charge used maintains four poles for one day. Each additional charge per hour allows the addition of four more poles.

ANTI-GRAVITY GENERATOR (TL5)

The subject using this belt device is able to fly, although only for about five minutes on a single battery.

AUTOMATIC WATCH (TL2)

Digital watches have fallen out of favor in the world of today. Modern watches employ a balance wheel that winds via the motion of the wearer's arm. This allows the watch to keep perfect time without requiring manual winding or any power source. The compact and complicated device is water resistant, shock resistant, and cannot be over-wound with abuse. They are also completely silent.

BIG EAR (TL3)

This tiny device wraps around one's ear and amplifies incoming acoustic data. It is best to switch it off when

not actively listening, since not only does the battery only last about 20 minutes with continuous use, but any sudden loud noise can temporarily deafen the wearer.

CAMERA BALL (TL3 or TL5)
This three inch rubber ball with a weighted flat bottom can be thrown or fired from a grenade launcher. Once it lands, it transmits audio and video input from a full 360 degree arc up to 500 ft. (100 squares) to a receiving monitor. The TL5 version contains a small antigravity unit, enabling it to hover for up to 5 minutes on a single battery.

DISRUPTION MUFFLER (TL2-3)
Though designers succeeded in creating a small container rendering its contents immune to disruption, larger attempts resulted in failure. The amount of insulation required increases proportionately to the size of the container, resulting in only slightly larger capacity for much large containers. The largest effective container is a small crate a little larger than a standard insulated cooler, with the most common muffler being a small bag about a third the size of a gym bag. Whatever their form, mufflers prevent disruption of anything inside them – such containers are usually used to transport batteries, which otherwise will lose their charge in less than a day when exposed to open EDF.

DISRUPTION PATCH (TL1)
Similar in principle to radiation badges, the disruption patch is a small square plastic tab the size of a bottle cap, often hung from necks or from wrists. Each bastion developed their own unique approach to the patch though a common practice is a colored dye (red being the obvious choice) that breaches into the top layer of the patch when an extremely sensitive microwave thermionic diode is disrupted via enchantment. The patch detects increased disruption from localized increases in magic though one must be careful to keep the vacuum seal each patch is sold in enclosed as a patch will often naturally disrupt after a day in the open.

ELECTRIC TORCH (TL2)
The most common device on a techan adventurer is the flashlight or electric torch. Modern torches do not employ fragile bulbs but instead use electronically regulated light-emitting diodes that make the end product more efficient, brighter, and more durable for the wilderness adventurer. It employs a miniature electrical generator and capacitor. By either shaking the light or winding a crank, the capacitor charges, allowing the unit to power its LED transmitter.

FORCE SHIELD (TL5)
Mann originally developed this technology, with Porto following soon after. They never traded it with anyone and technology theft remains the probable cause of its proliferation. The system consists of two ground-planted generator coils which, when placed up to 20 feet apart and activated, create a barrier between them, impenetrable from one side but allowing those behind it to fire through. The system has enough power per charge for two minutes of continuous operation.

GRAVITY LENS (TL5)
An ingenious invention Mann stole from Porto and Motego, the lens resembles a 10x13 photo frame with a handle on one side when unfolded from its compact package. When attached to a wall, it allows to the user to peer through it as if looking through a window. It detects secret doors, compartments, caches and so forth as well as snares and pits.

GRIP GLOVES (TL3)
This Selkirk prototype allows the user to climb walls with ease.

HOLOGRAPHIC GENERATOR (TL5)
This backpack-carried device deploys its own legs when activated. The fabric of the pack conceals most of the gear. Only a reflective sphere on a pintle rises from the top. The device can make a 50-foot circle look and sound like some other sort of natural terrain and can hide structures, equipment, and creatures within the area: multiple generators can be set up to conceal larger areas. All sounds within the dome are muffled from the outside. The effect is not solid, so interacting with the hologram reveals its illusory nature. The device can run for five hours on one large battery and cannot be moved while activated.

INFRARED GOGGLES (TL3)
These non-telescoping goggles still provide stereoscopic vision and allow the wearer to see in total darkness for nearly a full day on a single charge.

LASER SIGHT (TL1)
Laser sights may be used in conjunction with scopes. They paint targets with precision where the weapon's fire will strike. This also doubles as a psychological attack, as most individuals find a green target on their chest to be a great incentive to negotiation. A sniper may, if they wish, swap it for an infrared diode, which is invisible to everything except for infrared vision. The standard sight uses a green diode solid-state laser which is effective for the maximum range of any weapon.

LIE DETECTOR (TL3)
No paper, needles, or wire; this device is a simple palm-shaped item that is placed gently on the subject's body.

LIGHT STICKS (TL0)
Scientists battled for years to uncover a new chemical combination that provided the light of glowsticks with-

out the danger of disruption (despite being very low-tech, the traditional mixture mysteriously became inert after five minutes of exposure to EDF). When activated, the chemicals mix with a fluorescent dye and illuminate a 40-foot circle for about an hour. They usually glow red, green, or blue. Light sticks are popular in echa and often impress many where mere flamboyant spellwork fails.

METAL DETECTOR (TL3)

This small device extends a small probe that scans for metal objects.

NANO-HEALER (TL5)

Beyond just patching holes, these nanobots enter the body via an injection gun and repair it from within. Despite results verging on the miraculous, these are lower technology creations compared to some of the prototypes Porto is testing. The bots quickly run out of power after a few minutes, and disrupt instantly on exposure to echan flesh, making them impossible to use on any creature that generates EDF.

Healbots (free): One minor or moderate physical consequence is automatically changed to a recovering consequence (which should be almost impossible for an enemy to invoke), but the slot remains filled. If you spend a fate point when the injection is used, you can either affect major consequences or reduce the severity of the consequence by one degree. Further healing has no effect.

SCOPE (TL0 or TL3)

Attached to a longarm, a targeting scope assists in aiming, effectively turning any such weapon into a Sniper gun. The TL3 version uses a digital rangefinder and microcomputer to compensate for basic environmental factors, allowing for even more precise shots.

SUPPRESSOR (TL0)

These attachments muffle the flash and sonic blast of explosively propelled firearms. By slowing the expanding gases exiting the barrel, the suppressor stems the acoustical signature, but does not silence it completely – reducing it to merely loud instead of deafening. Anyone within the attack's range is still aware that a shot has been fired, but not necessarily from where or by whom.

TWO-WAY RADIO (TL2)

Civilian and military radios use frequencies chosen specifically to avoid eavesdropping and interference with other machines or day-to-day electronics. Military models can tune to any frequency: civilian and emergency service radios are each restricted to a certain range. With the expanse of the echan landscape, keeping this communicator bottled in the low bands or with reduced power is no longer required. It has a clear range of 5 miles in open echa, 20 miles within a bastion. Even basic models can withstand some punishment and water pressure.

BOOSTERS

Boosters are medical treatments that alter the basic functionality of the human body, either with chemical compounds, genetic therapy, or nanobots. Boosters do not work on non-humans (not even gimfen) and only the most basic concoctions work on echan humans.

The most basic form of booster is the **drug shot (TL1-2)**. It is a less popular option than micromachines or viral injections because, unlike the other two options, a drug shot is temporary, lasting only about an hour. It is also both cumbersome and painful and can have long-term side effects. Drugs are hit or miss with echan humans. If an echan human takes a drug shot, it has a 50% chance of failure. The process is accomplished via a jet injector and several doses can be loaded into a gun.

Viral/gene therapy (TL3-4) is of intermediate efficacy. Genetically engineered viruses rewrite a specific genetic code before terminating themselves. They were used initially as therapy to correct genetic errors, curing various hereditary diseases. Further advances allowed for beneficial viruses that could improve the human body beyond what is normally possible. Despite the controversial nature of this practice, it found use among many military circles, especially those being forced to deal with the monsters of open echa. Because echan humans have their genes rewritten by Attricana, this therapy does not work on them.

The pinnacle of human modification is **micromachine injection**, or **MM (TL5)**. One of the most advanced versions of the nanobot booster, these permanent micromachines are self-replicating and self-powered, tapping into the energy of the human body they are injected into. Micromachines are not sensitive to disruption due to their insulation inside the human body but will disrupt if the human becomes an echan.

BOOSTERS

TL3+ boosters are just like any other equipment – if you choose them, you gain their gear aspect, you can use their TL as a vocation, and you can choose their stunts as normal. Drug boosters, on the other hand, are slightly different. When you inject a drug (requiring no check, but still taking an action), you gain its aspect, but that aspect fills one of your consequence slots. In exchange for this, you gain one of the booster's associated stunts for free and can use the others (of the drug's TL or lower) by spending a fate point. The drug shot lasts until the end of the current scene, but the consequence slot remains filled until it would be recovered naturally. If you don't have an empty consequence slot, the drug's effect only lasts for one turn and you take 1 damage at the end of that turn.

AGILITY

This booster improves overall reaction time and swiftness.

Acceleration: Once per session you can add the TL of the booster to any check related to acrobatics.

Acrobatics Talent (requires TL3+): You draw two cards

instead of one when you spend a fate point to draw a new card for any acrobatic action.

Flash (requires TL5): You can move two zones as part of another action without making an overcome check.

Quickstand: You can spend a fate point to automatically overcome any obstacle related to losing your footing or falling prone.

ALERTNESS

This treatment boosts mental awareness, concentration, and memory recall. It sharpens the mind and prevents distraction.

Focus: You can spend a fate point to automatically overcome any obstacle related to mental distraction.

Prescience (requires TL5): Once per encounter you can compel who acts next in the round (as long as they have not already taken a turn this round) for free.

Spotter: Once per session you can add the TL of the booster to any check related to sight or hearing.

Reaction Time (requires TL3+): You always act first in a scene.

ENDURANCE

This booster improves overall health, boosts resistance to poisons and other toxins, and enhances recovery from injury.

Anti-Poison: You can spend a fate point to automatically overcome any obstacle or succeed on a recovery check related to poison.

Healing Factor (requires TL3+): You never have to make recovery checks for physical consequences. They automatically begin healing at the end of the scene in which they were incurred.

Regeneration (requires TL5): You can spend a fate point to reduce the severity of any physical consequence by one degree (if the consequence is already minor, it goes away immediately).

Survivorman: Once per session you can add the TL of the booster to any check related to enduring hunger or thirst.

LEARNING

This booster improves memory recall and the capacity to learn new skills. You are able to do difficult equations in your head without a pencil.

Calculator (requires TL5): You can make an overcome or advantage check to solve mathematical equations as part of another action.

Confidence (requires TL3+): You never have to make recovery checks for mental consequences. They automatically begin recovering at the end of the scene in which they were incurred.

Limitless: You can spend a fate point to use knowledge about any subject as if you had a relevant vocation at +2.

Wikiwalk: Once per session you can add the TL of the booster to any lore check.

STRENGTH

This booster increases muscle tension and reduces tendon strain on bones. It also improves overall body chemistry by burning calories faster and more efficiently to increase energy.

Beatdown (requires TL3+): When you spend a fate point to draw a new card for an action relating to unarmed combat, you draw two cards instead of one.

Climber: You can spend a fate point to automatically overcome any physical obstacle that can be climbed.

Fists of Steel (requires TL5): Your unarmed attacks deal +1 damage on a successful attack.

Strongarm: Once per session you can add the TL of the booster to any check related to feats of strength.

SPECIAL MATERIALS

Most techan humans adept in the knowledge of chemistry were bewildered when magic refused to follow certain rules of nature. Controlled laboratory experiments confirmed that in the presence of magic (which many claim prevents controlled laboratory experiments), certain elemental properties change, some in minor ways, a few in major ways. Heavier radioactive isotopes (like Uranium 235 and 238) stop degrading while others (like Radium 226) break down more rapidly. This makes nuclear energy a hazardous technological path for bastions seeking alternative energy sources. Chemical reactions also change - not enough to impede the continued existence of life, but enough to change the rules of natural evolution, and even some basic chemical processes are altered in ways that are not obvious or straightforward. There are even numerous chemical compounds that, according to traditional science, simply cannot exist. Because of these newfound rules, the 'science' of alchemy has returned with vigor (and much to the chagrin of techans, actually works). It is assumed that if magic were to suddenly vanish, the changeover back to the traditional rules of science would be a deadly one to life forms requiring these new rules to survive. Most scientists are unable to explain the new rules of magically altered physics scientifically. Even more frustrating is the unpredictability of magic, which takes an almost intelligent delight in suspending any rules on a whim.

Bastions continue to find new and unconventional applications to materials with altered capabilities. New chemical elements, thought previously unstable, now can not only be synthesized for more than a few fractions of a second, but can even be found in nature. Industry and architecture both echan and techan value these new substances; furthermore, in the world of commerce, certain rare and expensive metals critical to the economy of particular civilizations become worthless or dangerous when magic is removed.

Silver and gold retain their traditional value, although gold is particularly valuable to techans for another reason: while magic may be able to touch it, it cannot saturate it, rendering the metal invaluable for use in bastion power grids. Techan industry and manufacturing has also made titanium a highly valuable commodity. The common isotopes of uranium are no longer strongly radioactive, opening up a wide range of uses for the metal. Traditional fantasy would have miners

searching for iron and gold, but now mines like the Finer Fire Pits and Thos Thalagos also search for molybdenum, iridium, and rhodium, all of which can be extracted safely with narros expertise. There are also new materials that defy traditional categorization: the existence of angelite and coruthil confounds scientists to this day.

ANGELITE

When the Second Hammer hit Ixindar, the virtually impenetrable stone shell that encased the gate was fractured. This mountain of rock blew apart and scattered across the globe. Some refer to this stone as 'absolute rock'. Techans believe this material to have once been rhodium, the most precious metal on Earth. This made the shell around Ixindar more valuable than all the gold, platinum, and uranium on the globe combined. When infused with magic when both gates reopened, the silver-sheened stone became the hardest substance on Earth. On cursory examination, rhodium and angelite exhibit similar properties (resistance to corrosion, amazing durability): lacking the ability to properly analyze it on the molecular level, techan scientists have squeezed angelite onto the periodic table between rhodium and ruthenium. Despite its amazing density (12.38 g/cm^3) angelite feels extremely light, over five times lighter than its other precious brothers. This has never been explained. Angelite is seldom found in mines and the largest concentration still sits in Kakodomania. Only the fragments found around the world or in mines can be refined. Demons have tried to chip off and process pieces from the original shell, but have never gotten the temperature high enough to melt. Usable fragments can be found as small as splinters and as large as houses (although the only known cases that large are the heads of Ramkava). Unfortunately for adventurous techans, angelite also radiates EDF.

Harder Than Hard (free): Weapons made of angelite ignore effects that reduce incoming damage. Armor made of angelite ignores effects that increase damage on a hit. These do not apply if the source of the effect is also made of angelite.

COROTHIL

Coruthil simply did not exist until magic saturated the Earth. Techan scientists believe that this influence created a new transitional metal between scandium and titanium. When magic flowed through the mineral, coruthil emerged. Narros miners were overjoyed to discover these riches were unmined after 65 million years, not realizing until later that mankind had never had the opportunity to exploit it before. When worked like steel, it becomes a wonderful material from which to create items, having the same approximate hardness and tensile strength as steel but being completely immune to any form of oxidation or corrosion. Despite its origins, coruthil is naturally magically inert, although it can be enchanted just like steel.

FAE IRON

This ore sears the flesh of all fae. Almost every fae culture has banned this ore except for Kakodomania, where it is wielded almost exclusively by shemjaza, despite their own reaction to it (or, given their disposition, because of), though some pagus brandish these weapons insulated at the hilt (these are always rebels, as the shemjaza do not allow such potent weapons against themselves to be wielded by their peons). It was first discovered – accidentally – by the tenenbri, which has often led to the narros claiming it as evidence of the tenenbri's sins against Oaken. When the pagus migration occurred, corrupted tenenbri took the invention to their new masters. In modern times, techans analyzed samples and determined fae iron (or "leaded iron" or "cold iron" as it's sometimes referred, though not terribly accurate) is comprised of iron with extremely low trace amounts of carbon and lead (less than 3%). These ratios are extremely specific, as are the procedures for converting the material into a malleable substance for weapons. A simple deviation of half a percent of carbon or lead in either direction, and the metal is merely impure iron. No study has ever explained why this specific substance harms fae as it does. Techan humans, especially those from xenophobic cultures like Baruch Malkut, began trying to crack this ratio to arm their forces in mass with fae-iron weapons, but those who wield their obvious speciesism openly will find every hand of civilized echa turned against them. Narros will not forge it: even modern tenenbri refuse to have anything to do with the metal and consider its discovery the greatest sin of their past. It will never be found in any community with a fae population or in any city with good relations with fae. Even boggs and skeggs don't use fae iron purely because of the risk of personal injury.

GOLD

Apart from its aesthetic value, the benefit of gold as currency is that magic cannot touch it. Any other material transmuted into gold will bleed off the magic used to transform it and revert to its natural form within a few hours, making it impossible to counterfeit in this way. Furthermore, it can be added to any other magical item, even one that gains its powers from an alchemical alloy, to dampen or direct the effects without impacting the properties of the final item. Most magical items have at least a bit of gold about them to ensure that their negative properties are not transferred to the wielder. Gold wires are able to conduct electricity perfectly without any chance of being affected by EDF, and gold is an integral component in most forms of anti-EDF shielding. Armor and shields made of at least 50% gold or gold alloy are heavier and less protective against normal weapons, but make the wearer somewhat resistant to magic.

STEELWOOD

In areas with a high iron content in the soil, exposure to magic hardens the wood of local trees, making their bark and wood as hard as iron while remaining as flexible as ordinary wood. Unfortunately, this places it beyond the capability of most echan lumberers to put it to use, as it requires at the very least diamond-headed saws and drills to penetrate it. Only the chaparrans, with their knack for persuading trees to naturally grow items for them, can make proper use of steelwood. There is not much call for the substance among techans except as a curiosity and status symbol, since even though a steelwood knife won't set off a metal detector, neither will a plastic one, and hardened synthetic materials require far less effort to manufacture.

MAGNARROS

Already stubborn to ignite, magnesium becomes increasingly more difficult to combust in magical fields. This caused many echan blacksmiths to try to forge swords in magnesium for a time until they discovered this property had a knack of suddenly reversing without warning, making the weapon burst in a fiery white flame in a clash. It certainly was impressive and intimidating, but ultimately costly and dangerous to all, especially the wielder. A narros forge in Thos Thalagos, run by elder Magnalus Eneg, claimed to have perfected an alloy that prevents this dangerous combustion. He kept the process as a family secret until his death, forging weapons only for narros and never allowing the fruits of the technique to pass outside the species. Since his passing 50 years ago, more non-narros weapons have been appearing from forges. Other narros have learned the secret of its construction, although the method is still guarded from outsiders. It is a point of respect and awe for a narros adventurer to wield a magnarros blade. Magnarros is a very rare silvery, glistening metal that is lighter than iron but just as hard.

As Light As a Feather, As Hard As Dragonscale (free): Weapons made of magnarros gain +1 to attack (but not damage: if you would deal 0 damage as a result, you instead gain a boost). Heavy armor made of magnarros does not make the wearer ***Slow***.

VEHICLES

Though the overwhelming majority of travelers in the echan wilderness (or wasteland, depending on who you ask) still prefer beasts of burden for their transportation, a few still favor progressive methods. Vehicles designed to operate outside of bastions look different than those traveling effortlessly inside them. They are more rugged, with armored shells designed to withstand punishment both physical and magical. Though some vehicles in cities may employ internal combustion or short-life batteries, vehicles outside mostly utilize battery power, either from disposable cells or from rechargeable ones, generating electricity from solar power. Operating vehicles are rare in the echan landscape and many wandering travelers have come across ravaged and gutted techan vehicles, gears seized from disruption, their crew long dead with no way to return home. Along the Continental Cross it is not uncommon to see these vehicles towed along by horses like wagons when out of power or when conserving energy. All vehicles use batteries as they are far more efficient, clean, and supply rechargeable power where internal combustion requires a fuel source not easily accessible since most bastions don't sit on stockpiles of fossil fuels.

LOW-TECH VEHICLES

EDF is not kind to mechanical propulsion systems, especially those that rely on regularity – although the chemistry and physics work the same as ever, the systematic processes required by a fuel injection system is too easily interrupted. Interestingly, the chance of disruption seems to rise according to the volatility of the fuel source: steam power (relying only on pressure) is almost totally safe, while high-octane gasoline, even if it were readily available, causes the vehicle's engine to break down almost the instant it is turned on. Alcohol-based carburetors are the most stable combustion engines, functioning with minimal difficulty in low-EDF areas and disrupting once or twice a day or so but easily set to working order again, and even the occasional engine burning refined vegetable oil can be made to run as long as one has a capable mechanic on hand to repair it a half-dozen times a day. This presumes that the device only sees low-grade use, and is kept out of combat – a crop harvester is far more reliable than a jalopy, and not only are such low-powered engines totally unsuitable for the stress of conflict, but the pressure of EDF that builds up in such circumstances would inevitably get to the unshielded mechanism. Low-tech vehicles are all TL1, have a top speed of 10 mph and no tactical properties – such vehicles disrupt immediately if combat breaks out.

VEHICLE RULES

Vehicles are treated the same as other equipment, except that instead of using their tech level as a vocation rating, they have two vehicle ratings: maneuver and combat. The vehicle's maneuver rating is used for all overcome and advantage checks involving vehicle movement, and the combat rating for all attack and defense checks (including ramming, crashing, and vehicle-mounted weaponry): if you have a vocation dedicated specifically to using vehicles, use that instead unless you are in a situation where the vehicle's maneuverability or durability can be compelled against you.

Vehicles automatically reduce all incoming damage from anything other than heavy weapons, spells, or melee attacks by very large creatures by 3 (minimum 0); this applies both to damage directed at the vehicle itself and its occupants. Vehicles have their own stress and consequence slots, much like NPCs or monsters (but generally more than most organic targets have), which can be used by the vehicle itself or by any occupant of the vehicle. Vehicles can move up to two zones as part of a regular action without having to make an overcome check. Additionally, there are some terrain obstacles

that a moving vehicle will automatically overcome, and some that it cannot overcome at all: this should be determined by table consensus based on the size and durability of the vehicle and the difficulty of the obstacle. A vehicle that fails an overcome check to avoid a physical obstacle makes an immediate defense check against the same difficulty to determine crash damage (if the original check was opposed, any invocations the opponent makes to further increase the difficulty must be on aspects that weren't invoked on the original check).

STANDARD GROUND VEHICLES

Standard vehicles are designed primarily for use inside or near bastions, only taking to open echa when there is no alternative. The batteries in standard vehicles have enough power for nearly a week of use within a low-stress, low-EDF environment such as a bastion, or two days if exposed to standard EDF saturation or a combat situation.

ARMORED TRUCK (TL1)

Maneuver +1, Combat +2

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ Min/Mod

1 driver + 6 passengers; 3000lb of cargo space

Armored trucks offer amazing resistance to outside damage without the high costs of dedicated ETVs. Tires are run-flat, and the wheels are as protected as the rest of the truck. The enclosed cabin may have open gun-hole sliders while offering cover to those inside. Since most outside techan expeditions from Angel employ ETVs, most armored trucks outside of bastions are used by York. An armored truck has a single turret mount for a heavy weapon.

TRACKED ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (TL1)

Maneuver +1, Combat +2

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ Min/Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 8 passengers; 1000lb of cargo space

Slow, awkward, but reliable, the tracked APC design dates back to ancient man. The modern model employs a half-track configuration—easy for the common driver to use as its controls match those of the common truck. Primary propulsion is delivered through a caterpillar tread replacing the rear axle while a pair of massive tires controls the steering in the front. The enclosed cabin and cargo area provide sufficient protection through heavy gauge steel. From the outside, the halftrack APC appears primitive, and it is certainly less prone to disruption than more advanced vehicles, but the power requirements of the tracks remain steep, limiting its range. In York, where they first appeared, they found use with the military patrolling around the city. The APC has two turret mounts for heavy weapons.

Mode: The first four occupants to deploy from the vehicle per round do so as a simple movement: each subsequent deployment is treated as a +1 obstacle.

TANK (TL2)

Maneuver +1, Combat +3

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ Min/Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 3 crew; 500lb of cargo space

It is a fact of progress that weapons technology will always outstrip armor. The classic tank was almost engineered into extinction as advances in armor-piercing weaponry continually surpassed the ability of tank designers to compensate. However, when those same anti-tank guns have a better-than-average chance of misfiring, many crews find several inches of composite armor separating them from the outside to be a great comfort. Even most monsters have trouble combating the matrix of synthetic diamond tiles sandwiched between layers of steel. Add to that a sealed, self-contained environment and soon, the number of tank volunteers surged within large bastion expeditionary armies. Modern tanks offer the security and safety of solid weight. At more than 40 tons, the modern tank (namely the York Mark V Partisan and the ugly Angel TDM-001 "Toad") can still zip over the landscape despite the profusion of

LAND SHARK

obstacles willing to stand in its way. Most tanks have a single massive main turret gun and two other, less ostentatious weapon turrets. Its crew are immune to outside airborne poisons. A tank can traverse virtually any terrain; tanks may even be submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

Mode: The main turret normally fires ***Explosive*** shells and must be reloaded after every shot. The loadout can be changed to fire ***Fragmentation***, ***Nerve Toxin***, ***Smoke***, or ***White Phosphorus*** shells; changing the loadout is the same as reloading the gun.

CREW-SERVED WEAPONS

Many vehicle-mounted weapons are normally operated by two or more gunners, usually one to aim and one to fire (or occasionally, one to reload and one to aim and fire). This allows multiple characters' actions to benefit whoever actually fires the weapon: for instance, a tank might have one person to load the shell (the action required to reload between shots), one to calculate the shot's trajectory (creating an advantage, such as on the shell's property), and one to actually shoot (using any free invocations generated by the previous action). The number of characters that can serve as gun crew on any given vehicle is limited only by common sense, but 2-3 is standard for most vehicles: larger, more advanced vehicles with onboard computer targeting systems might permit 3-4.

WHEELED BIKE (TL1)

Maneuver +3, Combat +1

1☐ Min

1 driver + 1 passenger; 20lb of cargo space

Though motorbike variations number in the hundreds, the ones employed in echa often rest mounted behind ETVs and larger trucks, used for scouting and emergencies. These are durable basic machines with strong chassis and thick, large, run-flat tires with heavy treads. They don't offer any protection to the rider. Some manufacturers refer to them as *enduros*.

Road Warrior: When you invoke this vehicle's aspect for a bonus on an attack, you gain +1 to the invocation for every zone the vehicle moved on your previous turn (maximum +3).

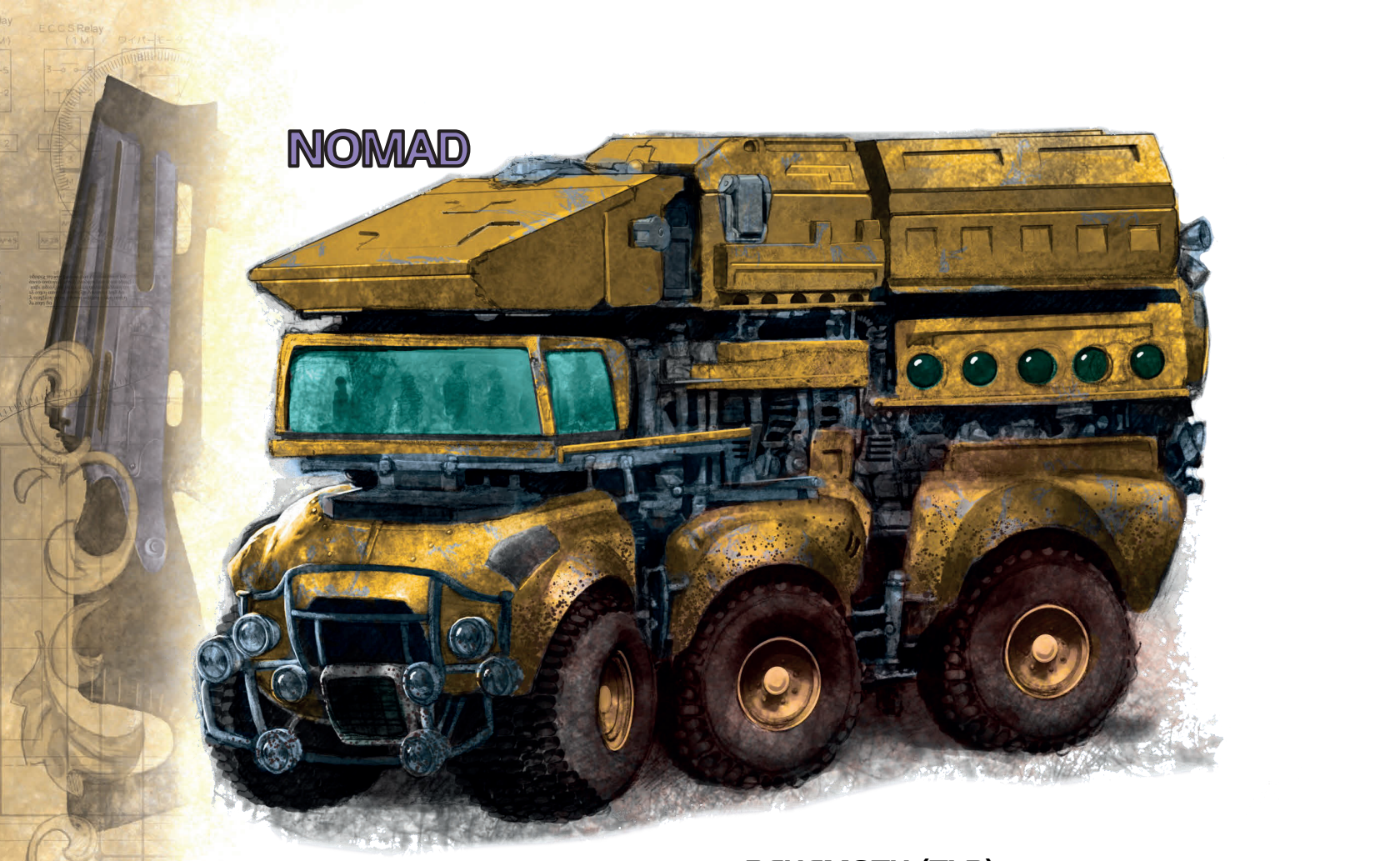
WHEELED TRUCK (TL1)

Maneuver +1, Combat +1

1☐ Min/Mod

1 driver + 4 passengers; 1500lb of cargo space

This descriptor covers a wide range of vehicles, from the open flatbed to the all terrain 4x4. Not even remotely designed for the echan world, wheeled trucks are still employed regardless: thankfully, their lack of complicated parts compared with other vehicles makes them easy to repair when they inevitably break down. Smaller mercenary groups use them, and York operates hundreds, shepherding people between the bastion and various military outposts surrounding the city. Like many all-terrain wheeled vehicles (save ETVs), most wheeled trucks seen outside of bastions are from York.



ECHAN TERRAIN VEHICLES

ETVs are meant to operate outside the protective walls of the bastions. Virtually all Wasteland All-Terrain Transports, or WATTs (usually referred to just as ETVs in standard parlance), come from Angel or Selkirk originally, although organizations such as the Iron Sons that operate out of multiple bastions make use of the technology wherever they go. These models are impractical for city use, being generally too large and/or clumsy for narrow city streets. They employ a modular design, shielded electronics, massive wheels, and grunt horsepower. They start from svelte and nimble bikes to gargantuan dirt trains like the behemoth and sand shark. The batteries in an ETV can last between two and four days in open echa, depending on the strength of the EDF. All ETVs have the following stunt:

Disruption Recovery (free): Any occupant of the vehicle can spend a fate point when the vehicle is disabled due to disruption to automatically bring it back online.

ETVS AS TERRAIN

ETVs are massive, and it generally isn't practical to keep them moving during a combat encounter (not only because they're awkward to depict as vehicles on a battle map, but because in a fight the EDF rises and there is a greater risk of disruption for an active vehicle). A stationary ETV consists of several zones when used as a piece of terrain: at a minimum, two wheel/track zones, one undercarriage zone, one or more roof zones, and one or more interior zones (for most encounters, one interior zone is sufficient even for very large vehicles).

BEHEMOTH (TL3)

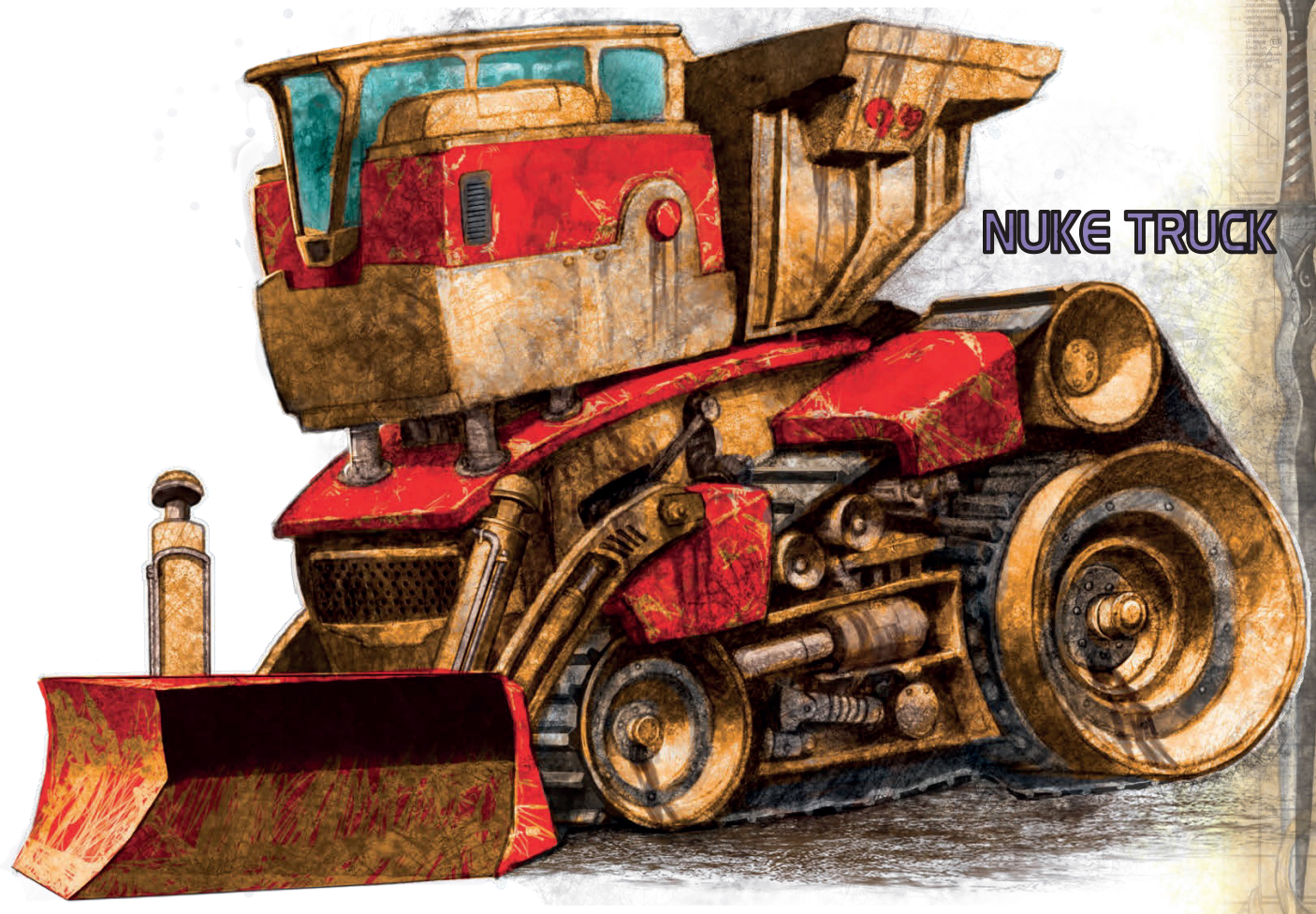
Maneuver +1, Combat +3

1☐ 1☐ 1☐ 2☐ 2☐ 2☐ 3☐ 3☐ 3☐ 4☐ 4☐ 4☐

Min/Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 50 passengers; 30,000lb of cargo space

The behemoth matches its name perfectly. This goliath lumbers over the landscape, delivering power equally to its 8x8 drivetrain. Massive steel-reinforced rubber/carbon tires supply little cushioning, relying on the beast's floating platform suspension system to keep it smooth and stable. Its eight wheels cover a footprint 40 feet wide and 60 feet long, and the three-level atrocity towers nearly twenty-five feet tall. This monster usually heralds its approach with the cracking of trees and snapping of bushes as it pushes and heaves through forest and grassland. Though at home in the arid and rocky terrain around Selkirk where it was built, in the varied landscape of the southern lands, the behemoth is somewhat overkill. The brute clumsily bullies its way through whatever stands in front. The fat and awkward TDM-001 Toad prances gracefully in comparison. When spotted outside Dianaso, the behemoth serves a broader purpose, as either a mobile base of operations for mercenary groups or as a nomadic home for families. The behemoth was not designed to be a military vessel so lacks any weapon mounts, counting on its population for defense. It is heavily ***Shielded*** against disruption and is completely sealed against the external environment. It uses solar cells on its upper plating to recharge its batteries, although the rate of recharge is far outstripped by the rate of power consumption: however, the vehicle is big enough to carry a lot of extra batteries.



Giant Bulldozer (free): When in motion, the behemoth automatically attacks any creature in the same zone(s) as its wheels at the start of the driver's turn. This does not take an action.

LAND SHARK (TL2)

Maneuver +1, Combat +3

1□ 1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ 3□ Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 20 passengers; 5000lb of cargo space

Also from Selkirk, this successor to the behemoth is substantially smaller, and while its redesigned motor system requires roughly as much power intake, it is much more efficient and can make do on a single battery instead of two. The 8x8 wheel system was replaced by an even more durable 4x4 tri-drive sprocket caterpillar system. In the middle of the 40-foot long vehicle is a pivot segment, allowing the vehicle enhanced mobility in tighter areas. Despite its convoluted drive system, the land shark is faster than the behemoth but not as roomy. It gained more popularity as a mobile command post for mercenary groups and military, and armed variants lead most Selkirk convoys into the Deep Pass. While the behemoth is wide and fat, the land shark is thin and tall. Even though only 20 feet wide, it still stands 25 feet high, as tall as its predecessor. The land shark has one heavy weapon turret mount, is as heavily ***Shielded*** against disruption as the behemoth and is also sealed against environmental hazards. It has the same roof-mounted solar cells as the behemoth.

NOMAD (TL2)

Maneuver +2, Combat +3

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 10 passengers; 2000lb of cargo space

The final Selkirk land cruiser variant released is the smallest of the trio, and by far the most popular outside of the Dianaso pass. The nomad uses wheels like the behemoth, though only having six. It features a center pivot so the vehicle can maneuver in tighter confines like the land shark. It is the smallest at only 20 feet tall and 30 feet long. This model has found use all over Canam and, along with the scrambler, is the most common ETV seen in open echa. The nomad moves via four separate electric motors contained in each of the axles. It receives power to all of them from its contained main drive in the rear of the vehicle, snuggled next to its ample cargo hold. The cabin occupies the entirety of the forward module. Unlike the land shark and behemoth, the nomad only has two levels but an efficient design makes it almost as roomy as the shark, with separated cabins and full air and waste management system. The nomad is both waterproof and self-sustaining. However, because of its smaller size, a rechargeable power system was never offered standard. It is just as heavily ***Shielded*** against disruption as its larger cousins, and sealed against environmental hazards.

PANTHER, VERKELEN ALPHA-I (TL2)

Maneuver +4, Combat +2

1□ 1□ Min/Mod

1 driver + 1 (cramped) passenger; 50lb of cargo space

Angel's government-funded arms maker dedicated to ETV and anti-echan R&D, Verkelen, started drawing plans to compete in the ETV market just under a century ago. The result, after millions of uc in development and testing, proved brilliant. The panther features a completely enclosed and ***Shielded*** stretched ovoid body with two forks sticking forward and back where the spoke-less wheels are mounted. Huge computer-controlled gas shocks absorb impact by predicting upcoming terrain and adjusting accordingly. The panther features a gyroscopic stabilization control system (GSCS), preventing it from toppling over. Unless fully deactivated, the panther can never be unbalanced from any maneuver or attack. The computer works with the driver, allowing the bike to lean over when the vehicle intends to maneuver but sensors detect if it will result in a fall. The GSCS even allows the vehicle to adjust its angle of attack on upcoming terrain. The panther's wheels are magnetically driven, capable of stopping and forcing its wheels into a lock. Each wheel carries enough torque to lift the entire body of the panther on one axle. The GSCS can then maintain that angle. With this ability, the panther could even climb a steep hill it has no hope of scaling by simply walking up its side.

SCRAMBLER, VERKELEN MARK IV (TL2)

Maneuver +2, Combat +2

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ Min/Mod/Maj

1 driver + 4 passengers; 1500lb of cargo space

Selkirk produces the largest ETVs in the world but at one point Angel made a play for the prize. They released two models within ten years, both large and somewhat clumsy, though in the end, nowhere near to the immensity of those from Selkirk. The most popular of all these was the scrambler ETV. This vehicle keeps the crew in a tightly sealed environment, elevated twenty feet above the ground. It rolls on six massive thick-treaded, steel-sidewall supported run-flat tires eight feet across. The scrambler can lose up to two tires without being disabled. The externally sealed and

Shielded multi-level cabin can hold five people in relative comfort with many of the amenities the crew enjoys at home, including full sewage recycling and kitchen as well sleeping areas. It also sports one of the largest headlight assemblies of any vehicle, equipped with twenty forward-mounted high intensity discharge lights capable of illuminating a cone of terrain hundreds of feet long. Much smaller than the behemoth or land shark, the scrambler is the preferred choice among smaller techan groups.

