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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 meagrely 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

extra-chewy, 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 case wrap.

"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 might 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

It's real.

It's all real.

Amethyst is at its core a role playing game, one involving the clash of magic and technology. However, this conflict provides only the foundation from which many types of stories can emerge. In essence, the setting can be described as satire, with many of the assumptions of the fantasy genre open to critique or even ridicule. It can serve up to be allegorical, thoughtful, or just mindlessly entertaining.

The concept is simple: What would happen if a true-to-book fantasy setting was forced upon our real world? We read and watch stories speculating how society would react if that were to occur—and most of the time, society takes it rather well. In truth, there wouldn't be such a smooth transition as fantasy tropes affront modern society. There would be immediate repercussions, including social, political, religious, and philosophical. Would we welcome the world of fantasy into our lives or would we fear its very presence? For most, it would be the latter. Magic operates on its own terms, disobeying rules set by both nature and religion.

The future presented in this setting emerges from the world we know—a world where books and movies written about fantasy exist. Those that live in this new age saw firsthand what they had previously thought to be fiction. Some even rushed to embrace this new world, only to be devoured by the harsh realism that awaited them. They were not the architects of their own dreams. Nothing matched expectations. Even major religions had difficulty adapting to such massive shocks to their dogma?

And that wasn't even the worst of it. On top of this social dilemma came the issue with disruption. Magic is a chaotic system that overwrites itself on reality, disrupting many of the normal rules of the universe that technology requires to operate. Although this interference doesn't directly 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 technological advancement can continue. Those creatures born from magic have little choice on the matter, but those consequential to evolution can still choose which world to live in.

What remains of our previous society and its technology survive in cities resembling those of memory, though walled in against the encroaching magic around it. Inside are cars, central heating, refrigerators, and all the other conveniences of modern life. Outside, there be dragons. The fantasy world may be wondrous, but it is also real. People die from the simplest calamities. Monsters prey on the innocent and unarmed. Empires have risen, and in many situations, are controlled by new races claiming a foothold in a world previously dominated by a single species.

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? Will religion be allowed once again to define miracles? Or is this world better than the one mankind squandered?

Meanwhile, outside of these bastions of technology is a complex mythology with its own conflict, where the fantasy world is divided between two opposing forces. Magic is not a singular energy but a complex power emerging from two metaphysically contrasting sources, 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 sets anarchy against order, uniformity against unpredictability, and determinism against free-will. Where life needs a level of uncertainty to blossom, homogeny leads only to 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 dumb and many.

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 broke many acceptable rules regarding electromagnetism, gravity, and quantum mechanics. Scientists later deduced that this rip, called Attricana in the previous era, 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 it to survive. If Amethyst came before, then he would be the single exception to this rule. 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 referred to it as 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 a civilization.

Meanwhile, the elder races were witnessing a slow degradation of enlightenment. The fae were not evolving butdegenerating. Their descendants were begetting feral beasts. At the bottom of this inverted tree were uncultured boggs, violent skeggs, and veracious

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.

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 between the Earth and 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.

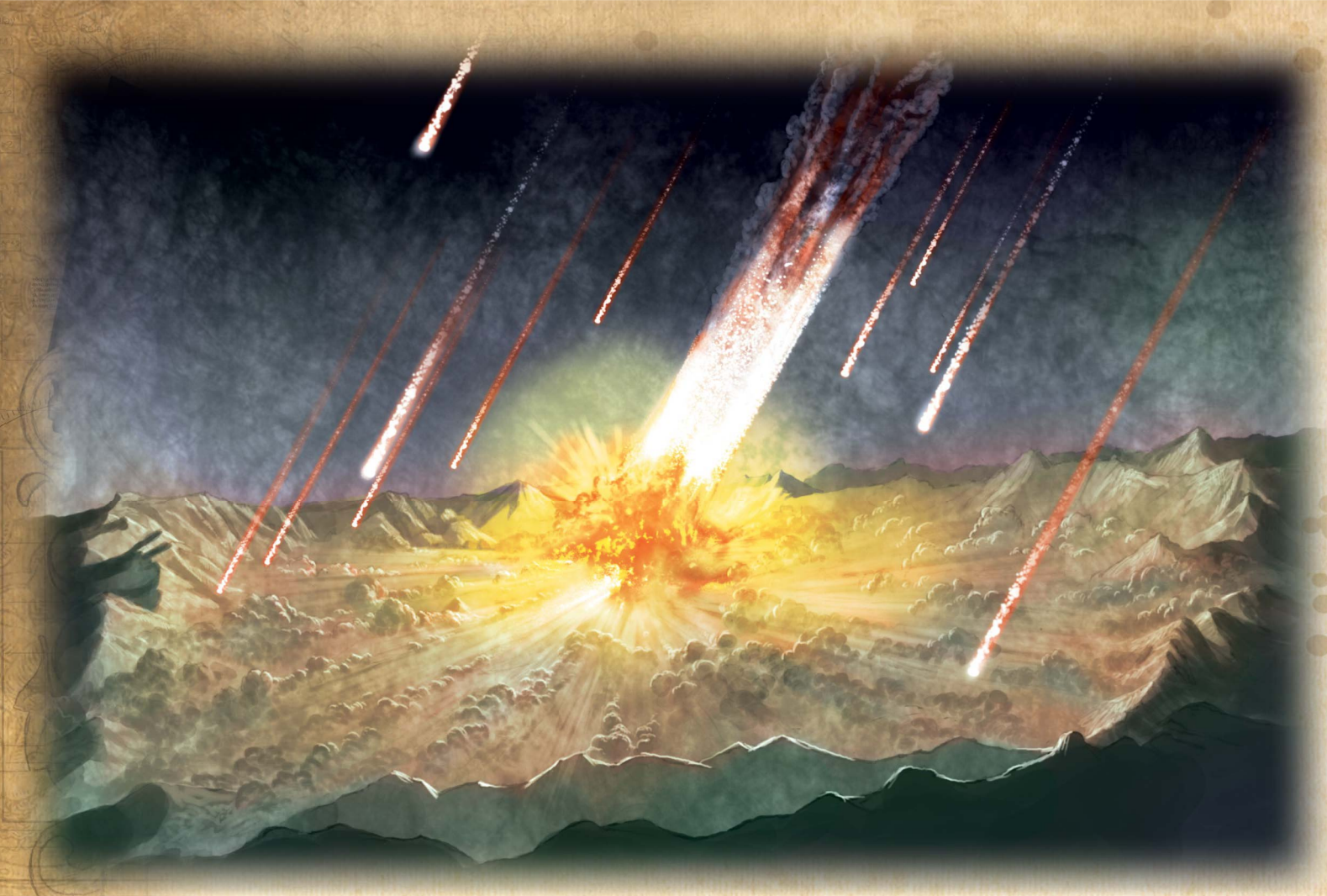
Chaparran. One of the oldest species of fae, who inhabit the woods and wild places of the world and are known as peerless archers.

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.

Damaskan. A younger branch of the fae, dedicated to the accumulation and preservation of knowledge and the principles of settled civilization.

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 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. Some still consider this ugly bastardization of 'enchantment' derogatory, but it is now too widespread to do anything about.



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. Many thought this would last forever.

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 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 separately sought 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.

Amethyst found himself surrounded by the soldiers of order. The general of this army, a 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, humanity told stories they 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 and religions. This influence from a time no human 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 a mermaid. Fantasies remained locked in the dreams of those living in 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. Ixindar opened, and some indeterminate time later, Attricana followed – but did Attricana's first stirrings perhaps provoke Ixindar's re-emergence, 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 is uncertain.

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 more desperate, the technology humanity 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 enchant-

GLOSSARY (Cont.)

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 enchantment disruption field prevents radio communication beyond a few miles, inhibits electrical conductivity and disrupts electronic circuits like an electromagnetic 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.

ment, 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, forests and fields. Monsters hide in dungeons and prowl in murky 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 are 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 into our 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.** Wizards utilize a script and dialect naturally imbued with magic. This language is called Pleroma—created by Amethyst and fluent only to his kin, other dragons. It is the power of creating something by naming it. Despite using Pleroma, wizards cannot claim complete mastery. The language is unique in that no magic can decipher it, probably as the script extends itself into multiple dimensions.
- **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 silent and unproven gods. Still, the rare priest or druid often finds no other reasonable explanation.

Religion does exist in *Amethyst*. Most are old—dating back through humanity's history—Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and the like. Others are derived, updated, or 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 or gods 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 can 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, 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 others 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, 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 few channel anything more than cantrips.

REQUIRED TO PLAY

Amethyst: Quintessence is a pen and paper role playing game utilizing the 5th edition (5E) of the first fantasy roleplaying game, the defining RPG of the last, current, and most likely next generation. The core books of that edition are required. This book was crafted utilizing those core 5E books and no others, as to not make the required list longer than needed.

Oh, and dice to. Totally need dice, all the standard polyhedrons. And pencils and paper.

Although numerous rules are referenced from these core books, none are reprinted or defined. A few rules (specifically referencing firearms) are expanded upon, but the original 5E rules are not altered. This book creates original material within the same rules structure while also attempting to honor the original game's philosophy.

GLOSSARY (Cont.)

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 positive 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 descendants, 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.

However, there are exclusions, specifically in reference to established setting elements presented within the 5E core books. As *Amethyst* is a different world in a different time, no setting elements from the 5E world will be found here unless stated otherwise. Notable examples include the races and many of the monsters.

A QUINTESSENTIAL TIME

The story of *Amethyst* involves a group of heroes from hopefully different nations, ideologies, and traditions, banding together to affect a permanent change to the world—a change which depends on said group's motivations. Despite some assumptions, this setting does not presuppose a certain party composition or motivation. It might not be about fantasy heroes fighting against the encroachment of technology or embracers of technology fighting against the chaos of magic; it may actually involve a mixed party reaching a compromise in order to fight a greater threat. This book (and other iterations for other systems) directly encourages romantic entanglements which can cross race, tradition, gender, and (new to this world) magical boundaries.

Amethyst deals less with the past and more about the present—about how the world is today. As such, very little is mentioned about the events which brought the world to this point: for most people living in the world, this information is either unavailable or, more likely, irrelevant. Even a character's history may be vague, pointing more to motivation than a detailed list of exploits and an itinerary of locations. At the beginning of this story, characters may not be unique or special in any way. No gods have smiled upon them and no prophecies have spoken their names. Their importance emerges from their actions as the game begins.

Amethyst also involves a story where the world eventually focuses upon the quest the players are undertaking, eventually leading into clashing armies and world-changing events. Humble origins may lead to legendary titles.

GENERAL RULES SUMMARY

Here is a general list of what to expect in *Amethyst Quintessence*:

RACES

As stated previously, no races other than humans are canon within the *Amethyst* setting. This book introduces nine, all inspired from folklore and mythology. Parallels between these races and those found in official 5E licensed products is unavoidable, as they were also pulled from folklore and mythology. Additionally, *Amethyst* also introduces race-based feats.

BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds function exactly as they do in official 5E licensed products. However, the ones presented here are more specific. Instead of three or four tables, *Amethyst* offers only one, but expands on it to create hooks in which to hang an expanded backstory and personal motivation. *Amethyst* backgrounds are often location or race specific and many list prerequisites. Unlike races, players are still open to select any backgrounds from official 5E license products as long as no specific setting is mandatory. Additionally, *Amethyst* also introduces background-based feats.

CLASSES & ARCHETYPES

Amethyst endorses many of the traditional fantasy classes one would expect to find, though some require conditions to be included. Others are expanded with new archetypes based on aspects of the setting. Specifically the fighter and rogue have numerous additional options.

In addition to these are ten new modern—or techan-based classes. These classes are not magical and often require technology to fully take advantage of their abilities. Unlike traditional classes, all techan classes list archetypes abilities at the same levels; techn archetypes are universal—they are not bound to one specific class, meaning you can pair any techan archetype with any techan class. There are more than twenty techan archetypes.

EQUIPMENT

Amethyst offers dozens of different weapons, armors, and general items across every level of technology. Tech levels denote how advanced an item is as well as its susceptibility to magical disruption. Unlike other core editions of *Amethyst*, in *Quintessence*, Tech Levels do not always equate magical bonuses. The firearm rules presented are an expansion of the basic ones listed in official 5E licensed products.

MONSTERS

Although many of the traditional mythological monsters are still present, many of the others have been replaced. The simple rule is if any creature can form a community with other similar creatures, they wouldn't be found in canon *Amethyst*. These races have been replaced, kobolds with puggs, goblins with boggs, and so on. Additionally, *Amethyst* offers its own flavor of dragons. Other new opponents include techan mercenaries and robots.

SKILLS & PROFICIENCIES

INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTER USE)

Knowing where the "on" switch is and understanding a point/click interface is a common skill expected of everyone. Computer Use specifically covers more advanced concepts like hardware modification, upgrade, and maintenance. Computer Use is also employed in

the researching of online materials. You can attempt the repair or modification of a computer, circumvent security, or use it to replace Intelligence (Investigation) when researching a subject.

INTELLIGENCE (DEMOLITIONS)

If proficient in demolitions, you can set and disarm explosives. This includes the planting of all manners of mechanical and electronic detonators. A successful check lets you place explosives to best effect and set or disarm detonators. Failure means that the explosive fails to go off as planned. The explosives are not lost. Failure by 10 or more means the explosive might go off (if it is an explosive that can) as the detonator is being installed. A failure with wiring explosives together means the extra wired explosives will not go off with the primary (See **Equipment**).

INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING)

This is the broad skill dealing with all applications of technology, allowing you to craft, modify, and repair devices. These include electronics, general machines, exo-armor, techan armor, techan weapons, and vehicles.

Crafting: Crafting technology deviates slightly from crafting mundane items. Not only are you required to be proficient in Intelligence (Engineering), but you also must possess the appropriate Engineering kit. If so, then you can expend 5 uc in widgets each day until you reach the market value of the item (this is called a build schedule). You must have widgets or parts on hand. Alternately, you can attempt to make an Intelligence (Engineering) check—the result -15 is how many uc you progress instead of taking the normal 5 uc each day.

The tech level of your engineering kit affects the speed of your build. If the tech level of the kit matches the item you are building, the build schedule remains 1 day for each widget investment. If the tech level of the kit is lower, add the difference to the number of days to your build schedule (if the item is TL 5 and you only have a TL 1 kit, it takes 4 extra days, 5 total, before you can expend more uc). If your engineering kit is more advanced, the difference is added to the uc you can expend on that day (it the kit is TL 5 and you are building a TL1 item, you expend 4 more uc that day). You cannot build other kits or medical injections.

Disarm Electronic Locks: When attempting to disarm a trap or break through a lock using an Engineering tool kit, you can use Intelligence (Engineering) granted you have a tool kit of at least equal tech level of the device you are trying to affect.

Recover Hit Points: You can take a day of downtime and make an Intelligence (Engineering) to recover the hit points of damaged items or vehicles. The number of hit points recovered is equal to the result of your skill check -10.

This value can be adjusted with an appropriate engineering kit. If the kit is more advanced than the item being repairs, add the difference to the hit points recovered. If the other way around, the recovered hit points is reduced (if repairing a TL2 item with a TL4 kit, you gain a +2 bonus to the hit points recovered—if reversed, it becomes a -2 penalty).

The repair cost in widgets for each day is equal the number of hit points recovered x 5.

Reverse Engineer: You can use the Intelligence (Engineering) skill to convert found technology into widgets to be used in the creation of other technology. Each attempt to reverse engineer an item takes six hours. Reverse engineering destroys the item being selected. The end result is you acquire one-fifth of the item's value in widgets.

Sabotage: You can use Intelligence (Engineering) skill to sabotage devices and vehicles. With this technique, you can inflict effects instantly or when certain conditions occur.

You can only attempt sabotage against a target which you can disrupt or incapacitate logically. The GM can refuse a sabotage attempt if you have no way of accessing vital components in the target. The GM may also require you to spend time gaining access to said components.

There are hundreds of different effects you can accomplish with sabotage. Effects last until the effect is repaired unless stated otherwise. Effects can be repaired by a contested Intelligence (Engineering) check or with specific solutions to each problem (breaking open a door instead of fixing the sabotage).

INTELLIGENCE (SCIENCES)

This is the general study of the applications of the unaltered rules that govern the real world. It deals with broad studies like Biology, Astronomy, and Geography and into further specific fields of expertise like Biochemistry and Astrophysics. Given enough dedication, you could earn grants and degrees, specializing in a field of study to better your species and the natural world. Being a top mind of the profession could enable you to unravel a genome or to design and build your own superconducting supercollider. This skill also allows the study of the differentiation between the ironclad laws of science and the malleable rules of magic.

You do not have to specify a field of expertise. This skill refers to a general knowledge of science. You use this skill for general scientific observations and to discern if an effect could be natural or magical. This is not a techan skill, but certain applications of it may only be available to techans.

INTELLIGENCE (REGIONAL HISTORY)

Regional History is a subset of Intelligence (History). You have proficiency when making checks in context of specific areas of the world: when dealing with immediately neighboring regions (or those with which your home region has extensive dealings), you add half your proficiency bonus.

- Abidan, Apocrypha, and Ažhi Dahaka
- Alpinas, Dagron, Seliquam, Quinox and Selkirk
- Angel, Crax, Dawnamoak, Torquil, and Xixion
- Baruch Malkut, Laurama, and Tranquiss
- Fargon
- Gnimfall, Mann, and York
- Kannos, the Finer Fire Pits, and Salvabrooke
- Laudenia
- Limshau, Orchis, Plicato, and Skyrose
- Sierra Madre, the Gloam

VEHICLE PROFICIENCY

If proficient with a vehicle, you know how to drive or pilot said vehicle and any situation. There are five types of vehicle proficiency—light ground, heavy ground, super-heavy ground, and aircraft, and watercraft. If possessing one, you know how to control all vehicles of that type. So if you ride one bike, you can ride them all. Although not entirely accurate given the broad range of technology seen across the world, this is a compromise to prevent clutter.

Routine tasks such as ordinary driving don't require a check. You only make a check when experiencing unusual circumstances (such as stormy weather or a slippery surface), performing a stunt, driving at high speeds, or if trying to operate a vehicle while being attacked or attacking.

If you fail a Dexterity check with a vehicle, you must suffer the consequences. This can include a second change to recover, a slide, or a crash. Some stunts are easy, and they neither require a skill check nor have consequences.

If you are crashing, you often lose control of your vehicle and cannot perform any checks involving your vehicle until the crash is resolved. In most crashes, you continue your remaining movement in the direction you were previously pointed. In others (like catastrophic jumps), you immediately stop your movement.

See **Vehicle Rules** in the **Equipment** chapter for detailed rules on vehicles and how they are controlled.

NEW FEATS

Amethyst also presents a handful of new feats. There are additional ones listed under specific races as well.

EXO-ARMOR PROFICIENCY

- Increase your Strength or Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You gain proficiency with techan exo-armor.

CROSSFIRE

- Increase your Dexterity or Intelligence score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Any ability you have requiring an ally within 5-feet of an enemy is now extended to any ally with a firearm within 20 feet of an enemy.

FIDGETY FINGERS

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- When crafting technology, the uc you can expend per day (or longer with a mismatched engineering kit) is doubled.

NATURALLY ECHAN DEFIANT

- Increase any ability score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on all disruption saving throws.
- The first time after a long rest that you suffer disruption, the targeted technology instantly recovers.

FIREARM EXPERTISE

- Increase your ranged attack ability score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You can reload one clip, magazine, or cell using fifteen feet of unspent movement.
- Before making a ranged attack with a firearm that you are proficient with, you can choose to take a -5 penalty to the attack roll. If the attack hits, you add +10 to the attack's damage.

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.

* * *

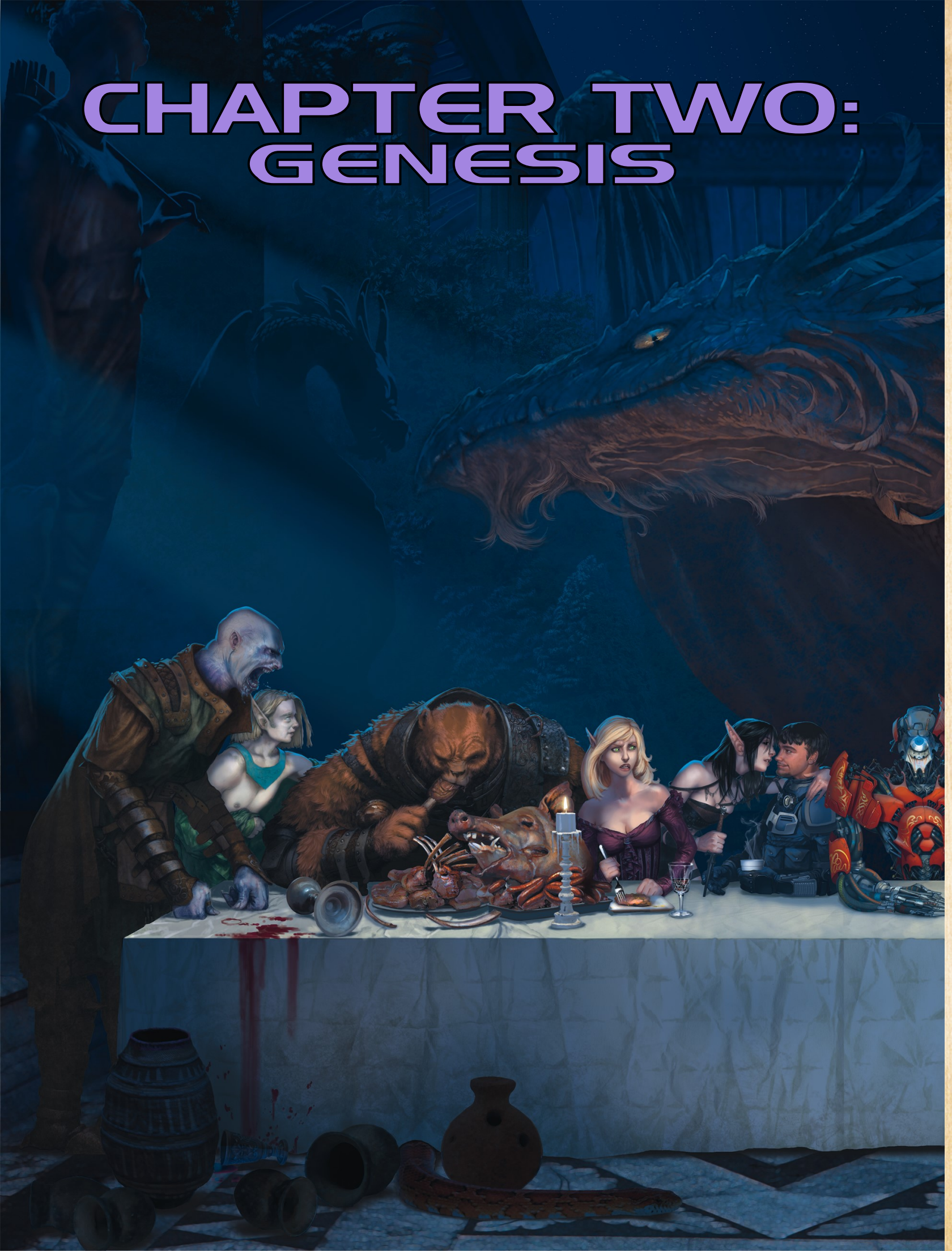
It was a week before Aiden could sneak out of his new house. He waited until everyone had settled. Their house was cast in an early night as the sun dropped behind the crown. Past 10:30 pm, Aiden saw the crack of light peeking under the bottom of the bedroom door go dark. He heard his relatives conclude 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 doubltful 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: GENESIS



Earth remains a crowded place. Millions of humans survived the holocaust they may or may not have brought on. 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. To this day, humans still often refer to them by these labels.

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 precisely. 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 fable. There are also creatures birthed from enchantment that are new to this era, possessing no history from the previous age.

The following races (or more properly, species) are broken up into three categories:

- **Fae:** These are naturally born from magic, with no original primordial form to track evolution back to. They began as the original fae (believed extinct), 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 peoples 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 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 race (at least on Earth) that has achieved intelligence without the assistance of magic.
- **Spawn:** Spawn are those 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 races 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 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 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 of how they were represented in human literature. Oddly enough, the traditional 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 it will be explained in more detail later, long after the dragons appeared in the world, the ancient fae appeared. These creatures

were humanoid, statuesque, and attuned to the ways of magic. As the dragons, the fae could comprehend and even manipulate the enchanted world around them; however, they were not masters of it.

Soon, the fae found themselves changing, but not for the better (in their eyes). Successive generations appeared unsophisticated, less enlightened, with decreased awareness on how to control magic. Despite their best efforts, the original fae eventually vanished, replaced with lesser races, who in time would begot their own lesser forms. This would ultimately result in the anathema—primal monsters, mere shadows of their ancestors.

Although the ancient fae have vanished, none of the successive races have, though some, like the laudenians, have dwindled dramatically. Modern 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.

Outside of the main branches of fae, there are two species still classed in the same company, though not directly connected to a parent species. These are the pagus and the tilen. The pagus appeared 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.

This leaves the tilen, a small group of vampires from the previous age that were forced from Ixindar to Attricana when the latter opened in the new age. Though the elder tilen—the original group—numbered few, their population has exploded in the centuries since.

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.

- *Body weight is shockingly low for the apparent mass of the body…*
- *An attempted biopsy of marrow from the scapula found the bone hollow. Interesting. Almost like a flying mammal. Will attempt another location.*
- *Other cavities located within the sternum and ribs. I know why birds have hollow bones, but how does a humanoid survive with a fragile…oddly enough the bone structure itself feel very rigid, stronger than expected, though still flexible.*
- *Bone mineral density test inconclusive, as it does not match with other findings.*
- *Finger bones also hollow but ulna and radius are solid.*
- *Final results: This fae's skeleton accounts for 8-10% of its total body mass, this is in comparison to an average human, where it is closer to 20%. In conclusion, this means this chaparran's skeleton is built more like a bird's than a human's.*

<Audio recording>
Autopsy on unidentified chaparran (excerpt), Angel
July 15th, 227 A.E.

RELATIONS AND TRADITIONS

Despite some common ground, there exist major cultural differences between human and fae. When the first fae encountered humans, they assumed that by understanding one group of men, they would 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 belief persisting 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 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 in any way, and tried their best to impress the elder elves, the humans' brash and unkempt nature fell afoul 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 has since found 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 animals, 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, narros, 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 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, while gimfen wipe sweat from their face before shaking hands. Waving one's hand to another is a greeting to many human cultures 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 peoples. 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 rarely bow.

Standards of politeness and decorum are also very different from group to group. Tenenbri are known to curse and swear loudly during the course of their daily affairs, while laudenians are encouraged to speak diplomatically even in private. While damaskans are reserved and frown on direct contact in public, chaparrans and tenenbri are generally exuberant and openly affectionate. 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, with notable exception again of the laudenians who take politeness very seriously and consider it 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 gen-

eral 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 (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 *acshomu*, 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 humanity 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 yet, many fae nations maintain a positive relationship with humans in spite of the massive casualties the fae suffered in the first century as well as their capture and enslavement by raiders and evil nations, a practice as prevalent now as it was when it began 250 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.

Studying sample 345B
Subject: Larena Senarius, Damaskan (Volunteer)

Analyzing sample discovered a standard long polymer of nucleotides in a double helix configuration. Initial investigation found the helix to be super coiled. Twenty-three pairs of chromosomes were identified. However, chemical imperfections have been located along several pairs. A few nucleotides are missing in key areas for life to sustain itself.

Defects have been detected on the adenine, thymine, and cytosine. Five copying errors have been located, leading evidence towards extensive somatic mutations of a severe variety. At least two chromosome inversions appear along the strand. Many of these mutations seem of a dominant phenotype. These anomalies cover the spectrum of patterned genetic diseases, some being autosomal dominant, while another is autosomal recessive, and yet another will be mitochondrial.

Thinking logically towards this, the patient should be affected by sickle cell anemia, hypophosphatemia, and leber's hereditary optic neuropathy. I also personally identified two other defects connecting to hemophilia and spinal muscular atrophy. To be blunt, this subject should be dead. I have confirmed that EDF had no part in corrupting this data.

I am in no way experienced with this level of genetic abnormality. By all accounts, the patient should not be able to walk, talk, or even breathe, let alone hunt and have a family. I will thank the volunteer for her services and forward my data to the Tilthe. Personally, I find this breakdown of scientific reasoning disturbing and hope that my data is flawed.

Walter Krause
Porto Medical Journal, smuggled to York
January 2, 495 A.E.

THE INFLUENCE

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 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 or gods 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.

SHARED TRAITS

Fae all share several common qualities. They are peaceful within their own species. They are often 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 (premarital) 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, most 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

This applies only to non-violent conflict. When a situation turns sour, even the most passive fae will rise a weapon to defend itself or those it cares about.

FAE RACIAL TRAITS

There are several features applying to all of the fae descendants:

Echan. All fae (except pagus) are tied to chaotic energies of the white gate of Attricana. Any technology you attempt to use is automatically disrupted, and you increase the risk of disruption of any device in the same general vicinity. You have a saturation value of 20, which can never drop below this value unless your soul switches from Attricana to the negative energies of Ixindar (see Corruption).

Immunities. You are immune to all natural 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.

Fae Iron. A specific ratio of lead and iron (known as cold iron to some) is extremely toxic to all fae. It is a forbidden substance, outlawed in most civilized communities. You are vulnerable to fae iron.

CHAPARRANS

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—" 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 fallen from 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. Where the laudenians are merely disdainful of those unlike themselves, chaparrans are downright xenophobic and hostile to outsiders. Their kind date back further than anyone can recall, including themselves, for they keep few records, and almost none of these written—where other fae 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. The chaparrans live almost exclusively among the woods, growing towers, temples, and whole communities from the soil and roots. Their mere presence encourages vegetation, and the tallest, thickest trees in the world grow where chaparrans live.

Most 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 fae 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.

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. Most 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. 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.

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."

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.

The actions of the past are simply covered up. Rings of wood grow over old wounds, protecting damage. As long as the wood grows, all is good. The trees spoke of terrible sins of man committed upon nature, the raping of the earth to construct false idols. But man refuses to hear the song of the wood, even now. Man ambles unaware. When they walk into the forest, they fear. They fear the unknown. They fear resentment and retaliation. They walk oblivious to the truth.

Nature forgave man.

Like a mother forgiving all the sins of the son, nature absolved man of his past transgressions. The Hammer was an act of God, not of nature. They seldom got along anyway. The mother created life. God gave them ambition. God punished them. Nature simply gave life another chance, forcing the planet to erase and try again. Man should consider himself blessed. If they embrace the ways of nature, following us into the wood, speaking the ageless tongue, we would – as would the tress – welcome them into open arms…and they shall never fear again.

Ambition. It should be a sin.

Sylvanakassus
356 A.E., from a speech

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

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 (thought mostly the latter). 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 their joints are capable of hypermobility, and a chaparran's big toes, while not fully opposable, are significantly more dexterous 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. They 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.

PLAYING A CHAPARRAN

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.

Chaparrans seldom seek adventure outside their forests. Of all fae peoples, 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.

A player creating a chaparran should be aware of their propensity of 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.

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).

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.

Chaparrans are also 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.

A chaparran player character is one who 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 natural flight instinct and will bolt instead of standing ground unless allies, innocent, or trees are threatened.

They assumed men all acted alike. Trees were just wood to us, construction and kindling, as worthless as dirt, trodden on with equal disdain. I remember and recounted a different view. I spoke of ancient lore, where the tree stood tall in its rightful place of worship. I brought up the Garden of Eden, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge, though I do admit starting with that later anecdote probably wasn't wise. I moved onto the Kabbalah's Sefirot tree, depicting the map of creation. I mentioned the Ashwath Vriksha, the banyan tree that represented eternal life in the Hindu religion. I even remembered the Lote tree at the end of the seventh heaven. Of course, I refrained from mentioning Christmas trees as I imagine that may really upset them. When I spoke of the ash tree Yggdrasill from Norse and how it supported the heavens, I finally got the attention of the priests. I told how the tree connected the sky, the earth, and the underworld together, and how its existence was vital to the entire universe—referred in popular myth as the World Tree. I even added that the last humans would survive Ragnarök by hiding within its branches.

These are all legends and taste of the flamboyance my ancestors were known for. One of the priests scolded my scoff, declaring a similar concept in their faith. They claimed Berufu, the mother of all fae, planted a single tree to remind the fae where they came from and where they were destined to end. Berufu proclaimed any who climbed to its tallest branch would feel her breath and understand the world's true purpose and form.

This great tree cannot be found in this forest or any other on this side of the planet. It grows from another on the far side of the world. It is not a stout tree with a trunk of mighty girth. It resembles the trees seen here, though indigenous to that land. It towers through clouds, upon clouds, reaching a point where one could observe the curvature of the planet. This tree can neither be seen by flyers or from the ground at any distance. A tree growing to the stratosphere would be a grand climb indeed.

Sugi Gantilanna
The New Irminsul

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 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. Under 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 TRAITS

Your chaparran character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2.

Age. Chaparrans reach physical maturity around 80 years, remaining children long after most humans have died of old age. Most starting ages begin around 100 years. Chaparrans can live to as much as 3,000 years.

Size. Chaparrans range between 5'8" and 6'3". Because of hollow bones and lean bodies, they weigh under 120 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. See also Brachiate.

Darkvision. Accustomed to twilit forests and the night sky, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. As an unfortunate side effect of this ability, you have dichromatic vision, responsive to green and blue; you are missing the photoreceptor for red (you are partially colorblind).

Brachiate. You have a climb speed equal to your normal speed when climbing trees. You have advantage on Strength (Athletics) and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks when moving through forested terrain. You can move through difficult forest terrain without a reduction in speed.

Listen to the Wind. Your perception is so keen you could use an enemy's breathing in the dark to aim your shots. When wielding a shortbow or longbow, you may use Wisdom for attack and damage rolls instead of Dexterity.

Natural Habitat. You are one with the forest. While in one, you gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Languages. You know Chaparra and one human language (usually English).

Weald Walk. You are able to vanish into the forest and reappear elsewhere to assault your opponent. If within 5 feet of a tree, you can move into it and teleport up to 50 feet to another tree within range as a bonus action. You emerge within 5 feet of the targeted tree. The trees must be rooted in the ground. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

Subrace. Chaparrans across Canam derive originally from two locations, Laurama or Dawnamoak.

LAURAMA CHAPARRANS

Hailing from Laurama, you have learned to be on guard against threats from an early age. Being combative comes not from tradition but from necessity. Your family has been uprooted at least once. You have most likely lost at least one relative either to the dark forest of Tranquiss or to the slavers of Baruch Malkut. This has created a civilization of extremists willing to reach any lengths to sustain their way of life. It unfortunately took a toll on Laurama's culture, as its people think of little else than survival.

You might have left Laurama, but why is anyone's guess—either by your choice or by your family's. Alternately, you might be second or third generation removed from your homeland, but those tendencies die hard. Your aggressive nature is hard to conceal through daily life. Elves from Laurama are indistinguishable from other chaparrans in physical appearance, but among your own kind, the dispositions are apparent. And people think normal chaparrans are xenophobic and guarded against non-fae. You abhor evil in all forms and have little sympathy for those unable to fight for themselves.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Wisdom.

Chaparran Weapon Proficiency. You are proficient with the shortbow, the dagger, and any two weapons made from wood.

Surprisingly Resilient. While not wearing heavy armor or carrying a shield, you gain a +1 bonus to AC.

DAWNAMOAK CHAPARRANS

Dawanmoak is the treasured kingdom of the chaparrans, and is considered the center of their world. You could have been raised in the shadows of the three towers, offering you unparalleled access to the entire history of one of the oldest species. If only they recorded more of it. Dawnamoak is more about teaching how chaparrans should act, and less about how they did. There are elders willing to impart their knowledge on archery, swordsmanship, and magic, but don't appear to know (or are unwilling to disclose) how they acquired it themselves. Whatever history is unveiled comes in the form of ancient traditions and theology.

You were most likely raised without threat and without exposure to other ideas or even races. However, unlike those from Laurama, there is room for curiosity. The offspring of Dawnamoak can be found throughout the world, and subsequent descendants all reflect similar qualities. This is considered the default for chaparrans.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Wisdom.

Chaparran Weapon Proficiency. You have proficiency with the longbow, the makana, and a single one-handed melee weapon of your choice.

Learned in Ways of the Forest. You have proficiency in Intelligence (Nature). You can use Wisdom instead of Intelligence with Nature.

CHAPARRAN FEATS

CHAPARRAN AUTOMATISM

You are so aware of your surroundings that you react without thinking, gaining the following benefits:

- You can use Wisdom in place of Dexterity when determining your ability bonus to AC.
- Your Wisdom score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

IMPROVED WEALD WALK

You have mastered your innate link with nature, gaining the following benefits:

- Your weald walk's range is extended to 200 feet.
- You gain advantage on your first attack roll on the same turn after using weald walk.

NATURE'S CHANNEL

Your Wisdom score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

DAMASKANS

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.'"

The first Damaska, before the Hammer fell, was the oldest empire in history (using the literal definition of empire). After the gate re-opened, damaskans rebuilt their civilization, though split into two different nations on opposite sides of the planet. In the ruins of the laughably termed "old world" of Lauropa, Damaska was restored to mimic its former glory. Conversely in Canam, the fae erected the empire of knowledge, Limshau. Because of the peculiar homogeneity of all fae, both nations should looked identical...but this ended up not being so in this case.

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. 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 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 are the most common, most often seen, and most widely circulated fae. 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. Of all fae, damaskans are the most numerous with the largest kingdoms. Because of their circulation over the globe, no one can be sure how many damaskans live on Earth, but it's probably between 2 and 3 million, although only about half reside in Canam. Narros hold rights to the largest armies, but damaskans claim all other records. 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.

Damaskans migrated across the globe very quickly. Even though Damaska remains the largest fae empire, dozens of other independent cities appeared in a matter of decades. The Damaskan and Limshau empires remain loyal to each other, though not often in contact.

Damaskans loathe pagus as well as the majority of anathema 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 mutual 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, preferring to judge individuals on a case-by-case basis. Limshau is currently in conflict with Baruch Malkut due to said nation's policy on fae salvery but war remains undeclared.

Each individual 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 everything down. Until the damaskans appeared, 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. 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 events objectively.

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.

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.

When they die, their bodies are burned and scattered to the wind.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

A damaskan's eyes are slightly slanted and have epicanthic folds similar to humans of Asian descent. 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. 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. Because of a peculiarity of the damaskan brain, they are able to employ both lobes simultaneously, 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. Damaskans frequently wear new clothes, or at least pressed and clean. They abhor getting dirty. 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.

PLAYING A DAMASKAN

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 class, 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.

A player creating a damaskan should be aware of their timid nature. Damaskans are often reserved, seldom speaking out of turn, but can be prone to sudden bursts of emotion when finally pushed. Some might call them shy, often staying quiet during conversations, but in reality 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.

Damaskans believe in discipline and order and find disorganization of any kind unsettling. Deliberate falsehood sets their teeth on edge. 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.

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.

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 of the spiritual 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 human faiths.

Regardless of their proclivities, a truly pious damaskan is a rarity: less than 5% 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.

The world evolves.

Magic and science are interchangeable. Interpreting one from the other depends on your vantage point. Elves, much like any other intelligent race aware of its own progress, observe life from a sword's edge, with the past and the future on either side. I fear elves never bother to walk this line, choosing to live in old ways. Humans arose and – given the chance – failed at greatness. Their weakness is mortality. Man's obsession with compressing time doomed their species. How I respect those humans that can sit for a week under a tree and pray, close one's eyes for a whole day without opening them. What courage that must take for a species so short lived. Most elves, including those reprehensible laudenians, don't appreciate the small victories in other species. The path remains the same.

Utilizing our patience, elves gain the opportunity to learn from Man's mistakes. We live enchanted. Magic flows through us but does not control us. Earth is a shared planet. Only by uniting and merging our knowledge with those of humans, narros, and gimfen, can we build a future.

Limshau Historical Entry 2534A
Ravenar Limshau IV

NAMES

Unfortunately, while phonetically pleasing to the ear, the damaskan language can 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).

Examples: Ravenar Limshau III is his real name, but his sister's husband elected to adopt the human title "Strongbow" to replace their damaskan family name of Kaixiu'Ooria. Centuries later, few in that family ever use that title. Their fourth child, a daughter was given the damaskan name Reivune, which eventually turned into Raven, which she elected as her open name, as well.

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

Limshau is repeating events of Earth's past and will fall under a hailstorm of fire and brimstone the like of which only god has seen before. Those with ears pointed and round commit the most grievous sins of hedonism. Its capital and all its cities both walled and open are cursed by god. It is too late for prayer, for they are all doomed.

This damnation spreads to all those within the white walls, especially the impenitent human sodomites who fall for the pleasures of the sinned, soiled flesh. Divine punishment shall come quick. When their flesh burns away, we will mock their calamity. It is not a sin to take pride in god's fury.

Shall we be the hands of god?

Father Prias
Selected Sermon
Faustis, Baruch Malkut

DAMASKAN TRAITS

Your damaskan character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 2.

Age. Damaskans reach physical maturity around 80 years, remaining children long after most humans have died of old age. Most starting ages begin around 90 years. Damaskans can live to as much as 1,500 years.

Size. Damaskans range between 4'8" and 5'7". Because of hollow bones and lean bodies, they weigh between 70 and 100 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 35 feet.

Languages. You know Damaskan and English.

Ambidexterity. You are neither left nor right handed, and thus never suffer disadvantage in situations where handedness matters.

Gravity Focus. You can enter a state of heightened awareness. Until the start of your next turn, you gain the following benefits:

- You increase your speed by +10 feet.
- You gain advantage on all Dexterity ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws.
- You gain a +2 bonus to AC.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

Tachygraphy. You can write any language you know in damaskan orthoglossy, which can be written five times faster than any other script (non-damaskans can learn to read and write orthoglossy by learning damaskan, but cannot learn to write it at full speed). You can write any other script (except Pleroma) at double speed.

Subrace. Limshau damaskans are the most common in Canam, though plenary damaskans, known on the other side of the world, have also appeared from time to time.

LIMSHAU DAMASKANS

As a member of the most common fae in all of Canam, the default, and the one most commonly and perhaps annoyingly referred to as an elf, you can trace your lineage eventually back to the founding capital city of Limshau. You may in fact still reside there. Most elves in this land know little of their culture before the inclusion and influence (though some would say corruption) of man. Your nation already held several traditions and beliefs similar to that of Eastern nations from mankind's past, and considering the human immigrants adopted also held those attitudes, amalgamation was unavoidable. Most Limshau (there is no plural) have embraced this new culture. If selecting this path, it is assumed you have as well. You wouldn't be carrying so many books around if you hadn't.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Dexterity.

Encyclopedic Knowledge. You gain half your proficiency bonus on all Intelligence-based skills you don't already have proficiency in.

Polyglot. Select 4 additional languages.

Think Before Acting. Your intellectual pursuits, far from impeding your combative edge, have only honed it. You may use Intelligence for attack and damage rolls with any weapons with the finesse property.

Limshau Academic. You have proficiency with any two Limshau weapons of your choice.

PLENARY DAMASKANS

Although fae from Limshau are the default damaskan in Canam, the plenary damaskans are the default for the entire world—they are simply a rarity in certain parts of it. As one, you look indistinguishable from the locals, but you were either raised well away from a Limshau city, or immigrated here from across the ocean years ago. Your attitudes and attire separate you.

Alternately, you could also hail from one of the few non-Limshau damaskan communities in Canam, few that there are. These include Seliquam, Skyrose, and dozens of unlabeled villages across the land. As a plenary damaskan, you don't actually refer to yourself as one—you're simply damaskan, referring to the rest commonly as Limshau. You distinguish yourself by your attire, your general disposition, and your commitment to not giving a crap about writing every event in your life down.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Dexterity.

Fearless. You have advantage on saving throws to resist being frightened. If you pass a save against being frightened, you gain advantage on your next attack roll against the creature that attempted to frighten you.

Expanded Knowledge. You gain proficiency in two skills of your choice.

DAMASKAN FEATS

KAZE

You can use Gravity Focus three times between rests (they can be used subsequently without interruption). During Gravity Focus, you gain the following additional benefits.

- Your base speed increases by +15 feet instead of +10.
- You can now walk on walls. If you leave an enemy's reach by moving along a wall, your movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.
- You are not required to use hands while climbing while Gravity Focus is in effect.
- If you do not suffer damage before Gravity Focus expires, it lasts for one additional turn. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

NEKO NO ASHI

Your sense of balance is impeccable.

- You have advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.
- Your Dexterity score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

NEUTRAL MONISM

Your Dexterity score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

TSUBASA

Prerequisites. Kaze

You can use Gravity Focus five times between rests. During Gravity Focus, you gain the following additional benefits.

- You can now walk on ceilings. As long as there is a wall or ceiling within jumping distance, you do not provoke opportunity attacks for leaving an enemy's reach.
- Your bonus to AC increases to +3 instead of +2.
- You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls while gravity focus is in effect.

GIMFEN

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 a natural curiosity about the world but lack the drive to control or conquer it. 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. 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.

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 of any complex device inevitably causes it to break down. However, the gimfen don't share this curse. This strange deviation, once thought to be a production of corruption from Ixindar, was later accepted by the other fae as another attribute of a late branch in the fae tree. 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 produced numerous masterful technicians, engineers, alchemists, and inventors, though nearly always refining existing accomplishments rather than pioneering new ones.

Where laudenians founded totem magic and narros the forging of magical items, gimfen took pride in alchemy, stumbling into potion brewing soon after. 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 mechanisms). 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.

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 monsters. 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 value, 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 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 some have theorized that this was also given to them, but by whom is unknown). 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.

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 immediate pre-industrial era of humanity's lost history. Currently there are more than two million gimfen in various villages and colonies about the world. They get along with the narros and damaskans, but their relations with other fae have strained since the gimfen have so often turned away from their roots. Gimfen often welcome humans, especially ones with a new toy.

Most of gimfen worship "Mecha," an obviously new deity to the scene from 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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Gimfen are the shortest of the major fae. 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. 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.

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. Sometimes it's drawn on.

PLAYING A GIMFEN

Gimfen are the best people 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.

A gimfen player character always follows one of two paths: nature or technology, with technology being by far the most common. 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 route 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), though dungeon delvers are equally as popular. 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.

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.

The smallest room is still the universe to whoever lives inside. Fae have preferred in the past to close all the doors around and sit, comfortable they understand the entire world— (Noise from the Grind Tower muffles the transmission).

They fear to open the door and discover that more waits across the threshold. That is what prevents us from moving forward, the refusal to expand beyond our universe. The laudenians, the tenenbri—yes, even the narros—all sit in a room bricked in by ignorance and held by fear. Like all fae, the gimfen emerged into a room not unlike them.

(Noise from the Grind Tower muffled the transmission).

It had the same bricks bound by mortar, the same door all others refused to open. One would assume we would follow the lead and pat ourselves for understanding the universe, as we perceived. Unlike our cousins, our cage was different. Someone put in windows. Faced with the truth, who would not open the door? Gimfen may be small. We may be ridiculed and insulted, but we see the truth. The room is shrinking. How ironic those with the most room to breathe are the ones so adamant about escaping. In conclusion, we must— (noise from the Grind Tower muffled the transmission).

Karlis Kronas
(Gnimfall Address, July 23, 999 A.E.)

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

GIMFEN TRAITS

Your gimfen character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by *2*.

Age. Gimfen resemble children for the whole of their lives. Internal maturity for them begins around 25 years of age with most taking on the world at 30. They can live as long as 500 years.

Size. Gimfen range between 3'4" and 4'3". Because of hollow bones and lean bodies, they weigh between 40 and 60 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Languages. You know Damaskan and one human language (most likely English).

Disruption Reduction. You do not disrupt technology that you use or increase the penalties to disruption in during combat. Gimfen do not generate an EDF, but no one is sure why. You have a saturation value of 0. This is before the selection of a class, which may make you an echan instantly.

Nimbleness. You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours.

Lithe and Irritable. You are able to maximize your capacity to use smaller weapons. Any non-finesse melee weapon you wield that weighs 2 lbs. or less gains the finesse property.

Scurry. Your movement is not reduced when crawling.

Subrace. Gimfen subraces are not split up by region or genetics, but by the choices they make.

PASTORAL GIMFEN

You seek to experience the finer things in life, and desire items and experiences that promote enjoyment. Admittedly, you may not be able to afford said items and certain experiences carry considerable personal risk.

You are not necessarily selfish, as some things are meant to be shared, but your impulsiveness prevents you from locking down to a single profession or location. This is not indicative of all pastoral gimfen, as nations have been formed of your kind. You are the one that leaves, the one unsatisfied with what can be found at home. However, your values remain rooted in a people that elected to remain within fae traditions. You have chosen the way of nature. This can be considered the default gimfen considering the alternate path is based on the influence of mankind.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Dexterity.

Raised an Entertainer. You have proficiency in two Charisma-based skills of your choice.

Creature of Fantasy. You have proficiency in two tools of your choice.

MECHANIST GIMFEN

You have discovered the possible balance of the past and the future, of old magic and the new machines. Your people have always possessed a desire for new experiences, but it wasn't until the arrival of humanity did you fully comprehend the extent of that inquisitiveness. Like your ancestors and those keeping with the ways of nature, you still prefer pleasure over pain, but unlike them, you are able to remain focused in one pursuit, the understanding of knowledge previous forbidden to fae. Your desire for adventure is dependent on your hunt for technology and its understanding.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Dexterity.

Builder. You have proficiency in Intelligence (Engineering).

Ohh, Shiny. You have proficiency in two techan weapons of your choice.

GIMFEN FEATS

LOOSE LIMBED

Your Dexterity score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

JUMP CHARGE

Instead of moving normally, you can leap towards an enemy. You must be within reach of an enemy at the end of your move, and you don't provoke opportunity attacks during this movement. You gain advantage on the first attack roll against the target. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until the target is dead or unconscious, or takes the Disengage action.

SPIDER BITE

You are adept at ground fighting:

- You no longer have disadvantage on attack rolls while prone.
- Your Dexterity score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

LAUDENIANS

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. 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, 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. Like most of their cousins, they 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. 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, steering 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 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.

Most people have never seen a laudenian and could not describe one if asked. Laudenians commonly prohibit outsiders from entering their lands. Their keeps are rich in natural resources and they use these riches to trade with the few nations they find agreeable, Fargon being the chief recipient. Few non-fae ever see these floating keeps. Their capital and solitary 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 swear to have seen it.

Laudenians commit to this life in the sky 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 race acted more feral, more uncivilized than 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 some merit, for the dwindling of the laudenian population slowed…though did not stop completely.

Today, estimates place the laudenian population to less than 15,000, though some suspect this number is 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 (as the fruit of such a pairing would never be a pure laudenian), and they strictly forbid bonding with humans under penalty of expulsion from the sky.

As part of their claim to be the most ancient fae, the laudenians believe they pioneered the modern study of magic, the use of Pleroma to encode spells, and the construction of totems to hold said 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 formulaic. They treat magic the same way techans 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 sky-keep 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.

Laudenians enjoy the music of strings and their dance often involves slow, subtle movements. Their rituals, like everything involved in their culture, can take days to complete. One festival, the Kenaz Sky, occurs once every 500 years and lasts six months. 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.

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 their god's domain.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Laudenians 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 wear long robes of white or green terminating just above the ankle. 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. 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. Additionally, 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 do they even need to blink, only closing their eyes to sleep. 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 after 150 years and don't show any discernible growth for another 1,000. No laudenian has ever looked over 50.

PLAYING A LAUDENIAN

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 lan-

guage 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.

It should be noted that a laudenian character would be a rarity. This 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 she withheld it from her companions—why this laudenian has taken the risk of walking on the soil. 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. 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. 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.

They almost never wear armor, and when they do it is usually light chainmail constructed out of magically-infused materials—they find heavier armor insufferably 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.

Laudenians are known to be extremely arrogant. They are the longest-lived of echan kind 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 are often revered by other fae, 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. A laudenian character could be more humble than her parents, whom most likely still live in the sky, but this would not mean the character isn't still arrogant.

NAMES

Laudenians refuse to adopt human names. Thankfully, their fae names are much easier to pronounce than a chaparran's or damaskan's, 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 the heritage will often insist on announcing themselves tracking back five or six generations. 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.

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

LAUDENIAN TRAITS

Your laudenian character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2; your Intelligence score increases by 1. You may swap these increases.

Age. Laudenians take a daunting 100 years before reaching the first indications of maturity. Adulthood begins at 150, and they have effectively an unlimited lifespan.

Size. Laudenians are slender and very tall, towering at over 5'10", with some as high as 6'7". Because of hollow bones and a natural magical buoyancy, despite not looking emaciated, they only weigh between 40 and 55 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 35 feet.

Languages. You know Laudenian, one human language (most likely English), and one additional fae language.

Emergence. You know where and when to be to strike the critical blow. You may use Wisdom for attack and damage rolls with any weapons with the finesse property.

Light Body. Reduce all fall distances by 10 feet.

Slide Waltz. Your body can move like water, swaying around an opponent with ease. When you move, move to any location within 5 feet of a Medium-sized creature in range of your speed. This movement can pass through space occupied by enemies, regardless of size, and does not provoke opportunity attacks. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

Natural Resilience. You have advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic. You also have advantage on savings throws against being blinded.

LAUDENIAN FEATS

CLOUD BODY

Your body is airy as the clouds themselves.

- You reduce all fall distances by 50 feet (instead of 10 with Light Body).
- Your weight reduces by half.
- You can run on any liquid or solid.
- You do not trigger any pressure sensitive traps while running.
- Your Wisdom or Intelligence score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Your Wisdom or Intelligence score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

MARTIAL WALTZ

Your movement and focus in combat is of unparalleled grace.

- You can use Slide Waltz three times between rests.
- Your Wisdom or Intelligence score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

NARROS

"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 long-spear in it. "Defend yourself," she said simply, raising the spear to the ready.

Despite ignorant stereotyping claiming them to be squat, long-nosed dirty miners, narros don't really resemble the fantasy creatures 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.

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 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 exactly dance—it's not from a lack for physical coordination, but the wild abandon of dancing runs contrary to their cultural precision and discipline.

The narros estimate more than five million of their kind walk the Earth, living almost exclusively in Canam and Southam and rarely appearing anywhere else. Their biggest concentration lies in 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.

The few narros holy men worship an idol-less 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. 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, though usually in stone.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

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 cousins, 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 naturally and tremendously bad swimmers. 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. Males despise painting their bodies in any way but women often do. 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.

PLAYING A NARROS

Narros are well and beyond the best people 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?

A narros character should not just be 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 to a quest. When sworn to a lord, 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 mentality.

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.

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. This schism is rarely mentioned—its roots stem from a religious dispute, a divergence of dogma that can be tracked back thousands of years to 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 oggraks, a lower fae branch from the narros, can match the loathing felt to the corrupted fae of Ixindar. Being the primary military force for other fae, the narros have clashed with pagus more often than other peoples. A narros need not require a reason to fight them and the opportunity to do so would be reason enough to join a quest.

Narros uphold their discipline when on their own or outside of their community. Personal and family honor is very important, 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 given such stained honor. Warriors shamed in this way traditionally foreswear their family names and depart from narros society on quests to redeem themselves, in order to prevent their dishonor from reflecting upon the clan. 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.

Foolish Humans. The best route is down, never up. I read their history—always building up. Up…why? What is up there? Clouds. Clouds made from water. I can dig and get that and it would cost far less. Now I am not saying that humans are stupid. They value gold and respect the steel we forge.

However, I don't know how they could have missed coruthil. Such a wondrous element, bestowed from Oaken himself. The almost mystical properties of it lead me to believe that coruthil, before the saturation of magic, looked ordinary, containing no special properties, useless. When enchanted energies passed through it, coruthil emerged from this dead rock. So much the better. The bastion humans sat on riches beyond what they can imagine for thousands of years. Millions of years of unmined riches. This is a great time to be a narros. The humans have no idea what they were missing.

Garach Glim
Finer Fire Pits
225 A.E.

NAMES

Unlike gimfen and damaskans, placing little stock in their family names, narros cherish their family names more than their given ones. They place their family names first when inscribing it and when announcing themselves in public. 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.

Examples: Ballakova Kasey, Kranerose Jibbs, Ragerrick Griff, Sollomas Karan, Sorannik Mogh, Ungnarona Mina

NARROS TRAITS

Your narros character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2.

Age. Narros reach maturity at 45 but are not allowed to venture into the world usually until 75. Their life expectancy is over 1,000 years.

Size. Narros are stout and study. Most of them are under 5" but weigh between 195 and 395 pounds. This is due to thick, iron-core bones, and not by obesity. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet. Your speed is not reduced by wearing heavy armor.

Languages. You know Narroni and English.

Darkvision. Accustomed to light underground, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. Your vision is based seeing frequencies of infrared, allowing you notice heat sources as well as seeing in the dark (although this does not give you any particular advantages in bright light).

Final Word. If you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you do not fall unconscious until the end of your next turn (regardless of damage taken). On your next turn, if you use your action to attack the enemy that reduced you to 0 hit points, you automatically hit. You still roll to determine if the attack is a critical hit.

Stone Bones. You have advantage against any attempt to move you against your will.

Subrace. Fargon is the ancestral home of all narros in Canam, though the Finer Fire Pits are large enough with enough of a deviation from the norm to be worthy of mention.

FARGON NARROS

The vast majority of narros in Canam hail from Fargon, an empire ever-expanding through virtually uncontested lands. Being from Fargon, you have been raised in a land where the narros have faced no real threats (other than internal), and thus have continued to embrace their traditions with ironclad conviction. Whether or not you still embrace them is entirely up to you.

Those from Fargon commit themselves fully to whatever task they take on or are given, but despite the lack of aforementioned serious threats, you probably still dedicated some time to military service. Only upon reaching adulthood are you allowed to select your own path.

Even though this is the default origin of most narros, this path remains the option for any narros outside of Fargon not raised in The Finer Fire Pits.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Constitution.

Militaristic. You have proficiency with the narros krollish and any two melee weapons of your choice.

Focused. You have proficiency in one skill of your choice. If you don't like the result of a check with your selected skill, you can increase the final result by 10. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

FINER NARROS

This small group of narros, after living for the majority of their lives underground, surrounded by poorly insulated furnaces, have adapted to survive in such a virtually inhospitable environment. After only a few hundred years, the narros there have emerged becoming, and inadvertently embracing, the very cliché of the mythological comparison they once attempted to fight.

Yes, you are that narros. You are, in fact, a dwarf. By this point in your life, you may be even embracing the cliché.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Constitution.

Hot as Hell. You have resistance to fire damage.

Stone Blood. You have advantage on all Constitution saving throws against poison or disease.

NARROS FEATS

ANGRY REGARDLESS

While you are at your full hit points, you gain a +1 bonus to all melee attack rolls. While you are at fewer than your full hit points, you instead gain a +2 bonus to all melee damage rolls.

PENULTIMATE SACRIFICE

After using your Final Word, you remain standing and conscious. You still make death saving throws, but you're only mostly dead—until you fail three death saving throws or become stable. You operate as normal except your speed is reduced to 5 feet.

IRON TO THE CORE

Your blood is as the veins of the mountains.

- Your hit point maximum increases by 2 for each level you currently have, and you gain +2 hit points per additional level.
- Your Constition score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

VIGOROUS STAMINA

Your Constitution score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

PAGUS

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 part of faekind 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 as commanded by their masters.

When the black gate was unearthed again at the beginning of the new age, the pagus were the first to appear. Five centuries later, the pagus number in the tens of millions with concentrations on every continent.

A little known fact about the pagus is that Ixindar's control is lessened the further one is from Ixindar. Mengus strengthens her 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. These singular elders gain an enlightened view of the role pagus are forced fill. 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, most often their own kind.

Pagus have no concept of godhead. The pagus of Kakodomania fear and worship Mengus and the shemjaza as powerful beings much stronger than themselves. The same occurs with dragons when the other two oppressors are not present, but there is no apprehension of divinity in this adoration, merely the deference of one bully for an even greater bully. Even free pagus continue this tendency, holding warleaders or pagus elders (often being the same) 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.

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 open roads. Every fae people has sworn to their destruction and will not stop to consider whether the target of their ire is redeemed, although those who travel with companions of the "civilized" fae are usually given the benefit of doubt. While non-fae like humans and kodiaks don't always reflect this racial hatred, they know to beware of the pagus. To see one is to assume combat; to see more is a portent to invasion.

In Canam, the vast majority of pagus currently live in 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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

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 fae. 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.

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.

PLAYING A PAGUS

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

A pagus joining a party has an uphill journey. Where the tilen are unjustly pigeonholed as predators,

the pagus' reputation has been well earned. Creating a pagus character must begin with an origin. Where was this pagus born and how did he reach this point in life? If joining an evil party, no explanation is required. However, if the group is populated by noble warriors, an initial encounter should be established (if not fully played out). 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.

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

PAGUS TRAITS

Your pagus character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 2.

Age. Pagus reach maturity at 9 years, ready to fight. At 12, they are branded warriors. After 40, pagus grow stronger rather than weaker. Insanity or enlightenment is another side effect. There is no account of a pagus dying of old age, but there ius no account of one surviving into his or her sixties.

Size. Pagus are tall and built. There are few pagus under 6 feet tall, with a few even pushing 7 feet. They weigh between 200 and 250 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. Your speed is not reduced from wearing heavy armor.

Languages. You know Paggin and English.

Darkvision. Ixindar corruption has altered your genetics to give you every advantage. You have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and

in darkness as if it were dim light. You suffer no penalties seeing in the dark—you can see in the full spectrum.

Ixindar Keyword. Unlike other fae, you do not disrupt technology. You do not increase the penalties to disruption in during combat. Pagus do not generate an EDF due to their corruption by Ixindar. You have a saturation value of 0 and a corruption value of 10. If you become bound to Attricana for any reason, you lose this keyword and generate EDF normally.

Focused Aggression. Whenever an enemy scores a critical hit on you, you gain an additional action as a bonus action on your next turn. You can only gain one action at a time this way.

Trained from Birth. Your maximum Dex modifier while wearing medium armor is 3 instead of 2.

Subrace. Pagus do not have subraces. Instead they are separated by age: those under the age of 40 and those 40 years and over. It is left up to the GM's discretion what happens if by some miracle an adventuring pagus changes age categories during the game.

HALF-GROWN PAGUS

You have yet to mature. You can be anywhere between nine and forty years of age, eager and open for violence or old and questioning one's future. At this age, you are open to influence by a more powerful creature. It's in the pagus' hard-wiring. If you lacked one, you might have struggled to find an identity, willing to cling onto any cause worthy of a powerful warrior. You could pledge to a fellow fighter as a brother, to a king demanding a crusade, or to a faith with an appealing creed. Lacking any of these causes, you live with a need that could never be satisfied. Only through time could you fill that hole with your own personality.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Dexterity.

Significant Reach Advantage. Any non-reach two-handed melee weapon you are wielding has reach.

SEASONED PAGUS

You are one of the few, the scarce few, pagus that have lived to and beyond forty years of age. Regardless if you find enlightenment or madness at the end our journey, you have stopped being a follower. You are no one's pawn, no one's cannon fodder. You are either the one leashed until a monster is required, or the elder plagued by the cancer of rationality. Regardless of your outlook at this age, you are the most dangerous pagus of all, either wild or wise. Which are you?

Ability Score Increase. Choose one of the following options.

- Your Strength and Constitution score each increase by 1, but your Wisdom score decreases by 3 (min 3).
- Your Wisdom score increases by 2.

PAGUS FEATS

ANCIENT PAGUS

Prerequisite. Long in the Tooth

The ravages of age have only made you more dangerous:

- If your Wisdom score (at the time you take this feat) is 12 or lower, your Wisdom score decreases by 3 (min 1), but your hit point maximum increases by 3 for each level you currently have, and you gain +3 hit points per additional level.
- If your Wisdom score (at the time you take this feat) is 13 or higher, you have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks, and your Wisdom score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.
- You cannot be rendered unconscious, even if reduced to zero hit points.

LONG IN THE TOOTH

Prerequisite. Seasoned pagus

You prefer to think of it as "experienced":

- If your Wisdom score (at the time you take this feat) is 12 or lower, your Wisdom score decreases by 3 (min 1), but you gain a +2 bonus to all melee damage rolls and a +1 bonus to AC.
- If your Wisdom score (at the time you take this feat) is 13 or higher, you have advantage on all Wisdom saving throws, and your Wisdom score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

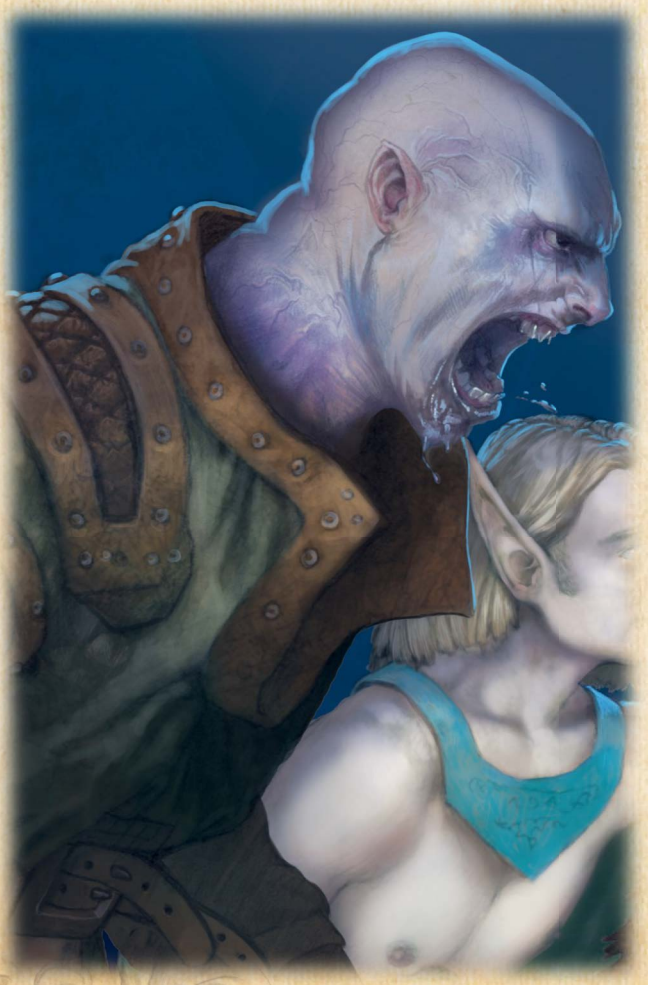
STEADFAST

Nothing can stop you when you are determined:

- You cannot be frightened.
- You ignore levels 1 through 5 of exhaustion.
- Your Constitution score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

UNYIELDING

Your Constitution score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.



TENENBRI

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 mark a point in fae history where the naiveté of free-thinking fae was stained with bloody civil conflict. The tenenbri live underground, but unlike the similarly subterranean narros, the tenenbri seldom return to the surface: only one of many points on which they differ. Although both share some common heritage and religious beliefs, the two peoples oppose each other on many other fundamental values and had already been involved in 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 people than the tenenbri, having broken directly from the laudenians, while the tenenbri branched later from damaskans. Tenenbri are more fanatically religious than the narros and worship the same god, Oaken. However, tenenbri differ on interpretation and several essential 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. 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 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.

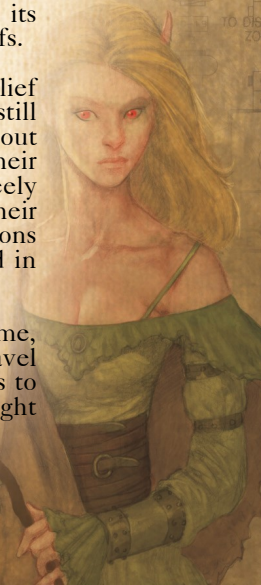
The fall of the Hammer precludes an accurate account of history, but what is known is that this refusal sparked a crusade, despite the peaceful intent of the original pilgrims. When the battles had ceased, the tenenbri were in control of Antok, and some say that they survived the Hammer's fall not by 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 once again.

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 that 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 open with their preconceptions, and will often volunteer them freely even if not asked. Tenenbri honesty comes from their natural ability to detect deception and hidden emotions in others. Like the narros, tenenbri bury their dead in stone.

Tenenbri 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. 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 tenenbri's natural preferences.

Everything about their 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 those 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 peoples are in open war, it's an easy law to enforce. 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, from humans and pagus, to oggraks and kodiaks. The rare cases when tenenbri marry outside their race are often described as avidly passionate. Other words to describe them in a relationship are hot-blooded, fiery, and lustful.

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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

In size, build, and general features, tenenbri are almost identical to damaskans, albeit slightly shorter. However, their entire race 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. 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. 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.

PLAYING A TENENBRI

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.

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. 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. Canam tenenbri find surprising acceptance in echan human kingdoms, considering the treatment that humans are subjected to in Southam (which those in Canam are mostly unaware of). Limshau finds the tenenbri braille books fascinating additions to their collection and will always allow a tenenbri to settle within their borders.

The narros, of course, still hold a grudge, with the majority of the narros judging the tenenbri as dishonorable and untrustworthy. 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 loose, letting their emotions carry them; as warriors, they employ stealth and trickery more than a daunting shield wall. Where narros prefer a straight-on fight, tenenbri have no objection to assassination.

Their extraordinary hearing and vibration sensitivity have allowed them an impeccable awareness of people's intents. Tenenbri are considered extremely exotic and 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 and are not shy about telling the world.

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.

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.

NAMES

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 children 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.

Examples: 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 TRAITS

Your tenenbri character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 2, and your Wisdom score increases by 1. You may swap these increases.

Age. Tenenbri reach maturity at 40, but are seldom allowed to socialize outside of a tight social circle until at least 55. They generally live for 500 years.

Size. Tenenbri look frail or even gaunt. Like most fae, their bone density is similar to that of birds. They are between 4'5" and 5'3" tall and weigh between 40 and 75 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 35 feet.

Languages. You know Tenenbra and, if raised in Canam, English. Tenenbra written language is a unique form of braille.

Blindsight. Your eyes are purely vestigial: you sense your surroundings via attuned hearing and from detecting vibrations through the ground. You possess blindsight within 60 feet. You can still read Pleroma--its glowing words illuminate even those who cannot see. You are immune to any effect that produces a visual illusion or imposes the blinded condition. If you are deafened, your attack rolls suffer disadvantage and attack rolls against you have advantage. Any of the following conditions reduce the blindsight range to 30 feet: being on a mount, being in the air or on a boat, or sleeping.

Piezo Scream. You can spend 30 feet of movement and emit a high-pitched scream as a bonus action to disorientate or damage your foes. All creatures within 5 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 8 + your Wisdom modifier + your proficiency bonusor be deafened and stunned for 1 round on. Targets that succeed on the save are only deafened for 1 round. After you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Sense-Focus. You have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks when not involved in combat.

Zatou. Blindness might hinder swordsmen of another kind, but never you. You may use Wisdom for attack and damage rolls with any weapons with the finesse property.

TENENBRI FEATS

BLINDSIGHT, IMPROVED

You could hear the beating of a butterfly's wings from across a field.

- The range of your blindsight is extended to 120 feet. When your blindsight would normally be reduced to 30 feet, it is instead reduced to 50 feet.
- Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

DEPTH OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Prerequisites. Improved Blindsight

Nothing can hide from you.

- You gain truesight within 10 feet.
- Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

PIEZO SCREAM, IMPROVED

Your shriek is brain-meltingly effective.

- The range of your Piezo Scream is increased to 10 feet.
- In addition to its normal effect, the scream also deals 1d6 + your Wisdom modifier damage on a failed save, half damage on a successful one. The damage increases to 2d6 at 6th level, 3d6 at 11th level, and 4d6 at 16th level.

SINGULARITY

Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

TILEN

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 in the modern age, 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.

The birth and history of the tilen is marred with pain, suffering, and mystery. How they came to cherish 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 pulled from any influence of Ixindar. The loyal minions of 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 malevolentexistence and discovered themselves immune to its corruption .

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, the most powerful members of their race and the ones most shamed over past sins. Their children would resemble them but exhibited only a fraction of their elders' 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.

Tilen don't need blood to survive, but it is the only way they can heal major wounds since the natural regenerative rate of their own body is impeded by the necrotic power of their heritage. They are emotionally sensitive and avoid violence, both for moral reasons and due to their decreased population. Pairings between tilen are almost always childless, with a birth rate of only 3 per 100 tilen per year. This rises by 600% when bonding with a non-tilen (there are no half-tilen: the child of a mixed union is always a pureblooded tilen). Their bonding ritual is a passionate and extended kiss that nearly suffocates the non-tilen partner.

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.

There are less than 10,000 tilen in the world but with their appealing nature and hospitality to outsiders, their numbers are growing fast.

Consider this; the majority of tilen born are females, all tall, beautiful, without blemish or wrinkle, not an ounce of fat on them. Exotic and rare with both a chill and a warmth for every desire, you could scour every royal line and not find such fortune in gaining one's favor.

I will not repeat the misguided and insufferable opinions of those wishing their demise. I am simply asking the questions that sit on so many of our lips. Look at the facts:

A) Tilen produce offspring more successfully with non-tilen than themselves.

B) Their offspring are always tilen. Sure they may have the other's hair or cheeks but the resulting race is still the same.

C) In the centuries they have lived in this age, tilen show no signs of creating a descendant species like the other fae.

I can figure two possibilities out of this. The first is that tilen have been placed on the planet to save the fae from turning into monsters. If tilen truly look the closest to the original fae like some, including them, claim, then this is a path to saving the fae species in its entirety. Second, this is the nefarious plot by evil hands to wipe out the fae, and humanity as well, by seducing them all into producing a singular species of tilen with no others. With only tilen, their population growth would grind to a crawl and they would potential decline to extinction given enough time. As they were once creatures of darkness, this theory may have some weight, making the tilen one of the most gilded plagues in all of the history.

I want to make clear this does not make them all evil. I personally believe the tilen may be innocent in this conspiracy. It would not serve the forces of evil to make them all deceitful for the truth would eventually be revealed. Tilen would have no control over their desires. It's natural as it is in all of us, to find companionship, to seed a further generation with your offspring. How could they be blamed for wishing what we all wish? I truthfully believe that if this matter is ignored, the tilen could be the only civilized people left in the world.

Logan Markus
Public Address (before his forced retirement), Kannos

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

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 but 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 stand out from their monochromatic skin and attire, reflecting brilliant greens, blue, and even orange. 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 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.

Tilen claim the uniformity of Ixindar resulted in a shape closer to the original fae. Many 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.

PLAYING A TILEN

Tilen are the best people 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.

A tilen player character 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 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 succubae and incubae—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.

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.

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. Living so close to the specter of death, they are not only driven to survive, but have a pathological abhorrence of causing unnecessary death.

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.

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 philosophical than faithful; 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.

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.

Examples: Azula Jaheer, Lhamah Cyrose, Mira Diemasko, Naga Sorenti, Saleena Kaeris, Zacheria Korvek

TILEN TRAITS

Your tilen character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

(These traits do not apply to the elder tilen, who are substantially more powerful and are not suitable as player characters)

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2; your Dexterity score increases by 1. You may swap these increases.

Age. Tilen age only slightly slower than humans, reaching adulthood in their 30s. They can live up to 600 years. Elder tilen are believed to be immortal, but they were made, not born.

Size. Tilen are tall and slender—their deceptive strength coming as a surprise to some. They range between 5'8" and 6'4. Like all fae, hollow bones and a lack of any fat has resulted in them weighing between 45 and 70 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Languages. Tilen have no language of their own. You know English and one other language.

Darkvision. Your ancestors were creatures of the night, thus you have inherited their superior night vision. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. The only color you can discern in darkness is red.

Reduced Healing. Whenever you recover hit points from an effect other than Blood Surge (including spending your own hit dice normally) the amount recovered is halved. This does not affect temporary hit points.

Blood Surge. Out of necessity, you possess the ability to drain the blood of a creature to heal your wounds. As an action, one living creature you are grappling takes 1d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier (choose one) damage. You recover hit points equal to the damage inflicted. If the target is awake and willing, you can choose the amount of damage you inflict and you regain double that amount. Once you recover hit points using

Blood Surge equal to half your maximum hit points, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. The damage increases to 2d6 at 6th level, 3d6 at 11th level, and 4d6 at 16th level.

Vampiric Remnants. Under direct sunlight, your vision is reduced to 50 feet and you have disadvantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks. Additionally, when you get emotional in any way (in combat, when angered, or in passion), old vampiric traits emerge. Your eyes glow and your incisors extend. When in this state, you have advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks but disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

TILEN FEATS

GHULATH TRAITS

Your Wisdom or Charisma score increase by 1, as does your maximum for that score. You also gain one of the following features.

Unnatural Strength: Spend a Hit Die to gain advantage on Strength ability checks and reroll all 1s on Strength-based damage dice for one minute.

Uncanny Agility: Spend a Hit Die to gain advantage on Dexterity ability checks and saving throws and a +1 bonus to AC for one minute.

Supernatural Speed: Spend a Hit Die to gain +10 feet to speed and not provoke opportunity attacks for 1 minute.

Aberrant Attraction: Spend a Hit Die to gain a climb speed equal to your walking speed for 1 minute.

Unbound: Spend a Hit Die to jump 15 feet vertically and 20 horizontally without having to make checks for 1 minute.

Special. You can select this feat up to three times, choosing a different feature each time.

BLOOD VENGEANCE

Your enmity against the creatures that spawned your kind knows no bounds.

- You have advantage on saving throws against all necromancy or Ixindar spells.
- You add your proficiency bonus to damage rolls against undead, or double your proficiency bonus to damage rolls against vampires and their spawn.

BLOOD SURGE IMPROVED

You have superior control over your blood.

- While using *blood surge*, you can reverse the effect, inflicting damage upon yourself to heal a target by an equal amount. You choose how much damage you take, up to your hit point maximum. Damage inflicted in this way comes off your normal hit points, not any temporary hit points you may have.
- Instead of healing damage when you use *blood surge*, you can choose to gain temporary hit points. You cannot have more temporary hit points than your Constitution score.

NOSFERATU

You are more like a creature of the night than you care to admit.

- When using *blood surge*, instead of half your maximum hit points, you can recover up to your hit point maximum between long rests.
- Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

VAMPIRIC UNDERCURRENTS

Your Wisdom or Charisma score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

NON-FAE RACES

HUMANS

"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."

(See the official 5E license product for rules on humans)

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 will 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. Since only humanity has arisen with any notable footprint as an evolved species, they are the only ones listed, however broken into two groups: echan humans and techan humans. Though humanity is still the most numerous intelligent species on the planet, less than 400 million humans live today, many of them outside of bastions.

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 has 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 disease by the time magic changed the world.

Some escaped into bastions while others embraced the ways of magic. Many more were killed in the first few decades. 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 saturated 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.

Mankind emerged into the new dawn with nothing. The old cities were gone. No corporations or organizations, no clubs, allegiances, or advocacy groups. Nothing that defined mankind as a species, or anchored them to their fidelity to god or country, endured. Fragments of the old age were scattered in the few 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 nations changed, ethnic groups continued to grow. Racism faded in the face of other, very real monsters. 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 to other species.

Humans have short memories, and there is nobody alive 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 outsiders, human or otherwise. Echan human nations respond well to each other with Baruch Malkut being the 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 welcome them with open arms.

Humans have maintained most of their old religions, but most 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 peoples. 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 had passed. The majority of man is still controlled by rulers professing a faith in an almighty power. 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 peoples 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.

Many human languages died within a few generations of the Hammer's fall. Others merged to create new variations. Only a handful remain. Surviving vernacular divided into regional slangs and patois, becoming recognized languages themselves with distinct lexicons, syntaxes, and phonetic pronunciations. Of the major languages, the only ones that survived more or less intact are English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese, and most of these are relegated to purely academic use in favor of more modern amalgams of a variety of regional languages. English was the dominant language of the world before it changed and often the only one that two disparate groups of survivors would have in common, so most modern languages are hybridized with it.

In Canam, the major dialects are Common English (English grammar with additional vocabulary drawn from Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and a variety of indigenous tongues, most prevalent in western and northern Canam), Native English/Englo-Lingo (distinct dialects, but both mostly pure English with French and German influences, found in eastern Canam), and Onespeak (roughly equal parts Spanish and German with some English influences, the dominant language of southeast Canam). Common English is the lingua franca of the human race in Canam and the few ports outside the continent that maintain any regular contact, and is the language most non-humans pick up when wishing to communicate with mankind.

The majority of bastion-born believe mankind earned his right for total dominion of the globe and wait for the day when technology will retake 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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Humans continue to be more varied than any other civilized race 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. Since almost every religion and ethnic group is represented on Canam, a player can select any ethnicity of his choosing. It is suggested that upon choosing an ethnic group, the player takes the time to research the unique strengths of said group.

PLAYING A HUMAN

With such a wide range of possibilities, humanity is the best people 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.

A player creating a human should first determine his origin: from a bastion or from the outside world. The player character choosing a path of technology must have access to said technology on a regular basis. Without upgrading their technology, techan characters won't fare much better than low-level echans.

A techan character 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 for which they have little to no preparation. 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 naiveté, 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. Techans fear the future of a world where magic reigns uncontested and humanity lives stagnant, in limbo, never changing, forever in a fantasy world.

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. 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.

Humans often seek excitement for the sheer thrill of it. 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.

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.

Examples: Chiaki Jones, Kim Jansen, Kiba Hebrus, Delacroix Lin-Wei, Miranda Okama, Robert Naseen

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 DM. 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.

KODIAKS

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.

A band's disposition relies on its leader, dictating how the tribe will act and where they will travel. Will they hunt or forage? Will they attack or trade? 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.

The kodiak belief system is essentially animist, with everything 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.

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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

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 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.

They also rarely wear clothes or wield weapons. Kodiaks wear layers only for protection. If they travel too far south, they stop wearing unnecessary clothes, except armor. 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.

PLAYING A KODIAK

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?

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. 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 Jibaro have only ever accepted four kodiak druids. They prefer loose-fitting armor to heavy plates. They avoid shields and relish two-handed weapons, especially heavy clubs and battleaxes. Kodiaks are brought into a party for their strength and not their colorful conversation. They say little, making others skittish around them. When they do associate with outsiders, it's often with other peoples bound to nature (chaparrans being the noteworthy example). Other semi-feral species often take a liking to kodiaks. There have even been a few rumors of kodiaks taking changelings or nariisa as mates.

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 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. A kodiak character 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.

NAMES

Kodiaks 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.

Examples: Donan, Goran, Hagga, Koa, Rogan, Warro.

Half Kodiak: Kodiaks rarely breed outside their species. Like humans they can mate with any fae (most commonly with nariisa), but their children will always be a pureblood fae of the fae parent's species. Humans and kodiaks cannot produce children.

KODIAK TRAITS

Your kodiak character has a variety of natural abilities common across the planet.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2.

Age. Kodiaks age quickly, reaching full maturity by 15 years. They generally don't live past 80 years.

Size. Kodiaks look enormous, but most of that is fur. Even considering that, males can occasionally tower over seven feet tall and weigh up to 450 pounds. Females are generally smaller, around 6'4" and 350 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. As long as you have nothing in your hands, you can run on all four limbs. If you do, your speed increases to 40. When moving in this fashion, you ignore movement penalties from difficult terrain.

Languages. You know Argose and English.

Enchanted. You are an echan. Any technology you attempt to use is automatically disrupted, and you increase the risk of disruption of any device in the same general vicinity. You have a saturation value of 20 that can never drop below this value unless your soul switches from Attricana to the negative energies of Ixindar.

Darkvision. Thanks to the tapetum lucidum, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You suffer no penalties seeing in the dark—you can see in the full spectrum. Your eyes reflect even the dimmest illumination.

Imposing but Clumsy. You can wield two-handed weapons in one hand. You are too large and clumsy to ride a mount.

Natural Weapons. You possess powerful claws and teeth and have proficiency with them. Claws count as finesse, light, slashing weapons that inflict 1d6 damage. Your bite counts as a finesse, light, piercing weapon that inflict 1d4 damage.

Subrace. Kodiaks do not have subraces; instead, they have distinct sexual dimorphism and gender roles.

MALE (BOAR) KODIAK

There is some sexual dimorphism between male and female kodiaks. On average, and pure only average, males (boars) possess heavier, more muscular heads and shoulders. Their ears are also notable smaller. Generally, their size is about 15% to 20% larger than females. Boars are also encountered more often in the wilderness than females though they are generally more skittish with outsiders.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Strength.

Snug. You gain a +1 bonus to AC, but are unable to wear heavy armor.

FEMALE (SLOTH) KODIAK

Female (sloth) kodiaks are generally smaller than males, with narrower heads, though larger ears. They are considered on average smarter and more curious about the outside world, even though they are seldom encountered there. Though more intelligent, sloth Kodiaks seldom rule their tribes. They often take background roles, advising leaders on the best course of action. They also raise all offspring, thus their rarity outside of tribes.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1. You can swap this bonus with your racial bonus to Strength.

Perfect Sense. You have advantage on all Wisdom (Animal Handling) and Wisdom (Survival) skill checks.

KODIAK FEATS

YOU'RE A BEAR

Your Strength score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score.

RAZOR SHARP CLAWS

Your bite and claw damage increase to 1d6 and 1d8, respectively. At 8th level, they increase to 1d8 and 1d10. At 12th level, they increase to 1d10 and 1d12. At 16th level, they increase to 1d12 and 2d6.

DID WE MENTION...

Prerequisites. Male kodiak

You're a big damn grizzly bear.

- You have advantage on all Strength ability checks.
- Your Constitution score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

DON'T MESS WITH MAMA BEAR

Prerequisites. Female kodiak

You are very protective of anyone you have claimed as your own.

- You cannot be frightened.
- If an ally is reduced to zero hit points or suffers a critical hit, you have advantage on your next attack roll.
- Your Wisdom score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

NATURAL STANCE

Your play-fighting as a cub translates to devastating advantages in adulthood.

- When running on all four limbs, your speed increases to 60 ft.
- You don't have disadvantage on attack rolls while prone when using natural weapons.
- Your Strength score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.

INTER-SPECIES

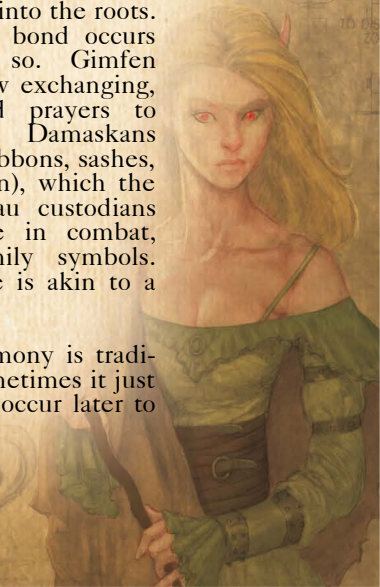
Each line of the fae is technically a separate species, and were it not for magic, they would not be genetically compatible with one another. Likewise they are genetically incompatible with humans. Magic, however, enables crossbreeding between fae lineages and even with evolved and spawn races with varying degrees of success. The first issue in fae-human cross-breeding is time. Fae 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 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, 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 them, this remains one aspect of the pagus considered 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.

That being said, ultimately the ceremony is traditional, and if a couple wishes to bond, sometimes it just happens. If there is a ceremony, it can occur later to



make the matter official, with few people other than the couple knowing that the bond had already previously occurred. 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.

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. 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

These are the benefits from possessing a fae bond:

Locator: Both mates know each other's exact position within 5 miles and general direction within 50 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 species 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 penalty to all their ability scores. 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.

Note: A 1st-level character can only begin the game bonded with the GM's permission.

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 (HUMAN/FAE)

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.

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.

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. 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.

PHYSICAL QUALITIES

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. 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.

PLAYING A HALF-FAE

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.

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. A half-fae player character will be shaped by their home culture more than their species; to that end, it is helpful to know which parent is the fae, and in which parent's culture the family resides. This will help create a believable back-story.

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.

HALF-FAE TRAITS

Unlike any other races, no two half-fae are alike, and you should consider possible strengths depending on your parents and your upbringing.

Ability Score Increase. Select two ability scores and increase them by 1.

Age. Like normal humans, you generally reach adulthood around 20 years, though your estimated life expectancy is the average of your human and fae parents.

Size. Your average height and weight is based on the average of your human and fae parents.

Languages. You know your fae parent's language as well as your human parent's.

Half-Half-Fae. The child of a half-fae and another fae (full or half) is a half-fae of the species of the parent further down the ladder. Any child of a half-fae and a human is a human.

Fae Blood. For all effects related to race, you are considered a fae of your parent's species.

Fae Gift. Depending on the fae parent, you receive the following additional abilities. You don't receive any subrace benefit regardless of your fae parent:

Chaparran: Brachiate and Natural Habitat, low-light vision.
Damaskan: Ambidextrous and Tachygraphy, normal vision.
Gimfen: Disruption Reduction and Scurry, normal vision.
Laudenian: Light Body and Natural Resilience.
Narros: Darkvision and Stone Bones.
Pagus: Focused Aggression and Ixindar Keyword.
Tenenbri: Piezo scream and sense-focus
Tilen: The offspring is a full-breed tilen and is not considered a half-fae at all

Sleep. Half-fae sleep like normal humans and don't gain fae sleeping benefits. However, you only require 5 hours of sleep a night.

Sensitivity: Like fae, half-fae are vulnerable to Fae Iron.

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 num-

bers. 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.

"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.

"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."

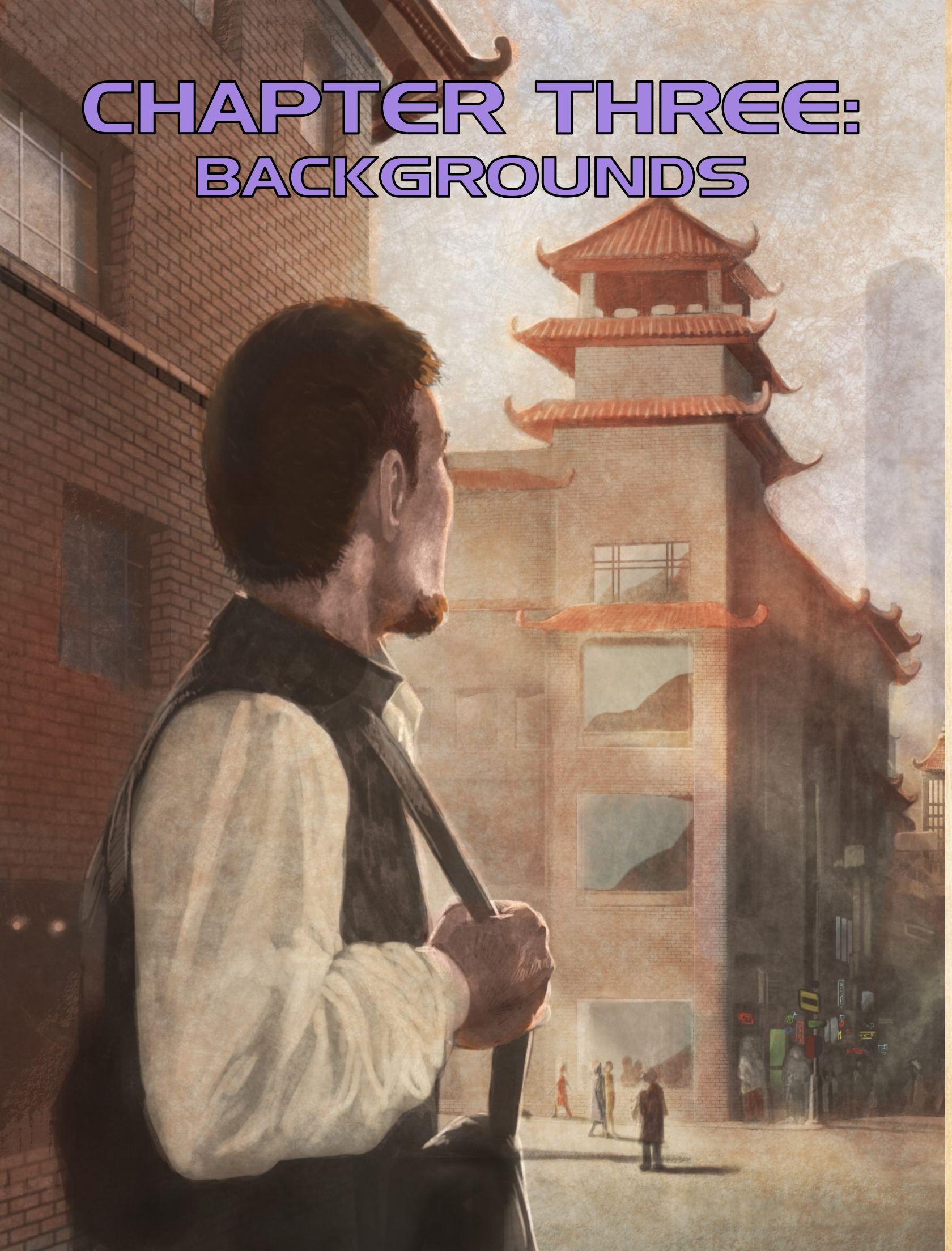
"How?" Chen motioned to the lamps. "You've just seen that. How could you know? Maybe it's something I do naturally no one else can."

"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."

CHAPTER THREE:
BACKGROUNDS



The world is vast and varied. Cultures and customs have developed with no outside influence for centuries. Huge kingdoms have formed and claimed land, occasionally absorbing smaller ones in the process. Where on Earth a player chooses to nurture her character can radically influence her chosen class and even her destiny.

Present across these pages are a variety of new backgrounds to go with the ones already available through officially licensed 5E products. The ones offered here are setting specific and are separated by region, discipline, or supernatural. Although you only receive the benefits of one selection, you can possess a backstory touching on several. For example, you can have a discipline but hail from a region also listed as a background.

Regional: You originate from a unique location. You are born and live the majority of your life in this territory. You are not required to take this path if you are from this region; likewise, you could have been born elsewhere, but still take the background if you were raised or spent a significant part of your life in this region.

Discipline: Although some disciplines are rooted in specific regions, this path is for those that commit themselves to a specific field of expertise. There is no recommended class choice when choosing a discipline.

Supernatural: There are only three ways to tap into magic: the words of Pleroma, the mixing of elements (alchemy), and the natural unexplained gifts of an exclusive few. This background is the latter. You possess exceptional abilities that defy all reason. Some ascribe it to a divine gift while others view it as the next step in the evolution of the species. Others simply believe themselves especially sensitive to the saturation of Attricana. When choosing this background, you become distinct individual. Only one character in a player group should be permitted to choose a supernatural background. This gift is bestowed from birth and occupies the mind of the character so much that they gain no benefits from choosing a region or discipline, despite where they were born. They can be born from anywhere on Earth, but receive nothing additional other than their gift. All supernatural backgrounds are echan by default and as such you disrupt technology. You have a saturation value of 20 which can never drop below this value unless your soul switches from Attricana to the negative energies of Ixindar (see **Corruption**).

BARUCH HAND

"By His Will be Mon ta senhores de All-terra. By His Will be diabos cursed. By His Will be tekmon cursed. By His Will be magia ta rights o Mon. Ta be ta Word ota King."

You dutifully attended religious events. You spoke the words, perhaps even from the heart. Graduating from catechism, you had many options, defender of the caravans, farmer, slaver, or thuggee. From early on, you were taught that your way was the right way, and that foreigners hated and feared you. Your school claimed outsiders are corrupt, victims of propaganda campaigns meant to place humans underfoot.

Emerging into adulthood, you are a Baruch hand—the largest order in the nation, the one everyone sees. You attend the rallies, wear the armband. The question remains why. Is it from peer pressure, the need to fit in, or do you genuinely subscribe to the dogma? There was no way to avoid your nation's improprieties by this point.

In Baruch Malkut, it is unashamedly obvious that the population enjoys the fruits of discrimination. You have seen how successful a nation can be when it practices total apathy towards an entire race. Every major creation in human history was built upon the backs of slaves. In the end, humanity uses the weak to build the mighty, and now humanity can clear its conscience with the belief that those enslaved are not human. By this point, the truth is unavoidable. You have embraced it, tolerated it, or secretly lament it. A choice awaits.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Human, must be from Baruch Malkut.
Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Religion
Tool Proficiencies: One set of artisan's tools
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger
Languages: English, OneSpeak
Equipment: A fae iron dagger, two sets of common clothes for two different echan nations, one set of artisan's tools, 10 gp in any nation's currency.

FEATURE: FROM THE CULT

For the majority of your life, you had been raised as a zealot of Malkut—all worshiping the prophet and king, Darius Koenig. Unlike those of history and myth , this prophet's very life can used as proof of divine grace, as Koenig appears immortal. As a zealot, you first tried proselytism, and when that failed, attempted a more aggressive approach . You might have been a preacher, an agitator, a terrorist, an assassin, and possibly all four. Your current opinions may waver considerably from that of your roots. Regardless, you have unmatched knowledge of Baruch Malkut, the teaching and techniques used. As one of the few to leave the kingdom, either on a sanctioned mission or by excommunication, your inherited knowledge is considered by some to be invaluable.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	Unless born within the blessed kingdom, everyone else is untrustworthy and ultimately a target. Koenig is the prophet all must follow.
2	It was the only life I knew. I followed what they said, attacked who they said. Now I'm getting tired of it all, no stomach for it anymore.
3	I took their training, vomited up the oaths. I do things only for myself. The moment enemies pay better, my lords will be marks.
4	I can recognize a cult for what it is. Since joining a mission was one of the few routes to escape the kingdom, I did so. I discarded my past the moment I had the chance.
5	They told me I could be a member of the cloth, an elite assassin. All I had to do was kill an innocent. I thought I could; now I'm the target.
6	I believed in the word of Koenig…and then one of the fae saved my life. Now what do I do? I have to rethink my life.
7	I've been betrayed. Like it or not, I've been excommunicated. I'm in with the enemy. Do I take them as allies or manipulate my way back to my kingdom's good graces?
8	People say the journey is more important than the destination. I have many people to convert and a long journey ahead. There and back, and it's easy to get side-tracked.

BASTION-BORN — ANGEL

"In almost every way, Angel personifies the way mankind was—ignorant of what occurs outside of its borders, distracted by the minutia it could control, and content to let the rest of the world crumble from a misguided sense of exclusivity."

Although Angel does not fear the outside world as much as Sierra Madre and Mann, they still insist on keeping that world as far away as possible, erecting a vast wall to keep the enchanted world out; despite their traditions and general acceptance of fantasy, even Genai residents are still techan. Despite their voluntarily isolation, those from Angel are far from ignorant of the world beyond the walls – they just wish it wasn't there. Angel characters are not exposed to the enchanted world for much of their youth. Television doesn't talk about it. Books don't discuss it. Even schools avoid the topic. Like tales of oversized mutant rabbits carrying baskets of eggs or jolly obese contortionists offering gifts to children, eventually the truth is revealed, not consciously, but because it becomes increasingly impossible to deny. With the semi-echan town of Genai within the walls, one would expect Angel residents to be tolerant to the ways outside, but the adverse is actually true. The purpose of the wall is not just to keep enchantment out, but to shield themselves from having to acknowledge the reality of what's around them. Very few leave. Those who do are either nomads hoping to find riches, part of a defense force who patrol the outside of the wall hunting down the raiders that plague the forests around the city, or followers of childish dreams inspired by excursions into the echan town hidden in the shadow of the southeastern wall.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Human, born and raised in Genai or Angel.
Skill Proficiencies (pick two): Computer Use, History, Medicine
Tool Proficiency: Ground vehicles and aircraft
Languages: English, Sinitic
Weapon Proficiency: One-handed Small Arms
Equipment: Bastion-specific clothing, an old book, a few techan trinkets (a few that are disrupted) 15 uc in a wallet.

