

forces
of a thousand worlds

PLAYING
GUIDE



EVERWAY

Playing
Guide



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Dedicated to Tessa Marie Tweet



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Jonathan Tweet contributes regularly to *Alarums & Excursions*, a monthly amateur press association devoted to discussing roleplaying games. As of spring of 1995, you can get a sample copy of *Alarums & Excursions* for \$2 (plus \$3 postage for U.S. addresses) from Lee Gold, 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066.

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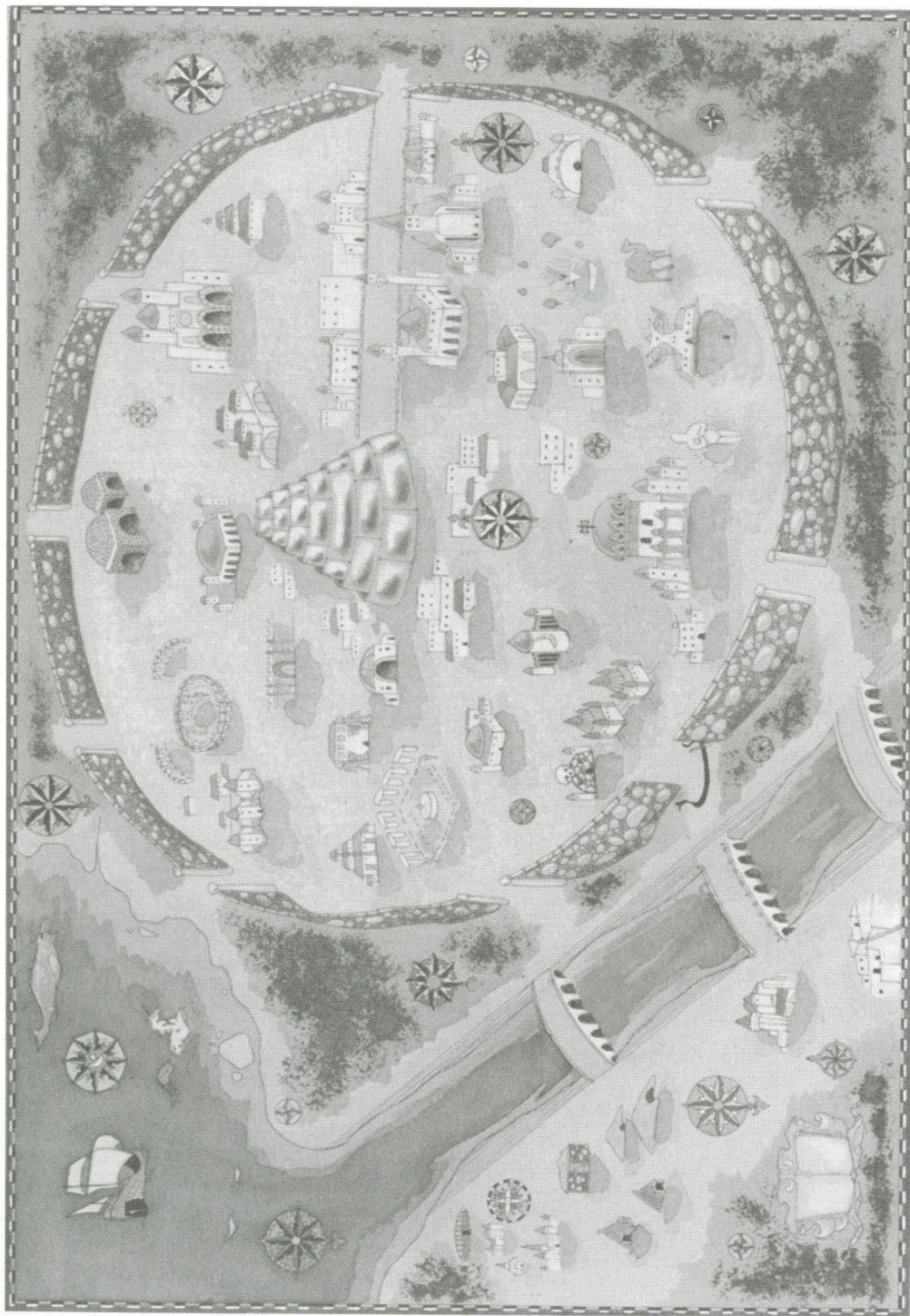
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Map of Everway





What Is Everway?

EVERWAY™ is a fantasy roleplaying game.

What Sort of Fantasy?

THE TITLE OF
THE GAME
COMES FROM
THE NAME OF
AN IMPORTANT
CITY THAT
EXISTS IN THE
GAME WORLD.
READ ABOUT
THE CITY OF
EVERWAY ON
PP. 10-29.

EVERWAY presents a world of warriors, shamans, monks, assassins, unicorns, dragons, goblins, ghosts, temples, castles, shrines, ruins, curses, spells, prayers, and quests. The heroes of EVERWAY games travel from realm to realm. Some of these lands have knights, castles, dragons, and wizards, similar to the popular settings found in many fantasy fiction and games. Other realms, however, more closely match historical places and eras, such as traditional North America, ancient Middle Eastern lands, imperial China, feudal Japan, tribal northern Europe, ancient India, the Aztec empire, African kingdoms, and so on. Still other realms contain people and cultures unlike anything that's ever existed on earth, including lands populated by societies that aren't human. The people, lands, creatures, and adventures found in a game of EVERWAY are limited only by the imaginations of those playing.

For a taste of EVERWAY'S style of fantasy, look over the vision cards, source cards, and fortune cards that come with the game set. If

you're not going to be the gamemaster, though, don't look at the quest cards. The gamemaster will show you those cards during the game.

What Is Roleplaying?

Roleplaying can mean many things, and different people have very different ideas about what is and is not included under this label. For the EVERWAY game, we mean a sort of interactive storytelling in which each player speaks out the role of an imaginary character; these characters have adventures together in worlds that are portrayed by a gamemaster.

Playing a character in a roleplaying game appeals to people in several different ways. One aspect people enjoy is the challenge. Their heroes clash with villains, and the wits of the players lead their heroes to victory. Though entirely imaginary, these victories feel great. Another enjoyable part of the game is portraying a character. Though the players are just sitting around a table, they "take on" the roles of fantasy heroes. Some heroes are braggarts, some buffoons, some diplomats, some ineffable magicians. Speaking out the role of someone different from yourself can be a lot of fun. Another aspect to the game is discovery or wonder. With the guidance of the gamemaster, you can imagine the strange and marvelous lands that your hero visits, worlds that you can interact with through your imaginary character. Taken together—setting, character, and action—these

TO SEE WHAT SORTS
OF HEROES YOU
MIGHT PORTRAY
AS A PLAYER, LOOK
OVER THE TWELVE
READY-TO-RUN
HEROES INCLUDED
IN THE BOX. IF
YOU'VE NEVER ROLE-
PLAYED BEFORE,
SEE PP. 115–116 TO
READ AN EXAMPLE OF
HOW THE GAME RUNS.

elements can produce memorable stories of which you and your character are a part.

Gamemastering is also rewarding. It requires more effort than playing a character because a game-master has to know the game, the setting, and the characters well enough to present an engaging plot and pace the action so that the plot unfolds dramatically. The gamemaster invents strange lands for the heroes to explore, exotic crea-

tures for them to encounter, weird mysteries for them to solve, and daring quests for them to undertake. Dreaming up these imaginary people, places, and things could be a pastime in its own right, but gamemasters also get to see their creations brought to life during the game.

This game set includes advice for beginning players, a special section for first-time gamemasters, and a ready-to-run quest. These features, and the design of the game itself, make *EVERWAY* suitable for people who have never roleplayed before.

In What Way Is It a Game?

Like any game, *EVERWAY* has rules. These rules let the people playing know what to expect from each other and how to interact with each other. When playing *EVERWAY*, however, nobody wins or loses. The point is to play and to keep playing, not to end play by defeating an opponent. Since nobody's victory is riding on the rules, the gamemaster is free to change them to suit play. Indeed, many of the "rules" are simply suggestions for how to play.

During the game, the gamemaster may present the players' imaginary heroes with tough challenges. The players can use their wits and insight to solve the problems that the gamemaster presents, and when they succeed, the players feel as though they've "won." No one loses, however, when the players "win." Indeed, any victory is followed quickly by another adventure and another set of challenges, so the story of these heroes and their adventures can go on indefinitely.

EVERWAY is also a game in the sense that "make-believe" is a game, an opportunity to play without concern for accomplishing this or that feat. Much of the joy of roleplaying comes from portraying a character or imagining new worlds and possibilities, regardless of whether the hero defeats the villains or is vanquished by them.

What's Here?

The *EVERWAY Game Set* includes the following things:

EVERWAY Playing Guide: This book. Gamemasters should read it, and players may read it if they wish. It covers the basics of how the game works.

EVERWAY Gamemastering Guide: A book that explains how to be a gamemaster. This book includes ideas that should be surprises to the players, so players shouldn't read it without their gamemaster's permission.

SEE P. 116 FOR AN
EXAMPLE OF THE
SORTS OF QUESTS
OR CHALLENGES
THAT HEROES CAN
FACE. IF YOU'RE
GOING TO BE THE
GAMEMASTER FOR
YOUR GROUP, YOU
CAN LOOK AT THE
READY-TO-RUN
QUEST STARTING
ON P. 31 OF THE
GAMEMASTERING
GUIDE FOR MORE
DETAILED EX-
AMPLES OF THE
SORTS OF CHAL-
LENGES THAT
HEROES FACE ON
QUESTS.

ONLY THE
GAMEMASTER
SHOULD READ THE
GAMEMASTERING
GUIDE, LOOK AT
THE QUEST
CARDS, AND LOOK
AT THE MAP OF
BONEKEEP; EACH
OF THESE
INCLUDES INFOR-
MATION THAT THE
PLAYERS' HEROES
WILL NOT HAVE.
THE GAMEMASTER
WILL SHARE THIS
INFORMATION WITH
THE PLAYERS AS
THE PLAYERS'
HEROES DISCOVER
IT DURING PLAY.

Guide to the Fortune Deck: A booklet that explains how the Fortune Deck works in the imaginary world as a tool for divination and in the real world as part of the game.

Fortune Deck: Thirty-six cards with symbols on the back. The gamemaster uses them to guide play of the game.

Vision Cards, Source Cards, and Quest Cards: Ninety vision cards (with questions on the back) help players invent their heroes. Three source cards provide some information about the city of Everway. Six quest cards are for the gamemaster to use when playing the ready-to-run quest in the *Gamemastering Guide*. Only the gamemaster should look at the quest cards.

Ready-to-Run Heroes: These twelve example heroes show what the players' own heroes could be like. Experienced roleplayers can play these heroes if they don't have time to invent their own, but inventing your own hero is a lot of fun, so don't miss it if you don't have to. Gamemasters can use ready-to-run heroes as background characters.

Hero Sheets: Full-color hero sheets for players to use when inventing their heroes, plus a black-and-white hero sheet for photocopying if you need more sheets.

Maps: For the gamemaster's reference.

Browse through these cards and books at your own pace, in whatever order you like. The

gamemaster will eventually need to read through at least most of this material, but players can start play without knowing any of it.

Glossaries

These two glossaries define terms as they are used in *EVERWAY*. Terms in the first set are used by players but not by their heroes. Terms in the second set are used by heroes and others in the game world.