TDM-002 MACO, NUKE TRUCK (TL3)

Maneuver +1, Combat +2

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ Min/Mod/Maj

10 passengers; 3000lb of cargo space

In order to combat EDF interference outside their walls, Angel R&D created a vehicle with its own shielded micro-nuclear fission power pack. The result is an extremely expensive and risky long-range carrier, the TDM-002 maco, mostly referred to as the "the nuke truck." The reactor, though miniature, is enough to keep the vehicle going and its systems fully powered for a full year before needing service. Because of the reduced degradation of Uranium-235 in the EDF and its increased resistance to shedding neutrons, scientists switched to Radium 226 and Thorium 232, which accelerate their decay while in magic. Since these materials cannot be found easily in nature, the only way to service and re-supply a nuke truck involves taking it to one of only two breeder reactors in Canam, one in York and the other in Angel. The breeder reactors expel more fissionable materials than they receive, but the process is not cheap and a full service and re-supply of a nuke truck takes a week and costs 10,000uc. However, the advantages are plain to see, as the vehicle is otherwise totally environmentally sealable and self-sufficient apart from this annual maintenance. The extensive radiation shielding virtually removes any chance of the reactor shorting out in the EDF; the rest of the vehicle's onboard systems aren't quite so well protected, but they are more heavily ***Shielded*** against disruption than most equivalents. If the nuke truck is destroyed, however, the reactor melts, potentially incinerating everything within 200 feet and making the initial area where the truck detonates a severe radioactive hazard for 20 years (EDF prevents the radiation from spreading beyond the initial point).

We'll All Go Together When We Go (free): The nuke truck gains one free invocation of its ***Shielded*** property per scene.

AIRCRAFT

Generally, most techans avoid air travel outside of bastions, stemming from the susceptibility of avionics to disrupt. Techans are paranoid enough worrying about an ETV breaking down: add in the possibility of falling to one's death and most people opt for ground travel. There are noteworthy exceptions, and these all come in the form of lighter-than-air vehicles.

ANGEL HAMMERHEAD (TL2)

Maneuver +2, Combat +2

1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ Min/Mod

2 pilots + 2 crew; 500lb of cargo space

This military aircraft uses fanjets to keep itself airborne and is unable to stay aloft otherwise: thankfully, the fanjets have a built-in redundancy that can compensate if the craft loses one of its engines. It operates as both a transport and as an attack vehicle capable of parking over a location and securing ground like a tank. It doesn't deliver the massive punch of a focused attack helicopter but can nearly equal one when accounting for maneuverability. It is equipped with a laser range finder, thermal imaging night sights, and a digital ballistic computer. Both the fuel and ammunition are compartmentalized to enhance survivability. The cockpit is

ANGEL HAMMERHEAD

sealed against all environmental hazards and the whole system is ***Shielded*** against disruption. The hammerhead has weapon mounts for two heavy weapons or three smaller guns. As it is not intended for long-range action, it will drain its battery in a day, inside or outside of a bastion.

Disruption Recovery (free): Any occupant of the vehicle can spend a fate point when the vehicle is disabled due to disruption to automatically bring it back online.

ARMORED ZEPPELIN (TL2)

Maneuver +1, Combat +0

1□ 2□ Min/Min/Mod/Maj

1 pilot + 15 passengers; 2000lb of cargo space

Thankfully, along with magnetic fields, lighter than air vehicles depend on a science undisrupted by magic. Before they developed magnetic technology, Selkirk employed low-tech rigid airships filled with helium to transport themselves around the mountains. Because of its ***Resistance to Disruption***, the zeppelin remains a popular choice for long journeys. Even if its fanjet nacelles short out, the craft will remain airborne, and the nacelles are such a low energy draw that one battery can power them all for up to two weeks. Engineers later added retractable sails for emergency propulsion if the primary drive fails. Internal cells separate the helium to prevent a catastrophic collapse in case of a puncture. The craft can lose pressure from more than half of its twelve segments and still not fall. Its ultra light polymer and metal envelope covers an internal aramid skin. The shell, wrapped around an aluminum skeleton, maintains its shape even when deflated, unlike standard balloons or blimps. This allows a greater capacity of gas and cargo. An automated repair drone buzzes around inside the superstructure, patching breaches in the baffles before they hemorrhage their gas. The majority of the crew lives in a pressurized segment inside the superstructure. Though several echans and techans use airships, the armored zeppelin from Selkirk is the only model employed by a bastion.

MANN PANTOKRATOR

MANN PANTOKRATOR (TL4)

Maneuver +2, Combat +3

1☐ 1☐ 2☐ 2☐ 3☐ 3☐ Min/Mod/Maj

1 pilot + 6 passengers; 1500lb of cargo space

The only known Mann aircraft seen outside of the bastion's walls, the pantokrator was intentionally over-engineered to increase survivability in echa. Environmentally sealed and heavily ***Shielded*** as with all Mann anti-echa technology, two pylon-mounted fanjets provide lateral movement and rudimentary lift if the vehicle's primary any-gravity module is damaged. The vessel also features visible weapon pods to increase intimidation. Its size and payload have dubbed it the "flying fortress". Increased armor makes it virtually impenetrable to small arms fire from the ground: an automated repair system easily deals with what few assaults are able to pierce the armor. The rear cargo area can hold up to six fully armed soldiers. In addition to its state-of-the-art sensors and thermoptic imaging, the craft has a wide array of weapon configurations, from two small arms turrets and one heavy weapon turret, to two heavy weapon turrets, to one truly massive gun.

Active Camouflage Denial System (Mode): When the system is engaged, any hidden or invisible creatures in a small zone within 200 feet of the craft are revealed. This mode punches through any form of concealment, and can even see through walls and ceilings.

Disruption Recovery (free): Any occupant of the vehicle can spend a fate point when the vehicle is disabled due to disruption to automatically bring it back online.

YORK WASP (TL3)

Maneuver +3, Combat +2

1☐ 1☐ Min/Mod

1 pilot; 5lb of cargo space

The wasp is a one-man aerial transport popular in the eastern bastion. It is used in law enforcement, traffic control, and military divisions assigned to urban warfare. The wasp is occasionally fitted with a single rifle-grade weapon, but is mostly employed for reconnaissance. It has no room for passengers, as the craft wraps around its user, sealing them against the outside. It has excellent thermoptic sensors, capable of perfect imaging in total darkness and revealing all invisible targets within 50 feet of the craft.

THERMALS

Since helium or hydrogen are hard to come by in the modern world, designers started brainstorming alternatives. With the exception of Selkirk, still employing a model of gasbag craft when flying outside of its perimeter, all the other bastions abandoned airships in favor of faster, more maneuverable vectored-thrust and rotor-lift variations. This knowledge refused to fall into antiquity and a few stubborn engineers, relics proclaiming a lost art, sold or imparted this expertise to the outside world. Airships moved in their own direction. Though a few rare models employ solar or battery powered propulsion, the majority (including all those under control of echans) utilize reliable methods including wind, steam, and dependable manpower. The laudenians are believed to employ a variety of airship powered by magic to travel between their semi-mythical castles in the air, but no non-laudenian has ever seen such a craft.

Thermals (as they are often known) remain popular in Canam and Lauropa more than in any other region in the world, though few attempt to cross the expanse between these great lands. In Canam, they proved more popular given the continent's girth and the influx of ground-based raiders. Almost every echan city, from Janoah to Limshau to Victrix, sports mooring towers. In Gnimfall, mooring cables hang from every grind tower. York and Selkirk are the only bastions to allow the mooring of echan thermals. Pilots must tread carefully when plotting a course: the northeast region of Canam swarms with dragons, and airship skeletons are scattered across the Gloam to the south. The sky is still not safe but is considerably healthier in comparison to ground travel.

Thermals are broken up into two subgroups: blimps and frames. All variations gain their lift through differentials in temperature between the outside air and the gasses contained within airbladders resting inside the structure. The choice of thermal lift over lighter gas comes from access: refining helium (the safer choice) is costly and requires techan processes to produce. The method of heating the air inside the balloon comes either from a natural heat (a coal fire for example) or from a magical one. All models are controlled by non-amplified mechanical flight control systems. This involves a series of pulleys and cables that directly transmit instructions to the control surfaces – though ineffective on faster aircraft, this method is perfect for slower-moving airships. Even on the larger thermal frames, a slightly more advanced servo-tab system allows the shifting of these massive fins with little force-feedback. All thermals are equipped with a basic pedal-based motor system requiring simple brute constitution for acceleration, making travel by flier just as exhausting as travel by foot, at least for a portion of a group. Rumors persist that it is possible to permanently enchant an airship. Though a basic blimp or standard frame without any propulsion or control modifications could theoretically be enchanted, the possibility of the enchantment disrupting the control surfaces may be too high. Moreover, the amount of spellwork required would be staggering. Not only would the entire craft need to be animated, but so would its propulsion system and flame. Add to that the need to make the spells permanent and the result is a procedure probably costing upwards of 3,000,000 gp not event taking into account the rarity of casters capable of accomplishing such a feat.

THERMAL BLIMP (TL0)

Maneuver +0, Combat +0

1☐ Min/Mod

1 pilot + 4 crew; 300lb of cargo space

Blimps are hot-air ships with a non-rigid structure. Without pressure, they deflate. After cold air is pumped in and then heated, the baffles fill up and the final shape takes form. Only the passenger car or gondola has rigid construction. The difference between blimps and simple hot-air balloons is the addition of tail fins and propulsion.

THERMAL FRAME (TL0-1)

Maneuver +0, Combat +0

1☐ 2☐ (3☐ at TL1) Min/Mod/Maj

1 pilot + 15 (TL0) or 30 (TL1) passengers; 1000lb (TL0) or 2000lb (TL1) of cargo space

This refers to a rigid airship—a dirigible maintaining its shape from a framework instead of internal pressure via a lifting gas. The rigid design offers the advantage of an increased lift capacity as the vessel can hold more and larger lifting bags inside the superstructure. Unlike blimps, where the crew sits in a gondola underneath the main balloon, frames only have a small cockpit with the cargo and crew compartments residing inside the balloon assembly. Some models come equipped with galleys and sleeping bays. Two sizes fly over most of Canam, with the larger reserved for mercenary units, public transportation, and charter flights. Manual propulsion keeps this vehicle incredibly slow, and most of those who can afford it and justify the disruption risk opt to upgrade to an automatic system.

If using the manual system, the standard frame requires 1 additional crewmember and the large model requires an additional 3. The large variant is by no means the largest; it's just the largest public option. Gnimfall flies the Ziggurat-Ex-Mundi between the various grind towers around Canam. It can hold up to fifty gimfen in comfort (though humans find the accommodations cramped). The ZEM's advanced steam drive makes it the fastest airship known. The largest frame of all comes from Limshau, the Abecedarian. Measuring a thousand feet long and weighing 150 tons, this 120 -passenger transport connects with all the smaller cities in the kingdom.

CUSTOMIZING VEHICLES

There is a certain kind of personality that just can't resist tinkering with vehicles. Modifying a vehicle requires access to someone with an engineering vocation, but requires no check: instead, for each full scene spent modifying the vehicle, you can apply the effects of a particular advantage to the vehicle's aspect. The modification should be of a tech level that the engineer is familiar with (though gimfen engineers, of course, can do just about anything if it can be described to them). If you don't want to fold in additional effects to a single aspect, you can instead make an advantage check or buy a stunt related to the vehicle as normal. Sample effects for customization include: ***Auto-Reload System (TL2); Electronic/Physical Countermeasures (TL1-4); Fly-By-Wire (TL2); Holographic Camouflage (TL5); Improved Suspension; Reinforced Chassis; Repair Drone (TL3); Rocket Boosters (TL1); Steam Drive (TL1); Tweaked Control System; Weapon Mount.***

Aiden looked up at the long flight of stairs, up the side of the crown. To call the outer wall a crown implied to Aiden that everyone behind it thought of themselves as royalty, claiming supremacy over everything they saw.

He clambered clumsily upwards, glancing occasionally to gauge the length of the climb. The steel railing didn't feel safe. The stairs were draped in darkness from the sun setting behind the wall. A gust of cool wind struck Aiden as he reached the summit. Aiden walked to the edge of the fortification. He stood between the jagged and uneven ramparts that topped it. Aiden would only have a few minutes before the next patrol. When standing on the peak of the crown, the city appeared to expand forever, over the horizon until heat radiating from concrete and iron mountains blurred to the sky. Skyscrapers, farms, manufacturing facilities and the last scraps of humanity's past. Aiden had seen such a view from his family's condo; anyone else would be amazed by it. But Aiden only offered it a passing glance, as much acknowledgement as traffic he wanted to cross.

He discarded one view for another, across the wall to a towering emerald forest of wild trees. They were alive and growing as tall as the city wall, without pruning or any arbortecture. Aiden had read that it was called Cyon, a dense pack of woods that encircled most of the south and east sides of the bastion. Aiden picked up noises from the forest—calls and yells from massive lungs. None of them sounded familiar. A high pitched screech resembled something a young girl could emit, though greatly amplified. A throaty bellow shook the trees and scattered birds. It was followed by something immense under the canopy shuffling leaves, shifting branches, and snapping undergrowth. A hawk with a span to cross an expressway lifted from a lower perch, jostled by the unseen beast brazenly bullying its way through the forest. The bird vanished back into the thick. Aiden assumed that a jutting rock larger than Chen's store was the peak of small crag only a few kilometers from the city. He then noticed it gradually turning. The rock was not attached to the ground; it hung silently, dangling from an unseen string.

Aiden caught a faint whisper in the breeze, not as such carried by the wind but part of it. He leaned to the edge of the wall. The whisper was from no beast; it was comforting, tempting, an aria of the air--feminine and beautiful.

Aiden imagined everything that could be out there, all the wonders denied by science. Everything he had read about, hiding past those trees, as easy as crossing a street. Aiden made a promise to himself at that moment while standing at the edge of the wall. He would become what he had read about, what he was told he could not be. He would pass from his world to one echoing the whims of writers for thousands of years. He would have his fantasy. It would be real.

Aiden smiled.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MAGIC

The term 'mage' covers a wide spectrum of spellcasters and magic users across the world. They may wish to protect good, or destroy everything around. They still, however, follow one common belief: The gates contain unlimited power and sit waiting to be harnessed. Wizards discovered long ago that certain shortcuts exist to channel energies from the gates. It is an almost scientific study of the ways of magic. Magic focuses its power through three sources: Pleroma (the language of dragons), magical materials, and innately magical beings.

The root of all spellcraft is the power to create something by speaking its name. This magic is imbued in the language of dragons. All wizards, be they elementalists or academicians, access magic in this way. To the uneducated, this language is simply called draconic. To everyone else, it is Pleroma.

Not only are there new elements like angelite, coruthil, and magnarros (born from previously rare minerals), there are also thousands of materials and combinations of elements that produce different results in the presence of magic. The arts of alchemy and magical crafting are born from these materials. Those with the knowledge to forge items of enchantment are simply educated in the exacting ratios of alloys and ingredients required. Miscalculate by only 0.01 percent or 1 milligram, and the material becomes magically inert.

Just as some monsters are inherently magical creatures, some people possess magical abilities on their own, whether from birth or spontaneously manifested later in life: gneolistics, mystics, vivicators and the like are some such, although all the forms such 'blessings' take are many and varied. These appear at random, though some people claim that this gift must come from some divine source. Both creatures wicked and wise have claimed such power. They can offer mild magical enhancements or powerful spell-like effects to almost rival wizards.

THE GATES

Many scientists dedicating their lives to the study of Attricana ascribe to the theory that the white gate is a tear in the fabric of space connecting our universe to another. This other universe has rules of chemistry and physics abnormal to our own. Radiating from this tear is an unquantifiable aura where the clashing of two universes results in the bizarre repudiation of scientific laws currently infecting the globe. Authorities on the side of magic refute this, arguing that the white gate does lead to another world, but not another universe: a realm reserved for gods and/or those who pass on through at the ends of their lives. Still another argument goes that the white gate leads to outside our universe, to the flotsam our cosmos floats in, a literal infinity impossible to comprehend or even quantify in our reality.

Despite these argument, physical laws change within the wake of this white gate. These changes are not always constant and often change with little to no warning. Because of this chaos, the principles of natural selection and evolution are rendered ineffective, as they cannot compensate fast enough for the changes in reality. Mutations that do occur create huge deviations that are systemic through a species, changing many suddenly but all in the same way. Interestingly, magic tends to suppress harmful mutations in any body it affects; while defects may still exist within a magical creature's genome, the influence of enchantment usually prevents such traits from becoming manifest (as is the case with the tenenbri and cystic fibrosis).

In the Terros age, the fae (the only beings to achieve intelligence after the dragons) never tried to define the rules of Attricana. Since

they had no concept of any previous world, there was no frame of reference to define the differences. Humanity on the other hand, was able to differentiate which rules were unchanged and which were altered. For one, no matter how many scientific laws the white gate modifies, none are altered to such a degree as to prevent any existing form of life from continuing to live. Many of the laws concerning biology and chemistry are amendments rather than wholesale alterations. These allow greater variations of life without voiding existing ones.

The laws of physics are more varied and inconsistent. Certain principles are fixed and have never shown any signs of changing. Magnetism works the same as ever, as does electricity, although the conductivity of any material other than gold is severely reduced in the presence of EDF. Other laws work mostly the same way, but with varying degrees of inconsistency depending on the strength of the local magical field. Gravity is particularly susceptible to alteration by magic, and it is suspected (though not confirmed) that the range of the electromagnetic spectrum has expanded (researchers take as proof of this the fact that creatures subjected to invisibility magic can still see, when by all rights they should be rendered blind). Pressure and kinesis are problematic: while on a basic level they work the same as they did before the gate reopened, in closed systems above a certain complexity, the laws of thermodynamics suddenly take a vacation as mechanical systems simply lose their built-up energy, causing pumps to void and gears to seize spontaneously with no indicator of where the lost energy has gone.

One group of intrepid scientists believed they found the secret to understanding the chaos from Attricana. They referred to it as the "Flow of Everything," a massive cause-and-effect chart of millions of entries of data that connect with other entries via 2 to 2000 different yes/no questions. These scientists became obsessed with explaining all the altered rules and the conditions causing one to go into effect in one moment and then do the opposite in the next. With the millions of different factors involved, all the original scientists died before ever solving even 1% of the entire system, without even discovering proof that it worked. Though subsequent experts have picked up the torch, modern disciples of flow theory accept that even if every single altered rule is explained and connected, it would not make the slightest bit of difference. One echalogian dismissed the entire escapade as pointless, as the number of factors actually needing to be observed was implausible. Some point out that this is exactly the same approach that echan wizards take to the study of magic, but such commentators are rarely given credibility.

In locations saturated with magic via casters and monsters, the overall influence of Attricana increases. Observations have proved that more spawn creatures appear in regions populated by other magical beings or in populations where magic use is prevalent. Magic also appears to be drawn to life; in areas where life does not exist, magic does not follow. In light of this discovery, several techans have proposed moving to Antarctica, or even to the moon (if some way of overcoming the ambient EDF long enough to get an orbital vehicle out of the atmosphere could be found).

Inversely, humans – being natural beings graced with intelligence and thus capable of observing the universe in a quantum sense – can actively suppress the influence of magic if enough of them refuse to accept it into themselves; it is not necessary to deny the existence of magic (thankfully, as there is enough evidence to the contrary to convince even the most determined skeptic), but the human mind can seemingly tell magic that it is not wanted here, and it appears to listen. However, magic is constant and though it can be reduced, it can never be fully suppressed.

Most animals wandering the wild, despite being evolved creatures and theoretically resistant to magical influence like man, eventually succumbed to its power. Though not every member of every species turned into some kind of monster, every major genus (even plants and bacteria) has produced at least one species begotten of magic. Some grew massive in size while others were able to channel great energy previously untapped. Given time, a few of them developed rudimentary intelligence of their own (kodiaks being a prime example).

Unlike animals, in the 500 years mankind has been exposed to magic, there has been virtually no major alteration to human physiology. There are reports of a few minor aberrations occurring in northern Canam and across the world in Lauropa and Slav, but overall humans seem resistant to the whims of the wave. One popular theory states that, if a species is intelligent enough to handle magic, they can prevent its total dominance. Dumber animals become slaves while smarter ones become masters. The fae, of course, are not an evolved species and thus not factored in to this theory.

Almost all magic in the world is from Attricana and finding sources of Ixindar magic is difficult except in Kakodomania, the heart of its power. The black gate of Ixindar corrupts rather than creates. Where Attricana is the embodiment of chaos and spontaneity, Ixindar codifies order and structure, allowing it to mimic many of Attricana's spells, though without its spark of life. The source of corruption has been hotly contested. Does Ixindar lead to hell or to a universe at the edge of death? If Attricana is every possible permutation, would it be also every type of dimension, and if so would Ixindar then be a doorway to nothing? If Attricana is infinity, then Ixindar would be zero. Magic from Ixindar radiates stasis, and therefore does not disrupt scientific laws. The creatures do not radiate EDF, nor do their spells. Instead, Ixindar fills the minds of those using its power with the conviction of perfect order: with every use, the wielder becomes more and more rigid in their thinking and set in their ways.

SPELLCRAFT

'Pleroma' is a pre-Hammer philosophical concept, representing the entirety of divine power. It was adopted first by human wizards and thinkers and later by the fae

as the name for the draconic language, since the tongue itself has no internal name. Even spellcasters, renowned for their logical approach and cynical minds, use the term despite its divine connotation. To many of them, it may still be a light above our world, and to a greater extent, our universe, but there may be nothing divine or spiritual about it; even so, it does represent the ultimate power to change the universe with a word. Pleroma allows individuals to direct power normally reserved for gods in myth. This power lay with the dragons for millions of years before the fae pursued this path. These words have been described as the base code of the universe: the word is the thing, and the thing is the word. A prospective arcanist must first understand how the word works in all ways by contemplating it in every dimension, absorbing its meaning into his or her soul. Wizards all share a common desire to study the behavior of these ancient words and discover new ways to utilize their potential. The books of a spell caster reflect this wish. The bigger the library, the greater the understanding the mage possesses of the arcane arts.

Pleroma actually exists in at least four dimensions, though humans and fae are only capable of perceiving three of them, giving each letter three views: this occasionally makes different symbols look identical when viewed at the same angle. Most mages have no knowledge of the true nature of Pleroma, as it is possible to cast any spell ever conceived by man or fae with a mere fifty-five letters, less than twenty percent of the total characters of the language. Some casters suspect even more powerful spells exist hidden in the script's barely-glimpsed fourth dimension and point to foundation anchors as proof, constructed as receptacles for these rare and powerful spells. This may explain why one cannot copy the spell from an anchor, as it is impossible for a three-dimensional being to transcribe it properly even if they can (barely) conceive of it in mind.

Learning the true language of dragons and their written word is extremely difficult and even the oldest laudenians can only claim partial fluency. The original Bibles of Drasago were created in the original tongue, though thankfully, they can be converted to the flat variety with a simple wave of the hand: more poetic passages lose much in the translation. The small number of souls aware of Pleroma's true complexities point to the impossibility of this language occurring naturally as proof of their divine origin and the existence of God: no species could ever evolve a language requiring possibly dozens of dimensions to fully comprehend. Another theory is that the language was not naturally evolved, but rather constructed and tied to the universe in a way no one has been able to explain. Yet another theory was put forward by Kereptis Rifts, who postulated, "As three-dimensional beings, we project our language onto two dimensions. A naturally-evolved four-dimensional language would then logically only emerge from a species existing in five." It is possible, howerver, that Rifts was not thinking big enough.

Because Pleroma defies the ability of human and even fae psychology to truly master it, instead, each mage is bound to a totem, a metaphysical cheat sheet that helps them visualize the multi-dimensional script that makes up a spell formula. The final key to the spell is the power word. The mage inscribes the word on his totem and memorizes it. When the mage speaks that word, the energy channels through the totem and the spell is cast. Each spell resembles a different symbol or sets of symbols, depending on the complexity or power from the spell – to those without understanding, they are meaningless squiggles, but to the arcane adept they leap from the totem's surface, glittering in three dimensions and extending backward and forward in time. The most common focus totem is the spellbook: however, different cultures favor different totems. Nevertheless, each totem is unique to the caster – what precise form it takes and how mundane or extravagant it looks depends on the staidness or flamboyance of the wizard.

Certain high-level spells are so rare they can only be found inscribed on unique items spread around the world. Sometimes, wizards must quest for them as others would quest for magic weapons. A wizard's honor insists these items either remain in their location or be taken to Kirjath-Sepher, Limshau, or some other protected vault for storage.

CASTING MAGIC

Any spellcaster can perform basic tricks related to their discipline: a fire mage can light a bonfire or set an enemy's clothes on fire with a touch, an illusionist can change their hair and eye color at will, a conjurer can pull a rabbit out of a hat (although it will usually disappear a few moments later). Mages require their totem on hand to perform even these cantrips, but supernatural casters do not.

To perform more powerful magic, you must first make an advantage check with your magic vocation to **prepare** the spell. **You do not play cards from your hand when preparing spells, but draw from the deck for each.** Like any advantage action, the difficulty is set by the GM, based on how powerful the spell appears to be (see the guidelines later in this chapter). If you fail this check, **you must succeed at cost** – you still prepare the spell, but you don't receive any free invocations of it and it doesn't necessarily perform the way you expect it to: perhaps it switches targets to another enemy mid-flight, or the blast radius is a little bit bigger than you planned for, or it drains your luck (costs you a fate point), or takes a physical or mental toll on you (inflicts a consequence), or behaves erratically when cast (opponent gets a boost). The GM is encouraged to be creative with unpredictable spell effects, but should keep any deleterious effects consistent with the difficulty of the spell. **For each hour you spend in study before making your preparation checks, you can attempt one advantage action to aid your preparation.**

Once prepared, you can cast the spell using any other appropriate action (a ***Shield*** spell to defend, a ***Fireball*** to attack, an ***Illusion*** spell to overcome, and so on). **You do not need to use your spellcasting vocation when casting**, as long as you can narratively justify using a different vocation (for instance, a gunslinger-turned-mage could continue to use their Gunslinger vocation to fire blasts of energy). When you cast the spell, **it lasts as long as it makes sense for it to last** (attack spells are usually instant, other spells may linger a few rounds or even minutes), and then must be prepared once more before it can be used again. If you have free invocations of your spell aspect, you can use them as normal to improve your casting result: alternatively, you can spend a free invocation to use the spell another time before having to prepare it again. **A prepared spell persists in your mind until it is cast or until you rest**: most wizards will prepare their spells well in advance to ensure they always have an arsenal at their fingertips. The only limitation is that **you can only have a number of spells prepared at any one time equal to 2 plus your total ranks in spellcasting vocations**.

There is no predefined spell list in *Amethyst*, and no limit to the number of spells you can know beyond what your background suggests your degree of experience should be – indeed, you are not even required to define your entire spell list in advance, although you may wish to make note of any spells that you plan to use on a regular basis. While spells themselves are discrete and precisely codified effects in-universe, for ease of gameplay you can make up your spells when you prepare them. Your magic vocation will generally place some limits on the trappings of spells that you cast, but in general terms, you just need to be able to narratively justify the desired effect. For instance, a fire Wizard might put out a forest blaze by commanding the fire to become quiescent, while one attuned to water could summon water to quench it, a wind-wielding Magos could deny it oxygen, and a Darawren attuned to earth or aether could smother it or stop its fuel from combusting.

PREPARING AND CASTING AS A SINGLE ACTION

Some stunts allow you to prepare and cast certain types of spells as a single action. In this case, you only make a single check with any appropriate vocation for the casting action: if the action succeeds (or succeeds at cost), the spell aspect comes into being without you taking an advantage action. This means you don't receive free invocations from preparing the spell, so you still have an incentive to take your time. Additionally, if the check result is less than the spell's normal preparation difficulty, some sort of magical backfire results, and the GM gets a boost related to the spell's effect.

TOTEMS

The totem is the 'key' to spellcasting, the Pleroma word being the lock. No character can cast spells without their totem in their possession. You can only have one totem at a time, and if you lose your totem you must

conduct a month-long ritual to replace it, as all the activation words have to be etched on it again. There are five totems generally accepted throughout the wizarding world: the forms that each totem can take are many and varied, but they all fall into one of these categories.

Book: The most common totem on Earth is the book. It is the most powerful totem and the easiest to master. Schools dot the planet dedicated to this belief. More wizards use book totems than any other. Limshau employs them almost exclusively: all damaskan mages trained in a Koana academy use the book, and as most human mages learn their craft from Limshau, the tendency has carried over. They believe that power from Attricana and Ixindar has its own rules and is not random, which means it can be eventually understood. All mages carry books, but the final Pleroma power words rest inscribed in the book wizard's totem.

Orb: The orb is an uncommon choice for most fae and is often found with wizards practicing the darker side of magic, the energy tied to the polar power of Ixindar. Orbs are also strongly associated with illusion and mind control magics, which most Limshau wizards consider, if not taboo, at least bad taste. Occasionally, a few tenenbri have been seen using an orb, but this choice is seen predominantly with negative casters or with humans that come about their training from a less than respectable source.

Shield: Although wizards cannot use armor as a totem, they can choose a shield. The symbols usually start on the inside, but as the wizard learns more spells, they must eventually cover the front as well. The narros are regarded as the instigators of this totem, and only they and the occasional human mage use it. A shield totem can only be constructed of light steel, wood, magnarros, coruthil, or angelite.

Staff: Outside of the book, the staff is one of the most common totems used, being the oldest known application of the craft. Many less civilized communities capable of competent wizardry often use it. A staff also remains popular with the traveling wizard, as it's less clumsy and can easily be disguised as a walking stick. Staff totem mages continue to stay fashionable with many fae races, especially chaparrans and laudenians, the latter admitting the efficacy of no other totem except for the rare laudenian sword mage.

Weapon: Although choosing a weapon seemingly appears without penalty, the benefits are double-edged. First, weapons have the smallest available surface area of any totem, limiting the number of spell triggers that can be encoded on it. Additionally, wizards with weapon totems often have a need to wield them in combat despite never being able to match a fighter on even ground. This does not stop a large number of wizards from using weapons, chiefly those for whom magic is a tool rather than an art. Narros and tenenbri, of course, argue about who developed it first. Narros began with the shield but claim the transition to weapon was an obvious one while the tenenbri claim they hold the sole claim on the weapon totem. Complicating the matter further is a small tradition of laudenian sword mages who claim that they originated the practice. Many human cultures embrace the weapon totem as well. A weapon totem must be composed mostly of wood, steel, magnarros, coruthil, or angelite.

TOTEM STUNTS

Your choice of totem makes you eligible for several specialty stunts. These are not requirements, but show your focus on your totem.

BOOK STUNTS

Book of Knowledge: As long as you have your totem, you gain +2 to any check related to recalling lore.

Esoteria (requires Book of Knowledge): You can spend a fate point to prepare and cast any spell you know as a single action with a +2 bonus.

Spell Collector (requires Book of Knowledge): You can prepare two additional spells at a time. You can select this stunt multiple times.

ORB STUNTS

Obedience (requires Orb of Order): You gain +1 to cast phantasm spells related to mind control.

Orb of Order: As long as you have your totem, whenever you critically succeed on a magical attack, you can force the target to take a mental consequence instead of stress.

Untouchable (requires Orb of Order): You can spend a fate point to automatically succeed on a preparation check for a mind-affecting spell intended to keep a creature from approaching you. This does not take an action.

SHIELD STUNTS

Abjurer (requires Shield of Strength): You gain +1 to all checks made to cast defensive calling spells.

Aegis (requires Shield of Strength): Whenever you critically succeed on a defense check, you and all your allies gain +1 to defend until the end of your next turn.

Shield of Strength: As long as you have your totem, you can prepare and cast defensive spells on behalf of an ally as a single defense action.

STAFF STUNTS

Channeler (requires Staff of Mystery): You can prepare and cast spells related to one element or school as a single action. You can choose this stunt more than once to select more than one class of spells.

Hermeton (requires Staff of Mystery): Whenever you critically succeed on a magical action to conjure creatures or objects, control the elements, or affect the mind, your next such action gains +1.

Staff of Mystery: As long as you have your totem, you achieve critical success on a magical check if you beat the opposition by 2 instead of 3 once per scene.

WEAPON STUNTS

Call to Hand (requires Weapon of Confrontation): As long as you know where your totem is, you can summon

it to your hand with an overcome action. This is the only magic you can perform without physically having your totem in your possession.

Weapon Dance (requires Weapon of Confrontation): You can spend a fate point to target two creatures with a single melee attack using your totem (each target defends separately against the full result).

Weapon of Confrontation: As long as you have your totem, if you critically succeed on a magical attack, you can force the target to take a physical consequence instead of stress.

ATTRICANA SPELLS

Most spells originate from Attricana. One can be an evil caster still bound to Attricana; he just can't cast Ixindar unique spells. Unique Attricana spells are those blessed enchantments exclusive to the white gate: spells that manipulate immaterial energies alien to this world, or inherently creative spells such as those that summon living beings (monsters are not actually summoned—they are created at that moment by will of the spellcaster, happy to return to the chaos of Attricana once that purpose is fulfilled).

All spells drawing upon Attricana appear alive when cast: they exist with enough intelligence to accomplish their task along with the drive to succeed at it. To fail would be worse than death, even if that death occurs anyway moments later. From dancing lights to lightning leaping from fingers, every spell carries some indication that an intelligence other than the spellcaster is at work. Some wizards, particularly of the Koana schools, nurture this intelligence, while others constantly attempt to refine their spell in an attempt to minimize the apparent outside influence – with only limited success.

ELEMENTS AND SCHOOLS

Magic is an organic study, but there are a few general conventions that practitioners tend to observe out of tradition. Among the darawren of Jibaro and those of like philosophy, the tradition of the Five Elements (aether, air, earth, fire, and water) is common, while more traditional wizards adhere to the Five Schools (Calling, Energies, Phantasm, Scrying, and Transfiguration). Most practitioners specialize in one of the disciplines, although this should not be considered a straitjacket – most traditions can justify just about any sort of spell the mage may need. The different disciplines merely have their own particular focus.

Most mages should have **2-3 disciplines** that they are familiar with, even if they specialize in one particular area. While there is nothing that intrinsically prohibits a spellcaster from knowing spells from every discipline, the character's focus should follow logically from their spellcasting aspect, and a tighter focus will make actually choosing spell effects a lot easier.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

Aether: The quantum state. Commanding elemental life (quintessence, chi, vital power, emotional energy); manipulating light and gravity; controlling, healing and rending living tissue; spells of connection, space and distance. Also sometimes known as the element of 'Wood' or 'Void'.

Air: The gaseous state. Manipulating elemental air, sound and electricity; spells of speed, balance and flight; weather magic; visual and aural illusions.

Earth: The solid state. Controlling and summoning elemental earth, stone, and metal; defensive and strengthening magics; spells of stamina and stability; animating earth constructs.

Fire: The plasma state. Summoning and commanding elemental fire; spells of violence and consumption; manipulating the body's energy; reading the future.

Water: The liquid state. Affecting and summoning elemental water; healing and cleansing magic; spells of fluidity and motion; farseeing.

THE FIVE SCHOOLS

Calling: Summoning and banishing creatures, objects, and material elements, spells of defense and warding against living (and unliving) dangers, commanding of constructs.

Energies: Controlling and creating energetic elements; affecting temperature and energy levels; energy attacks; spells of defense against elements; telekinesis.

Phantasm: Illusions both apparent and mental; spells of befuddlement and psychic influence; mental attacks and defenses.

Scrying: Perceiving other places and times; spells of lore and communication; counter-scrying magics.

Transfiguration: Alteration of physical properties, such as color or density; shapeshifting; healing magics.

SPELL DETAILS

The descriptions of the elements are deliberately imprecise: because such systems are traditionally very esoteric, any elemental mage should be able to accomplish just about any effect they can think of, the only difference being the physical manifestation of their magic. The schools are a little more concrete, but are still left somewhat vague, because while Amethyst does have a more scientific attitude towards magic than most fantasy settings, as with any science, academics are prone to argue over the precise details of classification – and during play it's far more interesting to just do something and worry about classifying it later than to wonder whether you can do it in the first place. As the schools correspond roughly to the major categories of magic frequently used by fantasy fiction and games, feel free to draw inspiration from other sources when figuring out what your spells can do.

ENCHANTMENT

As the famous quote passed among wizards goes, "Anything you can think of thinks for itself." Attricana

is about life in every possible combination, breaking rules that nature declares incontrovertible. A creature or force derived from these broken rules emanates that same chaos. Since technology is based on the principle that a given procedure will produce the same result every time, machines and magic cannot long commingle. This created a chain reaction 500 years ago, forcing all remaining fragments of working technology into the bastions. Although all fae are slaves to magic, humans have a choice, being born via the normal rules of biology. They can choose to accept the world of magic or remain disciplines of science. There is no good or evil in this conflict. There is only opinion, and there is no wrong answer. However, the choice is often permanent. By wielding that magic sword or by casting that spell, a human ties his soul to Attricana, becoming one with the world of magic, and disrupting technology just as an elf would.

SATURATION POINT

Human and pagus PCs have an **alignment stress track** with 4 boxes. At the end of each scene that you are subject to one of the following conditions, you are subject to an attack (defend at +0: you can spend fate points on this action). If you are subject to multiple conditions, only the highest bonus applies.

- **+5:** You are brought back from the dead.
- **+3:** You study the arcane arts.
- **+2:** You wield a magic weapon.
- **+2:** You wear magic armor.
- **+2:** You drink a potion.
- **+1:** You benefit from other magic items in your possession (per scene).
- **+1:** A beneficial magical effect (including magical healing) is placed upon you.

Normal rules on stress and consequences apply: saturation consequences are automatically converted into recovering consequences at the end of the scene in which they were incurred, but stress taken this way does not go away until you reach a moderate milestone: appropriate consequences for a saturation attack usually involve temporarily generating minor EDF effects, specific items fritzing without being disrupted, and the like.

If you are taken out by this saturation attack, you become echan and must immediately rewrite your concept aspect to reflect this. As with all echans, you generate EDF. You can only switch back to being non-radiant by rewriting your concept aspect at a major milestone.

There are two conditions under which you automatically become echan and cannot switch back by any means: taking a magic-wielding or supernatural vocation, or bonding with a non-human. In either of these cases, you do not need to rewrite your concept aspect.

IXINDAR AND MENGUS

For as long as anyone cared to remember, Mengus has not been referred to by any other name; no mistranslation or even spelling error has ever marred the name of the embodiment of perfect order. No creature has ever claimed to have seen Mengus and everyone accepts that she no longer possesses a physical body or lacks the capacity to form in the real world. A few dragons suggested Amethyst and Mengus are two sides of a single metaphorical coin – a balance the world requires. Perhaps they were one god-like creature split into two, and Amethyst retained the body. Yet in the Gospel of Lazarus, page 956, paragraph 10 verse 5, Lazarus was quoted as saying, "I once allowed Mengus to peer into my soul. I do believe she flinched. Not all can be corrupted." Lazarus never explained this passage, but whatever the case, the gender assignment stuck.

Because Mengus could only look outward from Ixindar, when Amethyst buried the gate, her influence was frozen and locked inside. Nevertheless, some echalogians have theorized that the great acts of barbarism that have marred human history were due to the whisper, and the continual fear of hell and demons emerged from her playful manipulation of mankind's nightmares. Even now, despite the great force of the second hammer, Ixindar is still not completely free: Mengus must strive towards her ambitions of godhead through her proxies the shemjaza and typhox dragons, and through the subtle influence of the whisper spreading secretly across the world from Ixindar's resting place in Kakodomania.

It is a common misconception, fed by the religions of many cultures, that Ixindar is the physical manifestation of Hell. Such proponents point to the demons that emerged from it as clear proof. Yet Ixindar, for all its malice, is not a force for chaos but for order – absolute, unyielding, incontrovertible structure. Its drive, more a natural law than a goal, is that all life must end or operate in service of order. When Ixindar corrupts, what it really does is subvert any originality in a subject. Its form of order results in degrading the real world to a constant level. This would not be the null background radiation the universe may be fated to reach but a collective consciousness possessing a power only described as absolute and divine. Another way to describe it would be that of a hive or overmind—to unify all thought and to make that thought able to control the universe.

SAEQAAR

The deified language of Pleroma has a dark counterpart, brought to this world by Ixindar and Mengus' whisper. This tongue is both the metaphorical and literal mirror of Pleroma, but draws its power from the black gate instead of the white, further reinforcing the theory that Pleroma is not the language of dragons at all. The symbols of this corrupted tongue resemble that of Pleroma as seen through a mirror, and are able to replicate similar results, but it only imitates the might of Attricana without the energy of chaos behind it. Ixindar does not spontaneously create anything; it must infect and convert what it finds to its side. There was origi-

nally no accepted name for this language; as with Pleroma, the name of the thing is the thing itself. Later it received its own sobriquet, saeqaar, a word with no meaning that can be rendered in any human tongue. While Pleroma utterances can be colorful and dancing with life, saeqaar words when spoken are sonorant and uniform – those who have heard them and lived to tell the tale speak of them as sounding like the tolling of funeral bells, with only their disturbing harmonics distinguishing different words. Appropriate, then, that the typhox dragons found in this language the tools for creating the most corrupt of the magical arts, necromancy.

IXINDAR SPELLS

Ixindar has many exclusive spells. These are vile spells with few redeeming qualities. Spells related to death, necromancy, negation and null energy states are unique to Ixindar and thus are not available to casters bound to Attricana. Otherwise, Ixindar casters can use any spell except summoning/creative spells and those with overtly good trappings. Casting Ixindar magic also locks the caster's thinking into the ways of the black gate, corrupting them eventually into an agent of absolute order. Corrupted magic has no flamboyance in its casting. There is no life behind anything emanating from a corrupted spell. However, the corruption of saeqaar does allow a spell to be bottled in, preventing the eruption of magical disruption. Like all energy from Ixindar, saeqaar does not disrupt technology. Instead, it prefers to disrupt the very soul attempting to control it.

FORBIDDEN MAGIC

These 'schools' draw their power from the black gate of Ixindar: they are not cast using Pleroma, and their use does not disrupt technology, but they are also abhorred by all right-thinking wizards and their use is grounds for summary execution even in enlightened societies like Abidan and Limshau. Even Baruch Malkut will not countenance their presence.

Necromancy: Imbuing false life in dead matter; extracting knowledge from the dead; inflicting disease and decay.

Nihilimancy: Unnaturally affecting entropic states; bringing matter or energy to an end; instant-death spells.

CORRUPTION

There can never be a moral spellcaster bound to Ixindar; eventually, the syntropic energy coursing through their bodies stratifies their worldview, and they become convinced that no perspective other than their own can even exist, let alone be valid. Those drawn too far down the path of corruption become perfect narcissists, convinced that the entire universe exists only for their benefit, or even that it would not exist without them.

CORRUPTION POINT

When you use magic tied to Ixindar, you will fall under the influence of corruption. All characters are subject to corruption: it uses the same stress track as saturation on the character sheet, but saturation and corruption stress are recording separately (for humans and pagus, when marking off saturation stress, draw a / line across the box, and when recording corruption, draw a \ line).