FEATURE: OF THE WORLD

Despite your city's high walls, you are still curious about the outside world enough to venture into it—but you certainly didn't leave unprepared. You've read lots of

fantasy books, unsure which were right and which were fabrications. Even if you don't know something specific about a region you're in or a creature you're facing, you've at least read a story inspired by it. You are never stumped on a question of the fantasy world... you just aren't always right.

If you fail a check related to history of the fantasy world, you can reattempt it with advantage: if you succeed the second time, your information is mostly wrong, but there is a sizeable grain of truth to it—although you have no way of knowing what is true and what isn't.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I must've taken a wrong turn at Salvabrooke. It was just a vacation…then I got lost. In a way, I still am.
2	I found the suburb of Genai, discovering the refuge of magic within our walls. The moment I came of age and decided to leave, I was already an expert.
3	I was happy behind the walls. Peering over the edge was enough for me. Then I saw that fae staring back at me…and I had to see for myself.
4	The fantasy world encroaches on my city. I answered the call and joined Angel's military. My next mission takes me into wastelands of echa.
5	When I was young, my friends and I played an ancient tabletop game where warriors killed monsters for gold. Then we found out it was real. Let's hope the real world matches the rulebook.
6	The city is boring. Boring. I need some excitement. It's the age where traveling the world could bring you face to face with a dragon. My friends will get a kick out of that on social media.
7	I joined a mercenary company that promised real money. They didn't prepare me for what I was going to find.
8	It has to be said—it's either them or us. They have their world, and we have ours…and I want ours to win.

BASTION-BORN — MANN

"What you call a nightmare of brutalist architecture encouraging a fanatical view of the world where only the righteous judged by few are allowed to live in a technological utopia…I call home. Let's burn it to the ground."

Mann characters face an uphill struggle. Outcast, they are prohibited to return to their bastion of birth. Mannites either take jobs in other bastions or they roam the outside world, selling what they find in echa to trade in techa. To gain the benefits from choosing this background, a character must have lived in Mann for some time. Perhaps they committed a crime or took a liking to the outside world and were ostracized for it. Leaving might have been by choice, but the separation was not amicable, for Mann is jealous of its secrets and prefers to "disappear" rather than banish subversive elements.

The Mann character is most likely alone and clearly inexperienced with dealing with the outside world. Despite the circumstances of her escape, she may be the most fundamental in her beliefs. Mannites not only dislike magic, they despise it. Among other techans, the person from Mann is looked upon with respect and trepidation. Mann is the most advanced bastion in Canam, as well as the most mysterious. No one attempting to enter has ever survived and those that have escaped have a mark on their heads, for the knowledge locked in their minds is too dangerous a commodity to be allowed to roam outside of the bastion.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Techan human, born in Mann.
Skill Proficiencies (pick two): Computer use, History (Mann), Intimidation, Sciences
Weapon Proficiencies: One-handed small arms
Languages: Englo-Lingo
Equipment: A discarded set of Mann clothing, 20 uc of counterfeit York currency.

FEATURE: HARD STUDY

Before you left your bastion, you were a loyal student of Mann, believing what you were told, passing the tests and excelling in the holy fields of science. But out in the world of blasphemy, science is not always absolute. One can't understand machines without understanding the physics behind them, nor combat the changes taking place in the world without understanding the unholy principle of that change. You see no reason to focus on one particular discipline to the detriment of others - all science is sacred, after all.

If you fail a check related to science or technology, you can reattempt it with advantage: if you succeed the second time, your information is mostly semi-accurate religious doggerel, although you have no way of knowing what is true and what isn't.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was one of the few allowed to leave the bastion on a mission only I knew—a task advancing the goals of my home, and surely to the detriment of the rest of the world.
2	Mann tech is more susceptible to disruption outside the city…and I found that out the hard way. Stranded, I have to find my way back or be forever outcast.
3	Too late...I'm forever outcast. It wasn't my fault. Seriously. It was a mission; I did what was asked. They claimed I was contaminated. I just want to go home.
4	Screw this bastion. I don't care if they put a bounty on my head. There's no life here. People just serve the state, worshiping a soulless city. I escaped—I snuck through a sewer and emerged a new person.
5	I started reading forbidden books, and they came for me (the bureau, not the books; that would be weird). Friends paid the price for my escape. I know my city, their secrets, and what they'll do to ensure I don't talk.
6	Everyone outside is part of a system keeping mankind's potential down. Regardless of my position with the bastion (despite being outside of it), I still keep their ideals in heart. I don't hold their opinion of me against them.
7	My family smuggled me out. There was something special about me. I had no place in that world. My only connection to the city ended when the city hunted down those I loved.
8	I took a secret mission to the outside world; now that I'm here, it's kind of fun. I'm not technically banished…I just have no real reason to return.

BASTION-BORN — SELKIRK

"Six in the day
Six in the shade
Half at play
While the others trade
A shovel in the ground
Beats a rifle in the hand
When the dwarves come round
Charge the military band."

Characters from Selkirk are born into a world of darkness and live most of their lives in the mines. Those that do depart are aware of the echan folk outside, particularly the narros, and trade convoys and military patrols find their company acceptable. Selkirk's military seeks to make the Pass of Dianaso safe. Others trek south to find warmer climates and warmer beds.

There is a stereotype attributed to Selkirk that the residents are all brutish and loud. This is unfortunately true. The chance that a character from Selkirk stems from the mines is high. They have been trained from birth to extend their body's endurance and survive in conditions that would kill most others. Since all must serve in the military at some point, they are also trained to live in the outside world. Rarely does a single Selkirk grunt lose a hand-to-hand fight against an equivalent rank from any other bastion. They are usually the most prepared in the open world and don't often experience the culture shock that plagues many other techans.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Techan human, born in Selkirk.
Skill Proficiencies (pick two): Athletics, Computer Use, Survival, History (Seliquam & Selkirk)
Tool Proficiencies: Smith's tools, mason's tools, or jeweler's tools (select one)
Weapon Proficiencies: War pick or Warhammer, one-handed small arms.
Languages: English, Narroni
Equipment: cold-weather clothing, climber's kit, 5 gp and 5 uc mixed in a wallet.

FEATURE: BORDERLINE ECHAN

You haven't lived in the mines your whole life, just most of it. And when you finally took on the outside world, you realized you'd never want to return to your city. You escorted trade missions to the narros, enjoyed your associations with them, and they recognized your kinship. Like them, you're accustomed to darkness, with superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can't see in infrared like the narros, of course, but your night vision is far better than most humans.

You have '"darkvision'"—you can see in dim light within 30 feet as if it were bright light, and as long as there is even a speck of illumination, you can see in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't distinguish color in darkness.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I suffered a severe injury while on an escort mission to Fargon and was healed by magic. Ever since, I felt a draw to remain in that world.
2	Back and forth from Seliquam—that's all I did. Finally, I told my employers I wasn't going back. They wished me well. I hope I made the right call.
3	Despite our necessary trade agreements, we're still a bastion, and I a techan. I prefer my guns. Lines will be drawn, and ultimately, these dwarves will be enemies.
4	Selkirk found synergy with those living in echa. I like to consider myself an ambassador, campaigning for balance between two worlds. I have no problems with either side.
5	I honestly think I'm a dwarf. I got the muscle, the discipline, the love for good wine. I'm even stubborn like them. I feel more a kinship to them than to my own kind. It was only a matter of time before I decided to stay out.
6	There is more to this world than Seliquam, Selkirk and Dianaso. I started as a member of an expeditionary patrol to Angel. We might have gotten a tad lost.
7	I don't want to be out here. I'd rather be in the mines. But everyone has to leave at least once. Let's get this over with. Oh god, it's so bright.
8	We were attacked by kodiak bandits. My caravan was scattered. I wandered the mountains, expecting death. Then I saw a city floating in the clouds. What was it? I need to know.

BASTION-BORN — SIERRA MADRE

"Our sun is manufactured. Our food is engineered. We live in a chamber forged by magic into a Euclidian geometric shape. We accept that. It's unexceptional."

Those who leave Sierra Madre are the most unprepared for the outside world. A techan from Sierra Madre is often considered the most naïve of any bastion resident. Being hidden underground, the population has had virtually no contact with the outside. Not even Selkirk can boast that level of isolation. Nevertheless, because the majority of Sierrans follow a faith of internal meditation and personal discovery, many citizens brave the landscape outside to fortify their souls and open their minds. Those that find the courage to leave often conceal their origins, analyzing what they find, and when possible returning it to their home for study. Even though they possess unique technology, they strive to adapt what they find to better their own society.

Unlike Mann, swept up in xenophobic paranoia, characters from Sierra Madre are the most hopeful for a time when the two worlds can live together. Their technology is the most advanced on Canam in the field of disruption resistance but they remain locked tightly in their underground fortress. Of all the techans found in the open world, those from Sierra Madre are the fewest.

Being from Sierra Madre, characters take their strength more from their own skills than on the technology they flaunt. Despite being naïve and prone to cowardice in the face of enchantment, those from Sierra Madre are the quickest to adapt when forced to. This also means the majority of those from the underground bastion rarely return, taken in by the whispers of a fantasy world.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Human, born in Sierra Madre.
Skill Proficiencies (pick two): Computer Use, History (Sierra Madre), Perception, Sciences
Weapon Proficiencies: One-handed Small Arms.
Language: English
Equipment: One-handed small arm of your choosing, 10 uc in techan gear, 10 uc in a wallet.

FEATURE: FAST LEARNER

You had a disciplined upbringing that serves you well today. Despite being somewhat naïve about the world outside your home, you pick up new skills rather quickly. Language, sciences, even the ways of magic are easily within your grasp.

During downtime activities, it only takes you 100 days to learn a new language or tool, and research and crafting only take half the time they normally would.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I'm lost. Where do I go? What do I do? I don't know anything about this world. Why did they send me out here? What's that noise?
2	My city requires that I leave the shelter and document this world of echa. I had read reports of how the natural world changed, and now I'm about to see it for myself. I'm both scared and excited.
3	The moment I heard there was more outside my city, I wanted to leave. The thrill of exploration grips me. I have no idea what to expect…but whatever it is, I'll be prepared for it…most likely.
4	I never wanted to leave. Someone I cared about left on a mission and never returned. Despite my feelings on the outside world, I need to find them.
5	I had been away from my city far too long. I had acquired considerable information on other bastions and echan nations. I now have a long trip back.
6	Now that I'm out there—succeeded on my information-gathering mission—I don't really want to go back. I told them I wouldn't be returning.
7	There was nothing more for me in that city. I had lost everything. I hated that place and its philosophy. At my earliest opportunity, I left.
8	I didn't deserve this punishment. It didn't fit the crime. Banishment. It's as good as a death sentence. A planet-wide gulag. I probably won't last long.

BASTION-BORN — YORK

"I sit 'ere watching de' game, enjoying a calzone, and in walks one of dem elfs. Away from the 'Walk. Struttin' like he can walk in'ere and just order a sarsaparilla or something. He obviously needs to be told where he can and cannot be. There is an order and there are signs… and I know dem types can read."

With no imposing 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. Those taking advantage of their friendliness and flaunting such enchantment may find themselves victims of a mob, or at very least a polite warning from the YSDF to remove themselves from the bastion forthwith. Due to the prevalence of passing magic users in York, citizens neither fear nor loathe the echans: they just prefer living their lives with air conditioning, elevators, and parking meters. York citizens can leave and re-enter the bastion as they wish, and are some of the most commonly seen techans in all of Canam. York is also the most aggressive in patrolling their borders. Although York has a fenceline, it is a vastly inadequate barricade, leaving the city to depend on open fields patrolled by a large militia of soldiers and low-tech robots known as zeros to protect it. They must stand on constant guard from attacks. They also operate a counter-intelligence organization that monitors activity within the rival bastion of Mann.

Characters from York have known about magic from the day they were born. They see it passing through the city to the docks. The main highway is a common route of passage of all residents and is the only safe route for echans. York characters have gotten used to not voicing their opinions of the world outside. 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.

A character from York has had the most experience with echans despite their feelings towards them. They also probably know someone that has ventured into the outside world and returned to tell the tale. Of all the bastion-born, those from York are the most romantic and experience the largest number of emigrants of any

techan city. Thankfully, they are the largest growing, so this small migration is not noticed.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Human, born in York.
Skill Proficiencies (pick two): Computer Operation, History (York), Persuasion
Tool Proficiency: Ground vehicles and aircraft
Weapon Proficiencies: One-handed Small Arms
Languages: Englo-lingo
Equipment: A used wheeled bike OR a used 4-wheel ATV or a riding horse (It is something you saved up for, but is near worthless if sold later).

FEATURE: HAVE A HOME

Unlike other bastions, York is open to both techans *and* echans (as long as they pay an entry fee and restrict their activities to the zone along the Broad Way—the highway running between the western gates and the eastern docks). Only the Fae-Proof Fence guards the perimeter of York, and as a citizen, you are free to pass back and forth as you wish. You've ventured outside enough times to be comfortable with echa, and even picked up a few connections outside the city (as well as within it). You have an edge when it comes to finding good deals on equipment, lodging and good fare both in and around the city, and you can generally find a friend to put you up for the night if you're stuck on the wrong side of the fence, or to carry messages back and forth for you.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was never more aware of the dangers of the new world until I saw them walk freely by my window. This city is being kept back by the disruption of our "guests". Time to take the battle to them.
2	It's like the ancient frontier times I read in books. Wagons West! I'm out to take on the new world, weapon in hand. I'll bring order to the savages! No allegories here.
3	I met one of them, beautiful; we shared a moment. I let it pass and assumed it would be forgotten. I wasn't…now I want to find that fae that stole my heart.
4	York mercenaries run open enrolment. They obviously found me a promising talent, because they signed me up. This was my ticket out…we'll see if it sticks.
5	Echan terrorists from Baruch Malkut killed everyone I loved. We let them in, and they betrayed us. I'm leaving my city, going to hunt those responsible and make them pay.
6	My city doesn't draw a line in the sand like others, neither will I. My trading often takes me from the city. Dragons? So what?
7	I was always the outdoors type, a survivalist. One cannot live in a forest of concrete and steel. But in order to live with nature, one must tolerate magic.
8	York prides itself on being diplomatic with neighbors, unlike other bastions. Envoys often send caravans to neighboring echan nations. I hope this satchel of communication I'm taking is important.

BLOOD ROYAL

"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 naïve 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."

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 deposed them. These included Saran Sana, Avraham Torquil, and Darius Koenig; of these, only the last has maintained his lineage (and somehow 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 on this half of the world: Elrenar Alkanost of Laudenia, Sharajaclypse of Vakai, Ravenar Limshau of Limshau, and Vincent Savarice of Abidan.

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 dragon 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 occasionally been known to 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.

Being of true royal blood, you are a descendant of one of these glorified family lines (Alkanost, Limshau, or Savarice). You currently don't have a claim to the

throne; why that may be is entirely up to you, but these houses are highly respected, so betrayal and expulsion is unlikely. It's also unlikely that you would openly announce your title to those around, as to do so without the presence of armed men tends to attract unwelcome attention. Your voice resonates to those with open ears. You possess a natural charismatic gravity that followers are eager to orbit around.

Path: Supernatural
Prerequisite: You must pick a royal line (Savarice, Limshau, or Alkanost). Your species must coincide with that line (human or half-fae, damaskan, or laudenian, respectively).
Skill Proficiencies: Persuasion, Deception, History (selected house)
Languages: One language of your choice.
Tool Proficiencies: A musical instrument of your choice.
Equipment: Letters patent, royal signet, regal clothes you probably shouldn't wear too often, a set of commoner clothes that don't fit you as well, and a money belt of 100 gp you'd do well not to flaunt.

FEATURE: NATURAL AURA

You were taught early that your words, carefully chosen, have the power to rouse the masses. You exhibit natural charisma in which others are drawn, whether they recognize you and your lineage or not. You are especially gifted when attempting to incite crowds or inspire followers—it requires a strong and stubborn mind to ignore you when you have something to say. Even if your actual heritage is secret, it's not the family tree or the position that rallies the crowds—although if you are able to boast your title, it usually helps. When traveling openly, you rarely have to pay for day-to-day expenses—most inns will put you and your entourage up for free if it means they can use your name and title as advertising, and most shops, at least in larger communities, will let you buy items on credit.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I've been betrayed, my title compromised. With few options, I'm forced to escape my home. I will return in time and claim what is mine.
2	My family doesn't understand. I want adventure, excitement, not primping and etiquette. I want to feel my blood pumping, to know my life is in danger. I'm probably naive, and maybe I'll meet my fate on the first day out of the castle. We will see.
3	I want my feet pampered! I want my shirts pressed. I belong in a covered wagon with feather pillows. But my caravan was attacked, and now I'm stuck out here. Someone will rescue me… won't they?
4	I was the black sheep of the family, the one sent on dangerous missions where they couldn't risk a more valued aristocrat. When the armies marched to war, I was the one standing arm in arm with the troops, sharing their trials and earning their trust as an equal, not as a stuffed shirt.
5	This may come as a shock to some, but I actually don't agree with my kingdom's policies, whether internal or foreign. This has proven unpopular to many, and some people (including me?) figured it would be better if I left.
6	I wasn't framed. I legitimately committed that crime. I took responsibility for my actions and accepted banishment as punishment.
7	One must follow the heart. I gave up my claim to the throne for the sake of love. Then I lost the love I had left my old life for. Do I miss either?
8	I was kidnapped, taken from my home as a child. I only discovered my true heritage years later. Few people know the truth, and if I were exposed, those I care about would come to danger.

BLOOD ROYAL FEATS

AURA OF FORTITUDE

You have an aura that affects you and all allies within a 25-foot radius of you. The aura confers the following benefits:

- Those affected can travel for ten hours a day without making exhaustion saving throws, and have advantage on the first two saving throws for a forced march. As long as your allies spend at least eight of those hours (not necessarily consecutive) inside your aura, the effect persists until their next long rest even if they leave it.
- Those affected have advantage on Survival checks to resist extreme weather, thirst, or hunger.
- If you score a critical hit or roll a natural 20 on a Wisdom (Insight or Perception) check against an enemy, each ally within your aura has advantage on attack rolls against that enemy until the start of your next turn.

NATURAL MOTIVATION

Prerequisites: Aura of Fortitude

Your entourage has a very good reason to keep you safe.

- Increase your Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Each ally within your Aura of Fortitude regains hit points equal to 1 + half your Charisma modifier per round as long as they have 1 or more hit point and are within 10 feet of an enemy.

BOTTLED BEAST

"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.*"*

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. 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 degeneration. 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.

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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Tilen
Skill Proficiencies: Intimidation, History (tilen)
Tool Proficiencies: A musical instrument
Weapon Proficiencies: One sword of your choice
Equipment: A diary of regression, a set of candles, a very old set of dress clothes, 15 gp in a small pouch.

FEATURE: REGRESSION

When you lose your temper, you have the tendency to regress into old ways. You become stronger, faster, more aggressive, but you also lose control over reason. You are not talkative and run the risk of doing something rash.

Using Regression increases your walking speed by 5 feet, gives you advantage on Strength and Dexterity checks, and grants temporary hit points equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier + your level. This lasts five minutes. From the time Regression starts, you have disadvantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Intelligence ability and skill checks until you finish a long rest. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. Alternately, you can expend five hit dice to use it again.

BOTTLED BEAST FEATS

MONSTER UNCAGED

Your inner beast paces in its cage, granting you the following benefits:

- Your Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score increases by 1, as does your maximum for that score.
- While using Regression, you also have a +1 bonus on melee attack rolls.
- When Regression ends, if you have not reduced at least one enemy to 0 hit points or used Blood Surge against at least one creature, you must you succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw at the beginning of your turn or attack the nearest creature (enemy or ally).

OVER THE LINE

Prerequisites: Monster Uncaged

You have thrown caution to the winds, reaping the following benefits when using Regression:

- The number of temporary hit points you gain is doubled.
- The hit die cost to use Regression again is reduced to 3.
- You inflict double damage when using Blood Surge.
- When Regression ends, if you took any regular hit point damage while using it, you must use Blood Surge against the nearest creature until you are restored to full hit points or until you succeed at a DC 20 Charisma saving throw. Any use of Blood Surge during this frenzy does not count against your normal daily uses.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I know there are stories of vampires using their powers heroically, never falling victim to their cravings, never turning into the demons they hunt. I could be that person, approaching as close to the darkness without crossing.
2	I'm a weapon, a necessary one. I have to use my abilities because to not use them is wasting that power. I respect it; I won't let it control me, but it must be used.
3	The darkness has power. I'll push and push, and if I fall back to the hunger, so be it. It's my nature, embrace it. It feels good.
4	No. Don't make me angry. You wouldn't like me when I'm angry. Tilen…smash…
5	I regressed once and it hurt the people I cared about. I know that power is there, but it frightens me. Will I be able to regain my old self next time? I don't think I can take that risk.
6	My mother was an elder, and she warned me of this path, that I shouldn't pursue it. I have not regressed yet. I am both excited and frightened what will happen the first time.
7	It's a switch like any other. When my life is in danger, I switch it on, and then switch it off. What's the worst that could happen?
8	They claim it's uncontrollable; that's because no one else has been able to control it before. I'll be the first, merging both halves of my soul, and emerging something new, all the strengths with none of the weaknesses.

CROSSROAD DRIFTER

Many individuals are raised in a stable environment, dependent on reliable income from parents that are always present. The crossroad drifter is not one of these lucky people. If he actually had a family, they were nomads or merchants. Nearly every wanderer, in packs or alone, eventually migrates to the Continental Cross—the singular highway that bisects Canam. There are thousands—if not tens of thousands—of miles of road that criss-cross the continent, but they are mostly unnamed and unmonitored. Only the Cross has regular patrols and has been cleared wide enough for three caravans to sit side by side. It is generally accepted that travelers will pass oncoming traffic at least once a day. It is the only safe route to Angel and the only direct road that connects the bastion, through Antikari, to Limshau and Gnimfall. Large tributary roads break off to several nearby free houses and the kingdoms of Kannos, Abidan, and the Finer Fire Pits.

Because of slow travel time and the long distances between locations, thousands are born with no real home to speak of. These drifters learn to walk early in life and never stop moving for the entirety of their lives. Despite loyalties to family present or past, they prefer to keep few ties. Their homes are temporary bed, wagon, and stable rentals. Crusades, causes, or jobs they take on are often considered peripheral, and they never believe them obligatory. They refuse to be tied down to rules or by the laws passed down by some egotistical government, despite the veneration of its rulers.

Even fae drifters cannot stand the idea of staying rooted in one place, and the company they keep should share that desire. They outlive their welcome early as they don't consider diplomacy a useful talent. If feathers are ruffled, these nomads simply pack up and move on.

Path: Regional
Prerequisite: From the Continental Cross
Skill Proficiencies: Survival, Sleight of Hand
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, thieves tools
Weapon Proficiencies: One simple melee weapon or One-handed Small Arms
Languages: English, Englo-Lingo, one language of your choice.
Equipment: A surprisingly large collection of miscellaneous items—select any 15 items less than 1 gp. You also have 15 gp scattered among a half dozen pockets, often mixed with the above junk.

FEATURE: UNUSUAL CHILDHOOD

Your life has been constantly in motion. You have interacted with a patchwork quilt of different peoples, gathering enough stories to fill a hundred books. You collect stories as you collect trinkets. As a result, you can attempt to recall knowledge on virtually any historical event from any part of the world, even if it is nothing more than an ambiguous rumor.

During downtime activities, research costs 1 sp per day instead of 1 gp per day.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	My parents came from a bastion, but I was born outside. I'm not sure why they left, but I have their tales and trinkets to remember a life denied to me. I may never see inside one…I may not care.
2	Caravans along the Cross are huge, rolling villages, a place I called home. I still have family in one, but all children must leave their home eventually.
3	"There's a voice that keeps on calling me. Down the road is where I'll always be. Every stop I make, I'll make a new friend. Can't stay for long, just turn around and I'm gone again. Maybe tomorrow, I'll want to settle down. Until tomorrow, I'll just keep moving on."
4	My caravan was destroyed, my family and people killed. Damned boggs (or puggs/pagus/kodiaks), they're all to blame. I have no home, only a mission…kill them all.
5	Back and forth, that's all we did, and I was getting bored. Puggs were just too damned easy. Then a freelance company came by promising real adventure and real treasures. Sounds like an idea; I'll come back a rich man.
6	My caravan is not an ordinary convoy. We carried something…something important, and it was stolen. I took it on as a mission to return it.
7	I lost my caravan. Well, I didn't lose my caravan; my caravan is lost. Just vanished, with little evidence of what happened. I continue searching.
8	I was banished from my caravan. What was the crime? Was I guilty? Answers for me to know. Regardless, I can never return.

CRYPHTARON

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.

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.

Outside of pagus circles, a cryphtaron looks even more revolting than his cousins. To a pagus, however, the cryphtaron is a walking angel.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Pagus, over 20 years of age.
Skill Proficiencies: Intimidation, History (pagus, dragons, shemjaza), Survival
Weapon Proficiencies: All two-handed melee weapons.
Equipment: Various overlaying pelts, explorer's pack, 15 gp worth of mixed valuable rocks.

FEATURE: SCARS OF TRUST

You are covered in a web of ritual and combat scars, which gain you numerous advantages, though they make you even more unpleasant to look at. Beyond the obvious benefit to intimidation, other pagus can read your scars like a personal history and automatically grant you the respect due to an experienced warrior. Furthermore, the scars thicken your hide and give you a natural resistance to pain: you are never cowed by the prospect of discomfort or even torture, and you could walk through a battlefield bleeding from a thousand cuts and feel only a refreshing sting on your flesh.

Whenever you roll a hit die to recover hit points, you recover +1 hit point.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I shall destroy those that give me a moment's annoyance. I need no rationale, no motivation. I have no history that I can remember, no bonds, ideals, or flaws. I am insane.
2	My mind is going. I can feel it. There is no question about it. I can feel it. I'm quick to anger, and those I once trusted with life now fear me. The chaos will swallow my soul and I don't know if I can fight it.
3	I welcome the chaos. The corruption of Ixindar tried to instill order in my soul. My fae origins are not as easily washed away.
4	I balance a fine edge, a yin and yang, chaos and order. I know who I am and what I am capable of. Each moment, I feel the balance shifting, but which way?
5	I keep my sanity internalized. I act the machine like they want, but I know my mind endures. Then one day, I was asked to commit something I could not stomach, and my life was forfeit in their eyes.
6	They wanted a monster they could control. It would have been easy for a sane man to act insane than for an insane man to act sane, but I just could not fill that role. I fled before they could kill me.
7	My judgment was appreciated, raised in a village that respected such strength. Then a higher authority invaded, and individuals such as myself were forced to flee. My kind will never know freedom unless dragons and shemjaza are defeated.
8	With age came reason, and I became a prophet among my own kind. Very soon, the real monsters came, and they took my brothers and sisters away. I am the most dangerous weapon of all—hope for a better future for the pagus.

CUSTODIAN

"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."

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 many 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Received training from Limshau.
Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, History
Tool Proficiencies (choose one): Cartographer's tools, calligrapher's tools, or painter's supplies
Weapon Proficiencies: Two Limshau weapons of your choice.
Languages: Damaskan, one living language of your choice (English, Englo-Lingo, or Sinitic are most common), and one archaic or dead language of your choice (Latin, Arabic, Mandarin, and Japanese are most common).
Equipment: Custodian kawabari armor in white or black, one Limshau melee weapon, a rare book (be specific), 15 Limshau-stamped gp in a money belt.

FEATURE: LOTUS BLADE

Your combat style is specialized for tight spaces, using walls and even ceilings to evade your target and maneuver into a position to subdue them. You rarely get lost, even in the most labyrinthine complex as long as you have a map or can get a view from the high ground. After general training, you selected a specialized role, bonding to a specific weapon and learning to maximize its potential. When using lotus blade, you rarely stumble.

Select one of the following bonuses.

- *Any Limshau weapon you are proficient in can be used for two-weapon fighting and counts as the appropriate weapon type for all class features that are normally limited to specific melee weapons (such as the monk's Martial Arts or the rogue's Sneak Attack).*
- *If you wear kawabari armor, you can still benefit from effects that require you to not wear armor.*
- *If you have a Dexterity of 14 or higher, any Limshau weapon you are proficient in which has the Versatile property also gains the Finesse property. If you have a Strength of 14 or higher, any Limshau weapon you are proficient in which has the Heavy property also gains the Finesse property.*

CUSTODIAN FEATS

DOUBLE RESPONSE

You are trained to watch every angle for a possible threat, granting you the following benefits:

- You can take two reactions per round instead of one.
- If you have surprise, your speed is double on your first turn.
- If you are surprised, you can still take reactions prior to the end of your first turn.

FLOW AS WATER

You have learned to move with complete ease from stance to stance, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- When you use the Dash action, you ignore difficult terrain.
- Whenever you hit an enemy with an opportunity attack, you can move half your speed as part of the action.

NITEN-ICHI

You have mastered the two-weapon form of *gorna sersannis*, gaining the following benefits while wielding a Limshau melee weapon in each hand:

- You gain +1 to AC.
- When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you add your ability modifier to the damage of the off-hand attack.
- Spend 30 feet of movement and add your Dexterity modifier to melee damage rolls until the end of your turn (this bonus doubles if you already use Dexterity for damage).

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was born and raised within the white walls of a Limshau city. I never knew another life and never wished for one. When time came to take on a mission for book and country, I followed dutifully.
2	I had heard about a nation of library cities and ninja custodians. That sounded too cool. At the earliest opportunity, I moved and joined the order. Years later, I finally graduated.
3	Limshau is despotic, even totalitarian, reaching cult status, focused on a bankrupt philosophy lacking in logic. Strangling the free market while legalizing vice will only stagnate this nation, and I finally had to quit the custodian order.
4	A criminal has stolen a very rare book, one from a branch I was responsible for. It was my watch, and that will not stand. Against orders, I left on my own to track the thief down.
5	Caravan survivors from a raid spoke of a hidden human library that survived the flood for hundreds of years. Their records back up that claim. Could it really be out there? I must find out.
6	I was perfectly happy in my city, and then I got assigned by my guild to document a person (or event) outside the walls. I thought it would be a quick jaunt…I was wrong.
7	I destroyed a book. An accident, but a disgrace I couldn't face. I decided to be a ronin, seeking out a way to reclaim my honor.
8	Although technically a custodian, I've yet to earn a place in one of the elite guilds. There are many possible routes, one that involves leaving a city for a year to document my journeys in a diary. Challenge accepted

DARAWREN

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."

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 it. 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.

Path: Discipline, Regional
Prerequisites: Trained in Jibaro.
Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, Nature
Tool Proficiencies: Woodcarver's tools, one musical instrument.
Languages: Chaparra
Equipment: Woodcarver's tools, one musical instrument, an appropriate wooden totem, 15 gp in valuable pelts

FEATURE: THE WAYS OF WOOD

Outside of the naturally gifted, there are few routes to master magic, all of which require hard study. While the damaskan wizards toil in libraries, chaparrans prefer to study beneath the leaves and amid the rocks and streams, learning how magic is reflected in the natural world. To understand this path, one must learn its ways from its founders in the towers of Jibaro, deep in Dawnamoak. Though most darawren are chaparran, the odd human and even a few rare kodiaks have learned the path. Joining the darawren cements you as a member of an elite fraternity, upon whose assistance you can always rely - but as nature is fickle, you can never be entirely sure what form that assistance will take.

You can choose the bard, cleric, druid, or ranger class. See the class descriptions for details. You cannot cast spells with the necromancy keyword. This is a variant arcane spellcaster, and like a wizard, you must select a totem (See Wizard).

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was raised in Jibaro. Darawren is the true path of the arcane. All the others are pale imitations… there is no wisdom in the others. I was taught by the best.
2	I read of the legend of Jibaro, searching years for it. When finally locating it, they refused entry. I was persistent and eventually earned a place, one master finally taking pity on me.
3	I never attended the actual school. My master was a hermit living on the outskirts, and I was his only student. I mourn for my teacher and blame myself for what happened.
4	I was already blessed with a natural affinity with magic. A darawren master recognized that and invited me to his class. My presence was a rarity, and I knew it.
5	If they found out that I stole their sacred scrolls, the masters would literally bury me in the dirt. I did return them…eventually…after I had read and copied the important bits. Of course, there are some gaps in my training, but I can improvise.
6	My parents were masters; I was expected to follow in their steps and be a teacher. I had other plans. What good is this power if it's never used with purpose?
7	Learning about the darawren was the first step. It's the universe I want to understand. Chaparrans preach a gut approach in contradiction to standard academic studies. Eventually, I'll want to master all the arcane arts.
8	I was taught the basics of the craft by an outcast hundreds of miles of Jibaro. The outcast made me swear to travel to Jibaro to continue my studies. I won't disappoint, but it's a long journey.

DAWNAMOAK KITARRI

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.

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 second 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.

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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Chaparran
Skill Proficiencies: History (Kesakas), Acrobatics, Athletics
Weapon Proficiencies: Kitarri black bow
Equipment: Kitarri black bow, 15 gp in valuable pelts (most of which you wear), a fistful of arrows.

FEATURE: KANSI

You are a legend within chaparran communities. Your title and reputation precede you wherever you go: you need but mention your kansi name and any honorable chaparran will go above and beyond the call of duty to assist you. You are an artist with the bow, able to place an arrow anywhere you can see, regardless of distance or obstruction, but you are always driven to exceed the deeds that made you a household name in the first place. As a result, you quickly learn to adapt to new situations and throw off anything that holds you back.

DAWNAMOAK KITARRI FEAT

CHANNEL STRENGTH

Your years of practice with the bow has granted you the following benefits.

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You can use Strength instead of Dexterity or Wisdom for all ranged attack and damage rolls with a kitarri black bow.
- Double your ability bonus to damage with a bow when firing at enemies within 10 feet.
- If one of your ranged attacks drops an enemy to 0 hp or less, you can use your bonus action make a single ranged attack against a different target. You do not add your ability modifier to the damage roll for this attack.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was granted an audience with the great Korrissessoro and permitted to train under him. Following his philosophy, I don't believe non-chaparrans should even touch a black bow let alone be trained on its use.
2	Marrisikorna demands patience. I'm older than other kitarri but feel my *kitarri-kansi* is stronger. For years, I pulled my bow with no arrow, just to learn the techniques. When I finally stopped asking for the arrow, I was given my own bow. It's an art.
3	I wasn't trained by a *kitarri-kansi* master but by a splinter-hound disciple. I know the talents, just didn't care much for the wisdom. I just wanted to put an arrow through someone.
4	I'm a second-generation kitarri, recognized as a prodigy. My humble teacher admitted I had surpassed even his middling talent, and my next lesson would only be found in the outside world.
5	I was a splinter-hound trained by Skylenaskanna that decided to leave my pack. I have a higher calling outside of just protecting a small forest.
6	Skylenaskanna was a wandering master, and one who found me. I was just a modest hunter, but she claimed I had hidden potential. We only had a short time, but I walked from it with a newfound talent and a beautiful black bow.
7	Korrissessoro, Marrisikorna, and second-generation teachers—I learned from them all, spending my life in Dawnamoak. They wanted me to spend another century training, but I'd have none of that; there is adventure to be had.
8	He wasn't one of the three masters, but my teacher knew how to use the black bow. When they killed him, I took the bow and vowed revenge.

DEATH HUNTER

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.

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.

To prepare themselves for the trauma 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 to 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: From or trained in Jairus.
Skill Proficiencies: History (Central), Survival, Intimidation
Tool Proficiencies: Navigator's tools
Languages: English, Englo-Lingo
Equipment: Two lanterns, a whistle, a very inappropriate kill trophy, navigator's tools, 15 gp gem from your last kill

FEATURE: CORRUPTED RESISTANCE

You have seen the worst this world can create, the darkest nightmares given form. Despite your resilient exterior, such images wear down on a soul. It affects your relationships, your outlook on life, and even lofty philosophical views of the universe itself. Your scars run deep, physically and emotionally, and you intimidate people without even having to try. On the other hand, your exposure to countless horrors gives you considerable resistance to fear and the fortitude to stand where others would inevitably flee.

You have advantage on saving throws against fear.

DEATH HUNTER FEAT

PURPOSE OF BEING

Your grim determination to end the forces of evil have given you the following benefits:

- You are immune to fear.
- Your first attack on a creature with the Ixindar keyword has advantage, and its first attack on you has disadvantage.
- When you attack an Ixindar creature, any weapon you wield is counted as magical and silver. If you hit, the creature has disadvantage on its next attack roll against you.
- Each time you kill an Ixindar creature, you gain resistance to cold, fire, poison, and necrotic damage until the end of your next turn.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I am a necessary evil. I'm the monster you want, the one solving problems you're unwilling to face. I'll take the horror so you won't have to; so don't complain if I get a little cross when you ask me to mind my manners.
2	I don't wish this life. My village, if not the whole countryside, is under threat by encroaching darkness. I was beating ploughshares into swords. When this evil is dealt with, I'll be perfectly happy being a farmer again.
3	I hated being a farmer. I was only looking for an excuse like this. I was already adept at fighting; this way, I can kill with a clean conscience.
4	The darkness destroyed everything I knew and could ever care about. My soul is already dead. All I know is vengeance. I don't seek trophies. I seek the souls of those that swear themselves to darkness.
5	Some people claim that hunting monsters for gold is only a profession for insane people. I don't see the issue; I kill monsters and get paid for it. It's a civic duty. It's not like I'm killing puppies.
6	The Sana Marsh is more than just a cancer reaching across Canam. It's a puzzle—a void of nature spreading like a virus. And one cannot kill a virus without first understanding it. I must unravel this mystery.
7	I was a loyal hunter, killing when and where, and then some impertinent son of a noble killed my pet. Now I answer to no one. I'm off their leash. I'm no one's dog.
8	I hurt those I loved. I lashed out to those undeserving. I'm no longer the hero I wanted to be. I can no longer be the soldier they need me to be. There is no retirement for those like me. All I can do now is leave.

DOPPELSHIDO

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."

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, 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 multicultural 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 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Narros
Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, Athletics
Weapon Proficiencies: One weapon with the versatile property.
Equipment: One weapon with the versatile property, common clothes, 15 gp in a small sack.

FEATURE: DOUBLE FORM

What you are able to accomplish with your favored weapon is as close to magic without it being so. You can make it do pretty much whatever you want. Your skill earns you both respect and a steady livelihood as a warrior, bodyguard, or instructor.

The weapon you choose as part of this background can be used for two-weapon fighting and counts as the appropriate weapon type for all class features that are normally limited to specific melee weapons, such as the monk's Martial Arts or the fighter's Fighting Style. Additionally, if you do not use its versatile damage as part of any attack on your turn, it counts as two weapons.

DOPPELSHIDO FEATS

MASTER FORM

Your constant practice has paid off, granting the following benefits.

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- When wielding your doppelshido weapon, you have advantage on opportunity attack rolls.
- Enemies have disadvantage on opportunity attack rolls against you.

JIZAMURAI

You bring the discipline of the doppelshido style into every aspect of your everyday life, which pays you back doubly as your strengths reinforce one another. You gain the following benefits.

- When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you add your ability modifier to the damage of the off-hand attack.
- Your doppelshido weapon gains the reach property, although reach attacks have disadvantage.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was born with a weapon in hand. I felt it in my grasp before learning to walk. I've known nothing else. It's an extension of not only my hands but of my will. My world begins and ends within my reach.
2	My talent is a gift from my god. I am a tool of his will. I do nothing that is not in the name of a higher order. Without that, I am just a mindless weapon.
3	I was in line to be a ravnorra lord. Then I fell to dishonor, a betrayal I was pinned with but not responsible for. Banished from my house, I am now a ronin, a criminal, hunted for a crime I did not commit. I aim to clear my name.
4	I am telokkrim—honored guard—set on a mission I will not fail. Unlike others of my kind, this forces me away from home.
5	I am the long-extended hammer of my lord/king, given a quest to defeat evil where it lies. To be honest, I think my fanatical views made me unpopular, and they found a reason to send me away.
6	My master told me the title of ravnorra was soon to be bestowed upon me. The final test awaits. I must discover my true self, define my place in this world. It involves walking the Earth, returning only when ready to take the title.
7	I left the order willingly. I had a weakness of the heart and it compromised my discipline. I was forced to leave and pursue alternative paths.
8	A monster broke through my guard and slayed my lord. I may call myself ronin, but most who claim that have no honor. I am all about honor…that… and vengeance.

EXPERTEERING ENGINEER

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.

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 compete with others for dominance.

Despite their wisdom and creative brilliance with poetry and song, fae lack the drive to push and conquer 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 in the new age and discovered humanity. The short-lived hairless apes found industry and technology second nature.

Gimfen rarely innovate, but they can replicate. 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: Gimfen
Skill Proficiencies: Engineering, Perception
Weapon Proficiencies: (See feature)
Language: English or Englo-Lingo, Japanese.
Equipment: Widget bag, 50 gp in various techan gear (unused gp become widgets.)

FEATURE: ADAPTATION

You learn how to reverse engineer technology and rebuild it with increased insulation and redundant components so it can operate in ED fields without disruption The adapted item is so fragile and requires so much fine-tuning that only you can use it effectively—if you give it to anyone else, it breaks after one use. Not even another gimfen could figure out the eccentricities of the device before it fails.

You can dismantle and reassemble anything electronic or mechanical, but doing so significantly increases the size and weight, which may cause drawbacks at the DM's discretion—furthermore, items that are not designed for a gimfen's stature (such as exo-armor and heavy weapons) may impose disadvantage when used. You are automatically proficient with the adapted item, but not necessarily with the item it is based on. This new shape is no longer sleek or beautiful, becoming ugly, clumsy, and heavy. 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 drunkard.

The time to accomplish the adaptation is one day (8 hours of hard work) per tech level of item. You must also invest gp equal to half cost of the original the item. Its weight increases by 100% if it weighs less than 10 lbs, +50% if it weighs between 10 lbs and 50 lbs, and +20% if it weights over 50 lbs.

One-handed small arms become two-handed small arms. Two-handed small arms become heavy weapons. Heavy weapons become super heavy weapons. Super heavy weapons cannot be adapted as they would be too large for an adventuring party to carry (though rumors suggest a few grind towers have them built in). Specialty weapons and grenades cannot be adapted.

Weapons requiring tripods when adapted automatically come with one during the procedure. Techan melee weapons do not need to be adapted unless they are powered: adapted melee weapons with the augment keyword can only be mounted on exo-armor. Medical gear and professional equipment cannot be adapted. Neither can battery cells as they benefit from the shielding of the adaptation while inside the weapon (EDF checks are only for batteries when outside of equipment). You should purchase an EDF muffler bag. Batteries cannot be adapted as the procedure would drain the battery in the process.

The original item being adapted is not retained as it is taken apart and incorporated into the new shape. This new shape is no longer sleek or beautiful. It is ugly, clumsy, and heavy. 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

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was born in a grind-tower and knew little else. I didn't care to leave until some brave warriors came by asking for a tinker. I figured what the hell.
2	We gimfen are gifted having a foot in each world, enabling one like myself to study the interaction between techa and echa. And one cannot commit research stuck in a workshop. I need to be out there.
3	My grind tower, a distant citadel isolated from Gnimfall, was razed to ash, and I was one of few survivors. My gadgets are all I have left, reminding me of what I lost.
4	Can you believe some gimfen build guns and robots and never use them? I cackle with glee each time one of my creations works.
5	They call me unstable? ME? What did I do? So what, I made one bomb. ONE BOMB. They just wanna suck the joy out of everything. Fine, I'll take my genius elsewhere, thank you very much!
6	I had always hovered near my grind tower, never venturing too far out…then I saw something in the sky, something mechanical. I followed it.
7	I wasn't raised in a grind tower; my home were the catacombs of York. I have more human friends than gimfen. One day, said friends asked me to join them in the creation of a mercenary company. It looked like fun.
8	My machines lie scattered across the countryside, a means to an end. I need to be better, stronger. I will not be considered some weak halfling. I'll be the rescuer, the gallant hero, the knight. I'll just have a gun instead of a sword.

adapted the item and attempts to teach others the technique results in utter confusion for anyone other than a gimfen with equal craft ranks. Even if explained, the exact supplies would be required, including the original item. Adapted technology does not disrupt from ambient EDF. It can still disrupt from active attacks (EMP weapons) or if an attempt is made to enchant the weapon.

(EX) TRAFFIC HUNTER

"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.

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.

Either you came into this career naturally or were bequeathed it from a family's legacy. You were trained on how to track and capture every type of fae. For reasons that are unquestionably complicated, you have moved away from this profession. More than likely, when faced with this birthright, you rebuffed the responsibility, appalled by the actions of your 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 your heritage, you have escaped the kingdom, obsessed with making amends for actions you might never have committed.

Or...not.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Human, from Baruch Malkut
Skill Proficiencies: History (Baruch Malkut), Perception, Stealth
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger
Languages: Onespeak, choice of one: English, Englo-Lingo, one fae language.
Equipment: A fae-iron dagger (whether or not you use it is up to you), a family heirloom, a set of Malkut clothes you avoid wearing, 15 gp of Malkut currency you'll probably need to melt down.

FEATURE: KNOW THEIR TRICKS

Despite your thoughts on your past life, there is no doubts that your training has kept with you. Like it or not, you are a natural hunter, and a common quality of the fae is that they share such common qualities. It allows you to guess their movements and counter them in combat.

You have advantage on saving throws against fae.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	Exclusion from my home was not by my doing. My caravan—my family—was set upon by angry fae. I somehow escaped. The only way I could survive was to shed off anything identifying me from my past.
2	I was a child riding with my father on my first hunt when everyone was killed. The fae took pity on me, and I was raised with a new perspective.
3	Let's get one thing clear: I didn't like the fae, and I still don't. Limshau custodians intercepted my caravan. We fought, I lived, and was thrown in jail. Limshau doesn't endorse capital punishment. I eventually escaped from my cell and vanished into the wilderness as a fugitive.
4	It was fine when it was just puggs. That felt… civilized. Then we attempted the lucrative score—hitting a proper fae village. It was unspeakable, what we did, what I was forced to do. I had a change of heart.
5	I was a captain, commanding loyalty, until a lieutenant that felt I was too soft betrayed me. They left me to die tied to a rock, assuming the chaparrans would kill me. They didn't.
6	I was foolish and talked to one of them, a damaskan that appeared more…human…than what I was previously believed. I realized the monster I had become. I freed the slave and became a fugitive. My old caravan now hunts me.
7	I never liked this life, not for one minute. I hated being forced into it by family. They forbad me to do anything else, damned patriarchal pressure. The moment I had the courage, I fled.
8	I had caught and broken every form of fae. I had my own collection, and sold dozens more. I put them to halo, killed when they resisted, and pit them against each other in games of sport. I don't know what changed. I simply had enough. I took those I could save and fled.

FARGON DISCIPLINED

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."

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, those of Fargon take this course to near fanaticism. Each city has a 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.

Path: Regional
Prerequisite: Narros from Fargon.
Skill Proficiencies: Select one skill
Tool Proficiency: Select one tool
Weapon Proficiencies: Narros krollish
Equipment: Narros krollish, 20 gp in Fargon currency, your selected tool

FEATURE: MASTER CLASS

As your title implies, you have narrowed your approach in life, focusing on the pursuit of a single talent upon which you can be considered the utmost authority. Alas, you tend to view all things other than your chosen skill as extraneous or even irrelevant. On the one hand, it allows you to ignore distractions easily; on the other, it makes you somewhat difficult for people the lack your focus to get along with.

Choose either the skill or the tool you gained from this background. You never suffer disadvantage on checks with the chosen skill or tool.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	Most narros are asked to try their hands at different skills before finding one that suits them. Once they discovered I excelled at one, they let me pursue it. However, to maximize my usefulness, I had venture into the outer world.
2	In my village, our roles were assigned based on testing and responsibilities required. I refused, wishing to follow my heart. For that, I was banished. I still hunt my dreams.
3	I was raised in a library in Fargon, studying on my favored topic as much as I could. However, I cannot be the master I wish to be trapped here, and I departed in search of my final lessons.
4	My talents are being wasted in my small home town. I don't mean to sound elitist, but I was worth more than what they had me do. So I left to find a proper use of my skill. A validation, that's all I ask for.
5	Money, that's all I ask for. Cross my palm with silver and you can have my visibly superior skill. Since no one here was willing to pay up, I'll have to find work elsewhere.
6	My gifts are given to me by a higher power. Said power has whispered to me that I must seek out a great quest, lest my talent go wasted. A great crusade awaits me; I just have to find it.
7	What I wish to be simply cannot be accomplished where I am. I don't want to leave my family; I simply have no choice. They claim this is an obsession, an unhealthy one, and that I should give it up. It's not as easy as that.
8	My talent has placed me atop an echelon others admire. Among a considerable population, I am atop a very long list of those sought out. One day, my lord approached me, as he could trust no other. "Take on this quest and make the kingdom stronger." How could I refuse?

FREE HOUSE CITIZEN

A very small segment of the echan population in Canam considers themselves free from obligations. They have no debts and answer to no one but themselves. With growing concerns of raiding bogg and pugg swarms, the number of truly free people dwindles daily. Many congregate around the huge nations of Canam like Limshau, Kannos, or Baruch Malkut. Others try desperately to win favor with a bastion. Many others simply settle for one of the many free houses across the land. The free houses are sovereign states squeezed between and around larger kingdoms. They are relatively self-sufficient and, despite their pride, spend most of their diplomatic capital towards earning favor with larger kingdoms. They do this either through trade goods or noble marriage, though the latter is unsuccessful with the fae houses.

Those raised in free houses must contend with a chaotic upbringing. Free houses are notorious for being unable to supply the needs of their people. There is not enough food, not enough shelter, not enough clean water, and not enough law enforcement. Those adept in the skills required for adventuring often acquired these skills from nefarious sources—robbing or pilfering their necessities on the streets. Before finding their calling, many of these travelers lived a sordid past with sins they would prefer not bring up.

On the converse, those seeking adventure with roots in a free house may have come from a rich bourgeois household, adorned in the rare and costly purple-dyed tunics that set them apart from the serfs. It's possible they were related to royalty or to a family with ties to the inner circle of the aristocracy. Why these individuals would choose to leave such a station could be obvious or rooted in issues best suited for privacy. If their path keeps them around their homeland, they will obviously have needed expertise when dealing with the local customs and practices. If outcast, they may wish to remain as far away from their home as possible.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Born in any Free House in Canam
Skill Proficiencies: History (your free house & surrounding area), Stealth, Perception
Languages: One of your choice: English , Damaskan, Englo-Lingo, Indic, Narroni, Onespeak, Romanic, Semitic, Sinitic, or Slavic.
Equipment: Common clothes, 20 gp in stuff snagged in local markets.

FEATURE: LOCAL EXPERT

You know where and who to talk to in your small pocket of civilization. You might have been raised in privilege, poverty, or somewhere in between—a knight, a peon, a serf, or a citizen, but you never lived a sheltered existence. The skills you've acquired came from the streets and work experience, not in a classroom.

You automatically pass all DC 20 checks or lower related to knowledge and lore about your free house, its inhabitants, its flora and fauna, and its immediate neighbors.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was raised on the streets, knowing neither home nor family (beyond those that earned my trust). My brothers shared no blood and we survived through instincts and wits…until I lost them all through law enforcement and gangs.
2	I was a common thief with exceptional skills, though eventually being caught by the house lord. Instead of dismembering me, he brought me into his fold…the nobility is always looking for spies.
3	I am proper knight commanded by his lord to complete a quest. Like legends, people will remember me and my exploits.
4	I was the child of a simple man who ran a simple noodle restaurant, but I strove for greater things. Despite loyalties to family, I knew a higher calling awaited me. Perseverance will offset lack of skill.
5	I can never return home; my family has disowned me. My kingdom considers me a criminal. If I return, it would have to be incognito.
6	I am no citizen of my land. They labeled me a bandit, and the title is fitting. Admittedly, I do raid caravans and vandalize house declarations. I'll keep at it until I find something better to do.
7	I never considered myself an adventurer. I was happy selling gear to those braving the wilderness. I knew I possessed a natural talent but never thought I was good enough. Maybe I'm wrong.
8	I was a member of the elite, the top percent of the house; I wanted for nothing. One day, street thugs killed my parents, and I couldn't protect them. That will change. I will be powerful, and I will be feared. By whom remains to be seen.

GNEOLISTIC

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.

From the moment of your birth, those around you knew of your blessing. You possess a natural affinity with the power of Attricana. You can alter the very order of nature and the universe around you. You are an apotheosis of the might of chaos. You can create life, heal injuries, and even recall souls from the afterlife. You channel the spirit of Attricana in everything you do. 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 Attricana then a gneolistic is simply a channeler of life-force.

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 study from Limshau revealed that the ratio of gneolistics to vivicators is almost exactly one in twenty 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.

Path: Supernatural
Skill Proficiencies (select two): Arcana, Religion, Nature
Language: One of your choice.
Equipment: Common clothes or vestments, an optional holy symbol or fake totem, a diary, 15 gp in silver coins.

FEATURE: INDETERMINATE CONSECRATION

You are touched by Attricana, able to channel the power of the gate without needing books or totems. Your talent is rare and valuable, especially to those without scruples who seek to exploit you as a prophet, a tool, or as a weapon. If you manage to avoid falling into the clutches of such people, you become adept at hiding your true nature and surviving on your own, either suppressing your powers or posing as a wizard, carrying a fake 'totem' and making sure that real wizards never uncover your secret. If you had the misfortune to be identified young and exploited, you at least always have a place in some cult's hierarchy or a master's entourage...as long as you do exactly what you're told.

You may select any magical class. By default, you are tied to the white gate of Attricana. Your saturation value is 20, which can never drop below this value unless your soul switches from Attricana to the negative energies of Ixindar--in which case, your corruption value becomes 20, your saturation value becomes 0, and you become Lawful Evil. If bound to Attricana, you cannot cast necromancy spells: if bound to Ixindar, you cannot cast abjuration spells or conjuration spells that summon creatures.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	My gifts were discovered in my village early on, and I was deified as a prophet of God (or gods). A cult formed around me. But something was gnawing at my soul. My family was manipulating me. I finally got wind of this and escaped.
2	Everyone loved me. It was not a cult; it was a movement. I deserved this attention. I. Had. Superpowers. I couldn't protect them when the bandits struck. Now I'm alone, forced to rebuild.
3	My gift does come from a divine source, but religion only comes from the lips of mortals. I refuse to follow books of dogma and prefer to find my own path. Thankfully, I was raised in a home that allowed me that freedom.
4	No one knew of my talent; even I didn't fully comprehend my potential until meeting that hermit. We were alike, and he taught me to expand my horizons, to think beyond the natural laws of the universe. He taught me a path I plan to follow.
5	My gifts came near puberty. Oh sure, there were signs early, but it was later when I blossomed… and a massive disruption draped my bastion in darkness. Oops. Time to find a new place to live.
6	This is not a gift from some intruding deity, just a natural ability unique in this new world. I just won the magical lottery. God or gods never need be involved. My path is mine alone; no prophecy or manifested destiny will control me.
7	Instead of a gift, my people believed my powers were a curse. I fled, fearful of what I could do. I must understand this ability, and either master it or have someone take it away.
8	My parents told me to keep my powers to myself, to push away anyone that could tempt me to slip. I alienated my siblings, believing me a shut-in. I saw them socialize, fall in love. In a brief slip, my powers were discovered, and I could think of nothing else but to flee.

HALFMASTER

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.

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. 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: Born or trained in Kannos.
Skill Proficiencies: Animal Handling, Acrobatics
Languages: English , Englo-Lingo
Weapon Proficiencies: All weapons with the reach property (like the glaive, halberd, or pike).
Equipment: A glaive, pike, or halberd; a riding horse, 15 gp in a pouch.

FEATURE: HABAUKEEDO

Habaukeedo is a specialized field of martial arts focused on wielding long weapons both at full length and up close, often from the back of a horse. Derived from ancient styles, habaukeedo has since evolved to adapt to the growing culture of Kannos. The versatility taught along with the style allows you to make a suitable weapon out of anything that is even approximately the right shape, and extends even beyond the art of combat—you are generally able to see any problem in life from at least two perspectives.

Any weapon with the reach property you wield can be used for two-weapon fighting (the offhand attack deals bludgeoning damage instead of piercing or slashing) and counts as the appropriate weapon type for all class features that are normally limited to specific melee weapons, such as the monk's Martial Arts or the fighter's Fighting Style. Additionally, if you are not wearing heavy armor, as a bonus action, you can switch the weapon from being a reach weapon to counting as two weapons.

HALFMASTER FEAT

BLUNT HIT

You have learned the secret of life is to walk softly and carry a really big stick. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- If you wield a weapon with the reach property, it gains the versatile (2d6) property when used for an attack against an adjacent enemy.
- You can choose when you make an offhand attack whether your reach weapon deals bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, regardless of the weapon's normal damage type or how you are currently using it.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I had been raised since birth with a mount; it was family, but after its death, I lost the spirit to be a proper mounted warrior, so I shifted perspective.
2	I was poor, with nothing save my weapon. One can carve a kingdom with the large enough blade. I have aspirations.
3	I was a loyal soldier of the kingdom. In a critical battle, I was injured, left for dead. Afterward, I stood among the bodies, realizing I had enough of war.
4	Service was required by the kingdom. At my earliest opportunity, I abandoned my duty and took the role of a nomad. They labelled me a deserter.
5	I was given an honorable discharge for service and a lingering injury. My home life afterward was turbulent; I was wracked with anxiety. It was best to leave and find purpose elsewhere.
6	It's not about what's best for the kingdom; this is just good old fashioned revenge. An opponent of significance killed my best friend; I won't settle until it feels my wrath.
7	I waited for years to see some action. Peacetime is so boring. I couldn't take it anymore, and I left home and family to justify years of training.
8	They said I was a natural, that I could do anything with a weapon. My future in the military was paved before me. But I won't answer to someone just because I'm told to. I'll punch my own ticket, thank you.

KAVALIER

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.

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. Kannos is weak, however, in mineral resources and must trade with the narros and their human allies in Abidan. 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. 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.

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.

Kannos kavaliers are quick on both two feet and four. They leap upon their mounts without a stir and drive even the most skittish animals into combat without a stutter. There is no greater waste in warfare than a trained warhorse with an incompetent rider and there is very little more dangerous than a Kannos kavalier and his mount.

Path: Discipline, Regional
Prerequisite: Trained in Kannos.
Skill Proficiencies: Animal Handling, Acrobatics
Languages: English , Englo-Lingo
Equipment: Warhorse or other properly sized mount (this becomes your *pact-mount*), horse tack (bits, breastplates, bridles, halters, harnesses, martingales, reins, saddle, and stirrups), 15 gp stored in saddlebags.

FEATURE: EQUESTRIAN TALENT

Kannos has the best horses and riders in the world, and you pride yourself among their elite. What you can do on horseback amazes everyone - all the more when you remove the saddle and perform the same feats again as adeptly. Outside of the military, you may have dabbled in circus performances, equestrian competitions, and dressage. Most riding tasks are a walk in the park, as you and your horse are in tune with one another.

Your pact-mount never acts against your wishes, and if you pass a saving throw against being frightened, your pact-mount does so as well.

KAVALIER FEATS

GRACE AND LITHENESS

Your pact-mount and you form a bond not easily broken.

- Your mount gains your proficiency bonus to its attacks, any skills it is proficient in, and (while you are mounted) to Dexterity saving throws.
- Your mount is proficient in all Dexterity- or Strength-based skills you are proficient in.
- Your mount gains one hit die of its normal type (based on its size) for each class level you possess over level 2, and can spend these to recover hit points as part of the same action that you spend hit dice to recover hit points.

SPEED AND ELEGANCE

You and your horse move as one graceful creature, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score as well as that of your pact-mount by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks.
- You have advantage on Dexterity saving throws while mounted.
- While mounted, you can use your bonus action to direct your mount to make a single melee attack on your turn (in addition to the mount's normal actions).

SUPERFLUOUS REINS

Prerequisite: Grace and Litheness, Speed and Elegance.
Your steed doesn't need any urging from you to take the fight to the enemy. You gain the following benefits.

- Increase your Dexterity score as well as that of your pact-mount by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- From now on, any time you select the Ability Score Improvement class feature, your pact-mount gains the same bonuses as you.
- Any time you recover hit points, your mount also recovers half the amount you do.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	My horse was the only one I pulled from the fire that destroyed my house, the only thing rooting me. Now it's just him and me.
2	As long as I have my mount, I have a home. I can't remember not having my best friend beside me. I dabbled in war, and when I got bored, we moved on.
3	I was a member of the elite Kannos rangers until emerging the only survivor of my posse after an ambush of outlaws. Now, I ride alone to right the wrongs I see. I might just wear a mask.
4	This isn't my horse; it belonged to someone I cared about. There was a battle and only the horse returned. Together, we both search for the truth.
5	Bandits killed my livestock and burnt my farm. Authorities claimed they'd deal with it. Both my horse and I both know the score, and it must be settled.
6	Call it a good-old walkabout—my horse and I taking the road, coast-to-coast, gathering stories to tell later. What adventurer we could have.
7	We were common thieves, my horse and I. One day, we crossed the wrong lord, stole the wrong treasure, and became the bandits other kavaliers chased after.
8	The battle is won, and now we take the long slow march back home. Packed full of swag, scars still healing, I took a meandering route home, and found myself swept up in something more interesting.

KINETASSANA

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.

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, with some venturing 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.

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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: Tenenbri
Skill Proficiencies: Stealth, Sleight of Hand
Weapon Proficiencies: Select one one-handed martial melee weapon.
Tool Proficiency: One type of gaming set, one type of musical instrument
Equipment: Traveler's robes, one type of gaming set or one musical instrument, 15 gp in miscellaneous coinage. If you own a sword without the heavy property, it can be disguised as a cane or similarly innocuous object at no extra cost.

FEATURE: PROPRIOCEPTING POSTURE

Acute hearing and superior instincts make sight superfluous to a master of the sword. Your craft involves smooth, controlled movements, including the quick drawing and returning of your weapon from its sheath so fast that sighted beings often cannot follow its path, or even realize that you're carrying a weapon. You are nearly undefeated in an ancient art form few outside your race have mastered, and your apparent handicap means that those who don't know better are quick to underestimate you.

You have advantage on initiative rolls.

KINETASSANA FEATS

PROPRIOCEPTING TALENT

It is easy to move quicker than your opponent when you can hear his heartbeat and read his intentions in his stance:

- You can use the higher of your Dexterity and Wisdom bonuses to determine your initiative bonus. If you tie initiative with a creature within 25 feet, you always go first.
- If you hit with a melee attack before your enemy acts after establishing initiative, your hit becomes a critical hit. If it would have been a critical hit anyway, you deal additional damage on the hit equal to twice your Wisdom modifier.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I'm but a simple businessperson who likes the odd game from time to time. I don't go out of my way to help people; bad things just seem to happen around me, and it's not in my nature to stand aside.
2	Despising the policies of my kingdom, I fled north in hopes of proving my people are not the tyrannical xenophobes others assume us to be. For that, I must be the better fae.
3	I was happily living life as a hermit (even had a nice hut), no responsibilities, until the legend of my past caught up to me. I was pulled into a cause I very much wanted to avoid.
4	I was a drifter, fleeing my past, unassuming, only resorting to violence when violence was wrought upon me. When others witnessed my hidden skill, they begged me to help them with an important quest. Sigh.
5	I acted nonchalant in public, but at night, assumed an alter ego. I became a defender of the innocent, righting wrongs when found. No one knew I was the hero that people feared and celebrated.
6	For a time, I was an undefeated fighter, scoring win after win in the arena. I suffered a great loss when my blade broke in combat. With bruised ego, I abandoned the sport to reclaim my honor and forge a new blade.
7	There are legends of famous blind swordsmen in human books. I may be fae, but these stories resonated with me. Such dignity and humility in these heroes, attributes I admit are lacking in many of my own kind. I aim prove we can be as gallant.
8	I've lost everything. I wander the wastelands of this new world, accepting no responsibilities. Despite occasionally discovering my buried kindness, I find it difficult to form significant bonds and prefer to wander this land alone.

PROPRIOCEPTING STRIKE

Prerequisite: Propriocepting Talent

By taking a moment to focus, you know exactly where to strike for the deadliest effect:

- Increase your Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Once per turn, you can expend a hit die to turn a normal hit into a critical hit. You deal additional damage with the hit equal to your hit die.

KNIGHT OF THE WALL

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.

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.

Path: Discipline, Regional
Prerequisite: From Abidan
Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Religion
Armor Proficiencies: Shield
Languages: Englo-Lingo, Paggin
Equipment: Janoahn shield, holy symbol (optional), 15 gp in semi-precious stones

FEATURE: FREEMASTERY

The ancient Spartans knew their shields. You probably don't have any of them among your ancestors, but you can at least claim a spiritual succession. You and your brothers-in-arms use steel with the force of will to protect the rest of the continent. After years, you've managed to synchronize your thoughts on the battlefield, effectively acting as one being. Your dedication to the defense of Abidan's Bulwark also earns you respect and gratitude (and plenty of free grub) from the citizenry.

When wielding a shield, against melee attacks, your AC bonus increases by one.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	The kingdom called for a mission, one the Abrahamic Knights often took on, but it was an open call, so I decided to answer. My shield brothers wished me well.
2	Defend the wall, day after day. I knew it was my duty, but I seriously thought there would be more…well…action. Shield knights also dabble in occasional bodyguard duty, so I changed my focus.
3	A minor attack by pagus upon the Bulwark of Janoah almost broke through because of me, a mistake I cannot allow myself to repeat. I walked away from my duties to find a new purpose.
4	God may have blessed the first King, but Abidan has become corrupt with each passing generation, milking a reputation no longer deserved. Disgusted by bureaucracy, I walked away, shield and holy book still in hand.
5	They wanted to train me for command, to swear totally piety to the church and order. But I had one weakness and couldn't in my heart accept it. I walked away from the only life I had known.
6	While defending the wall, my family was killed in the city. What does that say of the world? Of God? I left the wall to rethink my life.
7	I wasn't allowed an honorable discharge. I made a mistake and fled to avoid persecution. I couldn't give up my shield—it would be like severing an arm. My crest is covered to conceal my identity.
8	I always asked too many questions, and the priests never answered them to my satisfaction. It wasn't one issue, just a compounding of problems, resulting in me leaving the faith. And one cannot be a knight of the wall and an apostate. I was shunned, and had no other option but to leave.

KOANA SCHOLAR

"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

It is said that Limshau's rise to prominence as one of the world 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 nearly 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 twelve years (although "field study" is part of most curricula), though they are encouraged to remain longer if they wish.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: From or trained in Limshau.
Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, History
Languages: One living language and one archaic or dead language of your choice.
Equipment: At least ten books on arcane lore, a backpack to hold as many of your books as you can carry, cheap wizardly robes, a month's supply of dehydrated noodles and assorted spice packets, no money (spent it all on books).

FEATURE: ARCANE COMPREHENSION

You've studied more about arcana than even those purported to be masters. You've discovered secrets in your research known only to a few. This offers you a significant advantage in your studies of the arcane arts. It has

also probably left you with student debt, which gives you a good eye toward anything of significant value you might happen to pick up in a dungeon somewhere.

You learn one cantrip from the Wizard spell list, which cannot come from the schools of Illusion or Necromancy . Your spellcasting ability for this spell is Intelligence. If you do not have a spellcasting class, you must obtain a spellbook and have it in hand in order to use this spell.

KOANA STUDENT FEAT

HONOR ROLL

You graduated at the top of your class, with the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks, and on Constitution saving throws to maintain your concentration.
- When you regain spell slots, you can convert one of your 5th-level or lower slots into a slot of the next higher level. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I studied for years with no spells cast. I retook classes repeatedly. I've mastered the fundamentals. Finally, I became a wizard, matching the seasoned characters of fiction.
2	They say a wizard is one in a million, and it takes decades to discover one's talent. Call me a phenom: I'm young, eager, and now a wizard. I'm ready to take on the world.
3	I was fascinated by both gates, light and dark. The teachers warned me about investigating the ways of Ixindar, and refused to teach it. I dropped out to search for the knowledge they wouldn't provide.
4	I was the wizard equivalent of a jock, meaning I knowingly abused my popularity. I could cast spells, a rarity in a class of potential spellcasters. I still carry that level of bravado in daily life.
5	Relatives informed me was a child that I was a natural wizard, living among the common folk in the village. They carted me off to a city I didn't know, to a school I hadn't heard of, to make new friends and learn the craft. Many people still consider me a child playing with dangerous toys.
6	My family was killed by monsters I couldn't defeat. Friends at Limshau took me in. Weak in muscle but smart, I decided to pursue wizardly. I won't be weak anymore.
7	I wasn't even born echan. From a bastion, I abandoned my dishwasher, my computer, and central heating, because of a dream of being a wizard.
8	I was more than just a student of Koana; I was a teacher. I sent my share of students into the world, hoping I imparted some respect for the arts, but I never ventured into the wilderness myself…until now.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS

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.

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 race 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.

In the modern age, nearly every race 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. Unlike any other casters, the laudenians 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Laudenian
Skill Proficiencies: History (Dianaso & Sky Network), Arcana, Perception
Equipment: Roll twice on Magic Item Table B in the official licensed product and select one of the results, magos robes

FEATURE: TOTEM SYNERGY

You are born of magic. You understood the ways of magic while still a child, though admittedly for a laudenian, childhood takes a lot longer. Book knowledge cannot compete with natural talent. As a member of the elite of the elite, you have access to a wide range of magical items largely unheard of in Canam and know where the foundation anchor for any spell you might care to study can be found.

You can choose the cleric class. See the class description for details. You cannot cast spells with the necromancy keyword. This is a variant arcane spellcaster, and like a wizard, you must select a totem.

LAUDENIAN MAGOS FEAT

ONE WORD

You do not need pages of formulae to make sense of a spell: as long as you can envision the Pleroma word in mind, you can bring it forth in its purest form. You gain the following benefits:

- When you prepare spells, you can prepare one more spell than normal.
- You have one additional spell slot of the second-highest level you can cast, to a maximum of 6th level.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I fell from my city…literally. I'm lost, unable to find my way home. I'm a stranger in an even stranger land. Is this mud? I'm cold. I'm hungry. What's that sound?
2	I'm the exception to my race. I want to feel dirt around my feet. I knew leaving would mean the possibility I'd never return. But there's a world out there. I need to experience it. How dangerous could it be?
3	They classed me as unstable, my control over magic erratic. My acts harmed others. I was finally banished. I would've preferred they executed me.
4	In my deeper moments of meditation, I saw an image of my future, of someone close to me, of a place I needed to find. I don't want to leave my city, but I feel a compulsion impossible to resist.
5	Laudenia rarely sends their people to the surface, but this was an exception worth taking. I was given that responsibility, and I am honorbound to see this quest through.
6	I was a rare laudenian raised away from the city. My parents were magos and I inherited the skill from them. After they were killed, I found myself unique in a very big world.
7	As a master spellcaster, I have greater responsibilities than others, and I must ignore petty phobias about the planet and those living on it. When I got wind of a quest that required my talents, I took on the task.
8	I was soaring over the clouds on an enchanted boat when it was shot down by techans. The only survivor, all I have is my trusty totem and my anger at this world of science.

LIBRARIAN

"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!"*

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.

Path: Regional
Prerequisite: From Limshau
Skill Proficiencies: Select any two Intelligence or Wisdom-based skills.
Tool Proficiencies: Calligrapher's tools
Languages: One living language and three archaic or dead languages of your choice.
Equipment: A book collection too large to carry around with you, calligrapher's tools, common clothes, a backpack full of as many of your books as you can carry, 10 gp in a leather wallet.

FEATURE: BRANCH EXPERTISE

You've lived most of your life within the walls of a single branch of a Limshau city, gaining impeccable knowledge. As a librarian, you are responsible for cataloguing and maintaining the books under your care: you know everything about them, not just their contents, but the details of their construction, their history, the most intimate details of their authors, and any piece of trivia even tangentially related to them. You are an encyclopedia bound in clothes.

Select one: Add half your proficiency bonus to all Intelligence-based skill checks if you are not already proficient in them; OR, you double your proficiency bonus to one Intelligence-based skill you are proficient in.

LIBRARIAN FEAT

ADVANCED CURRICULUM

Your knowledge of the library extends beyond a single section, granting you the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- Choose one Intelligence- or Wisdom-based skill you are proficient with. You automatically pass all checks of DC 15 or lower with that skill.
- While within a Limshau city, you add double your proficiency bonus to all Intelligence-based skill checks.
- Choose a number of monsters equal to your Intelligence modifier. You are now an expert on those creatures and automatically pass all Intelligence checks related to them. You also have advantage on Insight, Intimidate, and Perception checks involving those creatures.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	Bandits struck my branch and made off with a very rare book. I'm not about to let a custodian take on the responsibility for its retrieval. They stole one of my books…big mistake.
2	Within the pages of the many books in my branch are stories of legendary locations and famous people. After so many years deep in books, I decided to see these locations and meet these people for myself.
3	I was in charge of a small branch in a small town. Then a skegg terrorist group literally named after the refuting of knowledge attacked. They killed everyone and burned my books. I have nothing else but vengeance.
4	After so many years, I was asked by the governor to document my own thoughts in a book to be printed. I accepted that honor, though I've never been outside my city.
5	A ragtag band of adventurers approached me for information regarding a subject I was proficient in. After answering, they asked me to join them. Why not?
6	I had been researching a specific subject on my off hours, but there's limited information in my library. To follow the breadcrumbs, I'll was forced to travel to some dangerous locations.
7	I've decided to change careers. They say the pen is mightier than the sword. NOPE. Not true at all. I need adventure, excitement. Books can only supply so much.
8	There was a call for an academic crusade, a group of warriors and scholars to travel and document what they find. They drafted me. I didn't want to go. I had no idea what was out there. Books don't really prepare you.

MALKUT OUTCAST

You are profoundly ashamed of your origin. You were raised in a world where humans have declared themselves superior, children of the true god, and as such are masters of all creatures of the Earth. You were raised under the leadership of a king blessed with immortality. He accuses others outside his realm of being heathens and heretics or worse, patsies for demons parading around in pleasant clothes and alluring skin. As judgment, these demons deserve extermination, but if they can be indentured to aid the

kingdom's exaltation, so much the better. You had no option and no cause to think otherwise. You believed this was true, for it came from the lips of your elders. Your teachers explained the history of the world and the slow extermination of the human race through a gradual process of corruption by whispers rather than swords.

You might have lived on a farm alongside these loathsome chattel, whip in your hand and revulsion in your heart. Then one day, or maybe over many, something changed. It is possible you always had issues with the practice. You couldn't understand how such evil could be attached to such innocence. Regardless of the shape of their ears, who were the demons that enslaved others? As a slaver, you might have been born into the career, or took to it easily in a culture that supported it, but that doesn't mean you believed in its practice. You might never have approved of the system but went along silently because of pressures from your government or family.

When you reached an age where rebellion was the norm, you might have recoiled from the business and escaped the hated reputation. Despite talents learned, you want nothing to do with your past and actively try to destroy the machine you operated within. Likewise, you might have rebelled against the system because of events that occurred late in life, when you are forced to face the sins you have committed. Perhaps you saw the eyes of an innocent fae and realized the truth of the evils you were perpetrating. But there is no room in the kingdom for those who do not absolutely support their king in his plan for the world. You are either with King Darius and his crusade against the infidels or you side with those fated for the gallows or a cross. You must swear absolute fidelity to Baruch Malkut or be counted among the enemy. Therefore, you left, abandoning your family, your holdings, and any claim to any land. Sometimes, you appear overtly friendly to fae, trying desperately to offset any accusation that that you remain loyal to that old belief. You keep your origin secret, but you know it will surface eventually. You also believe it is fate you will eventually return to face your sins and family directly, and this time you won't flee.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Human from Baruch Malkut.
Skill Proficiencies: History (Baruch Malkut), Stealth, Diplomacy
Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, thieves' tools
Languages: Onespeak, choice of one: English , Englo-Lingo, one fae language.
Equipment: One hallmark from your life in Baruch Malkut, common clothes, one type of gaming set, theive's tools, 5 gp in various currencies, 10 gp in Malkut currency no one outside of that nation accepts.

FEATURE: UNFORTUNATE ORIGIN

For years, you swallowed the rhetoric of the cult of Konig until you finally had a surfeit of it. But when you left, you took a significant amount of useful information with you. You are an expert on the Blessed Kingdom's culture, where to go and who to talk to. You know how their military works, what their goals are. You know how to evade the vile thuggee stranglers and the terrifying red-cloaked assassins of the king's inner retinue. You know how much of a threat the kingdom is, and how they keep their own citizens in thrall to a decrepit, corrupt ideology. Best of all, since leaving, you've learned how to rally others to believe you, which makes you the kind of enemy the king can't ignore. Once people know your past, they understand your commitment to affecting change. Your feelings toward Baruch Malkut and the secrets you have in your head can make you friends at important times and in high places.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I had gained a position of influence, someone with a future. They were grooming me for leadership. I saw through there lies, and gave up everything when I left. They didn't take it well. There's a bounty on my head now.
2	I used my position to operate an underground railroad. I managed to smuggled dozens of fae from the pens. I used my business to bribe officials. It was successful until we were discovered. I had to smuggle myself out last.
3	I held a prominent rank within the military until I saw an atrocity: a lieutenant, practically an equal, killing innocents in the name of our king. I defended them, and found myself crucified. Fae rescued me, and I carry the scars today.
4	I was a member of the abolitionists, hoping to enact change through political pressure. We attempted rallies, passed leaflets. We thought it could be peaceful, then the enforcers arrived. I went out for snacks, and then I went to Limshau.
5	Thankfully, I was raised in a house that abhorred slavery. When I came of age, my parents told me to escape the nation while they remained silently defiant back home. They made me promise to return and liberate Malkut from the plague infecting it.
6	I wish it was some noble act, but I was just a simple criminal, and they punish the likes of me the same as any fae. When an opportunity arose, a few others and me hijacked a wagon and made a break for the border.
7	I was a sellsword working within Baruch Malkut, paid for a variety of tasks, bodyguard, escort mostly. There was a limit of what I will turn a blind eye for. I turned my blade on my employer, and made a quick exit.
8	Abolitionists had it wrong; we needed an outright revolution. We trained for months for the right day. We struck hard, burned the governor's office, broke open the pens, and robbed the bank. We weren't expecting the retaliation that occurred, and the movement scattered. I was one of the few to make it out of the city.

REDCAP

Don't call him that. He hates people who call him that. And he usually kills people he hates.

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 race 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.

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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: Gimfen
Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, Intimidation
Tool Proficiencies: Thieves' tools
Weapon Proficiencies: Light crossbow, shortbow.
Equipment: A light crossbow or shortbow, thieves' tools, a cap of any color you want, 10 gp in a pouch which may or may not originally belong to you.

FEATURE: REDCAP REPUTATION

You are not some playful halfling known for picking pockets and irresponsibly getting drunk in a tavern. You're the strong arm of the gimfen. You've got a glare that could pin someone to the wall if your crossbow bolt didn't do it first, and even if some punters underestimate you due to your size, you'll make damn sure they'll regret it…assuming they can still walk.

You can make ranged attacks against targets closer than 5 feet without disadvantage.

REDCAP FEATS

KABOUTER

Prerequisites: Strength 14

Whoever invented that jolly lawn ornament got a few essential details wrong. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You don't have disadvantage when wielding heavy weapons.
- If you reduce an enemy within 5 feet to 0 hit points, you gain a +4 bonus (cumulative up to +12) to all damage rolls until you end a turn having not reduced any enemy to 0 hit points.
- If you score a critical hit, the target has disadvantage on all ability checks and attack rolls against you until the start of your next turn.

JUMP THE CORPSE

You are especially eager for the fray, gaining the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- If you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points, you can immediately move up to half your speed to be within 5 feet of another enemy as part of the same action.
- You have advantage on the first attack roll you make after reducing any enemy to 0 hit points. This effect persists from battle to battle if you don't use it, even after a rest.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I used to be a member of law enforcement, an honorable if not slightly boring profession where I lived. That was until old friends asked me to join them on a quest.
2	I admit teetering on lunacy. My sin list gets longer each day as I find more crimes worthy of punishment. Friends question my stability. They had better watch out, lest I put that on my list as well.
3	I was always prone to anger, which fit well with the role I played. My town asked that I find a purpose…elsewhere. I think they were only looking out for themselves.
4	I don't share with others the sanctity of life. I'm an assassin, the least one suspected. I permit myself the current company until the money stops being good.
5	I started life as a playful pickpocket, then I crossed the wrong mark, and my best friend was killed. I swore revenge, and after following through with that promise, I became a fugitive, escaping the only home I knew.
6	Redcaps are a proud aspect of gimfen culture, and I'm a honored member. I consider myself a knight. So what if I'm shorter. I've taken on a quest; it's a very respectful profession.
7	They don't expect a little gimfen like me to be a sellsword, but I may surprise you. I'm actually one the of the best soldiers you'll ever hire. Don't ask for my past; ask what I can do for you.
8	I watched all my friends fall to the hands of anathema. Some say that made me a little…unhinged. All I know is that boggs, puggs, and skeggs are a pestilence on this world. I will gladly dye my hat with their blood.

REKII

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.

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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Chaparran
Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Stealth
Tool Proficiencies: Disguise kit
Weapon Proficiencies: Longbow
Languages: Hand signs
Equipment: Disguise kit, hempen rope, grappling hook, bedroll, fur clothing, 10 gp sewed into clothes.

FEATURE: KEEN EYES

You are able to spot the smallest of details from nearly any distance. You can track opponents shrouded in darkness or hidden in deep foliage. You can convey that information to allies in order to offer an advantage. You fall into the role of a scout perfectly.

If you have line of sight to a creature and an ally that can see or hear you doesn't (but does have line of effect), the ally can make ranged attacks without taking disadvantage for not being able to see the target.

REKII FEAT

FOCUSED SPOTTER

You've trained hard to be someone else's eyes, gaining the following benefits:

- Increase your Wisdom score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You and each ally that can see or hear you can increase the normal range of ranged weapons by 50%.
- When you are spotting for an ally, enemies you can see lose the bonus to AC from half cover and reduce the benefit of three-quarters cover to +2.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was a scout for the splinter-hounds but was unable to keep my unit alive. As a matter of honor, I went into self-imposed exile.
2	I am not a technical rekii; I'm just a nomad, and my skill has simply come from avoiding people I don't much care for.
3	Chaparran warriors are entrusted with protecting the forests as much as the chaparran people…and my forest was burned to ash. I know who did it… and now I'm on a hunt.
4	I was always an independent spirit, not sharing in the communal essence of my people. Before even reaching adulthood, I decided to leave my forest and make a name for myself.
5	Rekii are the most common chaparrans assigned to groups not comprising solely of other chaparrans. My superiors obviously felt this quest was important enough to make me leave my home. I certainly didn't volunteer.
6	I was an honored member of a secretive society, a chaparran scout tasked with defending the world, men of action rather than words. Basically, we don't talk very much…other than these words I'm saying now explaining that.
7	They called me a wild elf, a feral fae, reflective in my hygiene and dress. I am one with nature, waiting for the day I will join the peaceful anathema. Then an outsider saved my life, someone I chose to follow as an ally, though often at a distance.
8	Early in life, I befriended a group of wandering adventurers and found their life appealing. My kin forbad me to accompany them. I disobeyed, and now have no home to return to.

SALVABROOKE SEEKER

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?

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. They strive to introduce some chaos in the world around to remind everyone else 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.

Path: Regional
Prerequisites: Gimfen from Salvabrooke; cannot be Lawful.
Skill Proficiencies: History (West Cross), Stealth, Sleight of Hand
Language: English
Tool Proficiencies: Thieves' tools
Equipment: Thieves' tools, three different changes of clothes for three different locations, 15 gp in stolen currency.

FEATURE: PETITE LARCENY

You do enjoy introducing a little anarchy into peoples' existences, just to make sure they appreciate what really matters. Through your interventions, you've saved lives, brought lovers together, and removed that which tempts others to wickedness. True, sometimes you commit what might technically be called "crimes" for personal gain...a lot...but it's all in good fun. Regardless, you're very good at it. You can run practically all day without getting tired, and if you are caught stealing, your talent at entertaining fast talk means you're unlikely to be punished for it.

SALVABROOKE SEEKER FEAT

LITHE LEGWORK

Your sticky fingers are backed up with quick feet and a canny eye for hiding places. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on all Dexterity checks related to pickpocketry or evading the negative consequences of pickpocketry.
- Your movement increases by 5 feet.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I admit being a petty thief. There is no way to polish that turd into a jewel. I would never steal something critically needed—I have my standards. It would be nice to be a hero, but who out there would require the services of a burglar?
2	I read books of how the rich should be taxed to help those less fortunate. Very boring, I'd rather there be a more aggressive approach, like… a… I dunno… a hooded bandit that would simply steal from the rich. Just call me a socialist tax collector.
3	I lifted something I shouldn't have. It looked so innocent. I offered to return it, but apparently, these miscreants have a "no-witness" policy. Well then, they can't have it. But now I'm on the run.
4	Oooh …shiny.
5	I have stolen my share, given equally to absolve my guilt. I was famous though no one knew my name. I was days from retiring, then friends pulled me back in.
6	I'm not a pickpocket but a professional thief, always going for the big score. I don't need the money—I need the thrill. Dangle a big enough carrot in front of me and I do damned near anything.
7	If I see something that I wanna take and it belongs to someone else, I take it. I want it more than the person who has it; does that not make sense? I have no concept of personal boundaries or ownership. If you want something I have, go ahead and try. If you get it, credit given.
8	My talent was natural and underused. Friends told me I had a gift, but everything I took I returned. It was just a silly hobby, but now someone says my gift could help the world…that's a tad bit of pressure. I'd rather just steal pastries.

SKY-BORN

You don't claim the Earth as your home. You fell from the womb and were not afraid. You clung onto ropes before learning to walk. You walked on the planks of a ship before you ever touched loose soil. You can dance on the railing of a skyship thousands of feet up.

Like any other nomad, you have no real roots, but unlike those on the ground, you do have a home; it's just mobile. You may have a family and might have owned your own ship at one point. Some catalyst has brought you on the ground. Perhaps you crashed. You could have been outcast for a crime. If you're a laudenian, you are most likely banished or have some need to see the world. Very often, that requires walking upon it.

Path: Regional
Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, History (Sky Network), Perception
Tool Proficiencies: Navigator's tools
Languages: English , Laudenian
Equipment: Navigator's tools, silk rope, 15 gp in tradable goods.

FEATURE:
NATURAL WINDWALKER

You were raised in the sky, or took to it early in life. Although this is the realm of the Laudenians, they have not been able to prevent non-Laudenian skyfarers from intruding in their domain. Whether you are one of these elder fae or a johnny-come-lately, you rarely set foot on the ground without pressing need. You never suffer from vertigo or motion sickness, and you have connections with a network that most others don't even know exists, or at the very least believe to be a legend. You can barter deals for passage on enchanted flyers or thermals, even negotiate a favor from a Laudenian drag-onshead captain on a rare occasion."

You have advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks when balancing or otherwise staying upright.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I was born of the sky. My parents lived and died up there, never setting foot upon land. I was the first to touch dirt, forced to the ground by a drag-on. I'm unprepared for what awaits me.
2	I was a good captain…at least I thought. My first mate committed mutiny and marooned me upon a mountain peak. He expected I would die climbing down. He wronged the wrong pirate—er, did I say pirate?
3	I was rescued as a child by a Laudenian airship and raised in the sky. When I came of age, I asked to be brought to the ground to find my own place in the world, maybe even discover my origins.
4	I spent my life obsessing over a legend, one telling of a city in the clouds keeping the secrets of the universe. This is not Laudenia but something greater, more mysterious. I lost my savings and my ship searching for it. My passion remains.
5	I was banished from the sky because of a crime they claimed I committed. All I've thought of since then is getting my own ship. They can't take the sky from me.
6	The clouds may be free and vast, but they're also boring—no one up here wants to travel where there's real adventure. Eventually, I took what I had and landed. If I can't fly to where there's excitement, then I'll walk.
7	It was no dragon that shot us down; it was a machine. But with no bastions nearby, who was it? Were we targeted? Perhaps the cargo we were carrying held the answer.
8	Some passengers we were ferrying told of a grand adventurer they were on. They invited me to tag along, but I'd have to give up my employment on my ship. I hope I made the right move.

SQUIRE OF ABRAHAM

"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.

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, 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 doubtful. 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 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.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisites: Choose a religion, from Abidan.
Skill Proficiencies: History (East Cross), Religion, Insight
Armor Proficiencies: Breastplate
Language: Englo-Lingo
Tool Proficiencies: One musical instrument
Weapon Proficiencies: One weapon
Equipment: A holy book, a holy symbol (optional), ink pen, humble clothing, a musical instrument, tabard of your order, and 15 gp in donations (or no money at all, having given all spare change away)

FEATURE: MEMBER OF THE ORDER

There are several orders encompassing the umbrella "Knights of Abraham", including the Cavaliers of Furusya, the Knights Sclavia, the Mubarizun, the Order of Savarice, and the Knights Pantokrator, each with its own code regarding war, the protection of innocents, and the proper behaviors of a knight. All fall under the blanket of the Edicts of Abraham, the code of conduct for a knightly representative of Abidan. While most Abidanians know enough heraldry to distinguish the orders, outsiders only know of a broad class of warriors beholden to epitomize virtue and chivalry. You can always call upon your brothers and sisters of your order in a bind to help you, and even those of other orders will put aside any petty rivalries to assist you if you are truly in crisis. When you display your order's colors, you are presumed to speak for your order, and any honest citizen of Abidan (and any other nation that recognizes the order's reputation) will do what they can to assist you. Of course, these courtesies come with the expectations that you will uphold the honor of your order, defend the defenseless, and behave in a manner appropriate to your station at all times.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I'm a knight, a paragon of chivalry. I believe myself a champion of causes. All my gifts come forth because of God's grace. With a list of medals and achievements, I was allowed to leave the kingdom in hopes of saving those outside from the evils the Wall of Janoah could not defend against.
2	I was a member and protector of a mission bringing faith to the faithless in the darkest corners of the world. I helped civilize the barbarians…until a mob of them fought back. The lone survivor, I struggle with motivation.
3	I am an admitted fanatic firmly believing that my kingdom is without sin and those under its flag should be proud to fall under the light of God. Those unappreciative could soon face God's wrath, or more directly, my own.
4	I have a soul bound to God, but I believe my morality comes from within. The sorrow of the soul comes from acts I know to be unethical, not because a kingdom or god told me so. With that, I felt it necessary to depart. I am proud of my heritage but fear what my kingdom may be turning into.
5	I am no longer one of my order. Perhaps God showed me to little or showed me too much. There are flaws in my religious teachings. I have decided to wander the world in search of the true God.
6	I no longer believe. I wear the armor; I wield the weapons. I took their training while secretly concealing doubt. Now, faced with the possible rise of fanaticism in my kingdom, I can no longer close my eyes. Lacking faith in kingdom and/or God, I had no other choice but to leave.
7	The power I have makes me mighty. I should be in charge of my own order, a saint, or at least one with my own castle. I am above these gospels. I set out to make my own order. People call me arrogant—but people like me forge empires.
8	I don't need to practice my faith; I've actually gotten quite good at it. I don't believe I'm required to hammer it over people's heads. I won't proselytize unless invited to. The quest I partake is not one required by my church. I won't enforce my kingdom's agenda. I do what I do because it's the right thing, and that's all.

TASKIN-KADA WATCHER

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.

Taskin-Kada, a respected city in Abidan, developed a counter-intelligence group for the express purpose of maintaining surveillance on potential enemies, and occasionally, potential allies. This gave rise to the watchers, an echelon of individuals trained in the art of stealth to rival even the assassins from Baruch Malkut. The watchers 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. Among other accomplishments, that reputation allowed the organization to expose corruption within a trading guild in Sclavia and recover Savarice's pilfered holy blade when stolen by thieves under blessing of Darius Konig. 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. The majority of them travel south, to watch the nation of Baruch Malkut.

Despite the impressive distance between the two nations, and the fact that several other kingdoms lie in between, Savarice never forgot his experiences near that land and considers the rival nation the greatest threat to Canam, more so than the pagus to the north. Taskin-Kada took an especially vested interest in Baruch Malkut. Home to the largest single Jewish population in Canam, Taskin-Kada despises the use of Hebrew words as a name for one of the most malevolent nations on Earth.

As a member, you can either be tasked by a secret mission or be one that has left the order for personal reasons. Your specialty deals with espionage in other nations and you are not cut for dungeons, though you would not be frightened by the concept.

Path: Discipline
Prerequisite: From Taskin-Kada or trained by a Watcher.
Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Insight
Languages: Englo-Lingo, Onespeak
Tool Proficiencies: Disguise kit
Equipment: Disguise kit, riding horse, several changes of commoner clothes, signal whistle, 10 gp in a pouch

FEATURE: PATTERNS IN CHAOS

You are a spy, pure and simple. You specialize in counter-intelligence, extracting information from places and people unwilling to divulge. You accomplish this through seduction, subterfuge, and good old-fashioned sneakiness. You observe and manipulate potential threats to the kingdom, whether it be a potential invasion or just simply those speaking against royalty. You have a natural talent in impersonation, disguise, and analyzing weak spots in a foe's argument. This generally doesn't assist you in combat situations, but it's an obvious advantage when breaking into facilities, talking your way into a situation, or talking your way out of one.

TASKIN-KADA WATCHER FEAT

OBSCURE MOVEMENTS

You are an expert at using the landscape to avoid notice, gaining the following benefits:

- You can always try to hide from creatures that have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, regardless of available cover. You can also always try to hide if you have at least half cover.
- You have half cover while prone.
- Standing up from prone only costs you 10 feet of movement instead of half your speed.

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	Enemies to the kingdom are everywhere, and we must root them out. I am a loyal infiltrator, trained form birth, reaching to any lengths to uncover evil.
2	I thought I was unearthing dissidents. In truth, they were only underprivileged protesters that were jailed and forgotten. I believe my kingdom is falling from grace, and I have decided to "retire".
3	I was only a common thief contracted by the nation occasionally to steal information and artifacts. I am on one such contract, though I'm still not entirely sure what I am looking for.
4	Watchers…that is what we are called. I watch, I record, and relay that information back to my kingdom. I have not been back in years. I hope they're still reading these reports.
5	I am on a long-term interdiction mission into enemy territory. No longer a watcher, I'm a full-on saboteur. I mean to cripple my enemies until the war officially begins.
6	Unlike some watchers, I've lived a predominantly normal life not within an enemy's borders, but within an ally's. If only they knew. Now I'm forced to choose between said normal life and something truly exciting.
7	I was selected among the elite for an extremely important mission, one requiring my particular set of skills. This goes beyond espionage or politics. This is real save-the-world type stuff.
8	After so many years, I'm getting tired of the old spy game. I refused my last order. I decided to make a life in the land I was supposed to be watching. Perhaps I'm in bed with the enemy. I'm not sure.

TRAIN GUARD

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..."

Located in the fertile Seliquam Valley that runs from the northern Nankani Mountains to the sea (the land formerly known as lower British Columbia and the Olympic Peninsula), the Seliquam Confederacy is a loose association of small multicultural tribal nations and city-states bound together by one thing and one thing only: the ever-present threat of the kaddog hordes from the wasteland of Xixion to the south. Every year at the end of harvest time, pugg swarms flood into the valley to loot, burn, and devour, and the people crowd behind a massive fortress wall and fight them off until the swarms retreat to their holes. Apart from this annual battle for survival, the nations of Seliquam live in a state of deep and permanent mutual distrust and spend the remainder of the year hatching political schemes against or covertly thieving from each other.

The only organization in the confederation that is above the constant infighting is the Train Guard, a military order founded by the ravnorra of Fargon to protect the regular trade trains between Fargon and Selkirk, but whose purview has been extended to not only guarding the many mountain passes, but making raids into Xixion to recover artifacts left over from the narros' expansion era.

Prerequisite: From or trained in Fargon, Selkirk, or Seliquam.
Skill Proficiencies: Perception, Survival
Weapon Proficiencies: Revolver, bolt rifle.
Languages: English , Narroni.
Equipment: Revolver, badge allowing free passage throughout Seliquam, common clothes, 10 gp in assorted Seliquam coinage.

FEATURE: BEST OF THE BEST

You are one of the few people that everyone in Seliquam respects. You have learned to look past the factionalism of the rest of the confederation in pursuit of the greater good. Because your order is essential to the continued survival of the petty tribes and duchies of your homeland, you can usually get a steep discount (between 10% and 50%) on goods and services in Seliquam—even on expensive bastion exports from Selkirk (which you can buy at normal cost instead of the regular 100-200% markup). Your grueling training regimen, created by the ravnorra of Fargon, means that you have more than a few tricks up your sleeve in combat too.

TRAIN GUARD FEAT

DOPPELSHUUDO

You have been taught a variation of the doppelshido martial art which integrates melee and ranged attacks. You gain the following benefits.

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- When you take the Attack action while wielding a light or versatile melee weapon in one hand and a ranged weapon in the other, you can use your bonus action to make a single attack with the weapon you didn't use for your main Attack action. You do not add your ability modifier to damage rolls with the off-hand attack.
- You can wield a bolt rifle or a heavy crossbow as if it were a quarterstaff (this makes it eligible for the above benefit as well).

Roll or Select	Backstory
1	I served at the Redoubt at Last Hope when the kaddog broke through the wall. I saw the bravery of the defenders who fought to the end and swore that I would never let a catastrophe like that happen again.
2	Heck, I didn't join up to sit behind a wall or on top of a train and pick off vermin from safety. I want to get me down into Xixion and plunder me some old narros treasures.
3	I grew up thinking of kodiaks as brainless barbarians, until an old bear of the Guard saved my life. I joined up in hopes that I can repay him some day.
4	Life in the bastion is too... clean. I prefer the great outdoors, and the chance to get elbow-deep in some yipping rat's carcass.
5	You. Get. To. Ride. Trains. What's not to like?
6	My ravnorra lord joined the Guard. Honor demanded that I follow him. Then he died in the line of duty, and honor demands that I remain until I too fall.
7	I had a choice: fight at Last Hope or get literally thrown off of Victrix for stealing. During the retreat I appropriated a uniform from a fallen Guardsman and got away. They don't keep a roster, so who's to know?
8	Our baron taxes us through the nose, but Guard pay is sacrosanct. As long as I'm here on the front lines, my family has enough to eat.

ORGANIZATIONS

Rarely do characters 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. Characters can be either part of a much larger organization or they can be independent, answering to no one but themselves.

Players should work together in forging a group that maximizes each other's abilities. They know their names, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

At character creation, a group of players may select one of the following affiliations. Being signed under an organization offers funds or equipment while independence offers the greatest gift of all, freedom. The GM may select an organization for the player group if the choice affects the campaign being designed. Not all members of a party need to select a single organization, though the party can only receive the benefit of one, regardless of the number of players in the party. To receive the benefits of an organization requires at least three members of party to share that affiliation. Players can only belong to one organization at a time. It is not impossible for players to switch their affiliation but this is not easy and requires the GM's complicity.

ABIDAN MISSIONARIES

"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?"

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, preferring to show the rightness of their faith to the world through their actions. 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. As the threat of an encroaching darkness looms, these missions have been found more and more often outside of Abidan borders.

Prerequisite: All members of this organization must have a good alignment.