Words in Game Play

The following words are for players and gamemasters to use when they talk about the game. The fictional people in the game world do not use these terms, or at least not in the game-related sense that they are used here.

Background Character: A CHARACTER that the GAMEMASTER portrays (*Gamemastering Guide*, p. 18).

Boon: Any benefit that a HERO gets from a QUEST (*Gamemastering Guide*, p. 20).

Character: An imaginary persona, either a HERO or a BACKGROUND CHARACTER.

Elements, cap: Four categories—Fire, Earth, Air, and Water—by which a CHARACTER is rated to determine that character's basic strengths and weaknesses (pp. 85–97).

Fortune Deck, cap: A deck of thirty-six cards that the GAMEMASTER uses to guide play (*Guide to the Fortune Deck*).

Gamemaster: The person who prepares and runs the QUESTS in which the HEROES participate (*Gamemastering Guide*).

Hero: A CHARACTER that a PLAYER portrays (*Chapter 2: Heroes*).

Mage: Any CHARACTER who can use MAGIC. (In the game world, people who use magic are known as “wizards,” “sorceresses,” “spirit doctors,” and so on.)

A NOTE ABOUT CAPITALIZATION: MANY OF THE TERMS USED IN GAME PLAY ARE CAPITALIZED SO THAT THEY WON'T BE CONFUSED WITH WORDS IN THE IMAGINARY GAME WORLD. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU WANT YOUR HERO TO BE A PERSON WHO USES “magic” IN THE GAME WORLD, THEN YOU, AS A PLAYER, GIVE YOUR HERO A “Magic” SCORE.

Run: To portray a CHARACTER, as in “I enjoy running magical heroes”; or to be the GAMEMASTER for a QUEST, as in “I ran a really surreal quest last week.”

Session: A meeting of the PLAYERS and GAMEMASTER to play the game. The lives and stories of the HEROES continue from session to session.

Words in the Game World

These are words that people in the fantasy world use.

Air: The element of thought, spoken wisdom, focused energy, speech, craft, skill, intellect, reason, and forethought (p. 92).

Among the Spheres: A phrase that roughly means “in the universe.”

Magic, cap: A CHARACTER'S ability to perform a variety of supernatural feats by use of esoteric knowledge or talent (pp. 99–109).

Player: A participant in the game who portrays a HERO.

Power, cap: A CHARACTER'S ability to perform a special, possibly supernatural feat (pp. 77–84).

Quest: A journey, adventure, or mission that the HEROES undertake (*Gamemastering Guide*).

Earth: The element of might, passive power, resistant integrity, endurance, security, safety, health, and fortitude (p. 90).

Elements: FIRE, EARTH, AIR, and WATER—the substances out of which the physical world is made. Each element is connected to certain aspects of the self.

Fire: The element of action, active power, forceful energy, change, strength, speed, and vitality (p. 88).

Fortune Deck, cap: A deck of symbolic cards used to divine the future (*Guide to the Fortune Deck*).

Gate: A connection between two SPHERES (p. 5).

Heaven: A phrase used to mean the gods and goddesses collectively; also divine or cosmic forces in general.

Planet: A heavenly body that moves in relation to the fixed stars. The seven visible, known planets are the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (p. 34).

Realm: An area of land or other location in which certain cosmic forces hold sway, an area with a shared story. A REALM is often a kingdom or other unified place (p. 8).

Sphere: A world, with many REALMS. Physically, almost every sphere is very much like real-life earth (p. 8).

Spherewalker: Someone who can walk through GATES to other SPHERES (p. 5 & 6).

The Tongue, cap T: The language that almost everyone AMONG THE SPHERES speaks (p. 31).

Water: The element of feelings, silent wisdom, receptive integrity, intuition, and flexibility (p. 94).

This chapter describes the spheres and realms found in the game of **EVERWAY**. Some of this information is about realms in general, but the last section describes a specific setting: the city of Everway. Players may find the information in this chapter helpful in creating their heroes, but it is not necessary for them to read this material first. Gamemasters need this information to help them create their quests.

Important Ideas

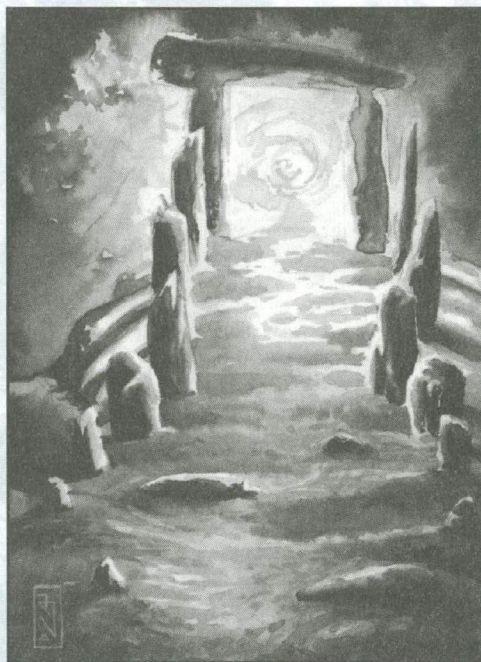
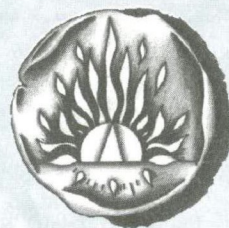
EVERWAY uses some specific ideas and terms in special ways. These ideas and terms are described here.

Gates

A *gate* is a way to move from one sphere to another. When you step through a gate, you appear on the sphere to which the gate connects.

What do gates look like? Gates are often simple arches or portals made of stone. They can also be caves, open spaces between trees, wells, waterfalls, mist-covered moors, and so on. If the people of the area know about a gate, they may have built a temple or other structure around it.

Who can go through the gates? People who are particularly sensitive to magic and unseen forces can travel through gates to other spheres. Those who travel the gates are called *spherewalkers*. There are also some spherewalkers who aren't magically sensitive but can travel the gates because of magical blessings, special training, or supernatural heritage. People who have the ability to travel the gates but never have are not called spherewalkers.



S p h e r e w a l k i n g



Generally, a character must have a strong "heroic" background characters who are not Water score to "open" a gate and to walk that spherewalkers.

gate path safely. Someone with 5 Water can



open most gates safely. A 6-Water character

can walk gates and guide another person or

two along the path. And someone who has 7

Water can guide a large group of people

safely through a gate.



Heroes are exceptions: All heroes have the

spherewalking talent regardless of their Water

scores. Remember that "hero" is the term in

EVERWAY for the character that a player cre-

ates and plays, so your hero can spherewalk

no matter what his or her Water score is.

Plenty of background characters are sphere-

walkers as well, and there are plenty of

Someone who tries to walk a gate path without

a Water score of 5 or stronger and without the

spherewalking ability cannot get the gate to

work. Such a person simply walks through the

gate as if it were a mundane portal. If such a

character goes through a gate that someone

else has opened, he or she may "fall off the

path" and be lost. Such a person may show up

at a random gate at some point in the future or

could be lost "in between" for years. Indeed,

the person may never reappear.



(See Chapter 2: Heroes to read about heroes

and Water scores.)

What does it feel like to go through a gate? Different spherewalkers describe the feeling in different ways. Many say it's like falling through the air on a starless, silent night. When traveling from one sphere to another, one moves between two places whose cosmic energies are

different. If one travels by foot, the transformation is gradual and often not even noticeable. On the other hand, if one travels between two spheres by going through a gate, the change is sudden and may bring visions related to the cosmic energies of the new sphere or realm.

How long does it take to go through a gate?

The time varies. To the spherewalker, it may seem to take only a few moments, but actually days or weeks may have passed. (Most spherewalks take about a week.) Since the sun, moon, and stars are the same from sphere to sphere, informed spherewalkers can tell how long their journeys lasted, usually simply by looking at the moon's phase.

The amount of time it takes to travel the astral path between two gates varies every time, so it's impossible to know ahead of time at what time of day one will arrive on the next sphere. Some spherewalkers, however, are attuned to certain elements or planets so that they tend to arrive at certain times. Someone attuned to the moon might usually arrive at moonrise, while someone attuned to Mars might arrive when Mars is at its zenith. Also, if a spherewalk between two particular spheres tends to be very short, say eighteen hours or shorter, the variation from walk to walk is small enough that one can roughly time one's arrival. In this example, leaving at dusk would let one arrive roughly at noon, give or take an hour or two. The longer the spherewalk is between two spheres, the greater variation there tends to be.

What happens to spherewalkers while they are between gates? The place between "earths" is impossible to understand with earthly senses. The term "astral path" is a metaphor; there is no

physical path down which one walks bodily. It seems, rather, that one's "essential self" travels to the new sphere. While "between" spheres, the spherewalker remains in sync with the planets, which are eternal and universal. Thus, if spherewalkers enter a gate at noon and step out of the opposite gate at midnight, the spherewalkers feel as though it is midnight. For instance, they are tired and ready to sleep. As the stars are linked to one's age, the spherewalker "ages" while between spheres. Fingernails and hair don't grow, but one comes closer to old age and death just the same.



How often can a spherewalker use gates? The transition to a new sphere usually causes very little discomfort, but spherewalking more than once without letting the body "settle in" between walks can be disturbing. As a general rule, spherewalkers can safely spherewalk again after

being "grounded" for as much time as they were between spheres. For example, if a spherewalker takes a week, it's best to wait another week before spherewalking again. The dangers of frequent spherewalking include weakness, disorientation, illness, madness, and even, in the most extreme cases, death.

Where did the gates come from? Legend says that the Walker made the gates while wandering among the spheres. It is said that as the Walker steps from one sphere to the next, gates are created between them.

Can a gate connect two realms on the same sphere instead of connecting two spheres?

Yes and no. A deity or a powerful magician could create a gate that connects two places on a single sphere. But the overwhelming majority of gates were created by the Walker, and they only connect spheres to other spheres.

A gate that connects two realms on the same sphere might work differently from one that connects two spheres. For instance, travel through this kind of gate might take no time or almost no time, and anyone, not just spherewalkers, might be able to use such a gate. These details depend on how the gate was designed.

Sphere

A *sphere* is an entire world. Spheres are physically similar to real-life earth, the same size and shape, with cold polar regions, a hot equatorial band, varying seasons, oceans covering most of the surface, and so on.

A sphere usually has hundreds of realms. Provided they have ships, vehicles, mounts, or other means of travel, people can travel from realm to realm all over the sphere. The only way to get from one sphere to another, though, is to travel through a gate by spherewalking. If the people in a realm know about gates, they are probably in contact with people from other spheres. Most realms, however, do not know about gates and are therefore not in contact with spherewalkers.

Are spheres planets? Yes and no. A sphere fits the *modern* definition of a planet. Indeed, spheres are a lot like the planet earth: they're enormous orbs on which life exists. The societies in the **EVERWAY** universe, however, are much more like pre-technological cultures in our world; planets are understood simply to be special kinds of stars, ones that move across the sky. (In fact, the word "planet" means "wanderer.")

The known planets are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The sun and the moon are sometimes categorized as "planets" as well.

What do people call the spheres on which they live? They usually just call their sphere "the world" or "the earth." Most people don't even know that there are other spheres than their own.