- **+5:** You are subject to mind-affecting magic from a shemjaza, typhox dragon, or the whisper of Mengus.
- **+3:** You study the arcane arts of the corrupted tongue of saeqaar.
- **+2:** You wield an Ixindar weapon.
- **+2:** You wear Ixindar magic armor.
- **+2:** You drink an Ixindar potion.
- **+1:** You benefit from other Ixindar magic items in your possession.
- **+1:** You end a scene in a corrupted area.

If you are taken out by a corruption attack, you must rename your concept aspect to reflect that your soul is bound to Ixindar. You no longer generate EDF, and you immediately recover any saturation stress or consequences you may have already taken. You no longer take saturation attacks until your corruption is expunged.

Corruption stress, like saturation stress, does not recover until you reach a moderate milestone: however, corruption consequences do not automatically convert to recovering consequences. The only way to recover from corruption is with time or certain rare magics. Corruption consequences are cleared at the appropriate milestones, and if you are fully given over to Ixindar, you must wait until you are able to rewrite your concept aspect before you can free yourself from syntropy.

Supernatural vocations are inherently tied to Attricana. However, their wielders are as susceptible to corruption as anyone else; as they lose their connection to Attricana, Ixindar subtly replaces it with a corrupted imitation. A corrupted innate caster has the option to change any abilities related to channeling positive energy to channeling negative energy (healing spells become harmful spells, etc.). A innate caster who loses her connection to Ixindar may or may not regain her Attricana-based powers, as determined by the GM.

If you ever become undead, you automatically switch to Ixindar: you cannot switch back under any circumstances until you cease being undead (usually by being re-killed and raised from the dead by Attricana magic).

SAMPLE SPELLS

The spells that follow are not an exhaustive list, but should serve as a guideline for creating your own, or even adapting spells from other games. They are arrayed by approximate preparation difficulty, along with

a guideline for what other sorts of spells should require a similar difficulty. The difficulties are intentionally vague, allowing for some individual latitude in customizing and tweaking spells: for example, a spell that is normally a +1 difficulty might be raised to +2 by adding a second target, or one that is normally +5 might be reduced to +4 by introducing some limitation. Work with the GM when you create a new spell to determine exactly what its difficulty should be.

Note that this is just the difficulty to prepare the spell: when actually casting it, the difficulty may be either lower or higher, static or opposed as the situation dictates.

+0 SPELLS

All +0 spells can be prepared and cast as a single action. They cover basic effects which any spellcaster can perform just by reciting a single Pleroma word. If the spell has no effect other than to provide the permission for a single (non-magical) check using another basic action, it is usually a +0 spell.

Kenning **(Scrying):** By meditating on your totem, you can attempt to answer one question on a subject you have not studied.

Prestidigitation **(Calling):** You create a single small object out of nothing. The object cannot be any larger than what could fit in a small sack (about 1 cubic foot) and disappears at the end of your next turn unless you cast the spell again.

Spark **(Energies/Fire):** Your hand burns the next object you touch.

Skeleton Key **(Transfiguration):** You place your finger against a keyhole and twist your own flesh to try to match the key.

Whisper **(Phantasm):** You convey a short message to one person you know within one mile.

+1 SPELLS

A +1 spell is any spell that would replace a single overcome, attack, or defense check, or provide permission for such if the GM decides the action is too advanced for a +0 spell. Any utility spell with an effect lasting no more than one round is usually a +1 spell.

Charm **(Phantasm):** You lace magic into your words, making them more convincing even if the subject would not normally consider them.

Cure **(Transfiguration):** Magical energy courses through your hands, enabling you to erase wounds almost as if they didn't happen. Your spellcasting action result determines the maximum severity of consequence you can heal (up to major: extreme consequences cannot be healed by magic). The consequence is automatically changed to a recovering consequence (which should be almost impossible for an enemy to invoke), but the slot remains filled. Any consequence can only be healed by magic of any degree once – further healings have no effect.

Fireball **(Energies/Fire):** You make a ranged attack with a sphere of flame.

Harden **(Earth):** As an enemy's blow impacts your body, the affected part is briefly transformed into a stone-like consistency, protecting you from the attack.

***Windburst* (Energies/Air):** You attack an enemy in the same zone with a sudden gust of wind.

+3 SPELLS

Most +3 spells are utility spells with a short-term (but not instantaneous) effect, lasting 2-3 rounds at most, or attack and defensive spells that persist for more than one round or have up to three targets.

***Air Walk* (Energies/Air):** Until the end of your next turn, you can fly up to 50 feet as a single movement.

***Icy Sphere* (Energies/Water):** You create a sphere of ice that surrounds a single enemy, preventing them from moving or attacking until they break free. While they are encased, you can attack them with burning cold. The ice melts or breaks by itself after three rounds.

***Restore Health* (Transfiguration):** As Cure, except that you reduce the severity of the consequence by one step before turning it into a recovering consequence.

***Shield* (Calling):** You create a magical shield to defend against physical attacks. The shield is dispelled after it absorbs 3 damage worth of attacks.

***Thorn Shroud* (Aether):** You create a thicket of spectral brambles around yourself. Any enemy that fails an attack against you takes damage equal to the difference between your results: you can also order the thorns to attack any enemy in the same zone. The thicket is dispelled after inflicting damage three times.

+5 SPELLS

A +5 spell is any utility spell that has an effect that endures to the end of the scene or until dispelled, or an attack or defense spell that affects four or more targets.

***Armor* (Calling):** You summon a suit of conjured metaphysical armor to protect you. If you spend a fate point at the time of casting, the armor reduces all incoming damage by 1 (minimum 0).

***Firestorm* (Energies/Fire):** You create a cascade of fire that affects any enemies you wish in the same zone.

***Masque* (Phantasm):** You create an illusion that changes your appearance to match any creature of the same approximate size that you can envision.

***Summon Monster* (Calling):** You conjure a simulacrum of any monster you know. The simulacrum is an average basic monster with a rating equal to your vocation. You use your own actions to direct it unless you spend a fate point to let it take independent action. The creature dissipates after its next action once you spend the last free invocation on this spell.

***Telepathy* (Scrying):** You communicate telepathically with up to four other people you know within fifty miles.

FOUNDATION SPELLS (+7 and higher)

Foundation spells, allegedly passed down from the dragons, laudenians, and shemjaza, are powerful spells only found on anchors scattered about the world. Because of their rarity, few casters of substantial power possess more than one or two. Only rare individuals know of them all, and they do not share this knowledge openly with anyone. Some anchors are buried for being too dangerous while others are guarded so obsessively that few have been able to successfully acquire them. Those who do are sworn to keep them secret. Anchors are considered artifacts, are thus extremely rare, and virtually impossible to destroy. Many anchors are one-of-a-kind pieces, the more powerful the rarer. Casters can transfer a spell from an anchor without destroying it; however, unlike normal arcane spells, others cannot copy the spell from a totem or spell scroll, as there are certain inscriptions from the anchor that are implanted into memory upon study. It is not possible to transcribe this hidden inscription in any meaningful way; it must be imparted either by the anchor or by instruction from someone who already knows it.

Foundation spells can be prepared and cast the same as other spells, but have a minimum difficulty of +7. Furthermore, **every time you cast a foundation spell, you draw one card from your deck (not your hand) and use it on a defense check against the spell's final modified result.** If you succeed, you take 2 damage from casting the spell (or no damage if you critically succeed): if you fail, you take 2 + the difference between your defense result and the spell's result. You can spend a fate point to negate this damage.

***Foreknowledge* (Scrying):** This spell allows you to perceive possible futures, which you envision as a blur overlaying your normal sight. Your mind automatically filters out less-likely futures, leaving only those with a strong likelihood of occurring: as they come closer to your present, you are able to identify an immanent event moments before it takes place, and can take action to either ensure it happens or prevent it from coming to pass.

Anchor: Inscribed in a traditional spellbook called the The Art of Arcane Thaumaturgy, this spell is locked in a secret library in Kirjath-Sepher. Other copies of the book are sealed in Myre and Laudenia.

***Labyrinth* (Calling):** You trap a single creature in an ever-changing localized fold of space-time, where they remain until they successfully overcome the spell. You alone can freely move in and out of the labyrinth, and can populate it with other conjured creatures as you wish in order to impede the target's efforts to escape.

Anchor: Inscribed in the earth itself as a hedge-maze in the citadel of Jalakkreth, where the forest of Dawnamoak meets the mountains.

***Lodestone* (Energies/Earth):** You control the strength and vector of gravity within an area of fifty cubic feet, anywhere within a hundred-foot radius. You can reduce gravity to nothing, cause creatures and objects to fall upwards, or root enemies to the ground with their own weight, although you cannot increase gravity to more than 150% of Earth normal.

Anchor: Only three golden feathers that carry this spell exist, all created by the inventive minds of Laudenia. They use two; the third was stolen and is currently missing.

***Meteor* (Calling/Fire):** You call down a ball of flame to annihilate everything within a one mile radius of the spot you designate. Creatures that successfully defend against the initial attack are thrown by the impact, coming to land

miles away and possibly sustaining more damage from the fall.

Anchor: There are three known anchors for this spell in the world, all embedded on silver-coated longswords. Lazarus in the mountain of Dracontia owns one. Another sits under lock and key in Castle Myre. The final one was lost in a pagus raid against a Janoahn convoy, the despoilers vanishing upon their return to Ažhi Dahaka.

***Soul Drain* (Nihilimancy):** You strike an enemy with a bolt that nullifies their presence in the fabric of the universe, possibly picking them out of existence altogether. The target permanently reduces all their vocation ratings by the difference between your spell result and their defense result. If this reduces their highest vocation rating to -3 or lower, they cease ever to have existed, time rewriting itself to compensate for their absence.

Anchor: This spell, inscribed on a tapestry made from fae skin, can be found in Kardia-Gothas in the Sana Marsh. Although claims have been made that an Attricana version of this spell exists, the only con-firmed anchor is the Ixindar spell.

SPELL RANKS FROM OTHER SOURCES

Many other games that involve spellcasting have some sort of rating system for the power of a spell. If you wish to adapt a spell from another system, if the rating system goes from 1-10 (or thereabouts), go ahead and treat the spell's rank in that system as the preparation difficulty in Amethyst, regardless if the spell's other parameters fit the pattern above. If the rating system goes from 1-5 or so, double the spell's rank to find the preparation difficulty. In either case, spells that translate to a difficulty of +7 or higher are foundation spells.

MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items are uncommon at best, except in centers of arcane learning or magically saturated locales like Laudenia. Basic enchanted weapons and armor are not too hard to come by for the dedicated adventurer, as such items are part and parcel of the narros' standard trade; potions, as well, are fairly common, as mixing them requires no innate magical talent (although it can't exactly be done by unskilled labor). Wizards frequently use single-use spell scrolls to supplement their prepared spells. But few major magical items exist without a reason. Major items are difficult to locate and magical weapons and armor beyond basic enchantments cannot be casually bought (although some can be specially ordered for a character, given the right smith or merchant).

CREATING MAGIC ITEMS

Although magic items are rare in the Amethyst setting, it is assumed that as exceptional individuals, player characters can reasonably expect to possess more than their fair share of those that exist (the fact that many tend to fall into their laps in the course of adventuring is treated as a convenient coincidence). That said, it is not required to be a spellcaster in order to create magic items; for most, all it requires is knowledge of the proper crafting techniques and the precise ratios of materials necessary to 'naturally' produce magical effects.

Assuming one has this knowledge, crafting a magical item is just a matter of obtaining the materials. The rarity of magic items is less about the knowledge required in their making (which is still a factor) and more the materials involved. Making magic items requires not only the employ of skilled craftsmen or the attainment of tools required to craft the item, but also the acquisition of rare alloys and ingredients necessary to create the specific enchantment. An item not entirely made of coruthil or magnarros may still require trace amounts of it in order complete the item. Other rare earth metals like yttrium, iridium, and osmium may be required, forcing the party to search mines or seek out obscure shops. A forged item may even need to be quenched in heavy water, which is almost impossible to come by in quantity outside of a bastion. Players should be forced to quest as much for the materials for their magic items as the quests they need their magic items for.

Mechanically, a magical item functions the same as special gear. When creating a magical item, give it a name, which is also its concept aspect and gives permission for any basic effects the item has. The item also has a vocation rating equal to the preparation difficulty of whatever spell it is emulating (plus or minus 1), which can be used in place of any other vocation for checks with that item (+1 by default: higher ratings should require commensurately more difficult to obtain components). Any powers the player and GM agree are too inherently powerful become stunts which the player can take as normal.

Example: ***The Flamebringer Sword* +2.** This weapon can be wreathed in flame at its wielder's mental command. Its wielder can take the following stunt:

Flame Burst: You can spend a fate point when you successfully attack with the sword to inflict 1 damage against up to two other creatures in the same zone as the initial target.

ALCHEMY

No longer the domain of mercury-addled mystics searching for immortality or ways of turning lead into gold, alchemy is a respectable, even scientific practice. Just as is the case with arcane metallurgy, certain chemical compounds when mixed in exactly the right propor-

tions produce magical effects. One does not need to be able to perform magic in order to be an alchemist – all that is needed is knowledge of the correct formulae. In some communities, alchemy is a cottage industry, with good coin flowing in from passing adventurers buying copious amounts of restoratives. Potions are not always suspicious liquids in bottles, either – many alchemists fashion their consumables into candy or pastries, or infuse them into aromatic leaves to be made into tea, or smoked by those with the inclination.

As a general rule, any short-term or instantaneous magical advantage can be placed into a potion. Drinking the potion (or throwing the bottle, in the case of a potion-grenade) requires an action, and places the advantage as if the contained spell had been cast on the drinker (complete with free invocation). Alchemical poisons apply their effects to whoever ingests them (or is stabbed by a weapon the poison has been applied to).

The effect of a potion rarely lasts longer than one scene.

Some more common potions include:

CANTRIP GLOBE +1

When broken, a cantrip globe produces a short-term magical effect: a brief gust of wind, a cascade of rainbow light, a short-lived animated illusion, a cloud of stinking vapor, and the like.

POTION OF MINOR/MODERATE/ MAJOR RECOVERY +1/+3/+5

A potion of recovery recovers all of the drinker's stress and turns one consequence of the stated severity or lower into a recovering consequence.

POTION OF MINOR/MODERATE/ MAJOR RESTORATION +2/+4/+6

A potion of restoration turns one consequence of the stated severity into a recovering consequence and reduces the severity by one step, so it recovers faster.

POTION OF MINOR/MODERATE/ MAJOR HEALING +4/+6/+8

A potion of healing completely removes one consequence of the stated severity.

ARTIFACTS

These special items carry great significance for the world of Amethyst and are likely to appear only as the focus of a major quest.

THE BIBLE OF DRASAGO AND THE ARCHON GOSPELS

When the dragons emerged from Attricana, Lazarus (the oldest and most powerful of the survivors) went about commissioning tomes of knowledge from the other dragons. He picked one representative from each lineage and exhorted them to write in their ancient language a gospel of all that they believe in and imbue it with the very power they possess. These books chroni-

cle all their knowledge and tell about the history of Terros through their ageless eyes. To read a gospel of Drasago is to peer into the very soul of a dragon.

Those who read such a tome are never the same, assuming they can find one in the first place. These books are extremely rare: only three or four copies exist of each gospel and the complete Bible of Drasago itself is owned and protected by Lazarus. Excerpts from these books have been found all over the globe. A reprinting of some passages translated into damaskan can be located in Limshau and Laudenia, but they lack the magical impact of the originals; only fragments have ever been translated into English, and these are often too cryptic to have any value even as proverbs. Dragons often share these books with each other, though never gaining the abilities from them. If a non-dragon skilled in Pleroma reads this book, which takes a total of 48 hours over a minimum of six days, he gains a special ability determined by the book. Once the book is read, the knowledge will always be present to that reader. A reader can only be affected by one book in their lifetime, no matter how many they read, and can only be thus affected once no matter how many times they read that book. **The reader can continue to use the book's aspect and retains any abilities granted by it even if the book later leaves her possession.**

The books are very large, embossed with real scales sacrificed by the writer. They are laced with platinum and silver and gilded with gold. Surprisingly, they are all quite light and will float upon water if dropped. The books are locked with fragments of a dragon's talon and cannot be opened without their key, nor can they be destroyed by any means other than the breath of the dragons that authored them.

THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY (+5)

Written by Aurannis of Dust and Greka of Babel

Leave it to holy dragons to write such a massive book, by two members as they couldn't agree who would write what. Only Greka's portion carries the gospel's enchantment; Aurannis' chronicle, while complementary to it, exists as a semi-apocrypha and is technically considered a separate book. Greka's book requires 72 hours to read over 8 days compared to the other books. It's a long, slow read, bouncing between subject matter and often diverting into seemingly boring and superfluous tangents. The holy book can be identified by the mirror-polished feather affixed to the cover. The book displays no artwork and the typeface is small and harder to translate than normal. A full quarter of the book is dedicated to the flight dynamics of holy dragons in comparison to other breeds.

After being read, the book grants the reader the power to speak and understand the tongues of animals, to endure extremes of the natural elements, strengthens their body against claws and blades, and enhances their knowledge of fire and phantasm magics. The reader also gains the following stunts:

Call the Fire (free): You can spend a fate point to automatically critically succeed when preparing a fire spell. A spell prepared this way does not require a totem.

Wyrmtongue (free): You can spend a fate point to prepare and cast a phantasm spell relating to magical suggestion as a single action. A spell prepared this way does not require a totem.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GUARDIAN (+5)

Written by Kelto of the Guard

Kelto, a battle champion of a thousand engagements, refused to die despite losing an eye, two claws, and the end of his tail. His claws were severed by an unnamed and forgotten cursed blade which he later destroyed. His eye was plucked and stolen as a prize when Goch and Kelto dueled over the skies of old Terros thousands of years before the First Hammer. Goch keeps it still, hanging the undamaged orb from his neck, unknowing that Kelto can still gaze through it as long as the injury remains unhealed. Not even the book goes into details on how Kelto lost his tail tip. Despite these injuries, Kelto is still one of the more approachable dragons, seldom taken to pomposity. The book, marked by a bright orange/red smear of Kelto's own blood, details the arrival of the guardian dragons and their crusade to defeat the armies of darkness. Guardian dragons are warriors, champions, and knights of the oldest order, and consequently the book details many battles. The accounts are exhaustive, graphic, and not for the squeamish, for Kelto and his guardians have seen the very darkest creations of evil.

After being read, the book grants the reader the ability to see in total darkness and track those around them by changes in air pressure and ground tremors, makes them more durable and resistant to electrical shock, and gives strength to their sword-arm. The reader also gains the following stunts:

Dragon's Claws (free): Any weapon you wield deals +2 damage on a successful attack.

Dragon's Scales (free): Any armor you wear reduces incoming damage by 2.

THE GOSPEL OF THE NOBLE (+5)

Written by Lynissa of Essence

Lynissa's family and the responsibilities they have taken on are far more interesting than the noble dragons as a whole. As nobles are considered the intellectual leaders of the dragons (the holy being the spiritual leaders), one would expect the book to detail their administration of dragon culture as well as their structure of authority. Thankfully, Lynissa intermixed this with anecdotes about her family line and their connection with the humans and elves of Akoya (in Euras), which is far more interesting. Euras possesses only one human line of blood royal, the Lamontaes of Akoya. This endorsement came from Lynissa herself, passed down to the first Lamontae, Raymonde. The silver hair of all the royals and their offspring regardless of the appearance

of their consorts encourages rumors across the land that Lynissa the Essence dipped into the royal line herself, siring a child while in human form with the king at the time. Such a pairing is not technically forbidden, though extremely rare and difficult to propagate (dragons must bond just like fae in order to reproduce with humans, although the side-effects of bonding for the human are unpredictable and often dangerous). If she endorsed the Lamontae line before or after the coupling is not known but Lynissa and her dragon offspring from the Terros Age all live within the kingdom, swearing to its protection. The diplomatic and noble landscape of Akoya is featured heavily in her gospel. Alas, the majority of the book still details the history of the noble dragons, and their arrogance and condescension about their intelligence does show through the words.

After being read, the book grants the reader an aura of calm certainty that strengthens their own minds and bolsters the morale of their allies, as well as giving them total confidence (bordering on arrogance) in any social situation. The reader also gains the following stunt:

Aggressive Negotiations (free): You can spend a fate point to prepare and cast a spell to summon a ***Sword of Light*** as a single action. A spell prepared this way does not require a totem.

THE GOSPEL OF LAZARUS (+5)

Written by Lazarus himself, this tome does not go into any details about general dragons but more into Lazarus's own life, as the most ancient living dragon. He talks about his feelings about the world and the fall of Amethyst. This book is extremely hard to find outside of the realm of dragons.

Of all the books, the Lazarus volume is by far the most cryptic. The words and speech meander from normal vernacular to poetry, with messages and meanings only revealing themselves after days, months, or years of contemplation and meditation. It is not an easy read to be sure. After appreciation of the words is finally reached, his thoughts and feelings carry through in clarity. Those finally understanding the book and its meanings often feel melancholy afterward, sharing with the author the curse of knowing too much. Though Lazarus does not impart many secrets, he does express his dissatisfaction about knowing them. After reading the book, one truly begins to understand the mentality of dragons, the immense responsibilities they carry, and the knife-edge they balance between wisdom and corruption. Lazarus knew the world the longest, and his book speaks of times known to no others, including the stretch of time between when Amethyst called the first dragons into being and the arrival of the fae.

After being read, the book grants the reader the power to see through illusions and immunity to mind control, as well as strengthening her knowledge of healing and weather control magics. Additionally, she gains the right to call upon an archon dragon to aid her once a week, and once a month if she is killed, she spontaneously returns to life within a day. The reader also gains the following stunt:

Healer's Word (free): You can spend a fate point to reduce the severity of any physical or mental consequence by one degree.

THE CHRONICLE OF AURANNIS (+4)

The Chronicle of Aurannis is a single tome separated from the rest of the Bible of Drasago. It holds the knowledge of Amethyst, the shards of his crown, and the artifacts forged around them. It also details the history of echa, the fall of the great dragon and by what means. It mentions Gebermach and the other gospels of Drasago. The book is quite well written in comparison to Greka's tome and is an easier read despite the ancient tongue. Thankfully, unlike other books, there is a "Rosetta-stone" translation matrix on the back cover, though some trickery in magic has concealed it unless someone knows it's there. The matrix lists the same first page in laudenian and in damaskan. With this knowledge, one can translate the words but must still understand Pleroma to fully understand the content. Rumor has it that a complete English translation of this work exists somewhere within Genai, inside the bastion of Angel; regardless of whether this is true or not, any translation would have none of the special powers of the original.

On its own, the chronicle has no particular effect other than the advancement of knowledge, but it does glow brighter when an Amethyst relic is within 1 mile in any direction. Also, the chronicle, when finally read (after 72 hours to read over 8 days compared to the other books) imparts a permanent mark of power on the user, protecting them against mundane harm. Afterward, the book vanishes from the user's possession and returns to Aurannis' side, where she either keeps it or sends it off again to find another reader.

STAFF OF KERIF (+3)

Many of the rumors involving Kereptis Rifts are false, conflicting with other tales spoken at the same table about his greatness. Was he a savior or a scoundrel? Was he a philanthropist or a villain? Many agree he had a temper, but no one contested his power or the loyalty he gathered because of that power. He is credited with numerous discoveries and creations, some later proven inaccurate. The one item everyone agrees came from his hand was the Staff of KeRif.

When Kereptis reached Ramkava, their behavior and triviality sickened him and he stormed away, unfulfilled. As he left, he discovered a piece of one of their heads that had broken off in an engagement with a death dragon. With this, he managed to gain their attention an unprecedented second time. After this second audience, Rifts took the shard back with him. He constructed a normal oak quarterstaff and topped it with the grayish shard of rock. The KeRif staff looks boring and only reveals its power with the testing of magic.

The staff empowers its wielder to command the attention of Ramkava, as well as allowing them to access a portion of the heads' mystic wisdom no matter

where they be. It is unwise to consult Ramkava too often, even through the staff's power; though they are more willing to give up their lore every few days or so, constant demands for their attention will only make them more and more cryptic.

I Am Talking (free): When you invoke an aspect related to communication or diplomacy while the staff is in hand, anyone listening cannot oppose your action without some sort of magical aid.

THE EIGHT SHARDS OF AMETHYST

The eight are the most powerful relics on the planet. Before Amethyst died, he cast a stream of white flame to heaven. It reflected back to drive Ixindar deep underground and solidify the Earth around it. His body turned to vapor soon after. Amethyst was gone and all that remained was a great violet crystal that shattered upon striking the rocks below. They scattered across the world, lost after the Hammer's impact. Despite a few shards surfacing throughout history, most of them remained quietly buried for millions of years. The fragments were of all different sizes and shapes – with some smaller than a pebble, others longer than a leg. Some were spherical while others held a razor's edge. One can imagine stumbling upon such a gem. It would not be fastened to rock and no amount of force and commitment could lay a scratch upon its surface. Despite their unusual properties, any that were found never received attention during the time of man before the Second Hammer, being indistinguishable, apart from their durability, from unremarkable quartz. Discarded and ignored, they stayed inconsequential for centuries.

After the gate's return, by some unexplained factor, the crystals all rose to the surface, regardless how deep in the earth they rested. Unlike before, their brilliance and power were impossible to deny. Before anyone knew of their potential, their fate, or their true origin, they had been sold, traded, and killed over. Armies clashed for their control despite knowing nothing of their history.

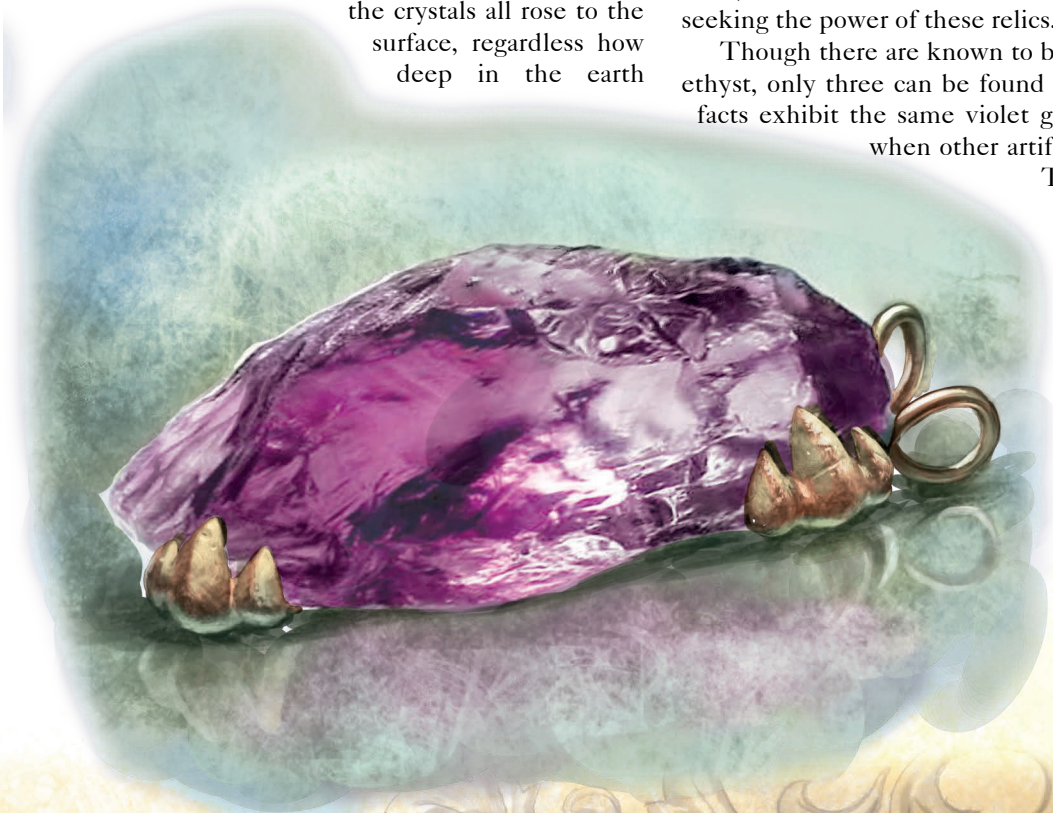
Those with wealth and weight of authority felt their power would be amplified if said crystals were imbued into ordinary items. Very soon, these items emerged with their own local legends, wielded by warriors and kings both noble and wicked. After their existence reached erudite ears, but before anyone could act, they vanished again. Some were stolen; some were taken as trophies when their wielders were slain. When the virtuous and mighty discovered the fragments of Amethyst had returned, they scoured the planet to locate them. Like an unnamed curse, the original owners, all of those that had created the artifacts, had lost them or died, often both at once. The relics fell into obscurity, passing through further hands until the trails and clues had faded. All that remained was the hope they would emerge again.

Paranoia and silence by the oldest races conspired to keep the knowledge of Amethyst and his shattered crown secret. Factor in a small portion of arrogance and many of those who knew the truth never bothered to seek out these relics. Despite the calls for their retrieval, some individuals honestly thought they were best kept buried, unaware of their vital significance in future events.

How Aurannis of Dust managed to write about them in her Chronicle has never been revealed, but the elder dragon disclosed specific details of the fragments, the items they were implanted into, and their potential power as a result. Though it does not give their locations, the Chronicle of Aurannis is a vital read to anyone seeking the power of these relics.

Though there are known to be eight artifacts of Amethyst, only three can be found in Canam. All the artifacts exhibit the same violet glow, growing intensely when other artifacts are brought closer. Their power increases as well, making them the few magic items that can grow along with the group questing for them. It is thought that when placed near each other, their total power would almost equal that of the original dragon. If that were to happen, perhaps he could even be reborn.

To increase in power, the gems must all be within 100 feet. Out of that range, the bonus abil-



ities are no longer applicable. The items do not have to be wielded or carried by the same person. An evil creature carrying any Amethyst artifact loses 4 corruption points each day and gains 2 saturation points each day.

Because of the age and the history of the artifacts, they often go by different names and many cultures worship them without knowing what they truly are. Their stats are listed with their individual abilities and whatever abilities are boosted with additional nearby fragments.

The gems CANNOT be destroyed by any means. No spell or weapon cracks them, and even the strongest techan lasers and drills will blow up before they make a mark, assuming they do not instantly disrupt.

AMETHYST RELIC VOCATION RATINGS

Amethyst relics have a vocation rating equal to the total number of relics within 100 feet.

THE AMULET / STORMCAGE / THE EYE OF GOD

The amulet of Amethyst fell originally to Torfin Gendron, across the ocean. The mighty wizard stumbled upon the circular but jagged stone by accident, pulling it from the sediment of a shallow river he was walking alongside. Believing the stone a sign, he continued upriver and discovered the outcropping rock that would later be the home of Torfin's great library and school of magic, Kirjath-Sepher. He never bothered to create a great device to channel the power of the crystal. Torfin forged a simple frame and hung it from his neck, and those years found the halls blessed with a newfound wisdom unseen in any human at that time or since. Torfin continued his work for years, as a nearby castle watched with fanatical and envious eyes. The fortress was Myre, a zealous order of knights committed to keeping magic from mortal hands. To them, magic was destined for a select few (themselves, of course, being among the few). Wilhelm Myre believed Kirjath-Sepher to be the greatest threat to the world and had ordered his knights to raze it to ash if the keep didn't willingly hand over all magic. Torfin and his loyal disciples refused.

To prove his piousness and dedication, Myre challenged Torfin to open combat, spell against sword, with no limits. Torfin agreed, and the Manora Vallis of Lauropa became the site of the greatest magical duel in history. Hundreds watched as the landscape erupted. Hours passed and the two were nearly exhausted, but neither accepted defeat. In the end, a final heedless charge brought Myre close enough to impale his sword into the heart of Gendron, but Torfin's retaliation struck lightning and fire from the heavens. Though his heart had stopped, the blade still skewered in his chest, Gendron remained precariously standing. The amulet slipped from around his neck and fell into his hand. He lifted his palm to the sky, and an eagle promptly swooped down to snatch the crystal.

The order of Myre and the mages of Sepher returned with their lords' bodies, declaring no further conflict would occur that day. The crystal vanished from the minds of both armies, and passed from hand to hand until it was found among the treasure hoard of a group of boggs annihilated by a patrol from Porto and taken back to the bastion for study. The intellectual elite of Porto poked and prodded the crystal but could not understand its mysterious properties. This item, unlike other echan artifacts, generated little disruption in comparison to its power. In a final attempt to unlock its secrets, they surreptitiously contacted an echan expert in another bastion, David Chen from Genai. However, while it was being transported there, a wandering dragon attacked the flyer, sending it plummeting to earth in the midst of the forest of Crax and scattering the cargo for miles. To the best of anyone's knowledge, the amulet was never recovered.

The amulet grants its wearer a certain degree of prescience and resistance to physical and harm, as well as clearing their minds and improving their ability to

reason and remember. When brought together with three or more other relics, it also forms a metaphysical barrier against magical effects. Otherwise, its only overt property is to cast a bright purple light.

THE BRACERS / ARMS OF TRUTH / THE PRESENCE OF RHINFORGE

The great dwarven city of Thos Thalagos was actually built atop the ruins of a previous smaller narros mine called Rhinforge, though few remember this. The tiny village of Rhinforge was the wealthiest mine in the north. Storehouses had to be built to hold the treasures they had unearthed. The mine's leader, Rarikon Baxs, refused to share this treasure with neighboring camps, with plans to use the money to hire an army of swords to conquer all of the land that would eventually be called Fargon. It was during this time that Baxs discovered the amethyst shards, two long, wide and flat pieces, just slightly shorter than a forearm.

To his amazement, Baxs realized the shards could not be cracked by any weapon in his arsenal and ordered them to be set within his cuirass, but this ended up not being feasible and he later had them placed within a set of forearm protectors in hopes they would improve his bowmanship. This they could not accomplish, but he found that they did protect him from harm. Near invulnerable, Baxs took it as a sign to crusade, to finally take the land as his own.

To prevent the formation of a corrupted empire, all the surrounding camps banded together. They struck Rhinforge before mercenary reinforcements could arrive. The combined might broke the back of the city's lackluster militia and Baxs was forced to flee south, his hands and pockets bursting with pilfered gold. Considering him too dangerous to allow free, the commander and now ruler of the mine, Thalagos Gin, placed a hefty bounty upon Baxs' head. The despot was finally located and chased up the face of Mt. Tirocinia, an active volcano. To deny the prize of his opponents, Baxs hurled himself to the flames and was engulfed by the molten rock. Thalagos Gin had the mining town renamed and decreed that none should ever speak Baxs' name again, excising this dark period from the narros' history.

More than 200 years passed before the bracers resurfaced, having somehow traveled another 450 miles south to wind up under Mt. Selkirk, eventually appearing intact from the back of a mining machine operated by the techan humans of the new bastion. Finding the discovery unusual, the miners brought them to their supervisor, who immediately ordered them locked in the company vault, where they remain in hiding to this day.

The bracers harden the wearer's skin against physical harm, projecting a magical carapace that defends against any weapon. When brought together with two or more additional relics, the wearer is immune to fear and resistant to mental assaults.

THE BUCKLE / THE BELT, BOOTS, or BRACELET OF DRAGONKIND

The only group or individual more obsessed with locating powerful magic than the Order of Myre is Darius Konig, king of Baruch Malkut. The kingdom has always been magically underprivileged: therefore, the king ordered all items of any significant power belonged to the kingdom and required them to be handed over to prolocutors trained to categorize and quantify their powers. Konig also demanded any texts or records of such items be tendered for examination. The prized trophy he sought was the manifest of Myre, the massive tome detailing all which lays within the Castle Myre vaults, be they magical or remnants from the old age of man. Darius coveted these artifacts and any others with the promise of power.

It was in their fervent pursuit that an Amethyst crystal was found, worn as a belt buckle by the noble of a small village called Eathar, who claimed the item was found on the corpse of a slain elvish princess. In truth, he had stolen the buckle from its former owner, but upon its discovery Konig insisted such treasures belonged to the kingdom and appropriated it for himself.

The amethyst gem had a longer history than that, having been forged into its present form by a mage from Laurama, Rhuunazodaeus. Rhuuna was not a powerful caster but did have a reputation amongst the other chaparrans of the forest. She stumbled upon the amethyst crystal in the most fitting way for a chaparran, finding it within a tree. A lightning strike during an unusually intense storm cracked an old conifer from tip to root. As Rhunna examined the char, she found the violet crystal embedded in its bark. This specific tree had predated the chaparrans' arrival and was dubbed the "Mending Tree" by their holy order for its ability to repulse the Tranquiss plague. Realizing the purity of the tree lay in this crystal, Rhuuna took it and fled back to her village. The Mending Tree was dead, but the crystal took on its name initially, as the Mending Sap. Rhuuna, in hope of channeling the crystal's power, affixed it to a buckle and tied it around her right wrist, believing she could channel its energy into her knowledge of Pleroma to cure the plague. She would not have her chance, as she was taken by slavers shortly thereafter, her ultimate unfortunate fate a mystery. The buckle, its true powers unknown, was passed through many owners over the intervening years, appearing at various times mounted as a bracelet, a belt buckle or a boot buckle by various dignitaries of the Blessed Kingdom.

Regardless of how it is worn, the gem improves the wearer's speed and reaction time. Additional powers come only with the addition of more Amethyst relics:

+2 Relics: *Boots*—The boots will always grip on a slippery surface, and improve the wearer's leaping ability. *Belt*—The wearer becomes more resilient to damage. *Bracelet*—The wearer can wield any weapon in the bracelet's hand as if they were a master of it, even if they have never touched such a weapon before.

+5 Amethyst Relics: *Boots*—The wearer no longer touches the ground while moving, hovering an inch off the ground. They can cross any surface (water, mud, etc) and never leave any tracks. *Belt*—The wearer cannot take more than 3 damage from any hit. *Bracelet*—Any weapon wielded in the bracelet's hand deals +1 damage on a successful attack.

+7 Amethyst Relics: *Boots*—The boots can also walk or climb on any surface, regardless of hand or foot holds (including ceilings). *Belt*—The wearer cannot take more than 1 damage from any hit. *Bracelet*—Any weapon wielded in the bracelet's hand deals +2 damage on a successful attack.

The outer gates of the southern wall groaned open for morning travelers. The rising spring sun brushed a graceful wave of heat across Aiden's face. He looked back at Angel's wall, perforated with sniper holes and artillery placements. He wasn't rethinking his decision, only taking in how unambiguous the boundary between the two worlds was.

Aiden had hardly spent a day away from Chen's biblio. Reading about dragons were only the beginning. Anything science denied as true, Aiden desired to learn. He remembered the story his mother had told him, of the singular focus of Willum Raenis. The character's aspirations were above his station, no higher than a princess, a target that could never be struck. All Aiden needed to do was sacrifice his central heating, internet, and cable TV. Martin thought it was selfish, and that Aiden's decision was like a virus that would spread to others, somehow disavowing thousands of years of progress, rejecting what mankind was most proud of--the very automation of his society.

As Aiden walked further past the gate, the level and planed pavement began to show cracks from shifting soil and snaking roots. At the edge, it had turned to rubble. The dirt felt the same as those in parks and planters in the city. The sun looked no different. Ahead was the forest. Against the barricade and under cover of shade sat hundreds of shacks and shanties populated by thousands that took pilgrimage to Angel in hopes of being blessed with admittance. If born inside, your citizenship could not be refuted. Trapped between the forest of Cyon and the city of Angel, refugees scavenged the city's garbage along with fragments leftover by more successful travelers. Some eked out a simple existence selling horses or trinkets from either side of the crown. There were no fae here, not this close to a magical dead zone. The village of Genai was ignored because of a long forgotten arrangement made centuries ago with the city's original builders.

Aiden's destination was hundreds of miles away. Deep in an area his brother called a wasteland was a city populated by millions of fae, humans, and books. It had been described more as a library than a city. Aiden could further his reading, having spent Chen's biblio nearly dry of words. He couldn't deny his ulterior motive, a city of fae and humans. Every pointed eared female a princess in his eyes.

Aiden had imagined her with unblemished naked skin riding a unicorn through an unspoiled landscape. He, the noble knight or wizard watches through the bushes, smitten. He jumps out to save the virtue of the virgin against a mob of hungry orcs, or boggs, whatever the story endorsed. She beds him against a tree in her gratitude. He follows her into the woods, taken by the fae into their flock to live for an eternity in enchanted bliss.

Despite aspirations of fancy, Aiden had proven himself an academic with enough saved and invested for the best universities. Out of high school, he could have been scooped up quickly and molded into an efficient, grounded, and functional member of society. He would do Martin, and his vision of their parents' ideals, proud. Now Aiden was nineteen and a hundred feet from all he had ever seen. Ahead lay everything he had read about. Some books were fiction, written by authors hundreds of years dead. They spoke of faeries and demons, dragons and kings. Following that, Aiden would find a book claiming to be fact which told similar tales.

Dragons and unicorns had adorned crests and flags for centuries before being discovered as truth. It could not be coincidence.

Aiden hated the prospect of booking passage on an Echan Terrain Vehicle, but there was little hope of him making it through the forest on his own, not with boggs on the rise. On occasion, an armed caravan would arrive at the wall and pick up passengers for a price bordering extortion. The passengers would be escorted to one of the safe primitive human havens on the other side, most of which were controlled by the free house of Antikari.

This was one of those occasions, and Aiden was unwilling to wait for a medieval wagon. He planned his departure weeks ahead; only those in the biblio knew of it. A note on a countertop was all he afforded Martin.

Martin

I'm not going to waste time explaining. I got my passcard and I'm leaving. I'm going to Limshau. I don't know how long I'm going to be, or where I might go from there. I know you don't understand which is why I won't bother explaining.

Aiden

The ETV was due to arrive in a few hours, assuming it survived the trip through Cyon. It wasn't just the boggs but the radiant magic permeating the forest that people feared. Aiden leaned against the warm concrete wall of the bastion crown, overhearing pilgrims making cases in hopes of admittance. They tried to barter their passage by claiming possession of some vital knowledge to better mankind.

Aiden was reading a book, as he often did. This one was fiction; he had checked. A sharp page corner nicked a small divot of skin from the base of his index finger, not enough to bleed. He caressed the redness, his finger skimming over the old scar on his palm from when he grabbed the broken window during Zmey's attack. Aiden still thought of the creature as Zmey, though its real name was Goetion is Lifeless. Dragon names were like that, part name, part phrase. Aiden's finger followed the scar as it bisected every line in his palm, from life to mercury. His left had fared better with only a leathery patch at the wrist to mark the event.