Benefit: All party members have proficiency with Intelligence (Religion). If a character gains this proficiency with another ability, then this proficiency bonus is doubled. Players also gain citizenship in Abidan.

CRIMSON STARLIGHT

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."

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 center of Genai and the great beast supposedly living underneath it.

Benefit: The player group signed to work for the Crimson Starlight receives a wheeled truck or a tracked APC for free. It is a loan and cannot be sold. They also gain a preferred enemy, gaining a +1 bonus to damage against puggs and boggs. Players also gain citizenship in Angel.

FREE-LANCE

"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."

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. If there's a problem, if no one else can help, and if they can be found, a free-lance may be hired.

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.

Benefit: Members of a free-lance must select a kingdom, free house, or bastion. Party members have a either a bounty placed on them from the location for their arrest/death or are shunned/outcast from there. Because of shared training, when one member of the free-lance rolls a Hit Die to recover hit points during a short or long rest, he or she may transfer 1 recovered hit point to another member in line of sight.

IRON SONS

"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.

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.

Prerequisite: Techan human.

Benefit: A party signed under the Iron Sons receives a scrambler. It is a loan and cannot be sold. If the party breaks from the Iron Sons (or attempts to sell the scrambler), Iron Son command will put out a contract for the party's elimination. Each player also receives membership within the Iron Sons organization.

LOGOS LANCE

"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."

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 the king himself.

Prerequisite: At least one member of a logos lance must have a background connected to the kingdom of Limshau.

Benefit: Any party member of a logos lance has access to any library branch and any collection of books within the kingdom of Limshau. Members also gain citizenship in the kingdom. Additionally, when attempting a group check with Intelligence or any Intelligence-based skill, if one member succeeds, then the whole group succeeds (instead of half).

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

"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?"*

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.

Prerequisite: Techan human from Sierra Madre.

Benefit: All players working for the MFA receive the shielding modification for free to all pertinent starting equipment and a 30% discount to purchasing said modifications later. Players also gain citizenship in Sierra Madre.

NOMADS

Strictly speaking, to be among this group is to be classed as an itinerant rather than a nomad, but that doesn't trip off the tongue nearly as well. This group doesn't follow a herd; they don't migrate with the passing seasons. They wander the world because of a personal need to see it or because of a fear of discovery. They may have secrets or carry something of value others covet. Of course, this need not be so melodramatic. Techan nomads, those outcast or unable to enter bastions, migrate to keep within areas with a low ED value. Echan nomads may be outcast from their own society, bound to wander aimlessly without a home. Either type may possess a stigma preventing their settlement. Despite being labeled as an organization, this group is not affiliated with any establishment.

Benefit: Once per level, during a long rest, a nomad can regain all lost Hit Dice. Such an occurrence is unique and there must still be situation for a party to lick their wounds.

OROBAS

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."*

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 personal 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.

Prerequisite: Techan human from Selkirk.

Benefit: If a member of Orobas in line of sight is at full hit points (or is healed to full hit points) during a long rest, one other member can regain a Hit Die. Players also gain citizenship with Selkirk.

RETINUE

"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."

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.

Prerequisite: A party belonging to this organization must have one member (a PC, companion character, or non-combatant NPC) who belongs to the nobility (i.e. has the Free House Citizen or Blood Royal background, or equivalent).

Benefit: As long as this character is active (not dead or unconscious) and in line of sight, all in-game purchases made by members of the party (other than magic items), including drinks, room & board, and booking passage on vessels, are reduced by 50%. The group also gains a caravan with riding horses.

SLAVER CARAVAN

"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.

Citizens of Baruch Malkut found outside of its borders are defectors, outcasts, or slavers, the last of which only leave the country when 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.

Prerequisite: A party of active slavers cannot have any members of good alignment. A party using the caravan as cover to aid escapees cannot have any members of evil alignment.

Benefit: The group receives a slaver caravan, consisting of two sleeper carriages and one slaver carriage outfitted with fae iron bars (draught horses are included). Every party member receives a riding horse. The party receives a +1 bonus to damage rolls against fae creatures (if active slavers) or against agents of slave-keeping nations (if aiding escapees). The players also gain citizenship with Baruch Malkut.

TECHAN MERCENARIES

"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 re-sealed 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."

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.

Prerequisite: Techan human.

Benefit: A mercenary group receives a 20% discount on all starting equipment purchases and 5% discount on all subsequent purchases. Each member gains citizenship in a bastion of his choice.

TRAIN GUARD

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..."

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. 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 (and then, 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 in 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 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.

Prerequisite: At least one party member from Seliquam, Selkirk or Fargon.

Benefit: Guard members receive either a revolver or a bolt rifle at no cost at 1st level. Additionally, fae members of the Train Guard gain an additional 50 gp in adventuring gear.

WATCHERS

The city of Taskin-Kada is the home of a very unique society charged with counter-intelligence for the entire nation of Abidan. Operations involve scouting in the pagus-controlled land of Apocrypha as well as extensive surveillance of Baruch Malkut. 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.

Prerequisite: From Abidan; at least one party member belongs to the Taskin-Kada Watchers.

Benefit: Each member of the Watchers can work together on Dexterity (Stealth) and Charsima (Persuasion) checks as long as one can communicate in some way to another.

YORK SELF DEFENSE FORCE (YSDF)

"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*?"*

The largest techan standing army in Canam is the York Self Defense Force. They 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.

Prerequisite: Techan human from York.

Benefit: When operating within York, each member of the YSDF has advantage with Charisma (Persuasion) checks against York residents and techan visitors.

"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.

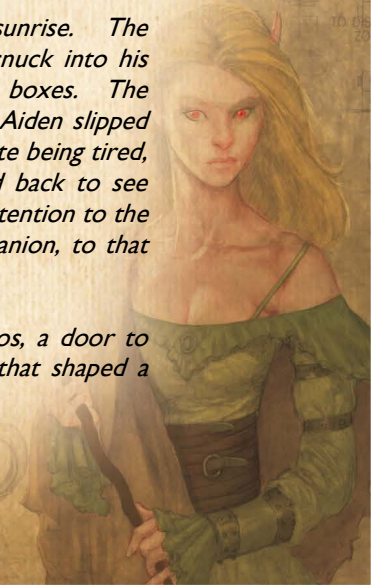
Aiden slammed the gate open, and it ricocheted off the concrete wall. He was too angry and confused to be frightened of switching stations or running down streets with inadequate lighting. He darted across intersections without alerting the crosswalks and ducked into darkened paths between buildings 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.

* * *

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 give*n 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.

* * *

Children assumed the truth until learning the virtue of doubt. They reached an age when they began to question the world around them. They turned to parents for reassurance. The goblins were never under the bed. No one snuck down the chimney to take cookies or leave presents. The disappointment that followed discovering the truth never settled. Aiden had reached that point when dreams rooted in reality replaced those impossible to achieve.

Every legend, myth, and tale his mother had narrated was a fiction that Aiden had so badly wanted to be real. He realized that every one of them held some fragment of fact. Historical accounts of modern empires, works of whimsy from when mankind ruled the planet alone. She was preparing him for the inevitable day when he would discover it for himself. There was no set time when someone was told. Like sex, it was just something picked up or stumbled through mostly be accident. The wrong book was opened, the wrong program watched. The child asked the proper questions at an improper time. Parents muddled their way through the answers.

Aiden had a dragon.

His mother had known the real world better than most, better than her husband, better than Martin. She knew more than most people about what was out there. With those books, she had told him everything.

* * *

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.

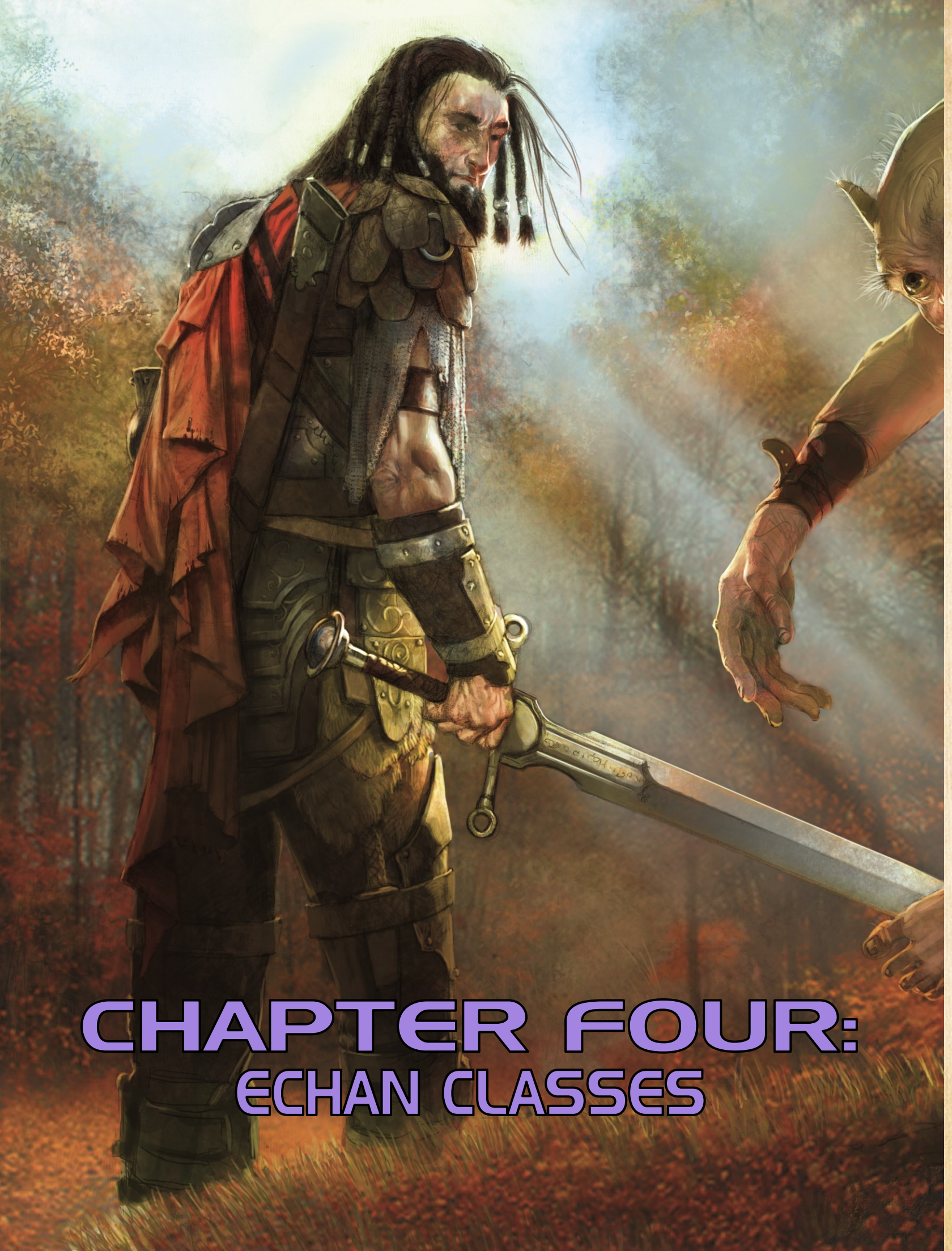
A hawk with a span to cross an expressway lifted from a lower perch, jostled by the unseen beast brazenly bullying its way through the forest. The bird vanished back into the thick.

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.

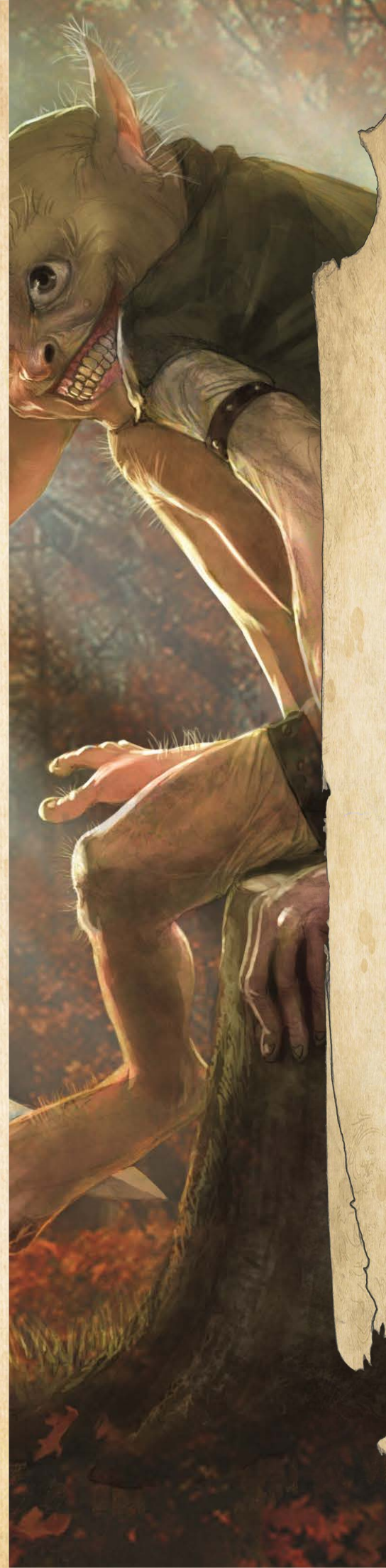
Aiden caught a faint whisper in the breeze, not as such carried by the wind but part of it. He leaned to the edge of the wall. The whisper was from no beast; it was comforting, tempting, an aria of the air--feminine and beautiful.

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 FOUR:
ECHAN CLASSES



In the fantasy world of *Amethyst*, there are real people and there are heroes, but mostly there are real people. The tales about great warriors are often fictionalized or heavily exaggerated. This story is not about the ordinary, but the exceptional. The same is true for the world of science. Players are creating those few extraordinary examples of heroism, regardless if they wield a sword or a firearm.

CANON CLASSES

In canon *Amethyst*, some classes are only available to characters who choose certain races or backgrounds, as indicated below. Additionally, all spellcasters (unless otherwise noted) use totem magic, and must choose a totem and have it in hand in order to cast any spells, even cantrips. See the wizard entry below for details on totem magic.

At the GM's discretion, normally restricted spellcasters can be described as wizards (choosing a totem as normal); also at the GM's discretion, any spellcaster may multiclass into any other spellcasting class, ignoring any default flavor that comes with that class—the new class is simply considered an extension of their present magical studies.

In a game that adheres loosely or not at all to canon, you may safely disregard these restrictions, as they are made exclusively for flavor rather than balance reasons.

BARBARIAN

The barbarian is only available to chaparran, kodiak, or pagus characters, or to echan humans with the hermit or outlander backgrounds. Barbarians rarely leave their remote homelands, but may be induced to do so on quests to prove themselves, to avenge some wrong done to the tribe, or if a "civilized" person offers them suitable payment (in trade goods or services, rather then gold) for their aid. They are most often seen in Kesakas, Halyc, Alpinas, Apocrypha, and very occasionally the West Cross region.

PRIMAL PATHS

Nearly all barbarians belong to the Path of the Berserker. The Path of the Totem Warrior is a supernatural path available only to chaparran characters or those with the gneolistic background, and in *Amethyst* is referred to as "spirit-bonded" (to avoid confusion with totem magic). This path represents a connection with one or more "spirit animals"—actually figments of the barbarian's own imagination given shape by his or her connection to Attricana.

BARD

The bard is only available to characters with the darawren background. Such individuals represent a branch path from the main darawren school (as represented by the druid class). The darawren tradition is so old, with many tangents of arcane knowledge, that some paths teach spells that are completely unknown to the main school.

The bard darawren views "humanist" subjects such as psychology, art, and history, as reflections of the power of nature, and apply the same discipline to studying and shaping them as their more earthy

compatriots do with plants, animals, and the weather. They are unique in that they usually use musical instruments instead of the more common totems, although their spells require neither song nor music.

You can choose when you take the class whether you use Charisma or Intelligence as your spellcasting ability: if you choose Intelligence, all class features that depend on Charisma use Intelligence instead. If a bard spell does not have a listed material component, then it uses natural components like grass, bark, or soil—things the darawren should naturally have to hand. You cannot use your totem as a spellcasting focus to avoid these components, but you can use a druidic focus in addition to your totem.

BARD COLLEGES

Even among the tiny fraternity of bardic darawren there are differences of opinion. Some hold that their art is an essentially peaceful pursuit, and focus on exemplifying the beauty of the world. Others point out that nature is a cruel mother and advocate a harsher, more militant path. In game terms, the former viewpoint aligns with college of Lore, while the latter aligns with the college or Valor.

CLERIC

The cleric is open to characters who take the darawren, gneolistic or laudenian magos backgrounds. Each has a distinct approach to the class. None are required to select a deity: They are welcome to select any domain they wish in keeping with their backstory, although each path tends to favor particular domains.

Gneolistic: The gneolistic cleric is an aberrant creature naturally imbued with magic and able to create spell-like effects from force of will. You do not require a totem, although some gneolistics use false totems to evade suspicion. While spell components are not an intrinsic requirement of your magic, you still use them as a focus to make channeling the power easier. You can use either Wisdom or Charisma as your spellcasting ability for this class—if you choose Charisma, all class features that depend on Wisdom use Charisma instead. You are bound to Attricana, and as such, you cannot cast necromancy spells (if your soul becomes bound to Ixindar, you become Lawful Evil, can cast necromancy spells, but lose access to abjuration spells and conjuration spells that summon creatures). Domains commonly associated with the gneolistic are light, life, nature, and tempest.

Laudenian Magos / Chaparran Darawren: The chaparrans and laudenians have several schools of wizardry. In both schools, the staff is the most commonly selected totem, though with the chaparrans, "staff" often equates a branch, with some Kodiak darawren employing an entire log.

You can use either Wisdom or Intelligence as your spellcasting ability for this class—if you choose Intelligence, all class features that depend on Wisdom use Intelligence instead. Domains commonly associated with the darawren and magos are knowledge, tempest, trickery, and war.

DIVINE DOMAINS, CHANNEL DIVINITY & DIVINE INTERVENTION

In *Amethyst*, the existence of the divine remains a matter of faith—it cannot be confirmed or denied even by the eldest dragons. Divine domains represent a personal aptitude for a type of magic rather than representing the common powers bestowed by a deity, and channel divinity powers are defined expressions of magical power, just like any other spell. Cleric characters may choose to believe that their power comes from a godly source, but a confirmed atheist with a similar gift would still be able to reproduce the exact same effects.

Divine intervention is a thorny point for scholars who study this kind of magic. The devout argue that this proves that someone "up there" is looking out for them: skeptics argue that it is merely a natural expression of Attricana's power channeled through the caster's thoughts—effectively, the power of wishful thinking made manifest. There is no hard evidence either way.

DRUID

The druid class is only available to characters with the darawren background, and represents the more common path of the school. The preferred totem of the druid darawren is still the staff however, which is always formed from a piece of wood naturally fallen from the tree.

You can choose when you take the class whether you use Wisdom or Intelligence as your spellcasting ability: if you choose Intelligence, all class features that depend on Wisdom use Intelligence instead. If a druid spell does not have a listed material component, then it uses natural components like grass, bark, or soil - things the darawren should naturally have to hand. You cannot use your totem as a spellcasting focus to avoid these components, but you can use a druidic focus in addition to your totem.

DRUID CIRCLE

There are two dominant schools of thought among the druidic darawren. While both adhere to the doctrine of chaparran kinship with nature, they have distinctly different methods by which they express that kinship. One sees the magical power of nature expressed through the complexity of ecosystems, and seeks greater attunement with the land in order to better harness

that power; whereas the other camp views themselves as merely one form of expression of natural power, much as each Pleroma word represents a different manifestation of magic, and that by changing their perspective—principally through shapeshifting—they change the "word" that they represent. In game terms, the former viewpoint adheres to the circle of the land, while the latter follows the circle of the moon.

As the darawren school is specific to the forest of Dawnamoak, only the forest, mountain, swamp, and underdark land types are normally available, and only creatures native to those landscapes are normally available for wild shaping. While a darawren could theoretically study the lands and creatures beyond Dawnamoak's borders, most chaparrans are notorious homebodies and are unlikely to do so.

FIGHTER

Fighters are by far the most common class in *Amethyst*, but with added archetypes, no two are alike.

MARTIAL ARCHETYPES

ELDRITCH KNIGHT

The eldritch knight archetype is a rarity in Canam, as no magic academies on the continent teach the discipline: it is only sometimes seen among self-taught mages or rare travelers from Lauropa, or as an ancient martial tradition passed down by certain laudenian noble families. Eldritch knights always choose either the weapon or the shield as their totem.

JANOAHN WALL CAPTAIN

As captain of the Janoahn wall, you have served selflessly for the protection of nothing short of the world. The Tethuss Bridge is the most common route pagus take when attempting to cross from their lands into the south. They hate water and despise the treacheries of mountain travel. All that remains is the bridge and, as a wall captain, you direct your phalanx to maintain their shields in firm lock against whatever evil attempts to crash against it. You effortlessly guide your line to repel armies ten times the size. As a team, your group could withstand the onslaught of dragons, giants, or a pagus invasion.

You don't need religion to have a crusade and your belief is secure in the church of the shield wall. Your devotion to this faith is unwavering and your piety in this conviction ensures its walls will never crack against any assault to its tenets. As shields are locked and weapons are brandished, you preach to your choir to defend the house of blades and plates against the heathens desperate to break your line. But the walls of this church are held by the wills of men, not gods, and as long as they have conviction in themselves and their captain, the house will never crumble. You are the pastor of a devout order, your followers hanging on your words—the sage of this church of war.

REQUIREMENTS

Origin: From Janoah

SHIELD LOCK

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, if you and at least two allies within 5 feet of you can link shields and form a wall, each member of the line (including you) receives a +1 bonus to AC until the line is broken. Each ally within 5 feet of you can also grant the bonus to one ally within 5 feet of her. Each target can receive the bonus once.

MAINTAIN THE LINE

Starting at 7th level, if your shield wall breaks for any reason, you and each other member of the wall can use a reaction to move up to 10 feet and relock the wall.

PHALANX ATTACK

At 10th level, when you make a melee attack while in a shield lock, one ally in the same shield lock can use their reaction to make a single melee attack.

STALWART FORTIFICATION

Starting at 15th level, you and each ally in a shield lock acts on the highest initiative value in the lock (you can decide among yourselves who goes first on that count). Additionally, unless the wall is broken, members in the wall cannot be shoved or be knocked prone.

LOCK DOWN

Starting at 18th level, while in a shield lock, if you or any ally benefitting from the shield lock suffers a critical hit, it is reduced to a normal hit. Additionally, if you or any ally benefitting from the shield lock succeeds at a Dexterity saving throw, one other member of the shield lock succeeds as well (even if he already rolled).

KINSHOA MASTER

"It will come to all of us. In time… Chaparrans will become plants and animals, narros will become rocks, damaskans will become memories, laudenians—clouds, gimfen—dreams…and us…we'll become the darkness."

Most tenenbri are social creatures, but only among themselves. Tenenbri understand well the distaste other races have for them, and to a certain extent, a deep current of repressed self-loathing extends throughout the entire species. It appears a natural instinct for tenenbri to seek contemplative isolation at some point during their lives.

The tenenbri that pursue this path of isolation eventually discover their attuned senses pick up far more than the normal world presents. The tenenbri's widespread faith in Oaken claims that the only way to truly experience their god's grace is to remove all other physical senses. Temples in Vanaka have prayer chambers with stagnant pools that can be sealed from external stimuli. Many followers have reported encountering visions that have either reaffirmed their faith or disillusioned them. After this period of isolation, the disciple is then encouraged to leave his home to contemplate on the experience, waiting for a moment of clarity. Those that depart often return to question the morals and motives of their empire. On a few rare occasions, they do not return, and either take to the open road, become hermits, or turn into kythix.

As a Kinshoa master, you realized that enlightenment comes from the discipline to control one's body and mind. You can perceive what cannot be seen. You can taste emotions on your lips and smell the impulses of your enemies. With such perceptions of the world, nothing comes as a surprise, and you never know fear. It is said you are aware of your own death moments before your final breath. You despise deception and have left your people because the corrupted values of its government made you ill.

REQUIREMENTS

Race: Tenenbri

WISDOM LIKE AN OCEAN

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you add your proficiency bonus to initiative rolls.

PRECOGNITIVE OUTCOME

Starting at 7th level, if you are hit by a melee attack that is not a critical hit, you can use your reaction to turn that hit into a miss and make a single melee attack (with advantage) against that enemy. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

IAODONA

Starting at 10th level, you add your proficiency bonus to damage rolls against creatures you have advantage against with your attack. Additionally, you have advantage on attack rolls against creatures who have not yet acted after rolling for initiative.

AWAKENING OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Starting at 15th level, if an enemy within your reach scores a critical hit on you, you can use your reaction to turn that hit into a miss and make a single melee attack (with advantage) against that enemy. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

PERFECTION OF FORM

At 18th level, you can enter a meditative state as an action to remove one negative condition (or one level of fatigue) currently affecting you. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Additionally, you can spend 30 feet of movement to gain +1 to AC until the start of your next turn.

KNIGHT-ERRANT

You are a knight of legend, the quintessential guardian in shining armor known previously only in story and myth. Across many barriers of language and culture such valiant defenders reveal themselves through determined purpose, ironclad beliefs, and unwavering integrity. You maintain your moral fiber, especially when those morals are the most inconvenient. You respect the laws of your faith, not necessarily the laws of where you reside. You believe in chivalry and honor, mercy and valor. You will never take the life of one who cannot defend himself. You will always prefer to protect the innocent, the poor, or the weak over the defeat of your enemies.

You fight only when necessary. You carry a strict faith in yourself or in the religion you follow and swear absolute loyalty to that devotion and its tenets. You believe the shields of truth and virtue protect better than any armor forged by man. You need not be tied to a lord, house, or kingdom: you may wander the world, dispatching evil when encountered. Despite the stereotype that such defenders are unreasonable, egotistical and vain, the majority are far from this cliché. You remain humble, giving of yourself when needed, regardless of the strain on body and soul.

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. You possess neither a specific creed nor code. You maintain your moral fiber, especially when those morals are the most inconvenient. You respect the laws of your faith, not necessarily the laws of where you reside. If they are in conflict, then your morals take precedence. You may not need to pray every single hour; neither does your faith require you to pray a specific way in a specific tongue. You might even follow no gods at all. You can claim you require neither the promise of eternal reward nor the threat of everlasting damnation to behave in a manner that is selfless or even "holy." Whatever power taps the shoulder of a potential paladin, it is capable of seeing into the heart and finding the goodness that resides within.

If an enemy asks for forgiveness, you must accept it unless the request is not genuine. You may appear in the most unlikely of circumstances, rising seemingly

spontaneously to confront the darkness. You may emerge unexpectedly in the midst of grief and loss as an avenger and guardian, or you may wander for years or decades, drawn towards your destiny before finally manifesting your abilities. This, combined with their relative rarity, propensity to wander, and short life expectancy, has made the source of your abilities almost impossible to study.

Courage is important, but you must temper that courage with common sense—to know when to fight and when not to. You must maintain your faith in the integrity and kindness of civilized people and/or to your god. Since a good and merciful god never asks a follower to die needlessly, you are not required to die for your faith, your lord, or even for your own honor. You only willingly die to protect others or to defeat evil in whatever forms it takes. You give to charity but will not give away your last sovereign if it means you are unable to be charitable on the morrow.

You must follow these simple edicts: benevolence, faith, humility, integrity, loyalty, mercy, and patience. You must adhere to these and keep the standards you wish to uphold. Breaking any of these ideals brings upon you a personal shame even if no others witness the act. You never look for an excuse to bypass your morals. You must never slay an enemy unarmed or helpless, never turn against an ally for selfish motives, and never ignore those in need.

Rise a knight.

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Lawful good or neutral good

Note: This archetype is supernatural, bound to Attricana.

EXALTED PATH

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, select one of the exalted paths listed below. You can activate a path as an action or a bonus action on your turn: once activated, each path lasts for 1 minute, and thereafter cannot be used again until you finish a long rest. You can only use one path at a time. You may prematurely end one path to begin another, but the terminated path still counts as having been used. You gain one additional exalted path at 7th level, 10th level, and 18th level. At 10th level, you can use two paths at the same time.

Aftereffect: Once an exalted path ends (either naturally or prematurely), you must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to 10 + 5 for each path (including this one) you have used since finishing your last long rest. If you fail, you suffer a level of exhaustion.

The available exalted paths are:

Supreme Tolerance: You gain unseen fortitude when facing certain death square in its eyes. You gain temporary hit points equal to your character level x 3.

Armor of Glory: You shrug off all but the greatest blows. You have resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage. *Prerequisite:* Level 10.

Wrath of Will: You wield your weapon with remarkable skill and force never before encountered. You score a critical hit against an evil creature on a roll of 19 or 20 (18, 19, or 20 at 10th level)

Rubicon: Enemies must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 10 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus) to use the Disengage action against you; you also advantage on all opportunity attacks.

Divine Strength: Channeling an inner light, you bring forth all remaining might of mind and muscle, saving nothing for recovery and victory march later. You can expend any number of your hit dice when you hit with an attack, dealing radiant damage. For each hit die expended, you inflict two hit dice of damage. For each die showing the maximum result, roll an additional die (max 2 additional dice). *Prerequisite:* Level 6

Pure Body: You are immune to all poisons and diseases, including supernatural and magical ones. You also have resistance to necrotic damage.

Image of Perfection: You have advantage on all Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom saving throws, ability checks, and skill checks.

Aura of Courage: You are immune to being frightened, and each ally within 20 feet has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

ENCHANTED ARSENAL

Starting at 7th level, any weapon you wield is counted as magical.

HALLOWED RESISTANCE

At 10th level, you have resistance to necrotic damage.

PURIFIED SELF

Starting at 15th level, any effect that would normally kill you outright (including instant death from massive damage) instead reduces you to 0 hit points, and you automatically make your first death save.

SANCTIFIED

At 18th level, you cannot become undead, no part of your body may be used as a component for any necromantic or nihilimantic spell or magic effect, and you no longer age.

MUTAHARRIK KAPTAIN

Leading the Kannos Kavaliers are the Mutaharrik Captains. You've probably spent more hours on your horse than others have on their own feet. Regardless if you raised your steed from birth or bought it from a stable, as an elite from Kannos, you can prepare any animal for combat within a week. You do not afford yourself any luxuries over the men under your command. You wear the same light armor, ride a horse with no barding, and charge alongside the line rather than behind it.

You and your animal are now one combined spirit and you no longer need to whistle for its attention or whip it to speed, requiring only a few words or a nudge. It may even act on its own if needed. The elite officers of Kannos forego all other pleasantries in favor of their bond. You don't bother with wives or children. It has even been said a Captain's steed lives for the entire life of its master, dying the second its Captain does.

REQUIREMENTS

Background: Kavalier or Halfmaster

Special: You must return to Kannos for promotion. You must own a large natural beast as a mount.

WHISPERER

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, if your mount acts independently from you, it can take the Dash or Disengage action as a bonus action on its turn.

PLOW THROUGH THE LINES

Starting at 7th level, while controlling your mount, you can spend 30 feet of movement and direct it to take the Attack action on its turn in addition of your own normal action. Additionally, when controlling your mount, it has advantage when attempting to shove a creature.

EQUESTRIAN CHARGE

At 10th level, mounting and dismounting only costs you 5 feet of movement instead of half your speed. Additionally, if your mount moved on its turn and you are not wearing heavy armor, on your turn, you can leap from your mount and land anywhere within 15 feet (within reason) without using any of your movement.

IMPECCABLE BALANCE

At 15th level, you automatically succeed at all Dexterity saving throws to remain mounted, and you can force any attack that targets your mount to target you instead.

UNBRIDLED LOYALTY

Starting at 18th level, the walking speed of your mount increases by 10 feet, and it can now take the Dodge action as a bonus action on its turn as long as there are no enemies in reach of it at the end of its movement.

ORDER OF ABRAHAM

Many claim the order of Abraham, the ultimate echelon of knightly order in Abidan, is that which all honorable warriors strive to join. If this was the case, there wouldn't be so many of them wandering with the crest scraped off their shield.

It is true the order was founded with the noblest intentions—to follow the edicts put forth by the first paladin king of Abidan and maintain the peace of the land he helped create. However, as time is known to do, several of the knights of Abraham have let their virtually unlimited power get to their heads. As such, a member of the order, although advocated as an symbol of chivalry, can occasionally be the harbingers of spitefulness and arrogance.

The order proves that a banner and an oath are not a guarantee for chivalry and respect. That being said, the order cannot be held responsible for the rising tide of fanaticism and polarizing dedication slowly infecting the kingdom, but they are certainly a pronounced indicator of it. The valiant and immoral may occupy an equal proportion among the ranks, and yet telling them apart is not as easy as judging how clean one's armor is. Sometimes the proudest knight carries the most wicked heart.

Although one would think rising from the lines of noble warrior to the highest stratum of Abidan military would filter such corruption, but like every aspect of society, there lies unfortunate bureaucracy. The edicts of Abraham are ever-changing and an absolute good, but it lies in the hearts of men to follow them without falter. Which are you?

REQUIREMENTS

Background: Squire of Abraham

Special: You must return to Janoah to accept knighthood.

OF LEGEND

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, select one of the following features.

- After you and your allies roll for initiative, each ally (not you) within 30 feet of you has advantage on attack rolls until they hit.
- As a reaction to an ally's hit, you can turn said hit into a miss; you then have advantage on your next attack roll.

NOBLE STAMINA

At 7th level, select one of the following features.

- You gain 2d10 (or 12) + twice your Constitution modifier hit points instead of the normal hit points gained. You also gain two hit dice at this level instead of one.

- Each time an ally suffers at least 10 points of damage within 10 feet of you, you recover 1d8 hit points.

LINE IN THE SAND

Starting at 10th level, you can declare your intentions with words or a firm stance of defiance against approaching evil. Enemies must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 8 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus) to use the Disengage action against you. Additionally, when you hit with an opportunity attack, the target is restrained until the start of your next turn.

NOBLE PROTECTION

- Starting at 15th level, select one of the following features.
- On your turn, you can select one creature within 10 feet as your ward. All attacks against your ward target you instead. Your ward cannot make attacks while this is in effect. If the target ends its turn out of range or attacks an enemy, it is no longer your ward and cannot be selected for one minute. If you move willingly, you can pull your ward with you.
- If a creatures scores a critical hit on you, after calculating damage, you suffer half damage, and one ally within 5 feet suffers the remaining half; targeted ally must be able to suffer said damage for you to avoid it.

LAST STAND

Starting at 18th level, when you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you do not fall unconscious, but you can only move up to 10 feet per turn. You don't make death saves, but each round you remain standing, you accumulate 10 damage: once the cumulative damage (plus any other damage you take normally) exceeds your hit point maximum, you die from massive damage at the end of that turn. As an action on your turn, you can voluntarily fall unconscious and start making death saves.

WARDEN

Wardens are a broad classification of several types of adventurers. They are nomads, drifters, bandits, horsemen, rangers, scouts, and sentinels. They connect themselves with their surroundings, whatever those might be. They travel light, fast, and by stealth. They survive in environments where others suffer. They know the ways of wilderness and often call home the realms avoided by other travelers. Wardens excel with the arrow. What they accomplish with the bow is nothing short of extraordinary. No one beats the warden at ranged combat. Despite the cliché, they can be found everywhere on Earth, even in the largest echan cities. They find uses everywhere. However, most still wander the lands, searching for a path or party or simply, an adversary.

REQUIREMENTS

Skill Proficiency: Nature

WARDEN EXPLOIT

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can select a warden exploit. You can select another exploit at 7th, 10th, 15th, and 18th level. Unless otherwise stated, you can't select the same exploit more than once.

Critical Arrow: You score a critical hit with a shortbow or longbow on a roll of 19 or 20.

Double-Shot: Once per turn, you can add double your Dexterity bonus to the damage roll of a successful attack with a shortbow or a longbow. This uses two pieces of ammunition.

Empathy or Vigilance: You can choose one of the following class features from the ranger class: Favored enemy, natural explorer, land's stride (min 10th level), or hide in plain sight (min 10th level). You can select this exploit more than once, choosing a different feature each time.

Point Blank: You no longer suffer disadvantage when firing a shortbow or longbow if you are within 5 feet of a hostile creature who can see you and who isn't incapacitated.

Rapid Fire: If you make at least three ranged attacks on your turn against the same target, you can make an additional ranged attack against that target as part of an action.

Greater Improved Critical: You score a critical hit with shortbow or longbow on a roll of 18, 19, or 20. *Prerequisite:* Critical Arrow, 18th level.

Channel Strength: You gain a +2 damage bonus with all attacks from a shortbow or longbow.

Damage Penetration: When you make a ranged weapon attack, choose one damage type: your arrow counts as this type when accounting for damage re-

sistance and vulnerability. Once you have used this ability four times, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or a long rest.

Long Arc: You double the normal and long ranges of any bow you wield.

Dead Eye: If you score a critical hit with a ranged weapon attack, you can choose to take the maximum damage result instead of rolling. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Improvisational Arrow: You are proficient with arrows as improvised melee weapons. Additionally, once per turn if you are the target of an opportunity attack, you can make a single melee attack with an arrow against the attacker as part of your movement. If your bow has a magical enhancement bonus, it applies to the arrow attack.

RAVNORRA

Narros take pride in their vocation and seldom break their disciplined lives for merriment or debauchery, lest they bring dishonor to their names. Though many narros devote themselves to mining and the acquisition and creation of goods, some dedicate themselves to the noble path of defending their house and the innocent. Narros soldiers all follow a strict code of honor, but a few take their discipline to an amazing degree.

All your life, you have lived alongside your blade. The crest on your shield is father and mother. Your house is an ideal you will defend to the end. You wake to don your armor and seldom remove it save for sleep or death. You will know neither mate nor child: your defense of the house and realm take precedence over all other desires. To break these oaths not only brings dishonor to you, but to the house and family as well. If such a code is broken, or if the house and/or lord is destroyed, you become an outcast, a 'vorronar' or ronin, set adrift on the waves of fate to find a cause or to live by the sword. You may continue your code, or do your best just to stay alive.

Many humans have remarked upon the similarity between the narros noble warrior and the ancient samurai, and most ravnorra, ronin or not, adopt the term when dealing with humans: to them, it is the proper translation.

REQUIREMENTS

Background: Doppelshido

HATAMOTO

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can use your bonus action to re-roll your damage dice from a hit this same turn and take the higher value.

DECEPTIVE POSTURE

Starting at 7th level, if you use the Dodge action on your turn, until the end of your next turn, you have advantage against each enemy that missed you with a melee attack the previous round.

THE ROAD OF RAVNORRA

Starting at 10th level, if you hit with your first melee attack on your turn, you can sacrifice one or more additional available attacks that same turn to inflict additional damage; for each attack sacrificed, you inflict additional damage equal to half of your normal weapon's damage. (if your hit is a critical, your added damage does not increase).

COUNTER POSE

Starting at 15th level, you are able to feign weakness, offering the illusion of cowardice, enticing an enemy to act foolishly. If you are hit with a melee attack while using the Dodge action, you can make a single attack with advantage as a reaction against the enemy that hit you. If you make the attack, you no longer benefit from the Dodge action.

PATH OF THE WARRIOR

At 18th level, if you have advantage on your enemy and both attack rolls score a hit, you inflict additional damage equal to half of your normal weapon's damage.

SCHOLAR SENTINEL (GUILD OF GNOSIS)

It was over a century after Stratos Stormguard created the gorna sersannis, or "Lotus Blade" when specialized branches of the popular fighting style began to emerge. Officially, the fundamental school located in Stormguard's home city of Zorahn was no longer able to handle the increasing number of applicants, and apprentices being forced to travel away from the capital to train was proving increasingly unpopular.

After Stormguard's death (by way of death dragon), political pressure eventually conceded with the founding of a half-dozen new schools across the kingdom, each controlled by a member from Stormguard's inner circle, the Folium. However, away from the discipline of Stormguard, who'd insisted the art was perfect, these branches quickly developed their own styles.

In order to prevent rivalry between schools, Ravenar Limshau IV assigned each guild a specific role within the kingdom. Over the centuries, these schools grew at different rates, with two emerging dominant, Gnosis and Ilm. The latter was given the duty of handling expeditions and crusades of knowledge while Gnosis was tasked with protecting the capital city and the books within it.

Developed by Echo Clearbrooke, Gnosis is considered the more "direct" approach to the craft, less about maneuverability and more about forward assault. While the Guild of Ilm is considered the spiritual successor to Stormguard's vision, Gnosis deviated by specializing in two-handed weapons, more effective in tight quarters than using a shield. Gnosis custodians are also distinctive given their white kawabari armor, matching the city walls, uncommon in the wild where the Ilm's black armor is nearly exclusive. It is not uncommon for Gnosis custodians to work double duty as librarians, and some have been assigned specific library wings for the entirety of their lives.

You are an elite member of this guild, one sworn to protect the walls and the books within. Thankfully, your school is conveniently located within the capital city. To be a member of the guild is to be nearly fanatical in the perseverance of knowledge. Unlike Ilm, you are not expected to record your adventures and missions for planned documentation and publication later. Although members of Gnosis seldom leave their cities, it has still been known to happen.

Why have you?

REQUIREMENT

Background: Custodian

FLORENTINE

Starting when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, when you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can add your ability modifier to the damage of the second attack. Additionally, whenever you take the Attack action as part of your action surge, you have advantage on the first attack roll.

TWIN-BLADE DEFENSE

Starting at 7th level, if wielding two melee weapons, after rolling for initiative, you gain a +3 bonus to AC against melee attacks until hit with a melee attack.

TEMPO ATTACK

Starting at 10th level, you gain a natural instinct for where to place either of your weapons. If you use two-weapon fighting and the first three melee attacks you make on your turn hit, you can make one additional attack as part of your attack action (before potentially continuing with additional attacks).

SWEEPING FLURRY

Starting at 15th level, you can spend 10 feet of movement after hitting an enemy your size or smaller with a melee attack to knock the enemy prone. You can repeat this effect on additional enemies in the same turn permitted you have available movement.

DOUBLE WOUND

Once per turn starting at 18th level, if you engage in two-weapon fighting and hit with a melee attack with one hand, one additional attack with your other hand automatically hits (don't make an attack roll, though it counts as one of your additional attacks that turn). The extra attack does not have to target the same enemy. You inflict half damage with this strike.

MONK

The monk is only available to characters raised in or trained by a sensei from Fargon, Genai, or Limshau, or to characters with the gneolistic background. 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.

MONASTIC TRADITIONS

Only the Way of the Open Hand is open to all monk characters, and its effects are considered non-magical even when they appear to defy the laws of physics and physiology. The remaining traditions are only available as unique magical paths, requiring either the Gneolistic background or the choice of a totem (usually the staff or the book). Such "martial wizards" would be an extreme rarity: only one cloistered order in all of Canam, the Monachis Draco of Seliquam, is known to practice this technique.

PALADIN

The paladin is only available to characters with the gneolistic background. Such individuals are not usually purposely trained as part of a knightly order, as gneolistics tend to be viewed as too valuable to waste in combat situations. Rather, they tend to be late bloomers who first discover their powers during their arduous knightly training. A gneolistic paladin need not select a deity (although most knightly orders in Canam are connected to some sort of religious establishment), and nobody is responsible for ensuring she adheres to her sacred oath except herself. There is also a paladin-like archetype available for the fighter called the knight-errant.

RANGER

The ranger is only available to chaparran characters with the darawren or gneolistic backgrounds. A chaparran born with natural magical talents can choose to defend her village with bow and sword instead of wholly focusing on developing her intrinsic magical talents. Given that innate magic is far more common among chaparrans than among any other species (even laudenians), the ranger is the only gneolistic class that could be considered commonplace.

For a non-magical ranger-like character, see the fighter's warden archetype. With the GM's permission, a character could also make a non-magical ranger by only choosing the following spells and describing them as natural exploits rather than magical powers (and making modifications to descriptions and effects for verisimilitude, as necessary): Animal friendship, cure wounds, detect poison and disease, find traps, freedom of movement, lesser restoration, locate animals or plants, locate creature, hunter's mark, nondetection, pass without trace, protection from poison, swift quiver.

RANGER ARCHETYPES

While both the hunter and beastmaster archetypes are reasonable choices for a chaparran ranger, a third option, the Krysallis, is far more celebrated in chaparran culture.

KRYSALLIS — ELATTARII

There is a segment of chaparran culture considered by some too extreme compared the rest of the already zealous civilization. After years of meditation, magical permeation, and study of nature, the end result is a creature blending elements of both flora and fauna—hair is the color of grass, the skin takes on the look and texture of dirt. From here, the krysallis adopts one of two paths, the elattarii (way of the strand) or the magittarii (way of the stream). While the latter focuses on spellcraft, the former centers on archery, though both revolving around the use of the bow.

Both paths began thousands of years before the exodus, developed by a fanatical subset of the chaparrans known as the Kobus. The Kobus felt that no one, not even other elves, had claim to the forest, and that any intrusion or sin upon nature was punishable by death. In the new age, the bigoted nature of the Kobus almost took root in Dawnamoak before the larger, more powerful, and thankfully more moderate Jibaro tribe took over and appropriated the Kobus into their ranks, suppressing the extremism yet adopting the discipline of the krysallis. That being said, threads of the Kobus's intolerance can still be seen in the discipline, a discipline revolving around the connection with nature and the mastery of the bow.

REQUIREMENT

Origin: Chaparran or Darawren
Proficiency: Kitarri black bow

FROM NOTHING

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, whenever you learn a new ranger spell, you can instead choose a conjuration or evocation spell from the druid or wizard spell list. You develop a spiritual connection with your bow. If you have unused spell slots when you finish a long rest, your highest-level slot remaining is imprinted on your bow. You can use this slot to cast any conjuration or evocation spell you know as if it were one of your normal spell slots, but it is lost when you next finish a long rest (even if it is not replaced by another one). At 9th level, 13th level, and 17th level, you can imprint an additional unused spell slot.

INNER LIGHT

Starting at 7th level, you are able to draw an inner strength only reserved for enlightened creatures. Your awareness of your own soul allows you to push yourself harder. You can infuse a conjuration or evocation spell with a casting time of 1 action or bonus action into an arrow fired from your bow. The spell only affects the creature you hit, regardless of its normal range or area. The target can no longer make a saving throw against the effect (if the spell requires one). The target takes damage from both the arrow and the spell (if it deals damage).

If you miss with your bow attack, you regain the use of the spell slot you used at the start of your next turn. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

FROM WOOD TO SOUL

Starting at 11th level, you are able to travel to where your arrow lands. Use an action to fire an arrow anywhere within your bow's range (this can be part of an attack). Immediately after impact, you can teleport to that location. If you strike a tree, wall, or even a creature, you appear adjacent to the arrow. If you miss your intended target, the arrow lands at a random location within 10 feet of your target. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. You can expend a Hit Dice to gain an additional use of from wood to soul.

DRAWING FROM PARADISE

At 15th level, the range of any ranged spells you cast are increased to the normal range of your longbow. You must follow the motions of drawing and firing the bow, even if the spell does not normally have a somatic component, but you do not use ammunition.

ROGUE

Rogues are the second most common class in *Amethyst*, but with added archetypes, no two are alike.

ROGUISH ARCHETYPES

BARUCH THUGGEE

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.

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.

Thuggees leaving the "Blessed Kingdom" for any reason find their title a burden or a curse. Declaring yourself a thuggee in Limshau or Gnimfall may likely net you jail time or expulsion. Openly wielding your

title in a free house may get you executed. You must keep your 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.

REQUIREMENTS

Origin: From Baruch Malkut
Race: Human

DEATH GRIP

Starting when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you have advantage on grapple checks.

PULL TO THE GROUND

Starting at 3rd level, if you sustain a grapple for three turns, at the start of the fourth, any hit automatically becomes a critical hit until the target breaks the grapple. If this attack does not kill the target, you must start pull to the ground from the beginning again.

INTO THE SHADOWS

Starting at 9th level, if you kill a creature within 5-feet, you can move up to your speed as part of the same action.

CHEAT

Starting at 13th level, if you roll any result on a d20 roll, that attack roll becomes a natural 20. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. You can also expend two Hit Dice to gain a second use of cheat (but only one).

SAND IN THE EYE

You don't play fair. There are no rules in war. Those who think otherwise lose. At 17th level, you can use

your bonus action to confound a creature your size or smaller within 5-feet of you. The target must be able to see you; it suffers disadvantage on attack rolls while you suffer advantage until the end of your next turn. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

CRIMSON LEAF

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 non-consensual 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.

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 of their caravans have survived the journey.

The Crimson Leaf claims a membership between 100 to 250 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 observes a crime detailed 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. As a Leaf, you are not foolish, employing all your skills, whether direct or stealthy, to accomplish your goals. You're patient, willing to hold until the target's fate is certain. When the course is set, nothing else matters.

REQUIREMENTS

Origin: Salvabrooke
Race: Gimfen

NEMESIS

Starting when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can select one enemy you can see as your nemesis. Once you select a nemesis, you cannot select another until you finish a long rest. You treat any result of 1 or 2 on a Sneak Attack die against your nemesis as if it were a 3.

LEAPING FRENZY

Starting at 3rd level, when you move towards your nemesis, you can pass through an enemy's space without provoking opportunity attacks.

NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

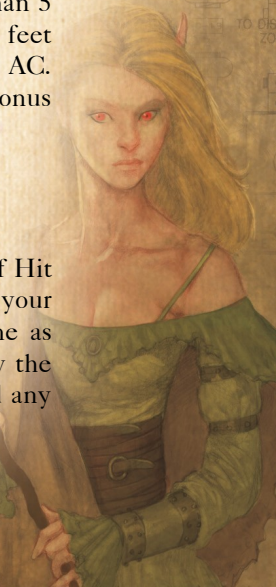
At 9th level, you can ignore everything else but the enemy you've decided to kill. You can have advantage on your attack rolls against your nemesis; if you do, all enemies, including your nemesis, have advantage on attack rolls against you until the end of your next turn. The first time you hit your nemesis while having advantage, double your sneak attack damage.

PURPOSEFUL AND COMMITTED

Starting at 13th level, as long as you move more than 5 feet on your turn and end your movement at least 5 feet closer to your nemesis, you gain a +1 bonus to AC. Once you are adjacent to your nemesis, the +1 bonus applies only against your nemesis.

VICTORY OR DEATH, HOPEFULLY VICTORY

Starting at 17th level, you can spend any number of Hit Dice and add that damage to a hit you inflict on your nemesis. Spending Hit Dice this way is the same as when attempting to recover hit points, except now the amount is added to your damage roll. You can add any



number of Hit Dice onto a hit. This additional damage is not increased with a critical hit. If you roll the maximum result with any of your additional damage dice, roll one additional damage dice and you recover that Hit Die (though it cannot be used again on the same hit).

ORDER OF THE CLOTH

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.

You are a member of Baruch Malkut's inner circle—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.

Each bears a golden death's-head ring with ruby eyes as their only badge of office, a magical device that projects the feared red robes and golden skull mask of the King's agents over their normal appearance, allowing them to disappear completely into a crowd once their deadly work is done.

You are not one to play fair. To be of the order is to know every cheat, every dirty play you can exploit to eliminate your target. You might have been once a bandit or a slaver or a paid assassin. Now a loyal member of the cloth, you follow the edicts of their holy cause, to eliminate all who disagree with the commandments of King Darius. Any who fail to understand his wisdom will meet the fate of all heathens, regardless if their ears are pointed or not.

If you venture from your homeland, you do so on a mission for the betterment of the king's power. Your loyalty is to the king and the king only. Even other citizens of Baruch Malkut are not immune to your wrath if they don't show total piety to the true authority.

Note: This archetype can also be swapped for any nations' unofficial assassin order.

REQUIREMENTS

Origin: Baruch Malkut.
Race: Human

ASSASSIN SKILLS

Starting when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain assassin points (AP) which you can spend and replenish during combat. Your AP is equal to your Dexterity or Strength score (pick one when choosing this archtype), and you regain all AP after you finish a long rest. You also regain AP after committing certain actions, though you cannot have more AP than your selected ability score. At 3rd level, you select two assassin skills, adding an additional skill at 9th, 13th, and 17th level.

Skills are separated into "trees"—high profile, low profile, and stealth. With high and low profile, you must select all lower tier skills to unlock a higher tier skill.

You regain 4 AP in combat if you kill a creature and regain 2 AP if you score a critical hit. You can also regain 4 AP at the cost of a Hit Die during a short rest (regaining no hit points if doing so).

Assassin's Feat: At 4th level, and again at 8th, 10th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can forego your ability score improvement feature and instead boost your assassin skills—you gain 1 additional assassin skill and increase your AP total by 4.

ASSASSIN SKILL TREES

HIGH PROFILE

High profile actions are dramatic and risky, inflicting greater damage but also always giving up your position. No matter what state you are in, using a high profile attack reveals your location and identity to both anyone in line of sight and in earshot. You cannot make Dex-

terity (Stealth) checks to hide until the start of your next turn after using a high profile skill.

Strong Attack (costs 2 AP): Activate after hitting with an attack; roll all damage dice twice and take the higher values.

Cold Blooded (costs 3 AP): Activate after hitting with an attack—double your ability score modifier, and the target can be pushed 5 feet.

Ground Execution (costs 6 AP): Activate after hitting with an attack; double the number of all weapon damage dice.

LOW PROFILE

Low profile actions are subtle and quiet. Even though the target's body may be easily spotted, observers won't obviously identify your position.

Weak Attack (costs 2 AP): Activate before making an attack. You have advantage on this attack. After the attack, you can move up to 20 feet as long as the movement takes you into cover, and you can attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Staggering Strike (costs 3 AP): Activate before making an attack. You have advantage on this attack: if neither roll hits, you still deal your normal weapon damage to the target, but deal no Sneak Attack damage and no extra effects. A hit target's speed is halved; it is knocked prone and suffers disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of your next turn. After the attack, you can move up to 20 feet as long as the movement takes you into cover, and you can attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) check.

String Assasination (costs 6 AP): Activate before making an attack. You have advantage on this attack: if neither roll hits, you still deal your normal weapon damage to the target, but deal no Sneak Attack damage and no extra effects. Afterwards, move up to your speed and make another identical attack against another enemy. If either attack kills its target, you can move up to your speed and make another identical attack against another enemy. Afterwards, you can move up to 20 feet as long as the movement takes you into cover, and you can attempt a Dexterity (Stealth) check.

STEALTH

Unlike low and high profile trees, you can select stealth skills without prerequisite.

Intuitivism (costs 3 AP): Activate with a bonus action. You know the location, challenge rating, alignment, and current hit points of all enemies within 50 feet of you, regardless of line of sight. You can see targets that are hiding but not invisible. While intuitivism is in effect, you have advantage on Perception checks. Intuitivism lasts until the beginning of your next turn, and you can sustain with 1 AP without taking an action.

Thiefsmith (costs 2 AP): Activate with a bonus action to gain advantage with tools you are proficient with until the start of your next turn.

Roll Recovery (costs 2 AP): Activate as part of your movement. Your speed increases by 5 feet, and you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks until the end of your movement.

Thick Skin (special): Activate with a bonus action. For every 2 AP spent, you regain 1d4+2 hit points.

Blend (costs 2 AP): Activate with a bonus action. Your speed is reduced by half but you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks until the end of your turn.

SCHOLAR WARDEN (GUILD OF ILM)

"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

It was the year 355 A.E., and Stratos Stormguard had been killed. His inner circle, the Folium were instructed by the king to open up branches dedicated to Stormguard's teachings in hopes of taking pressure off the single school in Zorahn, overloaded by this point by students. Of these half-dozen schools, two grew to dominating the accepted stereotype of custodian. These were the Guild of Gnosis in the capital city of Limshau, and the Guild of Ilm, based out of Warraqeen.

The Guild, formed by Fisher Calibannis, took on the duties to administer and coordinate the external operations of custodians on the periphery of Limshau and beyond. They originally 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."

You are an elite member of the guild. You returned to the Guild's office in Warraqeen and have taken on the oath of the order. To be a member of the guild is to be nearly fanatical in the perseverance of knowledge and free thinking. Unlike other custodians, you are expected to record your adventures and missions for planned documentation and publication later. You do not quest for your own greed. You do not travel the land seeking gold or glory. You are selfless in your path to free the world from those that would suppress the truth. Words are gold; books are the real treasure, and heaven is a world without fear.

REQUIREMENT

Background: Custodian

REDOUBLEMENT

Starting when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, if you miss with your Attack action, you can make another Attack action as a bonus action.

CLASSIC PARRY & RIPOSTE

Starting at 3rd level, when you are wielding only one melee weapon and an enemy misses you with a melee attack, double your ability bonus to damage against said enemy until the end of your next turn.

BALESTRA

Starting at 9th level, you gain reach with all melee weapons that don't have it, but only for the purpose of making opportunity attacks.

FLOW OR CRASH

Starting at 13th level, you can double your base speed for one turn. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

REMISE

Starting at 17th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. You can only inflict Sneak Attack damage with one hit, and you must miss twice to gain redoublement.

SORCERER

Of all the gneolistic-paired classes, sorcerer is by far the scarcest. It is nearly unheard of for a gneolistic to equal the power of a fully trained arcane wizard. If the claim is true that there are less than a hundred wizards of varying strength in all of Canam, sorcerers would number less than five. A player-created sorcerer would be one of only a handful in the world. These prodigies still often end up using a totem (sometimes just to deflect suspicion), as their powers grow with their own knowledge of the arcane arts. Someone with the full power of wizard without requiring any of the discipline would not only be singular in the land, but also incredibly dangerous.

WARLOCK

Warlocks are not canon in *Amethyst*. They are only available as a variant wizard (requiring a totem and GM permission).

WIZARD

The term 'wizard' covers a wide spectrum of spellcasters and magic users across the world. They may wish to protect the innocent, or destroy everything around them. However, they still follow one common belief: The gates contain unlimited power and sit waiting to be harnessed by those wishing to understand them. Wizards discovered long ago that certain shortcuts exist to channel energies from these gates. It's an almost scientific study of the ways of magic.

Non-human mages discovered certain words in vocal and written form channel immense power from the gates. This power was the sole province of the dragons for thousands of years before the fae pursued this path. These words, found in the ancient tongue of the first language ever spoken, Pleroma, have been described as the base code of the universe: the word is the thing, and the thing is the word. A wizard must first understand how the word functions in all ways by contemplating it in every dimension (quite literally—both written and spoken Pleroma exist in three physical dimensions and are theorized to extend beyond that), 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 wizard possesses of the arcane arts.

A wizard need not be completely fluent in Pleroma to use this power (and most can't be since it defies human and even fae attempts to master it): instead, each mage bonds power 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 of 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 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 its owner.

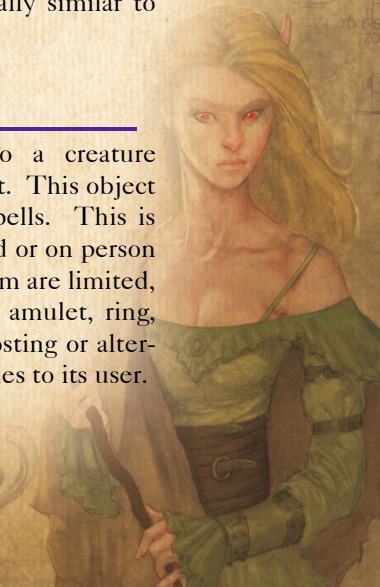
Certain high-level spells are so rare they can only be found inscribed on unique items spread around the world. Wizards occasionally quest for them as others would quest for magic weapons. A wizard's honor insists these items either remain in their location or be taken to Kirjath-Sepher, Limshau, or some other protected vault for storage.

Magic stems from one of two sources, Attricana or Ixindar. Where Attricana is chaotic and whimsical, Ixindar is never changing and uniform. There is little flash with Ixindar magic. It is also a corrupting force, whispering new thoughts and ideas into its caster. It's not a healthy option for heroic characters, but it does offer a variety of different abilities and powers, not the least of which is the replication of magic without disruption.

The wizard is the default arcane class in *Amethyst*. Though still not commonly seen, wizards occupy the majority of spellcasters. Variant spellcasters like the darawren (cleric / druid / bard) and laudenian magos (cleric) are still technically wizards—they only refer these classes as they are more mechanically similar to them.

TOTEM MAGIC

Wizards in *Amethyst* do not bond to a creature (familiars); they can only bond to an object. This object contains the trigger words for all their spells. This is their totem, which they must have in hand or on person in order to cast spells. The choices of totem are limited, and unlike popular fiction, cannot be an amulet, ring, rod, or wand as these are conduits for boosting or altering spells and for passing on specific abilities to its user.



Totems are often associated with specific arcane schools, such as the darawren bards utilizing musical instruments and students of Koana embracing the book.

BOOK

The most common totem on Earth is the book, which is also the most powerful and easiest to master. Schools dot the planet dedicated to this belief. More wizards use book totems than any other. 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, meaning it can be eventually understood. All mages carry books, often in a private library, but the final Pleroma power words rest inscribed in the book wizard's totem. When you cast a spell, it emanates from your hands, not your book. A few cautious wizards have even strapped their books to their belt to grab at a moment's notice while keeping their hands otherwise free.

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 opposed power of Ixindar. Orbs are also strongly associated with illusion and mind control magic, which most Limshau wizards consider, if not taboo, at least in 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 less than respectable sources.

SHIELD

Although wizards cannot use armor as a totem, they can select a shield. The symbols usually start on the inside, but as the wizard learns more spells, they must eventually carry over to the front as well. The narros are regarded as the instigators of this practice, and only they and the occasional human use it.

If you choose a shield, you gain proficiency with it, but only with this specific shield and no other shield you find along the way.

STAFF

Beyond the book, the staff is one of the most common totems employed, as well as being the oldest known application of the craft. Many less civilized communities capable of competent wizardry use it. A staff also remains popular with the traveling wizard, as it's less clumsy and easily 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 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 feel a need to wield them in combat despite never 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 argue about who developed it first. Narros claim the transition from shield to weapon was an obvious one while the tenenbri maintain the practice was stolen from them. Complicating the matter further is a small tradition of laudenian sword mages who argue that they originated the tradition. Several modern human cultures have embraced the weapon totem as well.

If you choose a weapon, you gain proficiency with the weapon but only with this specific weapon and no others you find along the way. The weapon can only be one of the following: Quarterstaff, battleaxe, glaive, greataxe, greatsword, halberd, longsword, maul, pike, trident, warhammer, or longbow.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

The strangest and most recent addition to the list of totems is the musical instrument, a domain exclusive to the darawren. Despite the path of darawren predating the current age, it's believed the employment of the musical instrument came about only a few hundred years ago, an innovation introduced by progressive chaparrans at behest of their first human students.

The restrictions in totem construction (simplified items) prevent using a complicated instrument like bagpipes, a French horn, or an accordion, while small ones like maracas and a tambourine are equally ineffectual due to the small surface area. Given spellcraft's requirement of vocalization, wind instruments are generally avoided as one can't make music and cast spells at the same time. This leaves examples such as the dulcimer, guitar, lute, lyre, and viol and large drums open for use—the arcane cartouches often mistaken as ornamentations to the untrained eye.

SPELLS

Certain spells don't exist in canon *Amethyst* due to obvious setting limitations. Other spells are difficult if not near impossible to cast without huge personal risk and loss. This can be offset by using a foundation anchor. Anchors contain extremely powerful spells and use their own energy in the casting rather than that of the caster. Obviously, these spells are often hard to locate. While most institutions of learning have a large library of spells for their students to learn, even the most dedicated schools like Koana and Jibaro only openly disclose spells up to spell level 3. Levels 4 to 7 are often regu-

lated, while levels 8 and 9 are either locked away or not contained in said school at all (Koana for example has no records for 8th and 9th level spells, though Laudenia has them all).

Players are not assumed to have access to high level spells the moment they gain the appropriate class level. In *Amethyst*, the reality of arcane spellcasting should be made apparent, and wizards are required to find high level spells in order to cast them. Very often, spell levels 8 and 9 require the wizard to locate a foundation anchor, making them sought after artifacts. They not only convey the knowledge of the spell but also grant the user the capability of siphoning its power in the casting.

Certain spells have also been modified. See the **Magic** chapter for details.

ARCANE SCHOOLS

Certain schools are more popular than others, while one is nearly impossible to find. Most have their particular specialties: for instance, in Limshau, most of the schools are dedicated to abjuration, evocation, or transmutation, while illusion is all but ignored, but in Salvabrooke, illusion is virtually exclusive. However, there are no known schools bound to Attricana in Canam that teach spells from the school of necromancy. There are rumors of a hidden cache of knowledge in the Sana Marsh and occult schools hidden in mountains, but they remain rumors.

You may select one of the normal schools or one of the specialized schools below.

ACADEMY OF LOGOS

Very few wizards are actually religious. Since the study is based around a discipline that many 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 reign 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 Abrahamic holy men that study Pleroma not as a path to controlling the universe but as a path to becoming closer to God. 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.

REQUIREMENTS

Faith: Any religion
Origin: From Abidan

DIVINE DISCIPLINE

Beginning when you select the Academy at 2nd level, the gold and time you must spend to copy a divination spell into your spellbook and totem is halved.

ACT OF GOD?

Starting at 2nd level, when you cast a damaging area of effect spell (like fireball), any allies caught in the area take no damage and recover hit points equal to the damage roll. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

WELL OF GOD?

Some of the spells of Logos are truly unique. Starting at 6th level, and when reaching a new level, you can learn one additional spell from the cleric spell list of any level you can cast. This spell still uses Intelligence.

GRACE OF GOD?

Starting at 10th level, as a bonus action you can select one adjacent ally with 1 hit point or higher. The ally either gains a +2 bonus to AC until the end of your next turn or recovers hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier + your Intelligence modifier.

FINGER OF GOD?

Starting at 14th level, when you cast an arcane spell, you can either increase its save DC by 2 or cast it as if using

a spell slot one level higher. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

KOANA ACADEMIC

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.

The Koana professors, or academics, play with their spells with an especially creative whimsy. The spells run, dance, or fly around while normal spells accomplish their task and vanish. In the scope of the brilliance that is Attricana magic, Koana wizards know how to add gusto to their spellcraft.

Although the Koana academies are happy to study gneolistics and incarnates, there is very little incentive for such people to enroll, since on a fundamental level, those who have inborn magic and those who must study Pleroma to practice it are as different in their approaches as chalk and cheese.

REQUIREMENT

Background: Koana Student (or honorary Koana graduate, at the GM's discretion).

HEAVY IN STUDY

Beginning when you select the Academy at 2nd level, the gold and time you must spend to copy an evocation spell into your spellbook and totem is halved.

THINKS FOR ITSELF

Starting at 2nd level, you are able to invest more energy into a spell, instilling it a shred of independent thought. Spend a Hit Die when you cast a non-instantaneous evocation spell that cannot be moved. As a bonus action on your next turn, the area of effect can be moved up to ten feet. The spell visibly appears to move as if given life, and you should describe how your new living organism acts.

LIVING ENERGY

Starting at 6th level, your living spells practically have a personality, able to survive longer than initially thought. Spend a Hit Die when you cast an evocation spell with an instantaneous duration; the effect persists, and you can repeat its effects as a bonus action on your next turn. You can combine this with your thinks for itself 2nd level ability (spending two Hit Dice on the spell). Spells that create multiple area effects only sustain one of them on the following turn.

Note: This ability can affect different spells in different ways. While cone of cold and burning hands only sustain their effects, chromatic sphere and fireball can both move and sustain their effects. Chain lightning creates one additional arc on the second turn.

SENSE OF EXISTENCE

At 10th level, your capacity to understand Attricana allows you to correct minor flaws in your initial casting. When you cast an evocation spell, you can choose to impose disadvantage on one creature's saving throw against it, or to gain advantage on your attack roll with the spell. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

MIND OF ITS OWN

Starting at 14th level, your spells can now act independent from your will. Spend a Hit Die when you cast an evocation spell requiring concentration. That spell no longer requires concentration to sustain. This means you can cast multiple spells requiring concentration, and the spells continue to exist after you have been incapacitated or killed. The spells still expire when their time is up. You can use this in combination with other Koana Academic features (spending additional Hit Dice for those as well).

KRYSALLIS — MAGITTARII

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 sequoa's roots.

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 exist-

ence and the chaparrans hold a devout faith that their descendant races like the nariisa 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.

As one of these rare chaparrans, you begin to exhibit strange properties, mostly physical. Your hair is the color of grass, leaves grow from the strands, and when you curl your fingers around your totem or weapon, you become one. Whether a weapon or a totem, your hand vanishes into the wood and you feel every bend and twist of the item as if it was a complete appendage. You may separate as easily but this is only the first step … eventually, you may be able to push yourself further, to take the next step in fae evolution.

REQUIREMENT

Origin: Chaparran or Darawren
Totem: Longbow

FROM NOTHING

Beginning when you select to be a krysallis at 2nd level, the gold and time you must spend to copy an conjuration spell into your spellbook and totem is halved.

TOTEM SYNERGY

Starting at 2nd level, you develop a spiritual connection with your totem/bow. When you finish a long rest, you can imprint an unused spell slot you didn't use from before the long rest into the bow. That spell slot can now be used in place of any normal spell slot you already have (regardless of the replaced spell slot's level). The saved spell slot can only be used to cast conjuration spells. This slot vanishes if not used before your next long rest. At 10th and again at 18th level, you can imprint one additional spell slot.

INNER LIGHT

Starting at 6th level, you are able to draw an inner strength only reserved for enlightened creatures. Your awareness of your own soul allows you to push yourself harder. You can infuse a spell into an arrow fired from your totem. The spell only affects the creature you hit, regardless of its normal range or area. The target can no longer make a saving throw against the effect (if the spell requires one). The target takes damage from the arrow and any effects the spell has. You can only infuse a spell with the casting time of 1 action/bonus action. Once a day, if you miss with inner light, you regain the use of that spell slot at the beginning of your next turn.

FROM WOOD TO SOUL

Starting at 10th level, you are able to travel to where your arrow lands. Use an action to fire an arrow anywhere within range (this can be part of an attack). Immediately after impact, you teleport to that location. If you strike a tree, wall, or even a creature, you appear adjacent to the arrow. If you miss your intended target, you can either teleport to a location up to 5 feet from the target or you can elect not to use this feature. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

DRAWING FROM PARADISE

At 14th level, the ranges of any ranged spells are increased to the range of your longbow. You are not necessarily firing an arrow, though you are aping the movements of releasing one from your bow.

URMAGE

The question of who first acquired the arcane arts from dragons may never be resolved, any more than the debate over whose physical form most resembles the ancient fae. Despite this uncertainty, laudenians have the most credible claim and are still known as some of the most powerful mages on the planet. 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.

Your position as an urmage represents the elite, the envy of all wizards in Canam. Though not possessing the absolute book knowledge and history of every spell like Koana mages, you possess a mastery of the Pleroma language that nearly equals the dragons themselves. You can play with magic, dance it around with your whim, and even create new variations of spells no one has seen before. You can even resist the magical might of your enemies. True, Limshau mages know more about the history of arcane, the who and the when, but you know the why and the how, and with that power you can control the very fabric of the universe. The only faith you need is in your totem. You strive to reach that moment when you are fully adept in Pleroma, as fluent as any finite god.

At this point, you may be able to understand the cosmos itself and control your fate. With the onslaught of Attricana, laudenians' days are few, with every fifth child born as one of the lesser fae species. As once the ancient fae vanished to obscurity, so your people may

one day soon. But the elder race never fully understood the influence of Attricana. Perhaps, with enough power, you can finally comprehend the ways of magic. Perhaps, you will stop being a slave to it and finally be its master.

REQUIREMENT

Race: Laudenian

SYNERGY

Select one school of magic when you select this order at 2nd level. The gold and time you must spend to copy a spell from your selected school into your spellbook and totem is halved.

ALTER POWER TYPE

Starting at 2nd level, at each new level, you can freely exchange the normal energy keyword of any of your spells to any of the following: cold, fire, lightning, or sonic. The spell retains the new keyword until you change it again.

ELEMENT SYNERGY

At 6th level, choose one of the following energy types: cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. You gain resistance to that energy. At the beginning of each day, you can change this resistance to a different type. At 14th level, select one additional type.

SUPERIORITY

At 10th level, your talents allow you to control the influence of magic, altering rules on a whim, turning the fatal to the helpful. If you pass a saving throw against a spell or against an attack matching your selected element synergy (likewise if such an attack is a ranged attack spell or ranged elemental energy attack), you instead absorb that energy and recover spell slots (like arcane recovery). The first time you use superiority, you recover three levels of spell slots. If you don't use these slots, the next time you use superiority, the spell slots increase to five, and then again to eight. Once you use a recovered spell slot, you cannot use superiority again until you complete a long rest. Like arcane recovery, none of the slots can be 6th level or higher. (For example, if you recover five spell slots, you can recover a 5th level spell, a 3rd level spell and a 2nd, 5 1st level spells, etc.). After you finish a long rest, you lose any remaining recovered spell slots.

MAGIC PRESCIENCE

At 14th level, your connection to magic allows you a certain foresight about the results of your spells. If all targets of a spell you cast make their saving throws (or you miss on your attack), you can decide retroactively not to cast the spell: no effects occur, the spell is not expended, and the action you used to cast it is not taken (although you cannot cast the same spell again this turn). When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

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

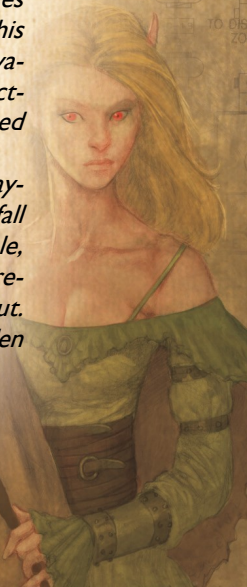
The ETV was due to arrive in a few hours, assuming it survived the trip through Cyon. It wasn't just the boggs but the radiant magic permeating the forest that people feared. Aiden leaned against the warm concrete wall of the bastion crown, overhearing pilgrims making cases in hopes of admittance. They 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.

"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.

* * *

The Echan Terrain Vehicle wasn't a simple pantherbike but a 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?

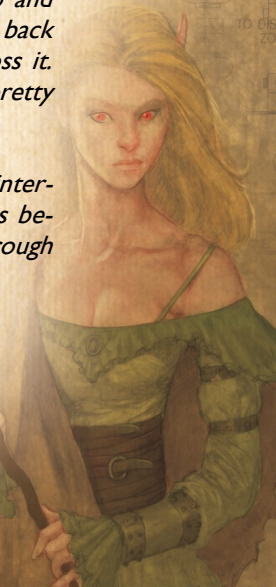
At first Aiden thought the quick thuds outside came from loose stones on the road or tree branches scraping across the scrambler. Aiden looked out the window and made out a squatty humanoid shape with a fat head losing ground in its pursuit of the vehicle. Aiden couldn't make out much more than that 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.

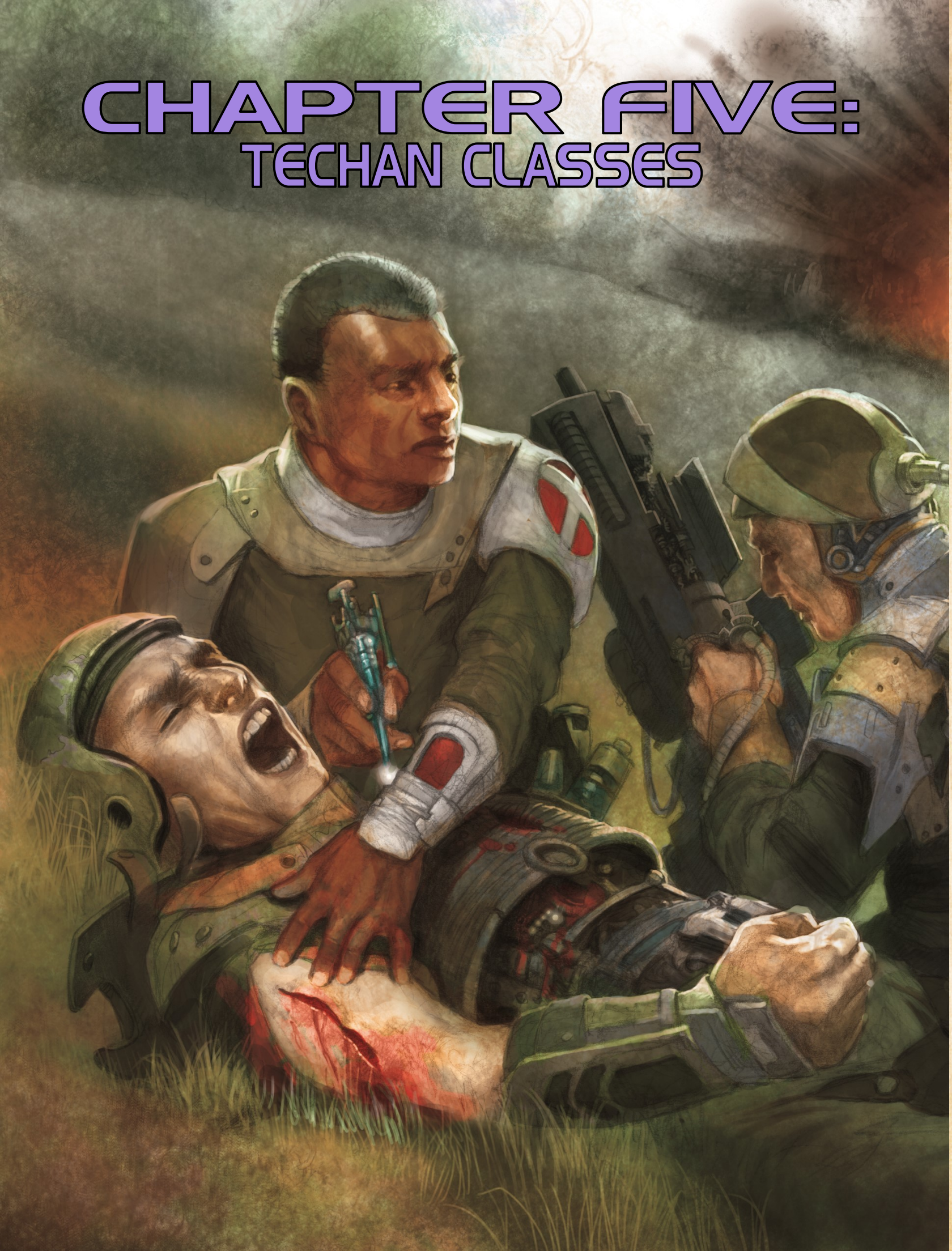
"Holy shit!" The driver's voice resonated from the top level. "Did you see that? Head came off from the jaw!" The other passengers were terrified. Aiden was still glued to the window. There were two more collisions as the fae were torn apart under the tires. One leapt up and pounded its head across the 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.



CHAPTER FIVE:
TECHAN CLASSES



It could be argued that magic saved humanity. Knowledge of the time before the Hammer is sketchy at best, but it is generally believed that humankind was teetering on the brink of self-destruction. They fouled the environment with industry and allowed sectarian grudges to rip societies apart. While the first Hammer's impact caused a mass extinction event, the second found the job already mostly done, and it could be counted as a miracle that it didn't finish the job. Instead, the complete collapse of their way of life forced those who remained to set aside their differences and work together to preserve what little remained of the old ways. Most of these experiments failed and became the echan human nations and minor houses that dot the landscape today. A significant few succeeded—the techan bastions and atolls, where humanity's millennia of progress are preserved against the rising tide of magic.

Techan classes are cut from a different cloth from traditional fantasy roles. Where one group stumbles into each other after a round of mead in a dingy tavern, techan parties have usually trained together as a cohesive unit long before attempting a voyage in the wastelands (well, mostly). A techan party must operate as a organized company, remaining in contact and providing support. They can't act selfishly or abandon their comrades in need. In the middle of battle, their loyalty is not for their government or for the coins in their purse, but for the brothers and sisters alongside them in the thick of combat. Techans have no healing magic, no elemental control over water or air, no symbiosis or sympathy with the surrounding environment. In open echa, they are foreigners at best, unwelcome invaders at worst. In order to survive, they must form groups, loyal bonds that remain stalwart even in the face of overwhelming horrors.

Of course, many bastion-born take jaunts into echa without fear of reprisal, but tourists stick to the main road and sleep in large caravans escorted by guns and swords, spending most of their time in large cities, safe from the dreadful fiends of fairy tales. Such travelers are naïve, their adventures sanitized, pre-chewed for their consumption to be swallowed easily. A techan party has no such luxuries. They venture in the deep forest, into the darkest dungeons, taking on the worst of horrors. They rescue lost vacationers, scavenge technology, and defend their cities from invading forces on all sides. Techans don't take on these jobs for glory, but out of duty for the bastion where they were born, out of loyalty to another, or for the acquisition of power and wealth.

In this new time in this new world, techans care nothing for gender, race, age, or religion. They don't judge their comrades based on beliefs, preferences, or vices. In the end, they are all human—techan humans, and as members of the true human race, they must work together to push back the wave of enchantment which threatens to drive out mankind's footprint forever.

Unlike fantasy classes, most techan classes depend on technology, both the hardware and the knowledge. Said advances cannot be found in the treasure chests buried at the back of dungeons. Though some can be repurposed from old ruins, the vast majority must either be built from scratch or purchases from vendors. To complicate matters further, these storefronts and virtually never located conveniently along a journey, and are mostly stationed back where it all began—in a bastion.

The composition of a party with techan characters is as important as a fantasy one. A group comprised of only one or two classes would be at a disadvantage, necessitating variety. Recommended compositions are as follows.

Four Players—grounder, heavy, medic, techie
Five Players—grounder/heavy, medic, marshal, techie, gunslinger
Six Players—grounder/heavy, medic, marshal, techie, gunslinger, sniper.

QUICK BUILDS

Something worth doing well requires patience and effort. There are no quick-build instructions offered in these pages. Take the time and put your heart into your character. You may be together for some time.

GROUNDER

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.

Modern military foot soldiers are referred to by various titles, many of which start with 'gr': grounders, ground pounders, 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 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 military.

Regardless of past choices, the grounder is the most common seen techan encountered outside of main roads. They are the majority protecting tourists and larger convoys. They escort diplomatic missions and are the first hired by mercenaries. Being able to handle a broad variety of firearms is the most useful skill outside of being able to build those weapons.

IT'S ABOUT THE TEAM

More than any other soldier, the grounder 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 grounder 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.

Grounders eat together, bunk down together, make rude jokes about their commanding officers together, and deal out brutal retribution to anyone outside the group 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), grounders are the first and last line of defense. Their rifles are their swords and their faith absolute—faith that the group they have joined will operate as a well-oiled machine.

CREATING A GROUNDER

A grounder has two main build options, employing rapid autofire attacks or more accurate single-shot strikes. Because of generalized training, you can employ pistols like a gunslinger, more powerful small arms like a heavy, or even long-range precision weapons like a sniper. There really is nothing you can't do.

Every techan home, be it atoll or bastion, requires grounders. They occupy the overwhelming majority of all armed services. You are considered indispensable and expendable at the same time. However, as you became isolated from the mass of ground-pounders defending the main cities, your importance grew. No matter the size of techan party assembled, know that there will always be a demand for someone like you.

Generally you gain purpose from the others around you, joining a team because of loyalty and friendship, not because a commander issued an order. Even when the goal is a paycheck, you would never commit to this job without others to have your back.

Creating a grounder requires the use of firearms, either in single-shot or autofire modes. Your combat abilities are focused mostly on high damage attacks upon single targets while also aiding allies in their own duties.

This is the best class of all since it is the most versatile, most broadly skilled. You can do almost anything.

CLASS FEATURES

As a grounder, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d10 per grounder level
Hit Points at 1st level: 10 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d10 (or 6) + your Constitution modifier per grounder level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: All armor, shields
Weapons: Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed and two-handed small arms, heavy weapons, super heavy weapons.
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Strength, Dexterity
Skills: Select two skills from Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Insight, Intimidation, and Perception.

EQUIPMENT

As a grounder, you receive the following equipment at 1st level.

- three small arms, each $300 or less
- two fragmentation grenades
- a set of techan armor $300 or less
- $100 in additional gear

FIRE SUPPORT

Starting at 1st level, you can select a *fire support* discipline. There are two to choose from: *assault* or *precision*.

By pursuing assault, you favor automatic weapons that fire multiple rounds, increasing damage at the risk of accuracy. By selecting precision, you keep your weapon firing single rounds, ensuring a hit without wasting ammunition.

Each time a discipline is selected, it increases its tier. You select additional disciplines at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level.

FIRE SUPPORT PATHS

ASSAULT

Tier 1: Whenever you make an autofire attack, you inflict additional damage equal to the amount you beat the enemy's AC by, up to a maximum of 5 (for an auto weapon) or 10 (for an auto-heavy weapon).

Tier 2: If you hit, you can increase your final attack roll for purposes of this path (up to a maximum value based on your type of weapon from tier 1).
Auto: +2 to your attack roll after you hit.
Auto-heavy: +4 to your attack roll after you hit.

Tier 3: If you hit, you can increase your final attack roll for purposes of this path (up to a maximum value based on your type of weapon from tier 1). This replaces the values from Tier 2.
Auto: +4 to your attack roll after you hit.
Auto-heavy: +8 to your attack roll after you hit.

Tier 4: The maximum upper limit on damage with this path doubles (10 (for an auto weapon) or 20 (for an auto-heavy weapon).

Tier 5: If you hit, you can increase your final attack roll for purposes of this path (up to a maximum value based on your type of weapon from tier 1). This replaces the values from Tier 3.
Auto: +8 to your attack roll after you hit.
Auto-heavy: +16 to your attack roll after you hit.

PRECISION

Tier 1: You gain a +1 bonus to all non-autofire ranged attack rolls.

Tier 2: If you score a critical hit with a non-autofire ranged attack, roll all damage dice three times instead of twice.

Tier 3: Set aside a natural 20. Replace one missed attack roll you make with a non-autofire weapons with that natural 20. Once you do, you cannot set aside another natural 20 until you finish a short or long rest.

Tier 3: If you roll a natural 2 or 3 on a non-autofire ranged attack, you can re-roll.

THE GROUNDER

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Fire Support	Brotherhood	Special
1	+2	1	1	Fire Support, Brotherhood
2	+2	1	1	Take A Knee
3	+2	1	1	Archetype feature
4	+2	1	2	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	2	2	—
6	+3	2	2	Double Tap
7	+3	2	3	Archetype feature
8	+3	2	3	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	3	3	Triple Tap
10	+4	3	4	Meat Shield
11	+4	3	4	Archetype feature
12	+4	3	4	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	4	5	—
14	+5	4	5	Quadruple Tap
15	+5	4	5	Archetype feature
16	+5	4	6	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	5	6	—
18	+6	5	6	Archetype feature
19	+6	5	7	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	5	7	All In

Tier 5: You have advantage on non-autofire ranged attack rolls.

BROTHERHOOD

At 1st level you select one of the following brotherhood abilities. These abilities complement the group you are in, rewarding teamwork over selfish ambitions.

You select additional abilities at 4th, 6th, 10th, 13th, 16th, and 19th level.

ACTION STAR

If you score a hit on a creature 20 feet or closer, you can elect to piss said creature off. It now suffers disadvantage on all attack rolls that don't include you as a target. The effect ends if you move out of range or out of line of sight (like behind total cover), or don't attack the same target before the end of your next turn

CAUTERIZE

You can use your action to heal an injured ally. The target recovers hit points equal to 1d6 + 2 x your level. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

COMBAT INEFFECTIVE

If an allied PC in line of sight is reduced to 0 hit points or less, you have advantage on attack rolls against the creature that hit the ally until the creature is destroyed or until the felled ally recovers hit points.

COMRADES IN ARMS

If an ally within 10 feet of you suffers a critical hit, you have advantage on attack rolls against the creature that made that attack until the end of your next turn.

SOLID FRAME
When wielding a two-handed small arm, you do not suffer the -2 penalty to firing while moving.

COVERING FIRE
Before making an Attack action, you can suffer disadvantage on all attack rolls for that action; all allies in line of sight gain a +1 bonus to AC and advantage on all saving throws against any target you attack until the beginning of your next turn.

FRONT LINE DEPLOYMENT
Select one ally in line of sight as bonus action. Until the beginning of your next turn, the targeted ally gains a +1 bonus to AC.

FOR THE COMMON HONOR
If an ally within 5 feet of you suffers a hit from an enemy, as a reaction, you can swap locations with the ally and suffer the hit and all effects instead.

JUMP IN FRONT
If you and at least one ally are struck by an area effect no bigger than 60 feet across, as a reaction, you can push your allies out of the target area. However, you are then targeted by the effect a number of times equal to the number of allies you pushed.

MAN DOWN
If you occupy the same space as a dead, prone, or unconscious ally, the ally cannot be targeted by any ranged or melee attacks and automatically passes all Dexterity saving throws. The effect ends if the target stands, if you leave the target's area, or if the target makes an attack.

MEMBER OF A TEAM
You can spend 30 feet of movement and select an ally within 5 feet. That ally can use the Disengage action without using her action on her next turn.

SLOW IS SMOOTH
When you move, you can reduce your speed by 10 feet and pull one ally within 5 feet with you. If you use the Disengage action, the ally also disengages.

SNAP OUT OF IT
Use your action to remove one of the following conditions an ally suffers from, unless you suffer from the same condition: charmed, frightened, stunned, or unconscious (unless dying).

SPOTTER
Target an enemy in light of sight with your action; one ally within 5 feet of you has advantage on his next attack roll.

TOSS MAGAZINE
You can spend 30 feet of movement and reload an ally's weapon. The ally must be within 10 feet and you must have the proper ammunition or cell.

TAKE A KNEE
Starting at 2nd level, you are able to crouch quickly and brace your elbow against your knee for a secured firing position. Spend 30 feet of movement and make an additional ranged attack as part of an Attack action this turn. You cannot use this feature if you are within reach of an enemy or an enemy is in reach of you.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

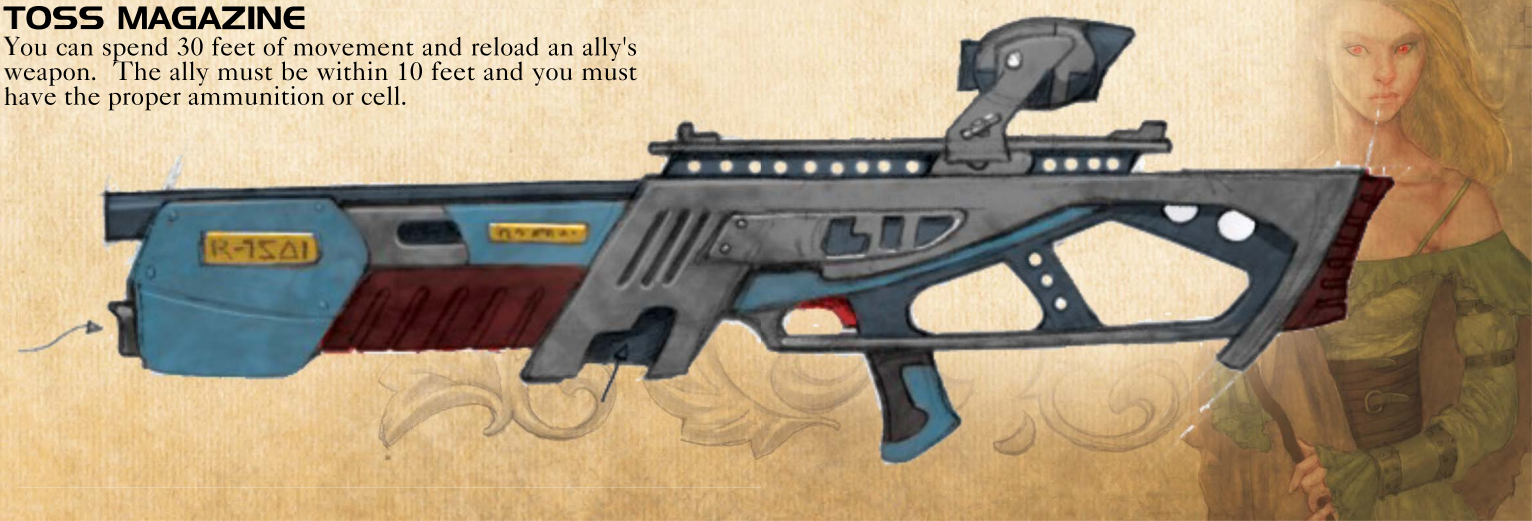
Alternatively, you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and select either an additional fire support path or a Brotherhood ability at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

DOUBLE/TRIPLE/ QUADRUPLE TAP
Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This increases to three attacks at 9th level in this class and four attacks at 14th level in this class.

MEAT SHIELD
An enemy is more useful to you when it's dead. Starting at 10th level, as a reaction—or part of your action if on your turn—when a creature within 5 feet is killed or otherwise reduced to below 0 hit points, you grab it; it now grants you half-cover until you move. If using a two-handed small arm, you suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls while holding the target. You cannot use a heavy or super heavy weapon with *meat shield*. You also cannot use *meat shield* with *take a knee*.

ALL IN
At 20th level, if you hit an enemy, you empty a full magazine to ensure a messy kill. Double the number of attacks you make with an Attack action against a single target. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. That weapon is also out of ammunition.



GUNSLINGER

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.

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.

THE GUNSLINGER

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Kata Points	Kata Exploits	Special
1	+2	4	2	Cinematic Style, Converging Fire, Kata
2	+2	5	3	—
3	+2	5	3	Archetype feature
4	+2	5	3	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	6	4	Gun-Fu
6	+3	6	4	Cinematic Style
7	+3	6	4	Archetype feature
8	+3	7	4	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	7	5	Reflex Shot
10	+4	7	5	Kata Improvement
11	+4	8	5	Archetype feature
12	+4	8	5	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	8	6	Gun-Fu
14	+5	9	6	Heroic Bloodshed
15	+5	9	6	Archetype feature
16	+5	9	6	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	10	7	Gun-Fu
18	+6	10	7	Archetype feature
19	+6	10	7	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	11	7	Endorphin Response

TRUTHFUL OR TRUISM

Wielding two pistols akimbo is honestly impractical, and few people ever did it throughout history. The practice was adopted in cinema for dramatic purposes, only later being embraced and perfected by others inspired by the practice. As such, employing either one or two weapons carries it's own set of advantages.

With two firearms, the gunslinger has increased her potential damage output at the expense of accuracy. With one weapon, the gunslinger has decided to make every shot count. 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.

Unlike other classes like grounder and heavy, the gunslinger is mobile and agile. It would be unlikely that they would wield a pistol with a full functioning rifle on their backs. They walk light, often near the front lines or scouting far ahead of a unit. They are not required to carry a shovel or plant explosives. Their purpose is singular, if not slightly selfish.

CREATING A GUNSLINGER

Decide on the number of weapons you'll be wielding in combat. It will not only set your play style, but your potential personality as well. There is admittedly some theatrics involved, regardless of the choice, a talent picked up outside of standard military training channels.

No doubt, you probably picked up a few tricks through specialized trainers and even practice. You might have possessed a background in law enforcement or been a crime lord's hired thug. There was a reason why you never held a rifle—it was either never given to you, or the details of your profession precluded its use.

You may be required to be agile, sometimes clandestine. You have no problem intimidating people with your appearance and demeanor and don't require some phallic compensation to aid in that. You can admit being somewhat of a cliché—the question is, do you embrace it? And if so, which one—the ancient American west or the later cinematic bullet ballet artist. Oddly enough, both roles have been embraced in this new world.

This is the best class of all since you embrace a number of literary tropes, from villain to hero. Fiction has become reality and there is now a place in this world for your unique talents.

CLASS FEATURES

As a gunslinger, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per gunslinger level
Hit Points at 1st level: 8 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per gunslinger level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light and medium armor
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed and two-handed small arms
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Dexterity, Wisdom
Skills: Select three skills from Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Insight, Intimidation, Investigation, Perception, and Performance

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- two one-handed small arms, $300 or less
- a set of techan armor $300 or less
- $100 in additional gear

CINEMATIC STYLE

Starting at 1st level, choose whether you fight with either one firearm or two.

TWO WEAPONS

Wielding two one-handed small arms is the same as wielding two light melee weapons for the purposes of two-weapon fighting. As such, you can use a bonus action to attack with your second small arm. You don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack, unless the modifier is a negative. At 6th level, you no longer have this limitation, and can add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack.

ONE WEAPON

If wielding only one one-handed small arm, you gain a +3 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon. This increases to +6 at 6th level.

CONVERGING FIRE

Starting at 1st level, when wielding a one-handed small arm against a creature 5 feet or closer, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to AC.

KATA

Starting at 1st level, you are able to use kata exploits fueled by kata points. You have 4 kata points at 1st level, gaining 1 additional point every third level beginning at 2nd level. You regain all spent kata points when you finish a short or long rest.

At 1st level, you select two kata exploits, gaining one additional exploit at 2nd, 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you are able to select a new exploit, you can replace one you know with a different one.

All exploits require the use of one-handed small arms. Certain kata exploits also cost more than one point.

At 1st level, you can only use one exploit per turn. This increases to two at 10th level.

ABNORMALLY FAST
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata as part of your movement to double your speed until the end of your turn. If you are hit with an attack before the beginning of your next turn, you gain 1 kata.

BETWEEN THE EYES
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata before making a ranged attack roll to have advantage on that attack roll. If both attack rolls hit, double your attribute modifier damage. If both miss, you regain 1 kata.

BLOOD IN THE EYES
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata as a reaction if an enemy scores a critical hit on you to make a ranged attack against the triggering enemy. If you hit, your attack is also a critical hit. If you miss by 5 or more, you regain 1 kata.

BOUNDARY THRESHOLD
Kata Cost: 1
If you are within 5 feet of at least two enemies, you can spend kata along with 30 feet of movement to make one ranged attack to one of those enemies.

CLASSIC TUMBLE
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata as a reaction when hit with an attack or if you fail a Dexterity saving throw. You take only ¼ damage.

EQUILIBRIUM
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata as part of a reaction when an enemy misses with a ranged attack—you make a ranged attack. If you score a critical hit with said attack, you recover 1 kata.

HYDROSTATIC SHOCK
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata after hitting a target; you inflict an additional 1d4 damage, and if the creature is your size or smaller and moves or attacks before the start of your next turn, you can knock the enemy prone as a reaction.

JUST ONE BULLET
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata before an attack action to you add your Wisdom modifier to all damage rolls until the end of your turn. If any attack rolls you make on your turn score a critical hit, you gain 1 kata (max 1).

KINESICS
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata on your turn: your movement is not reduced through difficult terrain, you don't provoke opportunity attacks, and all attacks against you have disadvantage until the beginning of your next turn. If you suffer more than one hit while *kinesics* is in effect, you regain 1 kata.

LIMBER UP
Kata Cost: 1
Spend kata at the beginning of your turn to gain advantage on Dexterity and Strength ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws until the end of your next turn.

RAPID KILL
Kata Cost: 2
Spend kata after hitting a creature to turn that hit into a critical hit.

WAY OF THE GUN
Kata Cost: 1
If you hit a creature at least 20 feet away, spend kata to gain an additional attack against one additional enemy within 5 feet of the first target.

WEAK SPOT
Kata Cost: 4
Spend kata after hitting a target. You gain a damage bonus to every subsequent hit on that specific target equal to your Wisdom bonus until the target is killed.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively, you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain a kata exploit and 1 kata point at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

GUN-FU
Starting at 5th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This increases to three attacks at 13th level in this class and four attacks at 17th level in this class.