Why do all spheres have the same stars, planets, length of year, and so on? The deities created the spheres for people to live on, and they made them fit for healthy human life. That's why the spheres have fresh air, sunlight, water, plants and animals, planets, and stars. If the deities made a sphere without a planet, it would unbalance the sphere's energy. For instance, a sphere without Mars would be lacking in energy. It might be a peaceful place, but it might be so peaceful that it is lethargic.

Realms

A *realm* is an area on a sphere in which certain cosmic forces hold sway, an area with a shared story. It may encompass several kingdoms, city-states, or lands, or it can be a small area. A realm can be as big as an entire sphere, but usually realms are smaller, so that there are many realms in a sphere.

What is a border between realms like? The nature of the border between two realms depends on the realms that it separates. In many areas, wilderness lies between realms. For instance, a realm might include a city-state and the sparsely populated countryside around the city-state. People who venture far enough away from the city-state may come to unsettled land, wilderness, which may or may not be very "wild" at all. Traveling further, one comes to another area of inhabited countryside, and eventually to another city-state. This settled land and the city-state at the center are considered a separate realm from the others.

Other realms have more distinct borders, usually along geographical features, such as rivers (rivers often form the border between the kingdoms within a realm as well). Sometimes a realm is tied to a type of land, such as a faerie forest that is a separate realm from the kingdom that surrounds it. Generally, realms are culturally different from each other.

Is every kingdom a realm? No. Often a realm covers several kingdoms, especially if those kingdoms are culturally and historically tied in some way, just as a family is made up of several related people. And sometimes a kingdom contains more than one realm. For instance, there could be a conquered land in which the conquerors and their castles or cities form one realm while the native people of the countryside are essentially another realm.

How can I know for sure what the boundaries of a realm are? Many times you can't. The concept of "a realm" is usually clear and useful, but it's still just a concept, not reality itself. Different people will use the term "realm" in different ways; just remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

Are all the realms on a sphere alike? No. Realms on a sphere can be at least as different as various cultures on historical earth have been. It is possible, however, that some overriding force on a sphere gives all the realms something in common. For example, if the sun circles a sphere's equator, none of the realms will have seasons or solstices.

Spherewalkers

A spherewalker is someone who travels from sphere to sphere. Spherewalkers usually travel through gates, though some have found other means to travel from sphere to sphere.

What makes someone a spherewalker? Those who are sensitive to mystical things (in game terms, those who have high Water scores) can open the gates and walk the paths between spheres. A few other people who aren't particularly sensitive also can open and travel the gates. Different people have this ability for different reasons. Those with even a little blood of the deities can usually spherewalk, as can those sent on missions by their deities, those who have been given special gifts by spirits or faeries, those conceived or born at propitious or magical times, and so on. Often no one knows what makes spherewalkers able to travel the gates, not even the spherewalkers themselves.

Why do people spherewalk? Spherewalkers offer various answers to this question. Some are seeking new lives, others are looking for adventure, and others are after fame or other rewards. It's possible to become wealthy by trading goods across the gates, though most spherewalkers have higher purposes than profit. Most of them, however, are led by forces that they don't understand to fates that will surprise them.

Can you tell who is a spherewalker? No, there is no distinguishing mark or characteristic tied to the spherewalking ability. Still, people can sometimes guess that strangers in their land are spherewalkers. Spherewalkers generally have exceptional abilities; they may be mighty warriors, powerful wizards, or enigmatic shamans. They often stand out by being different from the natives, such as by having different clothes, features, skin colors, statures, or manners. Spherewalkers often have a broader perspective on local events because they have seen many realms and many different people.

Besides gates, how can one move from sphere to sphere? Deities, magical rituals, and powerful mystic objects can lead one from sphere to sphere. Often these means send people to specific

realms. For example, a magic talisman may bring the wearer directly back to the realm of its origin, or a vengeful magician may make a scroll that transports someone to her dungeon when it's opened. Some rituals summon people from other spheres or draw spherewalkers off their paths. For instance, a priestess may be able to summon people to her temple in times of need. The people summoned may seem random, but the laws of magic dictate that it is often spherewalkers (or potential spherewalkers) who are pulled in.

How many people are spherewalkers? It seems that very few people are spherewalkers, but no one knows the exact count. Some spheres have no spherewalkers and no knowledge of other spheres (though there may be people there who *could* walk the gates if they knew about them). Other spheres have a high number of spherewalkers, especially if people have traveled there from other spheres. In the city of Everway (see below), about one in every hundred people is a spherewalker, and that's the highest concentration known.

How do others see spherewalkers? Spherewalkers go by different names in different realms, and these names indicate some of the attitudes that the natives have toward them. These include terms like "stranger," "outsider," "ghost," and "oath-breaker." Spherewalkers are usually different from the natives in a given sphere. They may unwittingly break taboos or insult hosts. Even when they behave themselves well, they still often consider themselves somehow "above" the realms they visit, and this attitude may not endear them to the natives. On the other hand, spherewalkers can bring new knowledge, crafts, goods, and magics, and they can often solve problems that the natives cannot, so inhabitants of some realms have very good attitudes toward them.

"Everway" is
THE NAME OF
THE CITY
DESCRIBED
HERE.
"EVERWAY"
IS THE TITLE
OF THE GAME
AS A WHOLE.

Everway: The Central City

Most spheres have two gates, each leading to a different sphere. The sphere of Fourcorner, however, has at least seventy-one gates, and all of them are in the realm of Roundwander. The central city of Roundwander is Everway, to which spherewalkers from hundreds of realms come to trade, learn, and settle.

Everway can be used in several ways. It can serve as a central area where heroes from different spheres meet, as a home to which heroes return after every adventure, as a fascinating place to visit, or as a location for quests. Players may use Everway as their heroes' hometown, incorporating it into their heroes' backgrounds. (A map of Everway comes with the game.)

Outline: The Realm of Roundwander

(Every realm is characterized by a Virtue, a Fault, and a Fate. These concepts are described on pp. 75–77. Some realms are further characterized by a Usurper. This concept is explained on p. 141.)

Virtue: Autumn (*plenty*). The place is old but still active. It is past its most energetic stage but not yet into winter. Roundwander's Autumn Virtue represents not just "plenty" in terms of quantity, but also in terms of variety. The people of Roundwander present the hundred colors of a forest in fall.

Fault: Spring—reversed (*stagnation*). Roundwander is an old, old place, and the habits of a hundred generations are worn into the stone-paved pathways.

Fate: Cockatrice (*corruption vs. recovery*). The influx of new people, new magic, and new ideas

could undermine what is good about Roundwander or bring it the new energy it needs to overcome the threat of stagnation.

Usurper: The Pyramid (*order and cooperative effort*). This Usurper represents coming together, working together, balance, order, and progress. Reversed, The Pyramid means dissension, imbalance, conflict, and regress.

Deities: The people of Roundwander worship countless deities, including many whose worship was brought here by spherewalkers. The great king's family devote themselves to a deity they call "the Goddess," who is therefore especially popular among the inhabitants of Roundwander. They understand all goddesses to be manifestations of their transcendent deity.

Rule: Horizon Emerald, the great king, rules all of Roundwander from his palace in Everway, and his power is felt in surrounding realms. The Council actually has more real power than the great king.

The Land: Everway sits on the northwest bank of the Sunset River (so named because it flows west, toward the sunset), where it flows into Shimmermoon Bay. Shimmermoon Bay flows out into the Circle Sea, by which Everway is connected to numerous distant realms. Roundwander extends over irrigated fields, pastures, hills, and forests. The

weather is warm and dry most of the year, with rains and some flooding during winter and spring.

Connections: Roundwander is open to visitors from other realms. While outsiders are slow to be incorporated wholly into the society, the natives tolerate them and their unusual habits very well. On the southwest bank of the Sunset, across from Everway, is "Strangerside," where strangers are welcome to settle.

People: Roundwander is a traditional, highly ritualized, ceremonial, and prosperous society. Extended families serve as guilds or classes. The great king's scribes estimate the population at ten million, with half a million living in Everway.

Craft: The people of Roundwander, especially the Everwayans, are skilled at all endeavors, from architecture to weaving to magic, though families jealously guard their secret techniques.

Tamed Animals: Dogs, oxen, mules, horses, and elephants are common work animals. Cattle, goats, sheep, and chickens are raised for meat, milk, eggs, leather, and wool. Dogs, cats, peacocks, fish, and lizards are kept as pets.

The People of Everway

For centuries, all manner of people have come to Everway, not only from across the spheres,



but across this sphere's surface as well. People of all shapes, sizes, colors, backgrounds, and cultures mingle here. Tolerance of differences is the rule, although some groups prefer to shut themselves off from others to preserve their traditions or bloodlines.

Families

Families are the central system of ordering society in Everway. One is considered to be related by blood to all those whose birth name one shares. A child takes his mother's birth name, so one's sister's children are related to one, but one's brother's children are not. A husband takes his wife's name and becomes part of his wife's family, though it is understood that he is still related by blood to his birth family. His own children, however, are not considered to be related to him by blood, as they are born with a name different from the name he was born with.

One's name determines, generally, one's position in society. "Position" can be very different from "status," as "position" implies one's role without necessarily giving any indication of how much respect or power one has. For example, members of the Stonebreaker family build structures of stone. The family leaders are respected architects who lay out plans for temples and mansions according to astronomical alignments and secret, magical formulae. They wield significant power and enjoy much adoration. In the same family, however, there are members who work side-by-side with slaves and convicts in the quarries.

In Everway, all those who come from elsewhere on Fourcorner are called "Stranger," with the term used as a last name, as in "Firstborn Stranger." All those who come from spheres other than Fourcorner are given the name "Outsider." A Stranger or Outsider man may marry into an Everway family, taking his wife's name, but a woman cannot. If she wishes to

integrate fully into Everway society, the best she can do is arrange for her sons to marry into Everway families, and to encourage her daughters to arrange similar marriages for their sons. In addition to position, one's family in Everway largely determines one's habits, including dinner etiquette, iconography, morality, philosophy, and secret family rituals and prayers. Each family has an oral history passed down to the new generations (and, oddly enough, each family's history portrays that family as founding, saving, or somehow glorifying Everway). Since the family is traced along the mother's lines, women in Everway are the holders of family secrets, knowledge, and tradition. Everwayans use the term "cousin" to mean any other person who bears the same last name.

People from Everway are used to members of other families behaving differently from how they've been taught to behave. As a result, they are remarkably tolerant of Strangers and Outsiders with different ways. It would be bizarre to an Everwayan to imagine that one set of standards should apply to all people.

Names sometimes reflect families' positions, but usually the connection is tenuous. A family's position results from generations of habit and tradition, traditions that usually developed after the name was established. In other cases, a family's position has changed over the centuries, resulting in a name that is imprecise or wholly inaccurate. The Stonebreakers, for example, may have originally worked only in the quarries, but in present-day Everway, they are primarily architects, engineers, and artisans, not simple laborers.

There are nearly a thousand families in Everway, some with a handful of members, some with over a thousand. Some of the more important or

noteworthy families in Everway are described below. (Players and gamemasters can make up additional families to serve as backgrounds for heroes and background characters.)

Crookstaff: A family renowned for magical ability, secrecy, and strange ways.

Crow: A military family, commanding armies, training troops, and competing in the Arenas.

Digger: Historically, a family of miners. Now, however, they're mostly moneylenders (who still maintain a monopoly on mining).