Aiden's black button shirt and grey trousers were from Angel but a gifted Asian girl in Genai with no technology to assist her handcrafted the brown wool sweater. His longcoat was also purchased off the benches of the Genai market. Aiden hadn't changed his style of glasses since acquiring his first set. Technology had fashioned his thermal underwear and orthopedic hiking shoes, extravagances he allowed himself. The only visible mark connecting him to Angel was the broken watch still wrapped around his wrist.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MONSTERS

Earth was, and always shall be, a dangerous place for those who venture into shadow. Across the entire world, no valley, mountain, forest, or town is immune to the influence of magic. Where humanity did not take root to at least moderately direct the land's development, the flow from Attricana would saturate it, giving birth to the truly bizarre, fantastic, beautiful, or revolting. Classed together as spawn creatures, the majority of these beasts possess no culture and many never develop an intellect that can be measured or tested. A scant few have broken from these primitive and primordial bonds to stake a claim as a species worthy of respect.

MONSTERS AND NPCS

One of your most important jobs as a GM is creating the NPCs who will oppose the PCs and try to keep them from their goals during your scenarios. The real story comes from what the PCs do when worthy adversaries stand between them and their objectives—how far they're willing to go, what price they're willing to pay, and how they change as a result of the experience.

As a GM, you want to shoot for a balancing act with the opposing NPCs—you want the players to experience tension and uncertainty, but you don't want their defeat to be a foregone conclusion. You want them to work for it, but you don't want them to lose hope.

DON'T FOLLOW THE RULES

Always keep in mind that you're never obligated to give any NPC a full sheet like the ones the PCs have. Monsters aren't designed to last more than a few rounds in an encounter, and it's rare that you're going to need a major NPC who in addition to their other skills has +1 in Whittling. Most of the time, you're not going to need to know that much information, because the NPCs aren't going to be the center of attention like the PCs are. It's better to focus on writing down exactly what you need for that NPC's encounter with the PCs, and then fill in the blanks on the fly (just like PCs can) if that NPC ends up becoming more important in the campaign.

Also remember: you're balancing for your own table, not for the game as an objective whole, and you can't always plan everything out ahead of time. If a monster you thought was going to be a challenge turns out to be a pushover, don't be afraid to adjust its abilities on the fly until it behaves like you expected it to, or bring in a second, much tougher one after the players have defeated the first. On the other hand, if the players are having a harder time than you expected against a monster, you can always let them take it out faster, or have it run away after they get one good hit in.

NPC/MONSTER TYPES

NPCs and monsters come in three different flavors: **basic**, **standard**, and **major NPCs**.

BASIC

The majority of the NPCs in your campaign world are so insignificant to the story that the PCs interactions with them don't even require them to learn a name, or monsters whose only purpose to the story is to slow down the party and drain their resources on their way to their ultimate goal. On their own, basic monsters usually aren't meant to provide much of a challenge to the PCs. You use them like you use a low-difficulty check, mainly as an opportunity to showcase the PCs'

competence. In combat encounters, they serve as a distraction or a delay, forcing the PCs to work a little harder to get what they want.

Most basic monsters/NPCs have a single concept aspect – their name and a brief description, such as ***Sora Mendovel, Small-Town Thief*** or ***Ravenous Dire Wolf***. This aspect also serves as their sole vocation. Basic monsters can be generally rated by how powerful they are relative to the PCs:

- **Weak** basic monsters have a vocation rating equal to the party average (or one point below) and no stress boxes (one hit takes them out).
- **Average** basic monsters have a vocation rating equal to the party average (or one point above) and up to two stress boxes.
- **Strong** basic monsters have a vocation rating between 1-2 points above the party average and up to three stress boxes. Some might have a second aspect as well.

MINIONS

Whenever possible, identical basic monsters like to form mobs. Not only does this better ensure their survival, it reduces the workload on the GM. Treat a group of minions as a single creature—instead of making checks individually for each of three thugs, just make one for the whole mob. A group of minions, even of weak monsters, is always of at least average strength. Assume every point of damage the mob takes drops at least one member, with the last survivor inheriting the remaining stress.

An even easier way of handling basic monsters is to simply to treat them as obstacles: use their vocation rating as a passive difficulty, and assume that a successful overcome check takes them out. This is useful when you want a mob of minions to be more of a background feature of the scene than a serious threat.

SAMPLE BASIC MONSTERS

The following sample monsters presume an average party peak vocation of +3.

DIRE WOLF +5

Pack Tactics

1☐ 2☐ 3☐

Dire wolves are efficient pack hunters that will kill anything they can catch. They are usually mottled gray or black, about 9 feet long and weighing some 800 pounds. They prefer to hunt in twos and threes, the flankers keeping the prey at bay while the alpha goes for the throat. A direwolf's sense of smell and their ability to move silently through their habitat is legendary.

SKELETON +3

Skeletons are the animated bones of the dead, mindless automatons that obey the orders of their evil masters.

STRIX SWARM +3

1☐ 2☐

A strix is a kind of vicious mosquito-bird that attacks by dive-bombing its victim and sucking precious blood with its long spiky proboscis. Bad enough on their own, when they come in a swarm they can get really dangerous.

STANDARD

Standard monsters and NPCs are a little more detailed, although still not as much as a player character. Like basic monsters, standard monsters have their concept aspect and their primary vocation rolled into one, but they also have a second aspect – usually representing some sort of special trait they can employ against the party, or a weakness the party can exploit. They also have a list of things they're good at (gaining +2 to their check result) and not so good at (suffering -2 to the result). Standard monsters use the same rules for stress and consequences as player characters, although they generally have fewer consequence slots. Like basic monsters, standard monsters can be broadly rated by how powerful they are relative to the party:

- **Weak** standard monsters have a vocation rating equal to the party average (or one point below), two stress boxes, and one minor consequence slot. They have one thing they are good at and two they are not.
- **Average** standard monsters have a vocation rating equal to the party average (or one point above), up to three stress boxes, and a minor and a moderate consequence slot. Some may have a single stunt as well. They have two things they are good at and two they are not.
- **Strong** standard monsters have a vocation rating between 1-3 points above the party average, up to three stress boxes, a minor, moderate, and major consequence slot, and between one and two stunts. Some may have a third aspect as well. They have two things they are good at and one they are not.

RUNNING STANDARD MONSTERS

Standard monsters aren't just sword fodder – even non-sentient ones have tactics they prefer, and have at least some sense of self-preservation. When the going gets tough, a standard monster should try to quit the field to fight another day.

SAMPLE STANDARD MONSTERS

The following sample monsters presume an average party peak vocation of +3.

GIRALLON +5

Vicious Rager

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Climbing/grabbing, scent.

The Fae

Chaparrans

Laudenians

Narros

Sibharil

Neirryd

Damaskans

Changelings

Sylfaen

Faeries

Hag

Dopplegangers

Satyrs/Fauns

Harpies

Gimfen

Tenenbri

Ogres

Dawnlings

Dojenn

Trolls

Centaurs

Sylphids

Skeggs

Cyclops

Ettin

The Fall

Kythix

Oggrak

Boggs

Pagus

Tilen

Puggs

Chiggoth

Bad At (-2): Moving on the ground.

Rending Claws: If the girallon invokes an advantage related to grappling on a successful attack, it deals +1 damage per arm involved in the grapple (to a maximum of +4).

Girallons are savage, magical cousins of the gorilla, only larger and with an extra set of arms. Clumsy on the ground, girallons prefer to remain hidden in the trees or the undergrowth in ambush, then swoop down, carry off any prey small enough to grab, and return to the high ground to rip the prize to bloody bits.

MANTICORE +4

Plays With His Food

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Mauling, spotting prey.

Bad At (-2): Tactics, resisting temptation.

Spike Volley: The manticore can make a ranged attack against up to three different targets, dealing +1 damage to each on a hit. All targets must be within 30 feet of one another. When it takes a moderate consequence, the manticore uses this attack every round until it runs out of spikes.

A manticore is a large magical beast with a human-like head and the body (and claws) of a lion, with vicious spikes on its tail which the creature can fire at enemies (although it can only fire 24 spikes a day). It has a keen eyes and nose, able to see in the dark, and is particularly attracted by the scent of fear.

SPIDER +3

Silent Spinner

1☐ 2☐ Min

Good At (+2): Moving through webs and branches.

Bad At (-2): Distinguishing targets, impulse control.

Giant spiders have been a staple of fantasy fiction for centuries, and the real thing shows why. Giant spiders regard anything they can catch as food, and prefer their meat to still be living when they suck out its juices. When they can't trap their prey in their sticky webs, they will try to pounce on them or drop on them from above, keeping the hapless creature immobilized with their forelegs while they wrap them up into a cocoon for later consumption. Not all giant spiders are intelligent, but those that live in areas tainted by malevolence tend to be.

MAJOR NPCs

Major NPCs are created exactly the same way as player characters, with their own complement of aspects, vocations, and stunts (although they are not required to tie their vocations to their aspects as PCs are, and they don't have lifepaths). They should have vocation ratings comparable to the PCs (even 2-3 points higher in

the case of major villains), and as many aspects, vocations, stunts, stress boxes and consequences as it takes to make them mechanically interesting (though for the most part, you'll probably want to limit it to three aspects, 2-3 vocations, 2-3 stunts, 2-3 stress boxes, and a minor and moderate consequence).

SOLO MONSTERS

Occasionally, you'll want player characters to take on a single, particularly challenging foe, or a small number of less challenging but still formidable opponents. By the standard rules, a single character is at a distinct disadvantage against a group because the group has more available actions: they can create more advantages, overcome more obstacles, and make more attacks than the lone opponent can. To make any monster or NPC a meaningful challenge for a group, make the following adjustments:

Rank: +1

Stress: Add a second (basic) or third (standard & major) stress track with the same number of boxes as the primary. The monster can still only check one stress box per hit.

Consequences: +1 minor (basic) and +1 moderate (standard & major).

Actions: Basic – 2 actions per round. Standard – +1 action per two additional PCs (2 actions against a party of 3, 3 against a party of 5, etc). Major – One action per PC.

HAZARDS AND ENVIRONMENTS

Occasionally, the characters may come up against a threat that isn't a flesh-and-blood (or even metal, clay, or aether) creature – a trap, a raging fire, a violent earthquake, a giant boulder rushing down the corridor, and so on. The easiest way to handle these environmental hazards is to treat them exactly the same as monsters – basic monsters for the most part, but there's no reason why a more involved hazard couldn't be a standard monster, and a particularly dangerous environment that takes an entire session to traverse might be statted out as a major NPC. A damaging hazardous environment should attack each PC at the end of their turn (allowing them a chance to try to mitigate the worst effects first).

FAE ANATHEMA

When magic first flooded the world, the saturation of enchantment began to reshape the animals and landscape. The dragons arose in imitation of the shape of the dominant life-form of the time, and an indeterminate amount of time later, well after the dragon kings had spawned their own descendant races, a new species appeared without warning from the forests. These new creatures resembled nothing that had come before. They were intelligent and beautiful, with the power and will to form a civilization while the other creations of chaos could only hunt and reproduce. Communities formed, towns were built, and cultures flourished.

The elder fae had emerged.

These creatures were tiny in comparison to the dragons, but reproduced a hundred times faster and were just as ageless and deathless except through unhappy accident. They spoke a single tongue, looked the same, and their traditions were mirrored in every civilization they founded. Yet, though creatures wrought of magic and able to imitate a fraction of the powers of dragons, they were not masters over magic. One day, without warning, every new fae child began to be born as a completely different species. They resembled the original fae in only the broadest ways. This first branch was seen as a deviation or worse, an abomination. They instinctively rejected the ironclad traditions of their elders: even their speech was slightly different. Most of these children were cast out of their communities, and soon began to seek each other out. They shared similar beliefs and in time, they developed a culture aberrant to that of their parents, their idiosyncrasies of speech developing into barely-related languages. As more and more came into the world, the original fae realized a drastic shift in their species was occurring. The members of this first offshoot had sprouted from the fae communities formed in plains and valleys. Shortly thereafter, the fae that took the forests as their home spawned their own unique subspecies. Fae in the mountains formed another.

This entire process took less than a thousand years, but by the next millennium, only one child in ten thousand was born a 'true' fae, and by the following millennium the original species was completely stillborn, the entire culture slowly becoming extinct as accident or quarrel claimed them one by one. Three young species rose to replace them: the laudenians, chaparrans and narros. Unlike the original fae, these three branches were shorter lived and took pride in cultural distinctions from their cousin races, though identical within their own communities. Narros built underground empires and cities atop of mountains while laudenians erected vast and expanding empires in valleys. The chaparrans vanished in the dense forests that birthed them.

These new fae were settled and complacent, but in less than half the time the original fae had reigned on the planet, the laudenians suffered another deviation. This new branch was shorter, with larger ears and a frenzied desire to learn and record what they knew. The laudenians became petrified at the prospect of vanishing like their ancestors. Believing the earth itself was the cause, laudenians employed their power of magic to uproot themselves and take to the sky, leaving their ground cities to their children, the damaskans.

The narros and chaparrans were not immune, and soon started to branch their own deviations. Through this chaos, there did appear a pattern to these mutations: they emerged more often in areas bountiful with life, and regardless of where the parent species settled, as long as the environment was similar, the offspring species was identical across the world. In the time it took the damaskans to emerge as a distinct people, chaparrans—the most varied and widest-ranging of the

new fae—spawned not one, but three different distinct subspecies, each bound to a specific element of the forest (water, earth, and air). Later, these lines broke off still further, amalgamating animal and insect parts into their physiology. Many of these subspecies grew smaller, more isolated to their particular niche, and were harder to categorize and define by outsiders. There were other odd idiosyncrasies. The chaparran branches produced fewer and fewer males with every iteration, with the youngest species being over ninety percent female. The narros, due to their homogenous environment, produced descendant races less frequently, unchanged for millennia before branching to the ogres, which themselves mutated almost immediately thereafter into variations with one eye and two heads. As the chaparran branches became smaller and overwhelmingly female, narros were becoming larger and predominantly male, with the monstrous chiggoth towering over them all. The most devolved creations became known as the fae anathema.

Building upon the foundations of the fleeing laudenians, the damaskans grew fast. They became the most populous of all fae, helped along by their increased reproduction cycle and social structure. While the chaparran anathema vanished into their woods and the narros in their mountains, the damaskan anathema spread quickly over the globe. The first were the skeggs and boggs, then finally the puggs, a locust swarm of fairy vermin that had no purpose beyond eating, rutting, and pillage. But not all the damaskan branches were entirely uncivil; a portion of their population had vanished under the ground, lost their sight and became the tenenbri. Another group begot the gimfen, curious and playful creatures which thus far has not spawned a devolved species of their own, a fact that most gimfen take as proof (together with their lack of technological disruption) that they are the final form of fae to inherit the planet.

Setting aside these last, newer fae branches always emerge less civilized and more perilous than their ancestors. The chaparrans thought they had escaped this, believing their future awaited them in the trees and that the faeries and nariisa were a preferred fate, until these almost angelic creatures descended into harpies and hags and finally the dojenn, one of the ugliest creatures on the planet, appeared from the watery depths. The ultimate narros anathema, a fate feared by even the ogres, is the dumb and massive chiggoth: the builder folk's descendants are fated to grow large and stupid, smashing down the mountain keeps the narros spent their empire's span building. Tenenbri have pushed their dark side into the crevices of their underground labyrinths, but as these subterranean fae begin moving north, their secret has begun to move with them, the kythix. Damaskans, alas, cannot bury their descendants in dungeons or in the depths of oceans. The skeggs are large and mean, but of limited and controllable numbers, but their descendent species of boggs was more intelligent and more numerous, and these in turn have been displaced (when they do not rule over) the growing mass of puggs, an unstoppable feeding frenzy of animalistic fae.

Then there are the tilen. With a complicated history of emergence, this young people has never branched into a descendant species. Tilen always produce pure tilen even when they breed with other species, even the never-changing pagus. Since the tilen look the most like the original fae (according to their claim), their existence may be the solution the fae need to maintain their heritage and prevent the madness of a chaotic future.

THE FALL

The exact date was never recorded, though assumed to have been thousands of years after the emergence of the fae. Darkness washed across a starry night. There was no fire or brimstone, no oracle to herald the end of days, no trumpets blown, no seals broken. A gloom settled with the passing wind and a million fae walked from their homes and families, following an undeniable temptation. They were no longer slaves to whimsy, no longer products of chaos. They embraced a way that would ensure the stability of their lives – an order of things, never changing; masters instead of slaves to enchantment. They were corrupted by the Fall – the arrival of Mengus. This influence could only corrupt what Attricana created, and an army of followers emerged in a single day, a stream of pilgrims to the shores of a distant land, a growing expanse of black glass where the dark star settled. Of all the fae, the chaparrans were the hardest hit. Many years passed before these corrupted fae returned as the pagus, their bodies transformed into identical, perfect killing machines, their might unleashed upon their unwitting former kindred. Unlike the fae birthed from Attricana, those from Ixindar never changed, neither devolving nor evolving. They simply were, are, and will forever be. While Ixindar cannot encourage spawn races, it can twist any existing life to its own purposes. The most feared of these transformations is the dark mirror of the elder fae, the shemjaza. Like the old fae, these creatures were tall and beautiful in their own ways, but obsessed with control and order rather than dance and play. They put forward methods of war while their opponents pondered and argued over celebration and joviality. Mankind now calls them devils or demons, and there is more than a little justification behind those titles.

SPAWN

Most monstrous creatures of the wilds are, of course, ultimately not of fae extraction, but are results of Attricana's influence on the world's natural flora and fauna (and, occasionally, the natural elements themselves). The most common effect of this influence is to expand the creature to tremendous size, similar to the dire beasts that flourished in the epochs prior to the ascent of Man, but occasionally a creature is subjected to some particular magical mutation which gives it unusual supernatural powers. A few rare animals are gifted with limited intelligence in this way, though few have yet developed any sort of civilization or culture. As any mutation caused by magic is invariably passed on to the monster's descendants, over the centuries many of these initial sports have produced true-breeding subspecies. They are usually far more dangerous than their animal forebears, as they have no intrinsic fear of humanity and will not hesitate to attack people when they feel hungry or threatened (or, in the case of some of the more intelligent species, when bored).

MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES

The following is a non-comprehensive list of the mythological creatures that may appear in a canon Amethyst game. Such beings seldom completely resemble the creatures of legend, but are close enough that humans commonly refer to them by the names passed down through history and literature. All creatures are categorized either as natural creatures, spawn, magical constructions, fae, or Ixindar corruptions. Only natural and Ixindar creatures do not generate EDF.

- ***Barghest*** (spawn)
- ***Basilisk*** (spawn)
- ***Centaur*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Changeling*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Chimera*** (spawn)
- ***Cockatrice*** (spawn)
- ***Cyclops*** (fae, narros branch)
- ***Dire/Giant Animal*** (spawn)
- ***Dryad*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Elemental*** (spawn or magical construct)
- ***Ent*** (spawn)
- ***Ettin*** (fae, narros branch)
- ***Fairy*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Gargoyle*** (spawn)
- ***Ghost*** (Ixindar)
- ***Ghoul*** (Ixindar)
- ***Golem*** (magical construct)
- ***Gorgon*** (spawn)
- ***Griffon*** (spawn)
- ***Hag*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Harpy*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Hippogriff*** (spawn)
- ***Homunculus*** (magical construct)
- ***Hydra*** (spawn)
- ***Kraken*** (spawn)
- ***Lycanthrope***
- ***Manticore*** (spawn)
- ***Minotaur*** (spawn)
- ***Mummy*** (Ixindar)
- ***Naiad/Nereid/Nymph*** (fae, chaparran branch; commonly known as '***Neriisa***')
- ***Ogre*** (fae, narros branch)
- ***Pegasus*** (spawn)
- ***Pixie*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Roc*** (spawn)
- ***Satyr*** (fae, chaparran branch)
- ***Sea Serpent*** (spawn)
- ***Shadow/Specter*** (Ixindar)
- ***Skeleton*** (Ixindar)
- ***Sphinx*** (spawn)
- ***Tarasque*** (Ixindar)
- ***Troll*** (fae, narros branch)
- ***Unicorn*** (spawn)
- ***Vampire*** (Ixindar; commonly known as '***Ghulath***')
- ***Warg*** (spawn)
- ***Wight*** (Ixindar)

BOGG

- *Wraith* (Ixindar)
- *Wyvern* (spawn)
- *Yeti* (spawn)
- *Zombie* (Ixindar)

MONSTER LORE

As a rule, any character who has an aspect which could reasonably cover knowledge of a creature type, its favored terrain or habits, or who has a vocation at +2 or better related to that creature, knows everything relevant about the creature and can use that knowledge freely to create advantages against it. Characters without this specialized knowledge (a vocation at +1 or lower, or no vocation) must make an overcome check against the listed difficulty for the piece of information, or see it in use, in order to use it for advantages.

BOGG

Boggs are not the most numerous of the kaddog (as the major damaskan anathema are colloquially called), but they are by far the most disturbing. Before the puggs emerged, the boggs were considered the largest growing threat in Canam. They were numerous enough to be a hazard on their own and just smart enough to realize stealth and numbers prevailed against smarter and tougher enemies. Although it is believed boggs came from the larger harrier skeggs, there have been reports of boggs emerging directly from damaskan roots. Skeggs are often chiefs among bogg tribes, especially when a bogg mother has not been established, and individual boggs have in turn been known to set themselves up as the leaders of pugg swarms. The common trait of a bogg is its perpetual smile and hideously distended mouth. With three times as many teeth as a human, the bogg can show nearly them all when it grins, and does so often. Boggs' pain receptors are wired differently from other species, releasing a flood of endorphins and adrenaline when the creature is hurt. This may explain their giggling laughter even when impaled upon an enemy's sword.

BOGG LORE

+1: Boggs delight in both giving and receiving pain, and the saying 'That Which Does Not Kill Us Makes Us Stronger' is particularly apt when applied to them. Any physical harm that does not kill them outright makes them more dangerous.

+2: Each bogg nest contains at least one bogg mother. This grotesquely obese female bogg is pregnant one hundred percent of the time, with between four and six uteri and an incubation period of twelve weeks. Each pregnancy produces between four and six bogg whelps or puggs (puggs born to bogg mothers are usually eaten, but a few are allowed to live as slave labor).

BOGG SCABB
(Average Basic Monster)

1☐ 2☐

Boggs don't bother much about strategy. Their preferred method of fighting is to launch themselves at the enemy and attempt to tear it to pieces with their claws and teeth, although they will at least make some attempts to maneuver in combat, unlike their pugg cousins. While they are in no hurry to die, pain is no deterrent to them – in fact, it makes them fight with even more ferocity.

BOGG THROWER
(Average Basic Monster)

1☐ 2☐

Bogg throwers are larger and smarter than the average scabb. They achieve this from puberty, which is a sudden and uncomfortable affair. A bogg thrower will let the scabbs or puggs (if they have them) run into combat first, approaching cautiously while hurling its axes at any target available. If forced, the thrower will join melee combat but only if there are a few other boggs there first.

BOGG RAKE
(Average Standard Monster)

Sneaky Little Masochist

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Sneak attacks; resisting poison.

Bad At (-2): Resisting opportunities to use poison; retreat.

Foul Concoction: The bogg rake can make an advantage check to apply some sort of noxious substance to its weapon in the same turn as it makes an attack.

While other species develop the art of stealth as a means to avoid getting devoured by something meaner than them, the bogg rake uses it as a tool to satisfy its urge for torture, sneaking up close to an enemy and then stabbing it with daggers coated in (usually) the bogg's own body effluvia. The bogg will then stick as close to the victim as possible and giggle while the poison goes to work.

BOGG SPITTER
(Average Standard Monster)

Disgusting Little Masochist

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Blowguns; resisting poison.

Bad At (-2): Resisting opportunities to use poison; melee combat.

Foul Concoction: The bogg spitter can make an advantage check to apply some sort of noxious substance to its weapon in the same turn as it makes an attack.

Bogg spitters are mature boggs, like rakes. Spitters continuously find new and even more revolting substances to coat their weapons in. A bogg spitter wastes no time in firing poisoned and diseased darts at its target, prefer-

ring fluids that cause dizziness or loss of balance to make it easier to keep their distance.

BOGG MOTHER
(Strong Standard Monster)
Big and Hungry Masochist

1☐ 2☐ 3☐ Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Grabbing; swallowing things whole.

Bat At (-2): Any form of locomotion.

Ham Hands: Any creature that the bogg mother hits with a melee attack is automatically Grappled.

Bogg mothers, much like ant queens, spend most of their lives immobilized and pregnant. Their psychotic children have the responsibility for keeping them fed and clean, which means that most of the time they are ravenous and filthy. A bogg mother is adept at grabbing the nearest vaguely edible-looking thing and swallowing it in one gulp – puggs and unwary adventurers are a common victim of this casual carnivorism. Despite having no actual maternal instincts whatsoever, bogg mothers have been known to go into a berserker rage when witnessing boggs or puggs killed by hands other hand their own.

DOJENN

Chaparrans were proud of their pedigree. Their descendant races were not massive ugly monsters with stone appendages or feral rodents devouring everything they could wrap their grotesquely oversized mouths over, but became beautiful, angelic creatures sought after by lustful mortals. Even when taking on the attributes of their environment, these descendant races had flair and artistry in how they expressed these features. Their echalogical echoes were represented with respect and worship, called centaurs, nymphs and faeries. This aspiration died when the dojenn appeared, rising from the depths of rivers, lakes, and oceans to feed upon drowning victims before the water claimed them. Dojenn are the dark reflection of everything the chaparrans had hoped to become.

Another noted difference between the dojenn and their cousin races is their appearance. Dojenn are one of the most feared creatures to look at in the world. They have lifeless eyes over a jaw of needle-like incisors. They can disengage their jaws and swallow creatures twice the size of their own head, and have been known to do so to live prey, using their long teeth to keep food from escaping. As time progresses, these monsters are appearing more and more, migrating farther inland, following rivers deeper towards established and unsuspecting nations. They have already started attacking Baruch Malkut and York, striking during the night and pulling dock workers before an alarm can be raised. Like all fae anathema, the dojenn are fated to be the ultimate legacy of the chaparrans unless something even more monstrous should emerge.

DOJENN LORE

+0: Dojenn prey on the innocent and complacent, and take joy in the terror of others. They have no qualms in devouring both fae and humans, with marked preference for their own cousin races like faeries and nariisa. It has been suspected that the dojenn have eliminated several faerie branches, forcing these innocent creatures from their waters and woods.

+1: Dojenn scales Ooze a Toxic Secretion which burns the flesh of dryfoots on contact, but it evaporates quickly in air and washes off just as quickly in water.

+2: The dojenn are an offshoot from an earlier chaparran deviation; a merfolk-like aquatic fae species called the jeilynn. The dojenn systematically destroyed each jeilynn home, and the vast oceans now contain little intelligent life other than scattered dojenn tribes and the occasional spawn creature. Rumors still persist some jeilynn have survived, hiding from their progeny.

+3: All dojenn most ever see are female. The males may still be visible as tiny, remora-like parasitic creatures that attached themselves to the female's underside and merge with her for life.

DOJENN MATARK
(Strong Standard Monster)
Toxic Grappler

1☐ 2☐

Good At (+2): Swimming; tendril grabs.

Bad At (-2): Finishing prey quickly; fighting at the water's surface.

Caustic Excretion: The dojenn deals 1 damage to any creature that hits it with a melee attack or that it successfully grapples.

Dojenn prefer quick strikes to pull prey into their environment to continue the attack. When in the open, they don't conceal their presence, attacking openly and visibly, letting their revolting forms dissuade enemies from establishing a defense. The dojenn immediately rush into combat with the first creature they see and attack viciously, pulling enemies deeper with their feeder tendrils and drowning or strangling them while their toxic jelly eats away at the victim's flesh.

DRAGON

The most iconic symbol of fantasy, when the world of magic swept over the globe, dragons became a confirmation more than a realization, the final evidence that fantasy had invaded reality. Unlike many other fables, legends of dragons can be found in every corner of every nation in history, the symbol of both the greatest wisdom and the greatest evil. Across the globe, they took many shapes. Some walked upon two legs, some four, or even six. Many twisted in coils with snake-like bodies through the clouds while others slumped across beds of gold, silver, and skulls like lumbering cows. Winged or not, most dragons of legend could fly. Some devoured maidens, staving off a greater appetite for villages offering the sacrifice. Some fell to lances wielded by saints or squires while others died by the hands of their own tricks, fooled by clever wizards. Throughout the legends, dragons were either dumb lizards or keepers of

great knowledge and magic. Some brought fire and disease while others water and plentiful crops. The sight of a dragon in the skies rained fear on everyone below. Their deaths heralded both ages of wisdom and despair. Their images upon coats, crests, and colors signified a country's dominance over the monster or their reverence for it.

Modern dragons were exultant over the respect they had received in their absence, regardless of the source. They were shocked at the amount of detail that had survived and the accuracy or liberties taken both condemning and glorifying them. Some were especially surprised at the singular attitudes dragons would take dependent on the nation. Rarely would dragons be represented in different lights within a single culture, causing no end of disagreement regarding their actual nature – how their bodies moved, what powers they controlled, or even how many toes they had. Nevertheless, to many people, defacing an image of a dragon regardless of its character was considered insolent and unlawful. The dragons' elevation to godhood was an obvious transition to some. Most dragons insist that such worship is undeserved, but even the noblest dragons have a streak of vanity in them, and few despise the adulation they receive. In one form or another, almost every dragon from human literature is represented on Earth, from the grotesque soot-belching eaters of the young, to the erudite masters of fire and water. Even the aberrations with many heads and tails and legs can be found, though somewhat rarer. Their origins are uncertain, even to themselves; it is suspected that Amethyst, the first and greatest dragon, created them from the dinosaurs who roamed the ancient Earth, but this is by no means confirmed. Initially, four dragon kings emerged. Each controlled a section of Earth. Lazarus of Grace, controller of the West and Shaka of Dawn, ruler of the East, remain the only known surviving dragon kings, though Goch of Wrath, one of the seven Azhi lords, claims to have been a dragon king at one point. Lazarus believes, although he omitted such a conclusion in his book, that Jahada of Glass is that fourth, taken by Amethyst as a mate. Her fate remains a mystery.

Soon after the kings appeared, many more dragons emerged. The Yok-ani, born from Shaka's will, were the first, though with their slow reproductive cycle, they quickly became the fewest (only nine exist in the modern day). Over the rest of the world, holy, noble, and guardian dragons fell under the umbrella title of 'archons'. Later, corruption from Ixindar claimed its first victims; from Goch came (whether as her offspring or her corrupted minions, none are sure) the Seven Lords of Ažhi, the first fallen dragons. Soon after, more dragons of hideous disposition appeared, including the cannibalistic death dragons and the cursed cancer dragons; these were feared and cursed by the name of 'typhox'. Many dragons, including Lazarus, believe that it was a beacon from Goch that originally summoned Mengus to Terros, and that the despoiled dragon king has within her hearts an evil not claimed by Ixindar.

CLASSIFICATIONS

There are three types of dragons: archon ('good' dragons, although by a dragon's definition of 'good'), typhox (corrupted or cursed dragons bound to Ixindar), and neutral dragons (elemental dragons, who largely serve their own interests, and yok-ani dragons, who take no sides in any conflict on philosophical grounds). All have decidedly different roles and cultures, but all of them are proud: any truly ancient dragon should bear a title appropriate to their nature. Among these three types are several unique individuals of great power who stand out from the rest. The dragon kings stand above even these. Any dragon given a name and title in an Amethyst publication is generally so powerful that they should not appear as an opponent in combat.

All dragons in Amethyst bear more than striking resemblance to dragons in literature, both modern and mythological. The background enchantment permeating through history influenced later myths and legends to describe the creatures, all the while fooling those writers into thinking they created something original. Imagination holds no bounds and many descriptions departed often from the reality of the true creatures living millions of years earlier.

DRAGON STATISTICS

Dragons are unique creatures. While different lineages have certain elements in common, differences in age, knowledge and intrinsic strength make for vastly different creatures, even for those hatched from the same clutch. A dragon encounter should be individually customized: even the weakest dragon is a major solo monster with a rank in the Dragon vocation at least 2 above the party's top vocation, and at least 3 stunts (one given below, one determined by the dragon's classification, and at least one other).

Every dragon is a powerful spellcaster, but unlike lesser creatures, they do not need to prepare spells or require totems. The words of Pleroma are burned onto their skins, and the most powerful dragons are branded with hundreds of words wrapping around their wings and arms. Only the dragon scribing them can read them, making transfer or copying impossible. All dragons have this feature, though some display them more visibly than others. In practice, give each dragon a number of spell aspects appropriate to their nature equal to double the number of party members. They can cast these spells freely without preparation, and automatically succeed on any advantage action to conjure a different spell (though they must still take the requisite action). Dragons are not limited by disciplines, save that only typhox dragons can cast Ixindar spells.

All dragons also have the following stunt:

Breath Weapon: The dragon can invoke its concept aspect to make an area attack against a single zone. All creatures in that zone defend individually against the same attack value. The attack deals damage of the type appropriate to the dragon's nature.

ARCHON DRAGONS

The title of 'archon dragons' applies to the three broad classifications of holy, guardian, and noble dragons – categorized not by their powers and nature, but by their role in draconic society. Holy dragons are the keepers of draconic faith and mysticism, a complex discipline of which lesser beings are fundamentally incapable of understanding more than a fragment: their wisdom is great, but frequently cryptic to mortals, and they are renowned for being long-winded. Guardian dragons are the warrior class, defenders of the dragon way of life and the lower creatures under their care: they are all expert strategists and deadly combatants in both body and spell. Noble dragons are administrators and adjudicators, the bureaucracy of dragonkind: they all have formidable minds and are more focused spellcasters than the holy dragons, but they have a tendency to focus on their own areas of interest or expertise, which is not a problem for dragons but may be difficult for the rare mortals they interact with.

A holy dragon's breath weapon is usually breathe a beam of radiant light. Guardians buffet their enemies with a cone of solid, hurricane-force wind. Noble dragons are more varied: most breathe fire, frost or acid, but some have been known to breathe more unusual substances, such as sand, iron filings, or a swarm of conjured locusts – whatever best fits the dragon's personality.

Archon dragons should rarely (if ever) appear as opponents, as they refuse to get involved in mortal conflicts: if attacked, they will use powerful spells to confound their opponents and simply vanish. Archons summoned by magic are always presumed to be just powerful enough to accomplish whatever task they have been summoned for without difficulty.

CANCER DRAGONS

The ugliest of them all, cancer dragons live their lives wracked in agony. They cannot die from any disease but have no way to defend themselves from any infection. They are receptive to any ailment afflicting any creature. Acid and poison courses through their very blood, their eyes are bloodshot and ooze puss. Many archon dragons sympathize with these pathetic creatures unable to rest or even sleep. This constant suffering has turned the dragon's disposition bitter and spiteful, wishing only to inflict their pain unto others. The only time the misery subsides is when the creature transfers disease or poison to a victim.

Cancer dragons breathe a fetid cloud of disease. Additionally, all cancer dragons have the following stunt:

Infectious Catalyst: The dragon gains +2 to advantage and attack checks when afflicting a creature with a disease, and can always actively oppose efforts by their victims to recover from any disease they impose.

CANCER DRAGON LORE

+1: Cancer dragons are among the most revolting, loathsome creatures to walk the earth. Their enormous bodies are carriers for every malady known to man or fae, and the oldest of their kind have complete and utter mastery over the maledictions that afflict their enemies. A cancer dragon's breath is a disturbing mixture of bone shrapnel, diseased fluids, and gas, most part of the cancer dragon at some point before expelling them.

+2: It is a common misconception that all cancer dragons are Ixindar-bound creatures; they are not. They were originally desert dwelling elemental dragons that were cursed by Goch. They are still Attricana-bound creatures, only suffering from a curse from Ixindar. Simply being in an area where a cancer dragon is or has been is hostile to a creature's health. Vegetation withers, animals grow tumors, and the ground oozes with rot.

+3: Cancer dragons live in hot climates and seldom in areas that are cold or damp. Their skin carries a natural bluish tint often marred by scars and lesions. A few cancer dragons, old and near decrepit, have killed enough and infected enough that they have finally vanquished the pain in their bodies, but they remain infectious and their blood is as toxic as ever. Avoid any attack from a cancer dragon which can penetrate skin; an infection will surely set.

+4: On a few rare occasions, a few sympathetic souls have used intense magic to cure a cancer dragon of their afflictions. If they survive the ordeal, the pain passes and the contagious blood purifies, allowing them to vanish and live peacefully in solitude from then on. Few cancer dragons have undergone the practice and even fewer have survived it: most will go to any lengths to avoid the treatment, fearing change more than pain. Those that emerge healthy find a new zeal for life. The stains of their sins remain, however, and those cancer dragons turning away from darkness have few allies on either side.

DEATH DRAGONS

Despite many assumptions, death dragons are not undead. They embraced Ixindar and dedicated their souls to its power, pursuing its ability to decay rather than create. When Mengus ceased to have any interest in necromancy, the death dragons – until then thought to be her favored children – were outcast. They possess astounding negative energy. They can control undead and cast necrotic spells. This effect decays their flesh and rots their souls. Death dragons look thin, with barely an ounce of fat and thin muscles hanging off their bones. Even their wings are pitted and frayed: however, the unchanging power of Ixindar keeps them as strong and deadly as they were in their prime. They cannot consume any food unless it has been dead at least a week. Anywhere death lurks in abundance, you will find them.

Death dragons breathe a miasma of necromantic magic that atrophies limbs and drains the target's will to live. As a creature of Ixindar, neither their presence, their magic, nor their attacks cause disruption. Additionally, all death dragons have the following stunt:

Grave Call: Any dead creature in the same zone as the dragon automatically gains the ***Undead*** aspect as long as it is in the same zone as the dragon at the start of the dragon's turn.

DEATH DRAGON LORE

+1: Death dragons will always be near areas with high concentration of undeath, as simply being near the dragon acts as a catalyst for nearby carrion or the corpses of the creatures the dragon kills to rise and obey their master.

+2: Of all the typhox dragons, the death dragon is the most magically adept, if only in a single form. Though the dragons did not create the discipline of necromancy, they are now, undoubtedly, the masters of it.

ELEMENTAL DRAGONS

Many dragons rejected the whisper of Mengus, but neither did they adhere to the side of Amethyst. Most were concerned only for their own affairs, maintaining strict neutrality in the conflict except when it spilled into their own domains. These dragons exhibited every conceivable shape and power, but the majority reflected in some way a connection to the natural elements of the world. There are dozens of unique lineages among the elemental dragons, most with only two or three members across the world. They exhibit no particular moral proclivities, beyond their typical draconic arrogance and self-centered nature. Only one lineage, the frost dragons, has been particularly prevalent in their interactions with the mortal world, and unfortunately they tend to have some of the nastiest dispositions: many lower beings classify them with the typhox dragons, which frost dragons find supremely offensive.

Elemental dragons' breath weapons are as many and varied as the dragons themselves, but the most common are fire, frost, lightning, and poison. Additionally, all elemental dragons have the following stunt:

Elemental Command: The dragon is immune to damage from the same element as its breath weapon, and gains +2 to checks made to magically control or alter that element.

FALLEN DRAGONS

Most dragons of legend slain by brave knights or braver squires tell of fire dragons. Their scales are either dark blood-red or green as ancient bronze, and they bellow smoke and flame with every breath. The closest match

to them in the modern age is the fallen dragon. The fallen were the first corrupted dragons, loyal followers of their greatest, Goch of Wrath. Unlike the repellent death and cancer dragons, fallen dragons are beautiful, with uniform scales and proud manes of gold or silver. Their teeth interlock without a gap or chip and they never display a stain or smudge upon their skin. They are the parallel of holy dragons, equally as ravishing to the eyes. Their voices are deep and commanding. They refuse to sully themselves by acting like undomesticated or uncultured monsters. Indeed, they believe themselves to be fair in their actions and just in their role as the most powerful creatures on the planet. They consider themselves to be the highest authority and superior to all others – a responsibility not to be taken lightly. A fallen dragon will gladly accept the worship of an inferior being and feel perfectly entitled to it; and when these followers march to war, they are the only force on Earth that can say without a doubt that god is on their side.

Fallen dragons rule over Ažhi Dahaka in Canam and often fight with the shemjaza for control over the pagus. Because of this rivalry, few of these dragons live near Ixindar, preferring to stake their claims elsewhere. They strive for dominance, resulting in more attacks from fallen dragons on civilized lands than from any other typhox. They prefer controlling land to dungeons or keeps, and will rarely be found underground or hiding behind castle walls. Fallen dragons will attempt to control everything they can see. That which they cannot outright command, they will destroy.

All fallen dragons breathe fire, although the color of the fire is not always uniform – the oldest and most powerful do not even breathe visible flame, but merely open their mouths and incinerate anything in front of them. Additionally, all fallen dragons have the following stunt:

Sibilant Whispers: Anyone who hears the dragon speak must make an immediate opposed mental defense check or be targeted by the ***Dominated*** boost. This does not require an action on the dragon's part.

FALLEN DRAGON LORE

+1: Fallen dragons have absolute control over flame. Where they go, mundane fires flare to follow them, and dry kindling may burst into flame of its own accord. The ground beneath their massive bodies is scorched black. Mages beware to use fire spells where a fallen dragon is, for fear that the wyrm will turn the magic against its wielder.

+2: Pagus in Canam are almost always under the direct control of a fallen dragon, and only rarely are led by their own unbound chieftains. The fallen will usually dominate every living creature in a massive area around its lair.

+3: The fallen were the original typhox dragons, and have always been the most powerful. They loathe the shemjaza for some long-past transgression but will rarely face them directly, choosing more subtle means to dispatch them.

THE SEVEN LORDS OF AZHI

These powerful fallen dragons rule northeastern Canam with iron claws. In canon *Amethyst*, they are the most powerful of all evil dragons. There should never be a point at which a fight against them should be anything less than grueling: the GM is encouraged to cheat shamelessly to ensure that they can always challenge any party.

***Baenis of Gorge* (*Fallen Dragon* +7):** Baenis sits bloated on his treasure, growing fatter on the rich livestock his pagus followers bring for him. Baenis is huge, but also slow and cumbersome. He stopped being able to fly long ago. He gorges on food every day with an insatiable appetite. In his prime he feasted on elves, giants, and even other dragons. Today, if his pagus don't feed him, Baenis will feast on them.