Additionally, at 5th level, if all ranged attacks you make with an Attack action are directed at the same target, you can make one additional ranged attack against that target. This increases to two additional attacks at 17th level in this class.

REFLEX SHOT
Starting at 9th level, when wielding a one-handed small arm, you can use a ranged attack as an opportunity attack.

HEROIC BLOODSHED
At 14th level, you become a staple of action films. If wielding two one-handed small arms, you double the number of ranged attacks you make with your Attack action, your Bonus action and any Reactions until the beginning of your next turn. If wielding one one-handed small arm, if you hit with an attack roll, that attack is automatically a critical hit and you double all dice rolled. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

ENDORPHIN RESPONSE
At 20th level, instead of using your Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, you can expend them on your turn as a bonus action and gain 4 points of kata.

HEAVY

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.

It's in the name, literally. The heavy wields 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. Heavies 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 heavy's area of expertise.

BIGGER IS BETTER

This may make the heavy seem a bit of a one-trick pony, and indeed, even her teammates often see her as such. Heavies 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 heavy can occasionally rival the sniper in her ability to apply complex mathematics to the military sphere. She 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 she has left. Nobody continues to poke fun at a heavy after seeing her in action… if they know what's good for them.

A heavy often brushes shoulders with grounders—they share bunk space, can swap stories when they both attended training academy together. Unless a unit is large enough—more than a dozen members—it is rare for two heavies to operate together. When they do, mutual respect is immediate. But in the field, they are seldom together, as responsibilities force them to deal with different threats.

Despite expectations, a heavy is not always the one expected to deliver the most damage. In fact, most of the time, the pressing task at hand is holding back the tide of enemy forces rolling over a hill. Unlike grounders, the heavy has specialized training with creating vast area-of-denial attacks, forcing enemies to slow down or dick for cover. It is the heavy that strafes an enemy's advance, the heavy that delivers scorched-Earth to farms, and the heavy that takes out the enemy elite with a well-placed rocket strike

CREATING A HEAVY

Size does matter—let's just get that out of the way. Although not as common as a grounder, you fill a similar role and are the second most common found in the general military population. You might have followed a brother-grounder in daring the fantasy world. You could also be the one assumed to take that general role, only with bigger weapons. And bigger they are.

You do prefer the larger guns—there are dragons out there. Little pea-shooters and capsicum sprays can do little against most of the threats you could possible face. You need a rocket launcher. Or a flame-thrower. Or a flame-throwing rocket launcher. If it exists, you'll be able to use it. The ultimate question is why. Are you compensating? Are you a warmonger only interested in maximum stopping power? Why you wield those weapons is as important as which ones you select.

You rarely walk into a situation with only one gun. Like those avatars in famous video games, you probably carry a few, more than most people think you need. Pistol? Check. Machine gun? Check. Flamethrower? Check. Rocket Launcher? Why not. You have a solution for any problem, at least those problems requiring weapons to solve...and in your eyes, most problems usually can be solved that way.

This is the best class of all since you wield the biggest guns, the heaviest armors, and are the class most resembling a character from a first person shooter.

CLASS FEATURES

As a heavy, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d10 per heavy level
Hit Points at 1st level: 10 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d10 (or 6) + your Constitution modifier per heavy level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: All armor, shields
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed and two-handed small arms, heavy weapons, super heavy weapons.
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Strength, Constitution
Skills: Select two skills from Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Insight, Intimidation, and Perception

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- any three small arms, each $300 or less
- a set of techan armor $300 or less
- $100 in additional gear

ARTILLERY TALENT

At first level, you gain artillery talents. You gain four talents at first level. You gain an additional talent at 2nd, 5th, 9th, 13th, 17th and 20th level. Several talents can be selected multiple times, increasing their talent rank, though you cannot achieve more than rank 2 at 1st level.

Several talents require the use of a Dexterity saving throw. The DC to resist your attack is 8 + your attack ability modifier + your proficiency bonus + any weapon bonus.

ATTACK OF NECESSITY

As an action, while you are wielding an auto or auto-heavy weapon, each creature in a 10-foot cone (or 15-foot for auto-heavy) centered on you must make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes your weapon damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. You expend ammunition with each saving throw attempted.

Rank 2: The cone increases by 5 feet (15 and 20 feet respectively).

Rank 3: Targets your size or smaller are knocked prone if they fail their saves .

Rank 4: The cone increases by 5 feet (20 and 25 feet respectively).

RAPID FIRE

As an action, while you are wielding an auto or auto-heavy weapon, each creature in a 10-foot cube (20 -foot with auto-heavy) within weapon range must make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes your weapon damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. You expend ammunition with each saving throw attempted.

Rank 2: The cube's area increases by 10 feet (20 and 30 feet respectively).

Rank 3: All targets in the cube have their speed halved until the beginning of your next turn.

Rank 4: The cube's area increases by 10 feet (30 and 40 feet respectively).

EASY TARGET

When attacking a Large or larger creature with a weapon using the auto or auto-heavy property, you gain a bonus to damage against the target for every size above Medium the creature is. You gain this damage bonus with both direct and area effect attacks.
Auto: Large +2, Huge +3, Gargantuan +4.
Auto-Heavy: Large +3, Huge +4, Gargantuan +5.

Rank 2: The damage bonus improves.
Auto: Large +3, Huge +4, Gargantuan +5.
Auto-Heavy: Large +4, Huge +5, Gargantuan +6.

Rank 3: The damage bonus improves.
Auto: Large +4, Huge +5, Gargantuan +6.
Auto-Heavy: Large +5, Huge +6, Gargantuan +7.

Rank 4: The damage bonus improves.
Auto: Large +5, Huge +6, Gargantuan +7.
Auto-Heavy: Large +6, Huge +7, Gargantuan +8.

GAMING AVATAR

As an action, make a single ranged attack with an auto or auto-heavy weapon. You use ammunition as an autofire attack for this action. If you hit, you impose one or more effects on the enemy depending on how much you beat the target's AC by (to a maximum of 5 for an auto weapon or 10 for an auto-heavy weapon). All effects are cumulative:
2 or more—The target is pushed 5 feet.
6 or more—The target is pushed 5 feet (10 total).

Rank 2: You gain two additional effects.
3 or more—The target has disadvantage on ranged attack rolls against you until the beginning of your next turn.
8 or more—The target has disadvantage on all ranged attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

Rank 3: You gain two additional effects.
5 *or more*—The target's speed is reduced to zero until the beginning of your next turn
10—The target loses its action on its next turn. It still can take reactions and bonus actions.

Rank 4: You have advantage with this attack.

THE HEAVY

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Special
1	+2	Artillery Talent (x4)
2	+2	Artillery Talent
3	+2	Archetype feature
4	+2	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	Artillery Talent
6	+3	Too Close
7	+3	Archetype feature
8	+3	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	Artillery Talent
10	+4	Strongpoint
11	+4	Archetype feature
12	+4	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	Artillery Talent
14	+5	Strongpoint
15	+5	Archetype feature
16	+5	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	Artillery Talent
18	+6	Archetype feature
19	+6	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	Artillery Talent

IMPOSING FRAME

You can spend 30 feet of movement and gain a +1 bonus to AC and provide half cover for all allies within 5 feet until the beginning of your next turn. You also have advantage against being moved against your will until the beginning of your next turn.

Rank 2: Allies now gain three-quarters cover.

Rank 3: The bonus to AC increases to +2.

Rank 4: Imposing Frame now only costs 20 feet of movement.

OVERWATCH

You are able to target large areas in the battlefield and impede enemy advancement. While wielding an auto or auto-heavy weapon, spend 30 feet of movement on your turn and select a 10-foot cube (20-foot with auto-heavy) within your weapon's range. Until the beginning of your next turn, the area is considered difficult terrain to any enemy targets attempting to move through it. As a reaction, you can force an enemy that enters the area to make a Dexterity saving throw. A target takes your weapon damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. You expend ammunition with each saving throw attempted.

Rank 2: The cube's area increases by 10 feet (20 and 30 feet respectively).

Rank 3: Overwatch now costs only 20 feet of movement to use.

Rank 4: The cube's area increases by 10 feet (30 and 40 feet respectively).

Rank 5: You can use your action as well as spending movement with Overwatch and double its area of effect.

Rank 6: If you used Overwatch on your previous turn, you can continue sustaining it on this turn, costing only 10 feet of movement to do so. You cannot shift its location.

PRECISION FIRE

When making a non-autofire ranged attack, you can reroll any damage die roll of 1 until the result is other than 1. If you roll the maximum result, add +1 damage.

Rank 2: If you score a critical hit, roll all damage dice twice and take the higher values.

Rank 3: If you roll the maximum result of a damage die, add +2 damage (instead of +1).

Rank 4: If you roll the maximum result of a damage die, instead of adding +2 damage, roll 1d6 instead.

SHRAPNEL

When you hit a creature with a ranged attack using the auto or auto-heavy property, one creature within 5 feet of the first target (10 feet with auto-heavy) takes damage equal to your Dexterity or Strength modifier.

Rank 2: Increase the range by 10 feet (15 and 20 feet respectively) .

SURE-FOOTED

You treat heavy weapons as two-handed small arms for the purposes of attack penalties while moving. This does not apply to super heavy weapons.

ARCHETYPE

At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain an additional artillery talent at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

TOO CLOSE

At 6th level, if you are hit by an opportunity attack, you can make a single melee attack, using your weapon as a club, as part of that same action.

STRONGPOINT

When you reach 10th level, you can take one additional action on your turn if both this and your normal action are used to employ artillery talents. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

At 14th level, you gain one additional use of Strong point before you finish a short or long rest.

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MARSHAL

"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."

A marshal often begins her career in the same way as the rank-and-file soldier, but moves into a command position either by accident in the field when the former commanding officer falls to enemy attack, or more often by taking classes on how to be someone responsible for a team. Perhaps she has a natural talent for leadership despite being a soldier like the rest.

Alternately, she 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 arms 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. A marshal must also be persuasive, and above all, brave, for nobody is going to risk life or limb for a coward.

ASSIGNED OR CHOSEN

The marshal is considered the leader in most techan parties. It will be assumed by outsiders encountering one, even if the assumption is inaccurate. A marshal coordinates other members of the party, plots out strategies before a battle, and alters them tactically as the need arrives. Any significant mission in open echa would require at least one leader to keep the group inline, to be certain the mission focus is adhered to. A military force is mandated to have a rank structure, and most often the marshal sits atop that ladder.

The authority of a marshal comes from both experience and from the respect of those under her command. This is not a situation where a detached officer is trained in isolation apart from the rest—stuck in a classroom—emerges wet behind the ears with untested military knowledge and attempts to exert authority on seasoned soldiers who refuse to recognize the position. Confidence comes from both training and in-field experience, not from simulations. When the bullets fly, no marshal will cower behind a rock.

CREATING A MARSHAL

Your personality will greatly affect your decision whether or not to select a marshal class, and if so, how you play one. A marshal is generally assumed to lead a techan party, so if you are not, the question is why. You, not just your marshal character, have to exhibit at least some compelling traits, a reason why those under your command would continue to follow you. In strict military channels, discipline can be enforced, but out in the wildlands of fantasy, there must be respect for the position. The other players should want to follow your instructions. You should know what you are talking about.

So when creating a marshal, be aware that at points during the game, other players will be consulting you, asking for instructions, and seeking advice. If the sniper is in charge of the group instead of you, the GM may inquire as to the reason. This is not saying that the most charismatic personality in the party must select the marshal class, but some justification should be established as to why the marshal is not commanding the party.

Perhaps you are an introverted genius—able to enact brilliant tactical decisions when required but unable to carry a casual conversation. You must acknowledge your capacity as a person when selecting the marshal. Don't assume the GM will hand you the reigns of a party just because you select this class.

CLASS FEATURES

As a marshal, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per marshal level
Hit Points at 1st level: 8 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per marshal level after 1st.

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light armor, medium armor
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed and two-handed small arms, heavy weapons
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Intelligence, Charisma
Skills: Select four skills from Computer Use, History, Investigation, Insight, Medicine, Perception, Survival, Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion

EQUIPMENT

As a marshal, you receive the following equipment at 1st level.

- two small arms, worth $300 or less
- a set of techan armor $300 or less
- $150 in additional gear

COMMAND PRESENCE

Starting at 1st level, your words and actions generate a presence that can motivate or generally boost those you deem your allies. Each command presence can also be temporarily boosted, after which you cannot boost it again until you finish a long rest. Unless otherwise stated, you gain no benefit from your own command presence.

At 2nd level, and again at 6th, 10th, 14th, and 18th level, you can either select another command presence or increase the potential of a presence you already possess.

THE MARSHAL

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Command Presence	Team Power	Special
1	+2	1	1	Command Presence, Team Powers, Team Presence, For the Good of the Team
2	+2	2	1	—
3	+2	2	1	Archetype feature
4	+2	2	1	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	2	2	—
6	+3	3	2	Double Tap
7	+3	3	2	Archetype feature
8	+3	3	2	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	3	3	Triple Tap
10	+4	4	3	—
11	+4	4	3	Archetype feature
12	+4	4	3	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	4	4	—
14	+5	5	4	Quadruple Tap
15	+5	5	4	Archetype feature
16	+5	5	4	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	5	5	—
18	+6	6	5	Archetype feature
19	+6	6	5	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	6	5	Manifestation of Greatness

BY EXAMPLE
You don't keep back and order from a distance; you stand shoulder to shoulder with those you lead. Allies that can see and hear you have advantage on Constitution, Wisdom and Charisma saving throws.

Exemplary Example (boost): As an action, for the next minute (10 rounds), all allies gain a +1 bonus to AC.

Tier 2: Allies also gain advantage on Intelligence and Strength saving throws as well; the bonus from *exemplary example* increases to +2.

FIELD ADVICE
Using only your words, you call your comrades back from the most harmful of afflictions. Allies that can see and hear you double any effect that removes fatigue. Finishing a long rest reduces an ally's fatigue level by 2, provided that the ally has also ingested some food and drink.

Profound Advice (boost): Use an action to give a rousing speech, and all allies that can see and hear you suppress all effects of fatigue for one hour.

Tier 2: You gain a number of Hit Dice equal to your level that you can distribute to allies that can see and hear you when you and they finish a long rest. These additional Hit Dice must be used immediately or are lost. Additionally, when you use *profound advice*, each ally recovers hit points equal to a quarter of your current hit points.

INTIMIDATING MUG
Opponents take one look at you and begin to rethink their approach. All enemies within 10 feet of you treat the area as difficult terrain.

Menacing Mug (boost): As an action, you double the range of *intimidating mug* for one minute (10 rounds).

Tier 2: Increase the range to 20 feet, and you can use *menacing mug* twice before needing to finish a long rest.

MASK OF AUTHORITY
Your friends believe themselves better knowing you are around. All allies that can see and hear you can re-roll all 1s on their damage rolls.

Personification of Authority (boost): Use an action, and for one minute (10 rounds), all allies that can see and hear you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls.

Tier 2: Allies re-roll all 1s and 2s on damage rolls; *personification of authority* improves to a +3 bonus to damage rolls.

STAND AS ONE
As long as you stand, no one falls. All allies that can see and hear you reduce all damage inflicted on them by 1 (3 at 10th level).

Brotherhood (boost): As an action, you advise your allies on the best way to avoid damage. Select an energy type (acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, radiant, or thunder)—for one minute (10 rounds), all allies that can see you gain resistance to that energy type.

Tier 2: All allies in range reduce all damage inflicted on them by 2 (6 at 10th level).

STRATEGIC PRECISION
You lead the attack, drawing allied fire to your target. If you hit a creature, pick one ally that can see or hear you—the targeted ally gains a +2 bonus to her next attack roll.

Strategic Superiority (boost): As an action, you convey an attack plan—for one minute (10 rounds), all allies that can see and hear you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against the last target you hit until the beginning of your next turn. Your selected ally still only gains a +2 bonus.

Tier 2: Instead of a +2 bonus, the selected ally gains advantage.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM
Starting at 1st level, as an action, you can allow one ally within line of sight to take any action normally available to her as a reaction to you or as an additional action on her next turn. Additionally, you can swap your initiative order with another ally once per round.

TEAM POWER
Starting at 1st level, and every fourth level after, you can select one *team power*. Several powers are only available to choose after level 5.

AUTOCRATIC
If an ally suffers a critical hit from a creature, you can use your reaction to give another ally a single attack against the creature that inflicted the critical hit.

BIG PICTURE
As an action, select one ally able to see and hear you. If the ally hits with an attack before the beginning of your next turn, that hit gains a damage bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier + your level.

BOAR'S HEAD
Spend 10 feet of movement to give an ally a 5-foot bonus to her speed until the beginning of your next turn. You can use *boar's head* multiple times on your turn, but each ally cannot gain more than 5 feet of movement this way.

CONTROL THE BATTLE THEATRE
When you roll for initiative, you can give one ally advantage on her initiative roll .

FACE SLAP
(Level 5)
Use an action to wake up one adjacent unconscious creature. If the target was unconscious from being reduced to fewer than 0 hit points, she is healed to 1 hit point. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

FOCUS TARGET
(Level 5)
As a bonus action, you can grant an ally within 5 feet of you a single ranged attack against the same creature you hit with a ranged attack the previous turn.

IMPROVISATION IS THE BEST PLAN
Use a bonus action to gain 1 additional reaction before the beginning of your next turn.

MARK OF THE PUPPETEER
Any time an ally hits with an attack, you can use a reaction to shove that creature 5 feet as long as the target is not moved into hazardous terrain (like fire or a pit).

NO ONE HITS THE CHIEF
(Level 5)
If a creature hits you with a critical hit, all allies that can see or hear you have advantage on attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn against the creature that scored the hit.

PAT ON THE BACK
When the party takes a short rest, you can award any of your Hit Dice to an ally. Allies cannot have more Hit Dice than their level.

PLAN OF ATTACK
You can spend 10 feet of movement to move another ally 5 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

PURE LEADER
If you hit an enemy with a ranged attack, you can inflict half damage and one ally can disengage from the same enemy and move up to half his speed.

QUICK PATCH
You can use your action to administer aid to an ally—the target regains a number of hit points equal to 1d6 + your level. When you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you take a short or long rest.

You can select this trait multiple times, increasing the damage cured by 1d6 each time and gaining an additional use of quick patch between long rests.

READING BODY LANGUAGE
You have advantage on Wisdom (Insight), Wisdom (Survival), Charisma (Deception), Charisma (Intimidation), Charisma (Performance), or Charisma (Persuasion) checks (select one). You can select this trait multiple times, selecting a different skill each time.

SNAP OUT OF IT
If an ally within 5 feet of you is charmed, frightened, or stunned, you can use your reaction to inflict 2d4 damage on that ally and remove the effect.

UNNECESSARY ABUSE
(Level 5)
If an ally within 5 feet of you misses on an attack roll, you can use your reaction to inflict 1d4 damage on that ally and have them re-roll.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and select an additional team power at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

DOUBLE/TRIPLE/ QUADRUPLE TAP
Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This increases to three attacks at 9th level in this class and four attacks at 14th level in this class.

MANIFESTATION OF GREATNESS
Starting at 20th level, you gain a pool of 1d4 natural 20s when you finish a long rest, which you can use to replace any ally's d20 roll as a reaction.

MARTIAL ARTIST

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.

The martial artist is specialized in the application of a craft that some people consider primitive. Despite any ranged combat skills she may possess, the martial artist prefers to make things personal. She has practiced day and night in the perfection of her craft. There may be countless reasons why she prefers close combat over firearms, but the primary one is usually self-empowerment.

A martial artist's strengths rely on her lethality in every situation. She requires no augmentation, no steel or explosives to articulate her skill. The martial artist's weapons cannot be removed. There is no scanner or sensor to identify one as a threat. She can suppress opponents without causing harm; remove a threat without making a sound. Firearms are a final, violent solution and most times a restrained hand is needed.

As a warrior, the martial artist has been trained from an early age by choice or by inheritance to take the role of a combatant. Her natural gifts were discovered and focused into a lifelong dedication. This is not to assume she is a warmonger, as such training comes early with the responsibility to know restraint. For many, having the skills is a means for self-discovery. This can apply in the application of hand-to-hand combat, the use of melee weapons, or in the proficiency of small-arms. The martial artist might have devoted her life to the implement of one art or the broad use of many.

IT'S SKILL, NOT MAGIC

The martial artist can fill a vital role in a techan party. Being a close combat defender means she may be the only opposition from monsters wishing to close the distance to your ranged allies. Even if opponents attempt to move, the martial artist can keep with them and prevent allies from coming to harm.

This requires proximity to an opponent—said proximity carries the risk of disruption, justifying the avoidance of modern firearms. This is not to say martial artists won't employ technology; they are just required to be shielded, and technology can still make a sword better than any passed down tradition.

The mastery of various martial arts can result in feats of near magic, some nearly crossing the line, but ultimately the talents of a martial artist comes from the normal world. She gained her skill not from some monastic discipline, but from practice after years of tutelage from masters. A martial artist can't fly; she doesn't walk on walls. There is no channeling of Ki, no immunity to disease. At the end of the day, the martial artist is a regular person...that can punch really, really hard.

CREATING A MARTIAL ARTIST

A martial artist is a non-magical alternative to the more clichéd official monk. It follows similar ideas but emphasizes less on straight-up magical effects in exchange for attacks that blur the lines. There is also a heavy de-emphasis on the spiritual and religious allusions. However, the martial artist fills in a similar role and is the only techan class that is technically not a techan-class. Everything that defines a martial artist is a talent that could have been taught in a monastery from birth.

Your origin as a martial artist is partially based on your skill selections. It is very possible that you have never held a firearm in your life, and such a proficiency can be ignored. Likewise if you were raised in a kingdom rather than a bastion, it's unlikely you would know how to drive a car. It is also entirely possible that your path dips a toe in both worlds—where you were raised in shadow of technology but had access to little of it in your upbringing.

The martial artist is the one techan class where you don't have to justify your inclusion in a fantasy party. It is the only non-fantasy class with absolutely no reliance on magic, and thus, you could be from anywhere. As a member of a techan group, your contribution is obvious, by keeping monsters focused on you, they are ignoring your friends with the firearms that become less effective in melee combat. If you are a proud member of a techan party, you still are not required to claim the same origin. In reality, few people know how to handle themselves in a fist-fight, let alone with opponents twice your size.

The martial artist is the best class because it is the only techan class equally effective regardless if it uses technology or not. No matter the situation, you will always be effective.

And you know kung-fu.

CLASS FEATURES

As a martial artist, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d10 per martial artist level
Hit Points at 1st level: 10 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d10 (or 6) + your Constitution modifier per martial artist level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light armor
Weapons: All simple melee weapons, all one-handed small arms, and select four martial melee weapons.
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Strength, Dexterity
Skills: Select three skills from Acrobatics, Animal Handling, Athletics, History, Insight, Intimidation, Perception, and Survival

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- a simple melee weapon for close encounters
- a one-handed small arm $300 or less
- a set of techan armor $300 or less
- $100 in additional gear

FIGHTING FORM

At 1st level, select either Dexterity or Strength as your ability for attack and damage rolls.

DEXTERITY

If you use Dexterity as your attack/damage ability, you gain the following abilities:

- When reaching combo-chain tier 2, you gain a +1 bonus to melee attack rolls.
- You add half your Dexterity modifier (round down) to your normal Dexterity modifier when determining your AC with light armor (effectively x1.5 your modifier to AC—a +4 Dex bonus becomes a +6).
- You can use Dexterity (Acrobatics) instead of Strength (Athletics) to make or sustain grapple checks.

STRENGTH

If you use Strength as your attack/damage ability, you gain the following abilities:

- You can re-roll any damage die roll of 1 until the result is other than 1. If you roll the maximum result, add +1 damage.
- You gain proficiency with all medium and heavy armor.
- You have advantage when attempting to shove a target. A shoved creature is pushed 10 feet away instead of 5 feet.

COMBO CHAIN

Starting at 1st level, you gain the ability to string fighting maneuvers together in order to unleash more powerful attacks. You always begin a battle on tier 1, inflicting 1d6 damage with unarmed attacks.

After you hit an enemy and inflict damage, you escalate to the next tier, where your damage dice increases for the next attack. Alternately, on tiers 2, 3, 4, or 5, after hitting a target, you can perform a finishing move. If you don't perform a finishing move, the combo chain can continue, escalating to the next tier (if there is one). When you perform a finishing move, miss on an attack roll, or fail to make an attack before the end of your next turn, you restart the combo chain at tier 1.

You must decide to perform a finishing move after a successful attack, and on the same turn as one. When you reach the maximum tier allowed by your level, you can sustain the chain and your damage dice for as long as possible, but remember, the chain ends—reducing you back to tier 1—if you miss on an attack roll or don't make one until the end of your next turn.

At 1st level, you can only string a combo chain to tier 3. This increases to tier 4 at 9th level, and tier 5 at 13th level.

Tier	Unarmed Damage	Finishing Moves
1	1d6	None
2	1d8	Bone Breaker, Circular Attack, Ground & Pound, Surging Punch
3	1d10	Counter, Soul Fist, Spinning Attack, Ranbu
4	1d12	The Zone, Touch of Death, Drop Hammer, Xian
5	2d6	Ultra, Falcon Punch, Sun-Goku-Satsu, Limit Break

Note: You can use melee weapons with combo chain but utilize the table's damage die instead of the weapon's. If you have an ability which increases the damage of your unarmed attack, your damage dice may change, but your tier does not.

TIER 2 FINISHING MOVES

Bone Breaker: You exert pressure on a limb and hear a crack. Double your ability modifier to the damage of your last hit, and the target's melee attacks inflicts half damage until the beginning of your next turn.

Circular Attack: You spin your leg around to catch another opponent. After resolving damage for your last hit, make a single additional melee attack (at the same tier) against one other creature in reach (different than the one that escalated the combo chain) as part of the same action as the last hit. If you score a hit, you gain an additional identical attack this turn against a new creature different than the first and second.

Ground & Pound: After resolving damage for your last hit, you use your agility and strength to knock the target prone (the creature must be your size or smaller). You can then either use a Disengage action or have advantage on your next attack against the target.

Surging Punch: You channel your willpower, focus your energy, and let out a roar. After resolving damage for your last hit, the target is pushed 5 feet and has disadvantage on skill checks and attack rolls against you until the end of its next turn (the creature must be your size or smaller).

TIER 3 FINISHING MOVES

Counter: You assume a defensive stance. After resolving damage for your last hit, you gain a +2 bonus to AC for one minute (ten rounds) or until you move. If a creature hits you, you can use a reaction to make a melee attack against the triggering enemy.

Soul Fist: Your enemy doesn't know it yet, but it's about to have a real bad day. After resolving damage for your last hit, if the target has fewer hit points than your attack ability score, it dies at the beginning of its next turn (the GM should inform you if Soul Fist can apply before using this finishing move).

Spinning Attack: Like a hurricane, either you spin in the air or your enemy does—either way, someone's getting hurt. After resolving damage for your last hit, make a melee attack at this tier to each enemy within ten feet of you. If you miss, the creature still suffers your ability modifier damage; if hit, the target is knocked prone.

Ranbu: Double your last hit's regular damage dice, and make additional melee attacks at this tier against the same creature until you miss twice or hit four times.

TIER 4 FINISHING MOVES

The Zone: After resolving damage for your last hit, your damage die remains at this tier regardless of your combo chain tier for one minute (ten rounds).

Touch of Death: After resolving damage for your last hit, until the target is killed or five minutes have passed, the target's speed is halved and it takes damage equal to half your level at the beginning of its turn. This damage value does not increase if you inflict this finisher on the same target more than once.

Drop Hammer: If you are grabbing the last creature you hit (it must be your size or smaller), after resolving damage, you maneuver yourself to force your enemy into the ground. Make a Strength (Athletics) check

with advantage and leap into the air. You inflict additional damage equal to your roll as you crash back down, possibly creating an impact crater, with cracks in the ground.

Xian: You achieve perfect clarity for a short while. After resolving damage for your last hit, all enemies in reach are pushed ten feet. You cannot be shoved and are resistant to all damage types for one minute (ten rounds).

TIER 5 FINISHING MOVES

Spirit Bomb: One incredible strike—triple your attribute damage to your last hit, and the creature is incapacitated until the end of your next turn.

Falcon Punch: Your last attack is a critical hit, you inflict max damage, and a creature your size or smaller is shoved 30 feet. If the target hits an obstruction, it suffers additional damage equal to the remaining distance. The target may still pass through the obstruction.

Shun-Goku-Satsu: You perform an incredibly powerful sequence of attacks. After resolving damage for your last hit, make eight additional melee attacks against any number of enemies within ten feet of you (each target can only be attacked a maximum of three times). If you miss, you still inflict half damage.

Limit Break: You're about to drop, but you know you cannot afford to lose. After resolving damage for your last hit, you inflict additional damage equal to the hit points you are currently down from your total (maximum 50 hit points).

MARTIAL EXPLOIT

At 1st you can select one martial exploit from the list below. You gain additional exploits at 2nd level, 5th level 8th level, and 11th level, 14th level, 17th level, and 20th level.

C-C-C-COMBO BREAKER

If the same creature in a single round hits you twice a single turn, you can perform a single melee attack against that creature as a reaction. If you hit, the target's turn ends.

CALISTHENICS

You gain a +2 damage bonus to melee damage rolls. You can select this exploit a second time and increase the damage bonus to +4, and select it a third time and increase the damage bonus to +6.

GUN-SOMETHING-SOMETHING

You treat one-handed small arms as melee weapons when attacking targets at 5 feet or closer.

MAINTAIN CHAIN

Instead of using your Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, you can expend them to prevent a break in your combo chain. If you miss (but don't roll a natural 1), spend a Hit Die as part of your attack to turn that miss into a non-critical hit. There is no limit of how many Hit Dice you can expend this way per turn.

MARKER

When you hit an enemy that is in reach of you with a melee attack, it has disadvantage on any attacks that don't include you as a target until the end of your next turn. The effect ends if you are reduced to 0 hit points, you move out of reach of that enemy, but not if the enemy moves out of reach of you.

THE MARTIAL ARTIST

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Martial Exploits	Special
1	+2	1	Fighting Form, Combo Chain, Martial Exploit
2	+2	2	—
3	+2	2	Archetype feature
4	+2	2	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	3	—
6	+3	3	Extra Attack
7	+3	3	Archetype feature
8	+3	4	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	4	Combo Chain
10	+4	4	Extra Attack
11	+4	5	Archetype feature
12	+4	5	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	5	Combo Chain
14	+5	6	—
15	+5	6	Archetype feature
16	+5	6	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	7	—
18	+6	7	Archetype feature
19	+6	7	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	8	Extra Attack

NEWAZA

You are a master at ground fighting. You gain the following benefits:

- If a creature breaks from your grapple, you can use your reaction to attempt a grapple check on the same target.
- You have a +2 bonus to AC against any creature you are grappling.
- You do not have disadvantage on melee attacks while prone. Enemies do not have advantage on you with non-reach melee attacks if you are prone.

POUND FOR POUND

You are a superior fighter in all respects. You gain the following benefits:

- If a creature moves away from you, even with the disengage action, you can use your reaction to move up to your speed with it.

REDIRECTION OF ENERGY

When an enemy scores a critical hit on you with a melee attack, you gain temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt. When you use this exploit, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Additionally, any time a creature scores a critical hit on you with a melee attack, you have advantage on melee attacks against that creature until the end of your next turn.

RHYTHM STRING

After performing a finishing move, the tier of said finishing move is a bonus you receive on your next melee attack at tier 1 (for example, if you perform a tier 5 finishing move, your next attack at tier 1 receives a +5 bonus).

TAG TEAM
If an ally hits an enemy within 5-feet of you with a melee attack, you can deal additional damage to that hit equal to your Strength or Dexterity modifier as a reaction. This does not count towards your combo-chain.

ULTRA
After hitting a creature, increase your combo chain tier by one and perform a finishing move. You must have access to the higher tier, and after using ultra, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

UNARMED EXPANDED PROFILE
Spend 30 feet of movement, and your unarmed attacks have reach until the beginning of your next turn. If you use this exploit, you cannot voluntarily move until the beginning of your next turn.

VICIOUS HOOK
Prerequisite: 10th Level
Your melee attacks score a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

WRESTLER
You're a classic brawler. You gain the following benefits:

- If you are grappling a target, you have half cover from attacks from other targets. Additionally, any attack that misses you by 5 or less hits your grappled target instead.
- When moving a grabbed creature your size or smaller, your speed is not reduced.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain an additional martial exploit at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

EXTRA ATTACK
Beginning at 5th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. The number of attacks increases to three when you reach 10th level in this class and to four when you reach 20th level in this class.

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.

The medic's job is to keep people alive, usually after they've been shot, stabbed, trampled, gored, poisoned, infected with a 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 encountered by techans, the major weaknesses are well-known (and of course, all magical creatures are weak to fae-iron), 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 devoured.

A DOCTOR, NOT A WITCH

A medic is not some faith healer or medicine man. She doesn't rattle chicken bones or blow moon dust over open wounds. Medics don't ignore the basics of their profession—splints and braces—but they also don't ignore the benefits of the scientific process and the by products of thousands of years of trial and error. 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. This has created a divide between the practisers of magical healing and proper techan medics, making the latter inexperienced with dealing with non-humans.

Humans and fae do not understand each others' biology very well. 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.

This has left the standard techan medic specialized in dealing with human injury. Further, she is also the pharmacist, the occasional psychiatrist, and when needs arise, the mad scientist. It is not uncommon for the medic to be called upon to whip up a drug that would inflict a destructive affect on the monster starring down a techan party.

CREATING A MEDIC

Like a cleric, a medic is a vital member of a techan group. Depending on the specifics of the campaign, in a mixed techan/echan party, a cleric could be allowed to heal techans without adverse affects, but generally, this is not advised. The medic is not a holy warrior, so your back-up skills involve boosting allies with drugs and imposing effects on enemies by utilizing similar concoctions.

You are also the scientist, a side-effect of being a doctor. Given the fascination many scientists have with the outside world, this could be encouragement enough to venture into the wilderness. You could herald from military channels or be a scientist with a general knowledge of medical techniques. Perhaps healing the party is a secondary objective, only brought into the forefront when goblins attack.

The medic is the best class as no techan party should leave a bastion without one. Didn't your mother ever tell you to date a doctor? They can always find work, and are generally very well paid.

CLASS FEATURES

As a medic, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d6 per medic level
Hit Points at 1st level: 6+your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d6 (or 4) + your Constitution modifier per medic level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light armor
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed small arms
Tools: Poisoner's kit
Saving Throws: Intelligence, Wisdom
Skills: Medicine; select four skills from Computer Use, Demolitions, Engineering, History, Insight, Investigation, Nature, Perception, and Sciences

EQUIPMENT

As a medic, you receive the following equipment at 1st level.

- a one small arm $300 or less.
- a medical kit and a drug kit.
- a set of techan armor $300 or less.
- $200 in additional non-military gear (no weapons, weapon-accessories, bullets, or armor)

MEDICAL EXPLOITS

A medic gains exploits she can use to aid allies or hinder enemies. Mechanically, these are identical to spells. Exploits require both the use of your hands and appropriate materials to perform. Unlike spells, medical exploits require neither contemplation nor studying each morning; you regain the use of them each day automatically. You do not need to choose which exploits to prepare ahead of time: you can employ any exploit on the list of a level that you can use.

At 1st level, you also know two medical applications of your choice from the medical application list. These are at-will abilities you can use as long as you have the requisite materials and action to perform them. You learn additional applications of your choice at higher levels, as shown in the medical applications column of the medic table.

TARGET AVOIDANCE

Starting at 1st level, as a bonus action, you can take a Dash action. At 2nd level, as a bonus action, you can instead take a Disengage action.

ARCHETYPE

At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain one additional medical application at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This increases to three attacks at 9th level in this class and four attacks at 14th level in this class. Additionally, if you make an Attack action, for each attack roll you don't make, you gain a +1 bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn.

The medic table shows how many slots you have to use your exploits of 1st level and higher. To enact one of these exploits, you must expend a slot of the exploit's level or higher. You regain all expended exploit slots when you finish a long rest.

When you become a medic, select either your Wisdom or Intelligence as your medic ability. It is used when setting the saving throw DC for a medical application you use and when making an attack roll with one. If selecting Intelligence, the Wisdom (Medicine) skill can be replaced with Intelligence (Medicine).

Exploit save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom or Intelligence modifier

Exploit attack modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom or Intelligence modifier

KITS

Many exploits and applications require the use of either a medical kit or a drug kit. A medical kit has enough supplies for 50 actions, while the drug kit has enough for 10 actions. This is regardless of how many targets are affected by said action.

INTELLIGENT RESISTANCE

Starting at 10th level, double your proficiency bonus with all Intelligence and Wisdom saving throws.

RISK AN ANEURYSM

Starting at 13th level, instead of using your Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, you can expend them on your turn to recover a medical exploit of any level you can use. You must employ that exploit within 1 minute or it is lost. You regain one level of exploit slot for each Hit Die sacrificed, but you can only recover one slot per turn. For example, if you spend 4 Hit Dice, you can recover a 4th-level slot.

EXPANDED KNOWLEDGE

At 17th level, select two more skills from your class list to have proficiency in.

GOOD THING YOU HAVE FRIENDS

At 20th level, you gain the ability to use allies for cover. For each ally within 5 feet of you, you can increase the level of cover you have: One ally—half cover; two allies—three-quarters cover; three allies—full cover. If you are still hit with an attack, you can transfer all damage to any single adjacent ally regardless if the original attack roll can hit the ally or not. If the attack targets

THE MEDIC

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Special	Medical Applications	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1	+2	Medical Exploits, Target Avoidance	2	2	—	—	—
2	+2	Target Avoidance	2	3	—	—	—
3	+2	Archetype feature	2	3	—	—	—
4	+2	Ability Score Improvement	2	3	—	—	—
5	+3	Primary Target	3	4	1	—	—
6	+3	Fight or Flight	3	4	2	—	—
7	+3	Archetype feature	3	4	2	—	—
8	+3	Ability Score Improvement	3	4	3	—	—
9	+4	Fight or Flight	4	4	3	1	—
10	+4	Intelligent Resistance	4	4	3	2	—
11	+4	Archetype feature	4	4	3	2	—
12	+4	Ability Score Improvement	4	4	3	3	—
13	+5	Risk An Aneurism	5	4	4	3	1
14	+5	Fight or Flight	5	4	4	3	2
15	+5	Archetype feature	5	4	4	3	2
16	+5	Ability Score Improvement	5	4	4	3	3
17	+6	Expanded Knowledge	6	4	4	4	3
18	+6	Archetype feature	6	4	4	4	3
19	+6	Ability Score Improvement	6	4	4	4	3
20	+6	Good Thing You Have Friends	6	4	4	4	3

you and the ally, the ally takes both damage values, taking your damage second. The ally does not have to be willing.

MEDICAL APPLICATIONS

DEFILADE
Activation Time: 1 reaction
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

If a creature scores a critical hit against you, each ally that can see both you and the triggering enemy has advantage on attack rolls against the target until the start of its next turn.

DIAGNOSE AND CURE
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Until employed or 1 minute

You use your Medical kit on a willing creature. The target gains a bonus on its next Constitution, Strength, Wisdom, or Intelligence saving throw equal to your proficiency bonus.

DO SCIENCE TO IT
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

Before attempting a Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligent (Sciences) check, double your proficiency bonus with the roll.

EVASIVE OVERDRIVE
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: 1 round

You're able to do everything in your power to avoid getting hit. You gain a +2 bonus to AC against one creature you can see, and you don't provoke opportunity attacks from the target until the beginning of your next turn.

FIELD SHOT
Activation Time: No action
Range: Self
Components: Firearm
Duration: Instantaneous

If you use a medical exploit as your action, you can make a single ranged attack as your bonus action this same turn. You only inflict half damage on a hit with this attack.

IMPERATIVE ESCAPE
Activation Time: 1 reaction
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

If you are below half hit points and an attacker that you can see hits you with an attack, you can use your reaction to halve the attack's damage against you.

LIVE, DAMN YOU
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

You use your Medical kit on a willing creature. If the target has been reduced to 0 hit points , the target becomes stable. If above 0 hit points, the target recovers hit points equal to your proficiency bonus + 1d6. This increases to 2d6 at 10th level.

MEDICAL EXPERTISE
Activation Time: 1 reaction
Range: One ally that can hear you.
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

You are able to aid allies in pinpointing weak spots in enemies based on your own medical knowledge. You can add your Intelligence or Wisdom modifier as extra damage to a successful attack made by an ally that can hear you.

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: Firearm
Duration: Instantaneous

Use after hitting a target with a firearm. Make an exploit attack against the same target. On a hit, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

MODERN MASTER
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Use after attempting an exploit that recovers a target's hit points. The target recovers 1d4 additional hit points. This increases to 2d4 at 10th level.

OUTTHINK & OUTWIT
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

You are able to quickly ascertain your enemy's eye movements and body language and determine the best course of action. Make a ranged attack against the target. You can use Intelligence or Wisdom instead of Dexterity as your modifier for attack and damage.

WEAK SPOT
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

Use after you score a hit. The target's speed is reduced by half until the beginning of your next turn.

1st LEVEL EXPLOITS

ANATOMY EXPERT
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: Firearm
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one creature you scored a critical hit on this turn—double the amount of dice rolled for damage.

CLAMP THE ARTERY
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature. The target is healed of any damage incurred by the last hit it received since the end of your previous turn.

CORTICAL REINFORCEMENT INJECTION
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: 24 hours

Target one living creature. The target is immune to being blinded.
Advanced: At 10th level, you can target two creatures, though each one requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

DIAGNOSE AND CURE
Activation Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: 24 hours

Target one living creature suffering from disease or poison. The target has advantage on any saving throws to recover from disease or poison.

EMERGENCY PATCH
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature. The target regains hit points equal to your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier + your level.
Advanced: At 10th level, you can either increase hit points recovered to triple your Wisdom bonus or you can target two creatures instead of one.

STANOZOLOL INJECTION
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: 1 hour

Target one living creature. Four one hour, the target has advantage on Dexterity skill checks and saving throws, and +10 feet bonus to speed.
Advancement: At 10th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

2nd Level Exploits

Adrenaline Injection
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature to gain one additional action on its next turn and on his following turn. This is in addition to any actions the target already has, including bonus actions.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires either an action or a bonus action (on the same turn).

Advantageous Scleroderma Injection
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: Five minutes

Target one living creature to gain a +2 bonus to AC. This bonus increases to +3 at 14th level.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your action on your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

Angel of Death
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature reduced to 0 hit points or less in the previous round. You gain 5 + your level temporary hit points.

Medical Master
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Five minutes

Target you and one living creature OR two living creatures. The target regains hit points equal to your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom attribute modifier + your level. The target also has advantage on Constitution ability checks and saving throws for five minutes.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 4 creatures, but every two targets require an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to affect all targets this turn.

Natural Healer
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target you or one living creature. The target regains hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus + double your Wisdom attribute modifier + your level.

Advancement: At 15th level, increase to triple your proficiency bonus.

Quick Recovery
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: Medical kit
Duration: 1 round

Double your proficiency bonus to your next Intelligence or Wisdom skill check. If the check still fails, you have advantage on all saving throws until the end of your next turn.

Synthetic Steroid
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: 1 hour

Target one living creature. The target has advantage on Strength ability and skill checks as well as a +1 bonus to Strength-based attack rolls.

Advancement: At 10th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to affect both targets this turn.

Treat Patient
Activation Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

One creature recovers as many Hit Dice as twice your proficiency bonus.

Xanthine Injection
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: 1 hour

Target one living creature. For one hour, the target has advantage on Constitution ability checks and saving throws. The target also gains temporary hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus + double your Wisdom bonus.

Advancement: At 10th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

3rd Level Exploits

Analeptic Injection
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: Instantaneous/Special

Target one unconscious living creature. The target wakes up. If at 0 hit points, the target is brought to 1 hit point, wakes up, and can expend up to 2d4 hit dice to recover hit points. The target is also immune to sleep effects until you finish a long rest.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

AVERSION THERAPY
Activation Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self
Components: Firearm
Duration: Until saved or 1 minute

Target one creature you hit with a ranged weapon this turn. The target suffers a -2 penalty to AC and its speed is halved until it makes a Constitution saving throw.

EPHEDRINE PSYCHOTROPIC INJECTION
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: Five minutes

Target one living creature. For five minutes, the target automatically succeeds at all Wisdom and Intelligence saving throws. The target also gains resistance to all physical damage.

DELAY CONDITION
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature. Its fatigue level is reduced by 4.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

MINOR MEDICAL MIRACLE
Activation Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one creature that has been reduced to 0 hit points or killed in the past five minutes. The target regains hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus + double your Wisdom attribute modifier. The target can also expend up to 2d6 hit dice to recover additional hit points.

UNHEALTHY PSYCHOSTIMULANT INJECTION
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: 1 minute

Target one living creature. When making an attack action, the target may make one extra attack with any weapon it is holding. This is in addition on top of its regular action and a possible bonus action.

Advancement: At 15th level, you can target up to 2 creatures, but each requires an action: you can sacrifice your next turn in order to administer both injections this turn.

4th LEVEL EXPLOITS

EXOTIC CONCOCTION
Activation Time: 5 minutes
Range: Touch
Components: Drug kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target up to 6 creatures (which can include you). Each target gains temporary hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus + double your Wisdom attribute modifier.

Advancement: At 20th level, target gains +3d4 additional temporary hit points.

FIELD EXPERIENCE
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: None
Duration: Five minutes

Target up to 6 creatures (which can include you) . For 5 minutes, the target's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. If the target already can score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, it increases to 18, 19, or 20.

I CAN HEAR BELLS RINGING
Activation Time: 1 reaction
Range: Self
Components: None
Duration: Instantaneous

If you are targeted by an area effect, you are moved to the nearest unoccupied space outside the area (suffering no damage). You also gain a +5 bonus to AC and have advantage on Dexterity ability checks and saving throws until the end of your next turn.

MAJOR MEDICAL MIRACLE
Activation Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one living creature. The target recovers from all of the following conditions : blinded, charmed, deafened, diseased, paralyzed, poisoned, and stunned. Its fatigue level is reduced to 0 and it recovers hit points equal to double your proficiency bonus + double your Wisdom attribute modifier + your level.

PLAYING GOD
Activation Time: 5 minutes
Range: Touch
Components: Medical kit
Duration: Instantaneous

Target one ally killed in the past 30 minutes. The target returns to life with 20 hit points, and they awaken.

SNIPER

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.

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 she'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.

ONE BULLET — ONE KILL

The sniper is defined by single moments. In an instant, she turns the table, changes the course of history, and ends conflicts. She is patient and invisible until receiving the signal. In many ways, the sniper is the worst kind of romantic—one that never makes the first move. When a threat emerges, the sniper responds. With the job completed, the sniper vanishes until required again. In open combat, with proper flash suppression, the sniper surgically removes the biggest threats, crippling foes and sends enemy formations into disarray, all from the safety of cover with few aware of her position.

To be effective, the sniper must approach positions quietly and wait for an opportunity. She may only get one shot, but most often only one is required. The sniper can be considered cold in this regard, unfeeling except for the task square in front of the reticle. It may be necessary to act without remorse. At worst, the most a sniper will feel after pulling the trigger is recoil—a famous anecdote.

The sniper is defined by two features—inflicting maximum damage and imposing effects to cripple larger threats. The sniper accomplishes this from secured positions well away from the battlefield. If the sniper takes direct fire, something has gone wrong. The sniper is the best class because she operates with near immunity, striking fear into opposition without ever being put in harms way herself.

CREATING A SNIPER

There is a belief that most snipers are heartless and act without honor. You are not a paladin. Chivalry is reserved for people without guns. Why should you present yourself as a target? Why should you let your allies come to harm? Simply take out your enemies from a distance and those you count as friends will remain safe. That, to you, is honorable. You may be tasked to take a life that never knew its life was in danger. That goes along with the profession. The ultimate question is if the target was a threat. When hunting animals, such a dilemma never presents itself. Can you make the distinction?

Most snipers in the world strike from assigned positions protecting bastion walls. They protect their cities but rarely leave their posts. Stealth is no longer a priority, exchanging it for maximum stopping power. You are cut from a different cloth, as you must seek out new firing positions each day, and occasionally, be forced to fire from the hip, placing yourself in harms way.

Like other techans, you probably dipped a toe in military training. However, this is not mandatory. In truth, military snipers are relatively uncommon in the open world, replaced more often by hunters and trappers that have embraced modern technology. It is entirely possible that you lived in the shadow of bastion walls, though on the outside. A person's got eat and protect her family. At some point, you were called to venture out, why is up to you.

CLASS FEATURES

As a sniper, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per heavy level
Hit Points at 1st level: 8 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 4) + your Constitution modifier per sniper level after 1st

THE SNIPER

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Marksman Points	Battle Condition	Special
1	+2	2	1	Marksman Talent
2	+2	3	2	
3	+2	3	2	Archetype feature
4	+2	4	2	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	4	2	Marksman Talent Improvement
6	+3	5	3	—
7	+3	5	3	Archetype feature
8	+3	6	3	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	6	3	Mad Minute
10	+4	7	4	Marksman Talent Improvement
11	+4	7	4	Archetype feature
12	+4	8	4	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	8	4	Mad Minute
14	+5	9	5	—
15	+5	9	5	Archetype feature
16	+5	10	5	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	10	6	Marksman Talent Improvement
18	+6	11	6	Archetype feature
19	+6	11	6	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	12	7	Marksman Talent Improvement

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light armor
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed small arms, two-handed small arms, and all weapons with the sniper property.
Tools: All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Dexterity, Wisdom
Skills: Stealth plus two from Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Insight, Perception, and Sleight of Hand

EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment in addition to the equipment granted by your background:

- a one-handed small arm $300 or less
- a basic sniper rifle
- a set of techan armor $300 or less.
- $100 in additional gear

MARKSMAN'S TALENT

Starting at 1st level, if you hit a target 25 feet away or further with a sniper weapon, you can spend marksman points to employ one or more of the talents on the following list.

At 1st level, you start with marksman points equal to 2 + your Wisdom modifier, gaining an additional point at 2nd level and every two levels after. When you take a short or long rest, you recover any spent marksman points. Additionally, if you kill a target with a sniper weapon, you gain 2 marksman points.

The number of points you can spend per attack depends on your level, and each talent can only be used once per attack.

1st Level: You can spend 2 points per attack.
5th Level: You can spend up to 3 points per attack.
10th Level: You can spend up to 4 points per attack.
17th Level: You can spend up to 5 points per attack.
20th Level: You can spend up to 6 points per attack.

ACADEMIC KILL

Marksman Cost: 1
Use when you hit with an attack to inflict additional 1d6 damage. This increases to 2d6 at 5th level, 3d6 at 9th level, 4d6 at 13th level, and 5d6 at 17th level. You can spend 2 marksman points to double the number of additional dice damage.

ASSASSIN PSYCHOLOGY

Marksman Cost: 1
Use when you roll a natural 18, or 19 on an attack roll to make the hit a critical hit.

BOOM! HEAD SHOT!

Marksman Cost: 2
Use when you drop a creature: all Medium-sized enemies in a 5-foot radius around the target have disadvantage on attack rolls until the start of your next turn. Each enemy can only be affected once per long rest.

DUM-DUM

Marksman Cost: 1
Use when you hit with an attack: the target also suffers disadvantage on saving throws and ability checks until the beginning of your next turn.

HOLLOWPOINT

Marksman Cost: 1
Use when you score a critical hit: you roll three times the damage dice instead of two.

MAGIC BULLET

Marksman Cost: 1
Use after dropping a creature to 0 hit points with a sniper weapon: you can make a single ranged attack against one creature within 20 feet of the original target. You use no additional ammunition. You can repeat this process until you fail to drop a creature to 0 hit points, you run out of enemies in range, or you hit three creatures.

PINPOINT ACCURACY

Marksman Cost: 4
Use when you score a critical hit: the target is stunned until the beginning of your next turn.

SYSTEMIC INFLAMMATION

Marksman Cost: 3
Use when you hit a living creature: the target is poisoned for one minute (ten rounds) or until it passes a Constitution saving throw. The DC for the saving throw is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom or Dexterity modifier (your choice).

TWITCHY FINGERS
Marksman Cost: 1
Use after scoring a critical hit: make 1 additional attack with the same weapon as part of the same action against the same target.

WEAK SPOT
Marksman Cost: 2
Use when you hit with an attack: until the beginning of your next turn, all your attacks on the target have advantage.

BATTLE CONDITION
There are many disciplines when pursuing the path of a sniper. Starting at 1st level, you gain one of the following special traits. You may select another condition at 2nd, 9th, 13th, and 20th level.

ARMY CRAWL
While prone, you don't have disadvantage on ranged attack rolls made with sniper weapons.

BALLISTICS EXPERTISE
Spend 10 feet of movement, and you either switch to a one-handed small arm from a sniper weapon OR switch to a sniper weapon from a one-handed small arm.

COVERT OPERATION
Spend 30 feet of movement: you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks until the end of your turn.

DEAD EYE
If a creature 25 feet or closer scores a critical hit on you, you automatically switch to your pistol and make a ranged attack against the target.

LOW PROFILE
While prone, you gain the benefit of half cover. If already behind half-cover while prone, it counts as three-quarters cover. If behind three-quarters cover while prone, it counts as full cover.

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION
If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll with a sniper weapon, you can re-roll. You cannot use this feature if you have disadvantage.

SNAP SHOT
You can now use Marksman Talent against targets 10 feet away or further with a sniper weapon.

LEAD THE TARGET
You slow your breathing and hold the weapon steady. You have all the time in the world to make the perfect shot. Target a creature in line of sight to become your focus. You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with sniper weapons against your focus. After you select a focus, you cannot select another until you finish a short or long rest.

PENETRATION SHOT
When making a ranged attack roll with a sniper weapon against a target with cover, you treat total cover as three-quarters, three-quarters cover as half cover, and you ignore half-cover.

PERFECT TRACKER
You are quick to aim under any circumstances. You can move up to half your speed and maintain your sniper bonus (See **Equipment** for the Sniper property).

SHARPSHOOTER
As an action, you have advantage on your next attack roll with a sniper weapon. This benefit remains until you make an attack roll or move.

SHOCK & AWE
If you miss with an attack roll with a sniper weapon, the creature you attacked has disadvantage on attack rolls against you until the beginning of your next turn.

SMOOTH AS GLASS
You add 2 additional marksman points to your total. You can select this battle condition three times.

ZERO YOUR WEAPON
Spend a bonus action to double both the normal and long ranges of any sniper weapon you wield.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype. The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain one additional battle condition at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

MAD MINUTE
Starting at 9th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. If you hit with your first attack, you can sacrifice your second attack, gain 1 marksman point, and apply it immediately to your hit.

At 13th level, you can attack three times whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. If you hit with your first or second attack, you can sacrifice an additional attack, gain 1 marksman point, and apply it immediately to your hit.

TECHIE

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.

The general-use operative, the jack-of-all-trades—the techan group will be hard pressed to survive without their techie. She is essential as her group ventures deeper and deeper into the fantasy world. It's up to the techie to not only maintain technology but also build it on the fly. There is no convenient shack in a passing village where one could resupply; the techie must use ingenuity and available salvage in order to improvise solutions to the dilemmas plaguing users of technology in a world of magic. Just as the medic can perform miracles in bringing life to the near-dead, the techie can create something functional from a field of garbage. Where most people see ruins of old man, the techie finds a hoard of unexploited parts.

The techie doesn't specialize in one talent but many. She is occasionally called on to be the mechanic, the scientist, and the diplomat—as understanding how technology survives in magic requires some comprehension on how this new world works. The techie knows more about the regions and monsters of the world than any other. Of all the members of a techan group, the techie is probably the only one that could survive on her own.

YOU PICKED A SIDE

Ultimately, the techie has made her choice: she prefers air conditioning, the internet, and machines that automatically wash dishes. Techies 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 techie 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 techie must constantly tinker with devices—restoring an item to its original state only causes it to break again faster next time.

Techies play a game of bluff against the EDF, "tricking" devices into failing in different and more manageable ways each time. This in turn lends itself to experimental modifications, so a good techie is also a consummate inventor.

There is no room for specialization in open echa. A techie must be able to field-strip and rebuild everything from a handgun to an APC. She 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 techie the equal in knowledge of any dedicated echa researcher, for they have hands-on experience that the mere academic can never hope to attain.

The techie is the best class because she gets the most toys. She is always invaluable because without her, a techan party wouldn't survive very long in the magical wilderness.

CREATING A TECHIE

You found the outside world fascinating, but are not one to forget the damage it has done to your species and their legacy. The progress of man has faltered, and you strive to get it back.

But to destroy a thing, you must understand a thing. You refuse to turn a blind eye to that world, for naiveté is a sure path to death. Just shooting stuff that doesn't conform is a sign of archaic military monsters. True survival deals with mankind's unique ability to adapt, to understand the ways and flaws of a system. As an expert in this world, you know how to survive in it, but more importantly, you know how to survive in it without magic.

By creating a techie, you have embraced technology; you have a natural fascination for it. You build, you tinker, and occasionally destroy in order to build and tinker again. You should always be on the lookout for resources to exploit. To you, the greatest treasure would not be in some dragon's hoard, but underneath the decaying bones of one of mankind's dead cities.

You can also modify your weapons to strike harder, further, and more often. That's also kind of a big one.

CLASS FEATURES

As a techie, you gain the following class features.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d8 per techie level
Hit Points at 1st level: 8 + your Constitution modifier
Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per techie level after 1st

PROFICIENCIES

Armor: Light and medium armor
Weapons: Simple weapons, one-handed small arms
Tools: Tinker's tools, All ground vehicles and aircraft
Saving Throws: Intelligence, Wisdom
Skills: Engineering; select four skills from Computer Use, Demolitions, History, Insight, Investigation, Medicine, Nature, Perception, and Sciences

EQUIPMENT

As a techie, you receive the following equipment at 1st level.

- a TL0 engineering kit
- a small arm $300 or less.
- a set of techan armor $300 or less.
- $200 in additional non-military gear (no weapons, weapon-accessories, bullets, or armor)

TECH POINTS

At 1st level you get tech points (TP) which can be used to boost abilities and perform exploits representative of your training. At 1st level, you start with 3 points, which increases by 1 every additional level. You also gain a bonus to your tech points equal to your Intelligence modifier. Your available tech points reset after you finish a long rest.

SHINY RED BUTTON

At 1st level, you can put a button on your firearm. You only need eight hours of work to put the button on a new firearm but only you can press it without breaking the weapon. The button's function is determined by your choices from the options that follow. You can add as many functions into your button as you have available tech points, but each modification can only be added once per configuration unless stated otherwise. If you don't alter the function outside of a battle, your last configuration is used (if you have the available points).

Pressing the button takes no action. When you press the button, you spend the tech points corresponding with each of the functions added. If you don't have enough tech points when you press the button, the entire configuration does not function. Once pressed, its effects last five minutes.

You can own multiple weapons with different configurations, as the points are not spent unless the button is

THE TECHIE

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Tech Points	Special
1	+2	3	Shiny Red Button, Widget Bag, Tech Points, Tech Savant
2	+2	4	Tech Savant
3	+2	5	Archetype feature
4	+2	6	Ability Score Improvement
5	+3	7	Tech Savant
6	+3	8	Pioneer
7	+3	9	Archetype feature
8	+3	10	Ability Score Improvement
9	+4	11	Tech Savant
10	+4	12	McGuy Something
11	+4	13	Archetype feature
12	+4	14	Ability Score Improvement
13	+5	15	Tech Savant
14	+5	16	Pioneer
15	+5	17	Archetype feature
16	+5	18	Ability Score Improvement
17	+6	19	Tech Savant
18	+6	20	Archetype feature
19	+6	21	Ability Score Improvement
20	+6	22	Tech Savant

pushed, though pushing multiple buttons during a single battle would be rather wasteful. Changing a configuration takes five minutes, though you can attempt to change a configuration as an action with a DC15 Intelligence (Engineering) check (you cannot change a configuration while one is in effect without voiding the invested tech points of the previous configuration).

Additionally, you can attempt to regain a lost tech point with a DC5 Intelligence (Engineering) check. Each check takes 1 minute, and successive checks increase the DC by 5 (DC10, DC15, etc). The DC increases regardless if you succeed in recovering the point or not, and the check reverts back to DC5 when you take a long rest.

CHARGE SHOT
Cost: 1 point
Each time you hit a target your size or smaller, you shove it 5 feet. If the target cannot be shoved, it takes 1d6 additional damage. You can add this modification twice to push the target 10 feet and increase to 2d6.

EXPLOSIVE ROUND
Cost: 1 point
When you score a critical hit, you roll all damage dice thrice instead of twice.

FLOATING RETICLE
Cost: 2 points
You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

HYDROSHOCK
Cost: 2 points
You deal additional damage with a hit equal to the difference between your attack roll and the target's AC. Add this modification a second time to inflict 1d6 additional damage. This increases to 2d6 at 9th level, 3d6 at 13th level, and 4d6 at 17th level.

INCREASED CALIBER
Cost: 2 points
Your weapon's damage die increases by one step (1d4 > 1d6 > 1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). This stacks with any other effects that increases damage die size. You can add this modification twice.

INCREASED RATE OF FIRE
Cost: 2 points
You double the rate of fire of your weapon (10 for auto, 20 for auto-heavy). When using burst fire, you add double your proficiency bonus to the save DC and you always use the upscaled damage dice. If targeting single creatures, your weapon's damage die increases by one step (1d4 > 1d6 > 1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). This stacks with any other effect that increases damage die size.

INCREASED ROUND VELOCITY
Cost: 1 point
When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die, you can reroll. You must accept the new roll, even if it is a 1 or a 2.

MUZZLE FLASH/BANG
Cost: 2 points
Any creature you hit within 20 feet of you has disadvantage on attack rolls against you until the beginning of your next turn.

POP-UP EYEPIECE
Cost: 1 point
If you roll a 2 or 3 on your attack roll, you can re-roll. You must accept the second result.

RAPID LOADER
Cost: 4 points
You gain one additional attack whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. You can add this modification up to two times. This stacks with Pioneer.

SMART TRACKING
Cost: 6 points
You have advantage on attack rolls.

TARGET SCANNING
Cost: 3 points
Your weapon scores a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

TECH SAVANT
Starting at 1st level, you gain one of the following traits that reflect the uniqueness of your talents. Some require the spending of tech points. You gain additional tech savant traits at 2nd level, 5th level, 10th level, 13th level, 17th level, and 20th level.

CONSTANT ADJUSTMENT
You have advantage on disruption saving throws, and you can make disruption saving throws at the start of your turn as well as at the end. Each ally in line of sight gains a +2 bonus to disruption saving throws.

If you select this trait a second time, you can spend one tech point as a reaction to recover your weapon instantly.

ECONOMICAL PLATING
You gain a +1 bonus to AC. Additionally, you can temporarily increase your armor's potential, spending one tech point to increase your AC an additional +1 for five minutes.

LIKE MACHINES
Your maximum tech points increase by 2. You can select this trait up to four times.

PRIORITIES
Instead of using your Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, you can use expend them to regain tech points. For each Hit Die spent, you recover 2 tech points. You cannot have more tech points than your maximum.

FRIGGIN' LOVE SCIENCE
Spend a tech point and you have advantage on Intelligence (Science) or Intelligence (Engineer) checks until the end of your next turn.

If you select this trait a second time, you can spend one tech point to set your next d20 roll Intelligence (Science) or Intelligence (Engineer) check to a natural 20.

IMMEDIACY
Spend one tech point to gain an additional action on this turn. This action can be used to take any action except an Attack action.

SCIENTIST, NOT A SOLDIER
When you use the Disengage action, you can also make a single ranged attack as part of the same action. You inflict half damage on a hit.

MIDAS TOUCH
While you are wielding a firearm, its damage die increases by one step (1d4 > 1d6 > 1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > d28 > 2d10). You can select this trait twice, and its effects stack with others that increase damage die size.

FAILSAFE
If someone other than you attempts to use your weapon with a *shiny red button* on it (regardless if they press it), the weapon explodes, inflicting a critical hit of weapon damage on the unlucky handler and stunning them until the beginning of your next turn. The weapon is now broken (but can be fixed normally).

SHRAPNEL MODIFICATION
You can now spend tech points in combat for an immediate boost to the weapon with your *shiny red button* while it is active . Spend 1 tech point after you hit, and the target is vulnerable to ally attacks until the beginning of your next turn.

WIDGET BAG
Starting at 1st level, you gain a widget bag. It contains random spare parts, useful materials, and salvage worth 200 uc. During a short or long rest, you can scavenge for components: in most areas you will be able to recover 10 uc worth during a short rest and 20 uc worth during a long rest, but the GM may award more or less (or none at all) at her discretion.

ARCHETYPE
At 3rd level, you choose a techan archetype . The archetype you choose grants you features at 3rd level and again at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level.

Alternatively , you can forego your archetype selection at 3rd level and gain one additional tech savant exploit at each of the above levels.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT
When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

PIONEER
Starting at 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This increases to three attacks at 14th level in this class.

McGUY SOMETHING
Starting at 12th level, you are able to construct useful items or tools to accomplish something generally not allowed given the available resources available. Either the GM can supply a random assortment of items you can use to create a tool or you can make a case for common items one is likely to find in order to solve an immediate crisis. This may involve searching an area or assuming certain items are available; if your widget bag currently contains at least 20 uc worth of parts, you can always be assumed to have a variety of small useful items such as screws, nails, paper clips, duct tape, and chewing gum. If the GM is convinced by your argument, make an Engineering skill check to see if the improvised gadget or solution works. When you use this trait, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

TECHAN ARCHETYPES

Unlike fantasy classes, all techan classes have the same set levels for archetypes, at 3rd, 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level. Any techan character who meets the archetype's requirements can choose that archetype (although some classes will synergize better than others, as noted with the archetype). Once you select an archetype, you cannot change it.

If you choose to multiclass into two or more techan classes, you cannot choose the same archetype twice. Unlike fantasy archetypes, several techan archetypes offer additional proficiencies upon selection. You gain these when you choosing the archetype at 3rd level.

ANGEL SNIPER

The Angel outer wall is one of the greatest works of construction in the known world. A monstrous barricade surrounds the city, accented by defense towers able to see as far off as Antikari. Along with gatehouses, flanking towers prevent even the largest armies from an easy assault. The wall is not solid, being filled with an intricate network of battlements and sniper holes. 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. As an Angel soldier, you are trained not only to deliver long range fire, but to do so to several targets. When boggs or puggs emerge to attack, they do so in overwhelming numbers. There is no time for aiming. You must take out as many of those little bastards as you can before they get too close to your city.

Angel snipers surpass all others on Earth, even those from the xenophobic city of Mann, another bastion boasting a defensive wall. Most Angel snipers carry out their tours inside or on the walls of the bastion, but almost every single mission outside the walls—whether in a shuttle or in a scrambler—carries at least one sniper with them. Rival bastions have copied their discipline and training, but the results have never been exactly duplicated.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the grounder, infiltrator, medic, and sniper classes.

PROFICIENCIES

You gain proficiency with all sniper weapons.

AUTOMATIC REFLEXES

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, after you hit a creature 25 feet away or farther on your turn with a ranged weapon, you can make a single ranged attack as part of the same action against any other target in range. If you hit a target with this attack, you cannot use automatic reflexes again until you take a short or long rest.

You gain an additional use at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level before needing to take a short or long rest.

WASTE OF SKILL
Starting at 7th level, if you score a critical hit, you may choose inflict normal damage and instead make single ranged attack against any target in range as part of the same action. You cannot score a critical hit with this additional attack. You can only use this feature once per turn.

THE SECOND SHOOTER
Starting at 11th level, after making a ranged attack against a creature 50 feet away or farther, you can move up to 15 feet of your speed and not be counted as having moved.

SPLINTERING SHRAPNEL
Starting at 15th level, if you drop a creature 50 feet away or farther to 0 hit points, each creature within 5 feet of the target takes damage equal to your attack ability modifier.

PERFECT SHOT PLACEMENT
Starting at 18th level, you are able to make multiple shots without a significant reduction in accuracy. If you drop a creature 50 feet away or farther to 0 hit points, you can make another single ranged attack with the same weapon as part of the same action. You can only use this feature once per turn.

BANNER HEAD
You may not be the leader, but everyone across the battlefield thinks you are. You stand taller and bolder than the rest. Your stare can lock upon an enemy from across a field. Your foes know well and truly if you have them in your crosshairs. You have no concept of subtlety and are known to do foolish acts in the cause of intimidation. Your allies may object but often times, these attempts work. You can make even the most fearless monsters flinch from your stare.

You are not a pretty individual. You are not one for arts and crafts. You have no hobbies. You have one job. You shoot people twice in the chest and once in the head. You do it for no other reason than the objective you have been asked to carry out. Your loyalty runs only to the men and women next to you. To them, you're the champion hero. To your foes, you are the one target they need to take down. You want them to think that. What good is war if there is no one to shoot at?

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, gunslinger, heavy, and marshal classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You gain proficiency in any two ranged weapons of your choice.

FLEETING ADVERSARY
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, select one creature within 50 feet and line of sight to you after rolling initiative. The target is your fleeting adversary. You gain a +1 bonus to attack your fleeting adversary, and your fleeting adversary suffers disadvantage on attack rolls that don't not include you as a target. This effect ends if you drop to 0 hit points, the creature drops to 0 hit points, you move beyond 50 feet, or line of sight is broken between you and your target. Once you select a fleeting adversary, you cannot select another until you roll for initiative again.

THE WAR POSE
Starting at 7th level, you can take a -1 penalty to attack rolls for each weapon you wield to wield a two-handed small arm with one hand. The weapon only counts as a one-handed small arms for purposes of how many hands you use to wield it, and for abilities and feats.

ADVERSARIAL RAGE
Starting at 11th level, you deal +2 damage against your fleeting adversary (+4 at 15th level, +8 at 18th level): this bonus ends if the target is no longer your fleeting adversary. Once you use this feature, you cannot select another until you finish a long rest.

REMEMBER ME?
Starting at 15th level, a few well-placed shots can bring an enemy's attention back around to you. If your fleeting adversary attacks an ally, you can make a single ranged attack against it as a reaction.

UNEXPECTED RESPONSE
Starting at 18th level, level, until your fleeting adversary is reduced to 0 hit points, each time it hits you, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against it. This bonus is cumulative up to +3 but is lost if you attack any creature other than your fleeting adversary or you score a hit.

BRAWLER
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."

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. This is seen most clearly in their national sport, which superficially resembles rugby in much the same way that war superficially resembles chess. Every guild maintains its own 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. 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 has also been known to lease out trainers to various allies, including mercenary companies and bastions like Angel.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the gunslinger, marshal, and martial artist classes.

PROFICIENCIES

You have proficiency with all simple melee weapons and with unarmed strikes.

BORN IN THE MINES

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can use both hands when grappling a target your size or smaller to have advantage on all rolls related to the grapple.

HEAD-BUTT

Starting at 7th level, while grappling a creature your size or smaller, you can inflict 1d6 damage per level on the target as a bonus action. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you take a short rest or long rest.

HEAD SLAM

Starting at 11th level, if you have one grappled creature in each hand, you can use a bonus action and make an unarmed melee attack against each target. A hit deals 2d6 + your Strength modifier damage to each target.

BEAR HUG
Starting at 15th level, when grappling a target your size or smaller with two hands, you may attempt a bear hug. Make an unarmed strike as your action (or one of your attacks). A hit inflicts 2d6 + your Strength modifier damage.

NECK SNAP
Starting at 18th level, if you make an unarmed strike against a target you are grappling, you score a critical hit on a natural roll of 19 or 20.

BROTHER OF BLOOD
On the battlefield, every ally is a brother. You are a member of a team and you've all worked together long enough to understand each other's patterns. You know when one is hurt, regardless of where on the battlefield. You would never take risks that will endanger another brother's life. You would never step out of formation; never leave a brother's side. They must depend on you as you depend on them. If one of your own falls, nothing short of god's finger on the battlefield will stop you from carrying your injured out of combat.

Those in the fantasy world think nothing of teamwork. They've their own little places staked out in the combat theatre. Good for them. They probably met in a tavern yesterday. As for you and your team, you are perfectly tuned machine that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, marshal, medic, and sniper classes.

Note: This archetype's abilities are useless unless at least one other party member has taken the same archetype. Be sure to discuss with your group before selecting this archetype.

PROFICIENCIES
You are proficient with one weapon and one armor (except exo-armor) another brother in blood is proficient in. If you both choose this archetype at the same time, you can both choose new pieces of equipment, as long as you both choose the same pieces.

MORE LIKE FAMILY
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, if a creature scores a critical hit on an allied brother of blood, you can make a single ranged attack against the attacker as a reaction.

ALLIED SUPPORT
Starting at 7th level, you can use a bonus action and target one allied brother of blood in line of sight. The targeted brother of blood gains an action that must be used before the end of your turn. This does not count as a reaction for the ally. Each brother of blood can benefit from Allied Support only once per round. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. You gain one additional use of Allied Support at 11th, 15th level, and 18th level.

ARMY OF TWO
Starting at 11th level, you grant a +3 bonus to damage rolls to each brother of blood within 10 feet of you (cumulative up to +6). Remember that they will be granting you this same bonus.

BETTER REFLEXES
Starting at 15th level, you can use the Help action on another allied brother of blood as a bonus action.

TEAM EFFORT
All members of the team synchronize their actions to operate as one organism. Starting at 18th level, after rolling for initiative, you and all allied brothers of blood act on the highest initiative among you. You all can decide which order you act in.

FIELD MACHINIST
You have a niche. Without you, the others don't amount to much more than a bunch of poorly equipped primitives with clubs. As a specialist in the field, you are the most experienced in echa when dealing with disruption. You are a devout follower of the technological supremacy of man and are probably the most hardline defender of the old ways.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the gunslinger, medic, and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You gain proficiency with Intelligence (Engineering).

ARTISAN OF GEARS
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain a bonus to your Intelligence (Engineering) skill equal to half your proficiency bonus. At 15th level, you instead add double your proficiency bonus to your Intelligence (Engineering) checks.

KIT MASTERY
Starting at 7th level, you treat all tool kits as one tech level higher.

FRANTIC REPAIR
Starting at 11th level, you can attempt to repair broken items as an action. Additionally, your progress in crafting any technology is doubled.

COVERED IN GREASE
Starting at 15th level, all technology you build costs 15% less (and thus takes 15% less time, round down).

PURE ENGINEER
Starting at 18th level, you can set an Intelligence (Engineering) check you made to a natural 20. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. Additionally, if you roll a natural 1, re-roll until the result is anything except a natural 1.

FIELD MEDIC
You specialize in the treatment of the injured during combat situations. You know when to keep your head low, but more importantly, when to rise in defiance to protect those under your care. You might have been a doctor back home and found a calling out in the wilderness. If so, your allies probably wonder why you've chosen this path.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the marshal, martial artist, medic and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with Wisdom (Medicine).

A TRUE HEALER
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain a bonus to your Wisdom (Medicine) skill equal to half your proficiency bonus. At 11th level, you instead add double your proficiency bonus to your Wisdom (Medicine) checks.

PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF
Starting at 7th level, once per turn, you can use a bonus action to recover hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier + your level. Once you have used this feature three times, you must complete a short or a long rest before you can use it again.

RACE TO THE FALLEN
Starting at 11th level, you can use the Disengage action without taking an action if you move directly towards an ally on that same turn.

IN THE PRESENCE
Starting at 15th level, every ally within 5 feet of you can take a bonus action to recover as many hit points as your proficiency bonus. You can use your action to doubles this hit point recovery until the beginning of your next turn.

NO LONGER CIVILIZED
If an ally succumbs to his or her injuries, you can no longer be a healer. You must be a protector. Starting at 18th level, if an ally in line of sight is reduced to 0 hit points, you have advantage on attack rolls until you hit, and gain a bonus to damage with your next hit equal to your Wisdom score until the ally is at 1 hit point or higher.

GRANDMASTER
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.

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, similar styles of unarmed combat emerged in 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.

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 adventurers 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 grandmaster in combat. Even enemies matching their skills in a fair duel will garner respect.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, gunslinger, and martial artist classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with all simple melee weapons.

MARTIAL ART DISCIPLINE
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you can select a specific martial art discipline. A discipline can be activated on your turn as a bonus action. Once activated, you gain the benefits of this discipline for five minutes. Once you use a martial art discipline, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest. At 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level, you can either select a new discipline or gain one additional use of a prior selected discipline before the need of a long rest. If you select the same discipline three times (they need not be at successive levels), you unlock an additional benefit. You can only have one discipline in effect at a time.

Capoeira: Resembling a dance more than a martial art, those specialized in capoeira are constantly in motion, attempting to find an opening in an opponent in whichever way possible. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- You can use the Disengage action as a bonus action.
- You gain a +5 bonus to speed.
- You have advantage on all Dexterity saving throws.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your bonus to speed increases to +10.

Drunken Boxing: In your enemy's eyes, you just appear to stumble around, luring your enemies in a false hope of an easy victory. The more chaotic you look, the deadlier you are. You must be inebriated to activate this discipline, and after doing so, gain the following bonuses:

- You gain temporary hit points equal to twice your level.
- You do not inflict double dice damage when scoring a critical hit. Instead, you gain two additional unarmed melee attacks as part of the same action. There is no limit on the number of additional attacks you can gain this way in a turn.
- Each time a creature misses, your AC increases by +1 (max +3); if a creature misses you at your max AC bonus, this bonus reverts to 0 and you gain an

unarmed melee attack as a reaction against the triggering target.

- After you select this discipline a third time, you gain three additional unarmed attacks instead of a critical hit instead of two.

Eagle Claw: You know how to find weak spots in your enemy. You are often seen as being patient, waiting for a moment for a decisive strike. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- If you hit a creature, you can instead inflict half damage and grapple the target.
- At the beginning of your turn, any enemy you are grappling suffers damage equal to your Strength or Dexterity modifier.
- Any time you inflict a critical hit on a creature, the target suffers half your hit damage at the beginning of its turn.
- After you select this discipline a third time, any enemy you are grappling at the beginning of your turn suffers damage equal to your Strength modifier plus your Dexterity modifier.

Karate: Your strength comes from your empty hand—the origin of the word. This discipline is extremely popular given the simplicity of its foundation. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- Use an action to focus your discipline: until the end of your next turn, you have advantage on attack rolls.
- You can spend 30 feet of movement to gain a +1 bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn.
- Use an action to make a single kick attack. This is an unarmed attack that inflicts 1d10 + Strength modifier damage. You gain a +7 damage bonus for each additional attack you would normally make with an Attack action.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your kick attack inflicts 2d6 damage instead of 1d10, and your AC bonus increases to +2.

Iron Palm: You stopped splitting boards and bricks and moved up to bones. Your opponents will fear your strikes. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- Double your attribute modifier to damage.
- If you roll a critical hit with an unarmed attack, you maximize one of your damage dice.
- If you attempt to damage obstacles like doors or tables, double all damage dice.
- After you select this discipline a third time, maximize all damage dice with a critical hit, and your triple all damage dice against obstacles.

Iron Shirt: The only way to survive some encounters is to not worry about how many times you are hurt. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- You have resistance to all slashing and bludgeoning damage.
- You can spend Hit Dice to recover hit points as if taking a short rest while in the middle of a fight. You can use any number of Hit Dice up to half your level as an action.
- If you suffer more than 1/5 your total hit points in damage before the beginning of your turn, you have advantage on your next attack roll.
- After you select this discipline a third time, you gain resistance to piercing damage as well.

Long Fist: An aggressive style, you push forward to your enemy, hoping a strong offense will discourage counter attacks. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- Double your attribute modifier to damage.
- Your unarmed attacks and attacks with a light melee weapon gain the Reach property.
- If you hit a creature with an opportunity attack, you disengage from all other creatures and move within 5 feet of that target.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your reach increases to 10 feet for the purposes of opportunity attacks.

Monkey Kung-Fu: Your bizarre acrobatic maneuvers involve grabs, tumbles, and attacks, which more disorientate your opponents than damage them. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- Each time you hit a creature with an unarmed attack, you gain a +1 bonus to AC; this effect is cumulative up to +4 with each successive hit, but is lost if you miss the target, do not attack the target by the end of your next turn, or attack another creature.
- When you activate this discipline, set aside four "monkey points". You can use a monkey point to (a) knock a creature prone as a reaction to the target missing on a melee attack against you; (b) automatically pass a Dexterity saving throw; (c) take only half damage from an enemy attack, or (d) double your proficiency bonus and gain advantage on your next Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Unused points are lost when the discipline expires.
- After you select this discipline a third time, you gain four additional monkey points.

Muay Thai: A variation of kickboxing, there is not a limb you possess that is not used in direct physical attacks. You are a stand-up fighter with a huge repertoire of attacks. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- Instead of a simple unarmed attack, you must select which attacks you wish to make. The damage dice listed cannot be adjusted by any other abilities.
  Punch: Damage—1d2; make two punch attacks in place of one normal attack you would normally make (max 2 uses per Attack action); you must hit with both attacks to increase your Martial Artist chain bonus tier.
  Elbow: Damage—1d8; if you use an elbow once as part of an Attack action, roll damage dice twice and take the higher value.
  Jump Kick: Damage—1d10; you must move at least 10 feet towards your target before making this attack.
  Roundhouse Kick: Damage—2d8; you have disadvantage on the attack.
  Knee: Damage—1d6; and you can shove the target 5 feet. If the target hits an obstacle, it takes +2 damage.
- After you select this discipline a third time, if you hit a creature three times or more with an Attack action, the target has disadvantage on attacks against you until the beginning of your next turn.

Praying Mantis: You carry a powerful stance, and emphasize your aggression through rapid and coordinated hand movements that both distract the enemy while delivering powerful blows which cripple one's enemy. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:

- You gain a +1 bonus to AC.
- If an enemy misses on a melee attack against you, you can make a single melee attack against that

target as a reaction—on a hit, you inflict half damage. If you score a critical hit, the target has disadvantage on its next melee attack against you.
- You have advantage against attempts to move you against your will.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your AC bonus increases to +2.

Snake Style: Your strikes are light, but rapid, connecting numerous times and at numerous places against your opponent. Simultaneously, your fluid movements make you a difficult target. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:
- At the beginning of your turn, select one creature you can see to gain a +1 bonus to AC against until the beginning of your next turn.
- Once per turn, if you roll a 1 on any of your damage die, you gain an additional melee attack against the same target as part of that action. If you roll multiple damage dice with a hit, all dice must roll a 1.
- While you are prone, creatures don't have advantage on you while and you don't have disadvantage on them.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your AC bonus increases to +2.

Tai Chi: You are able to direct enemy aggression into a weakness. The angrier the opponent, the more energy you can direct back. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:
- If a creature's melee attack roll against you misses, the difference between the attack result and your AC becomes a damage bonus on your next melee attack. This attack must be made on your next turn against the target that missed you, and if you miss, the damage bonus is lost.
- If a creature's melee attack roll against you is a natural 1, you can knock the target prone and make a melee attack as a reaction.
- After you select this discipline a third time, you knock the target prone and make a melee attack as a reaction if your enemy rolls a natural 1 or 2.

Taekwondo: More defined by its powerful leg movements rather than hand strikes, your opponents should always keep their eyes on your feet. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:
- If you are not grappled or your legs otherwise restrained , your unarmed attacks increase their damage die by one step (1d4 > 1d6 > 1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10).
- If you move at least 20 feet towards a creature and make an unarmed (kick) attack as your Attack action, you have advantage on the attack.
- Once per discipline activation, if you score a critical hit against a target your size or smaller, you inflict maximum damage.
- After you select this discipline a third time, you can inflict maximum damage with a critical hit twice per activation.

Tiger Claw: You adore getting close, real close. Getting within your enemy's reach, you hope to prevent a strong counterattack. And you kick too. After activating, you gain the following bonuses:
- You gain a +5 bonus to speed.
- You can spend 20 feet of movement and move to occupy the same space as your opponent—you no longer occupy a space around said opponent and allies can attack through you. Any target occupying your space cannot use the Disengage action.
- If you hit a target with an unarmed attack, you can use a bonus action to inflict additional claw (slashing) damage equal to your attack modifer. This damage is not part of the same attack action and thus is not multiplied with a critical hit.
- After you select this discipline a third time, your bonus to speed increases to +10.

GUN DANCER

Residents of York cope with echan encroachment daily. The natives watch, warily or willingly, as travelers walk along the main avenue from the west gates to the docks. While the income from the docks and immigrants force even the least open-minded citizens to tolerate this traffic, York continuously deals with racial violence between the techan population and outsiders, be it directed inward or outward.

The military and police are taught early on that most of their weapons will break down or be ineffective against most forces attacking their city. With training from those skilled in echan lore, the York military developed a system of analyzing enemies and determining the most sensitive place to strike with the most damage.

"Gun dancer" is a slang term attached to those individuals exhibiting remarkable skill in this martial art. There is no formal academy or dojo where one acquires the title: it is acquired through the school of hard knocks, its warriors emerging with a prowess exceeding the others—a natural grasp of the skills, as if never needing to be taught.

You have been given such a moniker. You are able to examine a target in an eye blink and determine the perfect point at which to inflict the greatest harm. In addition, you have developed a harmony with the area around you, always analyzing your surroundings for the best cover and field of fire. This allows you to avoid hits while still maintaining your concentration on the target. You rarely remain still in combat, constantly moving from cover to cover, always with a vital enemy weakness firmly locked in your crosshairs.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the gunslinger, martial artist, medic, and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES

You have proficiency with one-handed small arms.

SPASTIC SHOT

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, before the end of your Attack action, roll a second d20: on a roll of 16, 17 or 18, you gain one extra ranged attack as a part of the same action, and on a roll of 19 or 20, you gain two extra ranged attacks.

FASTER THAN EYES CAN SEE

At 7th level, you can reload a single one-handed small arm taking no action. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you take a short rest or long rest. You also gain a +2 bonus to initiative.

COWBOY KEMBO

Starting at 11th level, if you score a critical hit with a ranged attack gained from spastic shot, you one extra attack (max 4 extra attacks).

MAYHEM SONATA

At 15th level, you are able to perform a ballet of destruction. Your spastic shot range increases to 14-17 for one extra attack, and 18-20 for two extra attacks.

GUN WALTZ

At 18th level, if you gain at least two additional attacks with spastic shot, you also gain a +1 bonus to AC and +5 foot bonus to your speed until the end of your next turn (not cumulative).

INFANTRY SUPPORT SPECIALIST

You are not placed on this world to lead. You support those that have earned your loyalty. You are an infantry support specialist. You carry the largest weapons and know how to employ them effectively without endangering the lives of your allies.

Your only weakness is your speed. Being the heaviest hitter has also often made you the slowest. Your abilities are based upon lying down heavy fire and to prevent the approach of invading forces.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the grounder, heavy, marshal, and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES

You have proficiency with simple melee weapons, all small arms, heavy weapons, super heavy weapons, and two specialty weapons of your choice.

WEAPONS PLATFORM

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, spend 30 feet of movement on your turn to gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with auto or auto-heavy weapons until the start of your next turn.

FOCUSED BARRAGE

Starting at 7th level, as an action, if using an auto or auto -heavy weapon, you can target a single creature with a barrage. The DC of the Dexterity save to resist your attack is 8 + your attack ability modifier + your proficiency bonus + any weapon bonus. A target takes double dice of your weapon damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LAWNMOWER BARRAGE

Starting at 11th level, you can move 5 feet without incurring attack penalties with two-handed small arms and heavy weapons (but not super heavy weapons). At 11th level, you can plant a super heavy weapon as a bonus action.

THE MEAN ONE

Starting at 15th level, all opponents within 20 feet of you suffer disadvantage on any attack that doesn't include you, and you gain a +5 bonus to damage rolls with ranged weapons against them.

LET'S ROCK!

Starting at 18th level, you can use an action to make a single ranged attack against each enemy in range you can see. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. If no targets are hit by this action, you regain the use of this feature.

MACHINE OF WAR

There are some that accuse you of being a warmonger. This may be true but the fact is that there will always be a war somewhere. Your nation or your pocket-book will always be threatened. You have found a niche and fill it well. You may even acknowledge that this journey is only taken on by someone psychotic. Most heroes are insane anyway. At least you're aware of how close you are to losing it. If there was no war, you would be the type picking fights in bars, eventually committing suicide with the very weapon you used to dispatch your foes.

It's a great time to be alive. In this world, there is always a war, always an evil, always an opponent. You spend your life hunting and destroying monsters that obsess over leaving a scar upon planet and people as proof they existed. Medals are for the weak. All you require is a reliable weapon, an enemy, and finger to point the way. Morality and motivation are only convenient crutches you're happy to use when the need arises. You sometimes wonder if you're a good person or just thankfully on the right side. You take the actions you do as proof of your ethics. Save the innocent or kill the bad guy. Regardless of your response, your allies are thankful you're on their side.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the grounder, gunslinger, martial artist classes.

ADRENALINE RUSH

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, each time you make an attack against a creature within 30 feet of you, you regain 1 hit point of damage. For every ten hit points recovered this way, you gain one additional attack with your next Attack action.

GLAZED LOOK

Starting at 7th level, if you are reduced to 0 hit points by a non-critical hit, you automatically use and roll a Hit Die as a reaction, but only regain half the result (round up).

YOU WANT SOME OF THIS?

Starting at 11th level, you can allow enemies to have advantage on you until the beginning of your next turn. Until the beginning of your next turn, you have advantage on attack rolls and regain 2 hit points instead of 1 with Adrenaline Rush.

RISKY MANEUVER

Starting at 15th level, if you have less than 15 hit points, double your proficiency bonus on attack rolls.

ULTIMATE BADASS

Starting at 18th level, when your hit points are reduced to half your total hit point value or less, you gain a bonus to damage equal to half your Constitution bonus. When your hit points are reduced to one-quarter your total hit value or less, this bonus increases to your full Constitution bonus.

MAN-AT-ARMS

You are a professional soldier. You've been so since the moment you picked up a weapon. The only thing you can depend on is your firearm. By the end of the day, it is the most reliable friend you have. Having ventured into this wasteland these outsiders call home, you dedicate most of your time to ensuring your weapon does not break or jam. War is all you know, and you're good at it.

You track your line to the honored knights of a previous age, when they used swords and shield crests to display their honor: now you have chevrons of rank and a properly oiled firearm. Outside the bastion border, the old ways have returned. You can also almost respect those embracing the old code. You could even see yourself riding a horse as a knight—a trusted and proven sword in your hand. But that wasn't your path. You were born in a bastion, so your sword is your gun, and those with blades are your enemy. Such is the way of war.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, gunslinger, heavy, and sniper classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with all armor (except exo-armor), small arms, heavy weapons, super heavy weapons, and any two specialty weapons of your choice.

THIS IS MY RIFLE
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, select one specific firearm: you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and also do not suffer disadvantage on attack rolls when prone with your chosen weapon.

This is your chosen weapon for all man-at-arms abilities. When reaching a new level, you may select a different weapon.

MY WEAPON IS MY BEST FRIEND
Starting at 7th level, you can change a clip, magazine, or a cell on your chosen weapon without taking an action. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. You also have advantage on disruption saves for that weapon.

FIRE MY WEAPON TRUE
At 11th level, once per turn if you have advantage on your ranged attack roll with your chosen weapon and both rolls hit, you are considered to have hit twice (using additional ammunition accordingly) .

WE ARE MASTERS OF OUR ENEMY
Starting at 15th level, once per turn if you drop a creature to 0 hit points using a firearm, you can make a single ranged attack as part of the same action.

INSEPARABLE APPENDAGE
At 18th level, your chosen weapon becomes as much a part of you as an arm. You can re-roll one natural 1 on an attack roll with that weapon—once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a short or long rest. Additionally, your chosen weapon cannot be targeted or destroyed, you cannot be disarmed of it, and you can stow your chosen weapon and draw a one-handed small arm without taking an action.

MILITARIST
You have probably graduated from a command school or officer college. You emerged as a trained, disciplined leader, ready to rally the uncontrolled masses. You are not some desk jockey trained from books. You possess natural, applicable talents, earning the respect that goes along with them.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, marshal, medic, and sniper classes.

COORDINATION
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you receive TPs (Tactical Points) each time something unfortunate happens to you or an ally. As these points compound, you are able to counter with positive effects. Points are lost when you take a short rest or long rest or when you roll for initiative. Spending points usually takes either a bonus action or a reaction.

You receive 1 point when each of the following occurs.

- An ally you can see or communicate with rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll.
- An ally suffers a critical hit.
- An ally is reduced past half hit points.
- An ally is reduced to zero hit points.
- Three or more allies suffer damage from an area effect.

You can then spend acquired TPs the followings ways.

Elevate Strategy (3+ points): As a bonus action, select one ally per 3 points spent; the targeted ally immediately gains an action and can either move or take a bonus action. Targeted ally still gets her turn when it comes up.

Eyes Around (2-6 points): As a bonus action, select one ally per 2 points spent (maximum 3 allies); the targeted ally makes a single attack.

Intelligent Defense (1 point): One ally gains a +3 bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn: if you move before then, the bonus is lost.

Opportune Weakness (2 points): As a reaction, one ally's hit becomes a critical hit.

Outmaneuver (1 point): Spend 30 feet of movement to move a creature your size or smaller up to 5 feet (it cannot be moved into hazardous terrain). The target suffers disadvantage on attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

Shift Battle Theater (1-3 points): As a bonus action, select one ally per 1 point spent (maximum 3 allies); the targeted ally can either make Disengage action for free on her turn or can move immediately up to 20 feet.

Reverse Course of Action (10 points): As an action, all enemies you can see are stunned until the beginning of your next turn.

REEVALUATE STRATEGY
Starting at 7th level, instead of using your Hit Dice to recover hit points during a short rest, you can use them to gain TP points. For each Hit Die spent this way using a bonus action, you gain 1d4 TP.

TIDE OF WAR
Starting at 11th level, you gain 1d4 each time you meet a Coordination condition instead of 1.

BATTLE INSTINCT
Starting at 15th level, if enemies gain a surprise action, you gain 5 TP. If a creature hits you, you gain 1 TP.

BATTLE LEADER
Starting at 18th level, if you are reduced to zero hit points, you gain 10 TP and can use as many Coordination abilities as you want and can afford as a reaction .

PISTOLERO
You believe your abilities to be naturally canny skills developed over years of hard training and discipline. You possess the capacity to be in the right place at the right time in close combat to place a perfect shot. You prefer to present yourself in close quarters, preventing enemies from striking from a distance. You maneuver to get close, maximizing your firing potential while reducing the capacity to be hit in return. It is not unheard to jump in the midst of an enemy squad, take every one down at point blank range, and walk away without a scratch. To do that, you must get close, study your targets, and make every shot count. You study a scene

in seconds and know exactly where to stand and in what position to offer the greatest level of defense while making your weapons lethal with a single shot.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the gunslinger, medic, and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with all one-handed small arms.

POINT SHOT
Starting at 3rd level, as an action, you can make a single ranged attack with a non-auto one-handed small arm against a creature 20 feet or closer. You inflict an additional 1d6 damage on a hit, increasing this damage by one step at 7th, 11th, 15th, and 18th level (1d6 > 2d6 > 3d6 > 4d6 > 5d6 > 6d6 > 7d6 > 8d6). Any additional effects which increase damage this way, including other pistolero abilities, are compounded.

WEAVER STANCE
Starting at 7th level, you can wield a single one-handed small arm with two hands. If so, you suffer a -10 foot penalty to speed but increase Point Shot damage by 1d4 steps.

KILL SHOT
Starting at 11th level, you make sure each opponent is dead before moving on. If your Point Shot attack reduces a creature to fewer hit points than your level, as a bonus action, you use one additional round of ammunition to kill the target.

KINETIC SHOT
Starting at 15th level, if you act before an enemy after rolling initiative, you can increase your Point Shot damage against that enemy by 4 steps.

ONLY NEED ONE
Starting at 18th level, if you score a critical hit with a Point Shot attack, increase your damage by 4 steps.

RECON INTELLIGENCE
You dig yourself in and become one with the terrain. You ignore wind, rain, or even wandering monsters. Nothing distracts you. An entire army could pass without noticing. Even your attack is as silent as a mosquito bite, though far deadlier.

You approach your target and wait for the perfect moment. You adjust for every possible condition, from gravity to wind. When finally squeezing the trigger, only God could stop that round from finding its target. You never miss, as your purpose is to never give a foe the benefit of a reload. When you take out your target, your single goal, you slither away to your next objective. Your foes can dissect the terrain looking for you, but you were never where they thought. As they hunt you down, you aim for your next victim.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the medic, techie, and sniper classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with light armor, ghillie/yowie suits, and sniper weapons. You also have proficiency with Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

FLAWLESS REPUTATION
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, when you make a Dexterity (Stealth) check against a target's Wisdom (Perception), roll 1d10 and put it aside—this is your reputation die. You can use that result to affect the natural result of any d20 roll made for an attack or a Dexterity (Stealth) check, including the one you just made. You can only set aside 1 die at a time, and can replace one with a better result if it comes up. You lose any acquired reputation die when you finish a long rest.

YOWIE SPECIALIZATION
Starting at 7th level, if you use a ghillie/yowie suit in its proper environment, use an action to become invisible until you move or make an attack.

BRILLIANT SHADOW
Starting at 11th level, roll all acquired reputation dice twice and set aside the higher value.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE
Starting at 15th level, if you drop a creature 25 feet away or further to 0 hit points, you gain one additional reputation die—in addition to any already acquired.

SPECTER
Starting at 18th level, you can have two reputation dice at once, (three if one is acquired from Psychological Warfare).

RING FIGHTER
You have the belt. You've claimed the trophy. Few others boast the record you have. You fought hard and trained hard for the respect and it is well earned. In the realm of physical training, there is no better.

SYNERGY
This archetype works best with the grounder, gunslinger, marshal, and martial artist classes.

PROFICIENCIES
You have proficiency with simple melee weapons.

GRAPPLE DISCIPLINE
Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you are able to gain the upper hand in almost any close combat situation. You have advantage on all rolls related to grappling.

GUARD CONTROL
Starting at 7th level, while grappling a creature, you gain a +1 bonus to AC.

TOLERANCE THRESHOLD
Starting at 11th level, if you are grappling a creature, you have resistance to any piercing, bludgeoning, or slashing damage from the target.

CHOKE / LOCK
Starting at 15th level, each turn you sustain a grapple on a creature, you inflict damage equal to your Strength or Dexterity modifier on the target. This does not count as an action.

MOUNTED ATTACK
At 18th level, you gain complete control over every opponent. While grappling a creature, it suffers disadvantage on escape attempts.

SAPPER

Combat engineers have a long and respected history. You can be a bridge builder and a bridge destroyer. You approach bombs while others turn and run. With seconds on the clock, others give up while you take it as incentive.

SYNERGY

This archetype works best with the marshal, medic and techie classes.

PROFICIENCIES

You have proficiency with Intelligence (Demolitions).

THE LONG WALK

Beginning when you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you have advantage on Intelligence (Demolitions) checks.

RENDER SAFE PROCEDURES

Starting at 7th level, if forced to make a Dexterity saving throw, you can move 5 feet as a reaction but before needing to roll (possibly escaping the area of effect).

SLIGHT CHEMICAL IMPROVEMENT

Starting at 11th level, when you detonate explosives you have set with a blast radius of 10 feet or more, you increase the blast radius by another 5 feet.

PROPER APPLICATION

Starting at 15th level, when determining the saving throw DC for explosives you set, double your Intelligence modifier.