Emerald: The royal family of Roundwander.

Gold: Workers in precious metals and fine handiwork. Their skin is tinged yellow because this family was founded by a yellow-skinned Stranger. When the original Stranger applied to be recognized as the head of an Everwayan family, she had to agree that her family would never sell their products for less than three gold hefts so that they would not compete with the Smith family for the large market in less expensive goods. The Gold family has a tradition of inviting men from their homelands across the sea to come and marry into the family.

Host: Offers hospitality to travelers in their houses. Some host only the most important visitors, while many will host just about anyone. Visitors who offend the Host family are hard-pressed to find a place to stay in Everway.

Keeper: The family who maintains the gates, guarding roads to and from the gates, posting guards at gates through which dangerous people might come, and so on.

Mask: A family that, officially, provides amusements and diversions. Unofficially, they

are involved in various illicit activities.

Moondance: A family of priestesses and cousins who support them. Moondances are found in temples dedicated to many different deities.

Mother: Midwives and healers. In this family, the family name precedes the personal name, as in "Mother Joy" or "Mother Firstborn."

Mudbank: Leatherworkers. They are responsible for removing dead animals from the streets. The odor that follows them makes them the butt of jokes.

Plume: Imperial guards. They only protect the royal family, officials of court, and other high-ranking people.

Scratch: Scribes, scholars, and bureaucrats.

Smith: Smiths, metalworkers, armorers, and weapon-makers.

Snakering: Courtiers, ambassadors, and functionaries. They were once a powerful family, but now they work at the behest of others.

Stonebreaker: Architects and engineers who construct stone structures, especially large monuments and buildings.

Tender: Those who prepare bodies for burial and bury them. They are considered too holy to touch.

Wailer: Ceremonial specialists. Public ceremonies, and many private, familial ceremonies, require the Wailers to participate. Some Wailers are made mute so that they are unable to reveal the secrets they learn by participating in secret ceremonies. It is considered a sin for a Wailer to work for a living.

Prices in Everway

Prices are always subject to haggling.

Food, Drink, and Tobacco

- bread, stewed vegetables, and tea 6 beads
- a meal with meat 1
- a gourmet meal 5
- a dozen tobacco cigars 3
- a day's food and lodging 5

Weapons

- a steel dagger 4 beads
- a steel-tipped spear 5
- a steel sword 10
- iron armor 60

Clothes and Accoutrements

- an elegant set of clothes 8 beads
- an elegant set of jewelry 20
- fancy perfume and makeup for an evening 1
- incense as an offering 12

Animals

- a mule 50 beads
- a horse 200
- an elephant 5,000

Service

- a day's labor 4 beads
- a day of a sage's consultation 12
- a day of a doctor's care 40

Houses

- a wood and stone home in Strangside 5,000 beads
- a stone house in Everway 20,000
- a stone estate in Everway 100,000

Watcher: City guards. They keep the peace, or at least keep trouble from threatening important families. They wear armor made of steel plates sewn onto long shirts, and they carry long spears.

Weaver: Historically, a family of weavers and dyers. They've broken with tradition by now and taken up all manner of new trades. They are particularly friendly to Outsiders (and the new skills and techniques they bring), but they are regarded by some as troublemakers for slighting tradition.

Fashion

Long, loose garments draped over the body are the most common. They can be white or tan, or they can be bright and colorful. Many people wear rings, earrings, bracelets, and anklets that have special meanings within their families. These meanings may be public or private. Dressing properly is a sign of status. At social functions, people often wear elaborate, impractical clothes.

Men and women both use makeup, wear jewelry, and groom their hair to increase their beauty. Since a man has to be accepted by a woman's family to marry her, men go to great lengths to look good. Standards of modesty vary greatly from family to family and also according to status. High-status men and women sometimes dress provocatively as a triple display: of one's physical beauty, of the wealth and leisure it takes to dress and groom carefully, and of one's confidence in one's guards. Most men are clean-shaven. In some families, it's traditional for men to trim their facial hair in certain ways, such as a mustache but no beard, a goatee, a beard only on the chin, a beard only under the jaw, and so on.

Rule

The Emerald family rules Roundwander, with the great king holding the highest title. Kingship passes to the great king's eldest sister's eldest son. The King cannot marry, as

The Hundred Faces of Everway



Everyone who comes to Everway gets a different impression of the city. Ambassadors who come from distant courts and receive the great king's hospitality may leave with the impression that Everway is a thoroughly prosperous and beautiful city, with well-scrubbed servants and endless diversions. Lone wanderers, however, may wind up in the shadier areas around the Gaming Houses or Strangerside, where they are exploited, cheated, and manipulated. They may leave believing Everway is a giant cauldron of vice, greed, deceit, and crime. Newcomers may find themselves bedazzled by the colorful festivals and marketplaces, and lively customs of the place. They may leave Everway thinking it is an ever-changing jumble of random events. Scholars come to the Library of All Worlds and find the city to be the best educated, most cosmopolitan city they've come to (provided they avoid the Court of Fools). The face of Everway that heroes see depends on the motives and actions of those heroes and on the gamemaster's designs.

doing so would mean that he had joined another family. He may have progeny through concubines, but they bear their mothers' names, and so they are not considered royal. (Indeed, he's not considered to be related to them by blood.) When referring the great king, one says "Great King Horizon" or "His Imperial Majesty." To refer to the great king as "the king" or "a king" is considered an insult. When addressing the great king directly, one refers to him as "Your Imperial Majesty," never as "you." Certain families maintain traditions of using other terms as well. For instance, members of the

Crookstaff family refer to him as "His Imperial, Majestic Wisdom." Ambassadors from other lands are required to use certain forms of address that reflect their lands' relations with Roundwander. For instance, "His Imperial, Conquering Majesty" or "His Generous, Imperial Majesty" are common. (Learning the proper forms of address for the great king, members of the Emerald family, ambassadors from other lands, and important functionaries in the government is an important task for a new courtier. It can make the difference between a good courtier and a dead one.)

G r e e t i n g s



It is the custom in Roundwander to greet others by placing one's palms together in front of one's mouth, bowing slightly, and saying "a thousand times" (or "thousand" or "thou" for short). This phrase refers to the inhabitants' belief in reincarnation and is meant to remind the speaker of the good things that the greeted person has done for the speaker in countless past lives. A more formal greeting specifies the actions referred to, and each family or individual chooses which action is recalled. For instance:



A thousand times you have borne me in your womb.

A thousand times you have nursed me at your breast.

A thousand times you have tutored me.

A thousand times you have tended me in my illness.

A thousand times you have comforted me in prison.

A thousand times you have fed me when I was starving.

A thousand times you have buried me with tears.



As solidly entrenched as the Emerald family may be in Everway, most true power resides in the Council. Centuries ago, the leaders of prominent families formed the Council as a way to relieve the great king of an endless stream of mundane decisions and obligations. The Council members would make decisions among themselves and enforce them independently so that the great king would not have to be bothered with every minute issue of policy. Over the centuries, the Council has taken on more and more duties until now it is indeed the prime originator of law and policy in Everway. This function frees the great king to play a largely ceremonial and spiritual role, while still allowing him to intervene in the Council's decisions during the inevitable conflicts that prevent consensus.

The families with representatives on the Council include Crookstaff (mages), Crow (soldiers), Digger (moneylenders), Moondance (priestesses), Scratch (scribes), Snakering (courtiers), and Stonebreaker (architects and builders). In addition, a place is symbolically reserved in the Council for a representative from the Whiteoar family, whose remaining members all died hundreds of years ago in a civil war. It is conceivable that another family could gain a seat on the Council, but this could only happen if all the current representatives agree. As each new representative reduces the power of the current representatives, few families bother trying to gain a seat.

The laws of Roundwander cover property crimes and violent crimes, but personal vices, such as gambling and prostitution, are considered matters of family or personal concern. In fact, even violence and theft often fail to reach the attention of the authorities, as individuals and families often execute justice on their own. Families often punish criminals among their own number in order to see justice done and to preserve their family honor.

Economy

Everway thrives on trade and expertise. Traders can take portable valuables, such as tea, spices, tobacco, gold, silver, gems, and steel goods through the gates, making Everway the hub of profitable trade.

The basis of any civilization, of course, is agriculture, and irrigated fields throughout the realm of Roundwander provide grains and vegetables for Everway. Fishing also brings in plenty of food. Throughout Roundwander a silver coin of about a quarter ounce is used as the standard currency. The coin is called a "heft," which is also used as a measure of weight. Thus a knife might weigh "a hundredheft" (about a pound and a half) and cost "a tenheft." The Digger family controls exchange of foreign coins, which are common in Everway.

For smaller purchases, Roundwanderers use pea-sized beads of copper with holes in them which allow them to be strung on lines for easy keeping. Twenty-four beads are valued at one silver heft, though this exchange rate can change. Some merchants also consider it beneath them to accept beads, or they only do so at steeper exchange rates. It's also possible to cut hefts into fourths or even eighths to make small purchases.

For large purchases, especially between families or royal courts, people use gold. A heft of gold is worth twenty-four silver hefts.

Most business, however, does not use coin. For example, laborers hired to work the fields around Everway typically live on the estates where they work, getting food, clothes, lodging, and a few coins in exchange for their labor. Professionals generally work the same way. Families, for instance, often house and provide for doctors who see to the families' health. People frequently trade goods and services rather than using coin.



Religion and Magic

Everway has been called "the City of a Thousand Deities." Divine images are everywhere in the city, representing deities from across the spheres. Each family has its own spiritual traditions, and many families are particularly devoted to certain deities. The royal Emerald family is devoted to "the Goddess," whom they conceive as the transcendent deity of whom the various more individual goddesses are manifestations. Because

of the royal family's support for the Goddess, goddess images are popular in art, architecture, and personal adornment. The great king is spiritually linked to the prosperity of Roundwander, and he is the chief participant in Everway's solstice and equinox rituals.

Traditional magic takes three general forms in Roundwander: religious, familial, and transcendent. Religious magic is the magic of temples, priestesses, and priests, and it is tightly tied to the deities. In most temples, this magic mostly means religious prayers and rituals, while in

some it involves an intellectual study of magic as well. Familial magic is the magical techniques and secrets of the various families. Among their secret rites, most families have spells, wards, and charms. Some of these magics are tied to the families' specific missions, but often they're simply powerful secrets they keep to themselves. Transcendent magic is the way of the lone magician, a path that takes the mage out of the family and social circles. For some, the point of the path is great power, and for others, power is merely the side effect of greater wisdom. Transcendent magicians are accorded respect, and others often fear them.

In addition to the three types of traditional magic practiced in Everway, Outsiders have brought dozens of other styles of magic. Natives rarely practice them, but they have been known to avail themselves of the services of Outsider mages.

Strangers and Outsiders

In Roundwander, the terms "Stranger" (meaning someone from another realm on this sphere) and "Outsider" (meaning someone from another sphere) are used as "family" names and are thus capitalized. Strangers and Outsiders, paradoxically, are welcomed because they are kept at a distance. The natives tolerate them but keep their distance socially. Since Strangers and Outsiders can only really enter Everway's society through marriage, they are not a threat to tradition and can be welcomed without fear.

The City

Everway is a huge, ancient city, home to half a million people. This section describes features of the city, but the only way to appreciate the city in full detail is to explore it.