The Sin of Gluttony: Baenis can take an action to consume one ally to gain +2 to his next action.

***Balaur of Debauch* (*Fallen Dragon* +8):** Balaur follows neither logic nor reason. It is hermaphroditic, capable of shifting its sex and preference on a whim dependant on daily desires. It only acts out of passion and instinct and never out of rationale. Balaur desires continued physical gratification and the desire for external stimulus. It craves destruction and lusts for beauty. Balaur enlists slavers to capture those of beauty of various sexes from various species and often has its way when assuming their form. Balaur is even rumored to have sent emissaries to purchase slaves from Baruch Malkut (without their knowledge as to the source of funds). It lusts over the youth, the striking, and the otherwise unattainable. It cares not for emotion and prefers only personal indulgence. These slaves never live more than a year before Balaur grows bored and slays them in the most violent ways possible.

The Sin of Lust: Balaur gains +1 to its check when using *Sibilant Whispers* to dominate creatures that would normally be attracted to its current gender, regardless of what shape it occupies.

***Goch of Wrath* (*Fallen Dragon* +10):** Goch feeds on violence, fear, and anger. Goch, the oldest and most powerful fallen dragon, prefers to allow enemies to destroy each other. Using her unique complement of abilities, she can inspire rage and violent actions in others, corrupting them to commit the most despicable acts. Goch is far older and powerful than the other Ažhi Seven but is often lumped in with them, a categorization she despises.

The Sin of Rage: Goch can always invoke her own consequences. Additionally, when she invokes any moderate, major, or extreme consequence for a bonus, the value of the bonus is equal to half the consequence's soak value instead of +2.

***Lindis of Avarice* (*Fallen Dragon* +8):** This fallen dragon spends every moment searching for more treasure. She ravages narros mines, attacks wandering travelers, and ambushes mage towers. She considers the taking of wealth of higher importance to causing destruction,

and Lindis will often be very selective in her attacks, even sparing the lives of her victims in exchange for all their magic and wealth, especially if her attack may blemish or damage possible loot. No matter how much Lindis acquires, it is never enough. She is not arrogant as Verkelen and has the most guarded lair of any dragon known. Her dungeon is littered with symbols of varying magical potency with layers of multiple traps over many levels.

The Sin of Greed: Whenever an enemy fails to overcome a trap Lindis has set to protect her treasures, she is aware of it and gains a free invocation of that trap's aspect, regardless of the distance between her and the target.

***Lotan of Scorn* (*Fallen Dragon* +8):** Lotan is vainglorious. His over-inflated ego often nets him trouble as he brazenly strides into enemy lands, where he is often forced to retreat from greater foes. Legend claims Lotan lives in a great castle, though its location is a mystery. From a bed of gold, he commands others to do his bidding. He believes himself too important to go into combat, but will if a single enemy challenges him. Several opponents have tried but none have succeeded, increasing Lotan's already bloated self-image.

The Sin of Pride: Lotan's opponents cannot grant each other free invocations for purposes of making attacks against him.

***Verkelen of Spite* (*Fallen Dragon* +8):** This dragon hates all other dragons and intelligent creatures and covets all they own. Verkelen assumes the world belongs to him and takes whatever he wishes. He is the last creature anyone wishes to make deals with, as he never keeps his side of a bargain. Verkelen keeps a large cadre of creatures as personal servants.

The Sin of Envy: Verkelen's enemies cannot use free invocations of gear aspects on attacks against him.

***Zilant of Indolence* (*Fallen Dragon* +7):** Zilant is a lazy beast. He wishes to do nothing but sleep and eat. He believes he has done enough for the cause of evil and wishes just to be left alone. Every single time he closes his eyes, he sleeps for a century. When he awakens, he finds quick and easy prey for a feast. His dungeon supports an array of defensive battlements, making him difficult to slay. He never initiates an attack, believing it uses far too much energy, though will still defend his lair from assault. He also sleeps with one eye open and as light as an elk. He may be too lazy to commit evil acts but finds good acts an even greater waste of energy.

The Sin of Sloth: Moving more than one zone when Zilant is present always requires an overcome check, regardless of whether there are other obstacles or not.

YOK-ANI DRAGONS

The yok-ani were the first dragons born after the dragon kings, and bore more than a passing resemblance to the four that came before them (and indeed, to Amethyst himself). They most closely resemble the dragons of Asian mythology: wingless and sinuous, swimming through the air like snakes with no obvious means of support. Their scales are usually bright and colorful, and their mane-like crests resemble jeweled crowns. They are among the most powerful spellcasters ever seen upon this Earth, in either age, surpassed only by the dragon kings. Unlike other dragons, yok-ani do not claim titles.

Only nine yok-ani were ever born, and none has ever been killed or subverted by Ixindar. The only reason they are not classified among the archon dragons is their strict adherence to neutrality. They count themselves as the world's ultimate diplomats. They even believe if the dark gate and its denizens remained in their own land, they could be allowed to exist in peace. In wars, yok-ani refuse to take sides, preferring to maintain the peace when finally forced to intervene; this they only do when an ongoing conflict (such as that between the narros and the tenenbri) becomes so bitter and protracted that genocide becomes a very real threat. When this occurs, the dragons use their magic to stop the fighting and force the warring leaders to a truce. Breaking such a peace treaty brings immediate and conclusive, though rarely terminal, retribution.

Of the nine, only one yok-ani dragon resides in Canam: ***Genai-Dilong***, after whom the echan township within the walls of Angel is named. It is said that it was by his power alone that the refugee fleet was able to make the crossing across the turbulent ocean to the shores of western Canam, and that he now resides somewhere within the temple at the center of the town; there have only been a handful of confirmed sightings in the intervening centuries, however. For a mortal to see a yok-ani once in their life is thought to be a sign of the greatest good luck: two sightings are considered a sign of lifelong blessing. No lesser being, not even the

eldest laudenian, has ever seen a yok-ani three times in a lifetime.

Yok-ani dragons' breath weapons are not fixed and can be any element, substance, or energy imaginable: most simply exhale pure magic. All yok-ani dragons are too powerful to be meaningful opponents, even if one could be forced into conflict. If attacked, they have enough magical power at their disposal to halt the aggressor in their tracks with the merest glance, or to teleport them to the far side of the planet if they persist.

HAG

Unfortunately, the image of witch and hag are often mixed. Where one can simply be a user of magic with a connection to nature, the other is a descendant species of chaparran, which has a renowned distaste for company and personal hygiene. The discovery of these creatures was not made immediately, and their origin is still disputed. As only female hags have ever been sighted, nobody knows what a male's abilities are (or even what they might look like).

Baba Yaga: Another piece of folklore, baba yaga is a forest spirit almost as devoutly connected to the woods as nymphs, though not being bound to any specific location or tree. Although not pleasant to look at, she has been known to impart some wisdom to travelers who come upon her, though she is just as likely to kill the one asking. However, baba yaga will not immediately kill all that approach her. If they have a talent she can exploit, she may impart her wisdom at a steep cost (and may still attempt to kill the querent afterwards). Legend has it, the only way to ensure survival when dealing with baba yaga is to maintain proper manners, be as polite as possible, and not wince when looking upon her face. Though folklore believes there is only one baba yaga, there are several scattered in various places throughout the world. The first common sign of their appearance is the small hut formed of natural wood that sits atop four footlike living trees. One account claims the trees can uproot, allowing the cabin to move on its own accord to a new location.

Banshee: Traditionally, banshees, or bean nighes, were harbingers of death, but seldom assisted in the shuffling of souls to the afterlife. They appeared as omens from the underworld or otherworld (depending on the source). Like many myths, they were corrupted by other religions to be portents of evil. In reality, they appear as enchanted singers with melodic voices when an important chaparran is about to die. They have also appeared among other fae nations when significant figures are near to passing. The more banshees that appear, the more eminent the death. Because of their wisdom, they are often sought after as oracles, though their knowledge is limited to the moment and circumstances of a person's death, and they are loathe to divulge this information to any (and will never divulge it plainly to the person in question). Banshees appear in various clothes in various states, with long and short hair, as ugly hags or as beautiful faeries, hidden and reclusive or open and hostile. As their mythology is so varied, so are their abilities.

Sheela-na-gig: These are often seen guarding gates and protecting areas of powerful magic. When guarding something not belonging to them, they do so out of some undisclosed obligation. Though many are twisted in how they protect their territories, not all are absolute-

ly evil, just inherently selfish. They have insatiable sexual appetites and will often change shape into just about anything to satisfy their urges. They adore appearing as beautiful creatures to trespassers, tempting them to their death.

IRON SONS COMPANY

The Iron Sons is the largest techan free-company in Canam and possibly the world. Very few people outside of the Iron Sons' ranks knows how old the company is or who originally founded it, although it is believed that the current operating general is not its first commander or even its second.

Though virtually every community apart from Angel and York thinks of them as a terrorist organization, the Iron Sons take contracts from all bastions and – occasionally – from echan nations. They don't care who pays, and their success rate is extremely high. The Iron Sons continue to spread their fingers across the land, operating independent cells in several bastions and in nearly two dozen stationary and roaming bases across the continent. Their membership is wide, comprising of humans from every walk of life. Though many members would prefer taking assignments that allow them to act like heroes, all of them are willing to swallow that preference for a steady paycheck. Most of them have contempt for the fantasy world and believe what they are doing is patriotic for the human race.

IRON SONS LORE

+3: The current general of the Iron Sons is a man known only as Chauk. He has personally commanded several contracts and possesses such high-level intelligence on bastion technology and knows so many of the bastions' darker secrets that the same bastions which hire him have also posted bounties on his head. As such, he has not been seen outside of his inner circle in several years.

IRON SONS CORPSMAN
(Average Basic NPC)

1☐ 2☐

The corpsman is well aware of his fragility on the battlefield and will keep as far from melee combat as possible, firing his assault rifle as close to long range as he can. If enemies close to within charging range, the corpsman is likely to flee.

IRON SONS GRENADIER
(Average Standard NPC)

Bring Out the Big Guns

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Automatic weapons; explosives.

Bad At (-2): Melee combat; maneuvering.

Indirect Fire: The grenadier can ignore one obstacle related to cover when making a ranged attack.

Like most techans, the grenadier wishes to avoid close combat, preferring to use his grenade launcher on clumps of enemies, his assault rifle on individual targets.

IRON SONS SERGEANT
(Strong Standard NPC)

Sir, Yes Sir!

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Shooting; tactics.

Bad At (-2): Dealing with disruption.

On Your Feet, Soldier!: The sergeant can invoke ***Sir, Yes Sir!*** to return one ally that has conceded or been taken out to the fight. The ally returns to combat in the same condition they were when they left it (except not dead, if they were 'killed').

The sergeant is prepared for combat, with spare clips and a weapon reinforced against disruption. He is there to back up his men and ensure their survivability. Like all techans, he wants to remain out of melee combat but will not run from enemies unless his men have also broken off. Even still, he's not an idiot and will always keep his soldiers in front of him.

KODIAK

Kodiaks are one of the few spawn races to emerge in modern Earth with any semblance of a culture. They began as simple folk in the frigid north, slowly developing a social structure, farming skills, and the first signs of a spoken tongue. Their massive size encouraged a preference for violence and a brutal first encounter with the skeggs affirmed it. While a few communities have grown in size and civility, others have degraded back to feral ways, retaining enough intelligence to plot their attacks on the unsuspecting. The region in which a band originates determines its proclivities. Most live wild, ignoring the outside world and ignored in turn. Those kodiaks bordering on Fargon forged a trading relationship, bartering animal hides for weapons and education. The narros dealing with the kodiaks also hoped their civilized neighbors would beget a safe border and an eventual host of unstoppable warriors ready to rally if the narros were called to battle. Unfortunately, some of these kodiaks took this knowledge of weapons and went to war immediately against their own brothers as well as the skeggs. After the skeggs were pushed back by the modernized mass of muscle and steel, the victors continued their blood rage until they were killed or ran out of food. A few bands, smaller and less savage, moved west of the mountains as far south as the lands bordering Xixion, where they have become almost civilized. Although kodiaks have rarely been seen southeast of Quinox, the rumors of their migration grow each year. They are often sought after as bodyguards, thugs, or as savage warlords on the battlefield. Regardless of their role, they stand the tallest and instill the greatest fear on those that see their eyes.

KODIAK LORE

+1: Kodiaks have wide, trunk torsos but are still humanoid and easily differentiated from the bears they came from. Few people can tell the males and females apart. Kodiaks don't need to hibernate but they do eat massive amounts of food, nearly four times any other creature. They have no table manners.

+2: There are three distinct subspecies of kodiak. The best-known are the hulking brutes that most resemble the natural Kodiak grizzly bear after which the species was named. A smaller variety, more akin to the smaller coastal brown bear, is found primarily in the Seliquam valley and peninsular rainforest. The least known is a tiny population of throwbacks who are barely distinguishable from the animals they spawned from, and are revered as the closest thing the kodiak religion has to saints. The eldest of these, said to be as old as the present age, is rumored to reside atop a mountain somewhere in the far east of Canam.

+3: Kodiaks have developed a culture in their short span of time. Little is known about the kodiak religion. They worship several gods unique to them. Their major deities include Fressen, the maiden of winter and slumber. She attempted a mortal life with a kodiak shaman and was punished for her actions with the death of her lover. She birthed Chronzia, the kodiak devil, creeping from the north in the form of a colossal glacier. Fressen returned to her realm to rejoin with her other half, her twin brother Kwuoia, who is always silent and spends the entirety of his existence planting and growing trees.

KODIAK BRUTE
(Strong Standard Monster)

Big Claws and Teeth

Additionally, the kodiak brute has one of the following gear aspects (and can invoke it once for free): ***Heavy Iron Chains; Massive Battleaxe; Thick Wooden Club***

1☐ 2☐ **Min/Mod/Maj**

Good At (+2): Fighting with natural weapons, wilderness survival.

Bad At (-2): Strategy and tactics.

Ravenous: The kodiak brute can invoke its own consequences.

Unstoppable Onslaught: Whenever the kodiak brute invokes an advantage related to charging, attacking with its natural weapons, or berserker rage, the invocation grants +3 instead of +2.

The kodiak brute is a fairly typical warrior-hunter. Kodiaks do not appreciate subtlety in battle, preferring to charge and attempt to put down the enemy with a single bite or claw attack, and resort to weapons and fighting maneuvers only if this fails. Against particular-

ly tricksy opponents, they may lose patience and go into a berserker rage, attacking anything that gets within reach without regard for their own safety.

M.A.X.
(Mobile Anti-Echan eXoskeleton)

The appearance of this armored figure is rarely reported, as few ever survive the encounter. Despite the rumors and accounts, no one knows what its goals are, its origin or destination, or if more than one even exists. It resembles an oversized exo-armor, but with no apparent openings to accept a pilot. Its body is black without any insignia, and its arms and legs are as thick as the torsos of similar sized enemies. MAX possesses rudimentary intelligence and problem solving skills. Its low, deep voice demands obedience and its sympathy is nonexistent. No bastion in Canam has claimed its construction. It is never found with anyone else, has no marks of origin, and has never been found as wreckage to be salvaged. It seems to be on a mission and is singular in that purpose, never resting, never stopping until it has completed its objective—after which, it vanishes until another assignment is downloaded into its memory banks by its faceless masters.

M.A.X. (Major Solo Monster; PC Rank +2, 1 Action per PC)

Subroutine R8.2 Targeting Array
Subroutine Z0.0 Reactor Meltdown

Gear: ***Heavy Armor Plating, Reliquary Plasma Caster, Burrowstrike Rockets***

1□ 1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ 3□
Min/Min/Mod/Mod/Maj

Scorched Earth: M.A.X. can invoke its ***Targeting Array*** to target up to three creatures at once with its weapons. Each target defends individually against the full attack.

MAX relies on its durability for defense and goes on full assault whenever it chooses a target. It will use its rockets on the most lightly armored targets first, using its targeting system to light up as many enemies as possible. However, it completely ignores any creature that its onboard computer does not designate as a target: what criteria it uses to assign targets is not known.

MERFOLK

As these chaparran descendants lived their lives on and under the water, they eventually replaced their legs with fins and a tail. It is believed these fae branched around the same time as other nymphs, specifically water-based ones like nereids and naiads. Being so tied to

nature, and thus the world that reflected the power of Attricana, they were especially vulnerable to its effects. The few fae legends that speak of them refer to them as jeilynn, but many modern fae are unaware that such a creature ever existed; it was only their substantial consistent inclusion in human mythology that verified their existence in the previous age. They kept to themselves for thousands of years in the ancient world, and in the modern one they are virtually invisible, having been hunted close to extinction by their children, the dojenn. As it stands, sailor tales are the only evidence of their continued survival. The legends claim the females are as beautiful as the men are revolting—as close to vicious animals as can be before they stop being fae altogether.

Despite many fairy tales, there has never been a factual record of a bonding between any land creature and a jeilynn. Though human sailors seem fascinated by the idea, there are obvious physical hurdles popular fiction seems to ignore on a regular basis, which require fairly substantial magic to overcome (since bonding does not grant either partner the power to survive in their mate's hostile environment). Though they are classed as mammals and reproduce the same as dolphins, this is as close as they come to being related to other fae or humans. Another unfortunate misconception insinuates that eating the flesh of a jeilynn grants one immortality. This is false but has led to some barbaric attempts to test the theory.

JEILYNN (Average Standard NPC)

Reclusive Water Fae

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Swimming; water magic.

Bad At (-2): Fighting; courage.

Jeilynn are skittish creatures. They will generally avoid contact unless they are certain that the person means them no harm. Even jeilynn without actual spellcasting abilities can magically control water to a limited degree, often using this ability to speed their swimming while slowing down pursuers.

NERIISA

This offshoot of the chaparrans is really several classes of nature spirit, technically distinct but displaying so many tendencies in common that they are usually thought of as a single species. They became known to human mythology as 'nymphs,' and their variety birthed many other names across many cultures: dryads, selkies, kachina, nereids or naiads, kurupi, fairies, kappa, narfs, kitsune and changelings. Their unifying characteristic was in how they intensified the chaparran tendency for reclusiveness and introversion by bonding with a particular element of nature: a single tree, a particular stream, a grove or grotto, even an animal. This bond is so intimate that the neriisa can actually merge their bodies with or transform themselves into their chosen element. It may be because of this that neriisa became strongly associated with fertility, and consequently highly sought after by those seeking a faerie bride, but like the nymphs of legend they are very skittish and do not bestow their affections lightly.

Most neriisa are bonded to inanimate objects or locations, and rarely move more than a few miles away from their host. Even changelings, who bond with and transform into animals, do not often move outside their chosen territory. However, there are notable exceptions. Many of the human legends of shapeshifting trickster spirits are reflected in curious neriisa who venture forth from the forests in humanoid form and transform into their animal shapes to escape the consequences of their often dangerous pranks.

PAGUS

Ixindar cannot create, only transform. Within a single night, as the black star fell from the sky, a million fae walked from their homes and vanished into the night. Many of the unfortunate victims came from the chaparrans that lived in a large forest near the land later called Kakodomania. When they returned a century later, they were completely unrecognizeable: not only had they been transformed to be physically identical regardless of their original species, but their carefree hearts had been replaced with dark, destructive purpose. Ixindar's corruption caused their skin to become thin, cracked and veiny. They lost all their hair from head to toe and their once slender forms bulged with slabs of corded muscle. After centuries in darkness, only their ears remained the recognizable feature from the old fae, around the same length as chaparrans. An oddity of modern pagus is that some survivors of their attacks have reported pagus with naturally round ears, though there has never been an explanation for this.

All other fae descendants have disowned this breed. Chaparrans and narros have sworn to their annihilation. Alas, the most unfortunate side effect of the pagus' corruption is their reproductive system. Unlike other fae species, pagus females enter into season every two weeks and gestation only takes three months. Worse, pagus do not require pair bonding to breed outside their species, causing their numbers to increase at an inconceivable rate. Pagus know how to forge their own weapons and beat their own armor from an early age. They are taught every facet of war and the quickest routes to success. Pagus warbands rarely fail in their goals, if only because their innumerable hordes can simply overwhelm all but the strongest opposition.

By the time the First Hammer fell thousands of years later, pagus outnumbered all other fae combined. While Amethyst reduced most to ash in his death throes, when the black gate re-opened, they returned with an obsessed fervor. Thankfully, Ixindar lost control over most of them as the pagus spread throughout the globe. Kakodomania found itself without much of an army, forcing Mengus to reconsider her plans and wait for their numbers to replenish. However, she is nothing if not patient. Without the dominating whisper, the unbound pagus went wild. Some pagus claimed free-

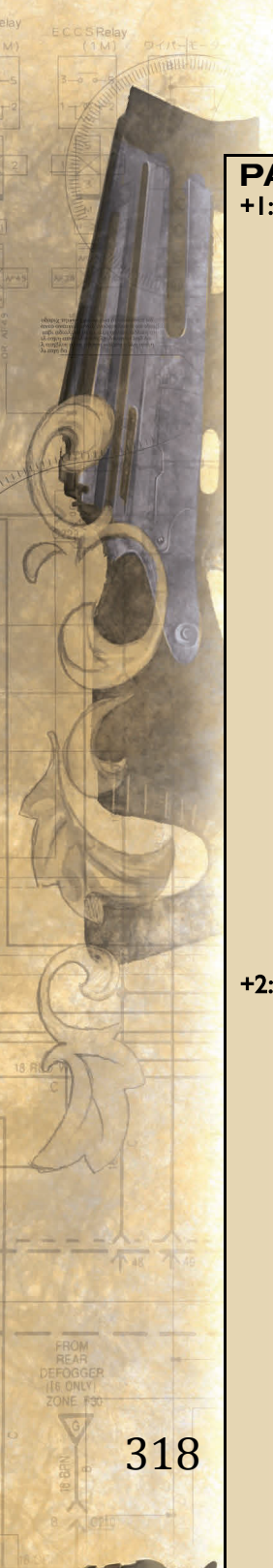
dom from Kakodomania but most followed the dictates of the corruption implanted in their souls hundreds of generations prior. Raiding bands appeared across the globe. Evil dragons took control of many to form their own personal guard, claiming lands in Canam for themselves. Many of those that were left became nomadic. Their hatred for the other fae never died, and they found new enemies aplenty in this new time. Oddly, every year, more and more pagus are trying to better themselves. The further they are raised from Ixindar, the greater the chance for redemption, but first they must somehow escape from the self-destructive tendencies of their kindred and find their own place in the world.

The human mage Kereptis Rifts calculated that more than six million pagus walked the earth in his day, and with their rate of reproduction (even considering their high mortality rate) that number must have easily doubled or tripled in the modern day. Their communities never grow larger than a few hundred before internal conflict splinters them. Their culture does not predate the present age, for they were neither permitted nor interested in expressing themselves while under the influence of Ixindar. This culture is noteworthy for what it lacks: they have no independent writing style (unnecessary, as they keep no histories and the only tales they tell are braggartly retellings of their battle exploits), they don't play music (excluding war drums), and they never dance. Since they were created for war and reproduction, the society that developed indulges in such actions.

One notable development of this is a festival of procreation called San Lossom ("The Founding"). All sexually mature pagus in the community divide by gender, and the males challenge the females to single combat; the women may wield weapons in this battle, the men may not. The males must disarm their opposites to earn the right to mate with them, while the females resist with deadly force. After the highest-ranked couples have concluded their private duels, the festival degenerates into an orgiastic grand melee. All the while, the war drums beat rhythmically, no different from any other battlefield. Because female pagus are as large and dangerous as the males, there is no separation of gender in their day-to-day life. Females have as many rights as the males and if a female reaches the rank of chief, she is expected to never be defeated by challengers; most female chiefs have already birthed a dozen or more whelps in their lives, so this is rarely a problem for them. Most shemjaza and dragons discourage the pagus forming their own culture, but a few have tolerated the San Lossom as it accomplishes two tasks: weeding out the weak and ensuring continued pagus stock.

Pagus were created to be perfectly obedient armies: separated from Kakodomania, their barbaric tendencies intensify because they no longer have a clear authority to follow and turn to the simple expedient of obedience to the strongest. As it is hard to dispute the physical superiority of dragons, this makes the winged gods natural choices for leadership. Sympathizers believe that, if instructed in ways of peace and given a benign figure of respect, pagus could civilize. Evidence of this has already been seen in Apocrypha.

Pagus are despised by every single race, even the ones that rule over them. Shemjaza think of them as hounds, dragons as cattle. All other races swear to their destruction. Only a small number of nations and rulers have permitted pagus to exist within their borders, and only when it has been conclusively proven that they do not live under the influence of Ixindar.



PAGUS LORE

+1: Pagus are militaristic to a fault. Each pagus whelp is trained harshly and vigorously from a very early age to become a vicious warrior. When in combat, the pagus are regimented and single-minded, unlike the riotous skeggs or the often solitary oggrak. The pagus take pleasure only in death, not in torture, and as such they are very quick in dispatching any opponents remaining after a battle. Pagus don't believe in much other than what they see and feel. They act on instinct and seldom with reason. Because of their skewed disposition, their intuition endorses violence and an unwavering dedication to the one they consider their leader. When pagus mark an individual as their chief, they swear untiring loyalty to that authority. For thousands of years, that fidelity was firmly tied to the forces of Kakodomania. No matter how powerful a pagus chief was, she always answered to a shemjaza, dragon, or occasionally the direct whisper of Mengus. When freed of that authority, pagus wander wild. Uncontrolled, they follow their last directions—to kill anything that opposes Mengus. Unfortunately, pagus must be told to stop fighting and, without those instructions, their path of blood will continue unabated.

+2: Pagus think forward, never backward. They desire what they see and rarely plan ahead. They were created to kill and do so very efficiently. Unlike the shemjaza, pagus seldom play with their kills. They dispatch as quickly as possible, razing villages and eliminating its population before moving on. If they have carnal desires, they commit them quickly in order to resume their regular duties. Pagus are impatient and easy to rouse. They will take to war over a morning meal with no preparation from the previous night. They are decisive in action and when ordered to commit or if taking a quest by choice, pagus are narrow-minded in their fixation. They cannot be distracted and have been known to refuse sleep for days in their obsession. Crossing a pagus is unwise and in battle, opponents are warned never to leave pagus alive. If they survive, they will remember who wounded them and will think of nothing but vengeance. Pagus don't taunt opponents, and they never cheer. On the battlefield, they are silent, cold-hearted machines. They march forward and mark their targets. When a rival sees a pagus locking eyes upon him, that opponent must be ready, for that pagus is coming to kill them.

+3: Pagus are a dominated race. The shemjaza and typhox dragons have held them under their thumbs since the fall and ruthlessly murder any pagus that begins to chafe under the yoke of Ixindar's rule. There are few pagus in Kakodomania older than twenty years of age. As a pagus ages, it doesn't become weaker and decrepit as do other races. A pagus continues to grow larger and larger until the day it is killed. However, the mental health of the pagus, unless strong to begin with, degrades until little is left aside from an insane monster. Most of these creatures are killed by the shemjaza before they can destroy the settlements they inhabit, but some are enslaved and brought from battlefield to battlefield in chains. These pagus are called the shaitar – the breakers. The pagus strong-willed enough to avoid this horrible fate find their mental agility increasing, rife with thoughts of free-will and culture.

PAGUS STRIFEBRINGER
(Strong Basic Monster)

1☐ 2☐ 3☐

The pagus strifebringer has one role in the armies of Ixindar: to charge the enemy head-on and do as much damage as possible before being killed, opening the ranks for the next strifebringer. Strifebringers hurl themselves into combat as quickly as possible, while still maintaining a cohesive battle line to protect any outrunners.

PAGUS BATTLESWORN
(Average Standard Monster)

Implacable Aggression

1☐ 2☐ 3☐ **Min/Mod**

Good At (+2): Melee weapons; ignoring pain.
Bad At (-2): Ranged combat; changing battle plans.
Focused Aggression: The battlesworn gains a free invocation of each physical consequence it takes in a conflict.

Pagus battlesworn choose an enemy at the beginning of combat and never take their eyes from their target. Battlesworn never switch targets until the first one drops.

PAGUS OUTRUNNER
(Average Standard Monster)

Heavy Crossbow Artillery

1☐ 2☐ **Min/Mod**

Good At (+2): Shooting crossbows; maneuvering.
Bad At (-2): Melee defense.
Focused Aggression: The outrunner gains a free invocation of each physical consequence it takes in a conflict.

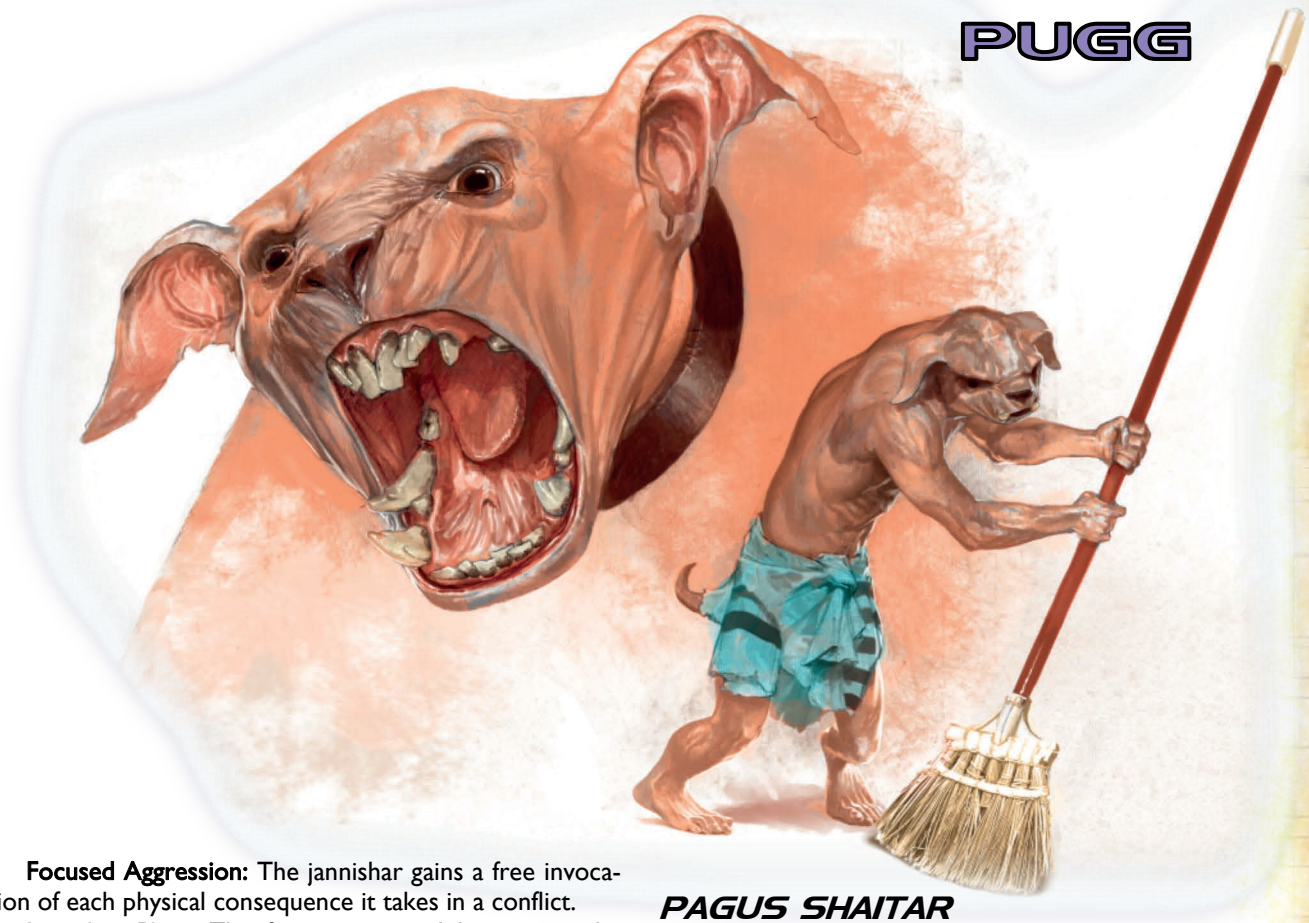
The pagus outrunner fires crossbow bolts into opposing ranged enemies, taking down one opponent at a time until engaged in melee. It moves quick due to its light armor, which makes it less durable than its fellows in close combat, but it does not shirk melee regardless.

PAGUS JANNISHAR
(Strong Standard Monster)

Brutal Onslaught

1☐ 2☐ 3☐ **Min/Mod/Maj**

Good At (+2): Mauling; intimidation.
Bad At (-2): Peripheral vision.



Focused Aggression: The jannishar gains a free invocation of each physical consequence it takes in a conflict.

Jannishar Plate: The first non-critical hit against the pagus in the encounter is negated.

Jannishar are the elites of the pagus horde. The jannishar will choose an enemy at the beginning of the combat. It will do everything in its power to close with that opponent, entrusting its jannishar plate-mail to protect against attacks from other enemies. Jannishar never switch targets until the first one is dead. A jannishar always uses lethal force and never accepts surrender: if one sets its sights on you, your only recourse is to kill it before it kills you.

PAGUS UNBOUND CHIEFTAIN
(Strong Standard Monster)

Unshakeable Conviction

1☐ 2☐ 3☐ **Min/Mod/Maj**

Good At (+2): Fighting; not dying.

Bad At (-2): Knowing when to quit.

Focused Aggression: The chieftain gains a free invocation of each physical consequence it takes in a conflict.

War Howl: Pagus in the same zone as the chieftain are immune to fear: pagus up to two zones away gain +2 to defense against fear effects.

The unbound chieftain is usually an elder pagus, often one with a weaker bond to Ixindar or who has completely thrown off the influence of the black gate – while they may still serve Mengus (and not all do), they often do so in their own ways. The chieftain leads from the front, staying close to its allies, and like most pagus chooses a primary target to vent its aggression upon.

PAGUS SHAITAR
(Strong Standard Solo Monster; PC Rank +2, +1 Action per 2 PCs)

Fury of Ixindar

1☐ 1☐ 1☐ 2☐ 2☐ 2☐ 3☐ 3☐ 3☐

Min/Min/Mod/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Smashing with dual morningstars; turning its own pain against its enemies.

Bad At (-2): Anything not directly related to smashing.

Unfocused Aggression: The shaitar gains a free invocation of each physical consequence it takes in a conflict: it can give up that invocation immediately to make an attack against the creature that inflicted the consequence.

The pagus shaitar, colloquially known as the "breaker." is relatively simplistic. It will charge into combat with the first enemy it sees and pulverize it into dust with its twin morningstars. Its brain is so wracked with pain that it is literally incapable of thinking about anything other than swinging its weapons at whatever gets in the way.

PUGG

Unlike other fae descendants like the chiggoth, kythix, and dojenn, the puggs are not difficult to find. Collectively, they are a massive, destructive organism quickly advancing beyond nuisance to real threat, a danger to nearly every nation on Earth. In some areas, they are a random and uncontrolled pest, amounting to little more than a handful of rock-throwing, blunt-spear-jabbing animals. While not dumb beasts, they have no avenues

for directing their intelligence and when not given clear and explicit commands (backed up by the threat of force) they generally default to the most destructive action they can perform. However, they have proven to be domesticable, and when raised in a culture that doesn't promote thievery or deception, puggs can sometimes be raised to live normal lives as servants. Whenever someone hears the term "house elf," it is usually a pugg that is being referred to. For every chaparran or damaskan captured or broken in the slaver markets, there are ten puggs that are processed and forgotten. Domestic puggs are usually bred in pens like pigs, as the feral ones are too difficult to re-educate, but many slavers will still capture wild puggs to replenish their breeding stock. They are trained for simple chores, hard labor, and occasionally cooking. Sad to say, they still live longer and happier lives than if they had been born into a bogg or skegg encampment, or even one of their own swarms. Freeing a house elf is no kinder than throttling it in its sleep, as even when they retain their feral instincts, they lack the brutal experience necessary to survive on their own. In open echa, when left to their own devices, puggs are inevitably savage and destructive. In history their likenesses have been attributed to several fantasy creatures like boggles, brownies, leprechauns, and various other malicious sprites.

PUGG LORE

+0: The lowliest of the kaddog, puggs have no aspirations, and only desire the freedom to eat and kill whatever they want. They have no self-control and only stop eating when their stomachs are too full to fit anything else. Their bodies can process any organic substance they can wrap their jaws around, and many will cheerfully attempt to eat inorganic matter as well. The two most common causes of death among puggs are choking on something too big to chew and being crushed or suffocated in a swarm.

+1: Puggs can be found anywhere on Earth but are especially prevalent in western Canam where they grow at an alarming rate. Female puggs can produce a litter of two to four offspring every three weeks, though only one in five hundred survives the eight months required to reach maturity (the rest usually being eaten by their siblings and occasionally their parents). Estimates indicate that every square inch of the planet will be covered in puggs within a thousand years if drastic measures are not taken.

+2: Slavers often capture puggs to sell as house pets to human owners. The puggs often don't even realize they've been captured, as they are beaten less under human care than under the skeggs'. Small groups of puggs have been known to wander into slaver camps and give themselves up for the promise of food, especially if they don't have numbers to overwhelm their enemy. On their own or when in small numbers, puggs are absolute cowards.

PUGG (Weak Basic Monster)

An individual pugg is only a threat to children and small animals: any reasonably ornery housecat could see one off. However, they rarely appear individually.

PUGG SWARM (Weak Basic Monster)

1☐ 2☐ Min

Good At (+2): Charging.

Bat At (-2): Practically everything else.

Bloody Innumerable: If the pugg swarm and its allies outnumber the opposition, it gains a third stress box.

'Swarm' is the term used to describe any number of puggs between 'five' and 'too damn many.' They have no tactics – they just charge, possibly crushing their own front ranks in the process. Puggs are cowards at the best of times, and refuse to attack unless they have overwhelming numbers on their side (or are so hungry they forget themselves, which is more common than not). They will gang up and swarm one enemy at a time, biting, scratching and kicking until it comes down.

SATYR

Satyrs, called scians by themselves and other fae, were represented somewhat accurately throughout human history. They are one of the earliest chaparran branches, eventually leading to centaurs. However, satyrs are not the peaceful skittish creatures the centaurs are. While less feral and animalistic than puggs and boggs, they are still wild creatures, and additionally are hypersexual, orgiastic, and hedonistic. The neurochemicals which in humans cause happiness and satisfaction instead produce an adrenaline response and a strong hallucinogenic effect in satyrs. They quickly crash from this high and must immediately seek out new pleasures or lapse into a dull fugue, during which they are easily provoked into mindless, wild rages. Satyrs are also incapable of bonding with any creatures, and thus can only breed with their own kind. Because their conception rate is the lowest of any fae, satyrs engage in as many sexual encounters as possible. However, the species has a strong sexual dimorphism, with female satyrs (also known as maenads) being virtually indistinguishable from human women, albeit with slightly pointy ears and profoundly unstable minds. Male satyrs are not generally patient enough to determine their partner's species beforehand, preferring to seduce first and not bother asking questions. They are incredibly charismatic and never take a lover by force, although their passions have been known to result in broken bones.

Satyrs seldom get involved in combat and are considered by many of the other races to be cowardly. They hide in forests the same as chaparrans and centaurs, though keeping away from both. Because of the increasing population of humans and their heightened sexual drive, many satyrs have migrated to nearby human communities to persuade passing locals.

Satyrs should not be confused with fauns, a very miniscule later branch from satyrs. Fauns are smaller,

less cowardly, equally as hedonistic but in different ways, preferring drink and song as their pleasure of preference.

SATYR (Weak Standard NPC)

1☐ 2☐ Min

Good At (+2): Hedonism.

Bad At (-2): Self-control; telling non-satyrs apart.

Satyrs are not good at friend/foe analysis. If not in the throes of a serotonin-induced adrenaline surge, they behave evasively toward everybody. Otherwise they act amorously toward anything vaguely humanoid and female, or either exuberantly friendly or jealously aggressive toward anything that isn't 'their type' – which approach they take is largely random.

SHAPELESS WILD

Many opponents swear these creatures are undead, while others claim them to be shadows, but they are neither. They are born from the death throes of lost souls within the Sana Marsh but are neither ghosts nor wraiths. They breathe, but have no faces; they have claws but no hands or arms. They throw no shadows but seem to emit darkness, concealing their true shape (if they even have one). Only illuminated white eyes and dripping silver claws twice the length of human fingers emerge from a mass of blackness. Their sole purpose is to protect the Marsh and follow the commands of their demon mother. They have recently been seen outside the Marsh, attempting to drag victims back to the darkness to increase their numbers.

SHAPELESS WILD LORE

+1: One must take the tales told by tavern drunkards with a grain of salt. Though many stories of formless beasts beyond the bogg-controlled forests are told, no one worth the price of a pint ever recounted a reliable tale. Some described the shapeless as living shadows, as if the shade they cast peeled from the walls and enveloped them. Others proclaimed them to be smooth-skinned creatures with nary a hole or wrinkle in their bodies save for a pair of white eyes floating in their featureless skulls. A similar story adds claws of silver sticking from black fingers. Because of the lack of definition, all one can see is a pair of glowing eyes looking out from a black void, and vicious talons whirling about it. Some claimed the creatures were cursed fae, maybe tenenbri or some offshoot of nymphs turned to shadow, while others insisted they were rejects of death, raised to inflict their rage upon the living.

+2: The shapeless are moving beyond their marsh and attacking nearby villages, or reaching far beyond to entice distant rulers with similar promises of immortality that drove the king of Kardia to madness and evil. The Torquil town of Barbecallis is rumored to have fallen to shapeless hands, but in that case, it was because the two lords in charge of the keep had rejected the advances of the demon succubus as they had already taken each other as lovers.

SHAPELESS WILD
(Strong Standard Monster)
Wrapped in Gloom

1☐ 2☐ **Min/Mod/Maj**

Good At (+2): Sneak attacks; causing fear.

Bad At (-2): Anything where there is more than dim light.

Hidden Ways: The shapeless wild can move any number of zones and ignores all obstacles to movement as long as there is a shadow in the destination zone.

Madness Given Form: The first advantage or attack action taken against the shapeless wild automatically fails.

Shapeless wild will always attempt to ambush, or otherwise take their victims by surprise. They teleport between shadows, keeping the enemy off guard and always reacting. When possible, the shapeless wild will gain combat advantage through flanking with one another. As creatures of Ixindar, shapeless wild do not generate EDF, nor do their attacks disrupt technology.