SCORCHED EARTH

Starting at 18th level, your explosives have a tendency to set off chain reactions. After you detonate an explosive, a lingering fire breaks out until the start of your next turn, dealing your Intelligence modifier in fire damage to any targets entering or starting their turn in the affected area. The fire lasts for 1 minute.

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.

* * *

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.

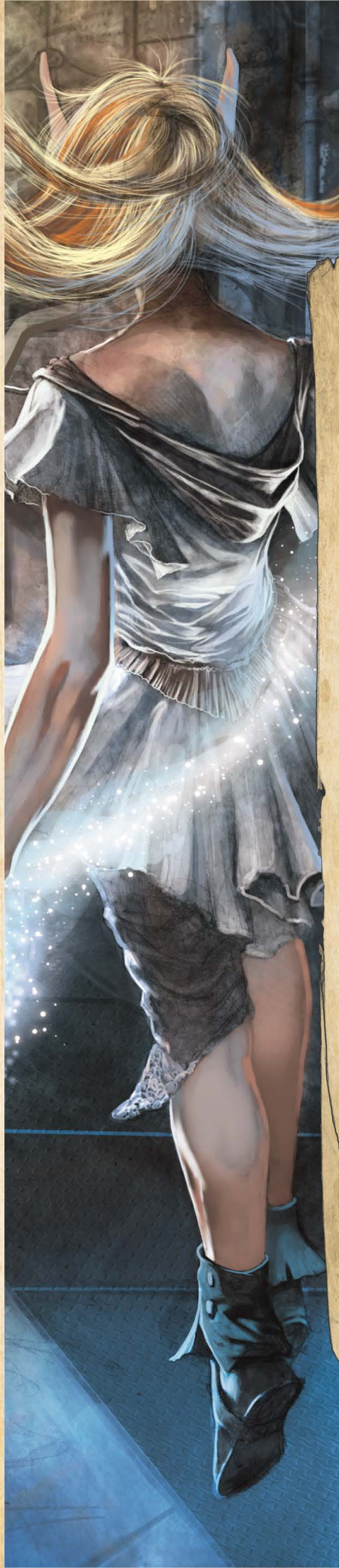
His hand rolled through fluttering pieces of snow that felt neither cold nor wet and refused to melt in the warmth of his hand. Sprinkles of the white packing foam fell onto the soil.

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.

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 the architects 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. Basic technology still works occasionally 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 industrialization.

Simultaneously, bastions have employed their advanced expertise to weaving better clothes and forging better armor. Originally intended only for their own populations, some have learned the value of these goods outside their walls. Though their high tech weapons and devices are mostly 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 economy of growing nations. The process 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.

It is clear, therefore, that 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—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 a few hundred feet. Thus, electric power is an extreme rarity in echa.

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 machines would be inevitable.

RESOURCES

Before man fell from his seat of power, he managed to strip Earth of almost all non-renewable resources. He extinguished nearly all fossil fuels, forcing bastions to develop alternate sources. Oil and gasoline are scarce after the Hammer, and with a lack of industrial-scale cultivation, vegetable-based fuels are not easily manufactured on the scale required by a techan population. The biggest hurdle for any formed authority was location. Many centers of techa positioned themselves on the coast for obvious reasons. Some utilize the energy of the atom while others embraced cleaner resources like geothermal, tidal, or solar power. However, while coastal locations are generally rich in these kinds of energy resources, the only mineral wealth they can usually claim is plentiful quantities of silicon. Only Selkirk sits on or near a mine. This left most available resources in the hands of echan cultures. The narros, of course, are the best miners and control the most valuable pits, but human settlements frequently grew around the narros mines to aid in exporting the excess mineral wealth.

The remaining resources are the common elements most took for granted years ago: copper, silver, gold, platinum, iron, coal, etc. In the new age, new riches like angelite and coruthil have also emerged. The bastions need such resources badly and some have secretly established trade agreements with outside sources.

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. Thankfully, the fae nations, long before man's arrival, already decided that—despite what stamp was cast into 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, namely gold, silver, and copper. This was standardized amongst the gimfen, damaskans, and narros (the latter being 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 rules when dealing with 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 wholesale. 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 golden foot. Here are some examples of Canam currency:

Copper/Brass/Bronze Coins (=1 cp)

Abidan/Limshau/Gimfen penny (plural: pennies)
Baruch Malkut copper
Kannos kuedo
Narros copper tooth
Orchis casten
Torquil penny (plural: pence)

Silver Coins (=1 sp)

Abidan dagot
Kannos kroenan
Baruch Malkut silver
Gimfen pebble
Limshau carmot
Orchis noman
Narros silver finger
Torquil sterling

Gold Coins (=1 gp)
Abidan sovereign
Kannos kannon
Baruch Malkut dollar
Gimfen gold stone
Limshau chryso
Narros golden foot
Torquil crown

Platinum/Palladium Coins (=1 pp)
Limshau tollar
Narros pallis spirit

Unique Currency (Various)
Narros angelite opus (=500 gp)
Laudenian enchanted mark (=10,000 gp)
Gimfen pearl (=50 gp)
Quinox crystal (=5 gp)

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 value itself. 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 is merely a glossy disk of brass but is enchanted with a permanent magical endowment. The coin has no apparent weight and can float in midair. 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 neighbors' (in this case, Limshau).

Games need not employ this system of currency; just assume the gold they acquire is universal. As an optional rule, GMs 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 race 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 jewelry 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 shilling, 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. For this purpose 1 uc = 1 gp. 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 near total impermeability to most magic. No bastions accept unique echan currency.

The Treasure Conundrum: Alas, unlike echans, techan characters will seldom (if ever) find their technology in the lair of a dragon (or any other creature for that matter). 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 widgets).

If characters gain a level in a dungeon, they won't conveniently find a higher level weapon after they slay the next big monster. 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.

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 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 of it. Tech levels indicate the possible origin of an item as well as its 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.

Five 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 than 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 the entirety of civilized history until the early industrial era, stopping before the harnessing of electric power: everything from the discovery of the wheel to its use in manufacturing. This tech level includes several firearms, and though primitive, are notable exceptions to the assumption that all TL0 technology is immune to disruption.

Vehicles: Gliders or basic aero-forms. Both ground and aircraft are limited to archaic steam power. There have been accounts of these vehicles being enchanted though their engines suffer disruption if directly imbued with magic.

Weapons: All weapons rely on chemical propellant with simple loading mechanisms. The blunderbuss and musket are examples. Though immune to radiant disruption, TL0 firearms cannot be enchanted.

Medical: Natural healing. TL0 benefits more from rediscovered human knowledge about biology than the tools that were developed consequently. Surgery can cure most wounds, but recovery can last a while.

Similarity: Up to mid-18th century.

TECH LEVEL 1

At this level, machines come into their own. Internal combustion and steam power have been perfected. Electric power and road vehicles are changing the way cities are built. TL1 is the most primitive level where ambient disruption starts to become a concern.

Vehicles: Ground vehicles are run off internal combustion and basic electrical systems. The fact they are mass produced is the real achievement. Aircraft are flown by manual controls and receive propulsion from propellers.

Weapons: Bolt action rifles and revolvers. Cartridge -fed firearms are becoming more common.

Medical: The implementation of the scientific method, and laboratory research has resulted in vaccines and the basics of genetic engineering. Drugs have become commonplace.

Similarity: 19th to early 20th Century.

TECH LEVEL 2

At this level, almost every form of technology has integrated electronics and advanced computer control. Electrification is now commonplace, though computers have yet to dominate civilization.

Vehicles: Ground vehicles now sport electronics; some even have climate control and electronic stability. Aircraft now have fly-by-wire, vectored thrust and vertical-take-off capacity.

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 X-Rays.

Similarity: Mid to late 20th Century.

TECH LEVEL 3

Refinements in the manipulation of magnetic fields and energy levels characterize this stage. Computers now control most of civilization and link all its citizens together.

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: There will always be bullets, but the rise of both railcannons and self-propelled projectiles offer alternatives. Laser weaponry in its infancy. Advanced magnetics. Prototype exo-armor appears.

Medical: Most known diseases are curable. Healing time cut to one-third with medical attention. Nanotech healing isolated in the laboratory.

Similarity: This is the last tech level that an observer from the 21st century pre-Hammer might still find familiar.

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." Exo-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 of 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: Common antigravity replaces all previous transportation.

Weapons: Disruptors, vapor rifles, disintegrator weaponry.

Medical: Complete body reconstruction.

APPLICATION OF TECH LEVELS

The tech level determines how easily the item is affected by disruption (see below) and affects the difficulty and cost of the crafting, repairing and modifying of technology. It also affects its rarity.

TL 0 and TL 1: Common. All items with no listed TL are TL0 .
TL 2: Uncommon
TL 3: Rare
TL 4: Very Rare
TL 5: Legendary

Certain items (like exo-armor) may be rarer than their listed tech level. They may also count as multiple items. Tech levels can also apply in other ways depending on the device in question: see the item descriptions for details.

ECHAN DISRUPTION FIELD (E.D.F.)

The EDF is a region of space the Earth resides in where the normal rules of the cosmos and the altered and continually mutable rules spilling forth from Attricana come into conflict. Despite the white gate's placement near the moon, the EDF appears to radiate from the surface of the planet, as if magic occurs as a reaction between Attricana and the Earth and not wholly from Attricana itself. This field is not uniform, with undulations and hot spots migrating like weather patterns, generally associated with life-forms imbued with magic. Deserts and bastions generally exhibit low EDF, while forests can disrupt even the most basic of machines. As technology currently has no way to reliably and permanently suppress magic, isolation remains the only solution. Bastions often track ambient magic and can detect surges in the background field despite being unable to alter them. They have even created technology to measure the rise of disruption, and can detect if an item or creature is particularly will endowed. Regardless of this knowledge, disruption remains a constant threat outside of bastions, and users or technology must always be vigilant.

DISRUPTION EVENTS

Disruption is a constant threat, but the rules applying to it usually only occur when they are at their most inconvenient. There is no hard rule about when disruption events can occur. The GM is invited to spice it up to create random unpredictable moments to make a disruption roll. A disruption normally occurs under any of the following circumstances:

- The first time in an encounter that someone attempts to use a technological device.
- Whenever a creature that generates EDF touches technology (echans attempting to *use* the device always results in disruption of TL1 and higher devices, no roll required).
- Any time the technology or its wielder is directly affected by magic (any spell or supernatural effect). Enchanting most TL1 and higher technology (like weapons) disrupts it automatically , no roll required.
- Whenever the technology or its wielder suffers a critical hit from a magical creature.
- If the technology or its wielder is hit by an attack from a pincher weapon.
- At the end of the initiative order each round.
- Any time outside of an encounter that the GM judges appropriate (using technology in a highly magical area, etc.).

At this point, the GM makes a single d20 roll to determine if an item is disrupted and which tech level is affected. Note that disruption rolls are not mandatory: the GM may elect not to make a roll if doing so would not make the scene more interesting, or to decree a disruption event if doing so *would*.

The result of the disruption roll determines the minimum tech level that can be affected by a disruption event, with the highest TL items not currently suffering disruption being affected first. A roll of 6-19 means no disruption event occurs.

A targeted disruption always affects the item or character targeted. Any number of targeted disruptions can occur in a round. If the disruption targets an item rather than a character, do not roll for which tech levels are affected – skip straight to the disruption saving throw (see below).

General disruption events usually only affect one device at a time. Outside of a combat encounter, treat disruption events as targeted disruptions or choose the affected character randomly.

If a general disruption event occurs in combat, the character with the lowest initiative is affected by the first event, the next lowest by the second event, and so on. If the character has no devices of the affected level, no disruption event occurs. Once all players have been rolled for, return to the bottom of the initiative order. Monsters using technology have their own rules and are not affected by disruption rolls.

If the player has multiple items at the same tech level, equipment disrupts in the following order: Weapon currently in hand > gear in use > armor being worn > any vehicle occupied. If the character does not have a device of the given type, move on to the next in sequence. Equipment not actively in use disrupts in the same order. If there are multiple items of the same type, only one is affected (chosen either randomly or by what would be most immediately inconvenient for the character).

A player cannot be subject to another disruption event until every player has been subject to one this sequence. Additionally, an item cannot be disrupted twice (even after it recovers) before every disruptable item the character is carrying has been disrupted once this sequence.

Natural 20, Critical Collapse: If the disruption roll is a natural 20, 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 undisrupted item they have.

Example: Kathryn Lindune wears TL5 exo-armor and wields a TL4 rail pistol and a TL5 plasma pistol. She also has operating infrared goggles (TL3). The GM makes a disruption roll and the result is 4. The lowest tech item on Kate that can be affected is her rail pistol. Her infrared goggles (TL3) are safe. Because the armor is higher tech level, it goes first. To break down the goggles, the GM would have had to roll a 3 or less on the disruption roll after already breaking down the armor and both weapons.

(If her armor and pistols have already suffered a disruption event and the disruption roll results in a 3, then the goggles would be affected next. If the roll was a 4, then the armor would be hit again).

EFFECTS OF DISRUPTION

A disrupted item no longer grants any bonuses. Any special abilities or properties the item has cannot be used. Firearms are unable to fire. Most exo-armor stops moving, rendering the user restrained. This persists until the character makes a disruption saving throw (a d20 roll against DC10). A character proficient in Intelligence (Engineering) can replace the disruption save with the following skill check: DC15 + (2 x Tech Level of item). The character makes one save or skill check per round per affected item at the end of their turn. If the roll succeeds, the device is immediately restored to normal functioning. If the roll fails, it suffers one of the following additional effects (determined by how many consecutive failed rolls have been made for the device).

1st Failure: If the first saving throw fails, the item remains disrupted. If the item uses a battery, it loses 1d4 charges. If the item uses a battery but does not have a quantity of charges, the battery is unaffected.

2nd Failure: If the second saving throw fails, the item remains disrupted. If the item uses a battery, the battery is neutralized and useless—you must replace that battery.

3rd Failure: A third and final failed saving throw breaks the item: it must be fixed before it can be restored to normal function. If it has hit points, it loses a quarter of them.

Catastrophic Failure: If any player rolls a natural 1 on their saving throw for item, it breaks; if it has a battery cell, is a catastrophic failure, resulting in detonation. The item is broken and the wielder (and sometimes others) suffers damage. Depending on the situation, a cell will inflict between 1d6 and 1d10 damage to everything within 5 to 15 feet.

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 and to reduce the necessity of the operator mechanic build in smaller game groups. Disruption events can be made more severe by using blanket modifiers to disruption rolls: all other rolls dealing with disruption (like saving throws and DCs) are unaffected. A GM should set the modifier when a campaign begins and maintain that for the length of the game.

Realistic Disruption: -2 to disruption rolls

Dangerous Levels: -4 to disruption rolls

Extreme Hazardous Level: -4 to disruption roll and critical collapse on a 19-20

ECHA-SAFE TECHNOLOGY

Various technological items are 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 items cannot be affected by a routine disruption event:

- Items with the immune property
- Any item created by the experteering engineer's Adaptation feature
- Any armor not requiring a battery cell for operation
- 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

Unlike gimfen shielding, which makes the weapon, armor, or item clumsier, bulkier, and far uglier, techan shielding relies on the use of echa-resistant materials (such as gold or fae-iron nanofilaments) to replace more traditional components, which keeps the overall shape of the original object and does not add significant weight to the final design, although the specialized materials make the item more costly. Any techan item can be shielded. The cost of shielding depends on the original cost of the item. You cannot shield batteries or TL0 gear (though you can shield TL0 weapons). Some items are shielded by default: these cannot have shielding added to them.

Price: 10% of the price of the original item
Weight: +5% in weight (round up).
Benefit: As a reaction to a disruption event, the item comes back online. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

BATTERY CELLS

Many of the objects in the following sections require batteries. A required battery is included in the item's purchase price (two with weapons). You cannot replace one type of battery for another type under ANY circumstances.

If a weapon's ammunition capacity or an item's consumption capacity is listed alongside a "B", "M", or "H", then that item uses a battery cell.

BATTERY CELLS

The three different types of battery cells are as follows:

Basic (B): These cells are for smaller items and cost 2 uc each. Ten cells weigh 1 lb.

Medium (M): These cells power many weapons, smaller vehicles, and larger equipment. They cost 10 uc each. One cell weighs 0.25 lb.

High (H): These cells are large, powerful, and usually reserved for huge weapons and massive energy equipment. They cost 40 uc each. 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 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). This applies to disruption rules, repairs, and when applying the Engineer skill to the item.

WEAPONS

WEAPON GROUPS

The weapons covered here are grouped into the following categories based on their general utility. They do not fall into the normal categories of simple or martial weapons.

HEAVY WEAPONS

These large weapon systems require a tripod, a base, a platform, or any other stable point from which to fire.

Properties: Heavy weapons use the same general rules as ranged weapons, except as follows:

- Because of their cumbersome nature, if you move or are moved any distance you have disadvantage on attack rolls with heavy weapons until the beginning of your next turn.
- Unless mounted, heavy weapons require at least Strength 13 to use.

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Simple Melee Weapons				
Brass Knuckles	5 uc	Special	½ lbs.	Augment, light
Collapsible baton	25	1d4 bludgeoning	1 lbs.	Finesse, immune, light
Martial Melee Weapons				
Bastion greatsword	500uc	2d6 slashing	3.5 lbs.	Heavy, mastercraft, two-handed
Bastion longsword	300uc	1d8 slashing	1.5 lbs.	Mastercraft, versatile (1d10)
Bastion short sword	200uc	1d6 piercing	1 lbs.	Finesse, light, mastercraft
Buzz baton	5,000	1d6 bludgeoning/ lightning	1 lbs.	Bonus (+1), finesse, light, pincher, reload (20-M), TL3
Chainsaw	1500	1d8 slashing	15 lbs.	Heavy, reload (20-M), two-handed, TL1
Collapsible baton	25	1d4 bludgeoning	1 lbs.	Finesse, immune, light
Harmonic blade	18,000	1d4 slashing/ Piercing	1.5 lbs.	Finesse, light, reload (20-M), TL 2
Limshau katana	150gp	1d8 slashing	3 lbs.	Versatile (1d10)
Limshau nagamaki	200gp	1d10 slashing	4 lbs.	Heavy, two-handed
Limshau naginata	150gp	1d8 slashing	8 lbs.	Reach, two-handed
Limshau odachi	500gp	2d6 slashing	4 lbs.	Heavy, two-handed
Limshau yari	100gp	1d8 piercing	9 lbs.	Heavy, reach, two-handed
Limshau tanto	20gp	1d4 piercing	0.5 lbs.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 20/60)
Makana	5sp	1d6 bludgeoning/ slashing	5 lbs	Versatile (1d8)
Narros krollish	150gp	1d10 special	12 lbs.	Heavy, mastercraft, special, two-handed
Piton-gauntlet	250	Special (1d6) Piercing	3 lbs.	Augment, finesse, light, reload (20-M), TL1
Power-hooks	5,000	Special	6 lbs.	Augment, bonus (+1), finesse, light, reload (20-M), TL2
Punch gun	350	Special (1d4) Piercing	2 lbs.	Augment, finesse, light, feed (4 shots)
Punch (laser) gun	18,500	Special (1d6) fire	2 lbs.	Augment, laser, finesse, light, bonus (+2), reload (5-M), TL4
Punch (plasma) gun	40,000	Special (1d8) energy	2 lbs.	Augment, bonus (+3), plasma, reload (10-M), TL5
Tesla glove	1,500	Special lightning	3 lbs.	Augment, finesse, light, pincher, reload (Special-M), TL2

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Martial Ranged Weapons				
Limshau crossbow	300gp	1d6 piercing	3 lbs.	Ammunition (range 60/120), light, reload (6 shots)
Compound longbow	500uc	Special piercing	4 lbs.	Ammunition (range 200/600), heavy, two-handed
Carbon Crossbow	500uc	1d10 piercing	6 lbs.	Ammunition (range 200/600), heavy, loading, two-handed
Kitarri Black Bow	300gp	1d8 piercing	1 lbs.	Ammunition (range 300/900), heavy, two-handed, mastercraft

These weapons may be purchased for a Large user (e.g. exo-armor). If so, the heavy weapons counts as a two-handed weapon. It can no longer be used by Medium-sized users.

SMALL ARMS, ONE-HANDED

These single-handed firearms are renowned for their ease of use and compact style, making them an easy choice for those preferring stealth.

Properties: One-handed small arms use the same general rules as ranged weapons, except as follows:

- You do not have disadvantage on attack rolls if you are within 5 feet of a hostile creature who can see you and who isn't incapacitated.
- One-handed small arms cannot be wielded by Large or larger creatures (e.g., exo-armor).
- You do not suffer disadvantage on ranged attack rolls if you are prone and proficient with the weapon you are using.

SMALL ARMS, TWO-HANDED

These are larger, slightly clumsier weapons usually preferred for longer ranges and high stopping power. With the development of technology, the latter became less a factor, but two-handed arms have the capacity for larger magazine capacities, greater accuracy, and the option of fast automatic fire.

Properties: Two-handed small arms use the same general rules as ranged weapons, except as follows:

- Because of their cumbersome nature, if you move or are moved more than 5 feet, you suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls with two-handed small arms until the beginning of your next turn.

These weapons may be purchased for a Large user (e.g. exo-armor). If so, a two-handed small arms counts as a one-handed small arm. It can no longer be used by Medium-sized users.

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	RANGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
One-Handed Small Arms					
Air Dart Pistol	150	Special	20/100	4 lbs.	Loading
Autoloader	250	1d6 piercing	50/200	2 lbs.	Reload (8 shots)
Capsicum spray	55	Special	10/40	2 lbs.	Feed (3 shots), immune
Break-action shot pistol	300	1d8 piercing	25/50	3 lbs.	Feed (2 shots), immune, shotgun
Capacitor plasma pistol	47,000	1d6 force	200/800	3 lbs.	Auto (1d8), bonus (+3), capacitor, reload (30-M), TL5
Caseless pistol	500	1d6 piercing	50/250	2 lbs.	Mastercraft, TL1
Coil pistol	5,000	1d6 piercing	100/400	4 lbs.	Bonus (+1), magnetic, TL3
Electroshock gun	450	Special	10	3 lbs.	Reload (2-M), TL1
ESP pistol	750	1d6 piercing	50/250	3 lbs.	ESP (1d8), reload (40 shots), TL2
Light machine gun	500	1d4 piercing	50/250	4 lbs.	Auto (1d6), reload (40 shots), TL1
Machine pistol	300	1d6 piercing	50/200	3 lbs.	Auto (1d6), reload (20 shots)
Nuclear Pellet Pistol	5,000	1d6 force	80/320	3 lbs.	Bonus (+1), nuclear, reload (15-M), TL3
One-handed grenade launcher	600	Special	50/200	8 lbs.	grenade, loading
Plasma pistol	50,000	1d6 force	200/800	3 lbs.	Bonus (+3), plasma, reload (15-M), TL5
Pocket Pistol	200	1d4 piercing	40/160	1 lbs.	Reload (3 shots)
Revolver	150	1d4 piercing	50/250	2 lbs.	Feed (6 shots), immune
Rail pistol	22,500	1d6 piercing	200/800	4 lbs.	Bonus (+2), magnetic, reload (10 shots), TL4
Restrainment field	2,800	Special	50/200	5 lbs.	Bonus (+2), reload (4-H), TL4
Solid laser pistol	22,500	1d6 fire	200/800	3 lbs.	Bonus (+2), laser, reload (20-M), TL4
SPP pistol	1,250	1d6 piercing	80/320	3 lbs.	Guided, reload (10 shots), TL2
Thumper laser pistol	45,000	1d6 fire	200/800	3 lbs.	Auto (1d8), bonus (+3), laser, reload (30-M), TL5

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	RANGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Two-Handed Small Arms					
Assault rifle	300	1d8 piercing	100/400	7 lbs.	Auto (1d10), reload (50 shots)
Basic sniper rifle	300	1d8 piercing	100/400	8 lbs.	Feed (5 shots), sniper (+1)
Bolt rifle	450	1d8 piercing	100/400	8 lbs.	Feed (5 shots), immune
Caseless rifle	450	1d8 piercing	100/400	10 lbs.	Auto (1d10), reload (100 shots), mastercraft, TL1
Cyclotron Rifle	4,000	1d8 force	100/400	15 lbs.	Bonus (+1), nuclear, reload (20-M)
Disruptor	45,000	1d8 radiant	50/200	10 lbs.	Bonus (+2), reload (20-H)
ESP rifle	450	1d8 piercing	80/320	10 lbs.	ESP (1d10/1d12), reload (80 shots), TL1
Gauss repeater	28,000	1d8 piercing	200/800	16 lbs.	Bonus (+2), auto (1d10), magnetic, reload (60 shots), TL4
Grenade light weapon	500	Special	50/200	10 lbs.	Feed (6 shots), grenade, two-handed
Ion rifle	5,000	1d8 lightning	50/200	16 lbs.	Bonus (+1), pincher, reload (20-M), TL3
Kinetic Flash Rifle	3,500	1d8 piercing	150/600	20 lbs.	Bonus (+1), auto (1d10), magnetic, reload (50 shots), TL3
Light Coilgun	3,500	1d8 piercing	150/600	15 lbs.	Bonus (+1), magnetic, reload (16 shots)
Machine shotgun	500	1d10 piercing	30/120	15 lbs.	Auto (1d12), reload (20 shots), shotgun, TL1
Nuclear Pulse Rifle	4,000	1d8 force	100/400	20 lbs.	Auto (1d10), bonus (+1), nuclear, reload (80-H), TL3
Plasma rifle	50,000	1d8 force	150/600	17 lbs.	Bonus (+3), plasma, shots (20-M), TL5
Railgun	14,000	1d8 piercing	150/600	15 lbs.	Bonus (+2), magnetic, reload (16 shots), TL4
Shotgun	300	1d10 piercing	30/120	10 lbs.	Feed (6 shots), shotgun
Sniper cannon	500	1d10 piercing	200/800	15 lbs.	Reload (6 shots), sniper (+1), TL1
Solid laser rifle	12,500	1d8 fire	150/600	15 lbs.	Bonus (+2), laser, reload (20-M), TL4
Sonic focus rifle	5,000	1d8 thunder	50/200	17 lbs.	Bonus (+1), reload (20-M), sonic, TL3
Sonic stunner	4,5000	Special thunder	50/200	5 lbs.	Bonus (+1), reload (5-M), TL3
SPP rifle	2,500	1d8 piercing	150/600	14 lbs.	Guided, reload (20 shots), TL2
SPP sensor gun	5,000	1d8 piercing	100/400	16 lbs.	Bonus (+1), guided, reload (10 shots), sniper (+2), TL3
SPP Vortex	5,000	1d8 piercing	100/400	14 lbs.	Bonus (+1), auto (1d10), guided, reload (70 shots), TL3
Submachine gun	300	1d6 piercing	80/320	6 lbs.	Auto (1d8), reload (80 shots)
Thumper laser rifle	52,000	1d8 fire	150/600	17 lbs.	Auto (1d10), laser, reload (60-H), TL5
Ultimate sniper rifle	25,000	1d10 piercing	250/1000	18 lbs.	Bonus (+2), magnetic, reload (10 shots), sniper (+2), TL4
Vapor rifle	75,000	2d6 radiant	100/400	12 lbs.	Bonus (+3), reload (20-H), TL5

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	RANGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Heavy Weapons					
Coil light gun	7,000	1d10 piercing	300/1200	65 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), bonus (+1), heavy, magnetic, reload (40 shots), TL3
ESP maelstrom	2,500	1d8 piercing	200/800	55 lbs.	ESP (1d10), heavy, reload (400 shots), TL2
Flamethrower	2,000	1d6 fire	Special	20 lbs.	Heavy, reload (10 shots), TL1
God's Eye sniper gun	4,000	2d8 piercing	300/1200	40 lbs.	Heavy, mastercraft, reload (10 shots) sniper (+2), TL2
Ion cannon	5,000	1d10 lightning	200/800	50 lbs.	Bonus (+1), heavy, pincher, reload (40-H), TL3
Linear Collider	12,000	1d10 energy	200/800	40 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), bonus (+1), heavy, nuclear, reload (60-M), TL3
Machine light cannon	300	1d10 piercing	100/400	30 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), heavy, reload (120 shots)
Net gun	500	Special	25/100	10 lbs.	Loading, heavy, TL1, two-handed
Nuclear Particle Lance	10,000	1d12 force	300/1200	35 lbs.	Bonus (+1), heavy, nuclear, reload (30-M), TL3
Pulse mini-gun	60,000	1d10 force	250/1000	100 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), bonus (+3), heavy, plasma, reload (200-H), TL5
Railcannon	52,000	1d10 piercing	300/1200	75 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), bonus (+2), heavy, magnetic, reload (120 shots), TL4
Rocket launcher	250	2d6 bludgeoning	200/800	20 lbs.	Direct (2d6+6), exp (5 ft.), heavy, loading, TL1, two-handed
Rocket launcher Mk2	1000	2d6 bludgeoning	250/1,000	20 lbs.	Bonus (+1), direct (2d6+6), exp (10 ft.), guided, heavy, loading, two-handed, TL3
Rotary cannon	500	1d10 piercing	100/400	65 lbs.	Auto-heavy (Special), heavy, immune, reload (250 shots)
Solid laser cannon	53,000	1d12 fire	250/1000	65 lbs.	Bonus (+2), heavy, laser, reload (30-H), TL4
Sonic devastator	50,000	1d12 thunder	70/280	50 lbs.	Bonus (+3), heavy, reload (40-H), sonic, TL5
Thumper laser cannon	55,000	1d10 fire	250/1000	60 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12), bonus (+3), heavy, laser, reload (200-H), TL5

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	RANGE	WT.	SPECIAL
Super Heavy Weapons					
Autocannon	1000	1d6+6 piercing	300/1200	200 lbs.	Auto (1d8+8), heavy, reload (200 shots)
Dense Plasma Focus Cannon	70,000	1d10+10 force	400/1600	350 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d12+12), bonus (+3), heavy, plasma, reload (200-H), TL5
Ground heavy gun	10,000	2d10 bludgeoning	400/1,600	185 lbs.	Direct (2d10+10), exp (5 ft.), heavy, loading, TL2
Mass Driver	65,000	1d10+10 piercing	300/1200	500 lbs.	Bonus (+3), heavy, magnetic, reload (10 shots), TL5
Mortar	500	—	50/200	50 lbs.	Grenade, heavy, loading
Particle Beam Gun	65,000	1d10+10 force	300/1200	350 lbs.	Bonus (+1), heavy, nuclear, reload (20-H), TL3
Plasma artillery	38,000	2d8 force	250/1,000	110 lbs.	Bonus (+3), direct (2d8+8), exp (10 ft.), loading (1-H), plasma, super heavy, TL5
Super-Kill Sniper	35,000	1d10+10 piercing	500/2000	150 lbs.	Bonus (+2), heavy, magnetic, sniper (+2), reload (5 shots)
Volley Gun ESP	5,000	1d6+6 piercing	250/1000	350 lbs.	Auto-heavy (1d8+8), heavy, reload (500 shots), TL2

SUPER HEAVY WEAPONS

These are weapons with the potential of incredible damage but balance that with a cumbersome design. These large weapon systems require a tripod, a base, a platform, or any other stable point from which to fire.

Properties: Super heavy weapons use the same general rules as ranged weapons, except as follows:

- Super heavy weapons come equipped with a tripod (unless mounted on a vehicle or exo-armor).
- You must use an action to plant a super heavy weapon in the ground. Once planted, it cannot be moved unless you use an action to uproot it. If you fire a non-planted super heavy weapon, you suffer disadvantage on attack rolls with the weapon. If your Strength is less than 18, immediately after the attack is resolved, you are pushed 5 feet and knocked prone.

These weapons may be purchased for a Large user (e.g. exo-armor). If so, a super heavy weapon counts as a heavy weapon. It can no longer be used by Medium-sized users.

TECHAN MELEE WEAPONS

Close combat 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 runs 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 usually 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 touch a creature physically 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.

Disruption: Techan melee weapons are affected as normal by disruption events (losing special properties), but can continue to be used as the base melee weapon with the same damage die and type.

Size: Like firearms, techan melee weapons can be enlarged for Large users (exo-armor). If one is purchased this way, it can no longer can be used by Medium-sized users.

Power: Like firearms, you only use a charge when you make an attack with a techan melee weapon that has an energy cell. Using the weapon for intimidation does not expend energy (unless you want it to).

NEW WEAPON PROPERTIES

AUGMENT

An augment weapon uses your unarmed strike damage dice. An unarmed strike can only benefit from one augment weapon per hit. By using an augment weapon, you are still counted as being unarmed.

AUTO / AUTO-HEAVY

Auto weapons have the capacity of firing several rounds with each attack. This is used with area effects and when increasing damage against specific targets. A weapon with an auto property need not employ that property, though some abilities require it. Auto weapons are broken up into two subcategories, auto and auto-heavy.

Auto weapons can fire in single-shot mode or in 5-round bursts. Auto-Heavy can fire in single-shot mode or in aggressive 10-round bursts. In single-shot mode, the weapon uses its normal damage die. In autofire mode, use the alternate damage value listed on the table.

All auto or auto-heavy weapons also have the burst fire property (thus it is not listed on the table: see the official rules for the definition of the property). Only users proficient with the weapon may make burst fire attacks with it. When making a burst fire attack with a weapon with the auto property, you use only the normal five rounds of ammunition, but do not use the improved damage die. With the heavy-auto property, you use the normal ten rounds of ammunition *and* the improved damage die.

BONUS (+1/+2/+3)

Higher tech weapons have a bonus to attack and damage rolls.

BURST FIRE

As defined in the official rules, the burst fire property uses a flat DC to compensate for the fact that no base character classes gain proficiency with firearms. As this is not an issue in *Amethyst*, the DC of burst fire attacks is equal to 8 + your Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus if proficient. Otherwise, the property works as normal.

DIRECT

Only certain weapons with the exp property have this property . Instead of targeting an area, this weapon can make a direct attack on a creature. Make a ranged attack: if successful, the target is automatically ground zero of the explosive attack and does not make a saving throw. It also has the potential to suffer a critical hit: otherwise, proceed with the explosive attack as normal, with the target's position as the intended point. Additionally, if you hit the intended target with an explosive attack, roll all damage dice twice and take the higher values. Creatures in the area of effect still make a Dexterity saving throw. If you miss the intended target, the point of impact becomes a random location within a 15-foot radius of the target (which can still suffer from the area of effect blast).

ELECTRONIC STACKED PROJECTILE

No longer are bullets loaded from an external magazine and launched via a firing pin. Now they are loaded directly into the barrel, separated only by 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 magazine, 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.

ESP weapons have both the auto and auto-heavy property. You can only have one in effect at a time, and can switch between them as a bonus action.

EXP

Explosives have an area of effect at the point of impact of 5 feet or more. Additionally, if an explosive's area of effect is impeded by indestructible terrain (like in a dungeon corridor), the explosion carries over to unaffected areas. For every 5 feet impeded by indestructible terrain, the area of effect shifts over to occupy the same area. If both sides of an explosion are occupied by indestructible terrain (like a narrow corridor), the blast carries up and down the corridor. This rule doesn't go into effect if the explosion can damage the obstructing terrain. The number listed next the "Exp" entry indicates the size of the radius in feet. Unless otherwise stated, explosive attacks inflict bludgeoning damage, and also deal extra damage to creatures vulnerable to fire as if they dealt that damage type.

Attacking with Explosives: When using any weapon with an area of effect, you don't make a ranged attack but rather establish a Dexterity saving throw DC that affected creatures must beat. The DC for the Dexterity saving throw equals 8 + your Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus (if proficient in the weapon you are using).

FEED

This property pertains to a weapon with neither a clip nor a magazine. It is either a weapon with a single-shot charge or it is a firearm that can only be loaded one round at a time. With an action and/or a bonus action (the character's choice), one shot is reloaded in the weapon. Like magazine/clip-based weapons, there is a maximum number of shots you can load. If a character has additional actions in a turn, these can be used to load as well.

GRENADE

Grenades use their own form of attack depending on the specific grenade.

GUIDED

These weapons assist in aiming after being fired and can even make a secondary attack if the first one misses.

As many times a day as the weapon's TL +2, you can either have advantage on the attack roll or reroll a missed attack and take the second result. If you choose to reroll a missed attack, it does not take effect until the end of the target's next turn.

IMMUNE
These weapons, and they are few, cannot be disrupted from casual use due to their archaic construction. However, they can still be affected by targeted disruption events and will still suffer permanent disruption if enchanted.

LASER
Any condensed, well-defined beam of light or heat 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 damage. There are laser pistols, rifles, and thumper cannons.

Laser weapons deal fire damage. If you hit with a laser, you gain a +1 bonus to your next attack roll against the same target. This is lost if you don't fire at the same target or if you miss. If you attack an obstruction or inanimate object, you inflict additional damage equal to twice your tech level.

Kind of Magic: Laser weapons count as magical for purposes of overcoming damage resistance.

Goggles Do Nothing: If you roll a critical hit, the target is blinded until the beginning of your next turn.

MAGNETIC
The specific process of accelerating metal shells using magnetism is complicated, with coil-based and rail-based technology launching shells using different means.

If you roll a critical hit with a magnetic weapon, you inflict additional damage equal to twice the weapon's tech level. If you kill a creature, the shell continues on a straight path from the weapon, making a single free attack on one creature in direct line of effect within the weapon's range.

Power: Magnetic weapons have a magazine but require power from a power cell to operate the magnetic acceleration (H for heavy and super-heavy weapons, M for all others). One is included with the weapon and is only depleted if disrupted.

Kind of Magic: Magnetic weapons count as magical and adamantine for purposes of damage resistance.

MASTERCRAFT
A mastercraft item is simply a more refined, better variation of an already existing design. These are a notch above despite sharing all other qualities with a mundane design.

A mastercraft weapon deals +1 damage if any of its damage dice result in a maximum result. This is in addition to any other effects that occur when the maximum result is rolled.

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 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. In other circles, these devices have been called particle accelerators.

Nuclear weapons inflict force damage, and also deal additional damage to creatures vulnerable to necrotic as if they dealt that damage type. If you hit with a nuclear weapon, every subsequent hit on the same target gains a +1 bonus to damage. This is cumulative up to the weapon's tech level and is lost if you don't hit that same target before the end of your next turn. If you roll a critical hit, the target is poisoned until the beginning of your next turn.

Kind of Magic: Nuclear weapons count as magical for purposes of damage resistance.

PINCHER
These weapons deliver an electromagnetic pulse that disrupts any item that requires a battery or an electric current to operate.

Pincher weapons inflict lightning damage. If you roll a critical hit on the attack roll and the target is not immune or resistant to lightning damage, the target takes additional damage equal to twice the weapon's tech level, and the target has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

Kind of Magic: Pincher weapons count as magical for purposes of damage resistance.

Disruption: All battery-powered technology on the target suffers a targeted disruption event.

PLASMA
Any weapon employing ionized gas is considered a plasma weapon. Magnetism is one of the few scientific constants not broken by the EDF: a plasma weapon fires a toroid of superheated gas inside a magneto-hydrodynamic 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. There are plasma pistols, rifles, and cannons.

Plasma weapons inflict force damage, and also deal additional damage to targets vulnerable to fire as if they dealt that damage type. Otherwise, the heat generated is too high for a creature resistant to fire to be resistant. Creatures immune to fire are only resistant to plasma weapons. If you roll a critical hit with a plasma weapon, you inflict twice the tech level in additional damage on this turn, twice the tech level -1 on the beginning of your next turn, twice tech level -2 on the beginning of the following turn, and so on until 0.

Kind of Magic: Plasma weapons count as magical for purposes of damage resistance.

Directed Energy: As many times a day as the weapon's tech level, you can attempt a directed energy attack—make a single attack, firing a single shot, as an action. On a hit, roll all damage dice twice and take the higher result, add all relevant modifiers as normal, and add twice the weapon's tech level. Each creature within 5 feet of the hit target also suffers damage equal to twice the weapon's tech level. If you miss, the initial target suffers half damage with no area effect.

RELOAD
This property pertains to a magazine- or clip-fed weapon. A magazine or clip carries a certain number of shots before requiring a reload. A magazine may also be battery with a set number of charges. Note that several techan melee weapons also require an energy cell, inflicting additional effects with each charge—these same rules apply. Refer to official licensed material for the rules on *reload*.

SHOTGUN
Shotguns impact with tremendous force at close range, but this stopping power diminishes rapidly further out. Shotguns do +3 damage if fired at targets within 10 feet. At long range, they inflict half damage. If you roll a critical hit, the target is knocked prone.

SNIPER
These weapons contain advanced targeting systems for long-range fire. These include tracking systems and scopes.

Sniper weapons list a bonus. If you are proficient with the weapon, you can use an action or bonus action to aim, gaining the bonus on your following ranged attack with the weapon against a creature at least 25 feet away. The bonus is lost if you move, are moved, or after you make a ranged attack with the weapon (whether you hit or not). This bonus is cumulative for up to two actions.

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. 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. In practical uses, the sonic weapon may be downgraded to transmit a normal voice across 10x its range increment to any other target without fear of anyone else overhearing unless they are inline.

Sonic weapons inflict thunder damage, and also deal additional damage to targets vulnerable to bludgeoning as if they dealt that damage type. If you roll a critical hit, the target is deafened for one minute.

Kind of Magic: Sonic weapons count as magical for purposes of damage resistance.

MELEE WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS
Most fae races remain steadfast in their traditions and techniques. A laudenian bow looks the same now as it always did. 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.

All weapons in officially licensed publications are available in *Amethyst*. Weapons from non-core and third-party supplements are allowed with the GM's consent.

BRASS KNUCKLES
A no fuss weapon, brass knuckles add +1 damage to unarmed melee hits.

BUZZ BATON
The buzz baton is a non-collapsible truncheon with a point capable of emanating a powerful electric shock. Basic damage is bludgeoning. As part of a hit, you can use a cell charge and either inflict +2 lightning damage, or replace the entire bludgeoning damage with lightning damage.

HARMONIC BLADE
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.

If you have proficiency in Wisdom (Medicine), you gain a +2 bonus to damage with this weapon. Damage increases to 1d6 if you have advantage on the target.

LIMSHAU WEAPONS
While there has always been a superficial similarity between the cultures of the damaskans and pre-Hammer east Asian cultures, only in Limshau has that similarity been celebrated and expanded into a full-fledged blending of styles. This is most visible to outsiders in the form of the preferred weaponry of the Limshau custodian, which take old Japanese designs and exploit the superior materials available in Canam to produce lighter, more easily wielded versions suitable for use with the narrow-quarters martial art of *gorna sersannis*. Limshau weapons are utilitarian pieces, lacking all but the most basic ornamentation: but one thing all have in common is a series of unobtrusive hooks, loops, and carabiners, enabling a custodian to easily tether and quickly release the weapon from one of the multitudinous belts adorning their traditional kawabari armor.

Any two-handed Limshau weapon can be temporarily wielded in one hand while climbing, balancing, or performing some similar physical task, but suffers a -2 penalty to damage rolls when doing so. Additionally, the wielder of a limshau weapon has advantage on all rolls to avoid being disarmed and can always recover her dropped weapon as a reaction.

MAKANA
The chaparrans of Dawnamoak eschew swords and other metallic armaments, but still find the versatility of a blade useful. The makana is a short, narrow club of hardened wood studded along its edge with sharpened points of obsidian or flint. It is wielded much like a short sword, but with more of a raking motion in order to inflict raw, bleeding wounds.

The makana can inflict bludgeoning or slashing damage at will. Switching takes no action, but slashing is assumed unless you declare the switch.

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, only keeping the tradition within Fargon. Narros born or raised elsewhere run the risk of never picking up one. 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 spearhead, and a hammer, formed from a single block of steel. That head is topped on a long staff towering over most narros wielding it.

The krollish can inflict bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing damage at-will. Switching takes no action, but slashing is assumed unless you declare the switch.

PITON GAUNTLET

This weapon mounts to the forearm, and 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.

If you hit a creature with a melee attack, you can activate the piton-gauntlet to inflict additional damage on the target (listed on the table). Once you use the piton, you cannot use it again until the beginning of your next turn.

POWER HOOKS

These impressive devices are oversized augmented manipulators attached to synthetic muscles and hydraulic pumps. The entire assembly wraps around the arm and most of the shoulder. Purchasing two links the two assemblies around the back.

Power-hooks increase the damage dice of unarmed attacks by one step (1d4 > 1d6 > 1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). A power-hook takes up a hand.

PUNCH GUN

Effectively an impact-triggered firearm, the punch-gun only discharges when a short relay is trigged an inch from your unarmed attack. Earlier versions of the weapon use basic chemical projectiles: at TL4, this is usually replaced with a laser, and at TL5 with a plasma weapon (such variations usually combine with an armored gauntlet to protect the wielder against back blast).

If you hit a creature with a melee attack, you can activate the punch gun to inflict additional damage on the target (listed on the table).

TESLA GLOVE

This unique item 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.

If you don't hit any creature during a round, at the start of your next turn, increase the damage of your next hit with this weapon by +2. This is cumulative up to +8 damage. After you hit any creature, the bonus is reduced back to 0. At the start of combat, unless you are surprised, the glove is assumed to be primed to +8 damage.

RANGED WEAPONS DESCRIPTIONS

These descriptions include both advanced echan weapons as well as advanced firearms, from pistols to artillery weapons.

AIR DART GUN

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 medical injections. You choose which injection to employ from your inventory before making the attack.

CAPSICUM SPRAY

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 odorless 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.

If struck, the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 2d4 rounds. If you score a critical hit, the target fails this save. Larger creatures gain a bonus to the save as follows (+2 Large, +4 Huge; larger creatures are immune).

CARBON CROSSBOW

This super light crossbow was originally exported from York, but replicas have been found across Canam. The weapon is a sleek, smooth, multi-piece item of black and silver, constructed from polymer and carbon fiber. The weapon is less clumsy than ancient designs.

The carbon crossbow comes with a range finding scope. Use a bonus action to aim with the scope, nullifying the disadvantage of firing long range.

COMPOUND LONGBOW

Compound bows are fashioned of steel or aluminum—a few rare models are constructed from magnarros or angelite. Their power comes from a series of pulleys, cams, and levers. They do not warp and can be adjusted for a variety of conditions.

A compound longbow can be adjusted for greater force at the cost of a more demanding draw. Using settings above the first requires proficiency with the weapon and the listed minimum Strength score. *Setting 1*—1d6 piercing; *setting 2*—Str 15, 1d8 piercing; *setting 3*—Str 18, 1d10 piercing; *setting 4*—Str 20, 1d12 piercing. It takes a full minute to adjust to a new setting.

DISRUPTOR

This 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 encountered undead opponents and reported a much-elevated damage potential. Undead creatures are vulnerable to hits from this weapon.

ELECTROSHOCK GUN

This wand-shaped device fires air-compressed barbed darts attached to coils towards a target. Upon impact, the coils conduct a massive electrical current, disrupting superficial muscle functions. The darts can penetrate enough to attach to anything, and are magnetic. The electrical pulse does not need to penetrate skin to be effective. Upon impact, the target must make a DC15 Constitution save or be paralyzed for 2d4 rounds. If you score a critical hit, the target automatically fails this save. Larger creatures gain a bonus to the save as follows (+2 Large, +4 Huge; larger creatures are immune).

Firing Rate: Tension springs recoil the darts back to the gun as a free action. However, it cannot fire again for one minutes (10 rounds) as its capacitor needs to charge.

Range: Because of the length of coil, you cannot strike creatures further than 10 feet.

FLAMETHROWER

This weapon has shrunk in size over the years. Though still two-handed, it no longer requires an unsafe pipe 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. 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 decompress, sprays out in liquid form. A magnesium igniter at its barrel sends the superheated stream of flame to its target. Despite rumors 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.

When you attack with the flamethrower, you target a 20-foot cone emanating from you. The DC for the Dexterity saving throw equals 8 + your Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus (if proficient in the weapon). Making the save still inflicts half damage. Any target that failed the save against a flamethrower suffers half the inflicted damage again at the beginning of your next turn.

GROUND HEAVY GUN

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 has an incredible range and is able to eliminate most soft targets with a single shot.

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, it is placed without coffin in the dirt along with a single seed. The tree that grows requires neither light nor water. Chaparrans are able to encourage wood to grow objects naturally 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 used/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. If the bow doesn't like you for any reason, you can neither gain your proficiency bonus or the mastercraft bonus with it nor use the following special abilities:

Excellence: If your primary attack attribute is 18 or higher, increase the damage by your black bow to 1d10.

Penetration: If you kill a creature with the bow, the arrow continues on a straight path from the weapon, making a single free attack on one creature in direct line of effect within the weapon's range. This process can repeat until the arrow runs out of range or hits a target it cannot kill.

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.

PLASMA ARTILLERY

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 for the decreased range with its damage potential.

RESTRAINMENT FIELD

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. If this weapon strikes a target, it is restrained: the victim needs to make a DC15 Dexterity or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to escape. Only Large targets or smaller can be targeted. A target can be hit additional times, each time increasing the save DC by +2 (maximum DC25).

ROTARY CANNON

This gun is a modern rendition of the weapon once called the "gatling gun", a relatively simple design with a manual or spring loaded crank for rotating the numerous barrels. The mechanism is simple, but does not have the massive firing rate or more advanced models. Because of its design, it is the most rugged heavy weapon in open-echa.

The rotary cannon has no single shot option: it always fires 10 shots per attack roll.

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 are 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 warheads and guidance systems. All SPP weapons also have the guided property.

SONIC STUNNER

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 (though they are commensurately more expensive).

A target hit by a sonic stunner must make a DC20 Constitution saving throw or increase its exhaustion level by +1 (to a maximum of level 5) for 1 minute. Unlike normal exhaustion, levels incurred by this weapon reduce by 1 every minute after suffering the last attack from it.

VAPOR RIFLE
No one is entirely sure who created this 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.

When you hit with an attack with this weapon, you can spend an extra cell charge to re-roll your damage dice and select the higher value. You spend the extra charges after you roll for damage, and there is no limit on the number of charges used (until you roll the desired result).

AMMUNITION
Supplies for adventurers are often extremely limited, and are a major factor in the elevation of magic over gunpowder. This is reflected in the cost of ammunition. Unlike arrows or bolts, bullets that miss cannot be recovered and used again (although the casings and points can sometimes be scavenged and recycled, but all but the most basic chemical projectiles require a factory to do this). Prices listed are for the quantities indicated next to the entry. Each quantity listed weighs 0.25 lb., except for flame tanks (5 lb.) and rockets (2 lb.).

Note: All characters gain two full magazines, clips, or cells for weapons when they purchase them. The only exceptions are air dart rifles and grenade launchers (which are sold without ammunition).

A NOTE ON CLIPS
It would be frustrating to micromanage one's clip/magazine usage. When purchasing ammunition, you are assumed to purchasing clips and magazines as well for the capacities you need. You are not strolling into combat with boxes of loose ammunition. You are expected to be prepared.

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/magazine: thus, you can only use one type of alternate ammunition property per turn unless you attack with multiple weapons.

FAE IRON ROUNDS
Rare, but some bastions made limited runs of fae-iron rounds, especially more xenophobic ones like Mann. Bastions with positive echan relations like York and Selkirk prohibit their manufacture and sale.

Use: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets, heavy shells.

RUBBER
Large and larger targets suffer neither damage nor any effect. Medium and smaller targets suffer 1 hit point of damage (which cannot be modified) and disadvantage on attack rolls until the start of your next turn. A critical hit causes the target to be stunned until the start of your next turn.

Use: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, sabot SPPs, shotgun shells, traditional bullets.

Requirement: Non-auto or non-auto-heavy.

SILVER
Silver bullets are usually employed by specialists targeting the very limited array of opponents vulnerable to silver. Apart from this, wounds from silver bullets are resistant to magical healing (reducing all hit point recovery by half), but are otherwise only as effective as regular rounds.

Use: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, sabot SPPs, shotgun shells, traditional bullets.

TRACER
If you suffer disadvantage from firing at a target at long range and miss with your attack, on your next attack, you no longer suffer disadvantage. You also suffer -2 damage on each damage die.

Use: Caseless rounds, ESP bullets, gauss iron flechettes, sabot SPPs, traditional bullets;

Requirement: Auto or auto-heavy weapons only.

INJECTIONS
Injections are an affliction and act similar to poison, only with injections, the target cannot avoid the initial effect. Injections can be delivered manually with a melee attack or via an air dart gun. Instead of inflicting damage, you impose the injection's effect. Large or larger creatures cannot be affected by injections. If you hit the same target again with the same injection before the effect wears off, the target automatically fails its next saving throw against the effect. Injections do not work on undead or incorporeal creatures. A missed attack with an injector does not destroy the injection.

DETONATOR
A vile injection, this introduces nanites into a subject that are exceptionally susceptible to EDF and detonate when disrupted. The first time the target makes an attack during its turn, it takes 12 damage. If injected into an echan, it takes effect immediately.

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.

A fae without the Ixindar keyword hit with this injection is poisoned. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect. After recovering from echan suppressor, the target takes 2d4 damage.

AMMUNITION TYPE	QTY	DAMAGE APPLICATION	COST
Energy			
Battery cell – B	1	Various	2
Battery cell – M	1	Various	10
Battery cell – H	1	Various	40
Kinetic			
Capsicum cartridge	3	—	4
Caseless round	20	Any	4
ESP bullet	20	Any	4
Flame tank	1 tank	Any	25
Gauss flechette (coil/rail)	10	1d6-1d8	5
Gauss flechette (coil/rail)	10	1d10-2d6	10
Gauss flechette (coil/rail)	10	< 2d6	15
Heavy shell	1	Any	10
Net cartridge	1	—	5
Sabot SPP	20	Any	2
Shotgun slug	10	Any	2
Traditional bullet	20	1d4-1d6	1
Traditional bullet	20	1d8-1d10	2
Traditional bullet	20	1d12 and up	3
Injections			
Detonator	1	--	10
Echan Suppressor	1	--	50
Fear	1	--	100
Narcosynthesis	1	--	20
Open Mind	1	--	150
Paralysis	1	--	75
Pain	1	--	100
Sleep	1	--	100
Slow	1	--	50
Alternate			
Fae Iron	--	--	x3
Rubber	--	--	x3
Silver	--	--	x4
Tracer	--	--	x4

FEAR
This batch of psychotropic 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. A creature hit is frightened. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

NARCOSYNTHESIS
Truth serum, multiplied by fifty. For one hour, the target must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw each time it attempts a Charisma (Deception) check or suffer disadvantage on the check.

OPEN MIND
This injection is a concoction of barbiturates, amphetamines, and LSD. When injected, the target becomes extremely susceptible to suggestion. A creature hit is charmed. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

PAIN
This injection does not inflict pain, but rather hypersensitizes the dermal nerve network, making a creature feel all sensations with uncomfortable intensity. Each time a hit target takes damage, it suffers an additional 1d4 damage. This is not affected by a critical hit. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

PARALYSIS
This broad-spectrum mélange of neuromuscular-blocking drugs is able to inflict nearly instant paralysis in a target. A creature hit is paralyzed. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

SLEEP
This heavy dose of diazepam and various opioids *might* actually kill a horse. A hit creature must make DC15 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious. If hit again with the same injection within 1 minute, the DC increases by +5 (cumulative to max DC25). The target remains unconscious for five minutes or until the sleeper takes damage or someone uses an action to shake or slap the sleeper awake.

SLOW
This strange medley of drugs causes muscle relaxation by depressing the central nervous system. A hit creature has its speed reduced by half. It also suffers disadvantage on Dexterity ability checks and skill checks. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

GRENADES & EXPLOSIVES
It's no secret that extreme increases in volume and energy can occasionally be muffled in the presence of magic. Although deflagration—subsonic combustion—appears unaffected, sudden supersonic expansions of energy can intermittently be suppressed, explaining why even basic combustion engines and chemical firearms sporadically work. As grenades are only required to work once, they remain popular, though there will be a dud from time to time.

GRENADES
These explosives come equipped with either an impact detonator or a 1-round timer detonator (exploding at the beginning or end of your next turn—your choice), chosen when you use the grenade. They can be thrown or fired from a launcher without requiring an Intelligence (Demolitions) check. A grenade can still be used with another detonator, but this requires a separate detonator and the use of the Intelligence (Demolitions) skill to plant it. Some modified grenades can still be thrown but most cannot.

EXPLOSIVES
Explosives all require a separate detonator. Some explosives are not designed to be used as one (like fuel) and may be overly or insufficiently sensitive as well as cumbersome. Explosives can be triggered without an Intelligence (Demolitions) check, but one is required to plant a detonator or at least some form of trigger.

PHYSICAL
Grenades and explosives with the physical damage type deal bludgeoning damage unless otherwise stated. Medium or smaller targets that don't save against the Dexterity saving throw are knocked prone by the explosion.

RANGE
All grenades and explosives 2 lbs. or less can be thrown by Medium-sized targets to a range of 20/60. You cannot effectively throw explosives larger than 5 lbs. A GM can alter these values if the thrower has a higher strength or is larger.

READING THE TABLE
Exp: All explosives have the Exp property (see Weapons). This entry indicates the area of effect.

Detonator: This indicates the type of detonator required to trigger the explosive:

Ignition—requires an ignition source (a flame or another explosive).

Explosive—requires another explosive (it will not detonate with an ignition).

Detonator—requires an actual detonator (it will not detonate otherwise).

N*ote:* Grenades are equipped automatically with an impact detonator or 1-round timer detonator (choose when using the grenade).

Symp (Sympathetic): A "yes" indicates it can be detonated if caught in the radius of another explosion (50% chance). A "no" indicates it cannot, but it may still be detonated by another method initiated by another explosion as long as it has an appropriate detonator. A sympathetic explosion is treated as part of the same explosion only if it is located in the same area as the primary—otherwise, make a separate explosives attack.

COMBAT WITH GRENADES AND EXPLOSIVES
Most explosives listed can be either a grenade or a planted explosive. Grenades can be thrown or loaded into a grenade launcher and they detonate upon impact or on your next turn (beginning or ending), chosen when using the grenade. Planted explosives require a detonator and a Intelligence (Demolitions) check.

USING GRENADES
When making a grenade attack (or an attack where you throw an explosive), you pick a spot in range (20/60 if thrown). All targets in the blast radius must beat the Reflex DC or take full damage. Targets that make the save take half damage.

Impact Point: Any creature within the same space as an exploding grenade takes +1 die of damage from a grenade attack (so a 2d6 concussion grenade will inflict 3d6 to any creature occupying the same space as the grenade when it detonates).

Direct Attack: Grenade launchers, rocket launchers, ground heavy guns, plasma artillery systems, and any other firearm with an “exp” value can target an opponent directly, using the direct property. See the description of that property.

Dexterity Saving Throw DC: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw is either 15 or 8 + your Dexterity modifier + your proficiency bonus, if applicable (whichever is higher). Targets that pass the saving throw still take half damage. Some grenades like EMP and nerve don’t require Dexterity saving throws.

After-effects: After an explosive or grenade is detonated, the affected area provides half-cover for one round.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	TYPE	EXP	WT.	COST	TL	SYMP	DETONATOR
Grenades								
Concussion	1d6	Physical	5 ft.	½ lbs.	10	1	No	Detonator
EMP	None	None	15 ft.	½ lbs.	100	3	No	Detonator
Flashbang	Special	Special	10 ft.	½ lbs.	25	1	No	Detonator
Frag	1d8	Physical	10 ft.	½ lbs.	25	1	No	Detonator
High-Yield (HMX)	2d6	Physical	5 ft.	½ lbs.	45	1	No	Detonator
Nerve Toxin	2d8	Poison	5/10/15 ft.	½ lbs.	250	4	No	Detonator
Plasma	2d8	Fire	15 ft.	½ lbs.	1,000	5	No	Detonator
Riot	None	Poison	5/10/15 ft.	½ lbs.	50	1	No	Detonator
Smoke-Signal	None	None	0	½ lbs.	5	0	No	Detonator
Smoke-Screening	None	None	10/15/20 ft.	½ lbs.	10	0	No	Detonator
White Phosphorus	1d8	Fire	5/10/15 ft.	½ lbs.	150	1	No	Detonator
Explosives								
Auto Fuel	1d6	Fire	5 ft.	1g. / 8lbs.	5	0	Yes	Ignition
Composition	1d10	Physical	5 ft.	1 lbs.	50	2	No	Detonator
Exposed gunpowder	1d6	Physical	5 ft.	1 lbs.	5	0	Yes	Ignition
Fertilizer / ANFO	1d6	Physical	5 ft.	1 lbs.	5	0	No	Explosive
Jet Fuel	1d8	Fire	5 ft.	1g. / 8lbs.	5	0	Yes	Explosive
TNT	1d8	Physical	5 ft.	1 lbs.	20	0	Yes	Explosive

USING DEMOLITIONS

Demolitions. When detonating an explosive, all targets in the blast radius must beat the Dexterity saving throw DC or take full damage. Targets that make the save take half damage.

Dexterity Saving Throw DC: The DC for the Dexterity saving throw equals 8 + your Dexterity modifier + your Intelligence (Demolitions) proficiency bonus. Targets that pass the saving throw still take half damage.

Damaging Structures, Inanimate Objects, and Helpless Creatures: Anything in range that does not have a Dexterity score and is not moving takes maximum damage from the blast. Animated targets that are helpless against the blast (for instance, if the explosive is attached to them) cannot make saving throws and also take maximum damage.

Proxy Detonation: Explosives always go off when their detonation conditions are met, regardless of whether the attacker is able to act in the encounter. The Dexterity saving throw DC of the explosive is set by the person making the Demolitions check, not the person who triggers the explosion. If the explosive is thrown, then choose the higher DC between the creator and the thrower.

After-effects: After an explosive or grenade is detonated, the affected area provides half-cover for one round.

EXPLOSIVE AND GRENADE TYPES

COMPOSITION EXPLOSIVE

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.

With a successful DC10 Intelligence (Demolitions) check, you can change the blast zone of the explosive from a 5-foot radius to a 10-foot cone. You must determine which area the explosive is affecting when you set it and once set and your skill check rolled, you cannot alter the explosive pattern without starting over. You cannot increase the area of a cone beyond 30 feet with additional explosives.

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.

Targets with 10 hit points or less that fail the saving throw are killed.

EMP

EMPs don't inflict any damage, but instead discharge an electromagnetic burst that disrupts electronics.

When detonated, all TL1 and greater technology that employs a cell suffers a targeted disruption. Vehicles suffer disadvantage on Dexterity checks for five minutes.

FLASHBANG

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.

Targets that fail the save are blinded and deafened until the end of your next turn.

FRAG (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 (dealing bludgeoning, piercing, AND slashing damage).

FUEL, AUTO/JET
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 is more than enough to start the surface of a liquid slick evaporating.

The blast radius is also on fire for 3d6 minutes. Any target moving into an affected area on its turn or any target beginning its turn in an affected area suffers the basic damage of the fuel (1d6 or 1d8).

NERVE TOXIN
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.

Nerve toxin grenades are a gas effect that only affects living creatures. After detonation, the area continues to affect any creature that starts its turn in or enters the target area for 1d4 minutes. After detonation, the nerve toxin grenade fills a 10-foot cube, expanding to 20 feet at the top of the next round and 30 feet on the round after that.

Targets are poisoned and suffer 2d6 damage each turn. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass two consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

NITROGLYCERINE
One of the oldest explosives, nitro is no 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.

RIOT GRENADE
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.

Riot grenades are a gas effect that only affects living creatures. After detonation, the area continues to affect any creature that starts its turn in or enters the target area for 1d4 minutes. After detonation, the riot grenade fills a 10-foot cube, expanding to 20 feet at the top of the next round and 30 feet on the round after that. Targets are poisoned and their speed is halved. At the beginning of its turn, the target can make a DC15 Constitution saving throw. It must pass 2 consecutive saving throws to recover from this effect.

SMOKE GRENADE
There are three types of smoke grenades: screening grenades, signal grenades, and white phosphorous grenades. Most smoke grenades are employed as signaling devices, though they can also be used to screen unit movements, conceal advancement and hinder enemy fire. Signal smoke grenades cannot be used for screening, though screening grenades can be used as a signal grenade. Screening grenades expel either a hexachloroethane/zinc (HC) mixture that is also an irritant or a terephthalic acid mixture (TA), which is harmless. Signal grenades use potassium chlorate, lactose, and a colored dye to work. Signal grenades are available in several colors, including white, red, yellow, green, and purple. 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.

Screening Special Rule: After detonation, the smoke grenade fills a 20-foot cube, expanding to 30 feet at the top of the next round and 40 feet on the round after that. The smoke obscures all sight, including dark/night vision. Everyone inside or on opposite sides of the smoke from an attack are granted three-quarters cover. Smoke grenades last for 1d4 minutes. Wind can disperse the smoke as well.

White Phosphorus Special Rules: This grenade has the same effect as the screening grenade except it also deals fire damage to targets inside. Targets entering or passing through the affected area automatically suffer damage without a saving throw (saving throws are only for the initial impact). White Phosphorus damage cannot not be increased by direct fire, ground zero, impact square, or a critical hit.

TNT (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 moldable explosive, TNT can accidentally detonate if caught in the blast of another explosion.

ARMOR
Only in this strange modern time can armor from every era in mankind's history be found in use. No longer are antiques collected in museums, pushed aside in favor of modern alternatives. Despite advanced armor being available, limited resources and a lack of mechanical fabrication have prevented their mass distribution, paving the way for previously thought obsolete relics.

The majority of techan armor can only be identified by their glossy and refined construction as well as their lack of medieval-inspired regalia. To put it simply, techan armor generally looks plain. Most techan armor is actually immune to disruption—only the powered accessories like targeting systems and flight packs are susceptible, and thus said additions are uncommon. Even rarer are the powered defensive systems including the imposing and powerful exo-armors, though their effectiveness in combat is hard to deny.

ARMOR AND DISRUPTION
Some armor requires power to operate at full effectiveness, or at all. The power usage of the armor, if any, is listed on the armor table. All armor that utilizes a cell lasts a month before needing to be replaced. Armor with a listed usage (like H[10]) have features that use additional power, as indicated in the armor's description.

When the cell is empty, or when the armor is disrupted, certain features of the armor may shut down until the cell is replaced or the disruption cleared, as noted in the armor's description. Unless otherwise stated, the armor continues to grant its AC as listed on the table when unpowered or disrupted. Note that unpowered armor of TL1 and higher are still subject to disruption events: those events just have no practical effect if the armor doesn't require a cell.

ARMOR	COST	ARMOR CLASS (AC)	STRENGTH	STEALTH	WEIGHT	CELL	TL
Light Armor							
Ballistics Armor	40	12+Dex modifier	—	—	15 lbs.	—	0
Limshau Kawabari	50gp	12+Dex modifier	—	—	10 lbs.	—	—
Synthetic Weave	40	11+Dex modifier	—	—	7 lbs.	—	0
Synthetic Weave, Mk2	500	11+Dex modifier	—	—	7 lbs.	—	1
Spider-Silk Suit	1,500	12+Dex modifier	—	—	10 lbs.	—	4
Medium Armor							
Aramid Combat Suit	1,500	14+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	25 lbs.	—	1
Aramid Survival Suit	3,500	15+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	30 lbs.	—	2
Blinder-Mail	4,500	14+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	— / Special	25 lbs.	H(20)	3
Force Body Vest	50	13+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	20 lbs.	—	0
Nanotech Armor	5,000	16 +Dex modifier (max 2)	—	—	25 lbs.	H	3
Heavy Armor							
Advanced Wasteland	5,000	17	Str 15	Disadvantage	40 lbs.	—	3
Carbide Armor	1,500	16	Str 13	Disadvantage	35 lbs.	—	0
Flak Longcoat	250	15	—	Disadvantage	35 lbs.	—	0
Full Combat Warrior	7,500	19	Str 13	Disadvantage	40 lbs.	—	3
Tactical Body Armor	2,500	16	Str 15	Disadvantage	30 lbs.	—	2
Tech-Mail	2,500	18	—	Disadvantage	35 lbs.	—	3
Yowie Suit	750	15	Str 13	Special	35 lbs.	—	0
Yowie Suit, Mk2	5,500	15	Str 13	Special	25 lbs.	H(20)	3
Exo-Armor (Light)							
Covenant	120,000	12*+Dex modifier	—	Disadvantage	450 lbs.	H(10)	5
Skinplate	65,000	12*+Dex modifier	—	Disadvantage	265 lbs.	H	4
Exo-Armor (Medium)							
Combat Exoskeleton	65,000	15*+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	1,950 lbs.	H	4
Combat Exoskeleton	85,000	15*+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	1,950 lbs.	H	5
Gladiator	65,000	15*+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	650 lbs.	H	3
Utility Exoskeleton	59,000	14*+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	1,500 lbs.	H	3
Vulture System	52,000	14*+Dex modifier (max 2)	—	Disadvantage	350 lbs.	H	4
Exo-Armor (Heavy)							
Amarok	50,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	10,000 lbs.	H	3
Apostle Motor Slave	100,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	4,850 lbs.	H	5
Mobile Motor Armor	65,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	3,950 lbs.	H	4
Rack Power Suit	70,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	4,050 lbs.	H	4
Tanker	85,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	8,000 lbs.	H	4
Testament	115,000	18*	—	Disadvantage	18,000 lbs.	H(10)	5

* AC enhanced, see description.

SHIELDS	COST	ARMOR CLASS (AC)	STRENGTH	STEALTH	WEIGHT	CELL	TL
Active Dissuasion System	7,500	+1	—	—	5 lbs.	H(15)	4
Deployable Shield	11,000	+2 / +3	—	—/ Disadvantage	10 lbs.	H	3
Energy Envelope	40,000	+1	—	—	5 lbs.	H	5
Forced Defense Shield	250	+2	—	Disadvantage	12 lbs.	—	0
Janoahn Master Shield	40gp	+2/+3	Str 15	—/ Disadvantage	25 lbs.	—	—
Kinetic Baffle	26,000	+3 Special	—	—	5 lbs.	H	4
Limshau Buckler	50gp	+1	—	—	3 lbs.	—	—
Repulsor Engine	15,000	+3 Special	—	—	5 lbs.	H/H (10)	4

EXO-ARMOR RULES

Powered armor, or exo-armor, is a powered mechanized unit controlled by a pilot inside. While several are not much bigger than their controllers, others weigh several tons and can tower over fifteen feet. Even though these are machines rather than creatures, Large suits can still squeeze like any other creature.

Entering and Exiting Exo-Armor: While under power, it is possible to don or remove exo-armor by use and action and expending 30 feet of movement (on the same turn). Since most exo-armor is designed to be used in open echa, it is usually designed with quick-release catches as well to allow for rapid removal when disrupted: doing so also requires an action and 30 feet of movement on the same turn.

Hit Points & Threshold: Exo-armor has its own hit point total, which the wearer can shunt damage to instead of taking it herself. It also possesses a threshold, which is the maximum amount of damage the suit can

absorb (or shunt to its own hit points) from a single hit (the wearer taking the rest). If exo-armor is reduced to 0 hit points, it can no longer absorb damage, but is still functional.

Weight: Exo-armor can support its own weight, and does not encumber the user. Its movement value is also fixed, despite any other gear the user may be carrying.

LIGHT ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

BALLISTICS ARMOR

This is a light, but still somewhat clumsy collection of ceramic and polymer plates placed strategically to withstand impacts without hampering maneuverability significantly.

LIMSHAU ARMOR

Overlapping layers of leather pieces sewn together to form fit the wearer, Limshau kawabari looks as unique as it feels. A master leatherworker must individually fit each suit of Limshau leather to its owner, making Limshau kawabari distinctive against other leather armors. The most obvious telltale signs are numerous belt latches over the whole body. Although available in several color based upon one's guild affiliation, generally white or black are the most common.

SPIDER SILK SUIT

Selkirk sold this technology to Angel, which was later stolen by Mann (thus being about the only time in history when any other bastion had something Mann wanted). Computer-controlled looms weave super thin synthetic silk into an extremely flexible nylon. When struck with any attack, the spider silk resists as hard as steel but will still flex more than soft rubber. It employs several thicker pads of carbon fiber in key areas. The spider suit allows for extreme maneuverability.

Resistance: You have resistance to lightning damage.

Flexible: If your Dexterity score is 20 or higher, the AC of this armor increases to 13.

SYNTHETIC WEAVE

The predecessor to advanced aromatic polyamides, this full body set includes thicker pads for impact damage reduction from slashing. It is, however, vulnerable to piercing attacks. Nevertheless, it is a popular basic outfit and the comfortable choice for many in the field. Unlike most armor, synthetic weave can fit easily and covertly under normal clothes (and can even be designed to look more like clothing than armor).

Resistance (Mk2): You have resistance to slashing damage.

MEDIUM ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

ARAMID COMBAT SUIT

The combat suit employs and blends harder materials, rigid plates and flexible aramids. Additional layers of nylon separate staggered sheets of thin polymer plastic.

Resistance: You have resistance to fire damage.

ARAMID SURVIVAL SUIT

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.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Resistances: You have resistance to fire and cold damage.

BLINDER-MAIL

This resembles a lightened version of the heavier titanium carbide armor. What it offers in addition is a holographic camouflage net that can alter the physical properties of the suit to resemble nearly any terrain it is using.

Stealth: When you activate the stealth net, you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks and can attempt to hide even without cover or breaking line of sight (although doing so negates your advantage). The stealth net takes one charge per minute of use.

Disruption: If disrupted, the stealth net is disabled.

FORCE BODY VEST

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.

NANOTECH COMBAT ARMOR

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 solid, deflecting the attack.

Nano-Reaction: Any critical hit against you becomes a normal hit.

Disruption: The armor becomes ordinary clothing and provides no protective benefits at all.

HEAVY ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

ADVANCED WASTELAND ARMOR

An evolved form of the full combat warrior, the wasteland suit was designed to combat more severe threats to techa, based off old designs used in space travel. Cooling systems maintain internal temperature in the harshest environments. A sealed helmet processes external gases.

Resistances: You have resistance to cold and fire damage.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Targeting: You gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls with ranged weapons within normal range.

Disruption: If disrupted, the targeting system is disabled.

CARBIDE ARMOR
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
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
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.

Nightvision: You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, and the system renders everything you see in shades of either green, yellow, or blue (user's preference).

Stealth: If your camouflage pattern matches your terrain, you gains a +2 bonus with Dexterity (Stealth) checks. It takes a full minute to adapt a suit to the terrain.

Targeting: You gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls with ranged weapons within normal range.

Resistance: You have resistance to fire damage.

Disruption: If disrupted, the nightvision and targeting systems are disabled.

TACTICAL BODY ARMOR
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.

Resistance: You have resistance to fire and cold damage.

TECH-MAIL
The most advanced non-powered armor available from the bastions appeared from various sources nearly at the same time. Based on medieval scale mail, tech-mail utilizes overlapping discs no bigger than gold coins interlaced together to form a durable but flexible covering. The discs, comprised of silicon, ceramic, and titanium, spread out impacts across the entire body, allowing for greater protection. The exacting pattern of the scales is proportioned perfectly to maximize protection where needed most. Of course, to most of its users, the fact that it has no complex components to disrupt is what makes it of superior value.

Hardened Defense: You have resistance to piercing attacks.

YOWIE SUIT
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 that can unfold or release to alter the appearance of the suit.

Stealth: In any earth or forest terrain, you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. Additionally, if you don't move on your turn, you gain half-cover.

TL3: The suit employs holographic imaging. If you spend a battery charge and don't move on your round, you are invisible. You remain invisible until you move or make an attack.

Disruption: If disrupted, the holographic projector is disabled.

EXO-ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

AMAROK
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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the amarok counts as a legendary item as well as two rare items.

Large Size: You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. This does not affect your reach or damage dice.

Power: The amarok requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The amarok as a +2 bonus to AC (20 total).

Hit Points: The amarok has 50 hit points and a threshold of 50.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Auto-Reload: You have a mechanism to reload your weapons (since you have no arms). You can reload three clips/cells automatically before needing external loading (you either have to exit the suit to reload or have an ally do it for you). External reloading requires an action and a bonus action.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the amarok comes back online. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Mecha: You ignore penalties for difficult terrain.

Nightvision: You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Resistances: You have resistance to cold and fire damage.

Weapon Limbs: You have neither limbs nor manip-

AMAROK

ulators to hold onto external weapons. You have no threatening reach and cannot make opportunity attacks. You are equipped with three heavy weapon mounts. Because the amarok is Large, you can install super heavy weapons as heavy weapons. Likewise, you can install heavy weapons or two-handed small arms in these mounts as two-handed small arms and one-handed small arms, respectively. You have disadvantage on attack rolls against Medium or smaller targets 5-feet or closer.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Resistances. Mounted weapons are not automatically disrupted and can still be used if you are somehow able to fire them manually.

APOSTLE MOTOR SLAVE

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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the apostle counts as a legendary item as well as two very rare items.

Large Size: You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. You have reach.

Power: The apostle requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The apostle has a +3 bonus to AC (21 total).

Hit Points: The apostle has 60 hit points and a threshold of 20.

Speed: Your speed is 35 feet.

Amplified Strength: Your Strength score is 25.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the apostle comes back online. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do 1d6 damage. If you already inflict 1d6 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also grant a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Resistances: You have resistance to fire, acid, and cold damage.

Regeneration: The apostle recovers 1 hit point per round while active.

Sensor Net: You gain a +2 bonus to Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Weapon Mount: The apostle has a shoulder or arm mounted assembly, which frees up a hand. This mount acts as a hand or a brace for holding or mounting weapons.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and cannot make attacks with held weapons. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Resistances, Weapon Mount. Mounted and held weapons are not automatically disrupted: mounted weapons can still be used if you are somehow able to fire them manually.

COMBAT EXOSKELETON

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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the combat exoskeleton counts as one legendary and two rare items. The TL5 combat exoskeleton counts as two legendary items and one very rare item

Power: The combat exoskeleton requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The TL4 combat exoskeleton has a +1 bonus to AC (16 total); the TL5 combat exoskeleton has a +2 bonus to AC (17 total).

Hit Points: The TL4 combat exoskeleton has 35 hit points and a threshold of 4. The TL5 combat exoskeleton has 45 hit points and a threshold of 5.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the combat exoskeleton comes back online. Once you use *disruption recovery*, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d6 damage. If you already inflict 1d6 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also grant a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mecha Fists: The TL4 combat exoskeleton has a Strength of 23. The TL5 combat exoskeleton has a Strength of 25.

Resistances: You have resistance to cold and fire damage.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Gauntlets, Resistances.

COVENANT

The most advanced armor currently available in open echa, the 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 one of 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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the covenant counts as three legendary items and one very rare item.

Power: The covenant requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The covenant has a +3 bonus to AC (15 total).

Hit Points: The covenant has 30 hit points and a threshold of 3.

Speed: Your speed is 35 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the covenant comes back online. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gravity Anchors: You have a climb speed equal to your normal speed.

Gravity Drive: You suffer no damage from a fall.

Jump Jets: You are always considered moving when performing a jump. You also have advantage with Strength (Athletics) checks when jumping.

Maneuverability: You have advantage with Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Shadow Field: Use an action and spend a cell charge—you are invisible for one minute, until you move, or until you make an attack.

Resistances: You have resistance to fire, lightning and acid damage.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Resistances.

GLADIATOR

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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the gladiator counts as one legendary item and two rare items.

Power: The gladiator requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The gladiator has a +2 bonus to AC (17 total).

Hit Points: The gladiator has 30 hit points and a threshold of 5.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the gladiator comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Firearm Stabilization: Even though you are Medium-sized, you can wield heavy weapons as if they are two-handed small arms and super heavy weapons as if they are heavy weapons.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d6 damage. If you already inflict 1d6 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also grant a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mecha Fists: The gladiator has a Strength of 23.

Weapon Mount: The gladiator has a shoulder or arm mounted assembly, which frees up a hand. This mount acts as a hand or a brace for holding or mounting weapons.

Disruption: You are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Firearm Stabilization, Gauntlets, Weapon Mount. Mounted and held weapons are not automatically disrupted and can be used as long as you are somehow able to fire them manually.

MOBILE MOTOR ARMOR

In the wasteland of open echa, not all treasures are enchanted. In the mad dash to traverse this dangerous environment, occasional travelers fail, leaving their bodies clutching on to the lingering threads of their failed technology, to be found by others. There are rumors of some mercenary companies that refuse allegiance to any bastion and flaunt technology that rivals anything behind the walls by reverse engineering found relics, lost between bastion states, fallen from orbit, or survived from the previous age. Other than the named exo-armor flaunted by bastions, mercenary companies have produced prototypes of their own design, even selling them to other mercenary companies (though reserving the more advanced models for themselves). These unique designs are simply called mobile motor armors. No two look alike, but they all share similar properties.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the mobile motor armor counts as one legendary item and two very rare items.

Power: The motor mobile armor requires an H-class power cell to operate and none of its functions work without it.

Large Size: You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. You have reach.

Bonus: The mobile motor armor has a +1 bonus to AC (19 total).

Hit Points: The mobile motor armor has 35 hit points and a threshold of 5.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d6 damage. If you already inflict 1d6 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one

step (1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also grant a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the MMA comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Resistances: You have resistance to cold and fire damage.

Removable Weapon Limbs: You can remove a gauntlet and replace it with a heavy weapon mount. Because the mobile motor armor is Large, you can install super heavy weapons as heavy weapons. Likewise, you can install heavy weapons or two-handed small arms in these mounts as two-handed small arms and one -handed small arms, respectively.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and cannot make attacks with held weapons. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Resistances, Removable Weapon Limbs. Mounted weapons are not automatically disrupted and can still be used if you can somehow fire them manually.

RACK POWER SUIT

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 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).

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the rack counts as one legendary item and two very rare items.

Power: The rack requires a H-class power cell to operate and it does not work without it.

Large Size: You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. You have reach.

Bonus: The rack has a +1 bonus to AC (19 total).

Hit Points: The rack has 40 hit points and a threshold of 5.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the rack comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d8 damage. If you already inflict 1d8 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also have a +2 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Mecha Fists: The rack has a Strength of 23.

Resistances: You have resistance to fire, acid, and cold damage.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and cannot make attacks with held weapons. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Resistances.

SKINPLATE

This is a small customized powered armor designed specifically for each user. It 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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, skinplate also counts as one rare item and one uncommon item.

Power: Skinplate requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The skinplate has a +2 bonus to AC (14 total)

Hit Points: The skinplate has 25 hit points and a threshold of 2.

Speed: Your speed is 35 feet.

Boosters: You have advantage with Strength (Athletics) checks when jumping.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the skinplate comes back online. Once you use *disruption recovery*, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Mask: You are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

Resistances: You have resistance to fire, lightning and acid damage.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained, and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Resistances.

TANKER

The successor of the smaller gladiator, the impressive tanker has unfortunately not found as much recognition. The military division has analyzed the size of the machine and the logistics division has criticized its cost in comparison to its lighter and cheaper cousin. Despite this, the tanker is still the preferred model for Selkirk military in long duration trade missions with the narros and as an intimidating adjunct to diplomatic Orobas and Train Guard escorts, though it is seldom seen outside of these roles. In truth, its reputation as a weaker system is undeserving, as the tanker is considered one of the most powerful weapon platforms on the continent.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the tanker also counts as one legendary item and two very rare items.

Power: The tanker requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The tanker has a +2 bonus to AC (20 total).

Hit Points: The tanker has 50 hit points and a threshold of 50.

Speed: Your speed is 25 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the tanker comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Firearm Stabilization: You can wield heavy weapons as if they are one-handed small arms and super heavy weapons as if they are two-handed small arms.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d8 damage. If you already inflict 1d8 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also grant a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mecha Fists: The tanker has a Strength of 23.

Weapon Mount: The tanker has a shoulder or arm mounted assembly, which frees up a hand. This mount acts as a hand or a brace for holding or mounting weapons.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and cannot make attacks with held weapons. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Weapon Mount. Mounted weapons are not automatically disrupted and can still be used if you can somehow fire them manually.

TESTAMENT

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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the testament counts as two legendary items and one very rare item.

Large Size: You are considered a Large creature while wearing the armor. You have reach.

Power: The testament requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Bonus: The testament has a +3 bonus to AC (21 total).

Hit Points: The testament has 60 hit points and a threshold of 60.

Speed: Your speed is 30 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the testament comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Mecha Fists: The testament has a Strength of 25.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d8 damage. If you already inflict 1d8 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also have a +2 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Gravity Drive: You suffer no damage from a fall.

Mask: You are immune to inhaled poisons.

Nightvision: You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Sensor Net: You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Phase: As a move action, spend a charge and teleport up to 25 feet.

Regeneration: The testament recovers 1 of its own hit point per round while the machine is active.

Repair Drone: You can spend a charge as an action to recover 10 of the testament's hit points.

Resistances: You gain resistance fire, acid, and cold.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and cannot make attacks with held weapons. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit Points, Disruption Recovery, Mask, Repair Drone (only functions as long as the suit's battery is not drained), Resistances.

UTILITY EXOSKELETON

Similar to the more formidable combat exoskeleton, the utility skeleton emerged after the former rather than the other way around, a byproduct designed for interbastion use by the same military program using the military variant. Unlike the combat model, the utility exoskeleton, often known as an Utex ("yue-teks") exposes the majority of the user to the outside environment. Though offering some protection, its primary function is as a muscle augmenter. Demand rose in this capacity, and eventually the Utex was sold in greater numbers. However, despite a lower production and maintenance cost, the Utex is still not often seen in open Echa.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the utility exoskeleton counts as two very rare items.

Power: The utility exoskeleton requires an H-class power cell to operate and it does not function without it.

Hit Points: The utility exoskeleton has 15 hit points and a threshold of 2.

Speed: Your speed is 25 feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the utility exoskeleton comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gauntlets: Unarmed attacks with the armor do base 1d8 damage. If you already inflict 1d8 or more damage with unarmed attacks, increase the damage dice by one step (1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). The gauntlets also have a +1 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Mecha Fists: The utility exoskeleton has a strength of 23.

Disruption: If disrupted, you are restrained and you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC. All special features are disabled except the following: Hit points, Disruption Recovery, Gauntlets.

VULTURE SYSTEM

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.

Balance: For the sake of game balance, the vulture also counts as two rare items.

Power: The vulture requires an H-class power cell to operate its flight system.

Hit Points: The vulture has 20 hit points and a threshold of 5.

Special: Entering and powering the suit is the same as full plate armor.

Bonus: The vulture has a +1 bonus to AC (15 total).

Boosters: You are always considered moving when performing a jump. You also have advantage with Strength (Athletics) checks when jumping. You also never take damage from a fall if you are conscious. You always land on your feet.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the vulture comes back online. Once you use *disruption recovery*, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Jump Jets: You have a flying speed of 60 (same as the *fly* spell) for 4 minutes. You regain 1 minute per hour.

Disruption: If disrupted, you lose your Dexterity bonus to AC, and the Boosters and Jump Jets features are inoperable. If the armor disrupts while flying, you must spend your next action to glide safely to the ground or you fall.

SHIELDS DESCRIPTIONS

ACTIVE DISSUASION SYSTEM

The successor of the energy envelope, 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 that can disable or kill nearby soft targets. The ADS takes two battery cells: one for its shield and one for its force feedback system.

Augmentation: You gain a +1 bonus to all melee damage rolls.

Backpack Mount: The energy envelope does not use up a hand.

Force Feedback: If you are hit by a melee attack, spend a battery charge with a reaction to inflict 4 electricity damage against the creature that hit you. However, when the cell is reduced to zero, the entire ADS system ceases to offer its AC or damage bonus.

Disruption: If disrupted, the item provides no benefits at all.

DEPLOYABLE SHIELD

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. While collapsed, it doesn't grant its shield bonus but it neither imposes its check nor its movement penalty.

Standard Configuration: Deploying the shield into standard configuration can occur on your turn as a bonus action. While deployed, the shield uses up a hand and grants a +2 bonus to AC.

Tower Configuration: Deploying the shield into tower configuration can occur on your turn as a bonus action. While deployed, the shield uses up a hand but grants a +3 bonus to AC. The maximum Dexterity bonus is +2, and Dexterity (Stealth) checks have disadvantage.

Disruption: The shield is locked in its current configuration until repaired.

ENERGY ENVELOPE

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 neutralize temporarily when its user makes a melee physical attack.

Backpack Mount: The energy envelope does not use up a hand.

Hit Points: The envelope has its own hit points and threshold, the same as exo-armor. These hit points cannot be repaired; the energy envelope regains all lost hit points after a long rest. The energy envelope has 30 hit points and a threshold of 10.

Limitation: You lose your shield bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn if you are hit with a melee attack.

Disruption: The item provides no benefits at all.

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. In addition, a locked slit can open once it has been planted.

If planted into the ground as a bonus action, the shield remains upright and acts as three-quarters cover to anyone behind it (as well as offering its bonus to AC). You must be occupying the same space as the shield to receive this benefit.

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.

While wielding the shield, you cannot be knocked prone if shoved. The shield has a +3 bonus to AC; however, if you move or are moved in any way, the bonus is reduced to +2 until the beginning of your next turn.

KINETIC BAFFLE

This reactive system generates a contained energy field that only responds to high energy attacks from distant

ARMOR	COST	STEALTH	WEIGHT	CELL	TL
Auto Reloader*	1,000	Disadvantage	+50 lbs.	H	3
Disruption Recovery	500	—	+20 lbs.	—	2
Gravity Anchors	6,000	—	+20 lbs.	H	5
Gravity Drive	5,500	—	+20 lbs.	H	5
Increased Armor (+1)	5,000	—	+2 lbs.	—	2
Increased Armor (+2)	25,000	—	+5 lbs.	—	2
Increased Armor (+3)	50,000	—	+10 lbs.	—	3
Increased Resistance	5,000	—	+5 lbs.	—	3
Jet Boosters	5,000	—	+25 lbs.	H	3
Jump Jets	7,500	—	+35 lbs.	H	4
Larger Gauntlets*	9,000	—	+75 lbs.	—	3
Maneuverability Booster*	15,000	—	+5 lbs.	—	4
Nightvision	1,500	—	+2 lbs.	H	2
Stealth Net	2,000	—	+5 lbs.	H	3
Structural Reinforcement, Mk1*	10,000	Disadvantage	+25 lbs.	--	2
Structural Reinforcement, Mk2*	20,000	Disadvantage	+50 lbs.	--	2
Structural Reinforcement, Mk3*	40,000	Disadvantage	+80 lbs.	--	2
Targeting System	500	—	+1 lbs.	H	2

*** Exo-armor only.**

targets. It cannot react to close or massive targets and is inoperable if a target blocks its sensor net. You gain the AC bonus against ranged attacks only and only as long as no enemies are in reach of you.

Backpack Mount: The kinetic baffle does not use up a hand.

Disruption: The item provides no benefits at all.

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. Along with its bonus to AC, the buckler counts as a club for the purposes of two weapon fighting and feats.

REPULSOR ENGINE

This device is less a method of resisting damage and more of a way of discouraging attack. It resonates an acoustic, magnetic, and gravitational pulse, preventing or dissuading targets from delivering melee attacks. The shield's AC bonus applies only against opportunity attacks.

Induce Pressure Wave: The repulsor engine requires a separate cell for the pressure wave system. Use a bonus action with a battery charge and all Large and smaller creatures within 5 feet of you are shoved 5 feet. A creature that cannot be pushed is stunned until the start of your next turn. Sacrifice five charges to increase the area effect to 10 feet. If you use the pressure wave in any way, the repulsor engine is deactivated for one minute.

Disruption: If disrupted, the item provides no benefits at all.

ARMOR MODIFICATIONS

These modifications are available to most techan armors (including all exo-armors) and often have requirements for their addition. There is no limit to the number of modifications you can add to exo-armor, though non exo -armor is generally limited to 1 for light, 2 for medium and 3 for heavy.

Armors that already have the system cannot add a second version except to upgrade an existing system, as stated in the description (redundant systems actually seem to attract disruption more, making the armor less effective overall). Unless otherwise stated, if the armor is disrupted, all systems on it cease functioning as well.

Auto-Reload (exo only): You have a mechanism to reload your weapons instantly. You can reload three clips/cells without requiring an action before needing external loading (you either have to exit the suit to reload or have an ally do it for you).

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the armor comes back online. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Gravity Anchors: You have a climb speed equal to your normal speed.

Gravity Drive: You suffer no damage from a fall.

Increased Armor: The armor gains a bonus to AC between +1 and +3 (it must not already have a bonus).

Increased Resistance: When you purchase this upgrade, select a damage type from the following list: acid, cold, fie, lightning, or thunder. You have resistance to that damage type. This feature is not disabled by disruption.

Jet Boosters: You are always considered moving when performing a jump. You also have advantage with Strength (Athletics) checks when jumping.

Jump Jets: You gain a flying speed of 60 (same as the *fly* spell) for 4 minutes. You regain 1 minute per hour.

Larger Gauntlets (exo only): Increase the damage dice of the armor's gauntlets by one step (1d8 > 1d10 > 1d12 > 2d6 > 2d8 > 2d10). On light and medium armor, this feature is not disabled by disruption.

Maneuverability Booster (exo only): You gain a +5 foot bonus to speed.

Nightvision: You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, and everything you can see is displayed in shades of green, yellow, or blue (your choice). If you already have nightvision, you can select this modification and increase the range to 120 feet.

Stealth Net: This modification nullifies disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks if your armor imposes it.

Structural Reinforcement (exo only): The armor gains additional hit points. These hit points do not stack with other levels of Structural Reinforcement. Each level also grants an increase in threshold. This feature is not disabled by disruption.

Mk1: +10 hit points and a +2 bonus to threshold.
Mk2: +20 hit points and a +5 bonus to threshold.
Mk3: +30 hit points and a +10 bonus to threshold.

Targeting System: You gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls with ranged weapons when firing at target at normal range.

TECHAN GEAR

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.

COMBAT ACCESSORIES

BAYONET PLUG

This is not a weapon but an adapter to add a melee weapon to any small arm, enabling either weapon to be used without dropping or holstering one. Only one- and two-handed small arms can be equipped with a melee weapon. One-handed small arms can be equipped with a dagger only. Two-handed small arms can be equipped with any light blade. The melee weapon cannot be enchanted. You cannot equip a specialty weapon with a bayonet.

LASER SIGHT

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 night vision (darkvision). The standard sight uses a green diode solid-state laser that is effective for the maximum range of any weapon. You gain a +1 bonus to your first attack roll on each turn.

SCOPE, TARGETING

This is a standard long-range targeting scope which can be fitted to any two-handed small arm or heavy weapon without an auto, blast, auto-heavy, or sonic property. It cannot be used with specialty weapons. Attaching the targeting scope gives the weapon the sniper (+1) property.

SUPPRESSOR

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. Suppressors cannot be used on shotguns, heavy weapons, or weapons rated higher than TL3 (most of which don't need it in any case). Affixing a suppressor takes a standard action.

You don't automatically reveal your location if you are hiding and make a ranged attack. Anyone within the weapon's normal range increment is still aware that a weapon has been fired, but not necessarily from where or by whom.

TOOL KITS

Unlike normal tool kits, these kits do not require proficiency but rather are necessary to use appropriate skills.

ENGINEERING KIT

These kits include diagnostic tools, a soldering gun, fine point insulated needle pliers, and wire cutters. It employs a battery for a digital multi-meter measuring ohms, amps, and volts. It also comes equipped with a variety of wires, clips, resistors, banana plugs and crocodile clips. All diagnostic tools in the kit use gold wiring and are shielded by design, as it would be incredibly inconvenient to have to repair the repair kit before repairing another device.

The engineering kit is immune to disruption. More advanced kits are required when dealing with more advanced technology and can affect build times and cost (see **Skills: Intelligence (Engineering)**).

DRUG KIT

Along with syringes required to deliver various medications, the drug kit offers standard chemicals medical professionals use to create various drugs. Additionally, this kit also includes tools enabling one proficient in its use to extract needed drugs from natural sources. Like the medical kit, the drug kit has enough supplies to 10 actions (regardless of how many targets are affected by said action).

MEDICAL KIT

The formidable medical kit holds bandages, pills, trauma shears, ointments, and basic stitching implements for basic injuries. They also have eye pads and cooling gel pads for burns. Along with wound irrigation. Other implements include splints, alcohol pads, an epinephrine injector, hemostatic pads, and various scalpels and scissors for emergency surgical procedures. Trained medical professionals can pull off miracles with a medical kit. A medical kit has enough supplies to 50 actions (regardless of how many targets are affected by said action).

UTILITIES

ANTI-ECHAN NETWORK (AEN)

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 that 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.

A DC25 Dexterity (Stealth) check is required for an echan creature to cross the net without it going off.

ITEM	COST (UC)	WT.	CELL	TL
Utilities				
Anti-echan network	1,000	50 lbs.	5/M	3
Battery Cell B	2	0.5 lbs.	—	2
Battery Cell M	10	0.5 lbs.	—	2
Battery Cell H	100	0.5 lbs.	—	2
Battery Flare	2	0.25 lbs.	—	1
Big ear	1,000	2 lbs.	20/M	3
Binoculars	20	0.5 lbs.	—	0
Camera Ball	500	1 lbs.	10/M	3
Camera Ball	2, 500	1 lbs.	10/M	5
Compass	1	—	—	0
Disruption Muffler Bag	250	2 lbs.	--	2
Disruption Muffler Crate	500	10 lbs.	--	3
Disruption Patch	5	1 lbs.	--	1
Duct Tape	1	--	--	0
Echan Survival Rations (1 week)	2	5 lbs.	--	1
Electro Optical Sensor	10,000	2 lbs.	10/M	4
Electric Torch	10	0.5 lbs	B	--
Electro Optical Sensor	5,000	5 lbs.	M(10)	4
Fire Extinguisher	25	2 lbs.	--	0
Flash Goggles	1,600	0.5 lbs.	M(5)	2
Force Shield	7,000	10 lbs.	H(20)	5
Gas Mask	500	1 lbs.	—	0
Gravity Lens	5,000	2 lbs.	M(10)	5
Grip Gloves	3,000	—	M	3
Handcuffs	3	—	—	0
Holographic Generator	15,000	30 lbs.	10/H	5
Infrared Goggles	6,000	1 lbs.	M	3
Lie Detector	1,500	1 lbs.	10/M	3
Light Bender	15,000	5 lbs.	10/H	5
Light Sticks (5)	1	0.25 lbs.	--	1
Lighter	1	--	--	0
Metal Detector	500	2 lbs.	M(30)	3
Nano-Healer	250	--	5/H	5
Rover Robot	1,500	20 lbs.	M(30)	3
Sleeping Bag	10	1 lbs.	--	0
Standard Techan Adventurers Kit	15	20 lbs.	--	1
Tent (2-6 person)	10	10 lbs.	--	0
Two-Way Radio	20	1 lbs.	--	1
Ultrasound Goggles	10,000	1 lbs.	H(20)	5
Watch, Automatic	10	--	--	1
Widget Bag	10	5 lbs.	--	0

ITEM	COST (UC)	WT.	CELL	TL
Combat Accessories				
Bayonet Plug	20	—	—	0
Laser Sight	2,000	—	M	1
Scope, Targeting	100	—	—	0
Suppressor	75	—	—	0
Tool Kits				
Medical kit	50	2 lbs.	—	1
Engineering kit	100	10 lbs.	—	0
Engineering kit	200	10 lbs.	—	1
Engineering kit	400	10 lbs.	—	2
Engineering kit	800	10 lbs.	—	3
Engineering kit	1,600	10 lbs.	—	4
Engineering kit	3,200	10 lbs.	—	5
Drug kit	50	2 lbs.	—	1
Detonators				
Friend/foe trigger	10	—	1/B	3
Impact trigger	1	—	--	0
Magnetic trigger	15	—	1/B	2
Motion trigger	15	—	1/B	2
Pressure trigger	20	—	—	1
Radio remote	25	—	1/B	2
Timer	1	—	--	0
Trip trigger	5	—	--	0
Wired remote	15	—	1/B	0

BATTERY FLARE

A battery-powered bright candle, the charge only lasts for four hours but illuminates to a 50-foot radius.