The Walker's Pyramid

At the center of Everway is the WALKER'S PYRAMID, a large, stone structure without a capstone. It is a step pyramid with seven tiers. Each block is about twenty feet high, and the pyramid is about a hundred and fifty feet tall and some three hundred feet on a side. The Walker's Pyramid is the tallest structure in Everway and dominates the skyline.

Legend has it that a deity known as "the Walker" built the pyramid stone by stone. The footsteps the Walker left as he (or she—no one knows for sure whether the Walker is male or female) traveled from sphere to sphere are the gates that now connect the spheres for mortal travel. It is said that the Walker is out among the spheres now, searching for the capstone, which will complete the pyramid. No one knows what will happen when the pyramid is completed. Some say the universe will come to an end. Others say that the universe will advance to the next stage in its evolution, an era of peace and prosperity. Some say that nothing ever really changes.

Around the base of the pyramid, visitors find temples, wandering mystics, and booths that sell magical goods and items for offerings. A group of "pyramid priests" tend to the Walker's Pyramid and to the pilgrims who come to visit it. They take the offerings that people leave and store them away; their intent is to present these to the Walker personally when he or she returns with the pyramid's capstone. Where they store these treasures and how much they've accumulated is a secret of the Moondance grandmothers.

In religious art, the Walker is pictured in many different ways. No one knows what the Walker looks like, or even, as mentioned earlier, whether the deity is male or female. Indeed, many people hold that the Walker takes different

Sights in Everway

In every part of Everway, a visitor may see a thousand different sights.



Sights Around the Gaming Houses

- A wealthy envoy from another land, accompanied by a large entourage, losing piles of silver at games of dice. Shady figures tail the group through the night; they are criminals who are there to see that no harm comes to the envoy. (Injury to an official would bring retribution and would dissuade other officials from visiting the gaming houses and losing their wealth there.)
- A wealthy young woman selling jewelry to raise money to get back into a dice game.
- A spherewalker getting beaten for getting caught using magic to influence the roll of the dice.

Sights Around the Library

- A humanoid dragon, a guest of the library, teaching the language of the dragons.
- A sage demonstrating her body control by doing a one-handed handstand.
- Two scholars fighting in a slapping duel over their different interpretations of an epic poem.

Sights Around the Council House

- Great King Horizon Emerald touring the city atop a covered platform on an elephant's back.
- Brightly bedecked guards of the Plume family keeping a close eye on Strangers and Outsiders.
- A dozen people bearing a flower-strewn idol through the

streets to celebrate one of the city's countless holy days.

Sights Around the Gardens

- Spherewalkers leading a wagon that carries a giant, spotted cat in a cage. They are taking it to one of the Gardens.
- An old woman selling all manner of herbs and dried plants. Some are in a wicker basket, while others are pinned all over her clothes.
- A thin, dirty, wild-looking face peeking over the wall that encloses a large garden.

Sights Around the Temple of Mercy

- White-robed, barefoot monks visiting the sick and needy. (Monks can be either men or women.) They carry wide begging bowls, which they hold out to all they meet. Those with something to give are welcome to place it in the bowl, and those in need are welcome to take from it.
- A Mother leading a group of young orphans on a walk. ("Mother" is a family name; the adult could as easily be male as female.)
- A leper clapping stones together to warn others of her presence as she walks down the street.

Sights Around the Houses of Dusk

- A file of mourners walking silently, some of them carrying

a dead body wrapped in tan shrouds. They are taking the deceased to one of the Houses of Dusk, where it will be prepared for its journey out to sea.

- A small group of Wailers in gaudy ceremonial costumes squatting in a circle behind a House of Dusk. They're playing dice, drinking strong tea, and laughing, while they wait for their next assignment.
- Black birds circling above a House of Dusk. All at once, they flock down and out of sight onto the roof. They are feeding on the a corpse of a Stranger whose tradition requires this ceremony after death.

Sights Around the Court of Fools

- A woman costumed as a high priestess of the Moondance family performing a bawdy, impromptu dance and making lewd suggestions to everyone who passes by.
- An engineer testing her latest contraption: a giant construct of gears and levers that, if it works, will walk under its own power.
- A holy woman who has taken a vow never to let both her soles leave the ground. She is sleeping, hanging in a sling that leaves her feet resting on the ground.

Sights Around the Arenas

- Warriors of the Crow family staging an exhibition fight (with practice weapons).

forms to make traveling among different spheres easier.

Architecture

The great buildings of Everway are made of stone, soaring structures with tall arches, daunting pillars, and narrow spires. The faces of gods and goddesses, monsters, spirits, people, and beasts peer out from the stonework. On the most celebrated buildings, not one square foot is left unadorned.

The older buildings in Everway record the architectural styles of ages past. For instance, buildings that date from 1700 to 1300 years ago often have sun images or solar motifs. During that era, the Tower family was the royal family of Roundwander, and they were devoted to the sun as the Emerald family is devoted to the Goddess. Buildings from 2300 years ago often have a unique pink and green marble worked into them. When these buildings were built, the Stonebreaker family had recently discovered a vein of this marble, and it was very popular. After the vein was depleted, however, the Stonebreakers never again found marble like it. Stonebreakers can often tell the date of old buildings by noticing even more subtle details than these.

The estates of wealthy Everwayans are also made of stone, with generous use of wood, which is shipped down the Sunset from wooded lands upstream. The faces of these buildings are also carved, often with the likenesses of ancestors and other images important to the families. An estate is typically a large, walled area with several houses and open-air patios inside. The estate is home to the extended family, and many areas are open only to family members.

The poor live in houses made of adobe and scraps of stone. Tarps often serve as shutters, doors, and

even roofs. Some of Everway's poor live in ancestral homes, but they are more likely than the wealthy to live in newer homes. Everway is so old that pieces of rubble from once-glorious temples and palaces can be found throughout the city. The poor sometimes use this rubble to hold down tarps, build steps, or otherwise improve their homes; it's not unusual to find a piece of an ancient statue used as an ordinary rock.

The Stonebreaker family has masterminded the construction of a series of fountains throughout the city, and they are popular in the homes of the wealthy as well.

Stone walls encircle the city of Everway proper (not including Strangerside) for protection. Many new homes are found outside the walls because Everway has not had to defend itself from direct assault for hundreds of years.

The streets of Everway twist and turn. Each is known by a descriptive name, such as Three Trees, Old Temple, Stone Mask, and so on. There are about twenty streets in Everway known as Old Temple Street. Street names are informal; there is no official designation for any street. A long street with several landmarks may have several names, each applying to the section of the street nearest that landmark. For instance, the street that leads north from the Plaza of Fools, past a black statue of an ancient great king, to a square fountain is known as North Fool Street, Black Man Street, or Square Water Street, depending on which section is being referred to. The exception to all these general rules is the WALKER'S WAY, a straight thoroughfare that leads directly from the IMPERIAL GATE to the Walker's Pyramid. The Imperial Gate and Walker's Way are wide enough so that, upon returning to Everway, the Walker will be able to carry the final stone to the pyramid.

Three large bridges span the Sunset, connecting Everway to Strangerside. These are the Fool's Bridge, the Dusk Bridge, and the Mercy Bridge, named for the centers they are near (see below).

Centers of Everway

Around the Walker's Pyramid are several centers of interest. Each center is large enough that it could be considered a separate, albeit small, city. Each supports a different sort of business and attracts a different sort of visitor.

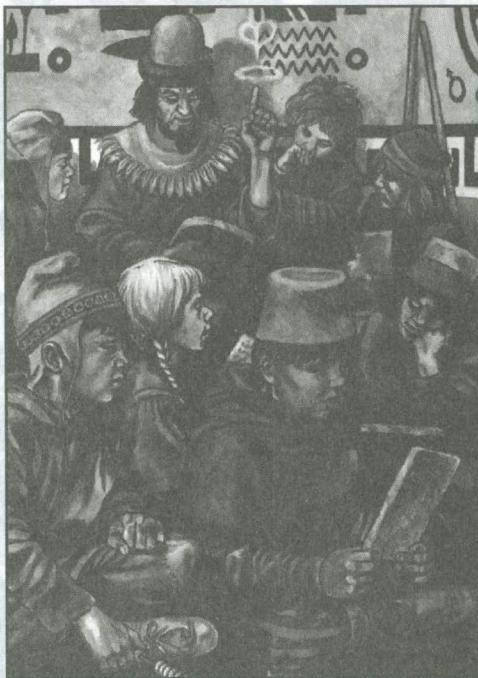
West of the pyramid are the GAMING HOUSES, where fortunes change hands over rolls of the dice. Other amusements of questionable morality can also be found nearby. Strangers find themselves welcome in this part of town. The Mask family has its head estate near the gaming houses.

Northwest of the pyramid is the LIBRARY OF ALL WORLDS, a collection of large buildings filled with scrolls holding knowledge and wisdom collected from a thousand spheres. Chamber Platinum is a group of people sponsored by the library who explore new realms and spheres. The Crookstaff and Scratch families have their head estates in this center.

North of the pyramid is the COUNCIL HOUSE, where the Council meets and addresses the great king, who rules Everway and the surrounding realm of Roundwander. The estates of Everway's wealthiest families are all in this

area, as is the great king's palace. The Emerald, Host, Plume, and Snakering families all have their head estates near the Council House.

Northeast of the pyramid are the GARDENS, which contain various temples to deities of nature and the earth. Exotic animals and plants from other spheres can be found here, if one knows where to look. The air is filled with the smells of blossoms. The head estates of the Digger, Keeper, and Stonebreaker families are close to the Gardens.



To the east is the TEMPLE OF MERCY, with several associated temples and charities around it. Here one finds poorhouses, hospitals, orphanages, and temples to deities of fertility and healing. The poorer inhabitants of Everway live in this area, and the Mother family has its head estate here as well.

To the southeast are the HOUSES OF DUSK, where the dead are prepared for their final journeys. The people of Everway tradi-

tionally place their dead on rafts that are left to float out to sea, but the Houses of Dusk can accommodate those whose wealth or culture necessitate other care for the dead. Artisans, laborers, and those who attend the Houses of Dusk live in the area, and the Moondance, Tender, and Wailer families also have their head estates here.

To the south is the COURT OF FOOLS, a large plaza where entertainers of all types demonstrate their arts. Mixed in among the buffoons and jugglers,

one can sometimes find prophets and seers. All are welcome at the Court of Fools if they can amuse or be amused. The Gold, Mudbank, Smith, and Weaver families have their head estates in this area.

To the southwest are the ARENAS, where gladiators fight and martial families demonstrate their skill and courage. Rough sports are popular here, as are contests of weapons. Fights to the death are rare; confrontations are always meant to settle some point of honor or vengeance, never merely to please a crowd. Temples to the deities of war are here, and the Crow and Watcher families have their head estates here.

Strangerside

The SOUTH BANK (actually the southeast bank) is the home of Strangers (those from other realms on Fourcorner) and Outsiders (those from other spheres). This area probably has as many people as Everway proper, but no census has ever been taken here.

STRANGERSIDE is a dynamic, crowded, colorful, and sometimes dangerous mix of people from distant lands and other spheres. Newcomers attract vendors, thieves, beggars, wanderers, and recruiters for legitimate and illicit jobs; all of them want to see what they can get out of those who set foot in Strangerside. On one hand, Strangerside's experience with newcomers means that their needs can be accommodated no matter what they are. On the other hand, some use this same experience to exploit, trick, mislead, or rob newcomers. Those who visit Strangerside are wise to remember that the people of Strangerside are much more experienced at dealing with newcomers than newcomers are at dealing with Strangerside.