SHEMJAZA

The greatest departure from legends, the modern commanders of the dark armies of Ixindar don't wield pitchforks, have cloven hooves and spiked tails, or sport horns, though they do have pointed ears. They resemble the oldest fae races, but are not fae: they are the pure manifestation of the power of syntropy, given the form of the ancient fae by the intelligence of Mengus. The fact that they closely resemble tilen gives credence to the claim that the tilen are the nearest to the original fae form, but has not helped the tilen's desire for peace with the various nations of the world. Their appearance was uncommon in the time of Terros and unseen in Canam until only a few years ago. The shemjaza are usually the ones leading armies and committing secret tasks bestowed by their lords or god. Each one is worth a hundred pagus.

They stand much taller than any fae, growing in stature as their power increases and have solid black eyes with no differentiation of the pupil, iris, or sclera. They feel nothing except for physical and emotional extremes. Everything must be pushed to an excessive limit, even pain, a sensation they are fascinated by and go out of their way to inflict on both themselves and others. Some intentionally mutilate themselves to keep their sensations constant. Despite their size and the

intimidating aspect of their eyes, they are described as being astoundingly attractive and charismatic. Another misconception claims they are all sadistically evil, which is not entirely true: what they are is the epitome of amorality. The concepts of good and evil are meaningless to them, and even chaos and order confuse them as philosophical notions. All they understand is obedience, and unlike the pagus and typhox dragons, they do not need to be prodded or threatened to obtain that obedience. To a shemjaza, fulfilling the interests of Mengus and Ixindar are as natural as breathing. They are permitted the greatest latitude of any of Ixindar's creatures, for they regard freedom as the greatest evil in the universe. All pagus in Kakodomania are controlled by the shemjaza, and a few have even appeared in eastern Canam to usurp the dominion of the typhox dragons. Shemjaza still number quite few even in Kakodomania, though they are by far are the most dangerous servants of Mengus.

SHEMJAZA STATS

Shemjaza are all unique creatures with capabilities and powers tailored for a particular role in the armies of Ixindar. There should never be a point at which shemjaza are a pushover for player characters. They should either be so powerful that taking them on would be obviously suicidal, or customized to ensure that they remain a challenge for even a powerful party. Every shemjaza has one aspect that gives them a broad, thematic ability, such as immunity to certain kinds of damage or the power to walk through their enemy's nightmares. Such aspects should have vague or imaginative names but be interpreted as absolutely literally as possible in an encounter. The following entry is an example of a fairly *weak* shemjaza, to spur your imagination.

MOGHAZIIN THE RESURRECTOR

(Major Solo Monster: PC Rank +2, 1 Action per 2 PCs)

Untouched by All that Crunches or Claws, Stabs or Slashes, Beats or Burns

1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ Min/Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Necromancy, nihilimancy, creeping the hell out of people.

Bad At (-2): Nothing.

Channel Ixindar: Moghaziin can prepare and cast necromancy or nihilimancy spells as part of the same action.

Consume Life: Moghaziin can kill one of its pagus minions to negate one consequence it takes.

Whisper of Mengus: If Moghaziin inflicts damage of any type, the target also sustains a +2 corruption attack (the shemjaza is not the source of this attack, so it is not triggered again if it hits).

Moghaziin was made to raise a legion of undead prehistoric beasts to send Mengus' enemies into disorder. Its skin is impervious to the natural weapons of such creatures and any manufactured weapon that inflicts similar wounds, as well as to fire and acid. The adventurers who foiled the plan discovered that its immunity did not apply to purely concussive force or crushing wounds inflicted by falling rocks, nor to ice magic, but the shemjaza escaped before they could use that knowledge to finish it off.

SKEGG

The skeggs share the boggs' desire to achieve satisfaction through violence. However, they are not capable of the boggs' casual masochism, and so direct all their energy into harming others. Since they have no talent for building large communities, they must raid for food and supplies. On their own, they attack caravans and hamlets but rarely towns or villages unless they have enslaved boggs or puggs to wear down the enemies. Skeggs are the smartest of the kaddog, just intelligent enough not to rush head strong into a fight, driving the lesser castes up first. They have a love/hate relationship with the boggs, but feel nothing but disgust for puggs, which they regard as little better than useful vermin.

SKEGG LORE

+1: The skeggs consider themselves the ruling caste of kaddog and will always assume control over boggs and puggs whenever they encounter them. Both skeggs and boggs look upon their descendant puggs with contempt, offering them no rights or privileges, throwing them in front of a battle line, assigning them the hardest labor, occasionally using them as furniture, and even breeding them as a food source.

+2: Skeggs will not breed with boggs and will oftentimes keep a bogg mother in chains to maintain order over a nest. Skeggs also have a basic knowledge of weapons and armor and enough intelligence to appreciate treasure and the affectations of culture—skills worth their weight in a chained bogg mother. Pugg-drivers occasionally sell some of their stock to human traders.

SKEGG THUG

(Average Basic Monster)

1□ 2□

Skeggs are crafty fighters in comparison to their lesser kin. Their preferred method of combat is to force the enemy into a position of disadvantage (ideally one from which it can't fight back at all) and then bludgeon it to death as painfully as possible.

SKEGG INCITER

(Average Standard Monster)

Mistreating Allies for Fun and Profit

1☐ 2☐ **Min/Mod**

Good At (+2): 'Motivating' minions, spiked clubs.

Bad At (-2): Courage, resisting opportunities for cruelty.

You're Not Finished: The skegg inciter can spend a fate point when an ally is taken out to allow it to make one final action immediately before suffering the effects of being taken out.

Skeggs feel pain as much as anyone else, and don't find it pleasant like boggs do. Whenever possible, a skegg leads from behind, usually throwing boggs or puggs into battle in front of him and only wading in to the fray for the satisfaction of finishing off a weakened enemy. Their battle strategy may be poor, but where maintaining the integrity of their own skin is concerned, the skegg inciter is usually tactically sound.

SKEGG PUGG-DRIVER
(Average Standard Monster)

Vicious Temperament

1☐ 2☐ **Min/Mod**

Good At (+2): Beating things with forked sticks, rabble-rousing.

Bad At (-2): Maneuvering, strategy.

Nice Throw, Boss!: The skegg pugg-driver throws a pugg at an enemy up to one zone away. The pugg then makes a melee attack at +2.

A skegg pugg-driver is the master of the band's pugg slaves. Their strategy consists of 'point puggs at enemy; beat them if they face the wrong way'. Their most common weapon of choice is a 'pugg-prodder,' a long pole with a two-pronged claw on the end, covered on the inside with an array of vicious spikes, which they use most often to catch puggs by the neck and fling them bodily at their foes.

THORNSHROUD

In the darklands, there is a complex hierarchy, which not all of Mengus' minions care to follow. Shemjaza, typhox dragons, and other powerful evil creatures engage in an intricate dance of dominance and deference. In theory, shemjaza overrule all other subjects of Ixindar, but in practice they often have their own concerns and feel no compulsion to enforce their will, enabling other overlords to take power. None of this mattered when Thornshroud arrived.

Thornshroud is a construct of living armor with the head of a human grafted onto it. The head is withered and decrepit but still conscious and aware. Negative energies keep the psyche intact, though twisted by whispers from the darkness. When Thornshroud arrived in Canam, he swayed any forces he approached. Pagus, shemjaza, and dragons wilted under his will. Instead of corralling the masses of evil behind him in an assault on Canam, this armor vanished on a mission no one else was aware of, one he wouldn't share with his subordinates. He told them it came from the highest authority, orders from the greatest voice of all.

Thornshroud takes joy in the torture and suffering of those he deems inferior, which includes every living and unliving creature on the planet. Unlike a pagus, Thornshoud wears his emotion visibly, laughing at the pain he inflicts, taking trophies of those he kills, brandishing pelts and skulls as marks of this glory. His ears are round, proof that such depravity could only come from a human. Not even he knows his own age or where on the planet he fell under the shadow of corruption.

THORNSHROUD

(Major Solo Monster; PC Rank +3, 1 Action per PC)

Engine of Ixindar

Holocaust, the Blade of the Reaper

1□ 1□ 1□ 2□ 2□ 2□ 3□ 3□ 3□ 4□ 4□ 4□

Min/Min/Mod/Mod/Maj

Bindings Macabre: Thornshroud can ***Grapple*** targets in an adjacent zone. Any creature Thornshroud binds takes

I damage from corrupting energy each turn they are grabbed. Only one target can be grabbed this way at a time.

Holocaust: Whenever Thornshroud inflicts a consequence with its sword, it gains a fate point.

Structural Integrity: Thornshroud can concede and escape after being taken out. It must be compelled by one player per fate point the GM spends (the GM can use points earned by conceding for this purpose) in order to be caught before it escapes.

Thornshroud's sword is black as Ixindar itself and crackles with negative energy. Thornshroud will throw itself into the middle of as many combatants as possible, taking full advantage of its extra actions to try to inflict as many injuries as it can. It does not hesitate to pump up its attacks with advantages and paid invocations, knowing that it can easily escape if it loses the fight. If it is defeated, Thornshroud's head detaches from its body, grows four spidery legs, and attempts to flee.

WEREBEAST

Contrary to popular belief, one does not contract the disease of lycanthropy by being bitten by a werewolf. Most werecreatures are born that way, either to fae (mostly chaparrans) or humans unusually susceptible to magic. Afflicted lycanthropy is not a disease, but a deliberate curse, usually inflicted by a particularly invidious spell. Throughout human history, therianthropes have been described as being tricksters, villains, wise shamans, or faithful lovers. There is no distinct therianthrope culture, though the condition passes along family lines and may influence local traditions. Natural werebeasts are believed to have originated when one of the rare spirit-bonded grew so close to their spirit animal that the two became merged. As with most magical mutation, some of the traits of the now hybrid being would have passed on to its progeny. Of course, this theory does not account for the number of such creatures relative to the rarity of spirit-bonded, and it is possible that other forms of magical shapeshifting may contribute to the phenomenon. The therianthrope condition has also been seen in reverse. Though magic usually creates a dire creature, occasionally a normal animal may develop a level of intelligence equal to or higher than humans or fae. The darawren believe that when such an uplifted animal develops a connection with a humanoid, it can eventually discover how to take their form, though rare is the animal, even an intelligent one, that can pass for a hominid without any tells. Regardless of its source, the transformative condition is only passed on to the werebeast's offspring about half the time, even when they bond with another werecreature.

A therianthrope usually (but not always) has three forms: their birth form (usually humanoid), their secondary form (usually the animal), and a hybrid of the two that combines the stature and flexibility of the humanoid shape with the senses and instincts of the animal. In their two natural states, the werebeast isn't substantially different from an unaltered member of the species: the two-legs has marginally better senses, the four-legs is slightly less hobbled in the area of abstract reasoning. In the hybrid form, the therianthrope has not only all of the strengths of both forms with few of the weaknesses, but the strength of the hybrid increases proportionally with the animal's size (although this is actually a detriment to certain werecreatures: werebears, for instance, are smaller and therefore weaker in their hybrid form than in their bear form, although they have far greater dexterity than the similar-looking kodiaks).

Natural-born werecreatures are not predisposed to any morality, although the majority have an at least semi-feral lifestyle and live in their hybrid and transformed state almost as often as their original form. Those cursed by magic often turn into psychotic monsters, as their minds are unable to handle the shock of the first transformation and crack under the strain. However, it is not unknown for a werecreature's mate to voluntarily accept such a spell, and while such folk tend to be more capricious than most due to not having the psychology of shapeshifting ingrained since birth, they are no more disposed toward antisocial behavior than a natural therianthrope.

WEREBEAST STATISTICS

A werebeast is simply a normal humanoid creature with the ***Were-(something)*** aspect applied to it. This aspect gives permission to transform between the three forms and create additional advantages based on the traditional powers of werecreatures, although it also confers the traditional vulnerability to silver. If you wish to adhere more strongly to the association of werebeasts with the phases of the moon, you can rule that changing between forms does not require a check during the lunar phase to which the creature is attuned (but no check equals no free invocations either).

"Going out or coming in?" a child asked. She was maybe twelve, tall for her age but narrow enough to fall through a rabbit hole. She looked surprisingly fashionable, no doubt in an attempt by her family to prove they weren't indigent. Aiden was unsure why she singled him out. She spoke his English, not one of the various patois Aiden had been warned to expect.

"Going out," Aiden answered.

"Why?" she asked.

"Why not?" Aiden closed the book. "What about you?"

"Going in." She nudged to her mother, the woman layered in linen with a talc-covered face discussing credentials with the outer guard. "Mom grows spiky fruit. Apparently that's hard."

Aiden nodded. "I'm sure she'll get in then."

"Why are you leaving?" she asked. She wanted to know; it wasn't idle banter. She had never been inside a

bastion in her life. She was looking forward to frozen dinners.

"Because there are things you can't do in there."

"Like what?"

Aiden placed the novel between his legs and removed a larger book from his pack. This one was crafted by amateur hands with a badly sewn cover wrapped in leather. The pages were rough and frayed and had a dappled texture. The words were written with the flaws and imperfections of a clumsy human hand. Aiden held the book up edge on. He brought his lips to the spine and whistled.

A glowing ball of catkin lifted from the center of the book. A tail of glitter, its only appendage, dangled behind it as it danced around the tome, happy and delighted at having been called, for its life was meaningless if it had nothing to shine upon.

The child was taken back. She recoiled from Aiden, her bottom lip quivering. "Y-You're magic?"

Aiden shrugged. "Not really. It's a gift from my teacher." This did not alleviate the child. She stepped back, turned, and fled to her mother. The catkin fluttered beside Aiden, as confused as he was. If a parent wanted to train her child to seek life in a bastion, it began early and fear was an easy implement to wield. "I guess that's necessary," Aiden whispered. He held up the open book to the spark. It blinked and hid between the pages. Aiden slipped his spellbook back into his satchel. It was a convenient term for it, spellbook. Wizards referred to them as totems, requiring to always be in contact when attempting magic. It didn't matter what Aiden called it; he had yet to cast any spells. He wasn't, what some people called, a radiant. Yet. All fae were born that way. For humans, it was a choice, one which Aiden was required to make if he wanted to cast any spells. He very much wanted it, but for some reason it had yet to take.

The laudenian totems were of ivory, bone, or steel. Chaparrans were always wood. Narros took to using weapons, swords and axes mostly, a few shields. The idea of wands came mostly from the whims of writers. Few casters ever needed them. They were the training wheels of sorcerers. Children used them in areas where magic was taught young. Aiden was never given such a crutch to depend on. No competent caster ever employed a wand. Hands were needed open to fiddle the fingers properly in controlling the spells cast. With one hand taken by the totem, putting a wand in the other was a colossal waste of digits.

All that was important were the words, to say the right one, the right way, and to understand its meaning. To speak the name and create it from nothing. There were other ways to harness magic, but Pleroma—the language of magic—was the most powerful and the path chosen by wizards. The spark that Chen had given Aiden was a living light drawn from nowhere, created with intelligence, and aware its life only lasted until dismissed. It knew this and didn't care, lovingly loyal to its creator or controller until discharged.

No matter how many laws of the universe the white gate modified, none of them were altered in ways that destroyed life. They allowed greater variations without voiding existing ones. Aiden remembered what Chen had said, that anything Aiden could think of thought for itself.

Humans not employing magic created dead zones where the disruption of technology was moderated, but never fully suppressed. The city of Angel was one of the few bastions left.

* * *

Aiden needed to change his money. Bastion currency was worthless plastic and paper. The bank was a wooden hut with a steel door guarded by three men wielding dull broadswords, archaic revolvers, and crater-ridden faces. The man inside sat on a plush chair and looked thin enough to pass through the iron bars separating him from Aiden. A safe behind him had sunken into the dirt.

"How much?" the cashier barked.

Aiden passed his bills through the bars. "Five hundred."

"Looks like four--"

"It's five," Aiden snapped. There was no way to exchange money in the bastion. Angel would accept echan currency because of the raw materials involved, gold and silver, but they would never trade it back. The cashier counted the bills twice.

"Exchange rate isn't good this time of year."

"Exchange? There's no trade, how could there be--"

"It's not good this time of year," he interrupted. The cashier opened the safe and rattled a few bags. "What do ya want?" he continued. "Kroenan? Carmots? Tence? Torquil tence does quite well. A lot of places take it."

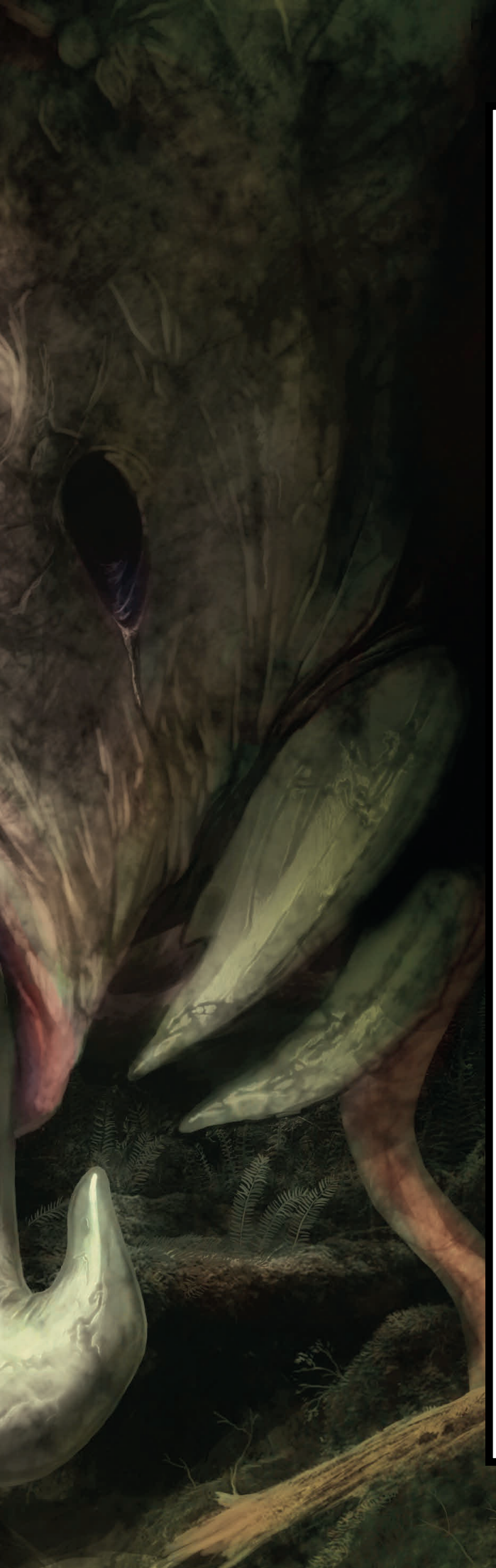
"Limshau currency please, carmots, chrysos--actually. Yes, tence would be good. I don't know...fifty?" Aiden had no idea.

"Want gold?"

"Yes, lovely."

The man chuckled and tendered the coins in a bag. Aiden knew it was short but had no angle to argue.

CHAPTER NINE:
CAMPAIGN



Ultimately, what distinguishes *Amethyst* from other fantasy settings is the contrast between the familiar and the alien. Merely the act of looking at the map and seeing the broad outline of North America cements the idea that the adventure is taking place in a familiar world, even if it has no other elements in common. Both GM and player will approach the setting with their own preconceptions drawn from their own real experiences, and want to integrate those elements into their play.

THEMES

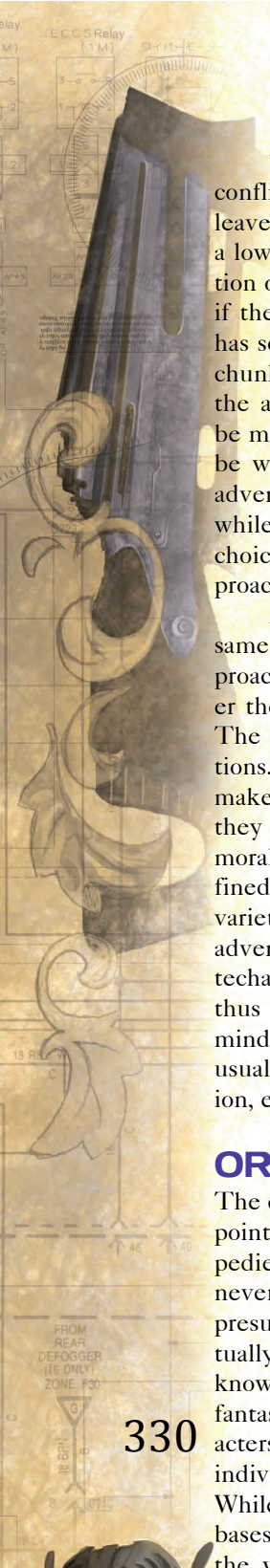
Amethyst's world is one where the definition of reality has become so subjective that clinging to an irrational ideology and rejecting anything that conflicts with that worldview is a matter of basic survival rather than political difference. The overarching theme of the setting is 'lines between extremes'. The line between fantasy and technology is the most obvious, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. The people of *Amethyst* draw lines between themselves and those unlike them because of a deeply rooted and fully justified fear that unless they cling tightly to their traditions, they will simply be swept away by an uncaring universe. Thus there are the lines between humanity and the fae peoples, and the discrimination that often results therefrom; the lines between the religions that better the believer and those which subjugate the outsider; the lines between civilization and wilderness, and the difficulty each has in co-existing with the other.

What is most important is the way in which these lines manifest. At first, it is appropriate, even encouraged, to represent them as dividing lines: partitions between extremes, and never the twain shall meet. Over time, however, they should evolve to represent a continuum, as the characters' experiences with the world beyond their preconceptions cause their ways of thinking to change. Not just the characters' attitudes, either – player characters are dynamic and powerful individuals capable of making a global impact. The actions of the party should have the potential to change the world, even if only one small corner of it.

Where most fantasy settings start from an exotic basis and grow gradually more familiar as the players are exposed to them, *Amethyst* should start from a basis of familiarity and grow more and more outlandish. The modern-style techan, with his day-to-day conveniences that roughly equate to the player's everyday life, is thrust into a realm of floating stone heads, trees the size of skyscrapers, teleporting wild cats, and impossibly beautiful and graceful near-immortals. The staid librarian is forced to leave her peaceful stacks in pursuit of a lost tome, and begins to experience the things that once she only read about. The miners who have never left their underground tunnels must venture out into the daylight and fresh air. In every case, no matter how jaded the character may claim to be, these experiences should be presented to them as the greatest of wonders. The one dividing line that underpins any *Amethyst* adventure is the line between isolation and experience.

CONCEPT

Virtually any adventure concept can be fit into *Amethyst*; the basic dungeon crawl; the epic quest; the noir mystery; the war story; the fairy tale; psychological or body horror; even sports stories have their niche. The only thing necessary to give the adventure a particular *Amethyst* feel is to emphasize any contrast between familiarity and otherness, injecting symbols of modernity into fantasy and symbols of fantasy into modernity.



The foremost manifestation of this theme is the conflict between magic and science. Even if they never leave the bastion, a techan party has to deal with at least a low-level of disruption, not to mention the consideration of why they're in a bastion in the first place. Even if they never encounter techans, a fantasy party likely has some synthetic equipment or would give up a large chunk of a treasure haul to obtain some. Regardless of the adventure concept, therefore, the first decision to be made when planning an *Amethyst* adventure should be whether the party will be echan or techan. Some adventures will only be possible with one type of party, while others can easily switch between the two, but the choice will inevitably impact the way the players approach the adventure.

An adventure with the same locations and the same monsters can often have radically different approaches, outlooks, and outcomes depending on whether the party follows the path of technology or fantasy. The characters themselves will have different motivations. A traditional fantasy character adventures to make a name for themself, to acquire wealth, or because they are called by a higher power (whether a personal moral calling, a command from a superior, or an indefined sense of destiny); an echan party tends to have a variety of individual motivations and approaches the adventure with much less focus as a result. A typical techan character is part of a unit, often paramilitary, and thus pursues the adventure's objective more single-mindedly because it's their job. A techan party will usually play through an adventure in a more linear fashion, even if the details of the adventure are unchanged.

ORIGIN

The choice of path also determines the physical starting point of the adventure. For fantasy games, the old expedient of 'you all meet in a tavern', while cliché, is nevertheless a viable option. Fantasy characters are presumed to be capable individuals, can come from virtually anywhere in the world, and have no real need to know their companions prior to the start of the game. A fantasy party will usually be broadly diverse, with characters more often created according to the whims of the individual player rather than the needs of the group. While most groups tend to cover as many of the tactical bases as possible (rare is the party that will set out into the wilderness without a healer, for instance), sometimes this will require the adventure to be tweaked to accommodate a deficiency in the group.

Techan parties do not have the luxury of individuality. As outsiders in the fantasy realm, without ready access to the means to repair and resupply, they only have one another to rely on for support. As such, they should know each other extensively before the adventure begins. Techans who meet over a brew and decide to take on the world tend to have their bones scattered across the wilderness in very short order. A techan group is usually part of an organization. They are accustomed to hierarchy and uniformity, their equipment is issued to them rather than found or crafted, and with very few exceptions, they all come from the same bastion. The bastion is the default starting point and 'home base' for a techan party, and the group will have to periodically return to it to restock their batteries and ammunition, to convert their unenchanted loot into the means to upgrade their equipment, and to indulge in the luxuries that they are fighting to preserve. As part of the techan experience is dealing with the fantasy world on its terms with often-inadequate equipment, even if there is a hole in the team's strategic makeup, the adventure should not be adjusted to compensate unless the disparity between the capability of the party and the power level expected by the adventure is too great.

RELATION

The techan group should define its perspective on the fantasy world before starting play. If dragon attacks are threatening bastion and village alike, this is usually merely a matter of flavor – whether the techans look down on their echan allies as ignorant bumpkins, are uneasy around them for the effects they may have on technology, or are even fascinated by their seeming exoticism, they do not require any additional motivation to make common cause. When offered a quest, however, a party that despises echans is probably going to demand some pretty hefty compensation in exchange for interacting with them. On the other hand, a group that is curious or even sympathetic to fantasy (but not enough to want to give up refrigerators and microwave ovens) is just as likely as any echan adventurer to help a dragon-ravaged village out of the goodness of their hearts (and for the less philanthropic, the lure of the dragon's hoard applies as much to techans as it does to unlikely heroes out for adventure). As the techan game lends itself strongly to military or paramilitary groups, those with no opinion one way or the other may be content to simply follow their orders. Regardless of their motivations, though, techans tend to view all echans as essentially the same, until they are confronted by the realms of variation throughout the world. A techan adventure, despite being very focused, should take care to accentuate both the common and the epic fantasy elements: these are all new and unique experiences to the characters, and even if they try to shut them out, they cannot help but be affected by the novelty.

An echan group does not need to define its position relative to the bastion-born, but each individual should consider where they come from and how that background relates to the world at large. An ex-slaver from Baruch Malkut is going to relate very differently to a Limshau damaskan than a knight of the Bulwark. A party from Limshau and a party from Seliquam might be equally cosmopolitan, but the one comes from a background of cooperation and cultural exchange while the other comes from an untrusting, cutthroat society. Additionally, while echans are broadly more experienced with the wonders of the world than techans, most are just as isolated, having never traveled more than a

few miles from their homes, or ventured off the beaten paths if they are habitually nomadic. They are used to the standard elements of the fantasy world – the diversity of peoples, the idea of magic if not necessarily all its implementations, the dangers of the wild – but they are also aware that there are many things in the world that they have not seen yet. An echan adventure should accentuate the differences between the characters' home experiences and what they encounter on the road, or the strange similarities that can arise despite very different circumstances.

TALENT

Techan and echan parties each have some things they can do that they other cannot. Obviously, the techan group cannot perform magic, and while some may have access to sufficiently advanced technology that can replicate some of its effects, that technology must be carefully guarded and rationed. An echan party has more reliable access to efficient healing, large-scale damage effects, powers that boost individual prowess, and spells and items with the potential to change the way they think about obstacles. An adventure for such a group must take into account the possibility that someone can fly over a wall to open a gate from the inside, or use magic to read a hostile courtier's mind and devise a counter for his arguments the night before their audience with the king.

A techan team, while lacking the ability to affect the world in such profound and unusual ways, has a slightly broader base of power. They are better able to compensate for one anothers' deficiencies. With very few exceptions, any techan can use any other techan's equipment, so very rarely will the outcome of a plan depend entirely on one character's special abilities: techans have more latitude to adapt as a result. As their abilities focus on improving the ability of the group rather than the individual, their damage output and defensive ability are more consistent than an echan party, and while they do not have ready access to instant healing, they do have fortress-like vehicles that they can retreat to when the going gets tough. An adventure for a techan group should account for their ability to take down large numbers of low-powered enemies without much difficulty, their ability to amplify their effectiveness with concentrated fire or explosives against more potent threats, and their power to overcome or simply demolish physical obstacles, depending on what means of transportation they have access to.

ADVERSITY

The most crucial consideration for any techan party is the threat of disruption. Sooner or later, all their nifty toys are going to break, and oftentimes their survival depends on their ability to either repair them or find some way to do without them. As a result, techan parties rarely venture far from home, as it is too difficult to find replacement parts far from their bastion of origin. Techans will never find useable treasure in the hordes of the monsters they dispatch. Any technology they might find would have been disrupted and rendered useless after such long-term exposure, and the only val-

ue magical items might have for such a group is the paltry amount they would be able to sell them for at the nearest village, since the prolonged exposure to EDF required to find a suitable buyer is rarely worth the risk. As a practical consideration to ensure the characters do not fall behind the curve expected by the game, treasure drops for techans should rarely include magical items unless those items have major plot significance (and that importance should be made obvious at the time). When fighting techan monsters (Iron Sons, MAX, etc.), this is not an issue, and salvaged technology can be a viable reward. Even if the enemy carries nothing that can be retrieved whole, it would be reasonable to award the group with an appropriate value in widgets a character with the Engineer skill can use to resupply and upgrade the group's equipment.

Another inevitability that techans must contend with is their own attitudes toward echa. With a few exceptions, most techans have no idea how to relate to echans, and constantly risk causing offense with their perceived superiority complexes. They intrinsically view fantasy as something that doesn't belong in the world – a view which echans do not hold of them in turn, and which they will have to come to terms with in the event, increasingly likely with prolonged exposure, that they become saturated with magic and are unable to return to their home.

As much as techans do, echans must contend with the fact that the world at large is a dangerous place, and unlike techans they have less reliable refuges to retreat to. Echans as a whole do not have the same sense of solidarity that the bastion-born do, and the variety of peoples and attitudes throughout the civilized world, let alone the wilderness, means that they cannot be certain of how they will be treated from one settlement to the next. While the ability to freely use magic is a great help in defending against the unknown, the unknown can often use it right back, frequently with more expertise. Furthermore, while anyone in an echan party can benefit from magic, only a few can actually use it, and if those few are somehow incapacitated, the group's collective effectiveness is substantially reduced.

Closeness with the fantasy world can be a double-edged sword, because the problem with magic is that it is inherently chaotic. Familiarity breeds contempt, and that can be deadly when one expects to easily dispatch a clutch of mindless puggs and instead falls into a pit trap contrived by one of the few wily ones. Forejudgment is a particular problem for fae, who are accustomed to homogeneity within populations: even a Limshau damaskan would have difficulty understanding that challenging the tough but good-natured barbarian to an arm-wrestling contest, despite being certain to lose, would be a better way to get information out of a group of rival adventurers than defeating his touchy wizard companion in a battle of wits. An echan group must be constantly made to realize how much they don't know about their own world, preferably in the most inconvenient way possible.

MIXED GROUPS

Though the game separates fantasy and technology by default, the dominant theme of the setting is the interaction rather than the segregation of the two. While normally this applies on a macro-scale, it can just as easily apply to interactions within the party. Mixed groups have hurdles, but this has never stopped them from trying. All that is required is a suitable justification for why echans and techans would be working together. The biggest consideration from a gameplay perspective is the impact of disruption on the team dynamic. The GM should monitor this situation carefully: if the party is getting constantly tripped up by the default disruption rules, consider adopting one of the less punitive variants in the interests of the group's fun.

In a standard group, the most common mix is the inclusion of a single outsider. Perhaps techans have allowed a fantasy character in their fold to help them with diplomacy and regional expertise. Maybe a techan has fallen prey to the lure of enchantment. As not all 'echan' humans actually generate EDF, the inclusion of a single non-mage human may not actually impact a techan party at all. A mage or a fae (gimfen aside) would be a different matter, as consideration would have to be made for their effect on the group's technology. Furthermore, as many techan adventures promulgate the cause of technology over magic, a truly echan character would have to be highly unusual to hold similar goals.

A lone techan amidst fantasy characters would have more difficulty. Most techans leaving bastions on their own are tourists looking for a temporary escape into enchantment. They keep to the main roads like the Continental Cross, never witnessing the hardships of those living under fear of pugg or bogg attack. They travel to a secured and safe echan nation like Limshau or Salvabrooke, have a happy little adventure among the elves, and return thinking they have gone rugged and tackled the harsh world. If forced to endure for long in that world, their equipment will start to fail, and unless they have the expertise to maintain it on their own (or can make friends with a gimfen mechanic) they may soon have to become echan themselves if they want to survive. Mixed echan-dominant groups are therefore more likely to contain two techans than a single one. If a lone techan joins an echan party, it may be reasonable for the GM to create an NPC party member with the necessary technical skills that the player character lacks.

RUNNING THE FATE SYSTEM

Fate is a bit different from other RPGs, in that many roles traditionally performed exclusively by the gamemaster are shared out among the players. The players are encouraged to add description to scenes, to develop background elements of the world, and above all,

to assume that there is a convenient bucket in the corner of the room if they need there to be one to do something awesome, instead of asking the GM to populate the scene with bric-a-brac. As the GM, you're still responsible for the pacing, defining the world and the adventure in broad strokes, playing the NPCs and monsters, and generally being the ultimate arbiter of the rules, but you should let the players mess around in the sandbox as much as possible. If nothing else, chances are they are capable of coming up with much more effective ways to inconvenience their own characters than you are.

THE THREE RULES OF FATE

There are three rules for the GM to follow that overshadow every other rule in the game.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Decide what you're trying to accomplish first, then consult the rules to help you do it.

In other words, don't look at the rules as a straitjacket or a hard limit on an action. Instead, use them as a variety of potential tools to model whatever you're trying to do. Your intent, whatever it is, always takes precedence over the mechanics.

Most of the time, the very definition of an action makes this easy—any time your intent is to harm someone, you know that's an attack. Any time you're trying to avoid harm, you know that's a defense. But sometimes, you're going to get into situations where it's not immediately clear what type of action is the most appropriate. As a GM, don't respond to these situations by forbidding the action. Instead, try to nail down a specific intent, in order to point more clearly to one (or more) of the basic game actions.

Occasionally, you're going to run into a situation that just doesn't fit easily into a predefined mechanic. In this case, come up with a ruling on the fly for how to make it work, possibly noting it down in case a similar situation comes up. If you can't think of something, just hand-wave it: come up with a difficulty and have the person make a check, without specifying exactly what sort of action it is.

For example: normally a character can only take one action per round without a relevant stunt, but suppose an ***Acrobatic Ninja*** wants to vault a wall and make a death-from-above attack against an unsuspecting victim on the other side. Ordinarily, traversing the wall and making the attack would require two turns, but this doesn't make a lot of sense in context of the character's narrative permissions. So as the GM, you rule that the stone wall is not that much of an obstacle to them and simply add the difficulty of overcoming it to the enemy's defense against the attack, enabling the action to take place in a single turn: if the player wanted, they could even spend a fate point to invoke the ***Stone Wall*** itself for a bonus on their check, since it makes sense in this context that leaping from higher ground would help them. While you shouldn't necessarily make a habit of this, it is a reasonable way of resolving a one-off multiple action situation.

THE SILVER RULE

Never let the rules get in the way of what makes narrative sense.

If you or the players narrate something in the game and it makes sense to apply a certain rule outside of the normal circumstances where you would do so, go ahead and do it. If something happens in the game that doesn't mesh with a general rule, change the rule for that specific circumstance (if you find yourself changing a rule frequently in the same way every time, consider making it a house rule). If you come across a situation that doesn't have a rule associated it and you think there should be, make one up, and keep playing with it until it works the way you expect it to.

For example: the rules say that by default, a consequence is something a player chooses to take after getting hit by an attack. But say you're in a scene where a player decides that, as part of trying to intimidate his way past someone, his PC is going to punch through a glass-top table with a bare fist. Everyone likes the idea and thinks it's cool, so no one's interested in what happens if the PC fails the check. However, everyone agrees that it also makes sense that the PC would injure his hand in the process (which is part of what makes it intimidating). It's totally fine to assign a minor consequence of ***Glass in My Hand*** in that case, because it fits with the narration, even though there's no conflict and nothing technically attacked the PC.

As with the Golden Rule, make sure everyone's on the same page before you do stuff like this.

THE BRONZE RULE

You can treat anything in the game world like it's a character.

Anything can have aspects, vocations, stunts, stress tracks, and consequences if you need it to. We've already seen this with things like magic and technological equipment having their own stunts and vocation ratings, and environmental hazards being treated like monsters. But it can go beyond that: you can create unique skills and special items that don't follow the normal structure; you can frame insubstantial concepts like the mood of a crowd as opposing NPCs; you can build and judge the relative power level of spells; you can even stat out entire scenes or adventures as characters, their aspects applying thematic changes from scene to scene, their stress tracks and consequences determining when the players have cleared them.

For example, a ***Corrupted Ruin*** might have an ***Evil Gloom*** about it, and have a **Maleficence** vocation which it can use to attack the characters' willpower and a **Shadowy Monsters** vocation to represent unseen claws from the darkness. At its heart might be a black gem that shoots annihilating bolts (Maleficence attack) and can fill the room with a maddening miasma (**Stunt:** Whenever you invoke ***Evil Gloom*** to make a mental at-

tack, you gain +1 to the attack per target affected), which the PCs must destroy to cleanse the site.

SETTING DIFFICULTIES

When setting passive opposition for an action, keep in mind that anything that's two or more steps above the PC's vocation is probably going to cost them fate points, and anything that's even one point below it will be a breeze. Rather than "modeling the world" or going for "realism," try setting difficulties according to dramatic necessity—things should generally be more challenging when the stakes are high and less challenging when they aren't. Functionally, this is the same as setting a consistent difficulty and assessing a circumstantial penalty to the check to reflect rushing the task or some other unfavorable condition. But psychologically, the difference between a high difficulty and a lower difficulty with a penalty is vast and shouldn't be underestimated. A player facing a higher difficulty will often feel like they're being properly challenged, while that same player facing a large penalty, likely chosen at the GM's discretion, will often feel discouraged by it.

Setting a difficulty low is mainly about showcasing a PC's awesomeness, letting them shine in a particular moment and reminding us why this character is in the spotlight. You can also set lower difficulties during periods when you know the PCs are low on fate points, giving them the chance to take compels in order to get more. You should also set lower difficulties on anything that's in the way of the PC's getting to the main action of a scene—you don't want them to get stalled at the evil overlord's drawbridge if the point of the scene is confronting the evil overlord. And of course, if failure doesn't carry the possibility of drama, there's no point in calling for a check at all: the obstacle is just narrative flavor, not something that needs to be overcome.

Finally, some actions should take lower difficulties by default, especially if no one's contesting or resisting them. **Unopposed efforts to create advantages should never be harder than +2 or +3 (or the PC's highest vocation rating, whichever is higher).** Overcome attempts should usually be opposed (remember that opposition doesn't have to always take the form of an NPC getting in the way—if the evil mastermind has hidden the evidence in his office away from prying eyes, you might consider that a form of opposition, even though the mastermind might not be physically present). Attacks and defenses, of course, are always going to be opposed.

The most important thing to consider is that, when using a hand of cards instead of dice, the players have much more freedom to shape their results. Most of the time, you are not going to be setting difficulties with the intent of registering success or failure, but the degree of success. If you don't want the adventure to be a cakewalk, don't be afraid to set difficulties high and encourage success-at-cost, advantage creation, and other ways of achieving that pinnacle.

Consider mitigating and aggravating factors when setting a difficulty as well: finding a dropped coin in a ***Pitch Black*** room is naturally going to be harder than finding one in a well-lit chamber, and both are going to be harder if monsters are starting to splinter their way

through the door. **As a general rule, each applicable scene aspect should modify the difficulty by +/-1 accordingly**, but don't go overboard: if there are more than two or three circumstances that can apply, just settle for a difficulty of 2 higher or lower, accordingly. The same task doesn't have to have the same difficulty for every character, either – a wuxia monk might be able to easily run up a high stone wall that would be murder for a heavily armored warrior. Always consider the intent and the capabilities of the person attempting the action before finalizing the difficulty. Don't modify the difficulty of opposed checks based on circumstances unless those circumstances clearly apply to one participant and not the other (in a fight between two characters in a ***Cloying Swamp***, for instance, the brackish water is equally an obstacle to both combatants, thus any modifiers effectively cancel each other out. However, in a fight between a human and a dojenn in the same swamp, the dojenn would have a clear advantage, possibly warranting a +1 to its actions: however, in these circumstances, it is far simpler just to increase the monster's rating by 1 when preparing the encounter to cut down on bookkeeping).

If the PCs are overflowing in fate points, or it's a crucial moment in the story when someone's life is on the line, or the fate of many is at stake, or they're finally going against foes that they've been building up to for a scenario or two, feel free to raise difficulties by 1-2 points across the board. You should also raise difficulties to indicate when a particular opponent is extremely prepared for the PCs, or to reflect situations that aren't ideal—if the PC's are not prepared, or don't have the right tools for the job, or are in a time crunch, etc.

Setting the difficulty right at the PC's skill level or one point above is, as you might imagine, sort of a middle ground between these two extremes. Do this when you want some tension without turning things up to 11, or when the odds are slightly in the PC's favor but you want a tangible element of risk.

FAILURE

If the PCs fail an action and you're not sure how to make that interesting, try one of the following ideas.

Succeed at a Cost: You can offer to give the PCs what they want, but at a price—in this case, the failed check means they weren't able to achieve their goals without consequence. This is always the preferred method, as it focuses on using failure as a means to change up the situation a bit, rather than just negating whatever the PC wanted. The guidelines in chapter 2 are good general suggestions for how to determine the cost, but you don't have to be bound by them – if you want to only use a minor cost when a moderate one is called for, or if you think the situation (or the degree of failure) warrants a more major cost, go ahead and propose it. For more severe costs, you may want to treat them like compels (substituting 'success at the goal' for the fate point normally given with a compel), enabling the player to buy it off if they prefer. One opportune alternative for a cost would be to trigger an unexpected encounter, with a number of weak basic opponents equal to the severity of the cost.