BIG EAR

This tiny device wraps around one's ear and amplifies incoming acoustic data. You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks when listening. It uses one charge upon activation and an additional charge every minute.

BINOCULARS

Ranging in size from small and concealable to large and clumsy, binoculars bring distant objects into close focus. They are sturdy, waterproof, and survive falls up to 50 feet. If broken, they cannot be repaired.

CAMERA BALL

This five-inch rubber ball 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 feet (100 squares) to a receiving monitor. When in range, it can also roll under it own power by remote; it has a speed of 10. It has 1 hit point and an AC of 10. It functions for 1 minute per charge.

The TL5 version contains a small antigravity unit, enabling it to hover for 1 minute per charge used. It has a fly speed of 20 and a ground speed of 10.

COMPASS

Thankfully, magnetic fields are unaltered in magical saturation. Magnetic north remains strong and true. Modern compasses diligently point to it loyally. Rumors indicate that Ixindar emanates a large magnetic field, but this power source cannot be detected from Canam.

DISRUPTION MUFFLER BAG/CRATE

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 container protects all batteries inside from disruption. The muffler bag can carry five H cells. The crate can carry 10 H cells. There is no lifespan of the bag or crate. Two M cells will replace one H cell and two B cells replace one M cell.

DISRUPTION PATCH

A small square plastic tab the size of a bottle cap, the disruption patch is 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.

The patch activates if the EDF ambient penalty to all disruption rolls increases, if placed against an enchanted item or echan creature, or if the item or creature is affected by a spell or other targeted disruption event. Once used, the patch is useless.

DUCT TAPE

Duct tape is useful for a wide variety of things, subject to your imagination and the GM's approval (ironically, it is borderline useless for repairing ductwork). Some examples include:

- Grant a +1 bonus to disruption saving throws to one piece of gear in range.
- Affix a small item (such as a flashlight or a tracker) to a weapon.
- Create one foot of rope (up to thirty feet).
- Mark up to three feet on the ground or on an object.
- Handcuffs (target is restrained, DC25 to escape).
- Prevent a restrained creature from speaking.

ECHAN SURVIVAL RATIONS (ESR)

Modern techans count their blessings every time they eat in the wilderness. They rarely need to fish or hunt. They are not required to stalk prey, gut and clean the kill, and cook them for hours over an open flame risking a number of contaminations when finally consumed (unless, of course, they want to). They simply tear open a ready-made meal and eat. These military rations, also called techan rations or bastion rations, began in Selkirk (which pioneered the modern product) as ESRs or Echan Survival Rations. They are no longer limited to freeze-dried meat and crackers, but offer a full range of cuisine including chicken and beef fajitas, hamburgers, meatloaf, beefsteak, and pastas with various sauces, beef stew, and jambalaya. Six days of rations for one person weighs one pound. Each package requires little preparation and can be eaten on the go. Beverages can be ingested right from the pouch. Each ration has a shelf life of five years with a peak temperature range of 60° C. Each day's worth of ration supplies, on average, 3000 calories. For reasons that are unclear, the narros adore ESRs and part of Selkirk's trade involves converting the imported narros food supplies into ESRs, which are then sold back to them for a profit. On the other side, laudenian and chaparran elves despise the stuff to the point that just the scent of the "human food" nauseates them.

ELECTRIC TORCH

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.

The light illuminates a 60-foot cone from the user. It lasts 10 minutes before fading out and requiring a recharge (one minute).

ELECTRO OPTICAL SENSOR (EOS)

The EOS is equipped with a 360-degree motion sensor meant to detect both ground and aerial targets within 250 feet. It sends all information to a source monitor that cannot be more than 100 feet away.

Targets must beat a DC25 Dexterity (Stealth) check or be detected. It only detects movement and cannot detect incorporeal targets. One charge is used up every hour.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER
Centuries of development resulted in a new multipurpose chemical that smothers the flame and cools the target. The result is a compressed container capable of putting out almost any kind of fire from combustible metals to burning oils.

As an action, extinguish a 5-foot area fire. Each container has enough for ten uses.

FORCE SHIELD
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 barrier between them, impenetrable from one side but allowing those behind it to fire through.

Use an action and drain a cell to create a 20-foot long wall that offers total cover for those behind it. It uses one additional charge per round in use. It must be deactivated to be moved (a bonus action to deactivate).

GAS MASK
This flexible and compact unit, when donned, attempts to filter all outside gasses and will protect the wearer from many airborne poisons. It will not protect the user if the environment has no proper earth atmosphere at all. While wearing the mask you are immune to gas attacks and inhaled poisons.

GRAVITY LENS
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.

You have advantage when attempting to open a lock, disable a trap, or disarming at explosive. Each attempt uses a charge.

GRIP GLOVES
This Selkirk prototype allows the user to climb walls with ease. You have a climb speed equal to your ground speed.

HANDCUFFS
These high tensile steel restraints require a DC25 Strength ability to break. You can also attempt a DC20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to open them .

HOLOGRAPHIC GENERATOR
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. This device cannot be moved when activated. Each hour of use exhausts a charge.

INFRARED GOGGLES
These non-telescoping goggles still provide stereoscopic vision and allow the wearer to see in total darkness.

You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, and everything you see is rendered in shades of green, yellow, or blue (your choice).

LIE DETECTOR
No paper, needles, or wire; this device is a simple palm-shaped item that is placed gently on the subject's body. You have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks on the target. Each attempt uses a charge.

LIGHT BENDER
Thought once to be the realm of magic, the bender moves light around it, effectively making itself and its wearer invisible. The device, usually backpack-stored with a remote bracelet to operate it , creates a magnetic field, removing the target from sight, even from darkvision and infrared. As bending *all* light would necessarily prevent the user from seeing out of it, light of very specific wavelengths is allowed through the field, creating a 'shimmer' effect when the field moves (to the wearer, the world merely looks constantly twilit): sudden movements or attacks disrupt the field entirely.

As an action, you become invisible. Each round uses a charge and the effect ends if you interact with something or someone ~~(including an attack),~~ or if you make any form of attack.

LIGHT STICKS
Scientists battled for years to uncover a new chemical combination that provided the light of glow sticks without 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. They usually glow red, green, or blue. Light sticks are popular in echa and often impress many where flamboyant spell work fails. One stick illuminates a 20-foot radius for one hour.

LIGHTER
You gain the capacity to make fire. Fire is (almost) always good. In a pinch, the lighter can illuminate a 5-foot area (your immediate vicinity) for one minute for each use. A standard lighter has 20 uses.

METAL DETECTOR
This small device extends a small probe that scans for metal objects. You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks when searching for metals. Each attempt uses a charge.

NANO-HEALER
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. As an action, the target recovers 8d4+8 hit points.

ROVER ROBOT
This tiny machine resembles a small, flattened box with two sets of caterpillar tracks. Regardless of how it lands or tumbles, it still can operate, as its propulsion system

is larger than its body. A camera adjusts automatically to any change in orientation. It receives instructions from an operator that cannot be more than 500 feet away and sends back both visual and audio information. The machine rolls at a speed of 35 feet and can tread through rough terrain or even over water. It has AC 20 and 20 hit points. It has a Strength score of 3 through a basic manipulator arm and a Dexterity score of 16. If you have proficiency in an ability check or skill, so does the robot. It uses one charge per minute and both the machine and the remote control require batteries.

SLEEPING BAG
Sleeping bags enclose one (or two snugly) occupant in a synthetic bag capable of protecting the occupant(s) from temperatures as cold as -50 degrees C. It resists wind and combustion (thought is still susceptible to magical fire). It is externally waterproof.

STANDARD TECHAN ADVENTURERS KIT
This kit includes the following: Two battery flares, five chemical light sticks, one compass, one sleeping bag, one lighter, one canteen (waterskin) and one week of ESR rations.

SYNTHETIC TENT
Tents come in two, four, and six person capacities. Most tents utilize flexible poles and are available in dome, tunnel, single-hoop, and geodesic styles. It takes 5 minutes to set up and take down properly.

TWO-WAY RADIO
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.

ULTRASOUND GOGGLES
These goggles translate sonic vibrations into visual stimuli. In the absence of ambient sound, they transmit high frequency pulses and detect the ricochet off objects. Any loud noise over 120 decibels causes the goggles to white out. You gain blindsight—you are aware of the location of any hidden or invisible creature within 10 feet of you. The goggles use one charge per hour of use.

WATCH, AUTOMATIC
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.

WIDGET BAG
You can use widgets to repair, modify, and create items, defraying the cost of repairs. You keep pieces handy for on-site repairs. These parts cannot be sold or traded, and they are useless to others. They cannot be disrupted and the parts work with any device you attempt to repair. When purchased, the bag has no widgets. When you scavenge technology, the GM may award a certain value in uc of additional widgets, or you can simply buy a certain uc value of miscellaneous parts.

Widgets count against the total treasure awarded. The weight of the widgets in the bag depends on your level (as you get better at separating useful objects from junk): level 1-6, 1 lb. per 500uc; level 7-13, 1 lb. per 1000uc; level 14-20, 1 lb. per 100,000uc.

DETONATORS

FRIEND/FOE TRIGGER
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, but setting the programming requires at least one minute.

IMPACT TRIGGER
After the safety is pulled, impact triggers detonate upon impact with any rigid surface. This detonator is rarely used except with grenades.

MAGNETIC TRIGGER
These unique detonators only function on explosive payloads of 5 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 there is any form of cover or impedance, the detonator stops but still detonates.

MOTION TRIGGER
This detonator detects movement in its burst area and detonates regardless of the target.

PRESSURE TRIGGER
These trigger the moment a weight is pressed upon the detonator. Large and larger targets automatically trigger pressure detonators upon entering a square containing one. Medium and smaller targets have a 50% chance to avoid the sensor unless the person placing the explosive succeeded on an DC15 Intelligence (Demolitions) check for proper placement. The sensor can be manually adjusted to only detonate for specific-sized targets (eg: detonation only for Huge targets).

RADIO REMOTE
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
Timers utilize a mechanical clock to countdown compared to a digital timer (unpopular in echa due to disruption). Although one may purchase a RDR (red digital readout) for the same price, this makes the detonator a TL2 item. The actual trigger is usually chemical or mechanical.

TRIP TRIGGER
This detonator is a simple mechanical or chemical trigger attached to an explosive with a trip wire: a creature passing through the wire pulls the pin and detonates the device. You can run up to 25 feet of wire but the detonation only occurs in the square where the explosives are placed. Because the wire needs to be raised to be triggered, there is a DC20 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the wire.

WIRED REMOTE

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.

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, 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 analyze it properly 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).

Angelite is identical in properties and cost to adamantine. Angelite radiates natural magic and cannot be used in the construction of techan equipment.

CORUTHIL

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 never had the opportunity to exploit it before. When worked like steel, it becomes a wonderful material from which to create items. Despite its origins, coruthil is not EDF-radiant (although it can be enchanted just like steel) and thus can be used in high-tech constructions (if used to build exo-armor, multiply all listed costs by 10).

TYPE OF CORUTHIL ITEM	ITEM COST MODIFIER
Light Armor	+250
Medium Armor	+1,000
Heavy Armor	+2,000
Weapon	+250

Coruthil has the same hardness and thickness of normal steel. It is immune to all corrosion, natural or magical.

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.

Fae iron is identical in properties and cost to cold iron. Fae creatures are vulnerable to attacks by fae-iron weapons, and just touching the metal causes them excruciating pain.

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.

Magnarros is identical in properties and cost to mithril/mithral.

TECHAN 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 very different from 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.

VEHICLE RULES

For the most part, vehicles should not be featured in combat, as the logistics of handling two separate scales are too complex for general purposes. When they are featured, they involve a slight departure from regular movement rules.

ARMOR CLASS

The vehicle's AC is listed in the vehicle table. Like armor, some vehicles allow you to add either your Dexterity or Intelligence bonus to your vehicle's AC.

ATTACKING FROM VEHICLES

The vehicle's controller has disadvantage on attack rolls (unless the vehicle is the weapon) while the vehicle is in motion (has a carryover speed) and must make a DC15 Dexterity check to maintain control if using the Attack action. Passengers have disadvantage as well unless using a turret-mounted weapon. Otherwise, vehicle movement is considered the same as personal movement for purposes of penalties and impediments to attacking, especially with firearms.

CONTROL

Only one person can control a vehicle, and the vehicle operates only on that character's (your) turn. If driving, and you are required to make a Dexterity check relating to driving outside of your turn, the effects of that roll take place at the start of your next turn (even if you are crashing). Large creatures cannot control vehicles without heavy modification no matter how big the vehicles are; whether a Large creature even fits in the vehicle is up to the GM's discretion. Only if a vehicle has secondary controls (ground vehicle do not—aircraft often do) can a second character assist the driver via Help or Working Together.

CRASH

A crash is a catastrophic failure in vehicle control. If you fail a Dexterity (Vehicle Operation), the result is a crash. In these terms, a crash is a lost of control, not an incident where damage is inflicted, though this ultimately can happen.

If you crash, at the start of your turn you decelerate at your speed rating if you haven't immediately struck an obstruction. If you hit difficult terrain, or you hit an obstruction (like a wall or another vehicle), your movement stops. The vehicle and all occupants inside take damage according to the vehicle's current speed.

SPEED	DAMAGE
Less than 30	No damage
31-50	1d8
51-70	2d8
71-90	3d8
91-110	4d8
111-130	5d8
131-150	6d8
151-170	7d8
171-190	8d8
191-210	9d8
211 and up	10d8

If there are no obstructions to crash into, you continue decelerating at your carryover speed rating each turn until your movement is 0, you recover with a Maneuver action, or until you hit an obstruction or difficult terrain.

If you fail a Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check while crashing by 10 or more, the vehicle rolls as it crashes. The vehicle takes 2d6 damage at the start of every turn it spends rolling.

Jump Failure: If you fail by 5 or less, you make the jump, but enter a crash. If you fail by 5 or more, your vehicle rolls. If you fail by 10 or more, you drive into the ground or fall short, instantly stopping and suffering damage.

Seatbelts: Occupants in vehicles are assumed strapped in when a vehicle crashes (unless they are moving around inside the vehicle). If a vehicle suffers damage from rolling or crashing, occupants strapped in suffer half the damage inflicted on the vehicle. Those not secured take full damage.

Aircraft: An aircraft that fails its control roll loses altitude equal to x2 its speed. Unlike ground vehicles, aircraft do not decelerate in a slide.

Blimps and thermals do not lose altitude when sliding or crashing. They remain suspended in the air via a series of "lifting bags" contained inside a larger carrier. This can be another balloon or a rigid superstructure. Each airship of this type lists the number of internal lifting bags. An attack that inflicts 20 damage or more on an aircraft may puncture a balloon instead of causing damage to the craft (attacker's choice). If so, the hit inflicts no damage on the vessel. Half of an airship's lifting bags must be punctured for an airship to be affected. Once half the lifting bags are punctured, the airship drops 20 feet at the start of each turn, dropping an additional 20 feet for every additional bag punctured. Every bag punctured also imposes a cumulative -1 penalty to the vessel's maneuverability. Only by destroying the vessel can it crash violently.

Escape: If all appears hopeless during a crash, occupants can try to escape (stunned or not) by making a DC20 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check for the driver or a DC15 check for passengers. Occupants have one chance per turn to try to escape. A driver who attempts to escape no longer has any control over the vehicle.

DESTROYING VEHICLES

Reducing a vehicle to zero hit points renders it nonfunctional. A vehicle reduced to a negative value equal to its total hit points bursts into flame, immediately inflicting 3d6 fire damage to every creature that moves through or enters its space or within 10 feet of it for five minutes.

ENTERING AND EXITING

Getting in and out of a vehicle costs an amount of movement equal to half your speed (like mounting or dismounting).

NEW ACTION: MANEUVER

A vehicle is a mindless machine and thus requires continuous input. Moving a vehicle occurs your turn using your movement. However, if you want to do anything significant with your vehicle, you are required to use an action to maneuver, a Maneuver action.

With a Maneuver action, you can accomplish the following.

- Increase your speed by a maximum of your vehicle's speed rating or by a maximum of x2 your speed, the latter requiring a DC10 Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check—failing, the craft's vehicle does not change.
- Decrease your speed by a maximum of x2 your vehicle's speed rating or by a maximum of x4 your vehicle's speed rating, the latter requiring a DC10 Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check—failing, the vehicle enters a crash.
- Attempt to gain control of your vehicle if it is out of control (in a crash).
- Ramming is part of a Maneuver action since you are making an attack roll, but it is in addition to any other acceleration, deceleration maneuvers attempted during the same action.

PROFICIENCY

Vehicles are classed as a tool proficiency. For these purposes, vehicles are divided into five categories:

- light ground (Medium-size vehicles, such as bikes and ATVs),
- heavy ground (Large ground vehicles, such as trucks),
- super-heavy ground (Huge and larger, such as tanks and most ETVs),
- aircraft (all manner of flying vehicles),
- watercraft (river- and ocean-going craft).

If you are proficient with a class of vehicle, you add your proficiency bonus to all checks related to the operation of such vehicles.

RAM

To accomplish a ram, you move a vehicle you are controlling into an adjacent space to your target. Take note of your current speed this turn (especially how much you have left). Ramming is part of a Maneuver action, and you can perform other vehicle maneuvers normally as part of that same action.

You can ram any creature or object you could target with a melee attack. You cannot target individual occupants of a vehicle (subject to GM discretion). You make a melee attack using your vehicle as the weapon. You may use Dexterity or Intelligence as the attack ability, and gain your proficiency bonus with the attack if you are proficient with the vehicle . If you pass through an enemy space and do not perform a ram or if you miss, the target automatically avoids you, and you continue moving your speed.

Damage with a hit depends on how fast the vehicle is traveling (its current total speed at the time of impact) along with how large your vehicle is.

- Normal-sized vehicles inflict 1d6 damage on a hit for every 40 speed the vehicles has.
- Large vehicles inflict 1d10 damage on a hit for every 30 speed the vehicles has.
- Huge vehicles or larger inflict 1d12 damage on a hit for every 20 speed the vehicles has.

If the target was a rigid object (such as a vehicle, or a Large or larger creature), the ramming vehicle suffers half damage from the ram. If it was a soft object (such as a Medium or smaller creature), the ramming vehicle suffers quarter damage.

If the target is a vehicle moving itself, the ramming damage may alter accordingly. Subtract the target's speed from the attacker's if the collision occurred from behind or the side, or add it if it was from the front.

RESISTANCE

Vehicles are immune to all conditions. They are also immune to necrotic, psychic, and poison damage.

SPEED

The speed rating for a vehicle is not its top speed but the rate at which you can change its movement (up or down) without making a Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check.

Here are the rules regarding vehicle movement and acceleration:

- Your vehicle has a "carryover speed"—the speed at the end of your last turn. Your vehicle has a carryover speed of 0 if the vehicle has stopped or hasn't moved before the start of your turn.

- You cannot move your vehicle with a Dash action (only with the movement portion of your turn)—you alter its current speed or perform an extreme maneuver with a Maneuver action.
- If you have any carryover speed (even if only 1), that is your speed at the beginning of you turn, and you must move that distance unless you alter it with a Maneuver action.
- A vehicle can accelerate up to x2 its speed with a DC 10 Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check (with a Maneuver action).
- A vehicle can decelerate at up to x2 its speed without a check (with a Maneuver action).
- A vehicle can attempt hard deceleration, decelerating at up to x4 is speed with a DC10 Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check (with a Maneuver action).
- In safe conditions, a vehicle can safely move up to six times its speed rating without a skill check. This may change depending on conditions
- A vehicle's top speed is x20 it's speed rating.
- Road and flight conditions can affect a skill check as seen below.
- Once a vehicle reaches a desired speed, it no longer requires a skill check unless conditions change or a maneuver is severe (a sharp turn, an obstacle, or terrain changes).
- A vehicle automatically fails Dexterity saving throw unless it has a carryover speed.
- Huge or smaller vehicles cannot normally enter squares labeled as difficult terrain. Depending on the situation, they may get stuck or hit an obstruction. Depending on the topography (marsh or debris, for example), Gargantuan or larger vehicles can ignore difficult terrain. The severity of the terrain may impede even these vehicles: trees may stop a tank but not a behemoth.
- A vehicle cannot squeeze, crouch, or adjust its space.

STUNT OR CONDITION	DC
Speed	
Up to x8 vehicle's speed	5
Up to x10 vehicle's speed	10
Up to x12 vehicle's speed	15
Up to x14 vehicle's speed	20
Up to x16 vehicle's speed	25
Up to x20 vehicle's speed	30
Flight conditions	
Strong wind	+5
Raging storm	+10
Tornado / Hurricane	+15
Road conditions	
Gravel	+5
Rain / Snow	+10
Accelerate x2 speed	10
Deccelerate x4 speed	10

TARGETING AND COVER

Creatures inside/on a vehicle receive protection depending on the situation and the attack.

Cover: Most vehicles grant three-quarters cover to their occupants. If an attack targeting a vehicle occupant benefitting from cover would have hit the target without the cover, the attack hits the vehicle instead.

Reach: Vehicles do not have reach but creatures inside may .

Selecting Defense: Creatures inside/on a vehicle targeted by an attack from a creature outside the vehicle may choose to use the vehicle's AC in lieu of their own. Certain vehicles prevent occupants from being targeted by certain attacks (usually disease, gas, or poison). Creatures attacking a vehicle may choose to target the vehicle itself instead of the occupants.

USING SKILLS

Any skill that could be negatively impacted by the motion of a vehicle—such as Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Engineer)—has disadvantage.

VEHICLE STATISTICS

Capacity (Cap): The standard person capacity or crew. One person is needed to drive the vehicle; other crewmembers serve as gunners, co-pilots, or passengers. Each unused passenger slot allows the vehicle to carry an additional 200 lbs. of cargo.

Cargo Capacity: The amount of cargo the vehicle is designed to carry in pounds in a cargo module or trunk.

Maneuver: If listed as "Disadvantage", the driver has disadvantage on Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks to operate the vehicle (so best not to push it).

Speed (Rating): The number of feet the vehicle can safely accelerate per round. Double this value is the vehicle's maximum deceleration. Both values can be adjusted with a successful Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) check.

AC: The vehicle's AC, to which the driver applies her Dexterity or Intelligence modifier.

Hit Points: The vehicle's hit points.

Size: The size of the vehicle.

Cell: All techan vehicles are battery powered. Each charge lasts one week in a minimal EDF setting (such as within a bastion or open wilderness) and one day in standard EDF saturation (whether or not the vehicle is running) or if put into a combat situation. The battery can be drained by disruption events. An entry of "2xH" indicates the vehicle requires two H cells to function, and the drain occurs equally to both cells. However, a disruption only occurs to one cell.

Weapon Mounts: Certain vehicles come equipped with mounting hardware to attach weapons. When available, the mount is able to house any class of weapon listed (the vehicle's size is not taken into account when determining the class of weaponry, as is the case with exo-armor).

STANDARD GROUND VEHICLES

4-WHEEL ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV)

All-terrain vehicles are miniaturized motorized buggies that are seldom employed for long missions outside of a bastion, though York survivalists and thrill seekers occasionally employ them on short excursions from the city. They don't offer the protection their larger cousins have. When seen in deep echa, they operate as scouts from a larger convoy.

NAME	CAP	CARGO	MANEUVER	SPEED	Armor Class (AC)	HP	SIZE	COST	TL	CELL
Standard Ground Vehicles										
4-wheel ATV	2	100	—	30 ft.	13+ Dex/Int mod.	30	M	500	1	M(10)
Armored Truck	7	3,000	Disadvantage	30 ft.	14+ Dex/Int mod (max 2)	80	L	3,000	1	H(10)
Tracked APC	8	1,000	Disadvantage	30 ft.	15+ Dex/Int mod. (max 2)	100	H	8,000	1	H(10)
Tank	4	500	Disadvantage	20 ft.	18	150	H	25,000	2	2xH(10)
Wheeled Bike	2	20	—	50 ft.	13+ Dex/Int mod.	30	M	500	1	M(10)
Wheeled Buggy	2	50	—	40 ft.	13+ Dex/Int mod.	40	L	1,500	2	M(10)
Wheeled Truck	4	1,500	—	30 ft.	13+ Dex/Int mod. (max 2)	70	L	8,000	1	H(10)
ETV (Echan Terrain Vehicles)										
Behemoth	50	30,000	Disadvantage	25 ft.	19	400	G+	150,000	3	2xH(10)
Land shark	20	5,000	Disadvantage	30 ft.	19	250	G	100,500	2	2xH(10)
Nomad	10	2,000	Disadvantage	35 ft.	18	200	G	75,000	2	2xH(10)
Nuke truck	10	3,000	Disadvantage	30 ft.	19	250	G	125,000	3	--
Panther	2	50	—	50 ft.	13+ Dex/Int mod.	40	M	3,500	2	2xH(10)
Scrambler	5	1,500	Disadvantage	35 ft.	19	200	H	30,000	2	2xH(10)
Wanderer	2	150	Disadvantage	35 ft.	18	100	H	20,000	2	2xH(10)

Special: ATVs can operate like mounts instead of vehicles for the purposes of combat. This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8 speed.

ARMORED TRUCK (AT)

Armored trucks offer amazing resistance to outside damage without the high costs of dedicated ETVs. Tires don't deflate when punctured, 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.

Armament: ATs are equipped with a single turret heavy weapon mount.

Resistances: The AT has resistance to acid, cold, fire, and thunder damage.

TRACKED ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC)

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.

Armament: The APC comes equipped with two turret heavy weapon mounts.

Resistances: The APC has resistance to acid, cold, fire, and thunder damage.

Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

TANK

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 obstacles willing to stand in its way.

Armament: Tanks contain three turret mounts for heavy weapons.

Pressurized: The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Resistances: The tank has resistance to acid, cold, fire, and thunder damage.

Terrain: Tanks suffer no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain a tank passes over is no longer difficult. Tanks may even be submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

WHEELED VEHICLES

Almost all vehicles seen outside of bastions still use wheels. In case of critical disruption, they can still unlatch their drive train, hook on some beasts of burden, and convert into wagons (some remain that way). Even the most advanced bastions still employ wheeled transportation for the majority of their population. The only real exception is Selkirk, which has no roads. Despite Mann's and Sierra Madre's magnetic technology or Angel's hover vehicles, most of the population still lumbers over pavement. The most advanced variations of these are the ETVs listed later. Some expeditions can't afford such luxuries and modify city vehicles to serve

their purposes outside of bastions. Because of dwindling fossil fuels, all wheeled vehicles run off battery powered electric turbines.

WHEELED BIKE

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.

Special: Bikes can operate like mounts instead of vehicles for the purposes of combat. This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8 and x10 speed.

WHEELED BUGGY

Outside of echa, this title usually refers to semi-enclosed vehicles with a wide footprint upon the ground with tires spaced far to the corners. They are much larger than a standard car. The buggy encloses the crew in a steel and plastic frame that offers protection from a crash but not from the outside environment. The body is formed in such a way that shifting a tumbled vehicle back to its wheels is a relatively simple procedure. Thick steel roll bars prevent damage to the frame or the people inside, provided they are strapped in. These buggies, though designed for wild terrain, don't possess the lifespan or durability for extended excursions within it. Like enduro bikes, they usually supplement convoys rather than dominate them.

Special: This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8 and x10 speed.

WHEELED TRUCK

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 most all-terrain wheeled vehicles (save ETVs), wheeled trucks seen outside of bastions are from York.

ECHAN TERRAIN VEHICLES

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.

BEHEMOTH

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 usual-

ly heralds its approach with the cracking of trees and snapping of bushes as it pushes and heaves through forest and grassland. However, 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.

Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the behemoth comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Energy: Solar cells covering the flat top of the behemoth regenerate one charge each week.

Resistances: The behemoth has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The behemoth is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Terrain: The behemoth suffers no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain the behemoth passes over is no longer difficult. It may even be totally submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

LAND SHARK

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.

Armament: The land shark carries a single heavy weapon turret mount.

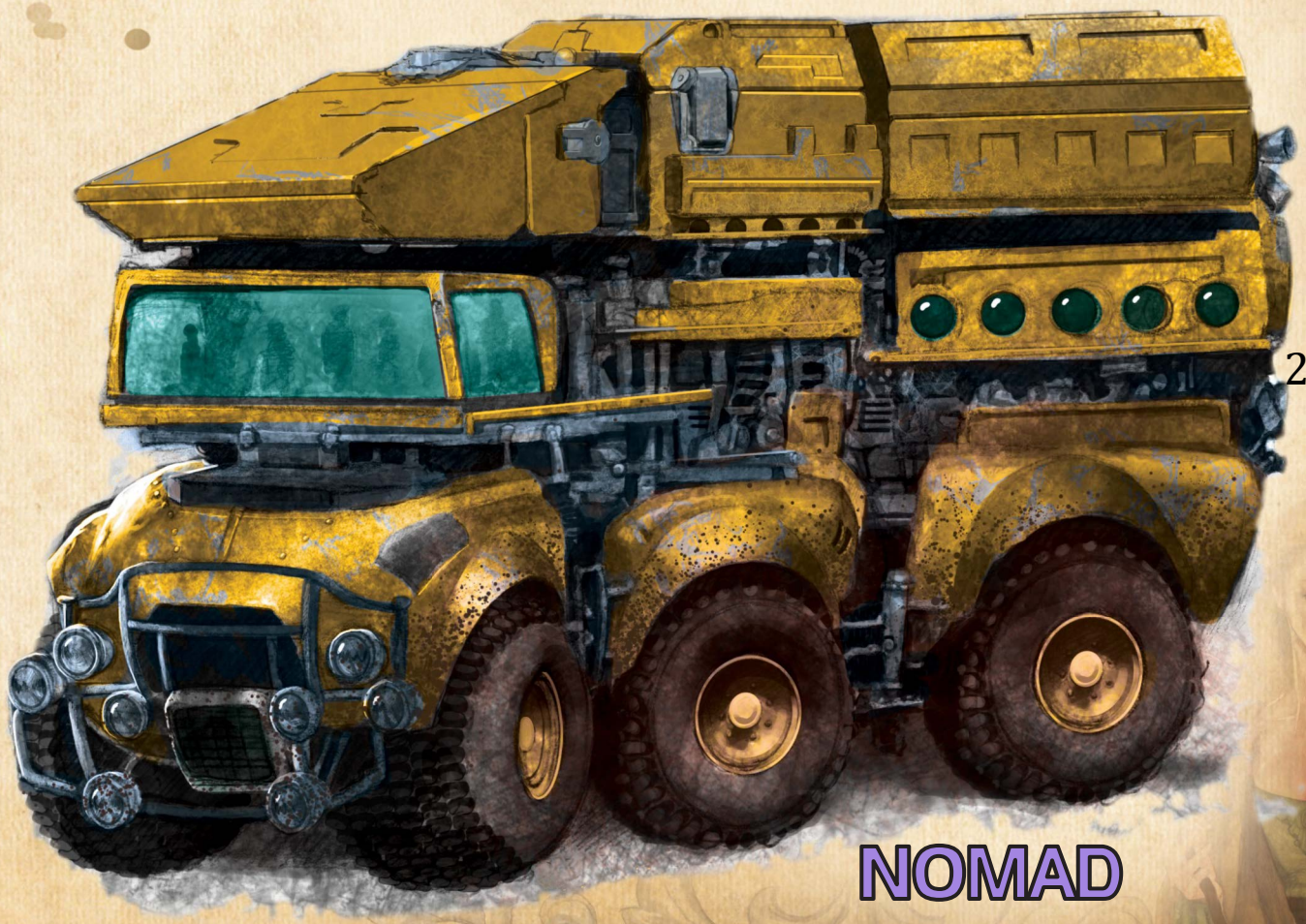
Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

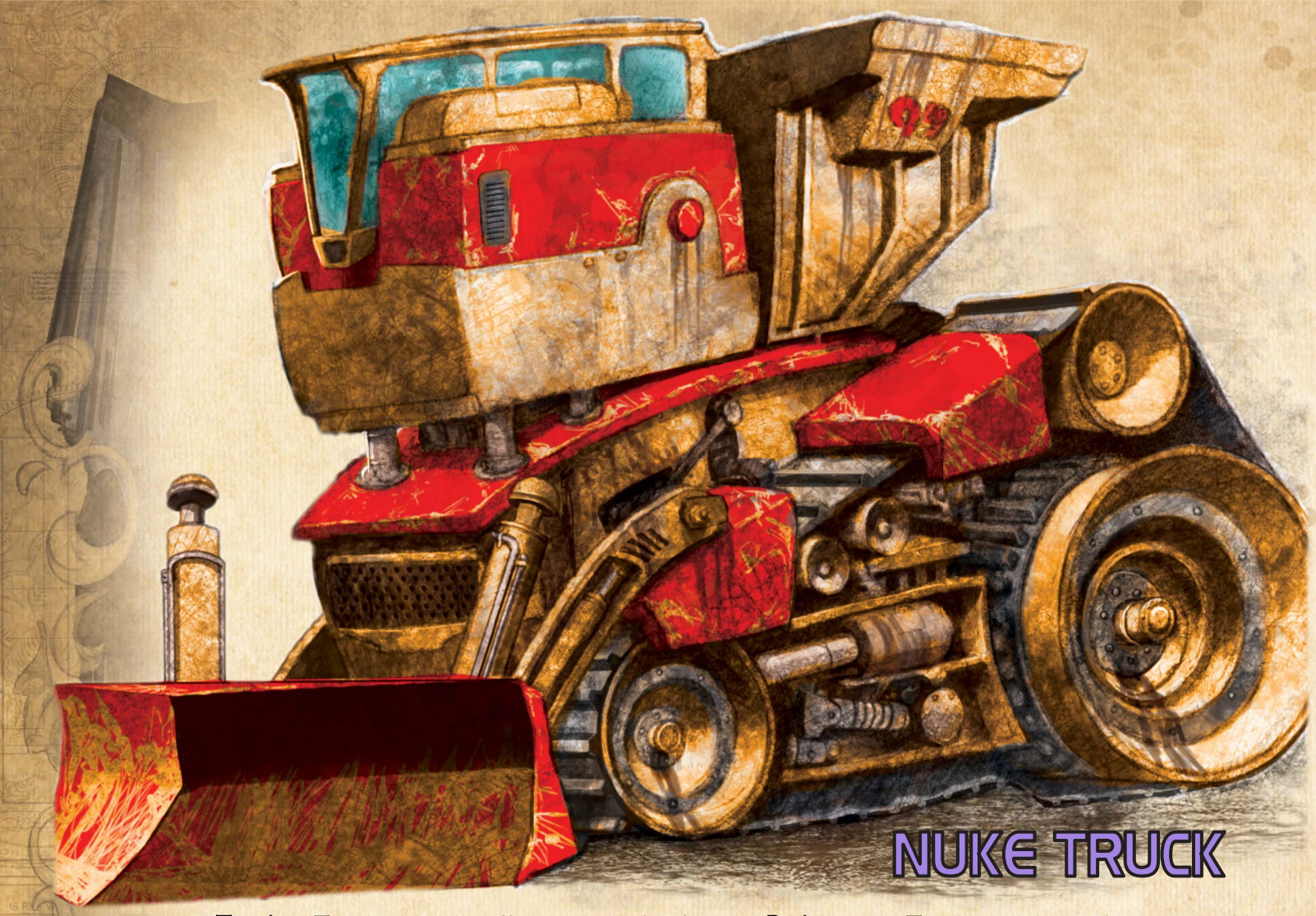
Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the land shark comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Energy: Solar cells covering the flat top of the land shark regenerate one charge each week.

Resistances: The land shark has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The land shark is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.





Terrain: The land shark suffers no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain the land shark passes over is no longer difficult. It may even be totally submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

NOMAD

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.

Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the nomad comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Resistances: The nomad has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The nomad is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Terrain: The nomad suffers no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain the nomad passes over is no longer difficult. It may even be totally submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

"NUKE TRUCK" (TDM-002 Maco)

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 10,000 uc.

However, the advantages are plain to see. The extensive radiation shielding virtually removes any chance of the reactor shorting out in the EDF, although the rest

of the vehicle's onboard systems aren't quite so well protected.

Critical Mass: If the nuke truck is destroyed, the reactor melts. This causes everything in a 100-foot radius to suffer 10d10+100 points of damage instantly (no save). Everything in the next 100 feet takes 10d10 points of damage (DC25 Dexterity save for half damage). Everything in the next 100 feet takes 5d10 points of damage (DC15 Dexterity save for half damage).

Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the nuke truck comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Resistances: The nuke truck has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Shielded: If a nuke truck disrupts, it has advantage on saving throws to recover.

Sealed: The nuke truck is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Terrain: A nuke truck suffers no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain the nuke truck passes over is no longer difficult. It may even be totally submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

PANTHER, VERKELEN, ALPHA I

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 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.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the panther comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Properties: The panther requires a DC25 Strength ability check to be pushed over or moved. It can fit a second Medium-sized creature, but all driving checks in the cramped seat have disadvantage.

Resistances: The panther has resistance to, cold, fire, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The panther is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Special: This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8 and x10 speed.

SCRAMBLER, VERKELEN, MARK IV

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 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.

Lights: The scrambler can illuminate a 200-foot cone.

Dismount: Non-driving personnel can enter and exit this vehicle with only 5 feet of movement.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the scrambler comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Resistances: The scrambler has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The scrambler is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Terrain: A scrambler suffers no penalties for passing through difficult terrain. Terrain the scrambler passes over is no longer difficult. It may even be totally submerged in water, bringing in air from an outside snorkel that rises up 10 feet from the hull.

WANDERER, VERKELEN, MARK II

The wanderer began its life as a next generation ground interceptor for the Angel military. As time passed before a successful prototype could reach testing, advances in hover technology surpassed ground possibilities and the newly formed Crimson Starlight soon captured the public attention and the entirety of military funding. Verkelen shelved the designs and mothballed the prototype for almost a hundred years until the increase in mercenary forces and the desire for echan expeditions encouraged a revisit to the old design. The wanderer measures thirty feet long but the main body only measures eight feet across. A complex motor system involving four large axles mounted on hydraulic powered limbs is capable of raising the craft anywhere from five to fifteen feet off the ground and/or widening its wheel placement to as far as twenty feet across. Two wheels are attached at each axle. The entire motor assembly also sits under a large swivel joint, allowing the entire cabin to rotate on its center. When traveling at any substantial speed or when committing any hazardous maneuvers, the wanderer must widen its drivetrain or risk tumbling over.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the wanderer comes back online. Once you use

NAME	CAP	CARGO	MANEUVER	SPEED	Armor Class (AC)	HP	SIZE	COST	TL	CELL
Aircraft										
Angel Hammerhead	4	500	—	40 ft.	13 + Dex/Int mod.	100	H	15,000	2	H(1)
Armored Zeppelin	16	2,000	Disadvantage	25 ft.	17	130	G	63,000	2	H(7)
Mann Pantokrator	7	1,500	—	50 ft.	15 + Dex/Int mod. (max 2)	200	G	162,000	4	H(2)
Thermal Blimp, Small	5	300	Disadvantage	5 ft.	16	100	G	22,000	0	Special
Thermal Frame, Medium	15	1,000	Disadvantage	10 ft.	16	130	G	42,000	0	Special
Thermal Frame, Large	30	2,000	Disadvantage	15 ft.	17	200	G	52,000	1	Special
York Wasp	1	5	—	45 ft.	15 + Dex/Int mod. (max 2)	80	M	5,000	3	H(1)

this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Motor System: The motive-limbs are neither fast nor articulate, and require an action to shift configuration. By default, the wheels are spaced twenty feet apart. The wanderer can squeeze by adjusting this configuration.

Resistances: The wanderer has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sealed: The wanderer is waterproof. The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Turrets: The wanderer comes equipped with two turret mounts for two-handed small arms.

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 most of these come in the form of lighter-than-air vehicles.

ANGEL HAMMERHEAD

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.

Armament: Two heavy weapon turrets or three two-handed small-arm turrets.

Auto-Reload: You have a mechanism to reload your weapons. You can reload three clips/cells instantly before needing external loading. You must land for external reloading.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the hammerhead comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Movement: The hammerhead can hover.

Pressurized: The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Resistances: The hammerhead has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sensors: Darkvision 200 feet

Special: This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

ARMORED ZEPPELIN

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. 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 ultralight 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. 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.

Lifting Bags: This aircraft is equipped with eight lifting bags. If deflated, you can use heated air in lieu of helium but the vessel's speed is reduced by 5 feet for each bag filled this way.

Pressurized: The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Movement: The zeppelin can hover. In addition, the zeppelin has sails. In an emergency, you can use them to substitute normal propulsion at 1/4 of its rated speed.

Repair Drone: A repair drone buzzes around inside the superstructure, patching breaches in the baffles before they hemorrhage their gas. Once per minute, the pilot can use an action to direct the repair drone to seal a breach , using one charge in the process.

Special—Resupply Helium: All bastions, some techan forts and atolls, and most gimfen grind towers can resupply the ship with helium. The price varies depending on the location but the average cost to fill a balloon is between 300-600 uc.

Resistances: The armored zeppelin has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

ANGEL HAMMERHEAD

Special: This vehicle cannot fail Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks relating to its speed. However, it cannot go faster than x10 its speed.

MANN PANTOKRATOR

The only known Mann aircraft seen outside of the bastion's walls, the pantokrator was intentionally over-engineered to increase survivability in echa. 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. The rear cargo area can hold up to six fully armed soldiers.

Active Camouflage Denial System: Use an action and select a 50-foot radius area within 300 feet. Targets using stealth are detected. Invisible targets are visible.

Armament: Two two-handed weapon turrets and one heavy weapon turret OR two heavy weapon turrets OR one super heavy weapon turret.

Auto-Reload: You have a mechanism to reload your weapons. You can reload three clips/cells instantly before needing external loading. You must land for external reloading.

Disruption Recovery: As a reaction to a disruption event, the pantokrator comes back online. Once you use this feature , you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

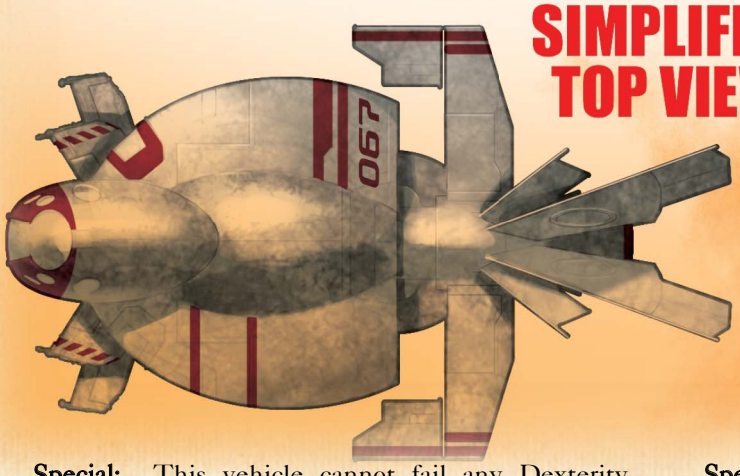
Movement: The pantokrator can hover.

Pressurized: The crew is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Regeneration: Every round, the pantokrator recovers 3 points of damage.

Resistances: The pantokrator has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sensors: Darkvision 200 feet



SIMPLIFIED TOP VIEW

PANTOKRATOR

Special: This vehicle cannot fail any Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks relating to its speed.

YORK WASP

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 weapons but is mostly employed for reconnaissance. It has no room for passengers, as the craft wraps around its user.

Armament: Wasps have a single weapon turret to hold a two-handed small arm.

Auto-Reload: You have a mechanism to reload your weapon. You can reload three clips/cells instantly before needing external loading. You must land for external reloading.

Movement: The wasp can hover.

Pressurized: The pilot is immune to all gas attacks and inhaled poisons until the vehicle is destroyed.

Resistances: The wasp has resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Sensors: Darkvision 100 feet

Special: This vehicle automatically passes Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks at x8, x12, x14, and x16 speed.

THERMAL AIRSHIPS

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

THERMAL AIRSHIP

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 spell work 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.

Lift: All thermals come with a torch to heat the air. It is either coal or propane. Usually a thermal has enough flame to keep it airborne for a week. This simple energy source can be resupplied at any village-sized or larger settlement at a negligible cost (anywhere between 5-10 gp).

Movement: All thermals can hover without requiring a skill check.

Properties: The awkward manual controls of a thermal impose disadvantage on checks to control the vehicle. The maximum altitude of any thermal is 12,375 feet. Being a lighter-than-air vehicle, thermals do not suffer from altitude loss if they fail a piloting check.

Special: Thermals cannot fail Dexterity (Vehicle Operation) checks relating to their speed. However, they cannot go faster than x10 its speed.

BLIMP

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.

Lifting Bags: This aircraft is equipped with four lifting bags.

FRAME

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 one additional crewmember and the large model requires an additional three. 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.

Lifting Bags: This aircraft is equipped with six lifting bags.

Properties: The larger thermal frame uses a slightly more complicated flight control system over the smaller frames and blimps, and thus counts as a tech level 1 vehicle, though receiving a +5 bonus to all saving throws against disruption.

OTHER 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 are 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 MODIFICATIONS

AUTO RELOADER

You have a mechanism to reload your weapons. You can reload three clips/cells without requiring an action before needing external loading.

MODIFICATION	COST	TL	CELL
Nawz!	420	1	--
Auto-Reloader	500	2	M
EPCM Level 1	500	1	--
Parachute	500	--	--
Weapon mount (2-handed small-arm)	500	--	--
Electronics Flash Reprogramming	900	--	--
Fly By Wire[2]	1,700	2	M(7)
Reinforced Chassis I	900	--	--
EPCM Level 2	12,500	2	--
Reinforced Chassis II	2,500	--	--
Sails[2]	2,500	--	--
Weapon Turret (heavy weapon)	2,500	--	--
Reinforced Chassis III	6,500	--	--
Weapon Turret (super heavy weapon)	6,500	--	--
Battery Turbine[2]	8,500	2	M(7)
Complete Composite Retrofit	8,500	--	--
Repair Drone[2]	8,500	3	M(3)
Solar[2]	8,500	2	M(7)
EPCM Level 3	25,000	3	--
Steam Drive[2]	12,500	1	--
Reinforced Chassis IV	32,500	1	--
Visual Active Camouflage	32,500	5	H

[1]Ground vehicle only
[2]Thermal only

BATTERY TURBINE

An airship can be equipped with a battery-powered turbine, granting a +20 ft bonus to speed rating. Being battery powered makes it the most susceptible to disruption. One charge lasts one day. The battery also powers heating coils for the air chambers.

COMPLETE COMPOSITE RETROFIT

Ultra high molecular-density polyethylene plates are bolted to the outer panels of the vehicle, removing any illusion of the transport's purpose. When you purchase this upgrade, select a damage type from the following list: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. You have resistance to that damage type.

ELECTRONIC / PHYSICAL COUNTER MEASURES (EPCM)

This is not one modification but several accomplishing similar ends. Reactive plating, adaptive camouflage, and regenerative countermeasures assist in making even an immobile vehicle harder to target with both close and ranged attacks. Reactive systems run off the vehicle's power source and any gains by this system are lost if the vehicle is disrupted.

Level I: +1 bonus to the vehicle's AC.

Level II: +2 bonus to the vehicle's AC.

Level III: +3 bonus to the vehicle's AC.

ELECTRONICS FLASH REPROGRAMMING

EFP involves removing the vehicle's engine control system that limits the vehicle's power output by dictating throttle response injection timing. The unit is then replaced or reprogrammed for higher and more efficient output, granting a +5 ft. bonus to speed rating.

NAWZ!
Your customized vehicle has a slight modification you haven't told anyone else about. As a bonus action, the speed of your vehicle increases by +10 feet for 1 minute. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

FLY-BY-WIRE
This system completely replaces the primitive control system with a digital fly-by-wire system common in all other techan aircraft. This turns the entire vessel into a TL2 craft, requiring a battery cell to operate, using a charge each day of use.

The thermal no longer has disadvantage on piloting checks.

PARACHUTE
Parachutes attach to the main cabin or cockpit of an aircraft and deploy in case of freefall. A mechanical barometric switch triggers parachutes to prevent a terminal crash. The vehicle must be at least 200 feet above the ground for the parachute to operate safely.

REINFORCED CHASSIS
By strengthening the chassis with strut and sway bars, adding run flat tires, and replacing key components with harder and lighter materials like carbon fiber, the vehicle can endure more punishment.

Level I : Vehicle gains +20 hit points.

Level II*:* Vehicle gains +100 hit points. Vehicle must have at least 40 hit points for this modification.

Level III: Vehicle gains +130 hit points. Vehicle must have at least 80 hit points for this modification.

Level IV: Vehicle gains +80 hit points. Vehicle must have at least 200 hit points for this modification.

REPAIR DRONE
A repair drone buzzes around inside the superstructure, patching breaches in the baffles before they hemorrhage their gas. The driver of the vehicle can use an action to make the repair drone patch one breach. A repair drone can seal a single breach once per minute, using one charge in the process.

SAILS
These pectoral and dorsal mounted sails provide a small boost in speed and can provide movement in an emergency if other means are neutralized. The sails can be drawn in and unfurled in one minute. This modification can only be added onto frames, not blimps. When deployed, the sails grant a +5 ft. bonus to speed rating.

SOLAR
This extensive addition covers the entire top half of the airship structure in solar photovoltaic cells. Stored energy is then used to power the propulsion system. This uses the same system as a battery drive, shunting power to turbines, providing propulsion. The ultimate advantage comes from an unlimited lifespan, supplying energy to the heating coils and the drive system. It turns the vessel into a TL2 craft. The solar array recharges the cell at a rate of 1 charge per day. The system grants a +10 ft. bonus to speed rating.

STEAM DRIVE
This basic powerplant uses steam to not only power the propellers but also heat the air balloons as well. It replaces the basic standard torch with a much more powerful boiler, connected to a double-action steam engine. This requires a source of heat as well as a supply of water. The average thermal can run for four days before requiring more water, a week before requiring more coal or propane. Being a basic engine, the steam drive counts as TL1 but gains a +5 bonus to any disruption saving throws. The system grants a +10 ft. bonus to speed rating.

VISUAL ACTIVE CAMOUFLAGE SYSTEM
This is an active cloaking system that can conceal a vehicle when not engaged in combat.

As an action, you become invisible for up to five minutes. If you are hit by a melee or ranged attack, you enter a square filled with water, you are hit with debris, or you fire any weapons, there is a 50% chance you become visible and the effect ends. Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

WEAPON MOUNT / TURRET
A vehicle must have a listed hit point total equal to or greater than 30 to mount a two-handed weapon turret, equal to or greater than 60 to mount a heavy weapon (unless stated otherwise), and equal to or greater than 100 to mount a super heavy weapon (unless stated otherwise). Most vehicles can have only one weapon mount. Weapons use their original size when determining what can be fitted to a mount, even if they nominally count as a smaller weapon for a larger user.

Its body was the size of Aiden's fist with eight pencil-thin legs longer than a forearm. Every step taken was careful and quiet, slipping over branches and sidestepping leaves. It stalked up the wool and polyester coat Aiden was using as cover as he slept. A pair of black lidless eyes floating on truncated stalks glanced over the sleeping man. Its legs inched closer to Aiden's neck. Two spidery limbs reached up and tapped each other in front of Aiden's face. Aiden, eyes still closed, turned a nose up and blew out a breath. The creature repeated the soft drum but received no response. One leg from the arachnid stretched out and hung precariously over Aiden's nose. It tapped him gently. Aiden slept soundly. Then twice again.

Three firmer pats and Aiden cracked open an eye. He failed to focus on the blurry mass in front of him. As he adjusted, he stared at the vapid eyes and short jaws and two long legs in front that tapped each other once more to gain his attention.

The scream that sprung from Aiden's throat was loud from adult lungs but pitched high from childish fear. Aiden swatted the creature to the ground and rolled to his feet, flailing arms and legs outrageously. He checked his limbs and digits, shouting as he squirmed away from the calm arachnid as it tapped its two front legs again. Aiden jolted his head around to check for an ambush. Surely, the tapping was the cue for a face-lock from a falling predator Aiden would be too distracted to notice. There was nothing, just Aiden and the arachnid, both waiting at a

distance. The spark had taken the cue to rest with the rising sun. Aiden reached forward and quickly snatched his bag. He pulled the blade from within it. The chunk of purple stone sat by the bag. Aiden stretched a hand and took it as well, tucking it to the bottom of his pack.

Aiden walked backwards down the path. He took a moment to ensure he wasn't returning the way he entered. Aiden finally remembered the entry from that long forgotten manual and announced it as if the creature could understand. "Book of Many Bugs. Page 346. Harvestman." It tapped its legs. Aiden continued on the road. The creature matched his pace. Aiden paused and so did it, drumming its legs until starting up again to follow him.

"Get lost!" Aiden flailed his sword arm. It followed. "Get out of here!"

Aiden stopped, then it stopped and tapped its legs. Aiden shouted as loud as he could, stepped closer, and stomped a foot down. It jumped nearly to Aiden's face. Aiden squealed, bolting down the road like his hair was ablaze. The spider ran surprisingly fast and kept up with him for five minutes before giving up. As Aiden ran out of sight, the harvestman tapped its front legs again.

* * *

Emerging from the forest, Aiden squinted from the sun's glare. The road resumed as empty as before to a blurry horizon. Before the afternoon, he would eat three more bars and still be hungry. The plains passed to a valley. Dried grass turned to green fields. All Aiden could do was walk, and did so until coming upon the wreck.

Its steel axle had bent. The wooden spokes had splintered. Aiden circled the broken wagon with a wide berth. The horses had been torn from their harnesses, leaving bloodied bits and hair tuffs on the straps. The half eaten hoof suggested a fast and messy meal by indiscriminate predators. Aiden was unsettled. The blood had the gloss of lingering moisture. A caravan had gone astray, no doubt. No wagon would chance solitude on a barren path. Aiden knew he was close to Antikari. A sane captain would take the extra day and follow the continental cross, the same detour the scrambler had made. The door was pinned closed by a rock-tipped spear half Aiden's height, too large for dog-sized puggs. They had been larger monsters.

Aiden orbited and checked the opposite door, unlocked. He almost missed the cage, half in the grass and overturned. The simple lock had broken with hammer falls with most missing their mark. Teeth indents around bars, dried spit at every corner, a dozen animals inside had molested each other for the shred of an inch of room. It hadn't been a detour. The slavers turned the moment their stocks were stuffed.

The door came loose off the hinges and fell. Aiden dropped his pack and swallowed as he leaned in. The spear had struck between the stomach and liver of the man but caught more of the latter. The spear had jammed the body against the wagon. "Oh god," Aiden mumbled.

"Huh," the body burbled after lifting his head. Aiden shrieked and fell back onto the door. He quickly composed himself and reentered.

"Oh my god! Can you talk? Can you..." He said nothing. "Say anything?"

"Mi y'ada," he groaned. Aiden held up his palms. "Hold that...don't move!" Frantic, Aiden paced around the wagon, unable to act, unable to freeze. He crawled back in. "I can't move you with the spear. Can't take it out either." Aiden reached for his pack and the dull blade meant for threats. He squeezed himself behind the body. He held the sword as high as he could in crammed quarters. He had hoped one slash would do it, but it only dented the spear, pushing the end further into the victim's chest. The man had lost any reserve for a scream and only choked. Aiden squirmed and tried for a harder strike, not that he had held anything back the first time. A second failed. A third cracked and the sword was wedged in the wood with a splinter holding the spear together. Aiden snapped it the rest of the way.

The man's head rolled flaccidly as Aiden pulled him onto the fallen door. He used the bloodied leather straps from the horses' harness and bound the man to the wood. Aiden swatted the man's lazy arm to finish the restraints.

"How far is Antikari?" Aiden asked. "An hour...two?" A cough was all that was afforded. "Just hold on." Aiden pulled another strap around the door and wrapped the other end around his shoulders. The man wasn't scrawny and the door was spruce. Aiden pulled a shoulder muscle lifting it up. Stones barely shuffled as he struggled for an inch. "You've got to be kidding me."

"Esta finderlohn por mia lebon," he moaned.

"Yeah, you said it." Aiden began to walk, slowly at first. Within a few steps, the gravel gave and his shoes slipped, stumbling Aiden to the ground. He punched earth, quietly cursed, and raised himself and the door again. "Come on! Come on!"

Aiden got momentum and dragged the door over a trivial summit and to the base that followed. The next climb bruised his pectorals and sprained an ankle. The body slipped off at the second crest. Aiden was sure to meet another night at this pace.

"Still with me?" Aiden called out. He wanted to keep talking but was loosing breath. Every lungful of air pulled his battered diaphragm. He should have exercised more. He couldn't stomach a meal and didn't bother offering one.

The saw a tree with branches twisted through a vehicle, lifting the wreck before the ground could swallow it. Only by pure chance had it survived. Boughs had peeled it apart, crucifying the car across the span of wood. Wheels were forged soft alloy with inadequate tread for unpaved terrain. Red and black and flaking from rust, the one remaining door tapped in the wind on its last unseized hinge. A stainless exhaust refused to wither. Aiden noticed its license plate, a flake of blue on a number, another of red on the word above. From his vantage, Aiden couldn't make out the number or the origin, not that it mattered. It was a relic from a lost time, five centuries forgotten. He couldn't afford to slow and kept on.

By late afternoon, the rain started and mixed with the dry clay into a viscous mud. The door built up a layer of sludge and Aiden's boots slithered across with little pro-

gress. He grimaced through it, letting the water roll down his face. The muck had slipped over his boots and into his socks. The water had pushed into his thermal ware. The clouds were ash, a constant slate which mixed the horizon to the mud.

Aiden lost his footing nearing another summit. The body and the door slid back down the incline until Aiden dug his cleats deep and cut his hand on the strap with whatever lingering strength he had. He could hear his sword fall down the hill, but he had no energy to retrieve it. He pushed back up the hill, dragging the door behind. Each boot slammed deep to get root. Reaching the crest, Aiden pulled the door back up to his shoulders and he stood cold and damp, a thick layer of grey running down his back.

He sighted the wagons, horses, and people of Antikari before dusk, emerging as a rising wave. The grass took a breeze and opened like a splitting river to guide him to town. A pair of aides by a wagon took notice and made for him. Aiden collapsed onto the ground. He stared at the passing clouds, coughing and wheezing as others ran to help.

* * *

"Did you know him?" A monitor guard asked him. A strong accent and muddled words meant this wasn't his first language. He tried too hard to pronounce every word.

"No," Aiden answered.

"We could not have saved him."

"Yeah…I know." He didn't.

"He was already half-dead."

"Thought perhaps you'd have a healer."

"Doctor tended. Too far gone."

"Vivicator?"

"Magic?" The guard shook his head. "One in a million, fewer with men."

"Nothing else?"

"Not more than chicken bones and blind prayer, I'm afraid. Doctors leave for bastion when good enough." The guard said nothing more, leaving Aiden by the roadside.

Aiden's ward had been a notoriously ungrateful slaver recognized for his stocks of broken puggs. He snatched his chattel in Xixion and passed the cross every six months to trade with caravans bound for Malkut. There was neither a reward nor grateful praise for his recovery. The corpse was tossed to a collective grave, a layer of lime the only consideration.

Antikari was unimportant in the world until progressive humans and fae from Limshau decided to set a road across the land, uniting its various kingdoms. The town nurtured a business of escorts and travel guides armed with allies and swords. Rising costs forced some committed pilgrims to chance the journey to Angel alone. At this late hour, gas powered lamps flickered with flame.

The continental cross was a beaten path that connected the bastion of Angel, through house Antikari and house Orchis, and finally to Limshau. Although not always safe, it was the easiest route to take with reduced risk. All Aiden needed to do was book passage and follow the single road to Limshau. He hobbled to the station, still forcing air into his lungs.

The Corrigan caravan was a string of a dozen slow moving conestogas, coaches, and carriages, laced together and towed by a group of oversized oxen. Endowed with magic, the two storey beasts never slept and seldom ate. They could pull a hundred tons for weeks before needing rest. It was what Aiden had waited his life to see, something truly unbelievable and impossible given the rules of science. It was real and alive and beautiful. The conestogas were double in height and the two monstrous bovine dragged them like living locomotives. Aiden had read about gargantuan snails with houses formed out of their shells and flying boats with stone wings which never flapped. This would do for now.

Ten silver Limshau carmot later and he had sleeping provisions that would travel during the night. Though the caravan was slower than galloping horses, it allowed a cushioned bed.

Antikari was a small house of questionable nobility in a town that ruled a dozen smaller farms. The main keep was a fenced house slightly larger than the surrounding buildings. Antikari also hated fae. Anyone approaching the town picked up that nugget of gossip. Any moral opposition to the population's xenophobic view needed restraining for those wanting to approach Angel. Travelers needed to unite as the raiders preferred smaller, less defended targets.

Most of the residents of Antikari believed anything non-human was responsible for man's fall from grace. Many of them wished to enter and live in Angel but their lack of useful knowledge prevented it.

The house baronet, Renan Torquil, inherited the keep when Stellen Antikari died from disease, leaving no heirs. Renan, his half brother and 2nd in line to Torquil, claimed the seat before any bastards or distant relations could object.

After taking in a proper meal of rice and chicken, Aiden found himself starring at the restaurant's bathroom. The paper was rough hemp. There was no seat, no plumbing, and no cover, only a hole in the ground with a bucket of water beside it. It ran to a closed pit a few meters away. Aiden took a glance outside and then back to the task. The ring around the hole wasn't clean, with muddy boot prints and various other stains he would rather not touch with bare skin. Indoor plumbing with moving water was a blessing Aiden instantly missed. There wasn't even a handle to maintain balance. Matters beckoned him and Aiden grimaced his way through it.

* * *

Caravans alive and rolling as well as sacked and burned could be spotted along the Cross's route. Wandering shops sold trinkets from the backs of wagons. Carts stayed together for protection, creating nomadic markets that roamed the roads.

A day after leaving Antikari, the Corrigan passed Arciducha--a caravan of 35 wagons that sold fine clothes, rare foods, and even protective lodging with optional

vendible flesh to keep merchants and adventurers warm and satisfied. It took four minutes for the road trains to pass each other. Flowers and drinks were share through windows. The drivers passed gossip and news about the road ahead. Aiden noticed various passengers waving and smiling. None of them were techan. All were human.

For the first few days, Aiden was forced to sleep alongside a farmer with leather skin forged from fifty years in the sun. After passing the village of Nymanis, Aiden slept beside two miners that smelled of week-old cheese. As the caravan left the land of Antikari and made for the free house of Orchis, Aiden was upgraded to a wool covered bed of straw in one of the conestogas with four other humans, three from Antikari and the fourth from Plicato.

After the second week, the caravan stopped in Orchis. The "sand-castle," as it was often mocked, was spotted on the horizon, flapping into vision from the waves of heat from dried desert soil. The ruling founders preferred the term "Desert Flower." Regardless of its name, the smooth towers of the relatively small keep soared over those in Antikari or any other buildings outside of a bastion.

A mockery of a legend claimed a demigod of child-like whim packed the sand with water and sculpted the keep with his own hands. Upon completion, he ordered a dragon to fire the castle to an ironstone ceramic. The castle was then given to the Orchis family on condition that neither the immediate family nor their direct descendants ever sleep beyond the limits of the castle. They ruled over a dozen smaller villages across seventy miles including stops along the continental cross like Archena, Kerria, and Bitterblush.

The Book of Free Houses, read to Aiden when he has nine. It was true to.

It was there when Aiden switched over to a larger stagecoach. It had two floors, a hallway, and four rooms with a narrow set of stairs and drapes separating the cabins from the beasts and their reigns. The population increased the further he approached Limshau. The caravan stopped at Blackbaronne and Kendelkorne, swelling in wagons and people. Aiden began recognizing cultures and landmarks from the books he had read. Still no fae. He shared the cabin with a pleasant looking musician wielding an acoustic bass guitar marked with colorful rosettes sprinkled with damaskan elvish. Aiden was still trying to pick up the tongue. It was one of the easier of the elvish languages.

"Ou frei casa y'habit?" the man asked.

"I'm sorry," Aiden answered," I don't speak…whatever it is your saying."

"Ou niima bastion?" Aiden was sure it was Englo-Lingo, a strange dialect no one at Angel knew.

"Yes…bastion, yes." The man plucked a few chords, evolving with each pass into a complex melody. It was far superior to any of the synthetic tunes Aiden had heard from his youth, only matched by the ethnic songs from Genai. "It's very good."

"Muzak esta sin knacko civila est verbessern de mecha"

"Whatever you said, I'm sure you're right."

Aiden appreciated the talent the man exhibited, and the level of hygiene was a blessing considering the weeks prior. It was between a surprisingly lengthy tune when the caravan shuddered and stopped. The coach drivers were all trained to pull their breaks in chorus but the vehicles still struck each other, causing Aiden to fall onto the floor. Aiden poked his head out to see what caused the halt.

It was a dumpy figure jabbing a dead jackrabbit repeatedly with a sharpened stick. Despite the state of the prey, the predator continued to perforate the body. The creature resembled a hairless dog walking on bipedal legs. Floppy ears ran down a flattened head. The caravan was understandably cautious. One could mean thousands. A forward guard readied a crossbow shot. Despite the racket of animals and passengers, the pugg ignored the group. They couldn't allow it to live, even if it did pay them no mind. It turned sharply and uttered a scream that crossed the laugh of a monkey with the shriek of a bat.

Dozens more vermin swarmed from the trees towards the caravan. Aiden fell back into the coach and slammed the shutter down. The voices and clatter of armed guards rushed past him.

"All able bodied men to the front!" screamed Captain Rothschild as he walked by the coach. "Grab a sword. If you can hold it, you can wield it."

"Esta sang froid!" said the musician as he took the call and departed. Aiden leaned forward to follow. The screams of the innocent forced a moment of pause and Aiden froze.

The captain poked his head through the door. "Out of the room, this duties' for all," he snapped. Out of reflex, Aiden grabbed his totem book as he left. "What's that?"

"Spell book," Aiden answered.

"A mage, we've hit the fools luck." He snatched Aiden's shirt and pulled hard. "Get behind a sword and throw some fire."

"I actually--" Aiden was cut short as he was tossed onto his feet out of the coach. He fell in behind a hefty fellow draped in mail and topped with a burgonet. His weapon was a well weighted often-used broadsword already blessed with pugg blood. The rodents were rolling over each other to get to their prey. A few wore scraps of clothes, many were naked, wielding sharpened sticks with the rare pack leader with a rock or steel tip. The guard cleaved one on his downswing and caught another as he brought his blade back.

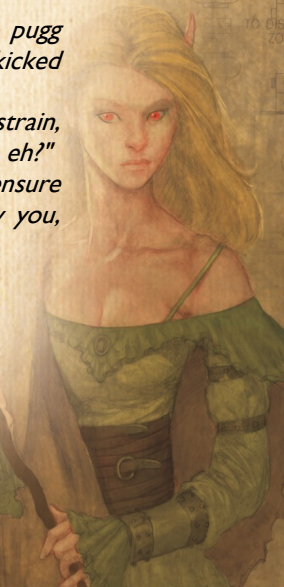
"I heard right...mage?" the guard asked Aiden behind him.

"Apparently. Watch out!" Aiden shouted as a pugg dove to impale a stick into the guard's shin. It was kicked away by a spiked boot.

"Human wizard," he responded with hardly a strain, "good marks on ya. Barking storms and cackling fire, eh?"

Aiden held a tuff of steel loops in his hand to ensure his cover remained in front. "I don't really follow you, no."

The guard leaned back. "Well, cast something."



CHAPTER SEVEN: MAGIC

Despite the numerous references to magic within these pages, those able to control such power are in reality exceedingly rare. Although most people can observe the consequences of magic's influence, through natural expressions in fauna, flora, and landscape, they will never possess any influence over it. It is a byzantine system that can confound even dragons from time to time. Masters require years of study, with wunderkinds as rare as the most powerful of artifacts. With that provision, it can still be expected that a group of heroes taking on a great quest will feature an unusually large proportion of magic users. The justifications for an assembly could come from a higher calling, or it could be dismissed as simple random chance, the byproduct of the very chaos magic encourages. In a world devoid of fate and prophecy, unforeseen coincidences are entirely acceptable.

THE SOURCE

Magic focuses its power through three sources:

Pleroma: 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 access magic in this way. To the uneducated, this language is simply called draconic. To everyone else, it is Pleroma.

Magical Materials: 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.

Magical Beings: 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 resides in, a literal infinity impossible to comprehend or even quantify in our reality.

Despite these arguments, 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 forms 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 over long distances 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. 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 race 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.

PLEROMA

"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.

Pleroma is known to exist in at least three physical dimensions. Though more are theorized, humans and fae are only capable of perceiving three, 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 physical 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 so many 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, however, that Rifts was not thinking big enough.

ATTRICANA SPELLS

Most spells originate from Attricana. The white gate does not force a particular morality upon its casters, but the general disposition of magic supports life in all its forms, beneficent and harmful alike. Unique Attricana spells are those blessed enchantments exclusive to the white gate, including all spells with the Good descriptor as well as monster summoning spells. In the case of the latter, 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.

HUMANITY

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 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

Saturation Point: Human characters start at level 1 with a saturation point total of 0. You gain saturation points under the following circumstances:

+1: You wield a magic weapon (per minute).
+1: You wear magic armor (per hour).
+1: You benefit from magic items in your possession (per hour).
+1: You study the arcane arts (per day).
+1: A beneficial magical effect (including magical healing) is placed upon you.
+1: You drink a potion.
+20: You are brought back from the dead via a spell or spell-life effect.
+20: You bond with a non-human*.
+20: You select a supernatural trait*.
* This accrual cannot be reduced.

The moment you reach a saturation point of 20, you begin to generate EDF (but you do not stop accruing saturation points). As long as you do not accrue any additional points, you remove 1 from your saturation point total every week (unless bonded or selecting a supernatural trait; if so, your total can never drop below 20). Once you begin to radiate magic/disruption from this accrual, you must fall below 20 before you lose disruption. If your saturation score remains over 20 for 6 weeks, it cannot fall below 20 ever again.

IXINDAR AND MENGUS

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 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. A cosmos with one occupant would have neither emotions nor a sense of individuality. Another concept follows the idea that Attricana may be infinity while Ixindar is zero. One is everything while the other is nothing. Given this, a single consciousness in an infinite space would be zero, while a single conscious in zero space would be infinite. That would-be infinite being has a name, and it is 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 it 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. Even a common gender assignment given to Mengus is up to debate. 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 in some circles.

Because Mengus could only look outward from Ixindar, when Amethyst buried the gate, her influence was 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.

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 originally 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.

NIHILIMANCY

For those falling for this lure, the price far outweighs the gains. The damage is paid by both the user's mind and by those around. This path to immortality, later

known as nihilimancy (pronounced either *ny-li-mansy* or *neel-li-mansy*), is growing amongst humans. Those few powerful enough to take advantage of the total potential of nihilimancy have risen to positions of authority, though none of them would admit it. Those opposed to corruption have yet to see the disciples of nihilimancy congregate. They don't send out newsletters or coordinate strategies. There's no need to. Since they all share common motivations, they all strive to follow the whispers of their unseen, unheard, and unacknowledged idol.

The practice of nihilimancy will be dealt with at more length in a future book. For now, there are a few general rules:

DISRUPTION

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, and Ixindar-based equipment and creatures do not generate EDF. It is

even technically possible to enchant a piece of technology using corrupted magic. Enhancement bonuses for magic and TL do not stack, and the enchanted enhancement bonus actually *replaces* the enhancement from TL (as opposed to the higher bonus applying). The item still has its original TL and is still affected by disruption effects originating from Attricana.

CORRUPTION

There can never be a good 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. When you use magic tied to Ixindar, you will fall under the influence of corruption. This works the same as echan saturation, but saturation and corruption points are recording separately. You gain corruption points under the following circumstances:

+2: You wield a magic weapon (per minute) with the Ixindar keyword.

+2: You wear magic armor (per minute) with the Ixindar keyword.

+2: You benefit from magic items with the Ixindar keyword (per minute).

+2: Every day you study the corrupted written form of atar draco sigilia (saeqaar), required to cast negative spells.

+2: You drink a potion with the Ixindar keyword.

+5: Any time you use an arcane power using atar draco sigilia (saeqaar).

The moment you reach a corruption value of 20 or more, you begin to fall under the influence of Ixindar. You cease to generate EDF, if you originally did so: magic items you carry, and any spells that use Pleroma, remain bound to Attricana, and thus generate EDF. If you continue to use normal magic, you are subject to the normal rules of EDF saturation, but if you ever regain enough saturation points to become an echan, you do not do so unless your corruption value first drops to 0. Recovering from corruption is a slow process, like recovering from exposure to magic: if you do return to Attricana, or are otherwise separated from the influence of corruption, you reduce your corruption point value by 1 every week. Currently, only time away from Ixindar's corruption can expunge it from one's soul. You cannot be tied to both Attricana and Ixindar.

You also start to be evil (more accurately Lawful Evil). So act like it.

IXINDAR SPELLS

Negative magic uses the corrupted inversion of Pleroma to cast spells, known as saeqaar. It requires essentially the same practices and discipline as learning Pleroma. Learning saeqaar is difficult, as there are no libraries in Canam that deal with the subject: the only known location in Canam confirmed to have these words is the fortress of Kardia-Gothas in the Sana Marsh, and the only other known means of learning the language is to be taught it by a shemjaza (which few spellcasters are willing to risk unless they are already corrupt). Ixindar also has many exclusive spells. These are vile spells with few redeeming qualities. All spells that deal necrotic damage are unique to Ixindar and thus are not available to casters bound to Attricana. Otherwise, Ixindar casters can use any spell except summoning spells and those that deal radiant damage. 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.

MAGIC ITEMS

Almost any magical item can theoretically have a corrupted counterpart, excepting those that have effects similar to the proscribed spells above. Such items function identically to their Attricana mirrors, save that they do not generate EDF. Negative magic items are extremely rare in the world, and they will never be found legally in any city controlled by the fae: even Baruch Malkut rarely deals in such artifacts, although possibly more due to the difficulty in obtaining them than any moral quandary. Negative magic items can only be located in areas already under the eyes of corrupted creatures. These regions include the Sana Marsh, Tranquiss, and numerous hidden dungeons scattered across the continent. If trying to acquire negative magic items on the black market, expect them to cost up to 10%-20% more than their normal disrupting alternative.

NEW SPELLS

ION PULSE

3rd-level evocation
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 150 feet
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous

An ion pulse resembles a solid white stream of light that weaves and bends to a target. The caster targets a 5-foot radius area in range. Any technology in the area (even partially) suffers targeted disruption. The next disruption recovery roll for the targeted technology suffers a –4 penalty. All items are affected, even those that recently saved.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the range increases by 50 feet, the penalty to recovery increases by -1, and the area of effect increases by 5 feet for each slot level above 3rd.

MODIFIED SPELLS

In a true canon *Amethyst* setting, the list of available spells would be much smaller; however, in order to broaden character options and increase overall game satisfaction, certain compromises are being made. Regarding the official 5E spell list, here are a few common guidelines:

- Spells from level 7, 8, and 9 are classed as foundation spells, which are bound into artifacts and must be sought after. Technically (stressing technically), the only way to cast a spell from one of these levels is to possess said artifact. Foundation anchors will be explored in detail in a future book.
- There are technically no planes as defined in official 5E publications; instead, there are realms beyond Attricana and Ixindar, as well as the run-of-the-mill pocket universes wizard have been known to create on occasion (GMs discretion as to which is which).
- There are no proven deities in *Amethyst*. Any divinity spells claiming to contact a higher power can either be removed, or better still answered by a mysterious disembodied intelligence with simple access to more knowledge than actual power—what this intelligence actual is can remain a mystery.
- That being said, there are still divine effects, as these are energies associated directly with Attricana. *Holy aura* is one such spell.
- When characters project or teleport, they are either shifting into an alternate quantum vibrational state or are shifting less out of phase of the real world and more resonant to either the flow of Attricana or Ixindar. The 9th level foundation spell *gate* is nothing but an extremely low-powered variation of the gates of Ixindar and Attricana, while *plane shift* can be used to banish a creature to one realm or another.
- When summoning or conjuring objects or creatures, the target in question is not being beckoned from another world, but rather is being created at that very moment (with exception of creatures like dragons that are called from elsewhere in the world). A creature possesses intelligence and the awareness that its life begins and ends with the spell. Even *planar ally* and *planar binding* creates something effectively from the wizard's imagination.
- Any spell that can translate language or text can never translate Pleroma. Period.

NECROMANCY

In *Amethyst*, the bulk of necromancy spells are tied to Ixindar, and are centered around the draining and corrupting of life as well as the creation of false-life—creatures with programming but not consciousness.

Some powerful wizards have been able to work within this system, gaining themselves eternal life while also being not technically alive. These creatures have been able to maintain their own identities, but it is important to note that they are still unable to create life from Ixindar. It simply cannot be done.

That being said, certain necromancy spells in *Amethyst* also have identical "positive" variations. The following spells are available as both necromancy (Ixindar) and transmutation (Attricana): *clone*, *gentle repose*, *revivify*, and *raise dead*

Alas, *resurrection* and *true resurrection* are still necromancy only, and thus are extremely dangerous for both the caster and the target.

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, in canon *Amethyst* , crafting magic items is nearly impossible—a knowledge only known and closely guarded by both elder fae races and dragons. The latter are believed to be the source of the most powerful items, with laudenians and then chaparrans following behind. This is not absolute, with exceptions occurring with every species (stressing exceptions). Magic item formulas are never found scattered carelessly on a desk, with most locked behind castle walls and within vaults owned by city rulers.

However, one is not required to be a spellcaster in order to create a magic item; for most, all it requires is the ultra-rare formula and the precise ratios of materials necessary to produce "natural" magical effects, most of which are extremely rare. A crafter is still required to meet the minimum level. Imbuing actual spells in magical items still requires you to be a spellcaster.

Attricana-bound magic items cannot be imbued with necromancy spells with the Death or Evil descriptor, and Ixindar-bound items cannot be imbued with abjuration spells or conjuration spells that summon creatures.

Costly Components: The rarity of magic items is as much about the knowledge required in their making as it is the materials involved. Making magic items requires not only the formula 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 outside of a bastion. This is in addition to any spell components required.

Any item costing more than a 500 gp should have

such creative obstacles, forcing players to quest as much for the materials for their magic items as the quests they need their magic items for.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

Certain magic items are not present in *Amethyst* for obvious reasons while others go against setting canon. Any item that deals with the planes is disallowed, as *Amethyst* has no planes (items dealing with the ethereal plane may still work on a case-by-case basis, at the GM's discretion). Any item that requires an 8th or 9th level spell is not prohibited, but should have a rarity commensurate with a major artifact. Items resembling technology, such as *apparatus of the crab* , may exist but would have to be recent creations made after contact with humanity. No artifacts exist except foundation anchors and those detailed in these pages and in other *Amethyst* supplements .

ARTIFACTS

THE BIBLE OF DRASAGO AND THE ARCHON GOSPELS

When the dragons emerged from Attricana in the new age, 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 chronicle 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 himself. 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 creature semi-fluent in Pleroma reads this book, which takes 48 hours over a period of six days or fewer, it gains inherent bonuses dependent on 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 once read, the book loses its magic, but regains it in a century.

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 a wish or the breath of the dragons that authored them.

THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY

Written by Aurannis of Dust and Greka of Babel
Wondrous item, artifact

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 imparts these abilities:

Spell Booster: Any spell slot you expend to cast a spell requiring a totem counts as a spell slot of one level higher for that spell .

Resistance: You are immune to disease.

Ability Score Increase: Your spellcasting ability increases by 2, to a maximum of 24.

Natural Armor: While not wearing armor, you have an AC of 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GUARDIAN

Written by Kelto of the Guard
Wondrous item, artifact

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 imparts these abilities:

Armor: Any armor worn by you that has an enhancement bonus has its enhancement increased by 1 (to a max of +3).

Vision: You gain darkvision 60 feet and blindsight 30 feet.

Ability Score Increase: Your Strength or Dexterity score increases by 2, to a maximum of 24.

Weapons: Any sword held by you that has an enhancement bonus has its enhancement increased by 1 (to a max of +3).

THE GOSPEL OF THE NOBLE

Written by Lynissa of Essence
Wondrous item, artifact

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 of 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 imparts these abilities:

Blessed Presence: All allies (not you) within 40 feet of you cannot be frightened or charmed.

Bestowed Authority: On your turn, you can grant one ally within 40 feet a second bonus action on her turn.

Ability Score Increase: Your Charisma score increases by 2, to a maximum of 24.

THE GOSPEL OF LAZARUS

Written by Lazarus
Wondrous item, artifact

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 imparts these abilities:

Call from Heaven: Once a month you can call an adult archon dragon (of any type) to your aid. The dragon will arrive in 1d4 hours and remain for up to 1d4 hours, though it won't leave you helpless or in an unwinnable situation.

Ability Score Increase: One ability score of your choice increases by 2, to a maximum of 24.

Eyes from Above: You cannot be frightened or charmed.

Sanctified: Once a month, if killed, you are subjected to the effects of a Revivify spell 1d4 hours later.

THE CHRONICLE OF AURANNIS

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.

STAFF OF KERIF

Wondrous item, artifact

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.

Beyond empowering the holder to communicate with Ramkava, the staff can do the following:

Know Direction: The holder always knows the direction of true north.

Linguist: You understand any language you hear or read (with the exception of Pleroma), though you cannot speak it.

Sensor: Within 30-feet of you, you can detect good, evil, and magic.

Legend Lore: Once a week, you can cast the spell *legend lore* but only if you have the object at hand or are in the place of question.

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 the stars. 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 abilities 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.

The most shocking attribute about the artifacts of all, and the property garnering the most curiosity from those few techans aware of the artifacts, is the fact they do not disrupt technology like other magic. Confirmed to not be cursed relics parading as benign ones, there is no answer to why the Amethyst shards are the exception to previously though unwavering rule.

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/STORMCAGE/ THE EYE OF GOD

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

On Its Own: Use an action and regain one expended spell slot up to 2nd level. Once you used this ability, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

2 Amethyst relics: Your spellcasting ability increases by 2, to a maximum of 24.

3 Amethyst relics: You can now regain one expended spell slot up to 4th level instead of 2nd level.

5 Amethyst relics: You have advantage on saving throws against spells.

7 Amethyst relics: You can now regain one expended spell slot up to 6th level instead of 4th level.

8 Amethyst relics: Your proficiency bonus increases by 1 when involving spells.

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 / ARMS OF TRUTH / THE PRESENCE OF RHINFORGE

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

On Its Own: The bracers, on their own, set your AC depending on the armor you are wearing. *Light armor*—your AC is 13 + Dex modifier; *medium armor*—your AC is 16 + Dex modifier (max 2); *heavy armor*—your AC is 19.

2 Amethyst relics: You have resistance to cold damage.

3 Amethyst relics: You gain a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws.

4 Amethyst relics: You have resistance to fire damage.

6 Amethyst relics: Any weapon you wield is counted as magical.

8 Amethyst relics: Your proficiency bonus increases by 1 when making melee attacks.

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".

THE BUCKLE / THE BELT, BOOTS, or BRACELET OF DRAGONKIND

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement)

On Its Own: You gain an additional action on your turn. You can use this ability as many times as there are Amethyst relics within 100 feet of you (including this one), and then it can't be used again until the next dawn. You can only gain 1 additional action per turn this way.

3 Amethyst relics: Your base speed increases by +5 feet.

5 Amethyst relics: You gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.

7 Amethyst relics: You are proficient with any weapon you are wielding.

8 Amethyst relics: You can cross any surface (water, mud, etc) and never leave any tracks. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

"I could..." Aiden had a hard enough time concentrating on his normal thoughts. To keep such a word in his mind, to recall all his knowledge of it, and in its expression, alter the physical rules of the world, was out of his reach when ferocious monsters were within theirs. "You know, I'm not good with a sword, but perhaps I should–"

The guard turned sharply back. "Are you a mage or not? Throw down the pillars, boy–"

"Holy crap!" Aiden shouted. The guard turned back to see the blurry point of a rock-tipped spear only an instant before it drove into his eye. The lumbering corpse fell back on Aiden, pinning his legs under 300 pounds of dead flesh and steel. The pugg pulled the spear from the wound and smiled teasingly. The terrified wizard kicked and struggled under the weight. His book was still in his hand. This pugg had more than a few scraps of cloth draped over it, the chief. Aiden waited for his rescue, for that moment in every book where the hero would be saved at the last second. A dragon would be good but a well placed arrow would–

The creature's spear drove an inch through layers of cotton and polyester and into Aiden's leg. The pain was shockingly intense. The pugg pulled it back quickly and strolled over the corpse to aim for Aiden's face. The leather-bound spellbook had a skeleton of wood. It was heavy for its size and durable. Only a handful of pages were pierced as the book was held up as a shield. When Aiden pushed the book back, the creature fell off the guard's body.

After dislodging himself from under the armored carcass, Aiden rolled back and slammed the tome as hard as he could upon the pugg's head. He brought it down again, hearing a crack, and another, which added a blemish of blood on the cover. All his strength in a third cracked the creature's bones and snapped the spear. A fourth, fifth, eighth, twelfth, and there was little left other than broken bones and blood. Aiden kept at it up until jostled by the shout.

"Hey...Wizard!" shouted the captain sarcastically. Aiden looked up from his kill. The remaining puggs had been driven off or killed. Three guards had fallen along with two passengers. "You done wowing it with your magic? It's over." Aiden lifted himself from the ground, looked at the nearly destroyed book, and limped back to the carriage. As he struggled up the steps, the captain added, "That was some spell you got there."

Aiden ignored him.

* * *

It was hours after the caravan got moving again did a doctor see to Aiden's injury. As the healer pulled the broken layers of clothing away, they both realized how pathetic the wound was. The doctor didn't comment and went about with three stitches. Aiden didn't voice his concern if the needle or thread was sterile or if brandy was the best cleaning solution. The sutures were clumsy and the brandy hurt as much as the needle sewing his flesh. Aiden winced away the pain the best he could but a single tear still found itself rolling down his cheek. He lifted the cover of his spellbook. It was beautiful once, blind tooled with symbols from Chen that Aiden was still trying to decipher. The uneven and muddled pages were a requirement, filled with scratches and notes on the sidebars. Equations and shorthand filled every space. Sitting perfectly even and parallel were the symbols of Aiden's devotion, the words of Pleroma.

The leather cover was broken. The spine was cracked. A bushel of papers fell out as he placed the book on his lap. The spark flew out of a fallen page and whizzed around Aiden's head, around the room, before flying back to its written word on the scattered leaf. The blood had gotten through the hole and stained the first few pages. Aiden gathered the fallen notes and minor incantations and slipped them back into the

broken book. After he was left alone in the coach, Aiden glanced at the abandoned guitar and realized who one of the fallen passengers was.

"Shit..."

* * *

Captain Rothschild called Aiden to the reigns at mid afternoon on the next day. Aiden was still nursing a mild limp as he pushed through the drapes and stepped onto the front of the road train.

"Captain?" said Aiden.

"Yes, have a seat." The captain had a cushion. Leaf springs didn't soften every rock. The vantage was impressive. Three storeys up and Aiden could just see over the crest of trees. Looking down brought him square into the ass of a cow twice the size of an elephant.

"How's the wound?" The captain emphasized the last word.

Aiden stroked the bandage he could see through the hole in his pants. "It's nothing."

The captain shook his head. "Could have told me you couldn't do magic. My fault for not knowing better. Human casters were rare enough."

"I know the words, but–"

"Not in combat. If you want a light, make a fire. That's a useful skill. Carpentry, metalwork—hell—musician, there's some value in that. Do something productive. Wizard…same spells then are the same today. Nothing changes, never gets better. Can't build on a spell, son." Aiden nodded. He didn't wish to engage in an argument, not now, not here. Aiden had practiced the basic words for years. The pain had been distracting. The creature's scream had been unsettling. Those were good reasons but they were probably wrong. "So which house?"

"House?"

"A peasant-born would know a blade. You've got skin as pure as a fae's ass. You were raised in sanctuary. So which house? Antikari? Torquil? You don't look inbred."

"You need to slow down." The captain looked ahead to see the approaching dust plume, moving fast.

"Storm? Stampede, maybe?"

"I don't think so."

The captain stood up and shouted to the controller at the rear of the coach, "Full stop!"

The man at the back stood up and a chain of screams followed down the line, "Full stop!" The captain pulled on the huge brake and the coaches slowed with the animals. "You know what that is?" Rothschild asked. "If it's a chiggoth, we're all dead."

As it rose over the hill, Aiden recognized it. It was taller than all the trees around, with eight wheels that dwarfed even the caravan's beasts of burden. The goliath lumbered over the landscape with carbon-kevlar wrapped tires, scarring the earth with deep treads. The brute clumsily pushed and bullied its way through whatever stood in front. The scrambler Aiden had ridden in pranced gracefully in comparison. It was twice the height of the caravan and held twice the people. It's main body was lifted high over its axles, allowing it to drive over the forest rather than through it. Only leviathans like this ever made it this far from a bastion and even then, they were a rarity. It was flanked and escorted by a half dozen all-terrain bikes with enclosed cockpits and chunky tires.

Aiden grimaced at the eyesore as it passed.

"My God, what a monster!" the Captain admired.

"Aptly said," Aiden replied. Monster was related to monstrosity, an abomination, something exaggerated, perverted, a sin against nature.

"Still beautiful in its own way. Nothing to fear with that. Not dragon or chiggoth. That's traveling in style."

"It's 2500 tons of iron and carbon driven by an energy that would vaporize this forest if it were released." Unlike the scrambler, this vehicle couldn't generate enough power from solar cells alone. Hidden deep inside, locked in an iron shell, was the energy of the sun.

"Still beats walking," the captain replied. Aiden turned to reenter the coach. "What would you call something like that?"

"Mark 13 Behemoth, via the Angel Strongyards " Aiden answered as he left the captain.

The captain turned and watched Aiden vanish into the vehicle. "Well, good luck out there, techan."

* * *

"Custodians! What fortune!" Captain Rothschild shouted from outside. Aiden jumped from the bed and scratched frantically at the wood to slide open the shutter. The parade had passed into Limshau's borders during the night.

"The anathema flee further into the west," a sharp, clear, and charismatic voice answered, a master of the language, "chasing food and from that which feeds upon them." Aiden poked out his head to see. When that failed, he went for the door.

"Yeah, they were here, 'bout two dozen. Never seen them this far," the captain replied. Still with half his layers on, Aiden threw open the doors, missed the steps, and slammed into the dirt. He flinched from the pain still in his leg. It passed quickly as he saw them, as real as every wish wanted them to be.

The damaskans noticed Aiden with their piercing almond eyes as he rounded the carriage. These two wore new clothes, pressed and clean–a common feature of the species. They abhorred getting dirty. The ears, their most distinguishing feature, tapered straight out a few inches from the sides of the skull to a sharp point. Both these guards were male. Supposedly, a female's ears were pointed higher and fluttered depending on her mood.

Their hair was dark and cut under shoulder length. Their skin was light tan. Aiden took note of their visible age, younger than himself. They wore the black kawabari and overcoat distinctive of the warrior scholars from the city of books. The kawbari Limshau armor was the uniform and signature of the custodian. Overlaying leather, both conditioned and boiled, covered nearly every inch of their bodies. The longcoat of thick split leather, ran down to the base of waist in the back, but flowed down past the knees in front. Their blades were locked and safe on their backs.

"Perhaps the speculation of a chiggoth in this region is accurate," the one custodian said.

"Either way, you here for escort?" Rothschild replied.

"No. You are three days from the city. You will find no other threats in your approach. We patrol to find the nest. We suspect it not far from your path. Have you suffered loss-

es?"

"A few, yes."

Aiden just watched and admired the accuracy of those stories. They walked with such subtlety and lightness, they were hardly leaving impressions in the soil. Every arm movement was intended, no peculiar itches or nervous ticks, no idle hands. They stood straight and balanced without shuffling. Their very existence was a denial of common sense and if the gate above were to close, their deaths would come quick under the unforgivable wrath of logic.

"Unfortunate," the custodian said.

Other passengers had emerged from the convoy to get their glimpses. Some had seen the likes of them before. The women were smitten. The men were unsettled.

"Should we worry over contraband?" the custodian added. Aiden noted they had no horses. They ran without a drop of water or sweat since the city and would continue to do so until nightfall.

"Never gave you reason to suspect before," the captain answered. "Still, you're in your place and welcome to check."

"We already are."

The third custodian wore white and was orbiting the opposite side of the caravan. Aiden turned back to notice and instantly became aware of his unbuttoned undershirt, his damaged pants, his unshaven face and morning hair.

She studied every passenger, scrutinized each vehicle, and did so with only a passing glance. She looked like a human girl barely at the sunset of her teens. Aiden couldn't find a single flaw on the modest amount of exposed skin. Gentle enough to be swept away by a stiff breeze, strong enough to push the breeze back. A sharp nose led to brilliant green eyes. Narrow in face but high in cheeks, her slender body floated towards him.

Aiden's jaw became unclenched. In a beat, he was fourteen again, ogling the sketches under the bedsheets. He became ashamed by his imperfections and hygiene. The light caught her flowing straight dark hair thrown back from a head turn. Strands pulled aside to expose the ears. Her smooth, light brown skin peeked from gaps in her armor. She was close and he appreciated the perfection. The coat had round buttons that continued up from the hips to the high collar, where it was topped by a firmly secured short belt. The collar continued half way up her long neck.

She passed him and stopped as they locked eyes. He wanted that to last forever. Everything everywhere led to this instant. It was beyond anything he had imagined or prepared. She broke the moment and looked down at his arm. When she reached for and grabbed it, the adrenaline could be measured in wattage. She pulled his sleeve and revealed the watch. "Rompere?" she asked

"Pardon?" Aiden answered.

"Non functional." She shared the accent of the others, a strange sort similar to Minx's, but with an emphasis on perfect pronunciation.

"Yes."

She released him. "A wizard's book but bastion born. You have a tale."

"I do indeed." Aiden tryed to form the best smile he could. His thoughts quickly migrated to remind him of the unbuttoned shirt and rumpled hair.

She tilted her head and a slight smirk to lift the spirits of the dead crept over her face. "Then the city will welcome you."

"Thank you," was all he could marshal as his brain rambled on with other distracting thoughts.

"Anything of concern, Raven" called out the lead custodian.

She answered him. "There is nothing tainted or corrupted. No advanced technology."

"Very good."

Aiden glanced at his watch. "Prohibited?" he asked.

"Not exactly," Raven answered as her smile faded. "Unprotected power cells are unsafe in environments such as these.

Aiden attempted to impress. "Actually, I know…I've…I've read."

"Then reminding you of it was avoidable," she answered directly and stepped away. Aiden furrowed his brow, unsure how to make of that.

The lead custodian resumed his conversation with the captain. "We will leave you to your journey," the custodian said. He called out, "let us continue, Raven."

Raven started for the other two. Aiden stepped up to follow her. "Raven, nice name."

She continued walking. "It is," she replied. Fae seldom sported curves. Detractors complained of their lack of definition, that females missed many of the voluptuous aspects of women, and males the tone and muscle of stout and sturdy men. All Aiden could think was how those critics never spotted a damaskan from behind strapped in kawabari leather.

The captain offered his hand to the lead. "Thank you again." When it wasn't accepted, the captain let it drop. The two custodians approached Raven.

Aiden watched her slip away. He didn't want to follow but he couldn't let it drop.

"My name's Aiden," he finally announced.

She looked back as she walked away. "I did not ask." He had read they had no concept of deception, that their outlook and behavior was foreign to those unaware. A year visibly older or younger could mean a century. A century of traumas and delights can change a person. His hand under no conscious control finally took the initiative and flattened his hair and buttoned his shirt. The elves vanished into the woods, her white leather the last to fade. The passengers and guards boarded the caravan. Aiden kept his eyes on the fluttering leaves.

The captain walked back around. "Hoping for an impression?" he asked, finally jostling Aiden out of his delirium.

"I don't know. I guess…yes."

"Next time don't ask a question you know the answer to." Aiden broke his stare to finally look at him. "Don't fret, you'll see more where that one came from." He patted the disillusioned wizard on the shoulder.

"Yeah, but..." Aiden had ceased being an adult some time ago.

...no higher than a princess, an exotic, a target that could never be struck...

"You'll remember this meeting, but it's not memorable. Sorry to say." The captain climbed on top of the lead coach. Aiden brought his eyes back to the forest. He wasn't sure what the captain meant. "Hey! Wanna walk the rest of the way?" was the final snap Aiden needed to recover his adulthood. He walked up the steps, back into the coach. "God have mercy on you in Limshau."

CHAPTER EIGHT: CULTURE

The world of *Amethyst* may be one of fantasy, but it is nevertheless built upon the common knowledge earned throughout human history dealing with building construction, agriculture, medication, and sanitation. 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 disposi-

tion. 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 than 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 thousands of years.

Both sides suddenly faced the prospect of reexamining their belief system. Echalogians offered 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 race 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, 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 (only due to the inclusion of humans in one of them), 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.

Language: This is the language name as translated into English.

Script Type: This is the system of writing the script uses. There are six variations:

Abjad: Very similar to Alphabetic, Abjad uses symbols representing consonants with little to no vowel use. This system includes some of the oldest languages still being spoken today.

Abugida: This system is similar to Alphabetic and Abjad in that it uses consonants, but it combines vowels with its consonants rather than having separate vowels.

Alphabetic: The root for many languages, this uses simple symbols representing individual consonants and vowels. This often creates a smaller spectrum of letters but added complexity may occur with a complicated vocabulary.

Featural: This is a strictly phonetic-based writing system often employing syllabic blocks. This language is not often seen but is easier to learn than most others.

Logographic: Symbols represent words and phonemes (though mostly the latter). These scripts can be extremely complex as the symbols can be intricate.

Pictographic: Symbols represent specific titles, vague concepts, or ideas. This is not considered a strong written language and is nearly impossible to translate without reference. These symbols have been known to be very extravagant.

Syllabic: Symbols represent syllables of words rather than whole words or consonants. This system can be nearly as complicated as pictographic or logographic but can convey a spoken language better.

LANGUAGE	SCRIPT TYPE	SCRIPT NAME	ECHAN
Argose	Pictrographic	Argose	Yes
Chaparra	Pictrographic	Faen	Yes
Damaskan	Logographic	Damaskan	Yes
English	Alphabetic	English	No
Englo-Lingo	Alphabetic	English	No
Ferran	Pictrographic	Ferran	Yes
Guttoran	None	None	Yes
Ignotan	Featural	Kakkonin	Yes
Indic	Abjad	Shahmukhi	No
Laudenian	Logographic	Faen	Yes
Narroni	Featural	Narroni	No
Old Fae	Pictrographic	Faen	Special
Onespeak	Alphabetic	Terran	No
Paggin	Featural	Kakkonin	Yes
Pleroma	Logographic	Adonnic	Special
Romanic	Alphabetic	Romanic	No
Saeqaar	Logographic	Adonnic	Special
Semitic	Abjad	Aramaic	No
Sinitic	Logographic	Kanja	No
Slavic	Alphabetic	Cyrillic	No
Tenenbra	Logographic	Tenenbra	Yes

LANGUAGE DESCRIPTIONS

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 / COMMON

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 discouraged.

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.

SEMETIC

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.

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.