Officially, Strangers and Outsiders are considered visitors in Everway, even though some

trace their ancestry back to Strangers and Outsiders who came to Everway hundreds of years ago. In order for Strangers or Outsiders to become accepted as residents of Everway, they must either marry into Everway families (possible only for men) or start their own families (possible only for women). The prosperous Gold family is an example of a family started by a Stranger.

Strangerside is home to numerous enclaves of like-minded people or people from the same cultures. These groups, which range in size from single houses to sprawling, walled estates, have no legal status, but the larger ones do wield some clout in Everway society.

Wandering about Strangerside, one may encounter any of the following:

- A walled, closed community of well-dressed, black-skinned Outsiders. One can gain entrance only by showing proper deference to the exiled noble who lives within.
- A large, stone estate now completely overrun by people who would otherwise be homeless. The inhabitants don't seem to care who else comes and goes. Rumors in Strangerside say that one of the inhabitants is a notorious, hard-hearted mage who is hiding from the Watchers.
- A narrow alley in which several short, light-skinned, brown-haired merchants ply visitors with a bewildering array of small, exotic goods. They refuse beads, insisting on being paid in silver, gold, or (preferably) gems.
- A large, two-legged bearlike creature wearing a harness. It's sitting in the shade, swatting flies that buzz about it. It watches passersby with intelligent eyes.

- The mortal remains of an Outsider who tried to make it in Strangerside on his own.
- Bedraggled refugees from a distant realm who have come here to find champions to bring justice to their homeland.
- A mighty warrior spending his latest plunder and attracting a crowd of temporarily loyal hangers-on.
- A one-armed opportunist trying to persuade a group of spherewalkers to accompany her to another sphere where she can trade steel to the inhabitants of a primitive realm in exchange for huge amounts of gold.
- A band of trouble-making kids, some homeless and other just running with the gang for kicks.
- An elegant home where a necromancer lives. The servants that come and go on errands are all animated corpses.
- Two mages engaged in a staring contest that's gone on for hours. The contest is probably also a magical duel.
- paths to further spheres. These are the seventy-one realms connected to Roundwander by gates; each is on a different sphere.
- Alabaster, where men and women live separate lives, meeting only behind families' closed doors.
- Antland, a realm inhabited by horse-sized ants. Scholars debate whether these are giant ants, or whether the gate shrinks spherewalkers.
- Archways, where several tribes live among the gargantuan skeletons of strange, ancient beasts.
- Ashland, a land of smoky volcanoes, deadly cockatrices, and devious goblins.
- Athenia, whose proud and brave people worship Athena, goddess of wisdom and war.
- Bliss, where one's dreams and memories intermingle until finally one's identity seems just like a daydream.
- Battlefield, the aftermath of some tremendous conflict preserved for all time by the deities, where innumerable corpses that never rot litter an endless plain.

Other Spheres

Seventy-one gates lead from Roundwander to other spheres, making it a realm heavily traveled by spherewalkers. No other realm has so many gates this close together (at least no realm known to the Library of All Worlds). Explorers have gone to each of the seventy-one realms to which the gates of Roundwander lead. In some cases, these other realms have multiple gates leading to more and more spheres. Some of the gates from Roundwander lead to spheres whose other gates have not yet been found, making these spheres effectively "dead ends" on the

- Boltheart, where a mage in a tower transmutes the stresses of the universe into harmless rain clouds and windstorms.
- Bright Eyes, a mystical place of lush forests, populated by cats (great and small) who have special powers.
- Bright Mirror, a silent, sunny forest, strangely devoid of animal life and filled with unusual pools of water said to have magical qualities.
- Canopy, an enormous, ancient tree whose interior houses a human civilization and among

whose roots exist hundreds of miles of caves where fantastic creatures live.

- Catchbreath, where even the seaside air is thin, and there is no air on the mountaintops at all.
- Crisscross, where several realms overlap, and you can never tell where a doorway might lead.
- Deep Mist, where secretive tribespeople haunt misty, temperate forests.



- Delta, islands at the mouth of a great river, where fish-people enlist the help of islanders in their wars and constantly shifting alliances.
- Diamond Isles, an archipelago where godlings, each commanding an island, use their worshippers as pawns in their endless conflicts.
- Distant, where seemingly normal boulders and trees are actually intelligent, shapeshifting beings thought to be elementals.
- Dust, a barren realm that is blanketed every night by the edible pollen of plants that thrive in the clouds.
- Emerald Jungle, where strange creatures live under a vast canopy of foliage that all but blocks out the sun.
- Evening Shore, the quiet western shore of a temperate sea on a warm summer's evening that never ends. Beyond the beach lies an expansive grassland, where wild little things play in the pools of light created by star beams.
- Festival, whose people are in touch with their land and ancestors, and where every night there is a festival or celebration of some sort.
- Fire's Wall, where a massive ocean meets an unending wall of flame that no one has ever crossed.
- The Flat Wastes, where the land is flat and dusty and the horizon is even and unchanging. Lightning storms plague the land.
- Fortune's Joy, home of merry nomads, traveling villages, and great merchants' caravans that trek far and wide.
- Frostgleam, where hardy villagers scratch out a living despite snow, ice, and ferocious beasts.
- Gem, where the natives, renowned empaths and healers, have small, smooth, colorful crystals of different shapes and sizes growing in their skin.
- Gentle, the forest home of lemur-like beings, which make excellent, intelligent companions.

- Gigggle, an ever-changing landscape ruled by faerie folk, where visitors never know when they may fall into the sky (or into a lake that is floating there).
- Glint, where towering brass cities house only vermin.
- Glitter Garden, a heavenly garden. Anything taken from here turns to garbage.
- Golden Mounts, where satyrs roam among tall mountain peaks, luring travelers away—forever.
- Granite, a subterranean paradise of incredible caverns, lit by crystals and full of natural wonders and magical energies.
- Hard March, where communal life and daily activities are regulated by gongs that only the natives can hear.
- Healertown, a bustling city founded generations ago by the suspect Healer family of Everway; descendants have kept the name “Healer” but not the profession.
- Heaven, protected by the Guilds of Learning, who welcome spherewalkers and other beneficent travelers.
- Hedge Maze, a sprawling maze with strange maze-walking creatures and no discernible culture or civilization. The hedge’s branches meet overhead, so the corridors feel like tunnels.
- Hellsedge, where a city stands on a river; on the opposite bank the dead screech and wail from dusk to dawn.
- Hive, a rocky land whose inhabitants are no bigger than blades of grass.
- Ghosthome, where stands an abandoned city of stone and wood, filled with false passages, dead-end halls, staircases that lead to nowhere or to deep pits, and so on.
- The Iron Citadel, whose smiths produce countless weapons and tools of iron and steel.
- Lotusland, a realm where all food turns narcotic when it rots.
- Magebane, where mages are outlawed, and with good reason—in this realm, magic slowly twists and corrupts those who wield it.
- The Market, where gold reigns supreme, and anything (and anyone) can be bought or sold.
- Merrybright, whose people engage in boisterous, complex, and sometimes deadly games.
- Merryflag, where it is against the law not to avenge a slight or insult.
- The Midlands, a peaceful agrarian kingdom where genteel nobles direct convoluted theatrical plots of betrayal and assassination.
- Midnight, where darkness and heavy mists envelop the countryside. Visitors who light fires are treated as miracle workers, blasphemers, or evildoers.
- Nature’s Touch, where all the sentient beings are half-human and half-animal: centaurs, satyrs, mermaids, nagas, sphinxes, harpies, and so on.
- Open Circle, an uninhabited, peaceful land in which every known settlement has failed for one reason or another.
- Overguard, from which no spherewalker has returned for seventy years.

The Point of Everway



The city of Everway serves several purposes. Gamemasters and players should keep these purposes in mind when they use Everway in their games.



First, Everway provides a starting place for gamemasters and players who want cultural background on which to base their quests and heroes. My original idea was to have no background at all in EVERWAY, relying on players and gamemasters to make up any sorts of backgrounds they wanted. A game without a setting, however, works for some people, but not for everyone. For those who want to create their heroes and quests in a cultural context, Everway is here for them. A gamemaster can state as a premise that the heroes are from Everway, or players can choose such a background for their heroes.



A setting to serve an open-ended game such as EVERWAY has to be flexible. Everway, therefore, provides plenty of room for gamemasters and players to invent details to their liking. If a player needs to invent a family to serve as a hero's background, there's still room for many

new families in Everway. If a gamemaster needs to invent a new subculture tucked away in Strangerside, there's room for numerous little enclaves that most people haven't heard about before. I made Everway big and varied so that you would feel free to add the details that you wish to add. In this way, Everway provides the benefits of background without restricting your imagination too much.



Third, Everway provides several "jumping-off points," ways in which heroes can get involved. They can explore spheres for Chamber Platinum of the Library of All Worlds; investigate strange occurrences in Strangerside; or involve themselves in the political struggles among the Emeralds, Snakerings, and other elites. Heroes can find plots within the city itself, or they can find reasons to explore other realms.



Finally, Everway includes a few magical patterns that aren't explicit. You can enjoy Everway without finding out all of its secrets, but they're here for those of you who like a little mystery.

- Pearl of the Waves, a fabulous undersea kingdom, where travelers ride in magic bubbles or in the mouths of huge fish.
- Rainbow Jungle, a jungle realm of abandoned temples and pyramids.
- Remnant, home to a happy, motley collection of different peoples, all survivors of various realm-destroying wars.
- Roundhome, a coastal realm where tsunamis toss up the giant snail shells that the inhabitants use as houses and as building material for beautiful, faerielike fortresses.
- Round Stones, where receding glaciers reveal ruins of an ancient civilization.
- Ruin, a flat, dark, featureless terrain stretching for as far as one cares to travel, apparently the site of a devastating war; a distant, whistling wind is the only known phenomenon here.
- Seashift, where rocky atolls appear and disappear with the shifting tides of a vast sea, and homesteads cling to a chilly, rocky coast.
- Sepulcher, a seemingly endless tomb-complex honoring an unknown, ancient queen. Those who steal from this tomb, or even step into forbidden areas, meet with gruesome ends.
- Serpent's Coil, where the Dragon Lords are said to live. No such great beasts are ever seen, but spherewalkers report an eerie feeling of being watched.
- Shift, where the people can change into various animals, a protective skill acquired ages ago in response to repeated invasions.
- Silence, whose people lead simple lives and refuse to talk to outsiders.
- Sky Stone, a realm of floating rock islands, where the people ride magic sky galleons and other flying ships.
- Stone Cage, a large, empty, stone chamber from which no exit has been found, other than the gate back to Roundwander.
- Stormsong, a lush jungle where gentle, mournful, sourceless songs seem to portend monsoons and tropical storms.
- Straggle, where vampires prey on the miserable inhabitants, and medicine men and medicine women prey on the vampires to boost their power.
- Tales, where storytelling is considered the highest art form, and storytellers are found on every corner.
- Talon, where wondrous cloud cities and bird-people fill the sky, and giant birds often aid travelers in reaching the safety of the cities.
- Temple, a peaceful realm where many orders of mystics, ascetics, and seers contemplate existence in harmony.
- Waters Gather, where several rivers meet at a lake that is the meeting place of several tribes.
- The Waste, which was once a fertile floodplain, before the river changed course and left the people to die out slowly.
- Wisp, a realm where no one heavier than a child can enter without collapsing the delicate, crystalline ground, and where edible plants are so fragile that they collapse if you breathe on them.