Blame the Circumstances: The PCs are extremely competent people. They aren't supposed to look like fools on a regular or even semi-regular basis. Sometimes, all it takes is the right description to make failure into something dynamic—instead of narrating that the PC just borked things up, blame the failure on something that the PC couldn't have prevented. There's a secondary mechanism on that lock that initially looked simple, or the contact broke his promise to show up on time, or the ancient tome is too withered to read, or a sudden seismic shift throws off your run. That way, the PCs still look competent and awesome, even though they don't get what they want. More importantly, shifting the blame to the circumstances gives you an opportunity to suggest a new course of action, which allows the failure to create forward momentum in your story. The contact didn't make his appointment? Where is he? Who was following him to the rendezvous? The ancient tome is withered? Maybe someone can restore it. That way, you don't spend time dwelling on the failure and can move on to something new.

Let the Player Do the Work: You can also kick the question back to the players, and let them decide what the context of their own failure is. This is a great move to foster a collaborative spirit, and some players will be surprisingly eager to hose their own characters in order to further the story, especially if it means they can keep control of their own portrayal. It's also a great thing to do if you just plain can't think of anything. It's better if the question is specific, like those examples—just saying, "Okay, tell me how you fail!" can easily stall things by putting a player on the spot unnecessarily. You want to let the player do the work, not make them.

SUCCESS

Most other RPGs expect the GM to relate what happens when an action succeeds. In a *Fate*-based game such as *Amethyst*, this should be the other way around: the player should narrate the results of their action ("I sneak up behind the guard and… *[plays +1 on an attack for a result of +4 vs. no defense, 4 damage]* stab him in the back before he's even aware of me, leaving him propped against the ramparts as if he'd just fallen asleep on duty"). This is particularly essential with the advantage action, as how the player describes their placing of the aspect will affect how the table interprets that aspect. Most overcome actions for physical obstacles should also give the players a chance to show off how athletic/strong/puissant their characters are. You can take over the narrative duties if you have something specific in mind for the outcome, but on the whole it is better to let the player do the bulk of the work, and then chime in with "—and…" If you take the narrative burden off of the players too many times, they may slip back into the habit of looking to you after resolving their action and expecting you to tell them what happens.

Sometimes, a PC is going to get a result far in excess of the difficulty. Some of the basic actions already have a built-in effect for exceptional success, like hitting harder on a good attack. For others, it's not so clear. What's happens when you get a critical success when you're trying to create a magic item? You want to make sure those results have some kind of meaning and reflect how competent the PC's are.

Ramp Up the Narration: It might seem superfluous, but it's important to celebrate a great result with a suitable narration of over the top success. Let the success affect something else, in addition to what the PC was going for, and bring the player into the process of selling it by prompting them to make up cool details.

Add an Aspect: You can express additional effects of a good result by placing an aspect on the PC or on the scene, essentially letting them create an advantage for free.

Reducing Time: If it's important to get something done fast, then a critical success should decrease the time that it takes to do an action.

WHEN TO COMPEL

The simple answer to this question is **'whenever it will move the plot along.'** In practice, it depends on the table. You should generally only offer a compel when you're reasonably certain that the player will accept it – otherwise, you just end up draining their fate points trying to force them to do things they don't want to do. If you're that intent on railroading the party, just plan or adjust your adventures so that they naturally end up where you want them to go regardless of which path they take. You should reserve compels for active complications that make the story more interesting.

Remember, compels don't have to relate to a character's aspects, but it's better when they do, if for no other reason than the players are less likely to complain about the loss of agency – they chose those aspects, for better or for worse. At the same time, don't turn every setback into a compel: compels are active suggestions that direct players toward a desired outcome. Getting thrown in jail isn't a compel: tripping on a loose floorboard and spilling your wine all over the spoiled aristocrat who sends you to jail is.

Players may also ask for compels and actively suggest them, particularly if they're running low on fate points. Most of the time you should honor their requests… but you should add a little spice to their suggestions, especially if it seems like the suggested compel isn't quite as inconvenient as perhaps it should be. You don't always have to tell them about any additional effects until they show up to bite them in the behind, of course. Of course, the GM is always the last word on whether a suggested compel is valid or not.

ADVENTURE BUILDING

When planning an adventure, even if you're adapting an adventure from another game system, the first thing to do is give it a Goal aspect. Like a character's concept aspect, this keeps the central idea of the adventure firmly in mind, as well as giving the party something extra to invoke when the going gets tough: "Come on, lads, we're this close to ***Saving the Princess*** – just one more castle!"

Also like a character, the adventure should have an Adversity aspect: something that will be a constant source of opposition to the party. This could be a time limit, an opposing organization, or something more intangible such as a prevailing mood (a horror story, for instance, might be precipitated by a ***Omen of Disaster***). You can and should change the adventure's Goal and Adversity aspects as events in the story dictate: if the party ***Saves the Princess*** but in the process uncovers a greater plot to destabilize her kingdom, their new goal can become ***Find the Conspirators***; if the prophesied disaster comes to pass, the party might find themselves ***Cursed by Fate***. You can have as many meta-aspects like these as you like, but be wary of going overboard – two or three should be more than enough for any adventure, especially when you add regional and scene aspects into the mix.

PATTERNS OF LANDSCAPE

In fiction, the focus of the quest is the journey rather than the goal. The lands that they pass through should take up more of the party's attention than what awaits them at their destination. In order to retain the sense of familiarity versus otherness, Amethyst's regions are only broadly defined, allowing the GM to populate them with wonders as the adventure requires. Over the course of a single adventure, the party should travel to between one and three locations: even if they remain within the same region (or even the same city), every adventure should involve going somewhere amazing and seeing something fantastic. The following general descriptions can aid the GM in converting adventures from other sources to *Amethyst's* world.

Abidan: Abidan is a civilized and well-populated country with little excitement to offer adventurers beyond those serving on the Wall. Though not as safe as Limshau, Abidan is blessed with friendly neighbors and a solid infrastructure, albeit one constantly under threat of pagus attack (only really a consideration for the inhabitants of Janoah – most others feel themselves perfectly safe). Unlike Limshau, Abidan is more like a traditional fantasy kingdom – it actually has a king, for one thing, and knights and priests as well as wizards. Its strong basis in religion but lack of a single state-sponsored church makes it less prone to corruption than other nations, with such occurrences being largely limited to the outer fringes. Abidan is most suitable as a homeland or base for an echan party, the destination for a delivery or escort quest, the site of a great battle between forces of good and evil, or merely as an example of what Man is capable of if the best parts of his nature are indulged.

Baruch Malkut: Konig's kingdom would less likely be a passing diversion and more appropriately a major

element of a larger quest, if not the catalyst of the quest itself. The rich live in fabulous mansions and employ every type of magical convenience, their wealth ensured by the slave-tended fields. The poor are crowded into cities with inadequate sanitation and amenities, denied the ability to read and better themselves, and conditioned to accept the word of the theocracy as fact. Thieves and assassins lurk in the shadows. The swamps that surround the cities are rife with bandits, slavers, and other examples of human monsters. Chaparran and damaskan guerrillas striking back against their oppressors are unlikely to distinguish would-be heroes from Malkut mercenaries, and may attack without asking questions. Players venturing into Baruch Malkut must always be on guard against everything around them.

Bastions: Bastions are launching points and home bases for techan groups, but rarely quest goals. Each bastion has a slightly different attitude toward echans, but all ultimately want to keep them out. Nevertheless, an echan party might be forced to penetrate bastion defenses on a retrieval or a rescue mission; a techan group might defect from their own society or infiltrate an enemy bastion, and have to use stealth to evade the authorities or steal away secrets. Non-humans will have the most difficulty in a bastion-based adventure, as their physical traits immediately give them away: pointy ears are a lot harder to disguise than just wearing a wide headband, not to mention that their mere presence shorts out high-tech equipment, making them fairly easy to track. Angel and York are the most obvious bastions for an echan party to infiltrate, whereas Mann is the most exciting and dangerous option for anyone to try to sneak into: the other bastions are simply too hard to actually get to for the purposes of most adventures.

Enchanted Forests: Dawnamoak, the triad of Laurama, Skepsis and Tranquiss, the forests to the north of York, and the various other mystical woods of Canam are perilous places even for those with a right to be beneath their eaves. The traditional role of a forest in a fantasy quest is as an obstacle that must be passed through, and the denizens of the woods do not make this easy. Chaparrans value their privacy and will attempt to hinder those who approach lacking their blessing, and outright attack those who come with hostile intent. The beasts that inhabit the woods are liable to treat any adventurer they come across as food, and some of them are intelligent enough to set traps for the unwary. Even the trees may resist onward passage. Traveling through a forest should be as dangerous, if not more so, than traveling through the mountains. Rarely will any of the chaparran settlements within the woods be the destination of a quest, but they may be a waypoint where a party stops to gain knowledge of how to proceed.

Fargon: Myth and literature are full of tales of the wonders of the dwarven underground halls, and many a quest has such a citadel as its terminus. The reality is slightly less impressive, as most narros living spaces are very dimly lit and tend to be somewhat claustrophobic for taller species (it being somewhat impractical to build high vaulted halls when you have to contain your city's entire population within a single mountain and your religion forbids digging too deep). That said, virtually

every mountainside and peak in Fargon is replete with wide-eaved temples, as if all the architectural wonders of the Orient were crammed into a single mountain, and even the isolated, unpopulated regions are home to fantastic monuments. Fargon is a relatively peaceful place as narros aren't known for being bandits or thieves. However, the constant warfare between skegg and kodiak forces has upset the tranquility of the nation, and the farther east characters travel, the greater the threat: furthermore, dragons and beasts of cold claim mountains the narros dare not touch. Fargon is the most remote of Canam's civilized lands, and is most likely to be seen either as the homeland of a wandering echan party or as the destination of a quest, perhaps to craft a particularly potent magical item, to study an ancient magical or martial technique, or to slay some ancient monster of legend.

Kannos: Assaults from the Sana Marsh, with boggs and skeggs approaching from the north and waves of puggs shifting from the west, means that no caravan is safe in Kannos. All merchants have mercenaries guarding their interests. Lost merchandise needs to be reacquired. Burnt wagons are an often sight on Kannos roads, and sellswords never go hungry. The larger cities have rarely suffered attacks, but they have dangers of their own: opportunistic businessmen, arrogant nobles itching for a fight, the organized crime that comes with a highly capitalistic society, bored mercenaries between jobs, and inconstant attitudes towards outsiders make for an interesting, if not necessarily a dangerous sojourn. Along the roads between the distant settlements, opportunities for side-quests are plentiful. Kannos is perhaps the most typical of all the human kingdoms, showcasing neither the best nor the worst of humanity in a neo-medieval world, but plentiful elements of both the bad and the good.

Laudenia: There are any number of reasons for adventurers to travel to Laudenia, but actually getting there is difficult enough to be the focus of a quest on its own. Most people are only dimly aware of the existence of the laudenian capital and fewer still know anything about the network of floating castles that criss-cross the continent; most non-laudenian airships don't fly high enough to encounter them, and magic cloaks the keeps from idle scrutiny. The only ways of reaching the sky realm are by accident or by enlisting the aid of a laudenian willing to overcome their species' scruples for a good cause or good cash. Once there, the challenge becomes not being kicked straight back off again. Laudenia can be the ultimate destination of an adventure, or the party may travel there in search of powerful magic or secret lore, but whatever their reason, they will never be just passing through.

Limshau: Limshau is urbanized and safe. Travelers can pass from town to town with little fear of being assaulted by anything other than merchants. The walled cities are well guarded, with little bureaucracy and therefore little corruption. Every city is also a library and an academy, and whenever the party requires specialized knowledge to complete a quest, this is likely where they will go to find it. The outer villages are more typical fantasy fare as might be seen in any other setting – or would be, if they were not the only place on Earth that such settlements are common. Nowhere but Limshau are you likely to encounter settlements with at least a few members of every civilized species. Limshau is the Constantinople of the new world, the hub of trade between the urbane peoples of the continent, and the place where every adventurer will find herself eventually, even if just passing through.

Salvabrooke: The agrarian gimfen settlement is somewhat unique in not being often a destination nor a home base for a party. It is more of a waystation, an opportunity to stock up supplies, gather intel, possibly meet new friends, take in the majestic beauty of the lands within the ancient caldera, and generally play tourist in a relatively safe environment. It is fairly easy to get to from anywhere, for all the various threats in between, and may serve as a staging area to reach more inaccessible regions of the continent.

Seliquam: While collectively as cosmopolitan as Limshau, Seliquam is a political viper's nest of conflicting interests and cultural grandstanding. Mixed communities are common, but usually no more than two or three species at a time, and homogenous settlements still outnumber them. Despite the fact that this is the only place in Canam where one can see a kodiak walking down a town street and nobody will bat an eyelid, where castle ramparts are patrolled by riflemen, and where ancient narros monuments can be seen without the long trek to Fargon, most Seliquam communities are intensely suspicious of outsiders, and adventurers must earn their welcome. Thankfully, there are plenty of opportunities to do so: the lands to the north and the south are replete with ruins and treasures waiting to be explored and cleaned of their monstrous filth. A quest from one end of Seliquam to the other would pass through every type of fantasy cliché, and even a few venturing beyond fantasy.

Wastelands: It is ill-advised to linger in such places. There are few settlements of any kind and those that do exist tend to be hostile to outsiders. Most have been uninhabited since the Hammer fell, and so any ruins or dungeons of interest are few and far between. More vicious and unusual monsters can be found in the wastelands, making them of greater usefulness for monster hunting quests, and caches and artifacts of the last age of Man tend to surface more often in such places, having had fewer adventurers survive the process of picking them over. Of the great wastelands of Canam, only Xixion provides much general adventuring opportunities because of its location and proximity to the ancient centers of civilization: the other lands are far more remote and hazardous to travel in, and are more likely to be the focus of a more epic quest.

RESCUING SIDETRACKED ADVENTURERS

Frequently, an adventure will go off the planned rails,

especially if the players are given a lot of latitude to work with. If this happens, you should work with it as much as possible, within reason – obviously the players went in that direction because they wanted to do so, and it wouldn't be fair to herd them back onto the one path you planned for them. That said, you shouldn't have to give up your plans just because the party can't stay focused. There are several techniques you can use to get them back on track.

Bribery: Place something that they want at the goal that you want them to pursue and make sure they find out about it. Perhaps the evil necromancer wields a powerful magic sword; perhaps the distant keep is rumored to hold the only copy of a tome that any Limshau librarian would give their right arm to possess; perhaps a dragon appears before the party and promises an unspecified favor if they retrieve an inconsequential item for it.

Compels: If the adventure has a time constraint as its Adversity aspect, you can always compel that to remind the players that they are on a schedule. This also works if they are members of an organization that can give them orders and make their lives miserable if they don't follow those orders. If they start going intentionally off the path in order to get you to give them fate points for returning to it, however, you should probably drop a couple of wandering monsters at the end of their detour so that they don't benefit from their willful profligacy.

Sleight of Hand: If you have a particular location that the party must reach in order to proceed, arrange circumstances so that they arrive there no matter what path they choose to take. The party always arrives just in time for the plot event to happen, even if they got

lost in the mountains for three weeks. The gem they need to open the magical door is always in whichever one of the three chests they choose: all that differs is whether it's inside the pommel of a magic sword, the setting of a magic amulet, or the gullet of a shapechanging monster. Considering that *Fate* adventures are generally more loosely constructed than other games and rarely adhere to set maps, this can be fairly easy. Just make sure that the players don't cotton on to the fact that you're doing this, because that is called railroading and is frowned upon at most game tables.

Ninjas: When all else fails, or when nothing exciting seems to be happening, have the party be spontaneously attacked by ninjas (or puggs, or wild chaparrans, or techan mercenaries, or dragons… whatever floats your boat). You don't even need to justify it yet: chances are the group is going to naturally assume that whoever sicced the ninjas on them had something to do with the adventure and will set off on a roaring rampage of revenge. If they don't, let them interrogate a survivor or find a dropped note that points them in the right direction and let their overdeveloped sense of vengeance get them into trouble.

THE SINGLE STONE

The following short adventure can serve as the group's introduction to the *Amethyst* setting, or serve as a campaign seed for a more experienced group. It involves travelling to different locations, researching the history of the setting, and fighting off some truly fiendish foes. Simultaneously, the party will involve themselves in a conspiracy that may take them across the world and involve enemies singular and powerful as well as numerous and influential. They will find evil parading in the light and allies hiding in shadows.

This is an adventure for four to five starting characters of either echan or techan origin; the specific events do not change, though certain obstacles along the way may. Although this adventure can serve as the starting point for a campaign focused on the Amethyst relics, the party is under no compulsion to follow this path at the adventure's conclusion. Where they go after this is for you and the group to decide.

SUMMARY

Greedy or generous, techan or echan, the group of heroes stumbles upon or is sent to investigate the rotting carcass of a crashed transport plane. No one is sure where it came from or where it was going, but apparently its sole purpose was to transport a small item a great distance: the Amethyst amulet. Little does the group know that they are not the only ones aware of this crash, for a rival organization has been tasked to take the amulet for themselves and eliminate any obstacles.

ECHAN INVOLVEMENT

The characters are on their way to Limshau, but before they arrive they are asked to escort a merchant caravan along the Continental Cross. When a band of kaddog attack and make off with a rare piece of treasure, the players will give chase and stumble upon the plane wreckage, starting their quest.

TECHAN INVOLVEMENT

Regardless of which bastion the players are from, they should be around the bastion of Angel when they are dispatched to a specific set of coordinates and investigate an aircraft from another bastion that crashed on its way to Angel. This may be a normal mission for this group or their first outing from the walls. The story begins just outside of Crax in Antikari.

SECTION I: THE CARBON CRUCIFIX

If the players are chasing the kaddog, they will encounter them at the following location. If they are travelling here intentionally, then they will be ambushed. As the heroes press through the forest, read or paraphrase the following:

> *You push through the heavy foliage and come upon a tree stouter than the others. The sheen of its silver skin glints in a fading sunset. Only two branches reach from its peak, spreading its arms to the sky. Jagged roots have sliced into the soft dirt, an invader among its neighbors of wood.*
>
> *The towering centurion left a scar of ashes and death behind it when it fell from heaven. This was not some great hammer of god cast to Earth but a machine made from the hands of men. Where once it obeyed undeniable rules to allow its flight, now a carcass rests to prove the chaos of a new age. From dirt to sky, it stands taller than most trees.*

This is the tail section of a very large aircraft. Over 100 feet tall, it's still only a small section of the monstrosity it once was. It plainly does not come from anywhere around here.

History or political vocation, +2: The craft comes from Porto—the utopian bastion known to prosper far across the ocean. How it got here would be an obvious question without a speedy answer. Though Porto has been known to send flights as far west as Angel, they rarely send more than one a decade. To find a wreck would be a rare prize indeed. Porto flaunts the greatest technology of the planet, though the chances of any of it still working by this point would be slim.

CONFLICT: BOGG NEST

If the characters are chasing the boggs, they only have a few brief moments before reinforcements arrive. If not, the group is ambushed by a horde that has been using the towering tail of the aircraft as their chief's hut.

SKEGG INCITER +4

Mistreating Allies for Fun and Profit

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): 'Motivating' minions, spiked clubs.

Bad At (-2): Courage, resisting opportunities for cruelty.

You're Not Finished: The skegg inciter can spend a fate point when an ally is taken out to allow it to make one final action immediately before suffering the effects of being taken out.

Skeggs feel pain as much as anyone else, and don't find it pleasant like boggs do. Whenever possible, a skegg leads from behind, usually throwing boggs or puggs into battle in front of him and only wading in to the fray for the satisfaction of finishing off a weakened enemy. Their battle strategy may be poor, but where maintaining the integrity of their own skin is concerned, the skegg inciter is usually tactically sound.

BOGG RAKE +3 (x2)

Sneaky Little Masochist

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod

Good At (+2): Sneak attacks; resisting poison.

Bad At (-2): Resisting opportunities to use poison; retreat.

Foul Concoction: The bogg rake can make an advantage check to apply some sort of noxious substance to its weapon in the same turn as it makes an attack.

While other species develop the art of stealth as a means to avoid getting devoured by something meaner than them, the bogg rake uses it as a tool to satisfy its urge for torture, sneaking up close to an enemy and then stabbing it with daggers coated in (usually) the bogg's own body effluvia. The bogg will then stick as close to the victim as possible and giggle while the poison goes to work.

BOGG SCABB +3 (x4)

1☐ 2☐

Boggs don't bother much about strategy. Their preferred method of fighting is to launch themselves at the enemy and attempt to tear it to pieces with their claws and teeth, although they will at least make some attempts to maneuver in combat, unlike their pugg cousins. While they are in no hurry to die, pain is no deterrent to them – in fact, it makes them fight with even more ferocity.

The chief, although a skegg and thus of superior stock, wasn't bright enough to understand the distinctiveness of his metallic keep. He stacked crates and used them to form a throne without bothering to attempt breaking them open, not that the steel reinforced plastic boxes would have yielded to his simple tools. The locking mechanism is intricate and far beyond his limited intelligence.

There are three boxes, two larger ones the skegg used as armrests and one small one he used as a seat. The security on each box is a mechanical but complex disk tumbler lock, making it difficult to break. An unlocking spell will open it instantly: any other magic used on the box will cause the lock to fuse and require brute force to open.

Each box requires a **+3 overcome check** to break.

Box	Label	Lock Difficulty	Contents
1-Large	Security	+4	4 disruption patches, 3 sets of handcuffs
2-Large	Emergency	+4	1 standard techan adventurer's kit
1-Small	See below	+3	See Below

The small box carries the label, "Open under controlled conditions—Disruption Hazard" but no other indicators. It also appears the lock has suffered some damage and may be easier to pick. Upon opening it, read or paraphrase the following:

> ***Echan:*** *Your hands roll through fluttering pieces of snow that feel neither cold nor wet and refuse to melt in the warmth of your hand.*
> ***Techan:*** *Your fingers rifle through the packing foam.*
>
> *You can see a faint violet glow through the packing. You reach in and curl your fingers around the light, and from the box you pull a strange purple jewel. Four pearlescent silver dragon's claws are clamped around the outer edges of the unrefined, almost jagged gem. The fingers of the lizard coil around back, not to a hand, but across to other fingers. Two golden loops could support a chain if one were so inclined to flaunt the amulet from his or her neck.*

If any of the players attempt a closer look, read or paraphrase the following:

> *You notice movement within, as glints of light jolt through the imperfections in the jewel, like lightning bolts arcing from one side of the gem to the other, following the sharp angles of the stone. No outside light source reflects in it, but it does reflect your faces perfectly in the glossy finish. It also gives off its own light; visible only when staring past the arcs of sparks, into the heart of the rock itself. This is unusual even for magic.*

At night, this item glows much brighter. Though magical, no one can identify its properties or origin. No spell can discern any information about it. Its oddest property is that for some reason, the item does not disrupt technology.

Techans have no chance of identifying the item on their own, and echans will find it difficult without access to a library. Either way, Limshau is the obvious next destination.

Magic vocation, +4: Obviously a magical item, this

relic was likely forged by a wizard of great power: the Pleroma lettering running down one side of the setting proves that. But enchanted jewels never glow with an internal furnace like this one. This is a natural enchantment that someone later set into an amulet. One of the Pleroma letters has been marred by a gash, possibly from a powerful sword strike. Further, this is most likely created by human hands: chaparrans would set it in wood; tenenbri wouldn't have used only one metal, and narros would not have used one as mundane as silver; gimfen have few competent wizards and none of this caliber; and neither damaskans nor laudenians would have allowed such an artifact to become lost in the first place. This leaves a human mage, but there have been very few of those on this continent of any significant power.

Religious vocation, +3: There is a faith based around the dragon god, Amethyst, but this is not a symbol of faith (though it is obviously made to resemble one). The markings on one side are Pleroma, indicating it was made by a mage.

History vocation, +4 (only if both the above checks succeed): To cause a gash on a magic item of this magnitude would require a powerful enchanted weapon. The only notable account of a duel between a powerful mage and an equally adept swordsman comes from Lauropan history, and the mutual destruction of the mage Torfin Gendron and the fanatical knight Wilhelm Myre.

SECTION 2: BY THE BOOKS

When the heroes arrive at Limshau, read or paraphrase the following:

> *They call them the White Walls of Limshau—a maze of dense stone and adobe walls dozens of miles across, radiating from a central archive. It holds the combined knowledge of a hundred nations, modern and extinct. One could find the rhythmic dance rituals of the chaparrans or the spastic drum beats of the narros. Look further and one could even stumble across tomes smuggled from the human bastions. Diligently, the damaskan fae and humans of Limshau maintain their city. Ten storeys tall and virtually uniform in texture, the white walls encircle the entire library, every branch, every building. The wall twinkles in the orange sun. The marble facing of the granite walls seem fragile at first… until you realize how thick the barrier really is.*

When the heroes pass through the gates, they must check their weapons with the storehouse. Only custodians and the militia are allowed weapons in the city. Clever deceit or sleight of hand may allow smaller weapons to cross but anything bigger than a short sword would be confiscated. The guards provide detailed receipts for everything before passing the party through.

When the heroes enter the city, read or paraphrase the following:

> *Limshau is orderly, calm, and beautiful. Hundreds move without a shove in the streets. The various buildings blend together in uniformity. Footbridges pass overhead, connecting higher buildings. As you wander deeper, the city grows taller, bridges criss-crossing over each other as the levels climb. A pair of leather-clad custodians with katana at their backs chats with merchants. An orange-haired gimfen stands atop his cart, selling various silks gathered from his village to the northwest. A few legal tall-eared scarlet women promote their pleasures from a second level window.*
>
> *A huge form eclipsing the rising sun bathes the street in shadow. You glance up to see the silvery-white skin of a 1,200-foot long airship floating over the walls with hardly a whisper. Only a small cabin hangs underneath the perfectly smooth untarnished body, with most of the crew and passengers resting comfortably inside the superstructure. Propellers bigger than men spin as the vessel slows towards the mooring tower at the city center.*

Limshau is enormous and the heroes may feel somewhat confused on where to start. If they have never been to Limshau before, this is a perfect opportunity to get lost and pick up some local color while they search for the arcane history stacks. If they do not wish to wander, any passing librarian or custodian can direct them to the appropriate branch. Once they begin searching around the branch, they can introduce themselves to the local chief librarian, a human female named ***Inara Setinga***, and the custodian assigned to this branch this week, a damaskan male, ***Baelin Stonesthrow***. Both will help the best they can.

Special: The ***Arcane Library***, the librarian and the custodian can all be invoked to attempt (or re-attempt) the above overcome checks. The players may attempt a new check every day.

Succeeding on all three checks allows the group to discover a book giving a rough history of the amulet, identifying it as Stormcage, Torfin's most prized magical possession. The book does not go into detail about the amulet's powers or history, only that Torfin found the indestructible amethyst stone and created the setting to place it into.

If asked about further avenues of research, either Baelin or Inara will volunteer the following:

> *"There is someone that might be able to help. He's an expert on lingering legends and relics that refuse to be buried. A very devout man, too, but we won't hold that against him. His name is Filipe Paraerra-sensei. You'll find him in the Philosophy branch of the University."*

FILIPE PARAERRA

Filipe Paraerra is not an old man with worn and weary eyes, pinching his nose when his heavy glasses strain

his head, but barely into his forties, 230 lbs. of toned muscle. He is not about brute strength but total physical perfection. As an athlete, he could outrun the stoutest of knights even without their laden steel. He is also a Buddhist. When the heroes enter his classroom, they find thirty students of various ethnicities, ages, and races squatting straight-backed upon mats placed erratically about the room. The desks have been pushed to the walls. No one pays the heroes any mind, regardless of how they enter and how they look. They find Paraerra at the head, wrists resting on his knees, addressing the room.

"Does the pursuit of truth without finding it have purpose?" Paraerra asks slowly, almost at a whisper. "You will find evil if you chose to seek evil. You will find faith if you chose to seek faith. But do not seek truth. A drive to find a truth will lead to faith, and will be perceived only in your eyes as fact. Truth…is what you find along the way of seeking. Truth…is stumbled upon, never fought for. The same it is with the salvation of the soul. The harmony we establish within ourselves, the love we accept, comes along the path, never at the end. Faith, belief, are yours to claim …truth is for all of us." He looks over the group, then rubs his palms together. "This week, pick one of the following books. Have it read by the end of the month. We'll then discuss them at length, including the possibility that I may have wasted your time in the assignment. Fear & Loathing by Soren Kierkegaard, Prophetic Fragments by Cornel West, Novum Organum by Francis Bacon, or The High Cost of Death by Marikama."

The class files out, passing the heroes looks ranging from curiosity and confusion to annoyance, leaving Paraerra alone. He makes one passing glance at the heroes and says, "By your presentation, I assume you're not nihilists."

The heroes can present their information and what they have learned. If they have not solved the previous overcome checks by this point, he'll answer the riddle for them, giving the heroes any information they may need about the item. It may take him a few minutes and he would have to see the artifact, but he will be successful against all the skill checks required. Beyond this, he confirms the unique powers of this item.

"It's as powerful as a foundation spell but apparently requires no sacrifice for its use. It's also possible it gains in power with its owner. The markings on the inside suggest that. You have in your possession a powerful relic that binds the arcane with faith, a declaration even I must acknowledge is more than a little incongruous. There could only be one other explanation, but that answer does not lie with me."

<Pause for response>

"If you'll permit me a momentary indulgence, I believe I know where the answer rests."

<Pause for response>

"As with everything else in Limshau, this truth rests in the pages of a book."

Although there is a library branch dedicated to the history of relics, there is also another smaller one doubling as a museum, dedicated to the study of the relics themselves. Paraerra believes what the heroes seek is there and decides to help them look for it. The book in question is the ***Chronicle of Aurannis***. The chronicle was once part of the great Bible of Drasago, the holy book written by dragons, but was removed due to its length. Unlike the other gospels, Aurannis' collection does not enchant the user if read but is still magical itself. Paraerra flipped through it once and could have sworn to have seen a relic like this amethyst among its pages.

When the group arrives at the specific branch, Paraerra questions the librarian, an attractive damaskan elf wearing vanity bifocals named ***Chenai Pagekeeper***. She has some unfortunate news as she leads them to the location in the branch the book was kept: it has been stolen.

"I hate to say, we lost that tome recently. It even carried a marker to prevent theft, but obviously they found some way around that. The book was taken not more than a few days ago. Interesting that nothing else was stolen."

This is obviously not coincidence but who would take it is a mystery. If the heroes ask the significance of the amulet, Filipe answers with, "From what I remember reading, if the fragments of his heart are brought together at place of his death, Amethyst can be brought back … and then the armies of order will have no hope against the power of his will."

Filipe doesn't know how many fragments there are or how powerful they have the potential to be. All of that was in the book. Limshau will also offer a 2,000 chryso reward for the book's retrieval.

TO FIND THE CHRONICLE

The Chronicle of Aurannis was stolen by thieves belonging to a techan mercenary company known as the Iron Sons, a cell-based organization and one of the largest and most successful free companies in the world. This cell operates out of the crumbling kingdom of Torquil, and is currently heading back to wait at their rendezvous in the abandoned keep of Zellis.

If the players inquire about the theft, Chenai is very forthcoming.

"The last people to look at the book were a pair of techans, judging from the way they were

dressed. At least, they were wearing techan-style combat fatigues. One sported a badge on his arm—a sun dipping below a line with a solid sphere of wrought iron below. They just flipped through the book briefly, then left without a word."

Techan history vocation, +2 (+3 for anyone else): This is the symbol of the Iron Sons. They operate across the continent, but most bastions technically classify them as a terrorist organization, so they operate like a secret society, soliciting contracts privately rather than advertising their services. Rumor has it that a major cell is operating out of Torquil.

If nobody is able to make the above check, they are directed to the lead custodian in charge of the investigation: a human, ***Robin Hataori***. While he suspects the Iron Sons to be responsible, he is unable to track them beyond the city gates, having ascertained from the gate guards' registers that a group of five arrived in the city four days ago and left again the next day, heading west. Among their equipment were several disruption muffler bags, which any techan in the party realizes could be used to shield the chronicle against magical alarms and scrying. Hataori presently lacks the manpower required to track the Iron Sons and has been engaged in research to try to narrow down their possible destinations: if the heroes offer to help, he can be invoked on the above check. On a success, Paraerra-sensei suggests that Zellis keep is the most obvious destination, as it is the closest. On a failure, Hataori is only able to suggest that the heroes may be able to pick up the trail again in Antikari.

If the heroes note that it seems odd to entrust the recovery of a valuable tome to a bunch of perfect strangers (especially if they are techans), Hataori tells them that he has perfect faith in their abilities and trusts to their word and the offer of the reward to bring them back once they've found the thieves. After they leave, he also dispatches two custodian apprentices to follow them secretly and make sure that the book comes back to Limshau. These shinobi are too well trained to be noticed by the heroes and will not intervene overtly: their only purpose is insurance (and to take over the mission should the heroes fail).

SECTION 3: SHADOW OF TORQUIL

From Limshau to Zellis is two weeks by horse, one week by ground vehicle, and four days by air. If they are certain of their destination, Hataori will commission a thermal to transport them to Antikari: otherwise, Paraerra will offer to hire them horses and sufficient stores for the journey (if they have their own transport, the offer of supplies still stands). If they are tracking the group via ground travel, the journey is much longer but would be an opportune time to insert one or two random encounters.

THE JOURNEY

If traveling by land, the group keeps to the Continental Cross for most of the journey. The cross is a beaten path that connects the bastion of Angel, through House Antikari and House Orchis, and finally to Limshau. The highway is inconsistently paved, being little more than a wide dirt road in some places, gravel in others, even asphalt in a few, depending on the resources available to the house or kingdom that maintains that stretch. The road is commonly used by thousands of people. A traveler can count on at least three encounters with fellow wayfarers or caravans every day. Wandering shops sell trinkets from the backs of wagons. Some carts stay together for protection, creating nomadic markets that roam the road, never straying apart. The most well known is the Arciducha, a caravan of 35 wagons selling fine clothes, rare foods, and even protective lodging between Antikari and Gnimfall, usually staying near Limshau borders, where the road is patrolled more frequently. When the group reaches Antikari, they easily pick up the trail of the Iron Sons, which requires them to break from the road and push through Crax.

CONFLICT: PUGG RAID

Swarms of puggs storm from the forest in waves.

PUGG SWARM +2
(x5, approximately 40 puggs)

1☐ 2☐ Min

Good At (+2): Charging.

Bad At (-2): Practically everything else.

Bloody Innumerable: If the pugg swarm and its allies outnumber the opposition, it gains a third stress box.

'Swarm' is the term used to describe any number of puggs between 'five' and 'too damn many.' They have no tactics – they just charge, possibly crushing their own front ranks in the process. Puggs are cowards at the best of times, and refuse to attack unless they have overwhelming numbers on their side (or are so hungry they forget themselves, which is more common than not). They will gang up and swarm one enemy at a time, biting, scratching and kicking until it comes down.

After three days through Crax, the group pushes through an opening into a huge valley, where they can see the majesty that once was Zellis Keep.

THE TOWER OF ZELLIS

Read or paraphrase the following:

The peak holds just enough room for the keep constructed atop it. Many of the battlements overhanging the cliff point down rather than across. The outer walls and towers curve at every corner to deflect siege works, though no ballista, catapult or trebuchet could reach this height. Only cannon could breach these walls. Battlements circle the keep with three rows of

embrasures atop each other. Hundreds of arbalests could rain straight down with gravity as their ally. Buttresses from the sides of the mountain rise up to join the walls of the castle. Most likely, the same construction of the mountain catacombs was employed in the building of the fort. The blackness of the entrance is reflected in the outer wall of the keep, formed of huge slabs to prevent handholds. The construction must have taken the kingdom a king's lifetime to complete. Those who planned its construction never lived to see its completion. Now, moss and weeds have crept up the sides and breached the indestructible walls. Grass pushes from arrow slits. Most of the castle has crumbled into ruin.

As the group reaches the base of the tower, read or paraphrase the following:

Though the wood rotted a century ago, the massive opening still remains, three storeys tall. The main door sits at the back of a thirty-foot corridor into the side of the mountain. The lintel above, carved from polished limestone, took an army to lift into place. It stretches from the doorframe, across the ceiling, sticking out of the entrance just far enough for a pair of weathered soapstone dragons, no bigger than a man, to perch, greeting those who entered. Their wings have long since broken to stumps, the gems encrusting their eyes stolen. Both walls around the architrave are divided by intersecting lines, opening squares wide enough for a man to reach to either end with his fingertips. Several engravings fill a few openings. At least two show bears, one foraging on all fours, the second rearing back to ward off enemies. Another image is of a great spread-winged eagle. A few others show animals lesser known, spawn species finding form after the wave of magic swept the globe: short, squatty puggs, flightless cockatrice, and various boggs.

There is significant damage to the entrance door, having broken from all but one hinge, opening the inner chamber to the light outside. As the players enter the keep's entrance, they spot three fresh corpses. Everything of value from weapons to gear has been stripped.

Overcome +2: A close examination reveals deep slashes across their chests, most likely from a talon rather than a knife. What remains of their clothing indicates a techan origin but anything more than that is a mystery.

There is a shaft of light coming from up ahead but the passage between entrance and light is long and dark. When the heroes reach the shaft, read or paraphrase the following:

You reach the light. Cylindrical and wide enough to fit an adult dragon, the shaft carries up through the entire mountain to an opening to the sky. There might have been glass or shutters at the top, but no longer. Unfiltered daylight glints off the embedded crystallized chips within the granite. The bouncing bands are visible through floating dust. Stone and wood beams run across the shaft, climbing up the sides all the way to the light. The sound of sporadic rain dapples to the ground level. A spiraling pathway orbits the tunnel to the top. The path is wide enough for a two horse-drawn carts abreast.

The crossing beams of wood and stone form part of a complicated pulley system, connecting by sprockets and chains to a warped wooden gondola suspended halfway up the shaft. The system is surprisingly well maintained and complicated, using the pulleys as a way to lift the gondola instead a bulky counterweight. It even appears automatic, requiring no slaves to strain in its use. If anyone attempts to use it, the entire construction will fall apart, raining wood and steel to the base. Everyone underneath is subject to a **+1 attack.**

The collapse ricochets and reverberates through the entire mountain. Unfortunately, the heroes must climb all the way to the keep above.

THE KEEP OF ZELLIS

Timetable: The climb is lengthy. No matter what happens as they ascend, the group arrives at the peak near sunset.

AREA 1: GARDENS

As the heroes reach to the top of the passage, read or paraphrase the following:

To slowly crumble through centuries is not a fate fitting for such a keep. The granite stone of the castle will take eons to fall to dust. The potential for recovery still lingers in its foundation. Yet, no one has come to claim its prize. The fragments of House Torquil have enough problems maintaining their keeps in the south; other free houses are too far east. Not to mention, the new tenants would also need to act graciously to the chaparrans of nearby Dawnamoak. But even considering the costs of maintenance, it's still quite the treasure in itself, rivaling anything stolen from its coffers since the empire's collapse. The surrounding lands are plentiful, and once cleared and secured the keep could be a stout defensive post. All one would need is ambition, masses of loyal indentured workers, and an army large enough to daunt neighbors.

When you burst into the late afternoon sun, you are greeted by a moss- and weed-plagued court. There had been glass covering the shaft at one point, and thick shards still jut from the sides. This beautiful court would have been cov-

ered with flowers and short grass surrounding a glass-covered pit where one could peer down into the bowels of the nation. Around the perimeter of the court, which fills half the peak, several broken windmills shudder rather than spin in the breeze. Across the field, you can see what remains of the keep itself.

Your attention, however, is diverted elsewhere as more than a dozen figures on the other side of the pit notice you and begin to approach. They wear loose mail and old blades but their cloak of velvet black appears cared for. Up the path to the keep, a roar bellows like a trumpet out of the entranceway. Under the shade of the keep, you see only the massive torso of a form twice the height of any of you.

Zellis is one of many abandoned castles and forts in the failed kingdom of Torquil. This one fell into darkness when a shemjaza attempted to seduce one of its two lords. Rejected, the demon set loose the shapeless wild upon the population. Most died in the carnage, others rose up as shapeless as they slept—a side effect of the curse the shapeless bring with them. Cultists followed, believing everlasting life awaits those that allow the shadow to embrace them. They are led by a necromancer, Katho Kovacs, who believes he has found a way to control the shapeless in the shemjaza's stead. Many of the shapeless are still here, hiding until night falls. Kovacs had been waiting outside the keep for sacrifices and found them when the Iron Sons arrived on their own business. Most of the Iron Sons have already fallen victim to the cultists.

The beast at the entrance to the keep is a kodiak the cultists have tortured into servitude and now guards the keep.

CONFLICT: SHADOW CULTISTS

The cultists are west and south of the pit. While most engage the heroes, at least one will run north to free the kodiak. The cultist requires two rounds to free the kodiak, though he is killed immediately after by the beast (only Kovacs can control it). It enters combat the following round.

DISCIPLE OF KOVACS +3 (x16)

Shadow Cultists

1□ Min

Good At (+2): Knife fighting

Bad At (-2): Keeping their footing; collaboration.

Martyrdom: Whenever a Disciple of Kovacs is taken out, the next Disciple to act gains +1 to their action.

All the cultists are human. They wear black robes that slightly restrict their movements and wield ritual daggers.

The cultists hope to take the group alive, and tie them up until night arrives. Shapeless don't attack those sleeping or restrained, preferring to let their curse produce more of their kind. As the victim sleeps, their soul is devoured by a shadow that withers the body to dust and emerges fully formed as a shapeless. The cultists wish to join this order, believing their souls are reborn as immortals. Their leader believes he can control the wild and is hoping to create an army of shapeless under his control.

All this information can be retrieved by careful interrogation of a captured cultist. These cultists are loyal to Kovacs but are apprehensive about dying, since this will prevent them being reborn as shapeless. If the fight goes badly and the disciples are unable to break the kodiak free, they will attempt to push past the kodiak and alert their master.