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 modern 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 it lives within Attricana, and/or it may be the realm itself. Some others say it 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 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 8 billion people died following the Second Hammer and subsequent fallout, 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 proof one way or the other. God or gods remain as quiet and as elusive as before.

Atheism is surprisingly uncommon, even among bastion populations (although bastions have a highest 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 – a race 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.

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.

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.

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 trust 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 an end 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 encourages 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 an end 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 yokani. 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

SERVICE	COST	OVERLAND SPEED	PER DAY	PER HOUR
Dragonflyer (routine)	2 sp per mile	125 (Flight)	300 miles	12.5 miles
Dragonflyer (charter)	4 sp per mile	125 (Flight)	300 miles	12.5 miles
Thermal (coach)	1 sp per mile	100 (Flight)	240 miles	10 miles
Thermal (luxury)	2 sp per mile	100 (Flight)	240 miles	10 miles
Wavecrasher	1 sp per mile	100 (Sea)	240 miles	10 miles

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 bandits 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.

Adding to a library bequeaths unlimited freedom of all books. A rule and principle of Limshau. Aiden knew the directives put forth by the nation of knowledge. Chen told him to take a book with him and offered one from his personal collection. He handed him an unlabeled pre-gate book of some age. Gilt rosettes ran inside gauffered edges of the front and back cover of the black tome. Inside the border, more gold engravings of urns and vases tumbled around a central tapestry of ovals and squares. Aiden noted the lack of a label anywhere on the cover or binding. The inside held a mouthful, The Glory of Her Sacred Majesty Queen Anne in the Royal Navy. A rare book. Chen promised the volume would yield indefinite access to whatever library he offered it to. Aiden flipped through its rough pages once or twice, never fully understanding the prose or context. Better than any currency, it would pay for Aiden's stay in Limshau for as long as it would tolerate him. Like other late arrivals by foot, mount, or caravan, he waited outside until the main gate's opening at sunrise.

The White Walls of Limshau were a maze of dense stone walls radiating from the central archives. They held the combined knowledge of a hundred nations. After the gate re-opened, damaskans rebuilt their civilization, splitting into two empires on either side of the planet. On one side, Damasia was rebuilt to its former glory. On this opposite, the fae erected the empire of knowledge. All damaskans lived in homes made of stone, not wood. Most of their cities were built into tall mountains or next to cliffs and always facing a major river or body of water. Where they differed was that Damasian cities expanded across open fields stopped only by water and cliffs where Limshau restricted its cities by raising walls. Damasian cities scraped the sky with sharp spires, a landscape of porcupine quills. Limshau's jigsaw of flat, interlocking, and tessellating buildings allowed an unobstructed sunset.

Fae races seldom recorded anything. Their history was marred with inaccuracies, legends claimed as fact, facts discredited as myth. Damaskans brought little with them when they returned to this world and were forced to reconstruct their past from scattered memories and the occasional relic.

Ten stories and uniform in texture, the white walls encircled the library entire, thirty miles from end to end. When engineers proposed the periphery, they envisioned a flawless circle of mathematical precision. Not a single error survived the obsession of hundreds of dedicated engineers over the century of the wall's assembly. Single slabs of waxy white marble reached ground to sky. A heavier layer of granite behind offered protection. In three hundred years, the wall never suffered an attack. Like Angel, a substantial population grew outside to take advantage of those arriving and leaving.

Shops were scattered about the housings, selling hundreds of various items for the passing and departing traveler. Aiden purchased a bowl of rice pudding farmed from nearby paddy fields. The moment the dealer spotted Aiden's mechanically spun pants, the price of the bowl doubled. Aiden sat in the corner of the open-air brasserie, flipping through the bound pages of his unique currency. He barely registered the approaching figure until the shadow blocked the overhead oil lamp.

"You read," the man stated, not asked. His accent came from speaking Mulkut Onespeak for most of his life. He wore a dirtied brown longcoat of thick threads closed with every oversized leather shank buttoned. Large traveling boots clopped the floorboards. An unzipped hold-all hung from his shoulder. Aiden recognized him from earlier but tried not to notice. Throughout the sprawl, he stood upon boxes preaching the unswerving dedication of his faith. He judged passing sins and cursed those of fae blood he spotted. All the while, the symbol--a cross with circles at the points--was visible on his coat and on the small book he never opened. The pamphlets he distributed throughout the day also featured the mark. Aiden saw one palmed in the man's hand as he made conversation.

"Apparently, yes," said Aiden, refusing to look at the immigrant.

"Give this one a try." He revealed the pamphlet and dropped it on the page of Aiden's book. Badly drawn sketches with pretentious dialogue detailed the fall of man due only to their decadence and over-reliance on technology. It preached the new world existed only as a test for mankind to overcome. Only by resisting the temptations of the new world would man ascend. This included such dramatic illustrations as a proud human turning his back on the hand of friendship from a chaparran, and the man suffering a heart attack at the end proclaiming, "TAKE ME HOME!" after a lifetime of unwavering piety.

Aiden glanced at the pamphlet only a moment before raising it up between them. "Is it true these count two-for-one in the city's brothel."

The man was taken back, snapping. "You insult me--"

"If I were to, I'd be honest and say that I'd prefer to tear it up, though destroying the written work in front of the white walls is an offense even I won't commit, despite the contents." Aiden tossed it back. The man caught it and pointed a finger with it still in his hand.

"This world awaits our hand to cleanse it. If you saw the scars upon our land by the claws of machines, you would agree. They live a life against God."

"That was never the reason why I left...move on."

"God will remember this conversation if you won't."

Aiden looked down to continue his reading but added as a mutter, "Sure he pays attention to me."

"He attends every second of all our lives. No one can fully understand his plan--"

"Least of all some imbecile handing out repression and racism outside of the greatest repository of all knowledge."

"I am a humble servant, willing and able to share his grace and wisdom with others."

"And the fae are exempt from this?"

"By his word."

"Then spoken by an ugly god. Even when I believed in him, he was never that petty. Move...on." Aiden ignored anything else the man had to say.

* * *

By sunbreak, Aiden had checked from the hostel and made his way to the eastern gates. He reached the front of the line before the crowds gathered. The seam in the door was nearly invisible until it broke the instant the sun's rays drifted down the wall. The simple assemblage of gears and pulleys moved the huge slabs of stone effortlessly. On the other side, a smaller gate of chain and iron was guarded by a handful of custodians. Two damaskans guarded either side, armed with katana and tanto with a human custodian sitting behind a podium, brandishing a clipboard and pencil. They were dressed in the black kawabari Aiden had seen before. The human greeted him.

"Hola. Sprache?"

"English?" Aiden answered and asked.

"Lingo or Franca?"

"Franca."

"Early morning sir. You carry papers?"

"Yes." Aiden brought up the various papers proving his identity. This included the Angel Ident Card and a letter of recommendation from David Obatala Chen. The custodian stopped at the latter and didn't bother flipping through the others.

"Aiden ka-moo?" the custodian verified.

"Kae-mus."

"Just arrived or spent the night?" The guard filled out Aiden's temporary passport.

"The night."

"No aggravations, I hope?" The custodian stamped the passport and handed it back with the papers.

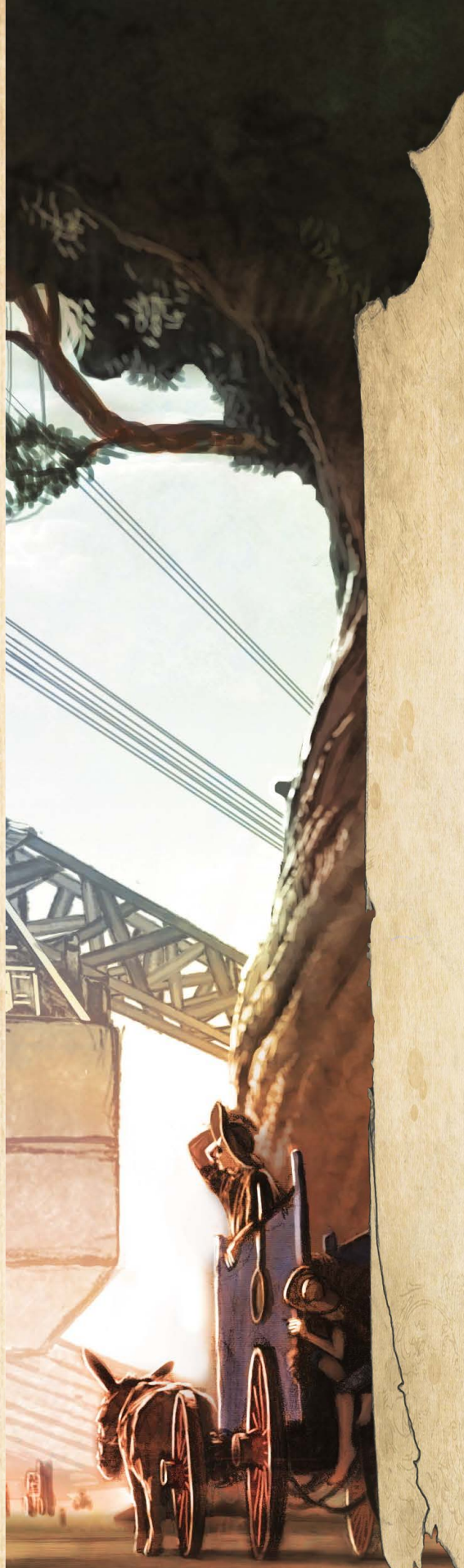
"Just some Malkut immigrant pandering his paranoia."

"Odd they still do after escaping that madness."

"Keeps them safe I suppose, a delusion to depend on. Thank you." Aiden retrieved the papers and made his way through the gate.

As he passed through, the custodian said to his back, "The gods may be dead but faith is no delusion. Enjoy your stay in Limshau." Aiden turned back and paused, but didn't comment.

CHAPTER NINE:
THE WORLD



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 to 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 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 succeeded rather dramatically. Fragments of angelite 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, 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 building. Even the scars left by industry were overrun by plants and moving dirt.

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.

Calculating the rate of destruction and the amount of alteration to the climate and the geography of earth, I have come to an unforeseen conclusion. The increased tectonic activity occurs from altered gravity fields and reduced basal and slab friction along the plates. The sudden torrent of enchantment that proclaimed the opening of the gate was akin to a bursting dam, flooding the world in excess before reaching the level most swim comfortably in now. This great deluge resulted in a massive schism, causing more loss of life across the globe.

Even this increase does not explain the washing of nearly all evidence of the human footprint upon the planet. Not even 100 years of floods, winds, volcanoes, and earthquakes could account the total erasure of virtually every building or every foot of road. Little survived with the most prized possessions being a handful of books found surrounded by computers long neutralized. My confusion deals with these said books along with a few other artifacts that survived from the old time. These relics are few in number, never larger than a clothes hamper. They also all weathered badly. Is this all that remains of old man? I believe mankind had already reduced his technological footprint either by will or forced upon them by some great war or natural disaster before the impact finished the job.

There are other theories including a fault in my own experiments or a dating error between the opening of Ixindar and the follow-up by Attricana. Evidence is hard to come by dealing with this era. This question may forever be unanswered.

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The Final Word of Echan Influence on Geochronology

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 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 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

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.

The best-known bastion of the west coast, Angel is known for two things: its massive city wall, and the echan (but legally non-magical) community of Genai nestled inside that wall, made up of descendants of Asian refugees that helped build the city. Angel enjoys good relations and trade, albeit at a safe distance, with its echan neighbors, and its native dialect of English is considered the common trade tongue of western and central Canam.

Angel is the largest bastion in Canam, and 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. Angel's development was the most troubled of all the Canam bastions.

Like many bastions, Angel's origin may predate the birth of Attricana, but also like other bastions, Angel has virtually no history of that time. Only a few patchy and unsubstantiated accounts survived along with old maps telling of sprawling cities now virtually forgotten. One such rumored account claims Angel, similar to Selkirk and Sierra Madre, began life as a military base which merged with a fallout shelter and subsequently expanded into the old metro line. Functioning technology was used to retake the old city ruins which were then subsequently torn down and rebuilt. However, encroachment of puggs and boggs caused setbacks which plagued the first hundred years before the arrival of echan immigrants from both east and from overseas.

Setting up on a shoreline rich in the necessities of life and devoid of neighboring contested territories, 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 goblin-folk are not noted for their intelligence and still frequently launch assaults against the walls, though all they can hope to achieve now is 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 believed to be the world's largest bastion.

Meanwhile, Genai cares nothing of its isolation. Legally, Genai is a separate enclave 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.

LOCATION

Angel is a bastion built upon a massive city of Earth's past. Utilizing old political lines, Angel occupies the entire Los Angeles - Long Beach – Santa Ana urban regions, including Huntington Beach, Ontario, Santa Monica and Thousand Oaks. The area claimed and controlled by Angel is fringed by a colossal wall 175 feet tall, the last of four such walls, each inner one shorter than the previous and dating the bastion like tree rings (though most of these inner walls have been dismantled). Angel requires such a bulwark because of the encroachment of magic from nearly every side. The magical forest of Cyon pushes from the south while infestations of anathema swarm from the north. This has encouraged Angel's isolation.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Angel is the most populous bastion in Canam. It is not the most advanced, only slightly more developed than York. After the first wall was erected, the techans accepted the assistance of echan immigrants in exchange for a protected enclave within the walls. The first Genai wasn't much more than a refugee camp, but when the last wall was erected, the Asian-distinctive reserve was given both borders and special administrative status. With little oversight, Genai became a sanctuary of magic-accepting, although officially non-magical individuals within the protection of techan walls. Despite this, Angel is still considered one of the more xenophobic bastions, with children being kept in ignorance of the true nature of the world as long as possible, and even then, largely regarding the magical realms beyond the walls in the same way they would think of Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. The only people who really know the status of the world are politicians and the military personnel tasked with protection.

ADVENTURES

Angel is fanatical about protecting its interests against the vague threats beyond. "Vague" is the appropriate term as there are no named armies or nations at war with Angel. The greatest threats are the dozens if not hundreds of wandering bands of anathema. Angel has attempted diplomatic relationships with other bastions like York and Selkirk, but their isolation prevents any contact more regular than a few messages a year. Because most of Angel's military is assigned the defense of the city and its outer wall, it delegates foreign issues to mercenary companies (mostly techan though hiring fantasy groups is not unheard of). Missions include ferrying personnel or supplies to other nations or bastions as well as more dangerous missions eradicating threats from the dense magical forests surrounding the city.

ALLIES

Technically, Angel is allied with other bastions like York and Selkirk but communication is sporadic. Angel also has unofficial but profitable economic ties with Salvabrooke, which welcomes those brave and edgy souls who consider a carefully organized and controlled tourist trip beyond the walls to be a taste of danger.

ENEMIES

Angel has no official enemies other than such wandering monsters as are not deterred by the massive walls. Unofficially, they have far more to fear from agents of other bastions than they do from the nearby echans.

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 mer-

chants 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 of Genai's cityscape looking 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 peninsula 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.

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.

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 security 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 represented. 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) 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 ethnic Japanese representing less than 10% of the overall population, residents of both Angel and Genai use traditional Japanese honorifics (-san, -kun, -chan, -sensei, etc.) in most formal situations, regardless of their own ethnic background.

Angel Examples: Aiden Camus, Joachim Annikos, Kimiko Ross, Martha Tsukigawa, Shelley Delacruz, Xavier Moran

Genai Examples: David Obatala Chen, Ji-hu Kim (Jimu Qi-Hu), Hiroyuki Nogoe (Nuoguo Xiaoyou), Mana Sieng (Xian Mana), Yeong-Sun Park (Pake Yun-Sung), Xiaolung Li

MANN

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 sits upon an island and rises as a dark blemish on an otherwise colorful horizon. 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 someday the city's masters may track them down and silence them if they reveal the bastion's secrets.

A dark and forbidding fortress across the water from the bastion of York, Mann considers itself the only true remnant of the human race. It is ruled by a brutally repressive and mysterious theocratic oligarchy that values technology as the highest achievement of mankind. 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 someday the city's masters may track them down and silence them if they reveal the bastion's secrets.

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 depart within thirty seconds. Even the wall is rumored to be covered in sheets of fae iron.

LOCATION

Mann is an immense stronghold of near featureless interconnecting buildings so tall, they are within visual

range of the rival bastion of York. The original island Mann sits upon was mostly washed away from past manmade global climate change, but a colossal reclamation project not only rebuilt it but expanded as well. An outer wall now not only protects the inner city but also the landmass—not an inch of soil is visible from the water line. The island was once innocuously known as Martha's Vineyard.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Mann is the most technologically advanced bastion in Canam, rumored only rivaled by the bastion of Porto across the ocean. They are also fanatically protective of their privacy. About the only information circulating about Mann is that it fires upon anyone who approaches their self-claimed jurisdictional waters who isn't a citizen of their city and that it hunts down expatriates like criminals to be either extradited back to the city or executed. The city is also known for turning their devotion to technology into a religion which encompasses every facet of city life.

ADVENTURES

Mann seldom sends people outside of their walls, knowing full well that they may not be allowed back in. Even the slightest taint of magic can result in extermination. They have employed smaller mercenary companies occasionally, but when it comes to retrieving Mann citizens or lost technology, Mann sends its own personnel.

ALLIES

Mann has no allies.

ENEMIES

Everyone, up to and including some of its own citizens. Mann's crusade involves nothing less than the elimination of all life touched by magic. Oddly enough, Mann's dogma also insists that only their way of life is to be allowed, so bastions like York, Selkirk, and Angel—known to practice certain measures of tolerance to the outside world—are fated for elimination as well. There is no one outside of the bastion of Mann that those on the inside don't look down upon.

HISTORY

Like many bastions, the history of Mann is marred in mystery, but in Mann's situation, even the origin of the city's construction remains a conundrum, with theories including that the city is a gift from God, the result of man's last forays into nanotechnology, or the consequence of discovered alien knowledge.

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.

LAYOUT

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.

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.

POPULATION

12 million (estimated)

TECH LEVEL

Mann flaunts tech level 5, and is the most advanced bastion in Canam. Their technology is susceptible to disruption and as such is rare in the open world.

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. 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 rela-

tionship 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.

SELKIRK

"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 heckled 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.

Built inside and on the slopes of a mountain in the northern Nankani range, the most magical region in Canam, Selkirk would be the most isolated of bastions if it were not for their friendly relations with the narros nation of Fargon to the north and the loose confederation of states in the nearby Seliquam river valley. The bastion's entire population belongs to a socialist corporation and is cross-trained in every aspect of corporate life: though most have one primary profession, everyone is required to spend a certain percentage of the year in the mines and in military service. Selkirk also has a strong sporting tradition, with rugby and wrestling being the national sports.

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'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.

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.

LOCATION

Selkirk resides inside a mountain range of the same name, east of Seliquam, nearby the ruins of an old techan town called Revelstoke. Virtually isolated, only a few roads exist from the colony, the most well-known being the pass of Dianaso which runs from Selkirk to Fargon in the north.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Selkirk is an extremely remote bastion few people have accidentally stumbled upon. It is the only bastion to openly maintain trade with echan nations, notably Fargon. Isolation has also sparred the colony direct attack save for a few flying creatures. As such, Selkirk's military only encounters resistance when escorting convoys to trading posts. Still functioning manufacturing facilities are one of the few aspects of Selkirk still keeping it as a bastion, as the miners seldom encounter any of the high technology of the upper levels in their day-to-day lives. Selkirk uses lighter than air vehicles and magnetically elevated ground vehicles and trains.

ADVENTURES

Every square inch around Selkirk is teaming with potential "adventure"—if you equate adventure with terrifying risks no person should ever put themselves through. The hostile landscape would be enough, but couple that with bands of anathema wandering the forests that love to prey on humans when not at war with the kodiaks. Selkirk, unlike other bastions, is not self-

sufficient, so must trade with outsiders like Seliquam and Fargon in order to survive. These caravans need constant protection and nearly every one suffers an attack.

ALLIES

Selkirk prides itself in being forthcoming to strangers, rare that they are, and maintains successful trade and military treaties with both Seliquam and Fargon. Trade agreements have also been established with Kannos, Angel, and a half-dozen techan atolls around the region, though these are sporadic.

ENEMIES

Officially, like all bastions, Selkirk has an enemy in Mann despite never having contact with that bastion. Beyond this, Selkirk has suffered direct attack from a few dragons and from creatures uncovered in the process of mining. The anathema around the region are also a nuisance but little more than that as they often make bad climbers.

HISTORY

Unlike other bastions, Selkirk is well aware of the fact it started life as a fallout shelter, but what is less known is that said shelter began life as a remote mine which became renown internationally when remarkable though inexplicable deposits of rare metals were discovered, including silver, gold, platinum, and most extraordinarily, rhodium—perhaps the largest deposit on the planet. As the population grew, the city quickly ran out of supplies. With inadequate resources to develop renewable staples, Selkirk began reaching out to the outside world, quickly discovering the elves of Laudenia, the dwarves of Fargon, and other magical oddities. Selkirk has maintained its isolation out of necessity rather than choice, protecting its resources, knowing full well that it may all stop working or dry up one day, and the colony would then be unceremoniously abandoned.

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.

POPULATION

8 million

TECH LEVEL

Selkirk is tech level 3, focusing mostly on mastering magnetics.

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 standing 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 carryalls are required to travel north to Fargon.

Selkirk does maintain a special forces unit known as Orobas, whose members--despite holding other jobs as usual--can be recalled to active duty at any time to deal with unusual problems, usually regarding the bastion's relations with its echan allies.

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

SIERRA MADRE

"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 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.

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.

The most remote of all bastions, located within an underground cavern far to the south of Canam and defended by both a brutally effective security system and hordes of paleozoic beasts in the canyons above, Sierra Madre enjoys plentiful clean energy from a geothermal tap, and it boasts the best EDF-shielding of any bastion, making its technology some of the most reliable in the world. Sierra Madre's people are the most laid-back of any techan population, and follows a philosophy of limitless self-expression and improvement. The only drawback is that it is also one of the least advanced bastions, continuing to make use of technology that became obsolete centuries ago elsewhere. To that end, secret agents frequently leave the city, often posing as ambassadors or tourists, to steal technology from other bastions and bring it back for reverse-engineering.

"Our sun is manufactured. Our food is engineered. We live in a chamber forged by magic into a Euclidian geometric shape. We accept that. It's unexceptional."

LOCATION

Despite assumptions, Sierra Madre is not located under the ruins of Mexico City. It's in fact Toluca, starting life, like most bastions, as a fallout shelter. Its distant and subterranean location has spared it from most conflict, though it also means that those from the bastion are the least experienced of the outside world.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Sierra Madre is an isolated bastion stationed underground under the ruins of an old city still with the remnants of old mankind atop. Unlike Selkirk, isolated by geography, Sierra Madre is isolated by distance and by choice. The torus is the largest enclosed chamber ever recorded, lit by an artificial sun and populated by a culture only rivaled by the bastion of Mann in its technological advancement. Having pushed out the remaining fragments of Bronze Age religions centuries ago, what remains is a spiritual belief that endorses an immortal soul without the belief in deities.

ADVENTURES

Adventure is a broad word, and for the people of Sierra Madre it mostly means including a unique ingredient in supper. They seldom want to leave and with a battery of automated weaponry and a wasteland filled with zoological nightmares protecting their territory, they don't have to. Those that do are truly extraordinary in their capacity for curiosity—to see a world that frightens others.

Missions from Sierra Madre come because of a need of some vital piece of knowledge the city lacks, perhaps technology from a rival bastion (Sierra Madre's technological advancement tends to be very idiosyncratic, and many advances a lower-tech bastion would take for granted can be completely unknown). Perhaps a prior expedition was lost. Regardless, to see anyone from Sierra Madre is rare.

ALLIES

Although the bastion has made contact with both York and Angel, there is no official treaty with either. The nearest nations to Sierra Madre are echan and formal relations have never been established.

ENEMIES

Oddly enough, Sierra Madre is the only bastion Mann has not outright declared an adversary. Although there are plenty of wandering monsters in the area most are unintelligent primordial beasts, and none of them have coalesced into a worthy threat. As the bastion is easier to access than Mann, Sierra Madre has also been targeted by rival techans looking to pilfer valuable technology.

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.

The catalyst of expansion from the original fallout shelter began with the uncovering of a bizarre magma pocket, the result of the magical saturation after the opening of Attricana. The chamber was named after its distinctive shape, the Torus, though later the entire expanse took on the name of the shelter, Sierra Madre. The torus is so large that after 450 years, the city has yet to expand to the surface. There are rumors that Sierra Madre has records which predate Attricana's open but such records have been locked up away from prying eyes.

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.

POPULATION

15 million

TECH LEVEL

Although Sierra Madre is classed as tech level 4, their technology is more resilient against disruption than other bastions. Nothing is a guarantee, and in time, even Sierra Madre's safety measures fail.

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

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

YORK

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 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.

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. The relatively low technological level has allowed some mingling of magic and technology, 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.

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.

LOCATION

Where Angel is the most populous bastion, York is the largest in landmass, encompassing the entirety of what was once called Long Island, west to what was once Newark. The fae-proof fence that encircles the bastion spreads out to include Staten Island, Yonkers, and even Trenton. Most of this is dedicated to farmland with most of the city secluded to the Village Wall which separates Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and the remainder of the island from the rest of the continent. Unlike other bastions, the names of these boroughs still persist. York is also blessed with have few immediate threats. It brushes borders with Gnimfall and is near Abidan, and Limshau.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

York is frozen in time; for hundreds years magical saturation and limited resources has prevented the bastion from advancing far beyond the 20th century—at least on the surface. To protect the city, its most primitive buildings are the ones most people see, with the advanced power, security, and manufacturing facilities kept beyond this near façade of unsophisticated architecture. The most obvious example of this contradictory presentation is the inclusion of robotic servants which permeate the city. York has never been able to keep back the influx of fae but the lack of aggression and initial positive relations has created a community of surface tolerance. A lesser known fact of these robots, which York tries to actively repress, is that they were designed and built with the collusion of the gimfen from Gnimfall.

ADVENTURES

York has a very large standing military and utilizes it beyond its fae-proof fence often. York also employs contracted security companies to beef up areas of the fence where anathema attacks are more common. York doesn't have to worry about attacks from the north because of Abidan and threats from the west are pacified by Gnimfall and Limshau. However threats from the south have been increasing as anathema continue to reproduce. York also has to contend with sea creatures as well, and they have ranged from the annoying to the epic.

ALLIES

York's main treaties with Gnimfall and Limshau remain the strongest though York also has non-aggressive pacts with Abidan as well. They also have a long standing trade alliance with Angel which has born little fruit.

ENEMIES
York's primary adversary is the sinister looking citadel glowering at them from over the horizon—the bastion of Mann, which has sworn to destroy York first in their eventual crusade to retake the planet. That has yet to occur. There have also been issues with fanatics from Baruch Malkut.

HISTORY
It is entirely possible that York is the only bastion to have survived the intervening centuries. Either that or the culture managed to rebuild very quickly atop the ruins of the old metropolis. The city was unable to prevent the initial influx of curious fae though the installation of the now famous fae-proof fence limited access to areas with unregulated tech in order to prevent disruption. This gave York its famous inconsistent tone as the visible technology of the city becomes more advanced the further one travels from the fae-walks—specifically the Broad Way, the main thoroughfare which connects York's western gate to the docks in the East. Fae intolerance also increases the further they are found away from these regions. Initial altruism came as a result of technology agreements with the gimfen which were able to design a self-sustaining robotic force known as zeros which enable York to build its infrastructure much faster than previously expected. Generations later, these zeros still exists, self-evolved from their primitive ancestors.

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 7,000 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.

POPULATION
35 million

TECH LEVEL
York barely registers above the fantasy world around them. They operate at tech levels 0 and 1.

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
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. A day pass for non-humans and mages costs 40 uc; the cost for non-resident humans is 10 uc. 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

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 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.

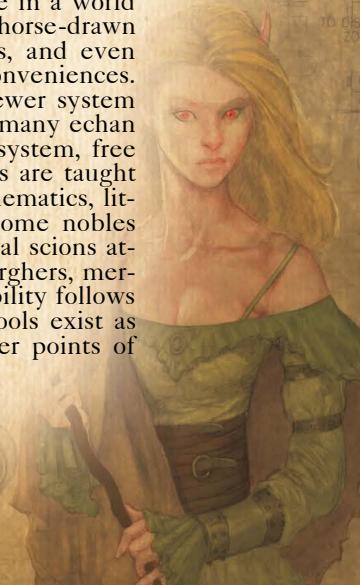
Two days ago, the fountain had been abuzz with chatter and laughter. Today, the chapel bells tolled the alarm, and every citizen of Janoah was either safe indoors or lending what help they could to defend the city. God willing, in another two days only the burn marks would indicate that there had been 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, 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.

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, also 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.



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.

LOCATION

Abidan occupies the land once known as Michigan, spreading into Indiana and Ohio in the south. There are virtually no ruins of the old city of Detroit where the new capital of Janoah sits. Abidan is one of the lands most washed clean by the winds of chaos. The great lakes have formed into one, leaving a single pass, the Tethuss Bridge, connecting the north to the south (not including a treacherous water journey or more threatening mountain pass). Abidan is run by a monarch seated at the capital Janoah which blocks the Tethuss Bridge from pagus attack.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Abidan is the ruled by the only human monarchy in Canam blessed by a dragon's kiss—meaning a dragon has actually adopted the ruling line into its own family. This came after decades of altruism on the part of the first king, Vincent I (Vincent Savarice, also known as the Paladin King), as self-declaration never earns such patronage. By that point, the nation of Abidan had already been formed from a handful of neo-feudal baronies: calling it a kingdom was an easy transition. Vincent's descendants have since attempted to honor his name and legacy. Despite criticisms from outsiders on the promotion of religion in Abidan, the kingdom still prides its morality and ethical laws. There is no suppression of free speech, and despite the encouragement of faith, there is no sponsored state religion. Public tolerance has prevented violent clashes between sects. This hasn't stopped emigration and the creation of dominant faiths in several major cities. It is thought that this stability only exists because of the threat of a common enemy in the pagus that pound against the Janoah walls in an attempt to invade the rest of Canam.

ADVENTURES

Virtuous knights fighting fantasy monsters—what more is there? There are actual dragons attacking the cities of Abidan. Kings send forces into the northern lands to cull the pagus population or make contact with sympathizers. Occasionally, these groups are just glory hounds or treasure hunters marching into the most hostile land in Canam. There is no shortage of possible adventures around Abidan and no shortage of people willing to pay in the name of the king.

ALLIES

Abidan maintains a solid alliance with both Limshau and Kannos with less public agreements with Gnimfall, York, and the Finer Fire Pits.

ENEMIES

Outside of the obvious pagus threat to the north, often flanked by the odd dragon, Abidan is one of the few nations openly advocating war with Baruch Malkut, a conflict which has yet to occur.

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, 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. 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.

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. 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. 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 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

BARUCH MALKUT

Caleb sneered. "You think be 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. 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."

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.

Baruch Malkut rose to prominence after the emergence of a cult of personality around self-declared prophet Darius Koenig. The birth pains of the kingdom began with their annihilation of the bastion of Sebring and the erection of the city of Faustis upon its ruins. Surrounding fae nations were either wiped out or driven out—a pogrom which continued until the potential for an economic opportunity arose. And through the hands of slaves, Baruch Malkut became the fastest growing nation in Canam, gaining power so quickly, it became obvious that not one nation could fight them on equal terms. Eventually, the aggressive expansion into other territories stopped, but it is believed this pause is only temporary and war will eventually break out over all of Canam.

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.

LOCATION

Baruch Malkut occupies all of once was considered Florida, reaching north to occupy most of Georgia and part of Alabama.

Noteworthy cities in Baruch Malkut include Archytas, Faustis, Itinera, Karum, Kavus, Maskell, Matronis, Miynos, Nassau, Orlov, Sykar, Tobias, and Vallis.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Baruch Malkut is a bizarre amalgam of three forms of government. It is a monarchy because of its standing ruler King Darius I. It is also a theocracy as there is religious law surrounding said monarch. It is also technically a dictatorship as Darius has never relinquished his throne since ascending three hundred years ago, a peculiar situation given that Darius is human. The kingdom's doctrine claims humans following the one true faith are the only ones allowed to inherit God's utopia, and that those following the one true faith are those that adhere to the laws put forth by the "final prophet", Darius Koenig. Malkut embraces a "new-age" Abrahamic faith which encourages the enslavement of fae and the eradication of those that remain free. Technology not used to further God's will is prohibited, this includes any attempts to understand the natural world in ways endorsing rationality and logic.

ADVENTURES

Those loyal to Baruch Malkut seek adventure only in the service of their king and the words of God passed down from the king's lips. This includes the hunting and enslavement of fae as well as interdiction missions into rival territories. Baruch Malkut is not against sabotage or outright assassination. Enemies of Malkut attempt to disrupt slaver caravans and even infiltrate the kingdom to sow dissent around the cult of personality which has arisen.

ALLIES

Baruch Malkut maintains no alliances with anyone.

ENEMIES

Take your pick, from every fae nation to every human nation, bastion or fantasy.

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 coopting the pure blood of humanity. Tilen were never officially taken as slaves; whenever they were captured (or discovered as slaved), they were marched to the sea under the blazing sun and ceremonially drowned. This resulted in them being prized by rich

landowners, and exceptions are known to have occurred.

Within a century, the Blessed Kingdom claimed all the land of southeast Canam, from the Great River to Okeanos. 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.

The greatest threat to Canam, and maybe the known world, is the growing fanaticism of the humans of Baruch Malkut. The kingdom 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.

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

DAWNAMOAK AND THE TOWERS OF JIBARO

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."

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: 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 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. No one is sure how many chaparrans live in the forest but numbers guess between 35,000 and 65,000. 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. Sometime 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. But 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.

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). 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.

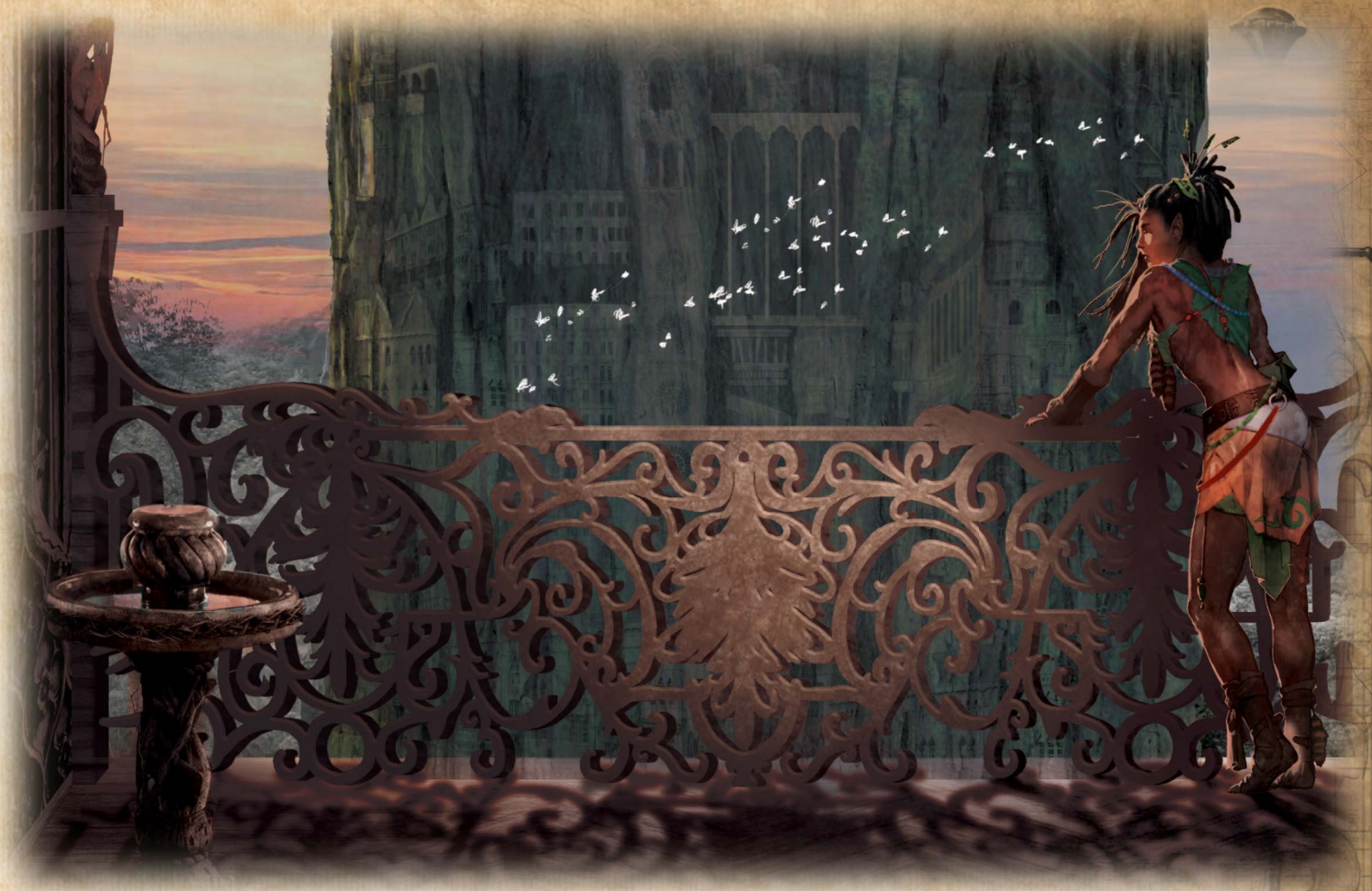
Chaparrans become more agreeable to the outside world the farther away they are encountered from the three towers. Although those residing in the towers claim all forests they see as theirs, there are dozens of smaller villages hidden in the woods that claim no loyalty to them. Their beliefs can often be different than those in the capital. Noteworthy villages include Koanas, Kerrana, Ulknas, and Widdig.

LOCATION

Dawnamoak is a massive forest occupying most of what was New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. Although the towers of Jibaro can be considered its capital, there are no maps denoting specific villages within the forest. It is all assumed chaparran territory.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The towers of Jibaro are the equivalent of Mecca in the chaparran culture. It is their holiest city and fervently defended by fanatical fae to the extent that non-chaparrans are prohibited from getting close to the towers. Most never even make it that far into the forest. There have been a few notable exceptions—specifically druids and respected holy men from various races. Each tower focuses on a specific facet of chaparran culture, one for the unique chaparran spellcraft, one for the chaparran holy warriors, and the other the virtually inaccessible central tower and pillar of the chaparran faith. Saturated through the rest of Dawnamoak are perhaps hundreds of even thousands of chaparran villages, shifting and amalgamating so often as to make detailing them pointless. Although chaparrans can be found in most most of the forests of Canam, they are most concentrated within the forest of Dawnamoak.



ADVENTURES
Adventurers entering the forest may affront the locals if not showing respect. Most chaparrans leaving the forest do so because of a quest bequeathed from an authority within the tower. Though rare, the high priests and generals of Jibaro have congregated with outsiders for a common need, most often involving human and corrupted threats.

ALLIES
Technically, Dawnamoak has no alliance with anyone. They respect laudenians but rarely encounter them. They have no misgivings about the other fae peoples, but hold no particular alliances with them either, preferring the solitude of the forest.

ENEMIES
Like most chaparrans, those in Dawnamoak have declared a jihad against Baruch Malkut. There is also considerably animosity between the chaparrans within the towers and most of the bastions, despite most bastions not even knowing Dawnamoak exists.

HISTORY
Dawnamoak was probably one of the first fae communities established after Attricana's opening. The chaparrans gathered in a location of heavy magic and began shaping the wood to their whim. These towers of Jibaro are not the same as the ones from the first age—they're not even close to their original location— but are considerably larger. After the towers grew, the knowledge of them resonated through every chaparran village, even ones too distant to receive the message. And like the Hajj, most chaparrans are expected to renew their faith within a tower of their choosing. Those not embracing the way of war or the way of magic are permitted within the tallest tower to undergo the greatest tests of faith, ones which those who enter never speak of.

FARGON
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…

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 century, 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.

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.

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 Dianaso, 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.

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. Their sworn enemies, the pagus, dare not approach these lands unless they arrive in the thousands in preparation for war.

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. All narros mines in Fargon feature thermal mooring towers but no dragonflyer flyer posts.

LOCATION

Fargon is incredibly isolated with most people only hearing or reading stories about it. Cut off by forest, rock, and beast, it resides in the far north, in a region once called Alaska. Noteworthy cities in Fargon include Hardstone Sig, Mag-Farg, Majed, and Thos Thalagos.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Despite the largest narros city being the Finer Fire Pits, most narros come from Fargon, a legendary empire of dwarves that, after a brief rebellion, suffered no setbacks in their expansion across a virtually empty landscape. Simply put, the empire ran out of narros. The cities are too tall, too expansive, and life beyond spiritual growth or martial discipline can get a little boring. After the cities went up, the dwarves dug down, though not to the extent their brethren in the Finer Fire Pits did. As result, many of their largest cities look empty, and their realm and the lands nearby are filled with ruins built centuries ago and then simply abandoned to the elements. Those in Fargon don't fit the cliché of the fantasy dwarf like their southern cousins, with only a small portion of the population focused on mining. The others dedicated themselves to military or farming, resulting in even more narros leaving their cities. The armies defended convoys and engaged with the rising anathema and kodiak threats. And then there are those that find the constant obligations to the state taxing and the lack of any non-narros contact tiresome. They undergo the months-long trek to escape from their lands to stake a claim in the south.

ADVENTURES

Fargon's armies seldom operate within the kingdom, utilized primarily in eastern defense preventing an invasion from kodiaks or fae anathema The narros also defend the convoys between Fargon and their trading partners elsewhere. Occasionally, missions demand longer journeys, ones taking years to complete.

ALLIES

Fargon's alliance with Selkirk and Seliquam is common knowledge. They also share common ground with the Finer Fire Pits. Despite how close they are, Fargon does not enjoy any positive relations with Laudenia.

ENEMIES

Fargon is under threat from the various fae anathema and from bandits, some admittedly armed by the narros themselves in a perhaps overly successful attempt to entice the bears to turn their aggression to the boggs and skeggs.

HISTORY

Nations in the south had no idea Fargon even existed until convoys started appearing from the north. Up until that point, the only civilized outsiders they had encountered were the techan humans of Selkirk, with whom they forged a profitable trading agreement that persists to this day. Fargon's history until then wasn't tranquil by any sense. The first city built by the narros was a modest metropolis called Rhinforge which became very successful very quickly and led its ruler, Rarikon Baxs to declare himself king of everything he could see. He amassed a fortune in efforts to bribe kodiak and anathema to fight for his side in an attempt to conquer the known world. There was a fanatical expansion where the narros built city after city with few people to live in with the expectations that the narros would congregate in time under their singular emperor.

This didn't go well with the other fledging towns, and the other narros rose up behind a new ruler, Thalagos Gin. Gin razed Rhinforge to rubble and rebuilt his capital, Thos Thalagos, upon the ashes. Despite assumptions that Gin would make the same mistakes, he in turn began an extended rule defined by humility and respect. His first decree was to draw his narros back to the northern lands, abandoning many of the southern colonies to be repopulated by humans and other fae. His second decree was to re-establish the traditions of ancient narros, moving away from the greedy disposition of those like in the Finer Fire Pits. Despite scaling back the reach of the kingdom, Fargon rose quickly to be the largest narros nations ever seen on the Earth.

THE FINER FIRE PITS

"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."

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. 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 oth-

er narros cities, but because the name of valley the Pits were dug into was called Finer Vallis by a group of local humans).

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 their self. 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. That said, few narros are disposed to take advantage of this freedom. 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 with inadequate 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. 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 race best avoided when there is no business to be done. The Fire Pits feature a dragonflyer flyer service but no mooring towers.

LOCATION

The passing traveler is most likely to miss the Finer Fire Pits unless specifically looking for it. Completely subterranean, there are virtually no marks of civilization on the surface outside of the main gate. A sprawling kingdom contained within a single underground metropolis, the Pits occupy a patch of land once known as Rockford Illinois, stretching out for seventy-five kilometers is every direction, the largest single echan community in Canam. Technically, a portion of the Finer Fire Pits resides underneath the Kingdom of Kannos.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The narros of the Finer Fire Pits fit the clichéd mold of the dwarves read about in fiction. They grow their beards; they mine for riches; they treat other races like dirt though never to the point of goading armed conflict. At least these dwarves bathe, and despite their crusty demeanor to non-narros, those who live in the Pits endorse an open gate-policy to outsiders. Everyone is welcome as long as they provide a function. It is not a tourist attraction, and the population disdains sightseers. Traders, merchants, miners, farmers and even armies are all welcome. Finer Fire Pits is extremely profitable, leading to the nation acquiring considerable influence compared to its neighbors. The militarization of the foundries could arm a nation in a week.

The side effect of this industry is a rather unhealthy atmosphere pervading the entire subterranean complex. It's altogether too hot, even in the winter months. Many outsiders can't stand the environment for more than a few days, probably an intentional design.

ADVENTURES

With tens of thousands of miles snaking underground, connecting the huge foundry chambers to smaller furnaces, colonies and mines, there is no short of adventure. A party of sellswords could earn a living for decades without ever walking down the same tunnel twice or even seeing the sun. There is no shortage of demand to protect the miners from the threats that lie in the depths.

ALLIES

Being a civilized fae nation, the narros of the Finer Fire Pits enjoy a healthy relationship with the elvish neighbors in Limshau and with the gimfen of Gnimfall, the latter helping design the foundries that define the landscape of the Pits. The narros even maintain a positive relationship with the human nations of Abidan and Kannos, though the general attitude to humanity is ironically cold given the heat generating from the nation of Finer.

ENEMIES

Like most fae nations, Finer Fire Pits abhor the internal and foreign policies of Baruch Malkut. The narros, like their fictional dwarven counterparts, also have a sworn ancient hatred against the pagus and tenenbri. Finally, they hold a special grudge against the Bugbears of Dagron, the skegg lords of the north whose constant raiding frequently disrupts the flow of much-needed supplies to the forges.

HISTORY

The Finer Vallis was claimed by the still living nation's founder, Garach (Garachthinakus) Glim, purchased from local humans hording the land on hopes of buying their way into a bastion. Glim and his followers carved out the first and largest cave—it wasn't dicovered like the techans of Sierra Madre. A technology alliance with the gimfen provided the know-how to build the foundries and the dwarves never looked back. In its 400 year history, Finer Fire Pits has never suffered an attack by any sizable force despite facing small threats daily from unearthed abominations. In the present, Garach Glim continues to work alongside his comrades, delegating his authority to a council of elders, all of whom defer to his wisdom when needed. However, many neighboring nations whisper accusations that Glim and his people keep themselves underground in order to prevent being dragged into a war.

KANNOS

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 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.

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. Some outsiders, especially in more xenophobic communities, believe this 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.

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. But despite their 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. 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. 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.

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.

LOCATION

One of the largest kingdoms in Canam, Kannos is a sprawling land of plains, valleys, and rivers claiming most of the former northern Middle America east of the mountains, claiming (at least in name) large parts of the lands once known as Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Manitoba. The borders of Kannos are vaguely defined, as controlled regions brush against the wildlands of Alpinas as well as the deadly Sana Marsh. Kannos is often considered an immense buffer zone preventing many of the wilder species from pushing into the more civilized nations of the east and south like Limshau, Abidan, Gnimfall and Finer Fire Pits. A low population density has resulted in wide expanses between towns and cities.

Notable towns in Kannos include Appareci, Golana, Jairus, Sarnathi, and Xiphos.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Kannos is known for livestock, horses, and a bizarre form of government. Basically, only those that own land can rule the people of said land. However, the economy is run by the farming and manufacturing industry, which landowners are not allowed to involve themselves in. They can only rent out a property and possess the land. Business owners have the wealth while the landowners set the policy. Despite such a strange arrangement, the "kingdom" of Kannos continues to function. The established ruler of the nation is determined by the family with the largest claims to property, despite not being even close to the richest. A royal family can remove themselves out of power by selling their land and going into business, forfeiting their claim to the throne but acquiring amazing wealth—something which has occurred more than once. Although this does mean that a wealthy businessman can sell his assets and buy his way onto the throne, the established king or queen is prohibited from altering the constitution: only a conclave of twenty-seven leading landowners with very specific and sometimes bizarre qualifications can alter the ultimate law of the land (the one time a king tried to usurp this power, his reign did not last very long).

The present monarch is Queen Bodika Nezekin, a woman with a manner as steely as her hair, who openly supports the war hounds calling for a preemptive strike against Baruch Malkut but cannot yet persuade those who hold the kingdom's purse strings to finance such an action.

Kannos cities are separated by ranches, military outposts, and "saddlements"—villages more built to accommodate resting mounts than their owners. One aspect of the nation a traveler won't find a lot of are temples, churches, or synagogues. For reasons historians find fascinating, a rational "naturalist" movement swept through the kingdom in its fledging decades, supported by the king. As royalty is determined by human ingenuity, the founding ruler Tarazed Matvala declared God as being unnecessary. There is no state religion and those establishing centers for worship are forced to pay taxes as much as any business. This has resulted in many religious centers branching into business or folding altogether. Religion and worship still occurs in Kannos—it's something which cannot be avoided—but its rarity is a shocking occurrence in such a fantasy world as modern Earth.

ADVENTURES

Kannos is a vast, expansive kingdom with no shortage of adventure. Despite being known for its flatlands, Kannos has its fair share of mountains, the most famous being the home of the infamous Kereptis Rifts and the catacombs he built from magic in order to store magic. As for serving the nation, Kannos is under constant attack in the west from puggs and boggs. From the south, the state enlists brave souls to venture in the Sana Marsh in hopes of finding a secret to end the curse there. Heading into the north finds the windy wastelands of Alpinas, along with skeggs, kodiaks, and possibly dozens of other undocumented beasts. The kingdom is also known throughout the continent for a tradition known as the Great Hunt, which the current ruler calls whenever a particularly dangerous monster appears within the realm: a fabulous reward is offered (paid for by the business owners most affected by the creature's depredations) to anyone who brings in the monster's head. The Great Hunt draws adventurers both echan and techan from across the land, for the reward is usually enough to set the winner up for life.

ALLIES
Kannos has a firm alliance with Abidan and an even stronger one with Limshau, probably the strongest bond with between any two nations in all of Canam. Kannos and Limshau share many basic philosophical principles, principles which prevent stronger ties with Abidan. Despite this, Abidan and Kannos still possess a solid peace treaty and friendly relations.

ENEMIES
Of all the nations of Canam, Kannos has been the loudest voice to start a war with Baruch Malkut. Despite not being directly attacked, the Kannos line has been unwavering in their defense of Limshau. Beyond rival kingdoms, Kannos is also under threat from all manners of monsters.

HISTORY
Kannos was a later kingdom formed after the collapse of the bastion of Appareci (which was itself built upon an old city called Billings, Montana. Unlike Sebring, Appareci was not destroyed, rather it just suffered too many disruption events in a highly saturated land and the people simply couldn't hold onto their technology. They adapted, the nation survived, and with no walls to govern them, their claims expanded. Appareci's great keep and the inner ward of the town that now surrounds it still show the signs of their techan past, although the steel-and-concrete buildings have subsequently become ornamented with buttresses, crenellations and gargoyles, and the machines have lost since sputtered and stopped. It was at some point that the first king, Tarazed Matvala, took the throne and established the state policy still being followed today. It was also around this time that diplomatic relations were forged with the older nation of Limshau. Abidan would occur later and the three nations would form an alliance in hopes of pushing back the encroaching Baruch Malkut. Kannos hoped such an alliance would lead to a massive crusade with Kannos Kavalry as the spearfront. However, Limshau has stalled war in hopes or sowing the seeds of rebellion within the local populations, something which has yet to occur. Today, Kannos continues to defend against anathema from the west while maintaining trade and relations with allies to the east. It has made it their personal responsibility to clean out the Sana Marsh as well as cull the populations of anathema before it becomes a plague. Given such declarations, it's no surprise Kannos has one of the largest armies in Canam.

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

LAUDENIA
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."

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. 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.

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.

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 neither a 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 or 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 center 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.

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.

Today, the cities grow and change depending on the moods of the designers. After the laudenians secured their foothold in the sky, they cut themselves off from the ground world and declared their race apart from all matters of the surface. By general policy they avoid any conflict, even ones in their best interest. This is not the consensus of the entire population, only the majority of the ruling echelon. There are voices, even within the echelon, of taking are more interest in the world, as coming wars may be unavoidable.

LOCATION

No one is really sure where Laudenia is. Like an aerial Brigadoon, dozens if not hundreds of people across the globe claim to have spotted it briefly and then been unable to find it again, but the only reliable accounts have it drifting somewhere between Selkirk and Fargon, among the coastal mountains of the former Pacific Northwest.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

What's known is just conjecture. The Laudenians took to the sky in constructed keeps and flying vessels to avoid ground contact. Fae anathema come about because of the degradation of the fae over thousands of years. Being the oldest, the Laudenians are now the fewest, and fled to the skies in order to prevent further degradation. It was only a theory but it proved correct, and the legend of the Ascension was born—a network of castles floating about the clouds only the Laudenians had access to. Flying vessels from techan aircraft to magically amplified thermal ships have tried finding these keeps and rumors claim a few succeeded. There are legends of colossal citadels like Aeronopolis and Selmana, but the most sought after is Laudenia itself, the nexus of Ascension and the home to the majority of laudenians. Within their territory, most laudenians don't care much for the affairs of others, especially those on the ground, and it would take a lost to jostle them from their meditation.

ADVENTURES

Having any connection to Laudenia or the Ascension in general would be a rare one indeed, even if one was a native to the city. When one leaves, they seldom return, as the migrations of the floating keeps is known only to a few. The cities have been known to send caravans to the Earth, most often to either seek out lost magic, or more commonly, finding rare materials the elves have difficulty replicating with magic. Many of the ruling laudenians have a fascination for powerful magic, especially the legendary foundation anchors.

ALLIES

Laudenia maintains no contact with anyone and has no alliances.

ENEMIES

That being said, the empire in the sky also has no enemies to speak of, not unless you count time. And dragons…maybe the occasional dragon.

HISTORY

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 magos 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.

LIMSHAU

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 travelers' 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.

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. 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 Asian 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.

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. 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. 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.

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 blessed 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.

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.

That was not the first time an elf asked me that question nor I imagine the last. I see them burning symbols of human faith, destroying the icons of their history. They expect me to understand. All I know is that one cannot justify evil in reprisal for another evil. I will admit my kind can bloat their bellies in ignorance and it truly shocks me. We, of all, should learn from our past. Humans must record their history, given their lifespan lies in a breath of ours. We remember them from experience. Chaparra and Laudenia claim superiority for we never enslaved another species or hunted them down in xenophobia. How dare they forget our past? The humans I speak to know nothing of our unsmothered hate. Pagus were elves. They still are fae despite the ignorant claims to the contrary. The humans' personal decree of corruption is but a candle to our bonfire. I will not judge all of mankind based on the paranoid actions of the hated few or for the deeds they committed in the past. Those people are dead in a world long forgotten. This world has changed. Adapt. Accept it.

Limshau Historical Entry 4684G
Ravenar Limshau IV

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.

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.

LOCATION

Limshau is a large nation with indefinite borders given its proximity to Tranquiss and the Sana Marsh. The Continental Cross bisects the kingdom which occupies most of the lands once known as Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois. The white-walled city of Limshau itself was built upon a grassy plain that was, in the distant past, the location of the town of Wichita, Kansas.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Limshau breaks many rules assumed integral to any nation. Although technically considered a monarchy, and its leader is called a king by everyone (except himself and anyone within earshot of him), the position is an elected one, with the winner ruling for the duration of his life or until he retires. That said, damaskans tend not to fix what isn't broken, and as a result the descendant of the city's founder, Ravenar Limshau, still rules the nation. Additionally, the vast majority of the nation dedicated most of its resources to the non-profitable pursuit of acquiring and documenting knowledge: eve-

rything from historical records to religious texts, techan engineering manuals, novels, plays, and comic books. Additional resources were spent on the cataloguing and protection of the millions of books and scrolls acquired in this nation-wide obsession. Being a custodian or librarian is not so much a profession as it is a calling, a life-long committed discipline. Each walled city is a glorified library with businesses and residences lodged between collections. Nowhere is this more clear than the namesake capital, with other cities occasionally having a lower ratio of books to people. Zorahn is committed more to the defense of the nation while Primmer holds the largest collection of printing presses. Limshau is also the most multi-ethnic kingdom in Canam, having a nearly equal population of humans and fae with the largest collection of half-fae found anywhere.

ADVENTURES

Beyond the fact that both librarians and custodians are sent on missions to either collect research or acquire lost or stolen books, Limshau also contracts out missions to those loyal to the nation. Very often these free-lances contain at least one custodian or librarian. Limshau's interests include missions into Tranquiss and the Sana Marsh as well as destabilizing the nation of Baruch Malkut.

ALLIES

Limshau is a proud nation with many allies, including Kannos, Abidan, Gnimfall, and Finer Fire Pits. Librarians and custodians have representatives in each of their neighbors. Limshau even has connections with the bastions of Angel and York, and there is regular communication between Limshau and the enclave of Genai (many of whose residents have distant relatives in the city).

ENEMIES

Despite their commendable social structure and foreign policy, Limshau still has enemies, namely Baruch Malkut. They also come under threat from anathema from the west.

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. 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, Raide
n, Shinobi, Tetsubo

SALVABROOKE

"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.

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. 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.

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 infrequently 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 is one of the few echan locations where techan ETVs are commonly seen. Salvabrooke features a thermal mooring tower and a dragonflyer flyer service.

LOCATION

Salvabrooke is a small civilization by Canam standards though is still the largest population of gimfen one can find in the world. A single large everlasting oak tree marks the only unconcealed entrance to the valley, believed to have been built over the ruins of an old city known as Salt Lake, though the geography has altered considerably since then.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Salvabrooke's geography makes it extremely difficult to find or even gain entrance to the valley without the native gimfen discovering it. Most general travelers approach from the western gateway, marked by a magically imbued oak tree rumored to be the extension of a fallen chapparan that was buried at that spot. The gimfen welcome outsiders but discourage many from staying very long. The entire economy of the nation (which is not much more than a scattering of towns within a day's walking distance) is based on recreation, generating income from visiting tourists. Like Finer Fire Pits, there is some revenue earned from manufacturing and farming, but the highest earnings come from the leisure industry. Every form of fantasy can be entertained and fae from across the world have gathered to earn money showcasing their uniqueness. Salvabrooke is part circus, part freak show, part burlesque house, and in some places, part bordello.

ADVENTURES

The humorous irony is that under normal circumstances, Salvabrooke would be considered an adventure, though one where no one's lives were at stake. Salvebrooke is a popular destination for techans looking to encounter the outside fantasy world without the hardships that face the people that actually live there. However, under the surface, Salvabrooke is constantly monitoring the migration patterns of nearby anathema, who often come very close to stumbling into the valley. Salvabrooke also operates a diligent police force to make sure tourists behave (while at the same time turning a blind eye to the gimfen pickpockets, confidence tricksters, and fraudulent sellers of knockoff goods, which are treated as 'part of the experience.')

ALLIES

Salvabrooke technically has no allies as it has made no attempts to forge treaties with any neighbors. Despite this, it is expected that if the gimfen were to come under threat, Kannos and Limshau would rush to defend.

ENEMIES

That being said, Salvabrooke also has no real enemies as they are too small to be a concern to anyone. Even anathema mostly leave them alone, since actually reaching the valley is far more difficult than seeking easier prey elsewhere.

HISTORY

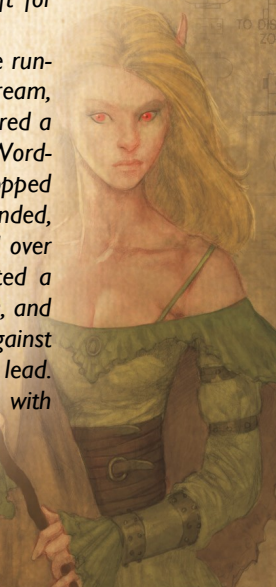
Salvabrooke emerged very organically over several centuries as gimfen continued to congregate in the valley beyond the lone tree. Although not resulting in conflict, these were fae that swore against the technically curious gimfen, creating a bizarre schism in the species--identical gimfen focusing on a different aspect of their stereotype. Many of their kind fall in between, but where gimfen engineers dedicate themselves to learning about the machines of man, the playful gimfen of Salvabrooke only care about joviality and relaxation. In fantasy books, these were different species, gnomes and halflings. The evolution to a nation-wide amusement park was a slow process starting with one town and expanding to others. The defining traits of the valley are only a hundred years old, but since then, the population of the valley has exploded, mostly from gimfen immigrants but also from outsider looking to join the industry. The visiting population has been known to shift from a few hundred to tens of thousands depending on season and periodic festivals. The recent arrival of techan tourists in the last fifty years has caused an economic boon, and the strangest visual marker of progress as huge echan terrain transports shuffle about in echan villages looking for parking.

SELIQUAM

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?"

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 distant support of the bastion of Selkirk to the east. Collectively, they are known as the Seliquam Confederation.

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 pugg 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.

The peninsular rainforest holds little of interest for the puggs, and by and large they leave it alone save 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.

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. 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 councilors 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 eight most prominent nations 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.

The dominant powers in the region are the eight nations on the Inner Council: Last Hope (human/narros), Victrix (human), Shiwoos (chaparran/kodiak), Gwaii (human), the Abbey (human/damaskan), Vanguard (techan human), and Squalmos (human/gimfen), plus Gateway as the unofficial face of 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.

LOCATION

The Seliquam Federation occupies the lands once known as southern British Columbia and northern Washington state, including Vancouver and the other coastal islands, Haida Gwaii, and the Olympic Peninsula, with most of the nations concentrated around the valley of the former Fraser River (now known as the River Seliquam). It is a vibrant landscape featuring every type of topography contained in a small space.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Oftentimes considered a forgotten land, Seliquam is surrounded on nearly all sides by predatory anathema and magically imbued beasts. As such, the civilized fae and human settlements have gathered together into

localized communities ranging from a few connected villages to small nations. These alliances are defined more through proximity and shared threats than ethnic or racial similarities. Even in the remote rainforests, there is some accepted mingling between chaparrans and their neighbors. There are accepted tolerances within Seliquam that would be appalling in larger nations.

This does equate Seliquam somewhat to the United Nations of Earth's past—in other words, almost completely ineffectual as a governing body, filled with petty squabbling, divided by centuries-old grudges, mostly paralyzed by a general inability to compromise, and politically dominated by a small handful of powerful member states that favor their own goals over the general good. If the anathema threat were to suddenly vanish, it's generally assumed that the tenuous agreements between these nations would crumble. Until then, Seliquam stands as an inexplicable microcosm of the entire continent—one still naïve of the true evils waiting to infect the land.

ADVENTURES

Finding adventure is not hard. Nearly every caravan travelling from town to town runs the risk of being raided by feral monsters or less civilized folk. There are those that don't recognize political borders or ethnic tolerances. Mercenaries have been paid by one nation to attack another and then receive money by their targets for the counterattack. Hostile landscapes sit over hills; dungeons wind within every hill.

Seldom are people hired for missions outside of Seliquam, but there is no ending of quests within in. As an affiliation, one must be specific as to which nation to ally with, as this can create negative relationships with other Seliquam nations. This is the only affiliation you can have both a positive and a negative relationship with. The only organization that is united under the banner of Seliquam is the Train Guard, a peacekeeping force only tasked with defending the region from outside threats, not to handle internal conflicts. Someone can also forge a relationship with all of Seliquam by making a connection with the Grand Council, the united governing body which attempts to keep the nation's common interests inline.

ALLIES

Seliquam's only known alliances comes from Selkirk via the town of Gateway and from Fargon traders in the north.

ENEMIES

The only known enemy of Seliquam other than Seliquam itself is the region of Xixion and the invading anathema.

HISTORY

During Rarikon Baxs' fanatical expansion of Fargon (before it was known as Fargon), the narros erected cities and mines almost all the way to Xixion. The downside was that there was virtually no narros to inhabit them, and when the Bax Empire collapsed under the weight of Thalagos Gin's crusade, many of these southern cities were abandoned save for a few proud and belligerent dwarves unwilling to walk away from their own accomplishments. Human and other fae migrated into the region afterwards to claim many of these abandoned cities, though most were left to be overgrown by ferocious vegetation. These cities became the capitals of the first republics, most of which remain today. Others grew from smaller adjacent towns sharing mutual interests.

The chaos to geography from magical saturation created hundreds of lakes and rivers, forcing most travel between nations by boat. This division created an environment where the nations within Seliquam developed at different rates and into different methods of government. The Grand Council eventually formed when the infighting grew so extreme that the region was in dire danger of being overrun: while it does little to foster relations between the nations, at least they are more inclined to snipe at each other with sternly worded missives from across their desks than with well aimed rifles from across the river.

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

FREE HOUSES

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 principalities. 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. The most notable free-houses are Antikari, Ogium, Orchis, Plicato, Quinox, Torquil and Skyrose.

THE WILD

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 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 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. The majority 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 YSDF. 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

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

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. 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

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 goblinfolk 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.

WASTELANDS

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

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.

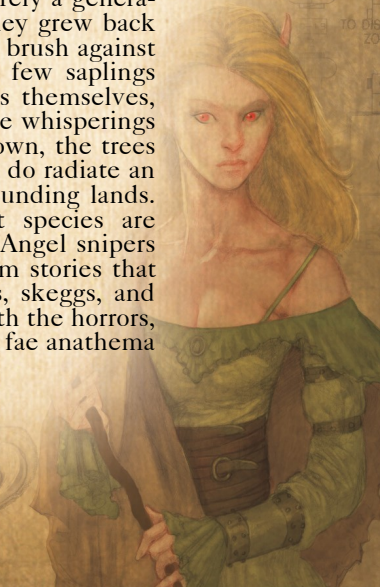
AZHI DAHAKA

The 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

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

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 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

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 Saren 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 pointed. 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 slowly and painfully. Without heirs, Sana became paranoid about losing his lineage and set his wizards to examine 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 Saren'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 newfound pleasures. After Sana's lust was satisfied, one story claimed he 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 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

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

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 goblinkind 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 valley, 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.

The appraiser had a desk plate announcing him as Roland Gauss. Gauss rolled his fingers over the spine of the book. He opened the cover and checked for bends, ensuring the bleed was undamaged as it folded over the front. Aiden's book was without rips, and the leaf had significant strength. Gauss was impressed. The room resembled Chen's biblio but with more collections and total works over singular novels.

"The Glory of Her Sacred Majesty Queen Anne in the Royal Navy and Her Absolute Sovereignty as Empress of the Sea, Asserted and Vindicated by Joseph Gander, amazing," the appraiser complimented. "Printed in 1703 and only once, a treatise for an age no one remembers. You weren't brandishing this book openly, were you?"

"No," Aiden lied, and Gauss could tell.

"Good thing no one out there appreciates real treasure," Gauss answered as he examined the book. "Gold is such a distraction. How many riches wait ignored by the rabble? Chen must have faith in you to offer this as a trade."

Aiden still hadn't checked in. His pack sat across his lap,

covering the hole in his pants. "You know him?" Aiden asked.

Gauss was pleasantly plump with three inches of growth across his face and a mop of chestnut hair. His teeth were straight and gleamed white across his dark beard.

"Every custodian worth his sword, every librarian worth his books knows him," Gauss said. "His life is priced more than the tomes in his collection." Gauss danced his articulate fingers across the embossed cover. "He's invested greatly in you, my friend. You looking for passes or currency?"

"I think both."

Gauss rolled his chair across to a nearby shelf and retrieved a ledger. "Well, passes translate to more for you. Compensation will be higher. Wizardry?"

"Uh…yes." Aiden was almost apprehensive to answer.

"What I love to hear," was his legitimate jovial response. "Human mages are rare in this world. A perchance for wonders and whimsy." Gauss loved words and enjoyed their expression. "You flipped?"

"Not yet."

"Well, it's not easy. I know too well." He opened his book and began logging in the details of the transaction. "Could never manage more than a card trick myself." After filling out some initial documents, he opened a drawer and revealed a piece of hard cardstock barely bigger than a pocket photograph. "This is an access pass. Hold that." He offered it to Aiden and he accepted. Aiden's signature, which he hadn't given, and his likeness, which he hadn't offered, etched upon the surface. "Pretty clever?"

Aiden flipped it around in his hand. "Actually it is."

"Can't even be stolen now. Hand it over." Aiden did so. Gauss dropped it in his drawer and closed it. "Check your pocket." Aiden followed and reached in, felt the card, and removed it. Aiden smiled at the real magic. Gauss opened hands and leaned back in his chair. "Your approbations are drippings from a Christmas turkey. I do have a hand with card tricks."

"You a wizard?"

"No," Gauss laughed. "Parents forbad it. Dad recommended I pick up a serious profession like silversmith. In the end, he settled for alchemy. Not all magic comes from the spoken word. There are those naturally blessed and those that mix materials fallen from heaven." Aiden disputed the use of heaven as science had its own theories. He didn't voice those thoughts. "Don't get jealous. Pleroma is still the standard. You figure that out, kingdoms will open their legs for you."

"No pressure though."

"If it was easy, everyone would do it, and a genocide by fools would follow."

"I thought all genocides were by the hand of fools."

"Point. Unfortunately, to master Pleroma requires intelligence, not wisdom."

"If everyone could wave a wand, there'd be anarchy," Aiden quoted his memory.

"Exactly. Thankfully for every hundred students following the arcane, usually only one emerges a wizard. If you're interested in classes, start with Dr. Paraerra. He doesn't teach spellcraft but many say you can't walk the path without him." Gauss pointed at the card in Aiden's hand. "Regardless, that will get you into any branch. With Chen's recommendation, you have the red banner. Flash it to borrow private editions from homes if you require. Trust and respect is assumed."

"Thank you."

"You were expecting…exploitation?" Guess leaned forward as he toyed.

"The trip here…was—"

"Anyone claiming a journey is half the fun lost faith in the destination." Gauss pulled out a stack of papers and signed the bottom of each. He then offered them. "Six months paid room and board. Private accommodations, you have a guest?"

"No," Aiden answered, though trailing off at the end.

"Planning on one?"

"I don't think so."

Gauss tendered the currency next. "And carmot, only currency we deal in. Four hundred remains after lodgings. Keep it in ration." He filled out a receipt. "Even a white city has shadows." Aiden looked at the paper in Gauss's hand. "We have banks," Gauss added.

"Oh–" Aiden accepted it receipt.

"Didn't think I'd hand you a stack of gold and silver in a leather pouch, did you?"

Aiden laughed it off, "Sorry, of course." He looked at the receipt as his signature and face drew themselves onto its surface. He looked back to Gauss as the realization washed over him. "You said you knew alchemy?"

"A hankering is all I'll admit."

Aiden opened his pack and pulled out the stone he found in the crash. It still glowed with its own fire, uncaring for having been ignored. "What do you imagine this is?" He offered it without worry.

Gauss looked at it over indifferent. "A glowing rock."

"Thank you," Aiden answered blankly.

"It could be sapping your life force as we speak or gifting you with foresight. Suffer from either?"

Aiden smirked. "I believe the melancholy is purely self-induced."

Gauss handed it back. "I like the clasp. Someone thought it was important. There's a religion based around purple stones. Something about a dragon god, I think. Older faith, pre-gate. Never seen one glow. Could be naturally imbued. You ever get drunk?"

"No–"

"In human mythology, amethyst would stave off drunkenness. Many of those stories had some measure of truth."

"That they did."

"I'll take it off your hands if you need extra coin. Limshau has an artifact library. I can tender a price when I know more."

Aiden casually slipped it back in his case. "I'll hold onto it for now." Aiden wasn't sure why. He trusted Gauss but preferred caution.

"Well, it's been nice having you," said Gauss. Aiden held out his hand and Gauss accepted. The appraiser turned over Aiden's hand to see the watch. "That can't be working."

"It's not."

"Well here time can stop if asked to. It's all in the wording." Gauss released Aiden's hand.

"Thank you, Mr. Gauss. It's been enlightening."

Gauss exclaimed as Aiden left, "It's Roland, and may the milk of mermaids quench your thirst."

CHAPTER TEN:
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.

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 took 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 numerous, and these in turn have been displaced (when they do not rule over) by 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.

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

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).

RULE AMENDMENTS

Minion: Certain monsters can be turned into minions. A minion adjusts its statistics as given in the description. Three monster minions count as one normal monster at the listed challenge (meaning monster minions should always be fielded in multiples of three). Alternately, you could also reduce the XP of each monster minion to one-third.

Descriptions: No monster flavor text from an outside source is canon in *Amethyst*. If a player inquires, be inventive. Only monster knowledge relating to the creature's physical capabilities and habitat is canon.

Fae = Fey: For dealing with magic items and monster origins, the fey keyword is part of the fae tree. However, only specific fey like nymphs and hags are canon. Any creature on the above list designated as fae has the same common fae traits as PC fae, but only has the common traits of the fey type if it normally has that type.

TYPES

These new types will assist in properly building encounters as well as determining context for the many monsters players may encounter in their adventures.

IXINDAR

Unlike Attricana, Ixindar cannot spontaneous create a monster or mutate an existing animal into a more complex form. Ixindar corrupts; it simplifies, and it suppresses. What remains is either an emotionless machine or a creature bound more by instincts and violence over its own desires to reproduce or survive.

Ixindar is associated with certain constructs and to most undead, especially those where monsters are raised by necromancy. All creatures tainted by Ixindar are either lawful evil or neutral evil (regardless of the original monster). Pagus are fae corrupted by Ixindar, and are one of the few creatures directly related to Ixindar presented in this book. There are others.

Monsters with the Ixindar keyword do not generate EDF and their magical attacks do not cause disruption events.

SPAWN

As mentioned earlier, spawn creatures are created from Attricana, once being normal creatures evolved from nature. There is no limit on what Atricana can bring into being, though higher intelligence—the kind that can create communities and empires—is an extreme rarity. Attricana is rarely associated with the undead, but exceptions have occurred—where the ambient magic has kept a consciousness bound in the real world. Almost all spawn created from Attricana will have the chaotic alignment; only when civilized will this aspect change.

CONSTRUCTS

Both Ixindar and Attricana can lend themselves to constructs—inanimate creations given the ability to act independently. With Attricana, a construct is given life, and generates something resembling an authentic personality. It will follow the commands of its creator but will speak for itself when apart. Their alignment is based more on the whims of the creator, however, and constructs from Attricana can still be evil. Many are still unaligned.

Ixindar constructs are more robotic. They act according to their programming, and personality is seldom manifested. Exceptions occur when the construct in-

herits its creators worst possible aspects. Ixindar constructs are unaligned, neutral, neutral evil, lawful neutral or lawful evil.

Although a monster can just be a monster, it may be important to define how a construct came about. In Canam, Attricana constructs are much more common, as Ixindar spell casters are somewhat rarer than Attricana ones.

ANATHEMA

As stated previously, anathema are more primitive creatures further down the fae ladder. They all count as still being fae, and as such all suffer from fae iron vulnerability. Which branch they derive from is not important mechanically—it's only offered to help place the creature in the context of the setting.

AVAILABLE MONSTERS

What follows is a list of the monsters from official licensed products available in canon *Amethyst*. These creatures either exist in the real setting of the story or their inclusion would not break the setting's logic. If a creature is not listed, there is usually a good reason.

You are welcome to include other monsters from any valid source, but non-canon monsters should be treated as accidental or deliberate magical mutations, without a developed history or a natural place in the ecosystem. Summoned and shapechanged monsters, of course, are constructs of the imagination and are not bound by this limitation; it is highly unlikely, however, that any spellcaster capable of such effects would produce a creature that has no canon analogue.

Some monsters included in the *Amethyst* bestiary may seem obviously inspired by mythology, which fits well within the setting, and thus, may be similar to monsters in official licensed products. *Amethyst* is meant to imply these are the creatures that mythology and fairy tales are based on, but did not get entirely correct. Since there is no dialogue with these monsters, the English name for them is the same as their historical mirror. In that case, *Amethyst* does refer to them by their original name and they would use the proper entry in official licensed products.

Also, as a general rule, all species able to form communities or empires are those listed in this rulebook, so those found in other products, including officially licensed ones, would not be found in canon *Amethyst*.

MONSTERS IN CANON AMETHYST

These are the available monsters available from officially license products and present within the *Amethyst* setting. Many have their alignments replaced. Types are not replaced though new ones (spawn, Ixindar, Attricana) are often added. The only exceptions are the aberration and fiend types, which are not present in *Amethyst*.

- Aboleth (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Animated Objects (construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Ankheg (spawn)
- Banshee (Ixindar, lawful evil)
- Basilisk (spawn)
- Behir (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Blight (Ixindar)
- Bulette (spawn)
- Carrion Crawler (spawn)
- Centaur (fae—chaparran anathema, chaotic good)
- Chimera (spawn)
- Chuul (spawn
- Cloaker (spawn)
- Cockatrice (spawn)
- Crawling Claw (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Cyclops (fae—narros anathema)
- Darkmantle (spawn)
- Demilich (Ixindar)
- Displacer Beast (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Dragon Turtle (spawn)
- Dryad (fae—chaparran anathema, chaotic neutral)
- Elementals (spawn)
- Ettin (fae—narros anathema)
- Fungi (spawn)
- Gargoyle (spawn)
- Ghost (Ixindar or Attricana)
- Ghoul (Ixindar)
- Gibbering Mouther (spawn, chaotic neutral)
- Golem (spawn or construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Gorgon (spawn)
- Grell (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Grick (spawn)
- Griffon (spawn)
- Hag (fae—chaparran anathema)
- Harpy (fae—chaparran anathema)
- Hellhound (spawn)
- Helmed Horror (construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Hippogriff (spawn)
- Homunculus (construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Hook Horror (spawn)
- Hydra (spawn)
- Kraken (spawn)
- Lich (Ixindar, lawful evil only)
- Manticore (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Medusa (fae—chaparran anathema)
- Merfolk (fae-chaparran anathema) — called Nemos
- Mimic (spawn)
- Minotaur (spawn)
- Miscellaneous Creatures (spawn)
- Mummy (Ixindar)
- Nightmare (spawn, lawful evil)
- Ogre (fae—narros anathema)
- Ooze (spawn)
- Otyugh (spawn)

- Owlbear (spawn)
- Pegasus (spawn)
- Peryton (spawn)
- Piercer (spawn)
- Pixie (fae—chaparran anathema, chaotic good)
- Pseudodragon (spawn)
- Purple Worm (spawn)
- Quaggoth (spawn)
- Remorhaz (spawn)
- Revenant (Attricana)
- Roc (spawn)
- Roper (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Rust Monster (spawn)
- Satyr (fae—chaparran anathema) — called Scians
- Scarecrow (construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Shadow (Ixindar, Lawful Evil)
- Shambling Mound (spawn)
- Shield Guardian (construct [Ixindar or Attricana])
- Skeleton (Ixindar)
- Specter (Attricana—chaotic evil, or Ixindar—lawful evil)
- Sprite (fae—chaparran anathema, chaotic good)
- Stirge (spawn)
- Succubus / Incubus (spawn, chaotic evil)
- Tarrasque (spawn)
- Treant (spawn)
- Troll (fae—narros anathema)
- Umber Hulk (spawn)
- Unicorn (spawn, lawful good)
- Vampire (Ixindar; commonly known as 'ghulath')
- Water Weird (spawn)
- Wight (Ixindar)
- Will-O'-Wisp (Attricana)
- Wraith (Ixindar)
- Wyvern (spawn)
- Yeti (spawn)
- Zombie (Ixindar)

MONSTERS REPLACED IN *AMETHYST*

(These monsters don't exist because there is a duplicate monster already present in the setting)

- All elves, replaced by equivalent fae
- All goblinoids (goblins, hobgoblins, and bugbears), replaced by puggs, boggs and skeggs
- All dragons (both chromatic and metallic), replaced by archon and typhox dragons.
- Giants (but not the giant type), replaced by oggraks and chiggoth
- Kobolds, replaced with puggs
- Orcs, replaced by pagus
- Merfolk are renamed Nemos,
- Satyrs are renamed Scians.

BOGG

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 SCABB

Small humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor, scavenged armor) or 13 with minion
Hit Points 10 (3d6) or 3 with *minion*
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	14(+2)	10(+0)	8(-1)	8(-1)	(10+0)

Skills Stealth +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages Ferran
Challenge ¼ (50 XP)

Masochistic Mob. If another bogg in line of sight is killed, on the bogg scabb's turn, it gains a damage bonus on its next hit equal to how many hit points the dead bogg had before it was killed (max 5). Only one bonus can be applied on a hit and you don't have to select which scabb gains the bonus until one hits.

Minion. Bogg scabbs can be used as minions in a battle. A scabb used this way decreases its hit points to 3.

ACTIONS

Short sword. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapons Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage

BOGG RAKE

Small humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor, scavenged armor)
Hit Points 21 (6d6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	14(+2)	10(+0)	8 (-1)	10(+0)	10(+0)

Skills Animal Handling +2, Stealth +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Ferran
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Foul Concoction. The bogg rake can coat its blowdarts in poison of its own devising. It typically carries enough poison to coat 6 darts, chosen from the following poisons (you can also roll a 1d6):

1-2: *Rancid meat*--The target must make a DC13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1d6 rounds.
3-4: *Swamp weeds and spit*--The target must make a DC13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the beginning of the rake's next turn.
5-6: *Bodily fluids*--The target suffers 1d6 damage at the beginning of its next turn.

Masochistic Response. If a creature hits the bogg rake but doesn't kill it, the bogg rake has advantage on all attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Sand In Yer Eye! As a bonus action, the bogg rake can throw sand in the eyes of target within 5 feet. The target must make a DC13 Dexterity save or be blinded until the end of the bogg rake's next turn.

ACTIONS

Punching dagger: *Melee Weapon Attack.* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4+1) piercing damage.

Blowgun. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus *foul concoction*.

BOGG MOTHER

Large humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 95 (10d6+60)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	10(+0)	20(+6)	14(+2)	10(+0)	9(-1)

Skills Animal Handling +3, Survival +3
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Ferran
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Masochistic Response. If a creature hits a bogg mother but doesn't kill it, the bogg mother has advantage on all attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Swallow: As a bonus action, the mother can swallow any target it is grabbing, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the mother, and it takes 12 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the mother's turns. A mother can have only one creature swallowed at a time. If the mother takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the mother must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the mother. If the mother dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by spending 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bogg mother can make two meaty fist attacks.

Meaty fists. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC15). Although the mother has two fists, it can only grab one target at a time.

REACTIONS

My Babies: When a bogg, pugg, or skegg is killed within line of sight of the bogg mother, she can move up to 15-ft. and make a meaty fists attack as a reaction. If the bogg mother is already grappling a victim, she may immediately swallow it.

BOGG LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Intelligence (Nature) check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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).

DOJENN MATARK

Medium humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 135 (15d6+90)
Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	18(+4)	22(+6)	10(+0)	14(+2)	5(-3)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +8
Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +6, Stealth +8
Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.
Damage Immunities poison
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages old faen
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Caustic Excretion. When a creature hits the dojenn with a melee attack, the attacker takes 6 (3d4) poison damage.

Feeding Time. The dojenn has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it is grappling.

ACTIONS

Mulitattack. The dojenn can make three attacks, two with its harpoon, and one with its bite.

Harpoon. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 11 (2d8+3) piercing damage plus a Medium or smaller target can be grappled (escape DC16). If grappled, the harpoon can inflict damage only on the grappled target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., *Hit:* 15 (3d8+3) piercing damage.

Feeder Tendrils. As a bonus action, the dojenn can make a feeder tendril attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10-ft., *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage and a Medium or smaller target is grappled (escape DC16). Up to three enemies may be entangled in the dojenns' *feeder tendrils* at a time.

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

A character can know the following information with a successful Intelligence (Nature) skill check.

DC 10: 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.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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.

DC 25: 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.

DRAGONS

"We command our people with absolute discipline. The fae continue to devolve into discord. The universe is on our side. In the end, patience assures our victory."

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 arose, each

controlling 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 Ažhi 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, typhox, and neutral dragons. All have decidedly different roles and cultures, but all of them are proud: any ancient or older 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.

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.

No game statistics are provided here for archon dragons (yet), as they refuse to get involved in mortal conflicts. Archons summoned by magic are always presumed to be just powerful enough to accomplish whatever task they have been summoned for without difficulty.

TYPHOX DRAGONS

The first typhox was a fallen dragon named Goch of Wrath, who either brought Mengus to this world or was the first corrupted. The others were most certainly corrupted, starting with the most powerful (the other Lords of Ažhi), Baenis of Gorge, Balaur of Debauch, Lindis of Avarice, Lotan of Scorn, Verkelen of Spite, and Zilant of Indolence. They became the first generals of Ixindar but their overpowering chaotic origins took the best of them and they soon parted ways to follow their own wicked desires. Most other fallen dragons are their descendants, though the wyrms have no family feeling and most do not even bother to acknowledge their lineage. Cancer dragons emerged from an Ixindar curse upon normally kind-hearted archon dragons. Death dragons followed later as several became enamored with the Ixindar-related field of necromancy. Because of the difficulty in suppressing the personalities of the typhox dragons, Mengus would later create the shemjaza in the image of the fae to enact her will, leaving the dragons largely to their own devices. In the new age, the typhox dragons congregated in Apocrypha and Ažhi Dahaka to distance themselves from Ixindar. They remain their still, building up their armies waiting for the day they can sweep across the continent and wipe out all life not under their control.

Unlike archon dragons, typhox dragons do have a central location and it is, unfortunately, located in Canam, claiming the immense patch of land known once as Eastern Canada starting with Quebec. This region is thankfully locked out from the rest of Canam thanks to the widening of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and engorging of the great lakes into one singular body of water. The land pass has also been obstructed by a hazardous mountain pass that rose from the Earth after the opening of Attricana to ensure the pagus were kept in place.

Typhox Dragons employ servants and will reward loyalty when it is placed before personal safety. It's actually an unhealthy business practice for evil creatures to kill loyal servants, and most typhox dragons are intelligent enough to keep their followers loyal by not killing them for the slightest mistake. This extends to anything non-pagus, as the corrupted fae have no choice and typhox have little respect for that. But other fae or humans which come willingly may be pleasantly rewarded, especially if the dragon's ego is stroked. This really only applies to fallen dragons as cancer dragons are nearly insane and death dragons prefer to kill their subjects and raise them as mindless drones.

ANCIENT CANCER DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 481 (26d20+208)
Speed 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29(+9)	10(+0)	27(+8)	18(+4)	17(+3)	14(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +15, Wis +10
Skills Perception+17, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities poison, disease
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 27
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 23 (32,500 XP)

Ambient Disease. A cancer dragon touching food or a body of water (up to 1,000 liters) instantly infects it with sight rot.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (2d10+9) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage plus plague.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d6+9) slashing damage plus plague.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 20ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d8+9) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Poison/Disease Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales poisonous gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, taking 77 (22d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

An ancient cancer dragon's breath weapon does not immediately vanish once expelled. The area remains infected for five minutes. Any target passing through the area suffers a *plague* attack.

Plague. Any creature struck by a cancer dragon's bite or claw attack must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be infected by the dragon's plague. Once infected, the target suffers from fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion immediately. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Proliferation. Cancer dragons are able to infect another dragon with the same Ixindar-born blanket disease all cancer dragons suffer from. In order to infect another dragon, the target must be smaller and younger than the cancer dragon and be struck by the cancer dragon's bite attack. It suffers from the effects of the plague (DC20 instead of 15). If the target dies, it awakens 24 hours later as a cancer dragon.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw or take 16 (2d6+9) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

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 DRAGON LORE

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 15: Cancer dragons are among the most revolting, loathsome creatures to walk the earth. Their enormous bodies are carriers for every malady known to man, 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..

DC 20: It is a common misconception that 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.

ADULT CANCER DRAGON

Huge dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 225 (18d12+108)
Speed 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25(+7)	10(+0)	23(+6)	16(+3)	15(+2)	15(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con+11,Wis +7
Skills Perception+12, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities poison, disease
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 22
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Ambient Disease. A cancer dragon touching food or a body of water (up to 500 liters) instantly infects it with sight rot.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10+7) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) poison damage plus plague.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:+* 11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6+7) slashing damage plus plague.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8+7) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Poison/Disease Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales poisonous gas in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

An adult cancer dragon's breath weapon does not immediately vanish once expelled. The area remains infected for five minutes. Any target passing through the area suffers a *plague* attack.

Plague. Any creature struck by a cancer dragon's bite or claw attack must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be infected by the dragon's plague. Once infected, the target suffers from fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion immediately. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, regardless of rest or food ingested, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Proliferation. Cancer dragons cannot reproduce—instead they infect other dragons with the same Ixindar-born blanket disease all cancer dragons suffer from. In order to infect another dragon, the target must be smaller and younger than the cancer dragon and be struck by the cancer dragon's bite attack. It suffers from the effects of the plague (DC18 instead of 12). If the target dies, it awakens 24 hours later as a cancer dragon.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (2d6+7) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

DC 25: 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.

DC30: 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.

YOUNG CANCER DRAGON

Large dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 152 (16d10+64)
Speed 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21(+5)	10(+0)	19(+4)	14(+2)	13(+1)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +5
Skills Perception +9, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities poison, disease
Senses blindsight 30ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 19
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Ambient Disease. A cancer dragon touching food or a body of water (up to 250 liters) instantly infects it with sight rot.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10+5) piercing damage plus 5 (ld10) poison damage plus plague.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage plus plague.

Poison/Disease Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales poisonous gas in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

An ancient cancer dragon's breath weapon does not immediately vanish once expelled. The area remains infected for five minutes. Any target passing through the area suffers a *plague* attack.

Plague. Any creature struck by a cancer dragon's bite or claw attack must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be infected by the dragon's plague. Once infected, the target suffers from fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion immediately. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, regardless of rest or food ingested, the character gains another level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Proliferation. Cancer dragons cannot reproduce—instead they infect other dragons with the same Ixindar-born blanket disease all cancer dragons suffer from. In order to infect another dragon, the target must be smaller and younger than the cancer dragon and be struck by the cancer dragon's bite attack. It suffers from the effects of the plague (DC16 instead of 10). If the target dies, it awakens 24 hours later as a cancer dragon.

CANCER DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)
Speed 30ft., fly 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17(+3)	10(+0)	15(+2)	12(+1)	11(+0)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +4, Wis +2
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities lightning
Senses blindsight 10ft., darkvlsion 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages English or Englo-Lingo , Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ambient Disease. A cancer dragon touching food or a body of water (up to 100 liters) instantly infects it with sight rot.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10+3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage plus plague.

Poison/Disease Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales poisonous gas in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

An ancient cancer dragon's breath weapon does not immediately vanish once expelled. The area remains infected for five minutes. Any target passing through the area suffers a *plague* attack.

Plague. Any creature struck by a cancer dragon's bite or claw attack must make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw or be infected by the dragon's plague. Once infected, the target suffers from fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion immediately. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 8 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, regardless of rest or food ingested, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

ANCIENT DEATH DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon (Ixindar) , lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 210 (21d12+42)
Speed 40 ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	14(+0)	14(+2)	16(+3)	15(+0)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +9, Wis +9
Skills Perception +16, Stealth +9
Damage Immunities necrotic
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 26
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 21 (27,500 XP)

Grave Call. All corpses within 40 feet of the death dragon at the beginning of its turn are affected by an *animate dead* spell, requiring no action on the part of the dragon. All undead raised this way fall under control of the death dragon and the dragon cannot lose control of any undead in its *grave call* aura. Depending on terrain and situation, a death dragon is expected to have up to 10 corpses nearby at the beginning of combat.

Swamp Stride. A death dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Touch of Ixindar. A death dragon can invoke its negative nature against everything it touches. Any creature the dragon touches, including with physical attacks, cannot recover hit points from magical healing until the beginning of the dragon's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10+8) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6+8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8+8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Napalm Breath (Recharge 5-6). A death dragon's breath weapon is a flammable napalm-like phlegm that is ejected as a narrow stream, 90-foot long and 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 67 (15d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any creature which fails its save must make another save at the same DC at the beginning of its turn or suffer half damage. This continues with successive failures (reducing the dice damage by half each time).

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Essence Siphon. The death dragon targets one living creature within ten feet. The target must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or suffer 15 (2d6+8) necrotic damage: the death dragon recovers hit points equal to the damage inflicted.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6+8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

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 DRAGON LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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.

ADULT DEATH DRAGON

Huge dragon (Ixindar) , lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 164 (17d10+28)
Speed 40ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23(+6)	14(+2)	14(+2)	14(+2)	13(+1)	14(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con+7, Wis +6
Skills Perception+11, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities necrotic
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 21
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 14 (11,500 XP) ·

Grave Call. All corpses within 20 feet of the death dragon at the beginning of its turn are affected by an *animate dead* spell, requiring no action on the part of the dragon. All undead raised this way fall under control of the death dragon and the dragon cannot lose control of any undead in its *grave call* aura. Depending on terrain and situation, a death dragon is expected to have up to 6 corpses nearby at the beginning of combat.

Swamp Stride. A death dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Touch of Ixindar. A death dragon can invoke its negative nature against everything it touches. Any creature the dragon touches, including with physical attacks, cannot recover hit points from magical healing until the beginning of the dragon's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10+6) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Napalm Breath (Recharge 5-6). A death dragon's breath weapon is a flammable napalm-like phlegm that is ejected as a narrow stream, 60-foot long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 54 (12d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any creature that fails its save must make another save at the same DC at the beginning of its turn or suffer half damage. This continues with successive failures (reducing the dice damage by half each time).

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Essence Siphon. The death dragon targets one living creature within ten feet. The target must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or suffer 13 (2d6+6) necrotic damage: the death dragon recovers hit points equal to the damage inflicted.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 13 (2d6+6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

YOUNG DEATH DRAGON

Large dragon (Ixindar) , lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 105 (15d10+15)
Speed 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	14(+2)	12(+1)	12(+1)	12(+1)	12(+1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +4, Wis +3
Skills Perception +6, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic
Senses blindsight 30ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 16
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Essence Siphon. Any damage the death dragon inflicts with his claw attacks cures the death dragon of the same value.

Grave Call. All corpses within 5 feet of the death dragon at the beginning of its turn are affected by an *animate dead* spell, requiring no action on the part of the dragon. All undead raised this way fall under control of the death dragon and the dragon cannot lose control of any undead in its *grave call* aura. Depending on terrain and situation, a death dragon is expected to have up to 3 corpses nearby at the beginning of combat.

Swamp Stride. A death dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

Touch of Ixindar. A death dragon can invoke its negative nature against everything it touches. Any creature the dragon touches, including with physical attacks, cannot recover hit points from magical healing until the beginning of the dragon's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10+4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage plus essence siphon. A death dragon can also make a claw attack as a bonus action.

Napalm Breath (Recharge 5-6). A death dragon's breath weapon is a flammable napalm-like phlegm which is ejected as a narrow stream, 30-foot long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 49 (11d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any creature that fails its save must make another save at the same DC at the beginning of its turn or suffer half damage. This continues with successive failures (reducing the dice damage by half each time).

DEATH DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium dragon (Ixindar) , lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 24 (6d8+0)
Speed 30 ft., **fly** 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	14(+2)	10(+0)	10(+0)	11(+0)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +2, Wis +2
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities necrotic
Senses blindsight 10ft., darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 14
Languages English or Englo-Lingo, Pleroma, any two fae languages
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Essence Siphon. Any damage the death dragon inflicts with his claw attacks cures the death dragon of the same value.

Swamp Stride. A death dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

Touch of Ixindar. A death dragon can invoke its negative nature against everything it touches. Any creature the dragon touches, including with physical attacks, cannot recover hit points from magical healing until the beginning of the dragon's next turn.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10+2) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit: 5* (1d6+2) slashing damage plus *essence siphon.* A death dragon can also make a claw attack as a bonus action.

Napalm Breath (Recharge 5-6). A death dragon's breath weapon is a flammable napalm-like phlegm that is ejected as a narrow stream, 15-foot long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any creature that fails its save must make another save at the same DC at the beginning of its turn or suffer half damage. This continues with successive failures (reducing the dice damage by half each time).

ANCIENT FALLEN DRAGON

Gargantuan dragon (Ixindar) , lawful evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)
Hit Points 518 (28d20+224)
Speed 40ft., climb/swim 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30(+10)	10(+0)	27(+8)	22(+6)	18(+4)	24(+7)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con+16,Wis +12, Cha+14
Skills Perception+16, Stealth +7
Damage Immunities fire
Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 26
Languages All known languages, Pleroma
Challenge 24 (36,500 XP)

Berserk Response. A fallen dragon gets very upset when an enemy has the audacity to inflict an injury against a living god. If a creature scores a critical hit against the dragon, the dragon's next successful melee attack (against any creature) on its next turn becomes a critical hit.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Manipulate Flames. A fallen dragon can control any non-magical fire spell within 100 feet. This ability allows it to reposition a stationary fire effect or enlarge or reduce the effect by 20 feet as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d10+10) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d6+10) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d8+10) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales fire in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 91 (26d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Betrayer's Deception. When a creature scores a non-critical hit against the fallen dragon, the fallen dragon can redirect the attack to the target's closest ally in range as a reaction.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Sibilant Whispers. A fallen dragon's voice can enchant unfortunate people foolish enough to listen. The dragon targets one creature able to hear the dragon's voice. The target must make a DC21 Wisdom save or suffer the effects of a *confusion* spell. At the end of the target's next turn, it can attempt another save. A fallen dragon can affect three targets at a time. The range of *sibilant whispers* is 100 feet.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 25 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d6+10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

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. 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

ADULT FALLEN DRAGON

Huge dragon (Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 237 (19d12+114)
Speed 40ft., climb/swim 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	10(+0)	22(+6)	20(+5)	18(+4)	22(+6)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con+13, Wis +7, Cha+13
Skills Perception+13, Stealth +6
Damage Immunities fire
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 23
Languages All known languages, Pleroma
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Berserk Response. A fallen dragon gets very upset when an enemy has the audacity to inflict an injury against a living god. If a creature scores a critical hit against the dragon, the dragon's next successful melee attack (against any creature) on its next turn becomes a critical hit.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Manipulate Flames. A fallen dragon can control any non-magical fire spell within 80 feet. This ability allows it to reposition a stationary fire effect or enlarge or reduce the effect by 10 feet as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10+8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6+8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 15ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8+8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales fire in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (18d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Betrayer's Deception. As a reaction, when a creature scores a non-critical hit against the fallen dragon, the fallen dragon can redirect the attack to the target's closest ally in range.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Sibilant Whispers. A fallen dragon's voice can enchant unfortunate people foolish enough to listen. The dragon targets one creature able to hear the dragon's voice. The target must make a DC19 Wisdom save or suffer the effects of a *confusion* spell. At the end of the target's next turn, it can attempt another save. A fallen dragon can affect three targets at a time. The range of *sibilant whispers* is 80 feet.

Tail Attack. The dragon makes a tail attack .

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6+8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed .

to control everything they can see. That which they cannot outright command, they will destroy.

FALLEN DRAGON LORE

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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.

DC 25: 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 are all ancient. In canon *Amethyst*, these are the only ancient fallen dragons, and They outnumber the other ancient dragons combined (there is only one known ancient death dragon).