Coming to Everway

When visitors come to Everway, especially for the first time, each visitor or group of visitors may have a different experience. Still, some events occur commonly enough to note. Game-masters and players may find these ideas interesting as they help set the stage for heroes' travels.

On the Other Side

To arrive in Everway, one usually travels from one of the connected realms through one of Roundwander's seventy-one gates. The realms that have the most ready contact with Everway, and the ones through which the spherewalkers are most likely to travel without incident, include Athenia, Crisscross, the misnamed Healtown, the Iron Citadel, The Market, The Midlands, Roundhome, Seashift, Tales, and Talon.

While spherewalkers are in realms connected to Roundwander, they usually meet people who have traveled there or even natives of Everway. They can learn much about the city from these fellow spherewalkers (though travelers have been known to exaggerate).

Getting Through the Gate

Every gate leading to Roundwander is different, depending mostly on the realm it is in. The spherewalkers may have to get permission to use a gate, pay a toll, or wait their turn in a long line of travelers. Sometimes a gate is

fortified to prevent dangerous people from entering the realm from Roundwander. These gates are "reverse fortresses," built to keep newcomers in Roundwander, rather than to keep invaders out.



Some gates are guarded by members of the Keeper family of Everway or by those in the Keepers' employ. The guards stop and question all who want to use the gates to get to Roundwander. Guards are traditionally armed with spears, iron scale armor, and steel helmets; though sometimes the Keepers retain the services of local warriors who use their standard armaments. The guards are serious but not hostile; they know that Everway benefits greatly from the goods

and knowledge that spherewalkers bring.

It usually takes about a week to travel the astral path from gate to gate. Those who watch the skies can tell how much time has passed by the phase of the moon; a week is enough time for it to go through a quarter cycle, such as from first quarter to full. (The skies among spheres are synchronized, so it's a full moon on the same night in every realm.) Spherewalkers may arrive at any time, day or night.

While there may or may not be Keeper guards at the gate in the other realm, there are certainly some at the other end in Roundwander, where

the spherewalkers arrive. They usually find themselves ringed in by walls, within a fortification. Here, Keeper guards question spherewalkers, even if they've already been questioned on the other side. Usually, the guards let spherewalkers past, and visitors immediately find themselves beset by children, officials, beggars, messengers, and other folk offering their services, especially guidance to the city and to respectable lodging.

Coming to Strangerside

Unless spherewalkers have business in Everway proper, guides and passersby direct them to Strangerside. The journey from the gate to Everway takes anywhere from a few minutes to a day and a half, depending on where the gate is located. If the spherewalkers need to find lodging before they reach Everway, guards, guides, and passersby can usually direct them to a Host's home.

The spherewalkers may travel overland to Everway or take a boat down the Sunset. In either case, they are likely to see Everway before them before they arrive. While the towers, palaces, and temples are impressive, the mighty Walker's Pyramid dominates the scene.

About half the gates are on the south side of the Sunset River, and about half are to the north. Getting to Strangerside on foot from the north means crossing the Sunset at one of the many bridges.

Once in Strangerside, newcomers are confronted on all sides by vendors, would-be guides, beggars, and others offering services to or asking things of the spherewalkers. With luck and patience, newcomers can find a Host's home without incident. Different Hosts maintain different homes with different levels of comfort. It is impossible to get into the

nicest homes without class. An exiled and penniless king is more likely to be welcomed in finer homes than a barbarian offering to pay a fortune. Those who prefer not to stay with a Host can often find lodging set up by competing Strangers or Outsiders, but they do so at their own risk.

Staying in Everway

Unless a Stranger or Outsider can marry into an Everway family (and only men can do so) or establish herself as a member of a newly recognized family (and only women can do so), the newcomer cannot buy property within the walls of Everway proper. To live in Everway proper, such a person must persuade a family to let them live on family property, and some families maintain quarters separate from their estates for just this purpose.

More likely, a newcomer will settle in Strangerside or in the less densely inhabited lands surrounding Everway. There are no legal restrictions on either action. In Strangerside, choosing one's neighbors can be difficult, though entertaining. Some neighborhoods are simply motley mixes of Strangers and Outsiders, while others have definite cultural and ethnic identities.

The Natures of Realms

Realms are all different, but there are common ways to describe them and many ways in which realms are similar.

Universals and Particulars

Among the spheres, there are certain features that are universal (or nearly so) and others that differ

from world to world. The universal things are those things that the gods and goddesses gave all people; the particulars are either things that certain gods and goddesses gave only to certain people, or things that people invented themselves.

This section describes what is common and what is different from sphere to sphere and from realm to realm. Gamemasters can use these guidelines to help them design realms, and players can use them to help them understand the game's setting and what to expect from it.

Universal	Particular
humans	races
deities	worship of particular gods and goddesses
spoken tongue	dialects, writing
the Way	the Fortune Deck
the stars and planets	names of constellations
length of days and years	calendars
land, sea, and air	geographical details
living things	particular plants and animals
valuables	scarcity of valuables

People

Humans, said by many to be the deities' last created things, are the smartest, most powerful mortals on most spheres. While they are all recognizable as humans, their skin color, hair color, facial features, size, and proportions vary. On only a few spheres, they differ significantly from typical human stock. There are spheres where all the people have one eye or where all the people are ten feet tall, but spheres like these are rare.

In some realms, other creatures form humanlike cultures. In most realms, there are intelligent non-human creatures, such as goblins, faeries, and satyrs. Usually, however, human culture predominates.

Some spheres have no people on them. Perhaps the deities have not yet decided what sorts of people to create there.

Worship

The same deities are worshipped on spheres across the universe, but their worshipers are often different from each other. In addition, the gods and goddesses themselves appear differently, and under different names, from place to place. Hera, the queen of the Olympian deities, for instance, can seem jealous and vengeful in realms where her husband, Zeus, is accorded higher status. However, in realms where she is worshipped as Zeus's equal, or even as the leader of the deities, she seems much more even-tempered. Likewise, the Aesir god Odin is known as the Sacrificed God and worker of magic in some realms, as Ygg, the terrible god of war in other realms, as the Law-Giver and All-Father in others, and as all three in still others.

In any given realm, only some gods and goddesses are worshipped, and usually certain groups of deities are worshipped together. For instance, in realms where people worship Hera, they usually also worship, or at least revere, the other Olympian deities, such as Zeus, god of storms, Ares, god of war, Aphrodite, goddess of love, and so on. Where people worship Osiris, god of fertility and of kings, they generally also worship or at least recognize his sister/wife Isis, goddess of magic, Anubis, god of the dead, Horus, god of the sun, and so on. Since gods and goddesses often give gifts to their worshipers, such as writing and science, the worshipers of certain groups of deities often have similar cultures even if they are in different realms or on different spheres. For

example, the Aesir deities, such as Odin, the All-Father, Thor, the storm god, and Tyr, god of war, all revere honor, courage, and strength. The people who worship them, wherever they may be, share these attitudes.

Language

The deities gave people language (called “the Tongue” by people who need to give it a name), and all people speak more or less alike. From realm to realm, people have different styles of greeting each other, unique words for things unique to their realms, different figures of speech, and so on. Still, they can speak with each other and understand each other.

Some gods and goddesses have given certain groups of humans ways to record speech in written form. For instance, Thoth, a god of knowledge, often provides hieroglyphics to those who worship him, and the Aesir deities provide the futhark to their followers. Those without writing usually have visual symbols with specific meanings with which to record ideas and important events.

Nonhuman creatures that speak generally speak the Tongue as well. Dragons, however, also speak a language of their own, one that pre-dates humanity.

In some realms, people speak a different language from the Tongue. For some, this confused language is a curse; for others it’s a blessing. The homeless, spherewalking Besahn people, for instance, speak a strange language all their own, a gift from their deities that allows them to retain their identity even though they live scattered among a hundred strange lands.

The Way and the Fortune Deck

“The Way,” meaning the combination of cosmic forces that direct the universe, is known in every realm. The Fortune Deck is the most common

Names



People who are more or less isolated from others generally use simple words for themselves and for their land. For instance, they say “We are people, and this is the earth.” Only by meeting outsiders do they learn to give their people and their sphere a name that differentiates them from others.



Most names are common words. They often start out as descriptions and then become standardized as names. For instance, when spherewalkers come to a realm with lots of mountains and cougars, they may call it “that place with the big cats,” the “cat mountains,” or “the mountains where we got mauled by cougars.” Over time, the realm may come to be called “Catmount,” or “the Maul.”



Why do people in different spheres speak the same language? When the gods and goddesses made people, they gave people several gifts, including the gift of language. They gave the same language to all people, so nearly everyone among the spheres speaks this language, known as “the Tongue.” A few peoples’ languages have been changed or distorted, however, so there are now a few groups among the spheres that don’t speak the standard tongue of humanity.

The Typical Realm



While realms among the spheres vary greatly from each other, the gamemaster may find it useful to use a typical realm as a "default" type. That way the gamemaster has a foundation on which to base each new realm. Below is an outline of the most typical realm found among the spheres. Gamemasters who want to run quests in different sorts of realms can invent their own "default templates." This typical realm is based on the "City-State of the Holy Temple" template found on p. 50.



The realm is warm and rainy in the spring, hot and dry in the summer, warm and dry in autumn, and cool in winter. It never freezes, except on the tallest mountaintops. Trees grow in the low areas where the water flows, especially around rivers, but many of these more fertile areas have been cleared for farmland. Hillier areas are drier and serve as pasture.



The people of the realm are human. They have brown skin and black or dark brown hair. Men and women are equal but have different tasks and roles. Those people who wish to do so are free to take cross-gender roles. People live in extended families, with children, parents, grandparents, and those who have married into the family all living together.



In the center of the realm is a walled city-state, where one can find:



- A hereditary king or queen and several royal officials

- A small army of soldiers armed with iron spears and wooden shields
- A large, stone temple devoted primarily to a single god or goddess
- Several priests and priestesses of various ranks
- Several shrines to other deities
- A few mages
- The only scribes in the realm
- Wealthy, land-owning families

In the countryside, where nineteen out of twenty people live, one can find:

- Little villages
- Isolated farmsteads
- Manor houses of the wealthy
- Shepherds, goatherds, swineherds, and hunters
- Hermits, outcasts, mages, and other loners
- Predators

The people all speak the Tongue, the language that the deities have given all people among the spheres. Only the scribes, priests, and priestesses know how to write, and they use an alphabet (or other writing system) that is probably different from any the heroes may know. They use common words, such as "Brook" or "Robin," as names for people.



The people worship one god or goddess, but they also recognize and revere many others. (The people of neighboring city-states worship the same deities, but each city-state reveres a different god or goddess as its chief deity.) The priests and priestesses of the temple coordinate various festivals marking special days throughout the year, especially the spring equinox (the first day of the year), the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox, and the winter solstice. People come from the countryside to participate in these festivals, in addition to holding their own celebrations. As long as these ceremonies all go well, the realm prospers.