AREA 2. GATE GUARD

Read or paraphrase the following (ignore the second paragraph if the kodiak entered combat in the first encounter):

The massive oak gate doors lie slightly ajar, creaking in the wind. A portcullis has long since rusted and fallen to broken bars upon a granite path. The doors do not sit at the top of the stairs but a distance underneath an overhanging round archway thirty feet up. Unlike the rest of the keep, this construction has survived time with every impost still standing. The painted white stone has flaked from weather, creating a speckled finish. Two doors, nearly the size of the main entrance, stand to your left and right.

The beast you saw before waits for you to step closer. A tortured kodiak hurls phlegm from a tongueless maw, rough and jagged. Its grey and black fur covers every inch, right to its black claws. Still primitive, many kodiaks have been exploited by more intelligent beings for their strength and brutality. This creature has been scared and tormented, broken and brainwashed into serving its captors. The once-proud warrior that could rise to its hind legs and hold onto tools with its claws has been reduced to nothing more than vicious guard dog.

CONFLICT: GUARD BEAR

The kodiak can move within reach of every door but not beyond the archway. Every round it is injured, it can make a +2 overcome check to break its chain. If it does, nothing will prevent it from trying to kill everything it sees.

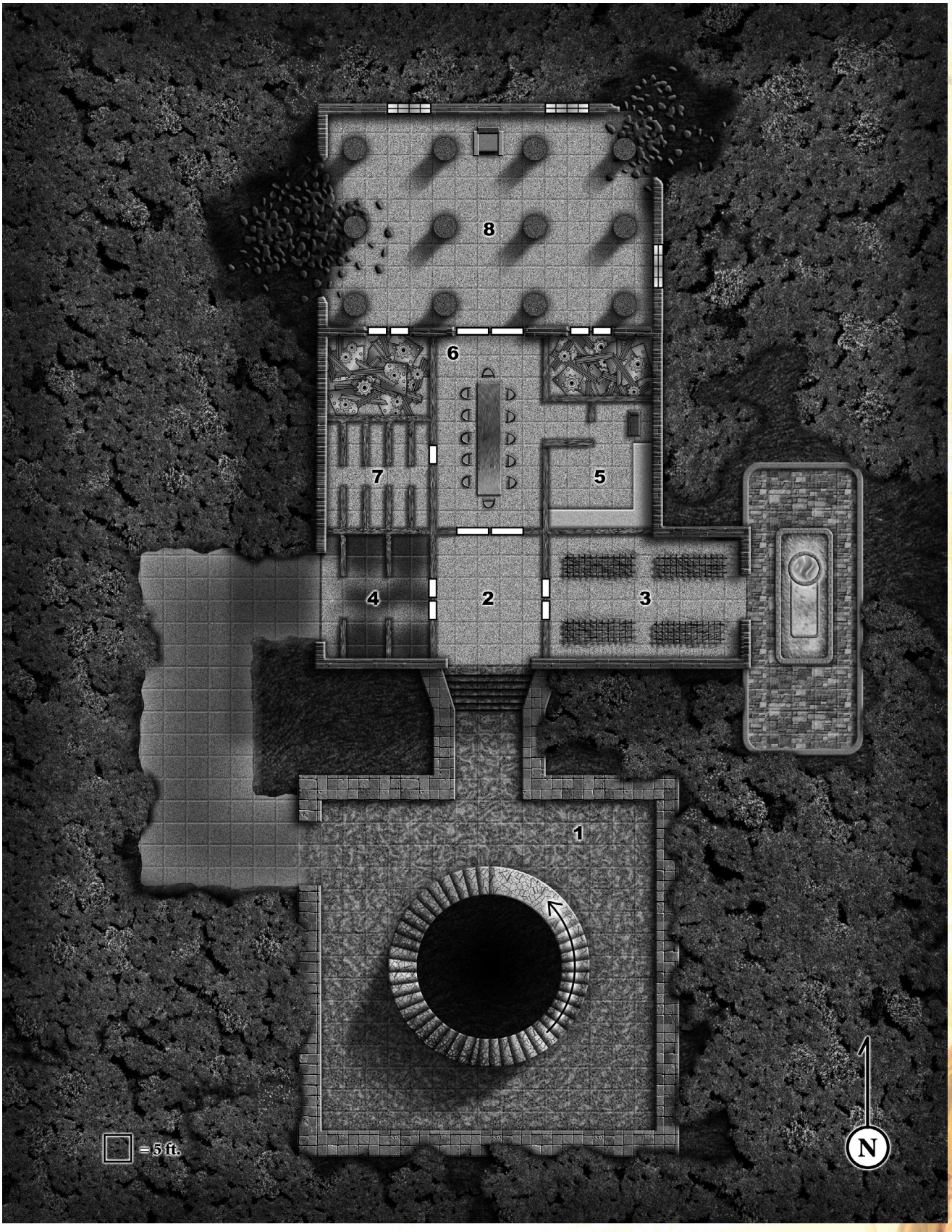
BROKEN KODIAK +4

Big Claws and Teeth

Gear: ***Rusty Broken Iron Chains***

1□ 2□ Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Fighting with natural weapons; berserker rage.


8
6
7
5
4
2
3
1
= 5 ft.
N

Bad At (-2): Strategy and tactics.

Ravenous: The kodiak brute can invoke its own consequences.

Unstoppable Onslaught: Whenever the kodiak brute invokes an advantage related to charging, attacking with its natural weapons, or berserker rage, the invocation grants +3 instead of +2.

The kodiak has been tortured and broken: it is now barely more than the beast from which it descended. If it breaks its chain, it charges mindlessly and attempts to take out its rage on anything within reach.

AREA 3. ATRIUM

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The influence of magic has had its way with the unmaintained plants of this garden. The atrium's glass roof has long since shattered and fallen to sharp fragments upon the stone floor. Four stone trellises in the room are overgrown by weeds and hanging ferns. On the opposite side of the room, it opens to the outside where you spy a moss- and algae-covered fountain.*

The horticulturist that saw after these gardens grafted together several bizarre species and had others imported from all over the world. Unmaintained for all these decades, they crossbred and basked in the chaos of Atricana and now have turned into a mass of killing writhing thorns that lash out to anyone trying to cross.

CONFLICT: NIGHT OF THE TRIFFIDS

The mass waits until the group is between the trellises before surrounding the group. There is one for each trellis. They drag victims to their trellis where they can be devoured slowly with caustic juices.

TRIFFID +3 (x4)

1☐ 2☐ Min

The triffid is a poisonous, mobile carnivorous plant. It feeds by injecting its victim with a paralytic enzyme that immobilizes the target, enabling the triffid to digest the creature with its poison-coated roots.

The fountain beyond is open the sky, outside of the keep. It is covered in mold and moss and the water is slick and sickening. A **+2 overcome check** will reveal one of the following (draw one card, each result only occurs once):

-4 or -3: A ***Jade Pendant*** (+2)

-2 or -1: A pouch with 4 Gold Coins, 10 Silver Coins, and a ***Fingernail*** (+1)

+0: ***Triffid Poison*** +2, 3 uses

+1: A ***Leather Scabbard*** (+1)

+2 or +3: A skeleton with 4 ***Gold Teeth*** (+2)

+4: A ***Potion of Major Healing*** +5

AREA 4: STABLES

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *The dozen horses the cultists had brought were once tied safely within the stables. Their bodies have been torn apart by the dark shape that refuses to show its form despite the light coming from the open stable door beyond. The shapeless form shifts and weaves under the bands of light cast through breaks in the wall. The creature casts no shadows. Its arms seem to vanish when covered by its body. Its eyes cast their own light, reflecting off matte silver claws.*

CONFLICT: NIGHTMARE FUEL

This is a shapeless wild that has woken early. Shapeless wild don't convert basic animals, only those with high intelligence. It immediately attacks. On round three, two more rise from a pile of hay.

SHAPELESS WILD +4 (x3)

Wrapped in Gloom

1☐ 2☐ Min/Mod/Maj

Good At (+2): Sneak attacks; causing fear.

Bad At (-2): Anything where there is more than dim light.

Hidden Ways: The shapeless wild can move any number of zones and ignores all obstacles to movement as long as there is a shadow in the destination zone.

Madness Given Form: The first advantage or attack action taken against the shapeless wild automatically fails.

Shapeless wild will always attempt to ambush, or otherwise take their victims by surprise. They teleport between shadows, keeping the enemy off guard and always reacting. When possible, the shapeless wild will gain combat advantage through flanking with one another. As creatures of Ixindar, shapeless wild do not generate EDF, nor do their attacks disrupt technology.

Characters checking the horses notice the excessive level of violence inflicted on the poor animals. A +1 overcome check will locate the pouches and saddlebags the horses had when they were killed. In one, they find ***30 Silver Coins*** **(+1);** in another, a fine black powder used in some more nefarious rituals. There is food in two bags, although it has been saturated by horse entrails. Further searching will find a Silver Chain (+1), a diary detailing the obsessive desire to convert to the shadow of one Ennis Carson, and a single ***Holy Dragon Scale*** (**+2**, but nobody is likely to trade for it). A **+3 overcome check** will find a ***Crushed Silver and Bronze Goblet*** **(+3)** under one carcass.

There is an exit here that proceeds down a small dirt path, all the way around the keep, to the pit stairwell.

AREA 5: KITCHEN

This is the main kitchen of the banquet hall. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *A large stone counter jutting from all the walls of this kitchen rests under a coat of dust. An open oven still has its spit and a thick layer of char and burned bone. Blackened chairs sat at either side of the spit for unlucky servants to spin. Anything else in the room has long since been stolen save for a few broken steel bowls and a hanging rack of cast iron cookware, black as oil and slicker than ice. At the far corner sits a pile of old bodies, withered and dried like raisins.*

The characters will have passed the chef's office (so he could check and double-check all the food that came and went). His papers are scattered, faded, and worthless. There are eight bodies in the corner, all naked and mummified to such a degree as to prevent any identification. They are decades old. Under the charcoal, a character can search against a **+2 overcome check** to notice a small black lockbox amidst the ash. It has a **simple lock (+2)** and inside, the characters will find ***Two Gold Wedding Rings*** **(+1)** and a ***Silver Pendant*** **(+2).**

AREA 6: BANQUET HALL

Read or paraphrase the following:

> *Instead of leading into a royal chamber, this keep opens directly into the banqueting hall. A long stained wood table extends for 25 feet down the length of the room. Worn but sturdy chairs surround the room. A large serving hatch connects the hall to the kitchen. A hallway beside the hatch leads to the head chef's office. Another door is closed on the opposite wall from the kitchen. Across from the entrance is an equally large set of oak doors, leading into the receiving chamber. Empty metal bars once held tapestries, and the nails in walls once hung paintings, but anything of value has been stolen. This makes the three bodies tied to chairs at the table all the more alarming.*

Despite being bruised and bloodied, these match the descriptions of three of the five Iron Sons thieves. They are not dead, only deep asleep, suffering from the curse of the castle. They cannot be awakened in any way, not even if they are injured. When night falls, the bodies will wither and shapeless will emerge. If they are aware of this, the players can kill the techans to prevent an ambush later, but it is too close to nightfall to get them out of the castle in time to save them. There are score marks in the floor, indicating the table has been moved often.

Treasure: The techans' gear is all still here and both echan and techan players can take what they like. The techan gear is still functional. ***Two Machine Pistols*** (TL0, only one with a clip with 30 rounds), three ***Battery Flares***, one ***Electric Torch***, one ***Lighter***, two ***Two-Way Radios***, three sets of spare combat fatigues, and 10 uc ***From Various Bastions*** (+1).

A **+3 overcome check** discovers a loose stone beneath the pile of gear. Under the stone is a pouch filled with ***20 Silver Coins and 50 Copper Coins*** **(+1)** and a letter written in English:

> *"If the sun sets, stay awake, lock yourself in. Bar the doors. Light torches about the room. Avoid the darkness. The shapeless will scrape and claw to get in. By day, defend the keep. Cultists want their offering and will kill those that try to leave. Only half of us sleep every morning while others fight. If you find this, look at the light. You live as long the sun still shines. By nightfall, be somewhere else. Don't bother praying for salvation. We tried."*

AREA 7: SERVANTS' QUARTERS

Read or paraphrase the following the moment the characters open the door:

> ***Echan:*** *Three loud bangs like thundercracks echo from the room as you open the door. Instinctively you pull back behind the frame. You noticed two humans inside but you couldn't see what weapons or magic they might have brought to bear. Three holes explode from the open door. This room seems to have been the servants' quarters and these poor souls appear to have been locked within for who knows how long. They don't appear in the talking mood.*

> ***Techan:*** *Three loud gunshots echo from the room as you open the door. Instinctively you pull back behind the frame. You noticed two humans inside, both armed with assault rifles with an obvious intent to use them. They don't appear much better equipped than you, but you don't know how much ammunition they have. This room seems to have been the servants' quarters and these poor souls appear to have been locked within for who knows how long. They don't appear in the talking mood.*

CONFLICT: IRON SONS SURVIVORS

These two men, David Stone and Martin Wood, represent the surviving members of the Iron Sons cell that stole the Chronicle of Aurannis.

IRON SONS SURVIVOR +3

Too Afraid to Be Afraid

1☐ 2☐

The survivors are sleep-deprived and well past the point of panic. They fire their assault rifles blindly at anything that moves, only stopping when they run out

of ammo or the weapon disrupts, at which point they struggle on with combat knives, fingernails and teeth. They must be subdued in order to get any sense out of them.

If either survivor is taken alive, the following information can be gleaned.

Overcome +1: He's obviously traumatized, but more importantly, he appears sleep deprived, which doesn't help matters in the slightest. They were probably ambushed in the receiving room or banquet hall. Given that his friends have yet to turn to the shapeless, he's only been locked in here for a day or so. Perhaps these two locked the other two out when the fight became too severe and they made a decision which cost the team.

Healing vocation, +1: He isn't physically wounded beyond the sleep deprivation, which appears to have been going off and on for the better part of a week. The heroes are able to stabilize him, but he needs sleep to properly recover. His lucidity may only be temporary. The heroes are not properly equipped to determine the long term psychological effects.

Persuasive vocation, +1: The heroes try to talk him down; assuring him they mean no harm. The heroes' appearance must have been initially alarming, but the offer of food and water helps greatly. Seeing the light outside has also helped.

Through his frantic speech and hyperventilation, he says the following: *"It-it-it was just a j-j-job. Taking the book was ea-ea-easy. Cake walk, good money, low risk, no w-w-weapons. They said h-h-here—wasn't our idea—they said here. Ok, w-w-why not."*

"I don't know. The general set it up. He got the c-c-contract. Whoever they were, they c-c-c-can't handle magic for very long. They said they were c-c-c-coming here to pick up the book. I-I-I c-c-can't fall asleep. They t-t-took it. The hoodoo and his flock, p-p-p-preparing for tonight. Don't be here. G-G-G-Got to g-g-get out."

No amount of diplomacy will convince the survivors to stay and help in the fight. If allowed to depart, they will flee without looking back, not even stopping to try to help their comrades.

AREA 8: RECEIVING ROOM

Read or paraphrase the following:

How magnificent this receiving hall must have been hundreds of years ago when two great lords welcomed anyone willing to trek up the mountain to request an audience. Now only fractured brick and decayed wood remains. The two thrones, once carved from oak and gold, sit in tatters, the wood rotted away and the gold long since been pilfered. Only stone feet, barely a foot high and embedded in the floor, remain. Tiles of jade checkered with marble have cracked with time and abuse. The thrones are not elevated. A stone table, shaped like a crescent moon, curves around the two chairs. Here, knights, businessmen, and landowners would convene to discuss affairs of the day. The room stretches a fair distance to the wooden doors at the entrance. Broken pillars occupy the remaining empty space in this dilapidated room. In front of the table, a dozen cloaked figures – the same as those you killed before – silently kneel before a taller man gleaming in silver and platinum plates. His complexion is perfect, his smile charismatic. He appears like a noble, beaming with allure and chiseled features, but his eyes give away his lack of virtue as he looks across the room to you. This is no knight, but a human monster.

"Do you grow restless, my children?" he asks. "You wish to waken anew. Cast off your mortality. All that is required is your desire. No bloodletting, no sacrifice. Just the will. Sit with us."
When the characters refuse, he concludes, "Then the shepherd must cull his flock." He then motions his followers to attack. "Alive if possible, let's be merciful." Of course, his brand of mercy involves forcing victims to slumber for the oncoming curse of the shapeless.

CONFLICT: COME JOIN THE FUN

The cultists will not attempt to kill the characters if they are taken out. If all the characters are taken out, then the cultists will stabilize and immobilize them. Characters may make a +2 overcome check after 10 minutes to rouse before the curse sets in, but their weapons will be removed and they will still be restrained.

KATHO KOVACS +4

Scary Nihilimancer

1□ 2□ Min/Mod/Maj

Nihilimancy: Kovacs can take an action to slay one of his disciples in order to gain +2 to his next action. Additionally, he has prepared the following Ixindar spells:

***Ashes to Ashes* (x2):** A target hit by this spell's attack takes 1 damage at the start of their turn until they overcome the spell.

Assembly of One: Kovacs clears one of his consequences.

Deliver to My Hand: All enemies in the same zone as Kovacs are stricken with Vertigo.

My Will Be Done (x2): When Kovacs is attacked, he can force the attacker to choose a different target in the same zone: if no enemy targets exist, the attacker must target an ally.

Kovacs is human, technically, but his mind is so tainted by Ixindar that he is completely impossible to reason (or even really communicate) with. He wields no weapons, preferring his dark magic.

DISCIPLE OF KOVACS +3 (x13)

Shadow Cultists

1☐ Min

Good At (+2): Knife fighting

Bad At (-2): Keeping their footing; collaboration.

Martyrdom: Whenever a Disciple of Kovacs is taken out, the next Disciple to act gains +1 to their action.

All the cultists are human. They wear black robes that slightly restrict their movements and wield ritual daggers.

The cultists will rush in to attack and protect their master. Apart from the furnishings already detailed, there is a pile of gear and treasure in the corner of the room, pilfered by the cultists as well as the other bandits and mercenaries that have frequented this keep.

Treasure: Although there is substantial treasure here, every piece retrieved takes an action. The most accessible are: one Suede Pouch with 50 ***Gold Coins*** (+2), two ***Linked Gold Rings*** (+1), four ***Short Swords*** (+1) in sellable condition, one random magic item worth no more than +4, and the ***Chronicle of Aurannis***.

PREDATOR AND PREY

Once only three or fewer cultists remain, or if Katho Kovacs loses all of his stress or takes two consequences, read or paraphrase the following:

> *All remaining natural light bleeds from the room. The shadows begin to grow long and fill the entire chamber. A few formless shapes rise from the casting blackness. Illuminated solid white eyes glint off the silver sheen of razor claws which slide and dance in the blackness, making you unable to see arms or shifting legs. As they emerge from the crevices about the room, whatever light still lingers refusing to reflect off them, they quickly close in.*

Four shapeless wild emerge from each corner and go about attacking both the characters and the cultists. Their first attack kills one cultist instantly, to impress upon the players that this is not a fight they can win. Every two rounds after this, one more shapeless emerges. This will continue until the heroes make their escape or are all taken out. Kovacs will attempt escape through the rubble in the west. If he makes it to the edge without pursuit, he escapes. None of his followers will survive. As the group passes through the banquet hall, the restrained techans transform into shapeless and attempt to block the escape. If the shapeless in the stables have not been killed, they emerge when the players pass that door.

When the heroes emerge back into the courtyard, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The sun has fallen and what few stars can fight against the glare of Attricana poke out from the curtain of night. Splinters of a few clouds thinly stretch out to the horizon. The black silhouette in the sky at first appears part of the night as it carries stars down with it.*
>
> *The vessel is taller than it is long, longer than it is wide, hovering just under the clouds and just over the trees. As a floating centurion, it dwarfs the mountains and the keep perched atop them. The Moon and Attricana bare their light through a temporary break and the glisten of the shape's metallic skin begins to twinkle. The top looks like inverted boat bigger than any ocean vessel ever seen. Underneath expands into gaping maw. The vessel is daunting in its profile—an overturned boat settling on a dragon's skull. Bumps and divots pepper the hull. No smoke escapes from the exhaust, no glow from idling engines. It hangs as if on wires suspended from heaven. Metal boarding ramps reach out; too thin to sustain weight at that distance, but without supports, the bridge doesn't bow, even as the first figures cross it.*

Six shapes under the shadow of the vessel scurry over, taking the keep in no time. The technological level of this group appears far beyond anything the characters have seen before. As their weapons dispatch the shapeless quickly, the players should make their escape. If they approach the interlopers, they will be fired upon. The first shot will miss and vaporize a nearby statue. Next round, if the characters have not taken the hint, fire a real shot (+4 attack). Any attacks by the heroes fail to do any damage even if they hit their mark: this is not a fight the characters should have a hope of winning.

As the players race down the tunnel, at least two shapeless will emerge behind them. As they reach the base of the shaft, two more shapeless will emerge below. The characters can fight or continue their escape. If the players had horses, they are still waiting outside. The shapeless will not pursue outside the keep if the heroes continue their escape. When the heroes have reached the edge of the valley, read or paraphrase the following:

> *The monstrosity pulls slowly away from the keep. It begins to lift to the sky, pushing through the threshold of clouds. Before the bottom jaw finally vanishes above, a small prick of light leaps from its point. It moves with precision to the keep. A brilliant flash strikes the landscape an instant before the wave of thunder reaches you. It shatters the peak and splinters the mountain as a hammer to a sand sculpture. Smoke and cinders covers what remains under the moonglow. Shards of grass fly like knives past your skin. The first trees lose their needles.*

The blast is not radioactive, only a destructive concussion wave. All characters must defend against a +2 at-

tack. The blast continues all the way to the forest, where it strips the needles and leaves off the trees. The keep, as well most of the rock tower, has been destroyed. Dust and pebbles are all that remains. If the players have not acquired the book, they can search through the debris.

Overcome +4 (one check per hour): The Chronicle is the only thing undamaged in the explosion, lying in the cleft of two shattered rocks that from a certain angle resemble a dragon's claw.

CONCLUSION

Even if they did not defeat Kovacs, they receive a ***1000-Crown Reward*** **(+4)** for his defeat if they return to Antikari. If they also recovered the book, the heroes can return to Limshau and deliver the book for the ***2,000-Chryso Reward*** **(+5)**, or they can take it to Paraerra-sensei before rendering it up to the librarians for the reward. He will open the book and read the following:

"Before the First Hammer, the greatest dragon—he of violet and lavender scales—gave up his soul to stop the encroaching darkness of Ixindar. It was Gebermach that wielded the demon blade Dogurasu, plunging it into the dragon's heart, ending the mortal life of an immortal soul. In his final scream of defiance, this dragon of violet and lavender scales brought down a mountain upon Ixindar and orphaned the world to science. The impact that followed closed the world from magic. Before that instant, the crown of this dragon fell upon the ground. It was shattered, scattered, and forgotten.

"Amethyst was the living deity that forged the first world before it was our world. Before the Hammer. Before science had its reign. And there are others … all infused into artifacts by owners since passed and forgotten. As they bond to their owners, or as they are brought closer to other fragments, their powers amplify. Eight they are in number. They have earned names across various kingdoms.

"Amethyst opened the first gate, or maybe he was inescapably connected to it. To control them would be to control the fate of this world, and the fate of his soul. According to myth, to bring them together at the point of his death would allow one to call him back to life. And, in that moment, he could save the world. The power to open or close the gates is contained in these items. With Attricana gone, Earth would fall back to science, leaving man unhindered in his pursuit to retake it, but for Ixindar of course. Some of techa insist the gates are connected and with one goes the other: perhaps they are right, though reality is rarely so simple. Where these artifacts rest, dark souls converge. Those bound to science wish a normal world while those bound to darkness wish only to see it burn. It is to be hoped that those reading this are more moderate in their desires.

"To find the other artifacts means to seek out those brought to their knees by overwhelming evil. Seek out the greatest temples, the tallest towers, and the deepest dungeons. Seek out the vaults closed tight. Seek out the obsessions that drive men mad. The answers have been recorded. Somewhere, at some time, someone noted their presence … for they have already all been found. And no one would give up such power willingly or without compensation regardless of their motives. Bank on greed as your bitterest enemy and staunchest ally."

LEADS

Where the players go from here is up to them and you. They may continue this quest or continue with their lives. If they choose not to take on this responsibility, then Paraerra will offer an additional ***2,000 Chrysos*** **(+5)** for the relic and insist that the amulet stay in the city (if they refuse, it is stolen from them within a week of leaving Limshau, by high-level custodians who leave no sign of their presence and are not detected, regardless of how good a watch the party keeps). This would be the opportunity to plan out the campaign with some clues … or leave the quest hanging for now to allow the players the chance to develop their characters with other adventures until the quest calls upon them again.

The Echan Terrain Vehicle wasn't a simple pantherbike but scrambler, all thirty feet and forty tons of it. It rolled on six thick-treaded, steel-sidewall run-flat tires, each ten-feet across. Twenty high-intensity discharge bulbs breathed a swath of light across the clearing. The vehicle had a center pivot separating the engine cluster from the cabin, allowing it to navigate around tight spaces and keep its drive train insulated from magical disruption. Despite the layers of padding, the vehicle still needed servicing every thousand miles; magic always found a crack to work itself through. This specific scrambler had a battery of photovoltaic cells glued to the roof for additional range.

Aiden followed the other passengers to the entrance, the last to climb the steps, and the only one to notice the black wooden arrow shaft embedded in the side of the vehicle. It had caved a crater in the panel twice the size of Aiden's head. Aiden motioned to the scrambler captain, a thin man with neither a nametag nor hair. "Uh...excuse me?" Aiden called out.

Hairless looked up and followed Aiden's eyes to the arrow rooted in the plate. At first, Hairless was unsure

what had drawn Aiden's attention. The arrow was obviously an annoyance that had paid him no mind when it occurred. He stepped up to Aiden's level and reached out to grab the exposed shaft.

"Oh don't worry about that," Hairless said as he strained against the arrow. "Picked it up on another run."

Aiden nodded and placed a foot inside the cabin. He immediately noticed the still sharp and polished bodkin sticking an inch into the compartment. That made him uneasy. Aiden leaned out again. "Aren't these hulls armored?"

"Six inches."

"Who?" Aiden started. He glanced inside, following the shaft through the foot-thick sandwich of kevlar, steel, carbon, titanium and plastic. The arrowhead had kept its point unbroken through the armor. "I mean. That's clean through."

Hairless moved in closer as he pulled hard against the wood. "Look..." He pulled hard and the shaft finally broke free. "Don't worry yourself, and don't scare the others. We're not going anywhere near them on this run. We'll be a minute covering this up. Gotta keep the chaos out." Aiden nodded timidly and entered the cabin.

The seats were of little comfort but a world apart from a horse's back. The crew sat on the deck above and seldom came down. Aiden didn't introduce himself to the other passengers, offering them only a nod and indirect eye-contact.

The older couple and their prepubescent child, all dressed in tatters, must have been stranded outside the wall for years before affording the tickets to return to a world they tried to escape. The two adult men opposite of the cabin were obviously brothers; one lost in music from headphones, the other reading a tablet computer. Both looked naïve with polyester pants and rayon jackets, probably fated for Salvabrooke, the vehicle's penultimate destination.

Salvabrooke was an adulterated sampling of the outside world, watered down and sanitized for ignorant outsiders, a secluded enclave with few predators and legal brothels, all run by welcoming fae.

The scrambler produced a canine-like yap, followed by further woofs as the engine's various electric motors activated. The growling increased to a whine and the vehicle launched with surge that tossed loose bags about the cabin. The vehicle moved at the pace that technology found comfortable.

It was a cumbersome machine, flattening unscarred terrain, marking its path with uprooted vegetation. The trees fell out of focus at this speed. Aiden couldn't hear anything; the vibrations in the suspension transmitted its noise through the frame of the vehicle.

The grey wall of Angel faded behind, and Aiden felt an unexpected level of anxiety wash over him. Would the dragon save his life again if he were in need? Its name was Genai, a title the city within the city took in tribute. Every time Aiden approached the pagoda atop the pyramid where Genai was rumored to reside, he was shooed away by the sentinel monks.

"If you walk from this city, from these walls, you will always be a child. You will always live in your fantasy." Martin's words came back to him as Aiden closed his eyes and imagined what and whom he would find. No dream would do it justice. No fantasy could be too extreme. Anything he could think of was real. Why would anyone want anything else? Was the library city of Limshau encircled by a pristine white wall? Was there a marsh that marked the corruption of a fallen human kingdom? Were there faerie shapechangers that would marry a man if he stole their scarf?

At first Aiden thought the quick thuds outside came from loose stones on the road or tree branches scraping across the scrambler. Aiden looked out the window and made out a squatty humanoid shape with a fat head losing ground in its pursuit of the vehicle. Aiden couldn't make out much more than that given the vehicle's speed. The creature hobbled clumsily, a bundle of rock-tipped spears under its arm. Another creature appeared ahead, poking up from behind a bush, launching similar projectiles ineffectually against the reinforced hull of the vehicle. Unlike the refined arrow Aiden had seen embedded in the scrambler previously, these had no possibility of penetrating the ETV. Not even the run-flat tires could be pierced by these weapons. Nevertheless, to quell passenger concern and possibly just for the thrill, Aiden heard the high-pitched oscillating mechanical buzz of the techans' retaliatory response.

A second later, a torrent of chemically propelled projectiles sheared a path across the horizon, cutting down the fae and any other wildlife unfortunate enough to get caught in the crossfire. A half-dozen more shapes emerged from cover, unafraid of the gatling gun's onslaught. The fae deflected their ineffective spears off the tires and windows. The vehicle shuddered a moment and the passengers all jumped from their seats as the scrambler flattened an obstruction.

"Holy shit!" The driver's voice resonated from the top level. "Did you see that? Head came off from the jaw!" The other passengers were terrified. Aiden was still glued to the window. There were two more collisions as the fae were torn apart under the tires. One leapt up and pounded its head across the door. Aiden jolted back from the window as a bloodied hand thumped across it. Aiden still couldn't catch the details though he was pretty certain the creature had a smile that ran ear to ear.

The attack ended as quickly as it began.

"Don't worry, folks," Hairless voiced over the intercom. "Nothing we haven't dealt with a dozen times before." The scrambler continued without incident through the remainder of Cyon.

* * *

Several hours later, just outside the forest, Aiden heard the whining of a failed bearing. The vehicle surged then decelerated, bucking the passengers inside. A small pop echoed from the cockpit above. Clear English curses followed and the vehicle stopped. Hairless jumped down from the upper hatch and opened the lower door from the outside.

"What's the problem?" Aiden asked. Hairless

snapped open a hand-sized plastic container and pulled out a disc-shaped piece of plastic. It was red around the edge and white in the center. He placed the disc close to one of the passengers, but nothing changed, then to another with the same result. When the innocuous plastic approached Aiden, the red expanded to fill the disc. Hairless brought the sensor down and seized Aiden's collar roughly.

After being tossed to the dirt, Aiden shouted, "What's the matter with you?!"

"Son of a bitch," Hairless snapped. He grabbed Aiden's bag and dropped it abruptly on the dry crimson soil. "You book my ride and don't bother telling me you're magic?"

"I'm not!" Aiden glanced at the other passengers. They stared back at him, confused, angry, and scared.

"That ident card even yours?" Hairless snapped as he took a step to the fallen boy.

"You can't forge those!"

"Where is it then? What you got on ya?" Aiden sat there, unable or unwilling to answer. Hairless kicked Aiden's shin. "Where is it?" Aiden fumbled in his pack and drew out his spellbook. He might have yet to turn, but the words and Chen's spark hidden inside were still enchanted. "You got to be kidding. You want to be a wizard?"

"Yes," Aiden muttered almost to a whisper.

"From a bastion?"

"Yes," Aiden answered more resolute as he got back to his feet. "What's wrong with that?"

"The hell's your problem?"

"I'm not a radiant. I haven't turned."

"Regardless, you're walking now. Back or forward, your choice. Forward's safer."

Aiden looked to a barren gravel field, the bushes and the scattering of short trees. "This isn't Antikari."

"We're at the border. Safe out of Cyon."

Aiden's eyes wandered around at the expanse. It was nearly a desert. Echa had a tendency to glorify extremes. Woods to wasteland, plains to peaks, with hardly a bush or hill to mark the transition. Aiden could see a dark patch of forest at the edge of the horizon. "There's nobody here."

"Don't care," Hairless replied as he closed the lower door and began scaling up the ladder to the upper hatch. "Soil my machine with what you got. Should've taken a wagon."

"I didn't think it would break down. Honestly. I thought these were insulated?"

"Only from the outside. You could blow the whole works with a spell if you were stupid enough." Hairless opened the hatch and sat in the copilot's chair. He stuck his head out. "No need to be too scared. Boggs rarely migrate this far from cover. Just keep your eyes open for puggs."

"Puggs?" Rodents of the fae tree, a wingless locust swarm, a growing infestation that plagued the land. If found alone or in small numbers, puggs were no better than rabid dogs, dogs with fingers to hold any weapons they found. Aiden had read stories.

"Oh, don't worry," Hairless replies. "A swift kick usually kills one. You've a gun or a blade?"

"Blade," Aiden answered. It wasn't much. Minx made him carry one. It wasn't more than a dagger; it was off balance, not very sharp, and not worth enough to be stolen. Aiden had desired one of the untarnished swords from Chen's collection. Brandishing it confidently against an opponent was effective if it was held right. He never really held it right.

"Know how to use it?"

"Not really," Aiden mumbled.

"Well…neither do they." Hairless went to close the door.

"Which way!" Aiden shouted.

Hairless poked his head out and pointed. "The road, eight hours. Make good progress, you'll beat nightfall." Aiden's head followed the man's point to a river of mismatched rocks that wound under a skeletal canopy of leafless trees.

"That's a road?"

"You expecting golden bricks? Just stick close to the path and pray it doesn't end." Hairless tapped his throttle and the engine belched. "At least this way, we don't have to detour. You were the only one going to Antikari."

"Glad I could help," Aiden muttered low enough to not be heard. Hairless closed the hatch and the vehicle lurched forward without giving its passengers time to prepare. The scrambler swiveled past Aiden, picking up speed after it passed, leaving a small cloud of dust in its wake.

* * *

It wasn't much of a road, but someone once strewn these rocks here with a purpose. The trees and bushes were pulled aside creating a path wide enough to accommodate a wagon. It was not an often used road.

Aiden kept his walk brisk. He didn't pass any travelers or found any evidence that there ever had been any for a hundred years. He couldn't see Angel.

Aiden wasn't sure why he had noticed the rock. It was a small round stone not unlike a million others on the path. It was smooth and grey with specks of black. It would offer a couple skips if tossed skillfully across a lake. It stood straight on a point against an ocean of flat brothers. Aiden reached down and picked it up. The bottom wasn't flat. He rolled his thumb across its surface and wondered how it found itself standing and how it could remain that way all this time. Was it chance or was it magic? Aiden placed the rock back. It immediately fell over. He tried again, but failed. Aiden finally kicked the stone casually off the path before continuing down the road.

* * *

Aiden was not on the Continental Cross--the moderately traveled highway that bisected Canam which he had read about. In order to save time, the scrambler crew had gone northeast and made Aiden walk south. Aiden wondered if it truly was eight hours or eight days at his pace.

Night fell with no Antikari. Aiden hoped to find gas-fed fires atop of posts and the revelry of rowdy humans behind tavern walls. When he entered the forest the road began to narrow. The light from Attricana beamed down from a cloudless night. Aiden could almost read by it. It looked as any star. It warranted worship as he imagined the constellations did when people could still make most of them out. Now this single brightness reigned orphaned in the night. It was not like the other stars. This star required no cresting backbone over the darkness to stay up. Aiden walked but every step was predicated by the dread of breaking a twig and beckoning predators. The canopy above was thickening, dimming the light as Aiden braved deeper.

The lake Aiden approached was almost inviting. He stared at its stillness, it's perfectly smooth skin. It unnerved him. He felt the wind but the water refused to obey. Aiden's mouth crumpled and he swallowed. His canteen had been emptied by dusk. He approached the beach slowly and unscrewed the top off the decanter. The strap fell off his shoulder and dangled precarious close to the mirrored surface. Aiden stopped before breaking the surface. He carefully pulled the canteen back. He was positive he'd read something about this, but he couldn't recall the details. He would rather be thirsty. Aiden backed from the beach and continued alongside, following the fading path. It led him back into the dense growth.

When Aiden began his journey, he had refused any working technology. No flashlight. The perky and loyal spark that hovered around him tried to settle his nerves by shining as brightly as it could, but even that only reached a few feet. The spark was only an aide in reading and lighting candles. In a pinch, it might be able to light a fire, but that could cost its life and Aiden wasn't prepared to cast it to oblivion just yet. He still had no capacity to make one on his own. Aiden kept his pace slow but committed as Attricana became nearly completely obscured.

The vegetation started to clear, instilling some momentary hope in him that the road would return. Instead, it opened into a small clearing dominated by a jarring and unbefitting metal tree. Vines had begun winding their way through the shell. A few charred segments of titanium sat behind it. Aiden recognized it as only the tail end of some great beast. Beast, Aiden had to get out his fantasy thinking. It was an aircraft, or was rather a portion of one larger than he had ever seen back home.

Aiden's spark knew it was important and buzzed around the silver hull, delighted that it was able to cast its own reflection. The tail had opened a hole in the forest canopy when it fell, breaking apart bushes and branches on impact. Aiden could tell it wasn't an Angel aircraft. There was something too faultless about the hull, perfectly smooth, without an exposed rivet or puckered seam save where the rest of the hull was torn away. The skin was a sword-thin carbon composite, a sandwich weave beyond the likes seen in Angel. A jagged opening offered Aiden cover from the elements.

He let his satchel fall aside and took a moment to eat. He unfurled the foil of an Angel nutrient supplement--500 calories of everything one might need in the wilderness, bound tightly in a pressed package of grains, nuts, and dried fruits. It was genetically engineered to maximize dietary needs without the pesky drawbacks of weight. It was supposed to be filling. It wasn't.

Still savoring the last few bites, Aiden began pushing through the fragments of debris around the crash. The faintest violet glow concealed in a broken crate caught his eye. As Aiden approached, he fell under the shadow of the steel sentinel, leaving only the purple light upon his face.

His hand rolled through fluttering pieces of snow that felt neither cold nor wet and refused to melt in the warmth of his hand. Sprinkles of the white packing foam fell onto the soil.

The item dropped to his knees; the violet light grew beyond a glint. The spark considered it competition and flew down to illuminate the stone as best it could. Aiden noticed four pearl-colored claws clamped around the outer edges of the unrefined jagged gem inset. The fingers of the lizard curled around back, not to form a hand, but to merge with other fingers. Two golden loops could support a chain if Aiden were inclined to flaunt the jewel from his neck. Such an item was jarring amongst the jagged metal and broken technology.

Aiden starred into the crystal.

He felt it staring back.

INDEX

Abidan aspects/stunts 186
Angel aspects/stunts 175
armor, light 251
armor, medium 252
armor, heavy 253
Baruch Malkut aspects/stunts 189
basic armor 232
basic chemical projectile 236
basic weapons 232
bastion exports 233
bonding benefits 81
book stunts 279
boosters 260
capacitor (mode) 236
caseless 236
chaparran aspects/stunts 46
Continental Cross aspects/stunts 192
corruption 282
creating magic items 285
crew-served weapons 265
currency 230
damaskan aspects/stunts 48
detonators 250
dire wolf 296
disruption events 228
easily concealed 237
echan terrain vehicles 266
effects of disruption 229
electronically stacked projectile 237
exo-armor, customizing 257
explosive 237
explosives, attacking with 249
explosives & aspects 250
Fargon aspects/stunts 195
gimfen aspects/stunts 53
falf-fae aspects 82
Finer Fire Pits aspects/stunts 197
fire damage 244
free houses aspects/stunts 198
Gear stunts 225
girallon 296
guided 237
human aspects 75
hobbies 88
injection effects 248
Ixindar spells 282
kodiak aspects/stunts 78
laudenian aspects/stunts 57
Kannos aspects/stunts 202
laser 237
lifepaths 88
Limshau weapons/armor 234
Limshau aspects/stunts 206
low-tech vehicles 263
magnetic accelerated 237
Mann aspects/stunts 177
manticore 298
minions 296
monster lore 303
narros aspects/stunts 60
nuclear 237
pagus aspects/stunts 63
pincher 237
plasma 238
range 238
resources 226
running standard monsters 296
Saegaar 281
Salvabrooke aspects/stunts 209
saturation point 281
self-propelled projectile 238
Seliquam aspects/stunts 210
Selkirk aspects/stunts 180
Sierra Madre aspects/stunts 182
shields 253
shield stunts 279
shotgun 238
skeleton 296
sniper 238
sonic 238
special gear 233
spell details 281
spider 298
staff stunts 279
starting gear 226
strix swarm 296
tilen aspects/stunts 71
treasure 226
universal fae traits 44
tenenbri aspects/stunts 66
totem stunts 279
universal 232
Wastelands aspects/stunts 214
weapon stunts 279
Wild aspects/stunts 213
York aspects/stunts 184

Appendix:
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Fargon
Deep Pass of Dianasc
Nankani Mountains
Selkirk
Alpinas
Quincx
Ocea
Seliquam
Appared
Sana
Locus Mallis
Plicato
Xixion
500 MILES
Angel
Antikari
Crux
Torquil
Dawnamcak
CANAM
After
The Second Hammer

Ashur
Azhi Dahaka
Dagron
Apocrypha
Kannos
Jancah
Abidan
York
Mann
Marsh
Continental Cross
Limshau
Limshau
Tranquiss
Skyrose
Okeanos
Orchis
Laurama
Baruch Malkut
Skepsis
Ogium
Faustis
N
Sierra Madre
The Gloam

Which side will you choose?
Which weapons will you wield?

Earth is torn between the order of science and the chaos of fantasy. These two worlds cannot mix. Venture into lands once claimed by skyscrapers and factories, now overrun by elves, goblins, and dragons. Choose your path and commit to the quest. Monsters will hunt you; machines will track you. No gods will help you; no prophecies will choose you.

The fate of the world rests with you.

This rulebook includes:

- A customized version of the Fate Core system for making strategic decisions with a deck of cards instead of dice.
- Eleven playable species, over two dozen unique cultures, and guidelines for creating your own.
- A customizable, profession-based skill system.
- Freeform magic inspired by popular fantasy.
- High-tech equipment from revolvers to railcannons, pickup trucks to powered armor.
- Mythological monsters adjustable to any level of challenge.

DFM
Dias Ex Machina

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