BAENIS OF GORGE

Baenis sits bloated on his treasure, growing fatter on the rich livestock his pagus followers bring for him. Baenis is slow and cumbersome. He stopped being able to fly long ago. He gorges on food every day with an

YOUNG FALLEN DRAGON

Large dragon (Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 161 (17d10+68)
Speed 40ft., climb/swim 40ft., fly 80ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23(+6)	10(+0)	18(+4)	14(+2)	11(+0)	20(+5)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +9
Skills Perception +8, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities fire
Senses blindsight 30ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 18
Languages All known languages, Pleroma
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Berserk Response. A fallen dragon gets very upset when an enemy has the audacity to inflict an injury against a living god. If a creature scores a critical hit against the dragon, the dragon scores an automatic critical hit with its next successful melee attack (against any creature) on its next turn.

Manipulate Flames. A fallen dragon can control any non-magical fire spell within 40 feet. This ability allows it to reposition a stationary fire effect or enlarge or reduce the effect by 10 feet as a bonus action.

Sibilant Whispers. A fallen dragon's voice can enchant unfortunate people foolish enough to listen. As a bonus action, a dragon can target one creature able to hear the dragon's voice. The target must make a DC16 Wisdom save or suffer the effects of a *confusion* spell. At the beginning of the dragon's next turn, any target that failed the save can make another. A fallen dragon can confuse three targets at a time. The range of *sibilant whispers* is 50 feet.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10+6) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6+6) slashing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Betrayer's Deception. As a reaction, when a creature opponent scores a non-critical hit against the fallen dragon, the fallen dragon can redirect the attack to the target's closest ally in range.

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. Baenis cannot fly and suffers a –2 to all attack rolls. He has 800 hit points.

BALAUR OF DEBAUCH

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

FALLEN DRAGON WYRMLING

Medium dragon (Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d8+30)
Speed 30ft., climb/swim 30 ft., fly 60ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19(+4)	10(+0)	17(+3)	12(+1)	11(+0)	18(+4)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5 ,Wis +2, Cha +6
Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2
Damage Immunities fire
Senses blindsight 10ft., darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 14
Languages All known languages, Pleroma
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Berserk Response. A fallen dragon gets very upset when an enemy has the audacity to inflict an injury against a living god. If a creature scores a critical hit against the dragon, the dragon scores an automatic critical hit with its next successful melee attack (against any creature) on its next turn.

Manipulate Flames. A fallen dragon can control any non-magical fire spell within 20 feet. This ability allows it to reposition a stationary fire effect or enlarge or reduce the effect by 5 feet as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10+4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Betrayer's Deception. As a reaction, when a creature scores a non-critical hit against the fallen dragon, the fallen dragon can redirect the attack to the target's closest ally in range.

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. Balaur can change shape at will into any creature.

GOCH OF WRATH

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. Goch has 1200 hp.

LINDIS OF AVARICE

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. Lindis' treasure horde is triple.

LOTAN OF SCORN

Lotan is proud. 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.

VERKELEN OF SPITE

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.

ZILANT OF INDOLENCE

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.

NEUTRAL DRAGONS

Many dragons rejected the whisper of Mengus, but neither did they adhere to the side of Amethyst, whether out of some ideological prohibition or simple self-interest. While birthed from Attricana, they hold themselves apart from the rest of draconic society, content to pursue their own agendas preferably a long way away from their kindred.

Neutral Dragons will be expanded in a later book.

ELEMENTAL DRAGONS

Many neutral dragons 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.

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.

IRON SONS

IRON SONS COMPANY

"I've seen every horror this fantasy world could throw at me, so I know where the chaos will lead. This civility they parade around in, it's a farce, and it could be a generation, two maybe, until it crumbles. Bastion born are a sorry lot of cradle-crying newborns desperate to escape but too afraid to climb. We're the ones with the guns, the manpower, and most of all, the resolve. They can have their magic—we have the laws of the natural world."

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. Seemingly everywhere—the Iron Sons are known for operating dozens of cells across Canam. In every bastion, in dozens of atolls, there will be someone representing the famous mercenary company.

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

IRON SONS CORPSMAN

Medium human, any alignment

Armor Class 16 (techan armor) or 15 with *minion*
Hit Points 52 (8d8+16) or 13 with *minion*
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	14(+2)	13(+1)	14(+2)	13(+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4
Skills Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages one language (usually English or Englo-Lingo)
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Minion. Iron Sons Corpsmen can be used as minions in a battle. A corpsman used this way decreases its hit points to 13. and its AC drops to 15.

Bad Timing. If the corpsman misses a target by 10 or more on his attack roll, he cannot use his assault rifle until the end of his next turn. The weapon either disrupts or has run out of ammunition.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The corpsman makes two ranged attacks. He can also make a ranged attack with a bonus action if using multi-attack that same turn, but this attack has disadvantage.

Rifle Butt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Assault Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (ld8+3) piercing damage.

IRON SONS GRENADIER

Medium human, any alignment

Armor Class 16 (techan armor)
Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	15(+2)	14(+2)	14(+2)	13(+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +5
Skills Vehicle Operation +5
Senses Passive Perception 12
Languages one language (usually English or Englo-Lingo)
Challenge 4 (1 ,100 XP)

Bad Timing. If the grenadier misses a target by 10 or more on his attack roll, he cannot use his stub rifle until the end of his next turn. The weapon either disrupts or has run out of ammunition.

Linked Targeting. When the grenadier hits a target with a stub rifle attack, one ally may make a single ranged attack against the same target as a reaction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The grenadier makes two ranged attacks. He can also make a ranged attack with a bonus action if using multiattack that same turn, but this attack has disadvantage.

Rifle Butt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Stub Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (ld8+3) piercing damage.

Grenade Attack (Recharge 5-6). The grenadier launches a grenade that strikes a 10-foot radius area within 80 ft. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

IRON SONS SERGEANT

Medium human, any alignment

Armor Class 15 (techan armor)
Hit Points 78 (12d8+24)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17(+3)	16(+3)	15(+2)	16(+3)	16(+3)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +6, Wis +6, Cha +6
Skills Perception +6, Stealth +6, Survival +5, Vehicle Operation +6
Condition Immunities frightened
Senses Passive Perception 16
Languages Up to two languages (including at least one of English or Englo-Lingo)
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Linked Targeting. When the sergeant hits a target with a stub rifle attack, one ally in line of sight can make a single ranged attack against the same target as a reaction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The iron sons sergeant makes two ranged attacks. He can also make a ranged attack with a bonus action if using multiattack that same turn, but this attack has disadvantage.

Look into my Eye (Recharge 5-6). Up to two allies of equal level or less that have been reduced to 0 or fewer hit points within the last round stand back up with ¼ their hit points.

Rifle Butt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Stub Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 100ft./400 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (ld8+3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Good Timing. If an ally triggers his *bad timing*, the sergeant makes a single ranged attack as a reaction.

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.

The Iron Sons are believed to have been around for about a hundred years and have gone through four commanders in that time, Chauk being the longest standing commander in the company's history. The founder was William Pentecost, a fanatical religious figure banned from Angel after gathering a cult of armed soldiers. Outcast, Pentecost led his people to what he believed was the new promised land where all machines would function, a valley where he would build his city of Topia. Alas, Pentecost never found his prophesized valley and the Cult of Iron Sons began leasing themselves out to wandering techan caravans and atolls. Pentecost vanished, was presumed killed, and left his fragmenting society to the first real general, Falco Young. Young adapted Pentecost's visions and the modern interpretation of the Iron Sons was born. The echo of their once religion fanaticism can still be heard today, though greatly muted.

The Iron Sons' singular leader is General Chauk, though the organization rarely requires his guidance. Barely maintaining a public image, many people believe he either never existed in the first place or has been dead for decades. Chauk's doctrine is embraced by his many cells scattered about the world and they function autonomously, lacking little direction from quadrant commanders. There have been a few occasions where cells have united to tackle larger missions but there has yet to be a situation where there has been a general call to arms.

With over a hundred cells comprised of between 5 and 500 personnel, the Iron Sons are stretched thin across Canam, though still numbering larger than any other mercenary company on the continent. It is each cell's responsibility to interpret Iron Son policy which best suits their environment. Being left to their down judgment, not all cells act alike, with some acting mali-

cious while others civilized. Though their mission statement includes the annihilation of the world of magic and the retaking of nature by the will of man, some cells have tolerated fae involvement. There have been occurrences where a cell has been disavowed, even branded criminals by the rest of the organization. Given the number of cells across Canam, it's difficult for said groups to move through techan communities without being discovered.

The Iron Sons are technically allies with most bastions, though some cities publicly denounce them. Because General Chauk has technically broken several bastion laws in the operation of the Iron Sons, he is considered a criminal. Many bastions have banned the Iron Sons in their cities though employ them for foreign work. Both Angel and York have employed the Iron Sons (despite Angel officially labeling them a terrorist organization, the Sons maintain a public message box just outside the gates of the bastion and never want for work in that region) as well as Selkirk on fewer occasions, but they have not been employed by Mann or Sierra Madre.

IRON SONS LORE

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 25: 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.

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

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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

KODIAK BRUTE

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.

DC 25: 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

Medium humanoid (spawn), any alignment

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 108 (12d8+48)
Speed 35ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	12(+1)	18(+4)	12(+1)	11(+1)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Str +7 Con +7
Skills Perception +4, Survival +4
Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Argose, maybe English
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ravenous. If a creature scores a critical hit on the kodiak, the kodiak gains a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of its next turn.

Unstoppable Onslaught. The kodiak can charge as part of its movement—it gains +10 speed, must move at least 30 feet before attacking, and ignores difficult terrain. It may only make bite/claw attacks at the end of the charge. If charging, the first attack roll has advantage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The kodiak makes any other two melee attacks.

Bite/Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

Iron Chains. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (1d6+4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is knocked prone.

M.A.X.

Large construct (robot), unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 204 (17d10+102)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	18(+4)	22(+6)	3(-4)	11(+1)	1(-5)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +10
Skills Athletics +10, Perception +5
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons.
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons that aren't magic or adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60ft., darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 15
Languages English (archaic)
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Construct: M.A.X. is a machine built by person or persons unknown. It is immune to disruption (from being extremely well shielded). M.A.X. has a built-in repair system that allows it to regenerate 10 hit points an hour unless it is below 0 hit points. M.A.X. also has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Subroutine Z0.0 Reactor Meltdown. If M.A.X. is reduced to 0 hit points or less, it instantly explodes. All targets within 50 feet must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (l6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. No components of M.A.X. remain in salvageable condition (although at the GM's discretion it may have a black box).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. M.A.X. makes two *slam* or *reliquary plasma caster* attacks. It can also make one *subroutine K1.98 burrowstrike rocket* attack.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8+6) bludgeoning damage and the target is pushed 5 ft.

Reliquary Plasma Caster. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 200/800 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (2d10 +15) energy damage

Subroutine K1.98 Burrowstrike Rocket (Recharge 5-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7, range 200/800 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 point of piercing damage, and M.A.X. can automatically find the target, regardless of terrain, for the next 24 hours. M.A.X. may detonate the *burrowstrike rocket* at any time as an action, inflicting 40 (5d10+15) points of explosive damage.

Subroutine R8.2 Targeting Array. M.A.X. makes a single *reliquary plasma caster* attack and has advantage on the attack roll. M.A.X. also inflicts a critical hit on a 19 or 20.

REACTIONS

Subroutine D7.1 Scorched Earth. When a creature scores a critical hit on M.A.X., M.A.X. releases a fire burst attack in all directions as a reaction. All targets within 15 feet of M.A.X. must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (3d10+15) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

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 non-existent. 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. LORE

Nothing is known of MAX.

NEMOS

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. In the modern age, the few reports of them refer to a more modern term, nemos.

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 nemo. 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 nemo grants one immortality. This is false but has led to some barbaric attempts to test the theory.

Nemos are the same as merfolk.

PAGUS

"We are the brush in which the master paints. Cleaned of all pigment, we await a stain to define us. If our gods fail to direct us, the blood of society will paint the canvas."

Ixindar cannot create, only corrupt. 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 unrecognizable: 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 freedom 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

PAGUS STRIFEBRINGER

Medium humanoid (fae, Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (half plate) or 15 with *minion*
Hit Points 48 (8d8+16) or 12 with *minion*
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	18(+4)	15(+2)	12(+1)	10(+0)	14(+2)

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +2
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Paggin
Challenge 4 (1 ,100 XP)

Direct Approach. If the pagus strifebringer moves at least 30 feet to an enemy, it has advantage on its next melee attack that same turn.

Minion. Pagus strifebringers can be used as minions in a battle. A strifebringer used this way decreases its hit points to 15.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The strifebringer makes two *morningstar* attacks. If both hit, the strifebringer can make a third *morningstar* attack as a bonus action.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8+4) slashing damage

PAGUS BATTLESWORN

Medium humanoid (fae, Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (half plate)
Hit Points 100 (10d8+60)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	20(+6)	22(+6)	12(+1)	10(+0)	14(+2)

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +3
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Englo-Lingo, Paggin
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Direct Approach. If the pagus battlesworn moves at least 30 feet to an enemy, it gains two attacks with its maul as part of an Attack action.

Onslaught. The pagus battlesworn automatically scores a critical hit against targets that are prone.

ACTIONS

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10+6) bludgeoning damage. The pagus has advantage with this attack, and if the pagus scores a critical hit, it inflicts triple dice damage instead of double and knocks the target prone.

Short Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (4d10+6) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Focused Aggression. When the pagus battlesworn first suffers damage after initiative is established, it gains a full turn as a reaction.

PAGUS SHAITAR

Medium humanoid (fae, Ixindar), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (full plate)
Hit Points 120 (12d8+72)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24(+7)	20(+6)	24(+7)	8(-1)	3(-4)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Str +10 Dex +9, Con +10
Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +10
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 6
Languages Paggin
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Fury of Ixindar. After the shaitar hits the same target three times in the same turn without attacking another target, the shaitar inflicts an additional 15 (2d10+4) bludgeoning damage.

Unfocused Aggression. Each time the shaitar suffers damage, the damage inflicted by his morningstar increases by +1 (max +10). This bonus reduces to zero after five minutes.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shaitar makes two morningstar attacks (or three if they are all against the same target).

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+7) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Focused Aggression. When the pagus shaitar first suffers damage after initiative is established, he gains a full turn as a reaction.

PAGUS UNBOUND CHIEFTAIN

Medium humanoid (fae, Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (full plate)
Hit Points 120 (12d8+72)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23(+6)	22(+6)	22(+6)	12(+1)	8(-1)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Str +9 Dex +9, Con +9
Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +9, Perception +5
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Englo-Lingo, Paggin
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Unshakeable Conviction. All pagus within 30 feet of the chieftain are immune to fear and have advantage on their first attack roll on their next turn after the unbound chieftain suffers damage from an enemy.

War Howl (Recharge 5-6): As a bonus action, all allied pagus within 20 feet of the chieftain can move 15 feet. This movement provokes no opportunity attacks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The chieftain makes two heavy flail attacks.

Heavy Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8+6) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Focused Aggression. When the pagus chieftain first suffers damage after initiative is established, he gains a full turn as a reaction.

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 gen-

der, 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 warbands are concentrated mostly in the secluded lands of Apocrypha though quite a few have been spotted in the rest of Canam. Pagus have a natural fear of water and mountains unless their wills are overridden by shemjaza or dragon, and have such kept mostly in their nation. Exceptions have occurred and attacks have been reported as far south as Sierra Madre.

PAGUS LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Knowledge (nature) check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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.

DC 25: 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.

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

Small humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 1 (1d6 - 3)
Speed 35ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7(-2)	16(+3)	5(-3)	8(-1)	7(-2)	7(-2)

Saving Throws Dex +5
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 8
Languages Ferran
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Bloody Innumerable. If the pugg and its allies outnumber their enemy 2:1, the pug gains a +2 bonus to melee attack rolls and melee damage rolls. If the pugg and its allies out number their enemy by 3:1, this bonus increases to a +3 bonus to melee attack rolls and melee damage rolls. Unless the puggs have a more powerful ally on their side, if they are outnumbered, they generally flee.

ACTIONS

Blunt Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit: 2* (1d4) piercing damage; this attack cannot score a critical hit.

PUGG LORE

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 10: 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 accidental death among puggs are choking on something too big to chew and being crushed or suffocated in a swarm.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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.

SATYRS

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.

Satyrs are not expected to be direct opponents and so monster stats are not included.

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 one can see; they have claws but no arms. They throw no shadows but seem to emit darkness, concealing their true shape (if they even have one). Only illuminated white eyes, jaws of knives, 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.

THE SHAPELESS WILD LORE

A character knows the following with a successful knowledge skill check.

DC 15: 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.

DC 20: 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

Medium monstrous humanoid (Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 42 (6d8+18)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14(+2)	16(+3)	16(+3)	13(+1)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Damage Immunities disease, poison
Skills Climb +4 Stealth +7
Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 10
Languages None
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Evergloom. All light within 25 feet of the shapeless wild is reduced to dim shadow.

Madness Given Form. After initiative order is established, the first hit by any enemy on the shapeless wild misses.

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Hidden Ways. The shapeless wild moves to any spot within its evergloom, and make two claw attacks. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

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. How this came about remains a mystery. 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 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. Shemjaza will be expanded in a later book.

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 damaskan anathema, 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 INCITER

Medium humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)
Hit Points 70 (10d8+30)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	16(+3)	11(+0)	12(+1)	11(+0)

Skills Stealth +4, Survival +5
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Ferran, sometimes English
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Get Over There! As a bonus action, the skegg inciter can move one ally within 30 feet up to 10 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Vicious Temperament. The inciter can re-roll 3 missed attack rolls per day (as many as its challenge level). It can only use vicious temperament once roll per attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The inciter makes two morningstar attacks.

Makeshift Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8+3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

You're Not Finished. When an ally within 25 feet of the skegg inciter drops to 0 hit points or less, the ally can make a Morningstar attack before falling as a reaction.

SKEGG THRALL

Medium humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (chain armor) or 12 with *minion*
Hit Points 32 (6d8+8) or 9 hit points with *minion*
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	14(+2)	12(+1)	12(+1)	10(+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Stealth +4
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Ferran, sometimes English
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Minion. Skegg thralls can be used as minions in a battle. A thrall used this way decreases its hit points to 9.

Vicious Temperament. After establishing initiative, the thrall can re-roll 2 missed attack rolls (as many as its challenge level). It can only use vicious temperament once roll per attack.

ACTIONS

Blunt Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

SKEGG PUGG SLAVE-DRIVER

Medium humanoid (fae), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (chain armor)
Hit Points 56 (8d8+24)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	12(+1)	16(+3)	13(+1)	12(+1)	14(+2)

Skills Intimidate +4, Stealth, +3
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Ferran, sometimes English
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Nice Throw, Boss! As a bonus action, the skegg may throw a pugg in reach up to 25 feet. If the pugg is thrown at an enemy, it lands within 5 feet and immediately makes an attack. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Vicious Temperament. After establishing initiative, the slave-driver can re-roll 2 missed attack rolls (as many as its challenge level). It can only use vicious temperament once roll per attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The slave-driver makes two pugg prodder attacks.

Pugg Prodder. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage. The skegg may attack through space occupied by puggs.

Rabble Rouse. Puggs within 20 feet each count as two for the purposes of the puggs' *bloody innumerable* ability.

SKEGG LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Knowledge (nature) check.

DC 15: The skeggs consider themselves the ruling caste of damaskan anathema 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.

DC 25: 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.

THORNSHROUD

Medium construct (Ixindar), lawful evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
Hit Points 162 (18d8+90)
Speed 40ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20(+5)	16(+3)	20(+5)	18(+4)	14(+2)	18(+4)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +8, Con +8, Cha +9
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +9, Perception +7, Stealth +8
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons.
Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from weapons that aren't magic or adamantine
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses truesight 120ft., passive Perception 17
Languages English, Englo-Lingo
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Construct. Thornshoud is a demonic machine built with a human head grafted atop. It is immune to disruption and has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. He also regenerates 5 of its own hit points at the beginning of each of his turns as long as he has more than 1 hit point.

Holocaust. Thornshroud's melee weapon can shift from a sword to a whip instantly. The sword inflicts more damage and recovers hit points for its wielder; the whip can reach, grab, and paralyze targets. *Holocaust* counts as adamantine and magic.

Structural Integrity. When reduced to 0 hit points or less, Thornshroud's head detaches from his body, grows four spidery legs and attempts to escape. In this form, Thornshroud has 50 hit points, a speed of 30 ft., and an AC 20. He cannot attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Thornshroud makes two holocaust attacks.

Holocaust—The Spine. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6+5) slashing damage, and the target loses 1 hit dice and Thornshroud gains 10 temporary hit points.

Holocaust—The Bind. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is paralyzed until the end of Thornshoud's next turn. The target can also be grappled (escape DC 18) and pulled within 5-feet of Thornshroud. While grappled, Thornshroud cannot use holocaust on any other creature but has advantage on attack rolls using the bind against the grappled target. The bind can release a target at any point (meaning it can grab a target, pull it close, turn into *the spine*, and make another attack in a single action).

REACTIONS

Riposte. If a creature misses Thornshroud, as a reaction, Thornshroud may move up to 10 feet and make a single *holocaust* attack.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Thornshroud can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Thornshroud regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Spine. Thornshroud makes a holocaust-spine attack.

Bind. Thornshroud makes a holocaust-bind attack.

Column Strike (Costs 2 Actions). Thornshroud makes a holocaust attack to each enemy in reach.

THORNSHROUD

"Don't think of this as a good death. It means nothing, just as your life was up to this moment. Those you gave your life to protect will die soon after you. And in the timeframe of galaxies, everything you have done, everything your ancestors did, or anything your descendants will ever do...is meaningless."

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 legend to most, so even common knowledge is scarce. He is described as little more than a decaying head atop an enchanted armor of such impressive complexity, some have confused it as being mechanical in origin. In the ranking of followers of Ixindar, it is believed Thornshroud is a singular authority answerable to no one. He can command pagus, shemjaza, and even dragons, though it is thought to the latter he has not extended this authority. The first rumors of Thornshroud emerged from books smuggled from the other side of the world but only date back about 75 years, meaning he is a recent creation. These same rumors compare his construction to that of the famous legend of Gebermach, the living machine which killed Amethyst. Gebermach was created by Mengus but since Mengus has been silent in the modern age, no one is sure who built Thornshroud.

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

THORNSHROUD

subordinates. He told them it came from the highest authority, orders from the greatest voice of all.

Thornshroud was a member of a powerful village in the Far East dedicated to the eradication of all creatures of Ixindar. At some point, this individual was captured and turned into that which he had sworn to destroy. It's unknown how much of the original mind is intact, though Thornshroud has acted in ways indicating his memories suffered little undamaged. He has yet to show any remorse for his actions and appears to be wholly enveloped by corruption. Despite this, he was never sent back to destroy his village and was instead set across the ocean to Canam in an attempt to marshal the uncontrolled armies of Ixindar. The pagus were running wild and the dragons operated on their own agenda. Meanwhile, the shemjaza were having difficulty controlling the pagus. Thornshroud's singular purpose is to muster these armies and get them to begin their crusade to wipe out all uncorrupted life in Canam.

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 LORE

There is currently no lore associated with Thornshroud.

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 insidious spell.

Throughout human history, therianthropes, as some prefer to call them, 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.

Natural-born werecreatures are not predisposed to any alignment, 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.

Aiden stared at the toilet. It was wood and stone, but it had a seat. The chain flushed water from the large cistern above. It was primitive, using gravity fed water from towers about the city, but it was heaven compared to the past two months. The seat was hard. The stone was cold. He didn't care and neither did his bowels. The bed was cushioned with a down pillow. The white walls were more than a design aesthetic. A cool breeze flowed to every crack and corner. Aiden found a second floor room with a view of a market street. The circular stone window held no glass, only a wooden shutter to block out the noises if needed. It was never too loud and the overlapping voices in various languages reminded Aiden of traffic clatter in Angel. A pull of a similar chain ran a pump bringing clean water. The toilet and the sink was knowledge brought over by bastion-man, what the fae could never manage on their own. It wasn't stupidity but a lack of the obsessive drive to better one's life that only came from evolution. Fae found a simple solution and never attempted progress. The disruption of their very being on even the most basic mechanisms did the rest. Before men and their printing press, the fae stuck mostly with scrolls. Books for them were a luxury reserved for special editions as each had to be stitched by hand.

The sun hadn't set before Aiden shut his eyes. He slept for twelve hours. He woke without an ache and thoroughly cleaned himself in the communal showers on the lower level. Aiden felt scrawny and bare amongst the

hairy, barrel-chested human men in the other stalls. The water was freezing as was everything else that morning. The city was still a slave to weather. He had a brazier and a few sconces in his room but they would do little against the cold when winter hit, mild that they were at this latitude.

There was no way to keep food cold so it was to the market for produce every morning. Aiden raced for an empty seat, fought through his deficient proficiency of the sinitic tongue the server's used, and ordered a plate of what looked like raw sewage. He tasted garlic. He didn't recall seeing garlic. Aiden felt something crunchy and hoped it was intended. He left his remaining Angel grain bars for emergencies. He knew he had to acquire a stout stomach if he had any chance to acclimatize to echa. The caravan had helped but that was mostly bread.

By afternoon, he found the arcana wing, three blocks of libraries, stores, and schools. Aiden slammed his tattered tome of incantations and power words in front of a storekeep that specialized in totems. It jostled the spark out of the book, which quickly went back into hiding. Aiden was awaiting some castigation from the owner but only heard, "I've seen worse," as the clerk took the book and went about finding the rare components required to repair it. Later, Aiden wondered if the keeper had seen worse from many of his patrons, or just the humans, few that they were.

Before lunch, Aiden signed up for a philosophy lecture. The teacher was not some old man with worn and weary eyes pinching his nose when his heavy glasses strained his head. He was barely into his forties with dark skin with toned muscle. There were thirty other students of various ethnicities, ages, and races sitting with backs straight upon mats placed erratically about the room. Aiden had entered late and noticed the desks pushed to the walls.

"I'm Doctor Philippe Paraerra and if you have any hope of understanding this world, you have to begin with your awareness. Of how you perceive it. This class does not deal with specifics. It deals with color." Aiden furrowed his brow at the statement. Others followed. "Got you all looking crooked, didn't I?" A few laughed. "I'm serious. Color is a name we give our perception of the basics of what we see. Something is blue. Something is yellow. Something is black and something is white. In this world, what we see is interpreted by our brains. What we perceive we take instantly as reality. What we are taught we accept...as gospel, even to the extent of altering our perception of the world around it. Yellow and blue do not make green and the true color blue isn't even something our brains can handle. If you have any hopes of understanding this world, you have to accept that there are no absolutes."

"Anything is possible--" Aiden found himself whispering.

"Damned straight," Paraerra exclaimed with a clap.

It jolted Aiden as eyes focused on him. "Sorry," he said.

"Don't be. Anything IS possible. God has been replaced by the will of the very people he created. This is his parting gift, the keys to the kingdom. It's not a test. There's no virtuous morality at play, no good versus evil. For the first time, the world is malleable. Why do you think they send all wizards to me first before they put any spells in your head. You're a dreamer."

"Is that a problem?"

"No, but you're sitting near me for your stay in my class."

Aiden held up his hands in protest. "No, no, that's quite all right." Paraerra raised his hands as if preaching to god, and then firmly pointed to an open area next to him. Aiden sighed and shuffled to the position.

"Let me start with a rhetorical question. If there was no intelligent life in the universe, does the universe have meaning? We all know the adage about the tree falling in the forest. I move beyond that by saying that if no one hears the falling tree, even though it makes a sound, the act of the fall and the sound it generates is utterly worthless. Intelligence is the universe's way of acknowledging its own existence, and a cosmos with no eyes to see it, ears to hear it, or brains to understand it...has no value. So if intelligent life is the ultimate goal of the cosmos, is there room or even a need for a greater intelligence? If there was a divine creator--a greater thought--behind everything, then that could devalue our own importance. This would lead me to say that there's meaning to the universe, but not a purpose. It may have a function, but not necessarily significance. That would transfer the responsibility onto us. We are not obligated to find purpose in our lives, but it may be something only we can seek ourselves, as no guiding light will show us the path.

"We now have the capacity to alter the universe, actually change how it functions. Only a cosmos aware of itself could control how it acts and if we're the gestalt of this consciousness, then God is only the sum of all the minds in the universe and had no capacity to think until we thought of it." Paraerra smiled. "...and I'm only four minutes into my first class."

The students laughed and Paraerra continued, "If you follow this logic any further, then the removal of god and science simultaneously allows us absolute freedom to pursue personal meaning without any obligation to the universe, which, as I said, may not have a purpose at all."

"So there would no predetermined path for anyone, by science or by God, real or not?" Aiden asked.

"There may still be a set path but one you may be only partially in control of. Think of it as...cosmic socialism.

"That sounds somewhat absurd."

"My thoughts exactly...but that's a conversation for another day."

* * *

As evening fell, Aiden sat at the edge of the window. The moon and Attricana were bright but a few well placed candles were still required for Aiden's reading. He didn't feel the need to flaunt the spark. He glanced at his open pack and the azure glow inside. Aiden walked over and pulled out the amethyst. He returned to the window and his book, placing the jewel on the open face. He could see the storms swirling away inside. He resumed his reading.

She was a fae. That much Aiden could easily tell. She

was taking in the breeze from her larger window across the street. Second floor, the same as him. His height but half the weight, with a frame of a normal person that had been stretched. She leaned from her window to let her blonde hair dry naturally in the wind. Her neck was long and thin, uncovered by a flowing layer of silk which danced about the air. She wore nothing underneath the simple gown but nature's current refused to reveal anything by whisking away the cloth. It would only permit Aiden a glimpse of her slender legs below the knee and everything above the shoulders. As her hair dried and lifted in the air, the strands parted to reveal her ears.

Aiden didn't notice the amethyst sliding off his book until it clanged on the floor. He bolted from view of the window to snatch it back up. When he returned to his admiration, he noticed the human male entering the room behind her. He wore well pressed blues and purples, satin and linen with accents of leather. He removed his coat as she turned. She slowly embraced him. He paid generously. She placed him on the bed and walked to the window. Her's had two shutters. As she closed one, she looked across the street and met Aiden's eyes. He flinched but continued his stare. She smiled and rolled her fingers in a wave and closed the final shutter.

Aiden sat himself back on the window edge and dropped the rock back on this book. It slid down to his hand, brushing across his wrist. He stared at the storm caught within it. Tick.

Aiden wondered if he had been so lucky to find some unique item, a mcguffin to start him on a great quest. If this was, would he take it, accept such responsibility? If it was worthy for midgets and melancholy mages, why not? But in fiction, the storyteller ensures the survivability of his characters and Aiden had no such guardian watching over him.

Tick.

Aiden didn't spot it initially. His mind was lost not on the stone but on the lingering image of the prostitute in the window. Tick. Right next to the amethyst, the gem commanded all attention. Tick. When the second hand moved again, Aiden spotted his watch. Tick, the second had moved.

Tick, again. Aiden tilted his head rather than risk shifting the watch as it rolled over to 10:04 am. He saw the hand mark off another second. Aiden mouthed a curse as he palmed the Amethyst and moved it away from his watch. The second hand stopped abruptly before 10:05. He brought the stone back alongside the mechanism. Time resumed, closing to the end of the minute.

"How is that possible?"

* * *

It was a wing dedicated to concepts of Pleroma—the language of dragons and the basis of all arcane wizardry. It didn't have any books on specific spells, but on the various attempts to understand the bizarre tongue and its capacity to alter the physical world when spoken by one learned in the word's meaning. It was taken up by the fae in the time of Terros—the age before man when magic held dominion. Fae needed to create totems to affix their words. They had to hold that item when the word was uttered, a condition no one was able to explain. The dragons went around this by burning the words onto their skin. It was a power few others had been able to replicate. The book was a recent and popular choice.

By mid afternoon, Aiden was the only one reading, accompanied by a librarian with eyes fixed on filing cards and a custodian that circled the halls every hour. Aiden enjoyed an apple for lunch. As he removed a second from his pack, he noticed the amethyst. He pulled it out again and stared into the oscillating and churning storms. There was a pattern to them. The shades of violet and lavender would flow one way and then shift the next. It was intentional. Aiden closed his book, packed up, and left. If it was a mcguffin, he might as well find out now.

It was the end of his first week and Aiden wasn't getting lost as often as he used to. He still hadn't made any friends. The fae embodied some artistic idea of what beauty looked like--what God intended in his design but was always depressed in the result. The males commanded authority with chiseled features; the females were sculpted to draw the eyes of all those around.

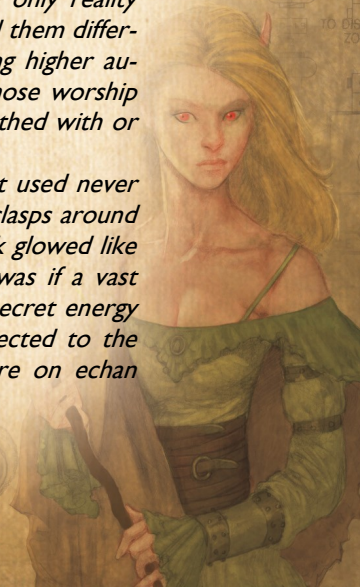
And they ignored him.

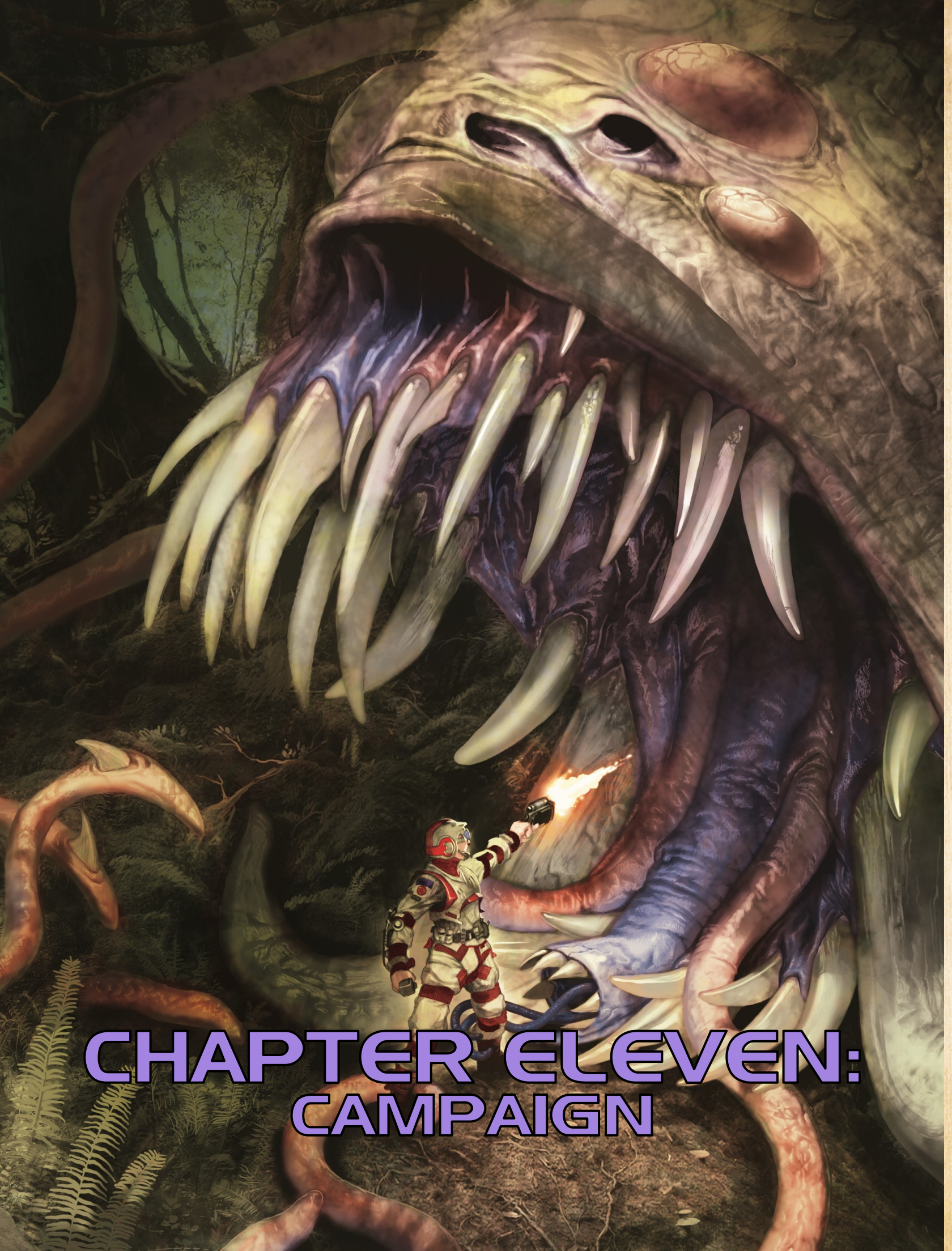
The men would only respond if addressed. The females wouldn't look his way. Aiden would occasionally nod to a few as he walked by in some aged sense of courtesy. They never smiled, never greeted him. Aiden had read fae and humans mixed here with half-breeds walking amongst the purebloods. What was odd about fae genetics was their refusal to abide by the laws of the human genome. Blond hair would surpass black, blue eyes over brown. The fae parent filtered out genetic defects or inherited disease. Aiden began to understand the unspoken tolerance between the humans and fae. They respected each other's distance. When they mixed, they did so infrequently.

In the religious wing, Aiden located the book based on the advice given to him from Gauss. The amethyst stone was the symbol of a religious order, the oldest faith on the planet. It connected itself to a god, a dragon of violent and lavender scales with eyes to match. Beautiful and majestic, it had wings to span across a city. All it needed to do was call something's name and it became real. It was the first dragon.

After the dragons came the fae--elves, fairies, pixies and boggles. They rose from the water, walked from the trees, and fell from the sky. Monsters would emerge and be defeated over an afternoon. It was the only reality they knew off with no frame of science to tell them different. Other religions sprang up after claiming higher authorities but Amethyst was the only one whose worship and faith was not required. It lived and breathed with or without its subjects.

But the stones the followers of Amethyst used never glowed. They were smaller with no ornate clasps around them. Even if they did shine, no magical rock glowed like this, not in any books Aiden had read. It was if a vast space occupied the gem, perhaps holding a secret energy Aiden hadn't understood. If this was connected to the Amethyst god, he would have to read more on echan history. That would take a while.





CHAPTER ELEVEN: 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

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. There is the line between humanity and the fae peoples, and the discrimination that often results therefrom; the line between the religion that betters the believer and that which subjugates the outsider; the line 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, techan, or a mix of the two. 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 undefined 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.

ORIGINS

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.

RELATIONS

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.

TALENTS

Techan and echan parties each have some things they can do that the 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 another's' 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 value 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. Although there are 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.

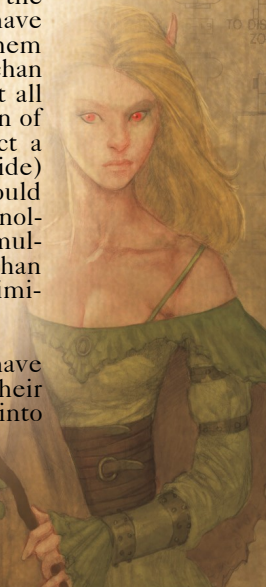
Closeness with the fantasy world can be a double-edged sword, because the problem with magic is that it is inherently chaotic. Familiarity breeds contempt, and that can be deadly when one expects to easily dispatch a clutch of mindless puggs and instead falls into a pit trap contrived by one of the few 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.

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. The following general descriptions can aid the GM in converting adventures from other sources to *Amethyst*'s world. 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.

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 guerillas 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.

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 1st-level 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 boggs 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 boggs, 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.

A bastion-born player can make a DC15 Knowledge (History) check to determine the following: *The craft comes from Porto—the utopian bastion known to prosper far east, across the ocean. How it got here would be an obvious question without a speedy answer. Though they have 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.*

A DC15 search of the wreckage will uncover 300 uc in widgets from the wreckage.

BATTLE

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.

1 Skegg Thrall (remove if the party smaller)
1 Bogg rake
6 Bogg scabb minions

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 virtually impossible to break.

Each box has 25 hit points and requires a DC20 Strength ability check to break.

BOX	LABEL	LOCK DC	CONTENTS
1-Large	Security	15	4 disruption patches, 3 sets of handcuffs
2-Large	Emergency	15	1 standard techan adventurer's kit
1-Small	See below	10	See Below

The small box carries the label, "Open under controlled conditions—EDF 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 (or with an additional DC13 Wisdom (Perception) skill check), 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.

A DC13 Intelligence (Arcana) check can find the following: 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. If this check is successful, gain a +4 bonus to the history check.

A DC18 Intelligence (Religion) check can find the following: 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 mage. If this check is successful, gain a +4 bonus to the history check.

Any player can attempt a DC20 Intelligence (History) check (including bonuses for the two other skill checks above): 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.

This is Stormcage, Torfin's most prized magical possession. The heroes, however, are not made aware of the amethyst's true power or history: only the legends surrounding Torfin's famous duel and the mysterious disappearance of the amulet. For more information on the amulet's properties and history, it will be necessary to do extensive research in Limshau.

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 crisscrossing 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: If the PCs failed the previous Intelligence (History) check, they must reattempt it before continuing. They gain a +4 to their roll while researching, gaining an additional +2 from Inara and +1 by Baelin if the characters enlist their help. They may repeat the challenge each day. If they previously passed the religion or arcana checks but fail the history check, they begin the next skill challenge with one success for each. This can continue until the players give up or they succeed.

If the players do give up, or are stuck, or when they do read the history of the item, eventually, either Bailin 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

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 40s, 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 skill checks by this point, he'll answer it 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 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."

<Response>

"If you'll permit me a momentary indulgence, I believe I know where the answer rests."

<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 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 gp 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."

A DC20 Intelligence (History) check can discover the following (a techan gains a +5 bonus): 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, they can make the above check with a +5 bonus. 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.

BATTLE

Pugg raid. Swarms of puggs storm from the forest. They emerge 10 at a time for three rounds.

30 Puggs

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.

A close examination with a DC10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals deep slashes across their chest, most likely from a talon rather than from a knife. What remains of their clothing indicates a techan origin but anything more than that is a mystery. Such a fate would surely fall anyone lost in the keep. 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 must make a DC15 Dexterity saving throw or take 12 (3d8) damage (save half).

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 I: 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 covered 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.

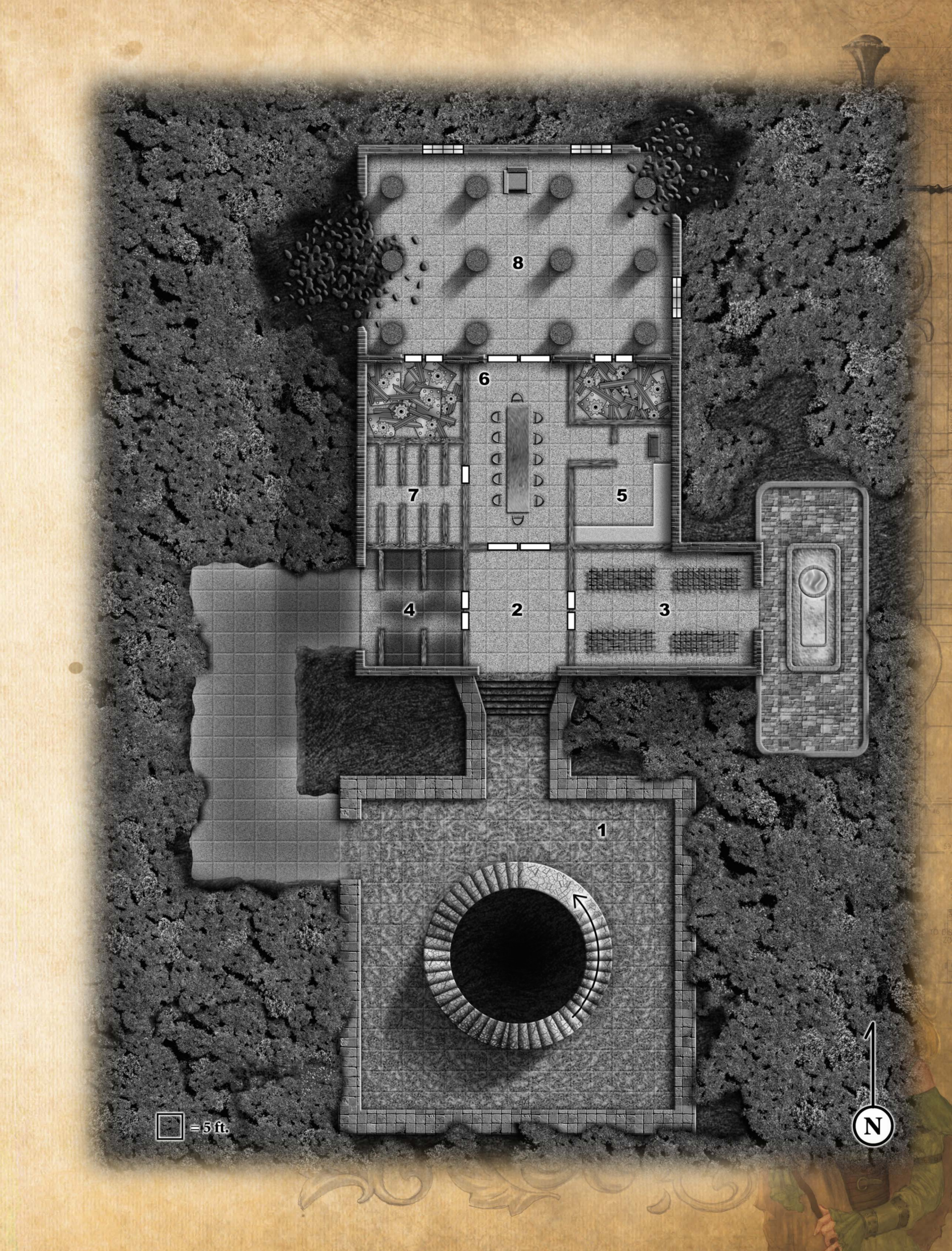
BATTLE

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.

20 Disciples of Kovacs

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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DISCIPLE OF KOVACS

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 10 (2d8+2)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+0)	14(+2)	12(+1)	12(+1)	13(+1)	14(+2)

Skills Deception +3, Persuasion +4, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages English, Englo-Lingo
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Martydom: When a Disciple of Kovacs dies, the next attack roll by a disciple of Kovacs has advantage.

Blood Will Tell: For every 4 disciples that die in the encounter, one rises from the dead to continue the fight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The disciple of Kovacs makes one melee attack plus one additional attack if a disciple of Kovacs was killed the previous turn (max +1 attack)

Ritual Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

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.*

BATTLE

The kodiak can move within reach of every door but not beyond the archway. Every round it is injured, it can make a DC15 Strength check to break its chain. If it does, nothing will prevent it from trying to kill everything it sees.

BROKEN BRUTE

Medium humanoid (spawn), neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 60 (12d8)
Speed 35ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	12(+1)	10(+0)	6(-2)	11(+1)	10(+0)

Saving Throws Str +7 Con +3
Skills Perception +4
Senses darkvision 120ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Argose
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ravenous. If a creature scores a critical hit on the kodiak, the kodiak gains a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of its next turn.

Unstoppable Onslaught. The kodiak can charge as part of its movement—it gains +10 speed, must move at least 30 feet before attacking, and ignores difficult terrain. It may only make bite/claw attacks at the end of the charge. If charging, the first attack roll has advantage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The kodiak makes one melee attack, 2 if below 30 hit points, 4 is below 15 hit points.

Bloody Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage.

Iron Chains. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (1d6+4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is knocked prone.

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 Attricana and now have turned into a mass of killing writhing thorns that lash out to anyone trying to cross.

BATTLE

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.

3 Triffids (2 if a smaller party)

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 DC15 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal one of the following (roll 1d6, each result only occurs once):

1: A pouch with 4 gp, 10 sp, and a fingernail
2: A jade pendant worth 10 gp and a book of carpet samples.

TRIFFID

Medium plant (spawn), unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 59 (7d12+14)
Speed 10ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	6(-2)	15(+2)	10(+0)	10(+0)	7(-2)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages none
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

False Appearance: While the triffid remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal plant.

Night Quill: If the slashing vine rolls a critical hit with a slashing vine, the target must make a DC13 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious for 1d4 minutes or until the target suffers any damage.

ACTIONS

Slashing Vine. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 feet., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+4) bludgeoning damage, and if the attack roll was even, make another slashing vine attack (1 additional total)

3: Triffid poison (3 uses; +8 vs. PD, 1 point of damage and the target falls unconscious [save ends]).
4: A leather scabbard filled with salt.
5: A skeleton with 4 gold teeth (1 gp each)
6: *Potion of healing*

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.*

BATTLE

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.

3 Shapeless Wild

Characters checking the horses notice the excessive level of violence inflicted on the poor animals. A DC15 Wisdom (Perception) to search will locate the pouches and saddlebags the horses had when they were killed. In one, they find 30 sp; 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 (2 gp), a diary detailing the obsessive desire to convert to the shadow of one Ennis Carson, and a single holy dragon scale (5 gp, though not many people will trade for it).

A DC20 Wisdom (Perception) check will find a crushed silver and bronze goblet under one carcass. This is used often in rituals and is worth 120 gp given its current state.

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 make a DC15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a small black lockbox amidst the ash. It has a simple lock (DC18 to unlock) and inside, the characters will find two gold wedding rings (2 gp each) and a silver pendant (10 gp).

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 TL0 machine pistols (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.

A DC20 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers a loose stone beneath the pile of gear. Under the stone is a pouch filled with 20 sp and 50 cp 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.*

BATTLE

These two men, David Stone and Martin Wood, represent the surviving members of the Iron Sons cell that stole the *Chronicle of Aurannis*.

2 Iron Sons Survivors

If either survivor is taken alive, the following can be made with the proper checks.

What happened here is not obvious. The PCs will have to take one alive and push through the temporary insanity in order to get any answers.

A DC18 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the following: 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.

A DC15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can reveal the following: 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. You are able to stabilize him, but he needs sleep to properly recover. His lucidity may only be temporary. You are not properly equipped to determine the long term psychological effects.

A DC15 Charisma (Persuasion) check: You try to talk him down; assuring him you mean no harm. Your appearance must have been initially alarming, but the offer of food and water helped greatly. Seeing the light outside has also helped.

Success: 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. Cakewalk, 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."

This warns the PCs that something is due to happen at nightfall. They each receive +2 to all defenses against the first attack by shapeless wild against them in the upcoming encounter.

IRON SONS SURVIVOR

Medium human, lawful neutral

Armor Class 16 (techan armor)
Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	14(+2)	13(+1)	14(+2)	13(+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4
Skills Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages one language (usually English or Englo-Lingo)
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Linked Targeting: Once per round, if one Iron Sons survivor hits with a ranged attack, one other Iron Sons Survivor can make a ranged attack against the same target as a reaction.

Bad Timing. If the Iron Sons survivor misses a target by 10 or more on his attack roll, he cannot use his assault rifle until the end of his next turn. The weapon either disrupts or has run out of ammunition.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Iron Sons survivor makes two ranged attacks.

Teeth & Nails. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grabbed.

Assault Rifle (Martin). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (ld8+3) piercing damage.

Shotgun (David). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit: 7* (ld8+3) piercing damage, and if the target is 20 feet or closer, increase the damage to 10 and the target is knocked prone.

Failure: He is irrational and babbles meaningless nonsense while thrashing and trying to escape. Nothing will sway him.

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.

BATTLE

The cultists will not attempt to kill the characters if they drop below 0 hit points. If all the characters are reduced below 0, then the cultists will stabilize them and the characters will be restrained. They may make a saving throw after 10 minutes to rouse before the curse sets in, but their weapons will be removed and they will still be restrained.

Katho Kovacs
9 Disciples of Kovacs

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 a standard action. The most accessible are: one suede pouch with 50 gp, two linked gold rings worth 30 gp, four short swords in sellable condition, one magic item worth no more than 520 gp, and the *Chronicle of Aurannis*.

KATHO KOVACS

Medium human, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (scale armor)
Hit Points 44 (11d8)
Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14(+2)	12(+1)	12(+0)	16(+3)	16(+3)	13(+1)

Saving Throws Wis +6
Skills Perception +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages English and Englo-Lingo
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Hit Dice: Katho Kovacs can spend his Hit Dice during combat. Unless Katho Kovacs has been in combat before, he starts with 11 Hit Dice.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Katho Kovacs makes any other two actions.

Black Staff. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage and the target loses one Hit Die.

Necrotic Spike. *Ranged Attack.* Katho Kovacs targets one creature he can see within 60 feet of him and spends a Hit Die. The target makes a DC14 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 14 damage and the target has disadvantage with attack rolls until the beginning of Kovacs's next turn.

Assembly of the One: Use one Hit Die and Kovacs regains 8 hit points.

PREDATOR AND PREY

Once only three or fewer cultists remain, or if Katho Kovacs is staggered, 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 should kill one cultist instantly regardless of his remaining hit points, 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 reduced to 0 hit points or below. 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 (+15 vs. AC, 25 damage). 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 beat a DC15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 12 points of damage (save for half damage). 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 the debris.

CONCLUSION

Even if they did not defeat Kovacs, they receive a 1000 gp reward 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 2000 gp reward, 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 gp 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 Koana district was a geographically bound organization of schools catering to prospective mages. The curriculum involved long hours in study with little practical application. Introductory courses took six years and most students, even fae, never became spellcasters. Unlike other schools, which tried to apply a theological approach to magic, supporting a "gut intuition" and encouraging natural talent, Koana maintained that true masters only came from research and exercise. Aiden had considered joining but each time he held the application, he realized the courses only bequeathed the keys to longer, more rewarding classes taking another six years. Chen had already taught him the basics. It was a waste of twelve years for him to emerge only older and seasoned. Aiden wanted the pay-off now. He had access to the books but needed to determine for himself the proper arrangement for reading.

He remembered the fight with the pugg. Would his mind blank? Would he freeze when most needed? He may never need to take such a risk. He may spend the rest of his days behind these white walls. As he stared into the perfectly clear unobstructed night atop the apartment building, he realized it wasn't such a dreadful prospect. He would need a job, something that reflected his talent, something he'd want to do, something not forced by society, with as little responsibility as possible. Maybe he'd be a writer, compose a tell-all introduction to wizardry to help humans adopt the talent.

Aiden had to tolerate how cold the mornings got. He had to forget about the dozens of red dots over his skin from the multitude of bug bites. He had to forget about the lack of hygiene at the restaurants he would frequent. The poor quality of the teeth of the people he would pass. He almost burned his spellbook with a candle one evening. He missed wireless communication. Everything he learned came from books decades or centuries old. A newsreader shouted out worthy daily events from atop a box a block down. It hardly measured to a five-minute surf on a computer in Angel, and even then it was limited to Limshau.

It had been three months. His savings wouldn't last another three. He could return to Angel. Would he take over Chen's biblio, a village forever enclosed by a cage of technology? Would he eventually snap and run back to his refrigerator and computer? What a waste of these years if he did that.

He was so sure of the choice when he made it. He would leave to be a great wizard, bringing down the pillars as the caravan guard had said. The scar itched again. He avoided the thought that a vacation was the better option. Ride the ETV free of disruption to Salvabrooke. Enjoy the hospitality of playful gimfen. Return with stories and souvenirs to share with others.

On a Saturday evening in late August, Aiden was struck by an illness he hadn't encountered before. There was no lab-tested medicine proven in test trials to ease his nausea. He began to sweat and shiver in his bed. He drifted through levels of consciousness, blurring his dreams with waking delusions. He lost the strength to move. There was no phone to call and no one checked up on him. Aiden believed it was from food--that unsightly looking falafel he should have skipped. The chicken didn't look properly stored. After that came back up, he fainted upon his bead. When memories of his mother came to him, her ghostly form passing through the walls of his apartment, Aiden couldn't help but cry.

* * *

"Ander Boek..."

"Are you speaking to me?" Aiden asked. His head rose from the pages. He looked across to the Limshau custodian orbiting the wing. Aiden grew accustomed to their patrols. He hardly gave them notice anymore.

"What?" replied the soft, passive voice. Aiden locked eyes with the speaker. She wore the white Limshau kawabari but hardly looked old enough to have earned the leather. It had been four months but Aiden recognized her instantly from the caravan inspection.

"What?" Aiden asked.

She raised her arm to apologize. "My apology," she said, "Continue reading." Her voice barely carried over the flapping pages from other tables. It was late. Paper screens supported by thin sticks of bamboo covered gas fed torches, diffusing their light.

"You're Raven?" he asked, unfortunately.

"You know this."

Aiden held up a finger. "Yes. That wasn't a question. That was me remembering. You addressed me."

"I apologize for interrupting sir. Continue your--"

"There's no need to apologize. Eight hours reading anything...I could have sworn I heard you say something." Aiden closed the book on his finger.

"No more than mumbles best kept quiet. I never meant them for your ears, sir. I repeat my apology."

Aiden smiled and leaned back. "Now, you have to tell me. Curiosity will haunt me to distraction." Aiden was not going to let this moment pass without a fight.

"It truly was of no importance," she said but didn't depart. Aiden didn't flinch as he smiled back. She shook her head. "I said." She paused. "Another one."

"Another what?"

"Told you it was of no importance."

"Now you must explain it"

"Must I?"

"You have somewhere to be? Indulge me."

She leaned forward and rested her knuckles on the back of the chair in front. She appeared to gather strength to reveal some deep personal demon but only said, "Book." Aiden raised his eyebrows and waited for

her to clarify. He nudged a chin forward to encourage. "Another book."

Aiden glanced down and fluffed out his bottom lip. "It's a library--"

"I know--"

"Comes with books. Part of the appeal." Aiden tried to not sound arrogant. He balanced that fine line between conceit and charisma.

"I was making an observation at the assemblage of books you have been reading in the past few weeks--"

"Weeks?" Aiden was slightly elevated. Her eyes dropped slightly.

"And as I mentioned. I did not intend intrusion."

"Please." Aiden raised his hand. "Sorry--wait. Finish your thought."

"The books selected appear not random. You seek something specific."

"True."

"I imagine you are seeking the arcane arts. However, you avoided books explaining the Pleroma, meaning you know them already."

"Also true."

"You took out Expedition to North Tower. After, the Ars Pravus--"

Aiden raised a finger. "Don't look too much into--"

"Though you do not seem the type to want to remove my organs to extend your own life. You took out The Seven Paths of Wisdom, before that the Myre Codex, two very different tomes dealing with artifacts, both magical and otherwise. Now you keep a stack of Ravenar III's crusade accounts and a copy of the Athenaeum Manifest, both of which I have read."

"Wow." Aiden leaned forward, the charm replaced by curiosity. The charisma well dried up. "I got nothing."

"We are trained to notice such things." She pushed herself from the chair. "Have a good evening?"

"Sure you can't stay? I'd appreciate your opinion on something...related to all this."

"I am afraid not, sir." She turned and left.

Aiden leaned and bent and strained to catch her lines rounding the far corner of the aisle. They were as perfect as the day he first saw her. She had noticed him. She had remembered him. He settled back down. His mind was filled with possibilities. It was what occurred when one must visualize instead of realize. He had wished the perennial stomach knot wouldn't occur every time such an opportunity waved by unfulfilled. Rejection still stung regardless if the refuser was human or not.

Aiden saw what life did to humans after a handful of years. Would fae mindsets be so alien with decades and centuries of experience to change their outlook? Human recollection was fleeting--their brains only able to hang onto the fragments of memory. Fae ignored the menial, the minutia, and preserved anything consequential. Every loss of love, every stolen kiss, lingered for the length of their nearly endless lives. It was not hard to understand why they would keep humans at a distance. All the stories of romance, those could be the only ones. It wouldn't matter now. Aiden's discipline flopped as his mind wandered. For weeks, he'd put such thoughts out of his head.

"I will admit curiosity. Nothing more," she said, approaching from behind. He turned sharply to her. Not even the floorboards shifted or groaned to herald her advance.

She pulled the opposite chair from the table. Her movement flowed like water, nothing sudden, no jerking muscles. Nothing fell out of place. She flipped over the backrest and perched her feet atop the cushion like a predatory bird. Even her weapon, dangling from her side, came to rest without a tap. With her hollow-bones, she must have weighed less than fifty pounds. The chair didn't jostle an inch. She grabbed two pencils from a nearby container, hung out both at arm's length, and brought the ends to almost touch. Perfectly steady, the lead tips hovered point-to-point. Aiden looked amazed. Confused. He recovered and reached into his leather bag. He removed a black silk wrapping he had been keeping the stone in. He unfurled it. She looked into his hand.

"It is just a--" she started.

"No. It's not."

Raven was surprised at the relative inexpensive dark lavender, almost violet, gem resting in the clasp of four pearl-colored dragon's claws that clamped around the outer edge. The reptilian fingers were slightly embossed with letters of a foreign tongue that only glinted visible with the reflecting light.

She looked closer and noticed the movement. Glints of light jolted through the imperfections in the jewel, like currents of electricity arcing from one side of the gem to the other. It reflected no light from the torches but did mirror her face perfectly.

"What is that?" she finally asked.

Aiden finally shifted focus from the fae he had captivated to the gem he rested on the table. He looked into it and received the azure glow upon his face. "I wish I knew."

* * *

It didn't matter how tired he was. There was vigor in her smile that empowered him to remain awake. She was sitting properly now, laughing at his anecdote.

"I have heard of the power of the spell book but perhaps not so…literally," she responded. They hadn't left that spot for hours. She was sitting across the table, the amethyst between them. The sun was due to rise soon.

"It was my first goblin. Revenge for all those sleepless nights when it prowled under my bed." He tried to laugh but the pain of the experience was still there. He related the tale as jovially as possible but that couldn't soften his anxiety of the event.

Raven shook her head. "Human fairy tales are so unusual."

"How so, the fact we have stories that detail your existence without any connection between our worlds?"

"More that your stories always end up with some strange motivation on the part of the fairy. They are making shoes. They are spinning yarn into gold. Trading in human children. I have read these stories. I share my ancestor's confusion upon returning to the world...to discover the fictions told about them by your ancestors de-

spite never encountering them."

"Fairy tales aside, we got a lot right."

"I suppose," her eyes diverted to the window as a cusp of glow appeared over the outer wall, "but it makes one wonder if our existence only came about from your imagination. Perhaps our history is only a fabrication we embrace to justify our lives."

"Wouldn't it be an insult to know you've been living a false life?"

Raven glanced at the thousand tomes lining the one wall beside her. "We live too long to remember every moment. Mine already has gaps. For my elders, their losses are measured in eons. Who is to say those are not the unintended mistakes of a lethargic writer?"

Aiden firmed his lips, not wishing to be argumentative. "I prefer to subscribe to echalogical influence--"

"How our history inspired your fiction through an immeasurable, ethereal thread. A term your people invented with little evidence to reinforce it--"

"If that were true." Aiden paused, realizing his escalation. He softened his reply as she turned to him. "If that were true, then it only leaves two explanations. It's all a coincidence... or it's all a lie... and I don't much like either one."

Raven nodded. "Your people prefer the latter."

"You mean techans or humanity?"

"The former. Of all humans, we know little of those still embracing their machines. What I would not give to see inside one of those cities. It would truly be a noteworthy event for a custodian."

"They would probably shoot you if you tried."

"You speak so negatively. Your city is safe. It prospers despite what surrounds it. Would you not prefer it with your people?"

"My people long for a time when the only things that frightened them were themselves and Bronze Age myths. I weighed the options and chose the one with dragons." She offered an angelic smile. Aiden attempted to changed topics, "Did you find their mother?"

"No, the puggs are still at large. We could not locate their mother."

Aiden could tell she wasn't happy about that fact. He didn't know if it was something he should push about. He tried another approach. "I thought custodians always wore black when they leave the city. At least, that's what I read."

"It was my first outing."

"Really...ever outside Limshau?" Aiden leaned in.

"Yes. It was a test."

A year or two could mean decades for a damaskan. She was barely into her adulthood in fae years. They don't place the stigma or attraction on ages like humans but he was still not about to ask her age. His guess was under a hundred. She was the same as him, a desire to leave her world, to encounter what was only read about. He tried to stop himself from smiling. "That's..." He wanted to say amazing or wonderful or delightful but didn't want to share with her their common ground, at least not yet. "Did you pass?"

"It is not about passing. It is about finding a cause. Custodians do not leave their city unless there is reason."

"Are you...looking for one?" Aiden teased.

She obviously knew where he was going. "Actually, I am."

He nudged to the rock. "I don't suppose this counts?"

She gave it a glance. "Assuming the answer does not lie here. You believe this to have that much significance?"

He wanted to tell her about his watch but something prevented him. "All evidence points to it having some."

"And have you used up all the resources in this city? There are a hundred million books, manuscripts, and scrolls on shelves in this city."

"I have it down to the artifact wing." Aiden picked the rock and began to wrap it in a black-stained silk. "It's not some random magical rock to light rooms with." Despite him doing it for the past four hours.

"Religious?"

"Maybe, but I don't think so," Aiden replied, though still not sure. He hadn't fully eliminated the prospect. "I know the dragon Amethyst--"

"That was not his real name."

"I can't pronounce his real name and there's that one quote where he says everyone is wrong so everyone is right, so...regardless, they use tiny amethyst crystals shaped into marbles which are hung around a neck."

Raven reached for his hand to grab a tuff of the silk cover. A finger brushed over one of his, sending shivers up his arm, through his back, and into regions that prevented rational thought. She opened his hand to point at the stone. "It appears to have loops."

Aiden's mouth cracked as his mind still hung on the touch. "It's..." he tried to focus, "kinda large for any human or elf to keep around their neck."

She released his hand. "Perhaps a dragon wears it," she replied. "It is a dragon god."

He folded it back up. "I never thought of that."

"I never asked how you found it."

Aiden opened his pack and returned the amethyst. "Before the caravan." He met her eyes, which was hard for him to do. "Where we met, I was lost between Angel and Antikari. I found it in a wreck."

"A wagon?"

"No...a techan aircraft, going to or from Angel. Maybe from another bastion. If so, it would have been a long journey." As Aiden reminded himself of the memory, the facts about it concerned him again, questions which were not pressing.

"Why would it be carried by technology?" She repeated Aiden's thought. "Why would your people care?"

Aiden detached himself from studying Raven's curves. Whenever she leaned forward, she bent her back in a way to push out her middling chest. She did it unintentionally. "I don't know...I think that's one of the reasons why I know it's important."

"You recognized it to be an aircraft."

"Yes."

She rested her elbows on the table. Aiden avoided getting too close and moved back. "Born in bastion walls but with eyes for magic," she said. "I told you there would be a tale. Seems beyond even coincidence."

"I don't subscribe to fate, if that's where you're going."

She leaned back. "If you have reached an impase with

books, perhaps we should ask an authority."

Aiden heard very well what she said. He rolled the memory around before asking, "Are you helping me?"

"Do you wish it?"

It was the most jovial smile Aiden had managed since leaving Angel, more so than the caravan, more so than seeing Limshau for the first time.

"I very much do."

* * *

"Ellslaanee." Aiden sat alone in his apartment. A few of the lanterns were still burning. He was tired but the strain was keeping him up. He knew there was a snake of smoke that could ease someone to sleep but Aiden wanted the pillars. Those spells that struck fear in opponents. That level of bravado fit for fiction. He remembered visuals of wizards standing on mountain peaks, commanding the waves and wind. He wanted to embrace that role. Although he could never beckon the coming of storms, he could one day create the elements of nature, gifting it with intelligence purely from his will. It was Pleroma, the language of dragons, given to the fae and stolen by humans. Possess the word in written form in the way passed down from the first age. In its utterance bring forth all knowledge of the word. It was harder than the boasters had claimed. Chen's gift of the spark floated over the book, trying its best to help in the only way it knew how. Even creating his own had been denied to him.

"Ellslaanee." He picked up the word before leaving Angel, the third one after the sleep snake. He hadn't tested that one either. Aiden gritted his teeth and closed his eyes.

"Ellslaanee." Would it be a rolling ball of lightning or a spider with spindly legs of electricity? Would it be large or small? Maybe his uncertainty was the reason he couldn't pull it off.

"Ellslaanee." He checked the pronunciation in his totem. It was right. The word had been copied properly, every curve and angle. The ink was the right chemical composition. The exact measurements required made it appear a science, save for the last part, the part where the universe changed to obey your command.

"Ellslaanee!!"

He threw his book on the floor. A wizard was useless without a repertoire.

* * *

"Does the pursuit of truth without finding it have purpose?" Paraerra asked slowly, almost at a whisper. Again, the class was on the floor. Again, Aiden was sitting beside his teacher. Again, the desks were pushed back and everyone's eyes were closed. "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 opened his eyes and looked over the group. He rubbed 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 departed. Aiden remained in range of Paraerra, waiting for the last student to leave before addressing the teacher.

"Doctor Paraerra?"

"Yes, Mr. Ka'moo," Paraerra joked.

"It's Camus, sir. You know that."

"I love the irony. You were late again today."

"Yes. Yes, I apologize."

"At least you're punctual with your tardiness. How can I help you?"

Aiden followed Paraerra as he filed several books into his pack and began to leave. "You mentioned a while back that the universe is controlled by people and not God."

They left the room and walked down the white stone hallway. "One lecture, I implied such a thought. Another contradicted that. As is everything, we filter out unwanted ideas."

"But on that, would it mean there's absolute free will for the first time, right?" The long hallway had no torches and the only light came from beams of bright afternoon through round windows.

"Assuming that God existed at all. I've mentioned scientific determinism as well, another idea this new world resists. Perhaps it's through our will for free choice that we're breaking unbreakable laws."

As they exited into the courtyard, Paraerra's bicycle awaited him leaning against ivory walls of the school. It wasn't secured. "So there are still coincidences," Aiden countered, "no matter how paradoxical the events may be."

Paraerra stopped and turned to face him. "Aiden, mankind hates coincidence. We're biologically compelled to find patterns around us. Our drive to explain everything when we knew nothing was how we created God. Chance occurs every second of every day. Where are you going with this?"

"When does coincidence become inconvenient, when the odds of converging and similar events become impossible to explain with luck—like echalogical influence? A fantasy world nearly identical to our literature enters our world. Literally leaping off the page. Our only explanation using logic is an unproven, undetectable echo which somehow resonates through sixty million years of evolution."

"…Until minds advanced enough to understand that echo listened. Would you prefer that we're all living in a fabricated reality?" Aiden eyes fell off to stare at the dirt. "If so, would that change anything? Dreams feel real to the dreamer, so who cares for causes? You worry because a fabrication assumes a fabricator." Aiden looked at the entrance of the court and noticed Raven resting back on a bench surrounded by a modest orchard of oversized olive

trees, their immense crowns looming over her. The mammoth dragon-shaped porcelain fountain at the center of the court sat between them. She admired the fluttering white blossoms in the light wind.

"When this city puts forward a vote," Paraerra continued, "the majority of people vote the same. Humans may look similar but genetically, we're practically clones. Coincidence? Of course not because we know why this is. Everything that could possibly occur in the universe will always happen at least once."

Aiden responded but kept his eyes on Raven. His lowered his tone. "Then those singled out for greatness are only what…fortunate?"

"Are we to break into the rhetoric that everyone is special. If we all were, then none of us would be. For every individual rising to greatness, a thousand others aspire for the same but fall short. You worry that you'll be the failure and not the exception?"

"My life began with a moment so unbelievable as to happen to so few."

"Have you turned?" Paraerra shifted to a direct query.

It took Aiden off guard enough to move his eyes back to his teacher. "What?"

"Have you cast a spell? Anything?" Aiden opened his mouth but couldn't muster the strength to answer. Paraerra nodded. "Unlike the fae, we're given the choice. Embrace magic or the machine. You have to want it. Cast a spell, bond with a fae, be born gifted, or depend on an item blessed with it. The moment you utter that word and create something from nothing, there's no going back. You sure this is the path you want?"

Aiden returned his eyes to the bench and saw Raven still resting on her back, enjoying the warmth of the afternoon. Aiden turned back to Paraerra. "Yes. Thank you, Doctor." He bolted off to intercept the custodian. Paraerra watched him leave but said nothing.

Raven's attention shifted as Aiden rose into view. "Greetings," she said as Aiden huffed huge lungfuls after crossing the short distance.

"Hi," he managed.

She looked past him to Paraerra still staring back. "Pandering for extra credit?" she teased.

"It's hard to fail a course about the unimportance of the universe."

Raven threw her legs up, flipping herself quickly atop the bench, then bounced off it to the ground. "Are your studies of the arcane bearing fruit?"

"Not as much as I hoped. And you?"

"I think I have located a lead to follow."

"Fantastic, where?"

"The religious wing."

Aiden sighed. "Been there, there was nothing."

"Not a book. I talk of a man...highly regarded as an expert in the field."

"Dammit," Aiden exhaled. She looked confused at the reaction. She expected gratefulness. "Just was hoping to avoid another fanatic."

* * *

"I wondered if you had a moment to talk."

Mahan assessed him quickly. "Look at you. How long have you been out?"

"Out?"

"Bastion."

Aiden intended concealment but found the truth emerging. "Four--Five...Five months."

"That was my guess. No offense but your eyes are glazed like a baby from the womb. You're practically steeped in afterbirth." Mahan held out his hand. "And you are?"

Aiden accepted it. "Aiden, this is…" he released and motioned to the silent damaskan beside him. Raven smiled but kept both her hands interlocked behind her back, offering a bow. "Raven."

"Raven," Mahan repeated, also with a bow, "what's your real name?"

"Raven," she said.

"What's your elvish name?"

She paused. For a moment, she had almost forgotten. Ravenar Limshau III was the king's real name but his sister's husband elected to adopt the human title "Strongbow" to replace their damaskan family name of Kaixiu'Ooria. Centuries later, few in that family ever used that title. Their fourth child, a daughter, was given a damaskan name, which eventually turned into Raven, which she elected as her open name as well.

"Reivune," she finally said. Aiden never thought to ask. That might have helped.

"Ah," said Mahan as he bowed again. "Alissa menis, Reivune." His dialect and accent were near perfect but Raven didn't respond. Mahan smiled it off. "Yes, well, usually it works. Mahan Vaaris Farcon." Mahan grabbed his book but tapped Aiden's wrist with it. "Why do you wear a broken watch?"

Aiden twisted his arm to show the timepiece. "Well-"

"When did it happen?"

"10:03 am...July 9th. I was twelve."

"Where?"

"Angel."

"Should I ask?"

"I wouldn't bother." Aiden quickly shifted attention, "What's the book?"

Mahan smiled the deflection away. "My field manual of God. My views and how the teachings of the prophet guide me. Some reference passages to the Qur'an, Torah, Bible--"

"You're Muslim?"

"Astute."

"My apologies, I didn't know."

"My fault, I left the tag in my pocket."

"So you got into a topic defending Christianity with a Christian?"

"Seemed a proficient opponent to joust with. You a follower?"

"No longer."

"Between faiths are you? Should I break out a leaflet?" Mahan joked. Raven didn't get it. "Sincerely, have you ever read any holy books, even for their literary value?

Aiden held up his hand. "Thanks, but no. I don't read fiction anymore."

Mahan drew a pronounced smile at the remark. Aiden

was unsure why he spouted such an obvious insult. It felt almost as a reflex, one he needed to suppress if requiring the man's help. Before an apology could be uttered, Mahan gave him a modest pass with, "Ohhh…rrrrright."

Aiden quickly tried to cover his remarks without directly apologizing. "I did appreciate what you said. If God exists, it does seem foolish to attribute human qualities to him...or it."

"I only say 'he' out of habit. It's a force no one can comprehend or understand. We're as far away from understanding God's will as a germ. We're all blessed, despite the prayers you say or in what language you say them in. This goes for those pious and pagan, those human," he looked to Raven, "and those beyond."

"So we are not heathens then?" Raven asked.

"To arrogantly accuse good and thoughtful people that reject God as beyond his protection and subject to damnation is nothing short of a holocaust of the enlightened."

Raven finally smiled. She looked to Aiden, then back to Mahan. "Sanossa."

Mahan bowed. "You're welcome." He pointed to her with a bent arm and finger. "That's what I wanted to see. So hard to get a damaskan to smile. Like getting a demon to laugh." He began to pack his supplies into a pair of large leather saddlebags.

"Where are you from?" Aiden asked. "You're far too smart to be a village priest."

"Not sure if that's a compliment or an insult to village priests," Mahan answered.

"I wasn't trying to be rude."

"Didn't take it as such, my friend." Mahan closed up the bags and threw them over his shoulder. "Taskin Kada."

"From Abidan, that explains a lot."

Mahan furrowed his brow. "Does it now?"

"It explains the adoration of its past king."

"The respect is there." Mahan then added sarcastically under his breath, "Adoration…feels a bit much."

Aiden stepped closer as he changed topics. "Rumor is you're the resident expert on religious artifacts. I was wondering if you had time to look at something. Do you have somewhere to be? A flock waiting for you?"

"I'm not an Imam. Far better men and women carry that responsibility. I have enough issues with my own direction." Mahan loosed the bags from his shoulder and let them slide to his grasp. "Some consider me a holy man but I'm no cleric, missionary perhaps."

"That denotes a mission," said Raven.

"Thus, the lack of direction."

* * *

"It's amethyst," said Mahan plainly upon looking at it. Aiden had rested it on the same table the crowds had gathered around earlier.

"That's amazing, good, thank you. That's all I needed." Aiden responded sarcastically.

"Not the gem, the faith. The dragon god. It's their symbol."

"I checked. Their's don't resemble this."

"Not in books but who's to say?"

"Look closer."

Mahan picked up the rock and stared at the storm within it.

"Enchanted. Also not unique...admittedly rare. I expect you found this under honorable conditions?"

"I wouldn't be so foolish to show you if it wasn't."

"Well, that's a weighted statement." Mahan placed the rock back down. "I will add it's peculiar. Those worshiping dragons don't often go to this extent. The pleroma is somewhat alarming. The symbol is a matter of faith and the dragonspeak is used in the study of magic that renounces god."

"Was that a slight in my direction?" Aiden asked. He also took note Mahan's reference to the language of dragons. Only those aware of its power referred to the written form as Pleroma.

"Heavens no." Mahan looked at the artifact again. He brought his eye close to the gem and let the light dance over his vision. He pulled it back and sighed. "You're right on that. This is no symbol of faith, but it's made to resemble one." He placed the artifact back on the table. "The dragonspeak on the fingers indicate it was made by a mage, but they didn't enchant it. A magic jewel glows but never with such a….furnace. It would be a natural blessing. Someone found it and clasp it to be worn. The fingers are silver, meaning a holy dragon, so I doubt it's cursed. The attention to inscribing the letters tells me a wizard. The competency means a good one. So it's valuable."

"I assumed so."

"Evidently not since you paraded it so openly on the table. It's worth more than your spellbook," Mahan replied, nudging a chin to the fae, "or even her fresh off the train in Tobias." Aiden glanced at Raven, who didn't respond to the remark. "Notice the gash?" Mahan added.

Raven and Aiden leaned forward to look closer. Aiden spun the rock on its back to stare at the letters on the fingers.

"Gash?" Aiden asked.

"I know little about Pleroma," said Mahan as he pointed, "but that one looks odd."

Aiden and Raven almost tapped heads. He didn't acknowledge her. Aiden caressed the mark in question. The draconic letters were raised but one specific had a faint recess.

"Yes, I had seen that," said Raven, "but I gave it no mind."

"That came from a sword hit, a powerful one." Mahan sat down on the chair, leaning back. "So…you would have to look for an incident where at least a competent mage faced against a swordmaster… and potentially lost.

"Sure it was a sword?"

"Perhaps an axe."

"Not a mistake in the forging?"

"No."

"Not a careless drop from a height?"

"No. To mark magic this way requires magic to do so, and I can guarantee the creator was human."

"Why do you say?" Aiden asked.

"Chaparrans would wrap it in wood. Tenenbri wouldn't be so ornate. Gimfen have no competent wizards.

Damaskans have no imagination." He glanced at Raven. "Sorry, it's true."

"It is true," she replied, matter of fact.

"Narros would employ some rare element along with it, magnarros or angelite. That leaves laudenian and humanity. And it's not laudenian."

"Why?" Aiden asked.

"Because you wouldn't still have it. This leaves a human mage, and there are few of those on this continent."

Aiden was amazed at the presentation. "You are knowledgeable."

"You should see me cook."

"It could come from Lauropa," Aiden continued.

"Quite the assertion."

"It was in the shadow of a crashed aircraft from the east. Not much in that direction. I heard about bastions out that way, even beyond the ocean."

"That makes things more complicated. More wizards there than here. Hapura, Piotre Raczik, Torfin Gend…" Mahan realized it and said it again. "Torfin Gendron."

"Torfin died in a duel against the fanatic knight Wilhelm Myre," Aiden answered.

"Wield swords do they?" Mahan goaded lightly.

Aiden shook his head in amazement and grew a large smile to the cleric. Mahan, despite Aiden's opinion on religion, had impressed him greatly. "God dammit--"

"Hey," Mahan snapped. He wasn't angry, just vexed.

"Sorry."

"You're forgiven."

"This could be stormcage then?" Raven asked.

"Torfin's amulet," Mahan declared.

Aiden held the artifact to the light. "God da…" he stopped and then slipped, "darnit."

"You know that's not better."

"Sorry," Aiden replied, sheepish.

"You're forgiven."

* * *

Aiden closed the huge steel bordered book bigger than a church bible with a thud loud enough for everyone to hear. They sat in a new branch minutes into a new day. The wing was near empty. A single damaskan librarian read quietly in a corner. She was pure blood, slender and beautiful. Her dark hair was neatly tied behind, revealing her long neck. The horn-rimmed bifocals sitting on her sharp nose drew Aiden's initial attention. Fae had perfect eyesight. When the book slammed closed, a gust of wind threw Raven's hair back in a quick puff. Mahan sat opposite to her.

"So that answers that," said Aiden.

"Not in the slightest," answered Mahan. "Stormcage was found 'as is'. All Torfin did was shroud it in prestige. This stone was significant long before he was arrogant enough to claim it as a trophy."

Raven pushed herself back from the table and stood.

"What is it?" Aiden asked her.

"I cannot imagine the account used an eagle as a metaphor for an aircraft. I am going to see the librarian. Perhaps there is more." She stepped away, then turned back to look at Mahan. "Did you want anything?"

"Sanossa," he replied, "Tea, local will suffice." She nodded, turned, and left. Mahan threw a hand to Aiden quickly as she walked away. "Nothing?"

"Tea with cream, I already know," Raven added without turning to face them. Aiden smirked. He moved to another smaller book nearby. He opened it and started reading.

Mahan kept both eyes on Raven until he was confident he was out of her attuned ears. He leaned towards Aiden. "Wow," he whispered a shout, emphasizing the outer letters.

Aiden looked up and nodded. "Yeah, I know." He faked nonchalance.

Mahan leaned back and muttered casually, "Doesn't say much, does she?"

Aiden looked back down to the book. "Only when it's important."

"Common among the damaskans, I've heard. Never seen a custodian that young. I mean she can't be more than a hundred."

"Ninety-five."

"How long have you known her?

"Few weeks...a bit more."

"Shall I inquire as to the details of you two?"

Aiden glanced to Mahan and squinted slightly. His head tilted as he said, "Nothing?"

"Are you asking something?"

Aiden gathered his thoughts and repeated. "Nothing."

"That's a lot of nothing, my friend."

"Are you probing for a prospect?"

"Certainly not. I wouldn't think of it. I keep my eyes away from those viewed by my friends. It's a big world with many options. I have never needed to betray anyone over matters of flesh." Aiden appreciated how quickly Mahan was to trust. The honesty of those outside of bastion walls was refreshing. Fae abhorred lying. Those living in their cities took to following that principle as best they could. Since Aiden returned the courtesy, he could count Mahan as a friend as quickly as Mahan had proclaimed it.

"Isn't fornication a sin with you?"

"A sin is an act that damages yourself, others, or the society you live in. Why should God care what we indulge in if it doesn't go against the pillars my faith rests upon or the morals I stand by based upon the nobility of virtue. Love is what it is."

"Still seems a personal interpretation of words with a clear view on that sort of thing."

"It's poetry, my friend. Not an owner's manual. It's a product of its era and thus adapts with our growing morality. Never have I allowed its politics to corrupt my views." Mahan paused. "What is it?" he responded to Aiden's stare.

"I always thought there was no room for grey in this world, no balance. You're either a fanatic or an atheist, a scientist or a priest. Both extremes swear there's no compromise."

"Intolerance isn't just bound to religion. Science can never disprove God and faith can never disprove science."

"There are many that disagree."

"Such is there choice."

"The prophets in these books do preach some pretty awful things, executions for misdemeanors."

"Things change."

"Doesn't look like it. Not where I'm from." Aiden went quiet.

"Perhaps not in the way you intended. Your city depends on rules for science and society. It grows advanced by building upon that foundation. Those cannot change. Faith is another case entirely. Out here, there is no stability. It changes on a whim as easily as we do in our dreams."

"Out here, I can be what I want to be."

"Also true. You can bend whatever rules you wish in your favor."

"Just as people bend their dogma in their favor."

Mahan paused, letting the insult drift by unacknowledged. "Point taken. I see your kind occasionally seeking adventure outside their cities, to experience a world known only in stories. Not much time passes before they realized there's no climate control, no computer networks, no digital music players, no cellular phones. The fantasy fades quickly and most run back under the sheets." Aiden didn't comment. "You starting to regret it?"

Aiden couldn't muster an honest answer. He knew the pursuit of this recent truth distracted him from remembering the reality of the past few months. He refused to acknowledge it. "Not going to say it wasn't difficult."

"But I still see delusions rooted behind those eyes. Still hoping it's a fiction you have some control over." Mahan pointed with his pupils to Raven's distant back. "They may be exotic, but they are also costly, and those seeking courtship are not aware of the hardships to come. I hope you do not linger on this pursuit in some last desperate attempt to realize your dream. Especially considering a damaskan."

"Damaskans have the highest ratio of half-breeds."

"Seek to breed, do you?"

"Just making the argument, pairings occur--"

"There may be more half-breeds in Limshau than anywhere else but they still occupy an extremely small portion of this city. Damaskans have shields that would take a suitor years to chip away. I'm not going to dissuade you. I'm the authority on believing in something without evidence." Mahan smiled. He wanted to push the irony, but didn't. "However, there are shortcuts."

"Shortcuts?"

"Fae establish relationships through shared experiences. The more memorable the event, the more receptive they become. Did you meet her in battle? Was your initial encounter noteworthy enough to draw interest if you told it to a crowd?"

Aiden took a minute to think, realized the truth, and sighed. "Not really," he finally said.

"Shame."

* * *

Certain volumes were deemed too valuable to be exposed to the elements. They sat under glass. Though the founder of the kingdom, whose name carried with the capital, never agreed to clasp locks on books, some volumes were simply too rare to be handled. Aiden passed his eyes over Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies and a 42-line Gutenberg bible, the latter one of only three known to have survived. Only the keeper was allowed to open these books and read from their pages. It was a respected position in Limshau to sit behind the desk in the towering cathedral of old books. It was the closest approximation most damaskans had to church. Attricana was covered by a thick layer of rain-laden clouds. Night hadn't fully set, leaving a dim orange glow over the distant outer wall. The cathedral bordered on the gothic. Inside, the circular nave carried up to the stone supports of the roof. A path orbited around the perimeter of the room, rising up storey by storey. Single displays of books sat in exhibits awaiting one's willing trek up the long climb. Like stations of the cross, oversized single-page excerpts of these books hung between the displays. The keeper sat at her alter of knowledge at the center of the nave.

Raven approached in the lead. She held her hands at her sides and bowed with her head down. "Allasennis frellissa. Reivune Kaixiu'Ooria keris vanna," she greeted her. When the keeper stood, she towered over them all. She was not damaskan. She looked almost human with subtle points to her ears covered by a healthy growth of black hair coiled into braids and running down her back. She was inches taller than even Aiden but still as thin as Raven. Her garments were white, loose, and regal. Aiden had remembered laudenians having a phobia of touching the ground, preferring their lives in the sky. They were the oldest fae, the fewest and the fading.

The keeper returned the bow with a hand to the heart. "Annia Kaixiu'Ooria, guis lore fanna."

Raven turned to the others and translated. "I told her we needed to see a catalogue or a reference of all books that date to Terros. She explained that most of those tombs were written by her people and they divulge their knowledge to no one. The ones here are exceptions, written by others."

Aiden raised a brow. "Wow. You said all that?"

"And damasian is the easier tongue to learn. I also explained the motivation behind the request."

"We can trust her on that?" Aiden was not aware of the offense he was making in questioning the discipline of a keeper.

"There is no greater confidence I can place in any other creature on this world."

The first book they stopped on their expedition up the tower was Thalagos Monarch. The narros were all about magical things, rings and swords mostly. It was a steel spined book with a stone cover. Aiden was amazed the keeper could even open it. She had read every tome in this church, including the human volumes on the base level. The books got older as they climbed.

"Nothing with amethyst," Raven translated. "Narros do not often go for jewels. They prefer items of magic that empower their fortitude. Steel, iron, angelite, magnarros."

The second book was the Kakodomarkia, the only Limshau book written by a demon. It talked about the

rigid and compulsively complicated class structure of the perfectly ordered society of Kakodomania, the realm of black glass that emanated from the gate of Ixindar. It mentioned the dragon god Amethyst but only in reference to his mirror, the formless intelligence known only as Mengus. The keeper warned the others to avoid touching the book, a task the keeper had hardened herself to.

"Aclara gossina drasago," the keeper announced upon approaching the next exhibit, half way up the spire.

"Here are the Gospels of Drasago," Raven interpreted, "the bible written by dragons, split into five volumes. Aurannis, Greka, Kelto, Lynissa and Lazarus."

Mahan smiled as he followed behind her. "That's not exactly true. The Aurannis volume was removed by Lazarus. Greka and Aurannis were both Holy Dragons. Aurannis was the superior writer but they chose to endorse the Gospel of Greka."

Raven spun around to face him. "It is still up for debate. I consider it canon."

"Garafara. Yanayaris soosan. Lazara Enoc janna serra." the keeper interrupted as she opened the silver encrusted book with bosses of animated tails and talons swimming around.

"Book of Lazarus, the dragon king," Raven said. "It will speak of Amethyst, the first one. She reminds that dragons prefer spheres...it dominates their religion, their culture. Everything circular, the snake eating the tail--that sort of thing. All that they create, from artwork to artifacts, were forged from nothing. So with them, the sphere would be glass, a mirror or a pearl, pure, simple. Jagged chunks of rock are not their way." Her tone dropped. "The other exhibits further up are only excerpts and images of lost books, not the books themselves."

The keeper flipped through the pages faster than any human could read. She finally closed the book after her search. "Enaser talasa."

"Sanossa," Raven expressed her gratitude. The keeper returned on her path back to the ground. She did so slowly as the feeling of cold earth unsettled her. She was anxious to help anyone that required her to climb. Raven turned back to Aiden. She attempted some mild sense of compassion. "I am sorry, but I doubt this item was created by a dragon. If it was not created by them, there are few other options."

Aiden was not relieved by the disappointment. His eyes fell off hers. Mahan voiced the unfortunate truth. "Despite its impressive appearance, that may be all it is."

"Dammit," Aiden snapped, resting himself back onto the railing.

"It's still a rare find. Why the melancholy?"

"I'm just...I don't know." Aiden shook it off. "You're right...of course. It's just a rock."

"I believe we were all hoping for more, an adventure analogous to fiction."

Aiden gasped and arched his head, looking at but ignoring the impressive architecture of the nave's ceiling. "You know I left my city expecting a fantasy. Adventure, sights... stuff I could only read about." His head fell back down to look at them. "Every time I turn a corner, something reminds me of what I am. In the end, it was just a rock, and I'm just a failed mage with aspirations of distinction. I guess we can't all be heroes of the age."

Raven kept her cold stare but behind it, she started to understand. Mahan stepped forward with a hand on his friend's shoulder. "I won't quote scripture Aiden, but it looks like your path is distinct already. It may just not be the story you wanted to tell."

Aiden lifted himself from the railing and opened his pack. He snatched the rock and rolled it around his palm, feigning apathy the best he could. He held it out to an accepting elvish hand. "Either way, you can have the rock. I am a poor warden for an item such as this."

Raven was going to have none of this and pushed the rock back to his palm. "No," she said. "I think this is more important. I wanted the quest as well, a worthy obsession to claim."

Mahan stepped between the two of them. "Raven," he said, "there is nothing to back that. The keeper's opinion is respected. We'll take the rock to the appraisers tomorrow. You don't need a motivation if you want to go...just go. Find incentive along the way." He nudged to Aiden. "Aiden followed it through the best he could...more than anyone should ever hope. Finding stormcage is quite the feather. It's something I would be proud of. I know you were hoping for some proof of destiny."

"I don't believe in fate, Mahan," Aiden interjected.

Mahan turned to face Aiden and firmed his point with a finger. "No, but you believe you can create your own fantasy...write your own path...but this world is shared. We have control of our choices but not always our life. I wanted this to be more. I had a lot going for it." He reached between them and grabbed the amethyst, then addressed Raven. "This isn't mediocre. As a custodian, you can write about it. Record it and be respected for your involvement in the event." He faced Aiden. "Just because it's not the target of an epic novel doesn't detract its value. In fiction, it would be a macguffin--a worthless encouragement. Maybe the novel of your life doesn't require one."

"I just don't want to be stuck in a tragedy. I don't want to flip the page and realize I'd been wasting my time."

Mahan placed a solid arm on Aiden's shoulder. "Even the seminal works of the genre wade in cliché. If this was a high fantasy you'd found yourself in, this chapter would end in some twist, a cliffhanger. It's real life, Aiden. Let this chapter end."

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AMETHYST

DEM Dias Ex Machina

CHARACTER NAME

CLASS & LEVEL | BACKGROUND | PLAYER NAME

RACE | ALIGNMENT | EXPERIENCE POINTS

STRENGTH

DEXTERITY

CONSTITUTION

INTELLIGENCE

WISDOM

CHARISMA

INSPIRATION

PROFICIENCY BONUS

- ○ ___ Strength
- ○ ___ Dexterity
- ○ ___ Constitution
- ○ ___ Intelligence
- ○ ___ Wisdom
- ○ ___ Charisma

SAVING THROWS

- ○ ___ Acrobatics (Dex)
- ○ ___ Animal Handling (Wis)
- ○ ___ Arcana (Int)
- ○ ___ Athletics (Str)
- ○ ___ Computer Use (Int)
- ○ ___ Deception (Cha)
- ○ ___ Demolitions (Int)
- ○ ___ Engineering (Int)
- ○ ___ History (Int)
- ○ ___ Insight (Wis)
- ○ ___ Intimidation (Cha)
- ○ ___ Investigation (Int)
- ○ ___ Medicine (Wis)
- ○ ___ Nature (Int)
- ○ ___ Perception (Wis)
- ○ ___ Performance (Cha)
- ○ ___ Persuasion (Cha)
- ○ ___ Religion (Int)
- ○ ___ Sciences (Int)
- ○ ___ Sleight of Hand (Dex)
- ○ ___ Stealth (Dex)
- ○ ___ Survival (Wis)

SKILLS

ARMOR CLASS | INITIATIVE | SPEED

Hit Point Maximum

CURRENT HIT POINTS

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

Total

HIT DICE

SUCCESSES ○○○

FAILURES ○○○

DEATH SAVES

PERSONALITY TRAITS

IDEALS

BONDS

FLAWS

NAME	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE/TYPE

ATTACKS & SPELLCASTING

PASSIVE WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

OTHER PROFICIENCIES & LANGUAGES

CP

SP

EP

GP

PP

EQUIPMENT

FEATURES & TRAITS

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AMETHYST

DEM
Dias Ex Machina

CHARACTER NAME

AGE	HEIGHT	WEIGHT
EYES	SKIN	HAIR

NAME

SYMBOL

CHARACTER APPEARANCE

ALLIES & ORGANIZATIONS

ADDITIONAL FEATURES & TRAITS

CHARACTER BACKSTORY

TREASURE

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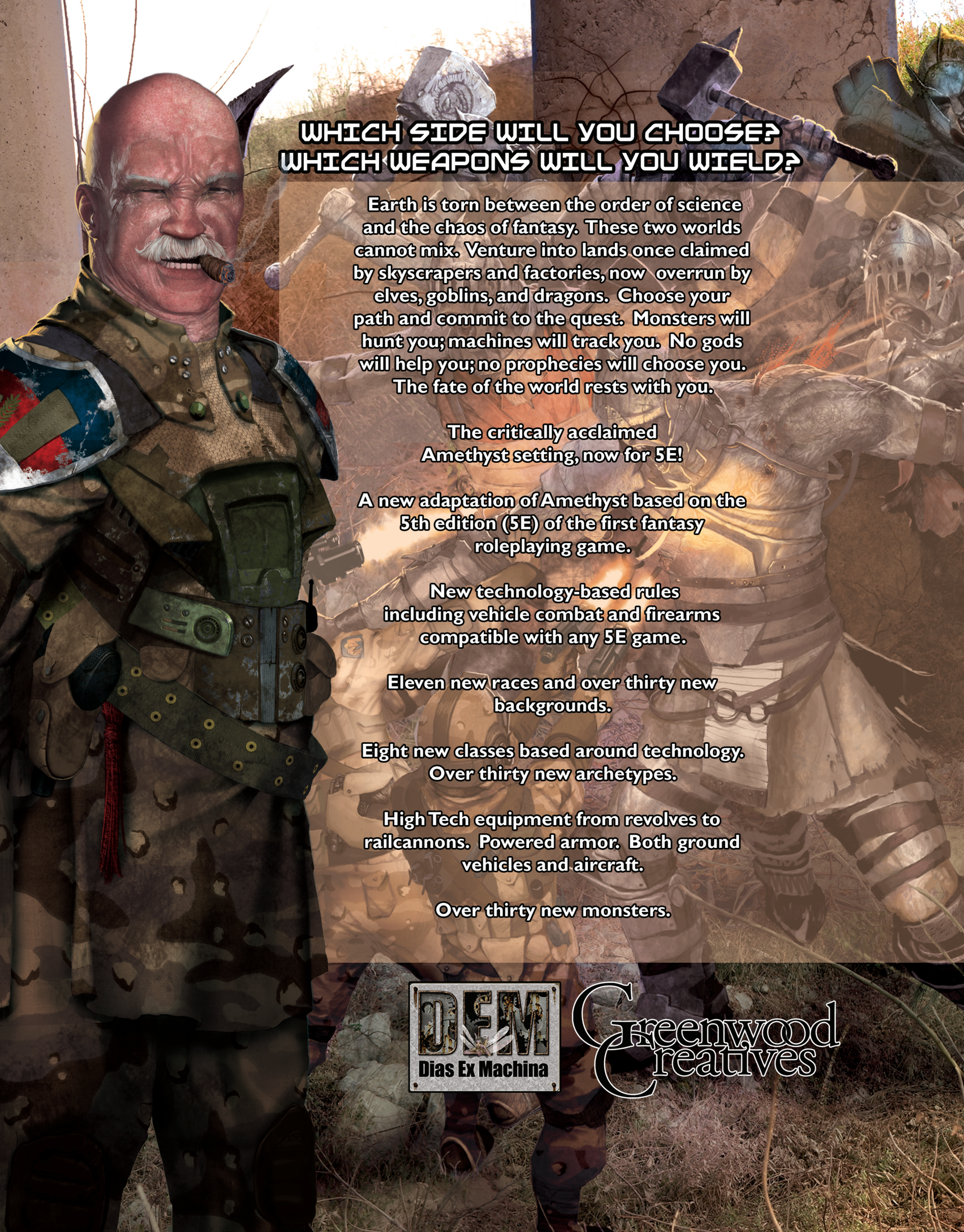

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