Priests, priestesses, and mages have Fortune Decks, but they are precious items because they are very hard to make. The Fortune Decks do not have words on them; those who use the Fortune Decks have learned the names and meanings orally from their masters. Other people know about the Fortune Deck but don't know the secrets of how to read it. The common folk, however, have

many other ways of divining things, such as looking for omens, interpreting dreams, watching birds in the sky, and so on. The sun, moon, planets, stars, and constellations are the same as in the heroes' homes. The zodiac constellations, which form the path through which the sun, moon, and planets travel, are the most important constellations. The days, lunar months, and years are as long here as anywhere else. The calendar has one month of thirty to thirty-one days for each sign of the zodiac, with the year beginning at the spring equinox with Aries.



The people depend on animals for meat, milk, leather, and labor. They have domesticated chickens, goats, sheep, pigs, cattle, donkeys, dogs, and cats. The nobles also have horses.



The people herd, fish, hunt, and plant for their food. Their crops produce enough grain to be stored for lean times. They brew their grains into beer, which is a common drink.



Valuables include gold, silver, and copper items. They also have gems, whose faces are polished but not cut. The wealthy use silver coins for their transactions, but most people barter.



When outsiders come to the realm, the natives are hospitable, as decency demands, but are also suspicious. Outsiders are expected to prove their good intentions.

means people use to describe and understand the Way, but most people around the universe know little about the Fortune Deck. From realm to realm, people know the Way through runes, visions, and other methods of divination.

The Sky

The deities set the stars in the heavens to guide the lives of people and nations. One finds the same stars, constellations, and planets on each sphere. The planets, however, are in different positions on each sphere, causing different events among the spheres. The planets are also known as “wanderers” or “wandering stars.” Stars are known as “fixed stars,” to differentiate them from the “wandering stars.” Over time, the planets of a sphere move about in relation to each other and to the fixed stars. The fixed stars, however, are always in the same relation to each other, from year to year and from sphere to sphere.

While the stars are the same from sphere to sphere, the people of different realms may give different names to the constellations, or they may “connect” the stars into different constellations. People in most spheres, however, commonly connect the “central constellations,” which are the twelve constellations of the zodiac: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. Planets in every sphere travel this central path through these twelve constellations. Depending on one’s location on a sphere, one can

see different constellations and stars. The North Star, for example, is only visible in the northern half of a sphere. The central stars and constellations, however, are visible from any location on a sphere, just as the sun and moon are.



Different people give different importance to the sky. Those who are most attached to the earth are likely only to watch the sun and moon, while people who seek a “higher” order chart the course of the planets as they wander against the background of the fixed stars. The sun and moon are deities in most realms, and the other planets—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—are also identified as or linked to gods and goddesses in many realms. The signs of the zodiac guide the lives of people in many realms.

Time

Since the sky is the same from world to world, the lengths of days, months, and years are also the same. As with written language, however, the way that people keep track of time varies from realm to realm. Some keep track of days, months, and years without numbering them. Others name and number the days, months, and years, and divide day and night up into hours. Some say that a day begins at dusk. Others say it begins at dawn.

A common calendar that spherewalkers have spread from sphere to sphere assigns one month of thirty to thirty-one days to each sign of the

TYR IS THE GOD
OF WAR, ODIN
THE RULER OF
THE DEITIES,
THOR THE GOD
OF STORMS, AND
FREYA THE GOD-
DESS OF FERTILITY.
THESE ARE ALL
AESIR DEITIES.

zodiac, with the year beginning at the spring equinox with Aries. The year is also divided into weeks of seven days each, with the days named for planets and Aesir deities. In order, the days are: Sun Day, Moon Day, Tyr's Day, Odin's Day, Thor's Day, Freya's Day, and Saturn Day. Even where the Aesir are not worshipped, many people adopt these days without knowing that they refer to particular deities.

Elements

All spheres have solid ground, fresh and salty water, good air, rain, fire, and all the other elements necessary for life. The shape of the land, however, varies from sphere to sphere, and spheres may have these elements in different proportions. Generally, though, there's more variation from realm to realm on a given sphere than there is between spheres. For example, the typical sphere has frigid regions near the poles, hot regions around the equator, and temperate areas in between.

Living Things

Most animals can be found on most spheres, but there are spheres that lack some animals. Lacking animals can have a big effect on the human cultures that live there. For instance, many realms depend on horses; these realms would be very different if there were no horses on their spheres. There is more variation among realms on a sphere than there is between spheres. For example, horses are on most spheres, but on every sphere there are some realms where horses are unknown. (Gamemasters should primarily pay attention to what animals can be found in a given realm, not to what animals can be found across a whole sphere.) Creatures on various realms are of comparable size. There are gigantic creatures and small ones,

How Common Is Magical Healing?



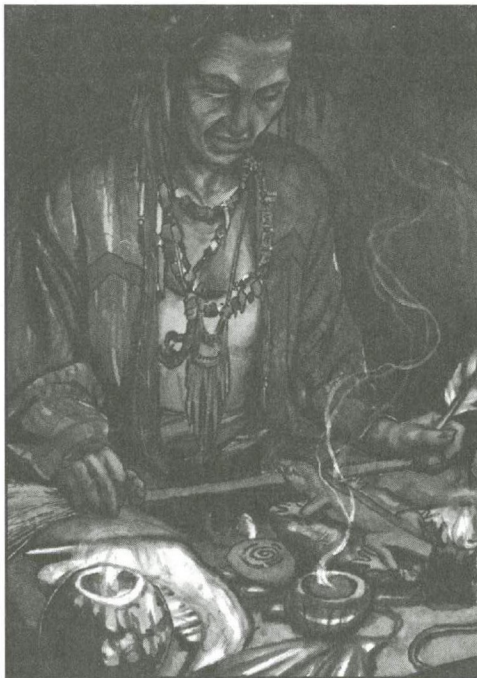
See p. 103 to see what injuries and illnesses a "Soil and Stone" mage can heal. Assume that one out of ten mages is a healer with comparable powers and look at the frequency of mages in a population on p. 100. In a kingdom of a hundred thousand people, there may be ten mages, more or less, with Magic scores of 4, and of these, one might be a healer. If there were a hundred 4-Magic mages in the kingdom, then about ten of them would be healers, and so on. In other words, only about one in every ten thousand people in a given realm is a healer capable of magically countering a disease (having 3 Magic or stronger). If the realm in question has at least ten thousand people, and the afflicted person has access to one of the best healer mages, that mage can probably cure a disease by touch. Without such a person, there are certainly less able healer mages and plenty of herbalists and physicians who may be able to help an afflicted person recover.

certainly. Any spheres, however, where the rats are as big as horses and the people as tall as oaks, or where the horses are the size of rats and the people the size of mice, are very rare.

Valuables

The blood of the sun (gold), the tears of the moon (silver), and the blood of the dragons (gems) are valuable on every sphere. Even where these treasures are unknown, the people recognize them as beautiful, and therefore valuable, when they see them.

In some realms, certain valuables are very scarce or very common, making them relatively more or less precious. The realm in which the streets are paved with diamonds, however, has not yet been found (unless drunken travelers' tales are to be believed).



Different pantheons often have similar deities, such as Tyr, the Aesir god of war and Ares, the Olympian god of war. Some people say that these are merely different aspects of the same warlike deity. Indeed, some say that all the

deities are manifestations of two transcendent deities, the God and the Goddess, or even that they are all manifestations of one great deity. As is always the case with religion, debates about these possibilities have not led to any general agreement on the nature of the deities.

In some realms, gods and goddesses are found only in poetry and metaphor, with heaven or some similarly transcendent principle named as the creator and guide of the universe. The people in these realms acknowledge the

existence of the deities, but they pay homage to abstract or general forces that they consider superior to any particular god or goddess.

Magic Among the Realms

Magic is everywhere in the realms of **EVERWAY**. Here are some common magical ideas and phenomena common among the various realms.

Gods and Goddesses

Countless deities are found among the spheres. Typically, they are found in groups or pantheons. Thus one usually finds Apollo where one finds his twin, Artemis, and one finds Isis where one finds her brother Osiris.

Travelers generally pay homage to the deities of the lands through which they travel, in the same way that they pay homage to the lands' rulers. The deities of one's homeland do not regard this homage as treachery or blasphemy any more than the rulers of one's homeland regard it as traitorous to bow to another land's king.

Folk Magic

People everywhere practice "folk magic," "low magic," or "common magic" on an everyday basis. Indeed, it's so common, that most hardly

regard it as “magic.” For instance, it is common to carry adornments related to one’s patron deity, magical symbols, and charms or lucky items. It is also common to say “bless you” or “health” when another person sneezes. Many people speak little prayers or perform rituals before leaving on a journey, bedding down at night, eating, or working. Homes and workshops usually have magical, spiritual, or lucky symbols somewhere about.

The less common a magical practice is, the more “magical” it seems. Thus certain other activities are slightly less common and therefore more readily recognized as magical. For example, people often have folk traditions of divination, such as casting lots to identify jinxes. Folk traditions may also include simple spells, such as stringing white thread across doorways and windows to prevent ghosts from entering and ward against curses. Chanting or singing to bring rain or keep it away is another example of a folk spell.

Names often have magical associations. A person’s name is often related to certain taboos or magical acts. A jealous girl, for example, might crush violets as a way to bring harm to a rival named Violet. In realms that use the planetary names for days of the week, the people may designate Sun Day as a holiday if they worship the sun, or Moon Day if they worship the moon.

Omens are common, and different realms have different guides for interpreting omens. People may

THE TYPICAL FORTUNE DECK
DEPICTS THESE DEITIES: ANUBIS,
BRIGHID, COYOTE, GAIA, KUAN-
YIN, ODIN, OGUN, AND
QUETZALCOATL. THESE ARE SOME
OF THE DEITIES THAT ARE COM-
MONLY FOUND ON DIFFERENT
SPHERES, BUT BY NO MEANS ARE
THEY THE ONLY ONES. NOR ARE
THESE DEITIES WORSHIPPED IN
EVERY REALM. FORTUNE DECKS
VARY FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AND
IN SOME REALMS THESE DEITIES
ARE REPLACED WITH THOSE THAT
ARE WORSHIPPED THERE. FOR
EXAMPLE, A DECK CREATED
WHERE PEOPLE WORSHIP THE
AESIR DEITIES MIGHT HAVE HEL IN
PLACE OF ANUBIS TO REPRESENT
DEATH, LOKI IN PLACE OF
COYOTE TO REPRESENT TRICKERY,
AND SO ON.

count crows, watch clouds, read tea leaves, or interpret dreams to get hints about the future. Some omens are very personal. For example, a person named Hawk may pay special attention to hawks. Seeing a hawk with a mouse in its claw might signify good fortune or success, while a dead hawk would be a bad omen. The same could be true for a person whose totem is the hawk or who otherwise identifies with hawks. (Gamemasters can use omens in their quests to foreshadow events or to give players hints about things that will happen on a quest.)

These various instances of simple magic are not as powerful as the high magic that mages wield, but folk magic is a part of everyday life, and it generally helps people retain

some control over their lives.

Ceremonies and Rituals

Ceremonies and rituals are special instances of folk magic. People have rituals to mark entry into each of the major stages of life, such as christening infants, initiating children into adulthood, marrying couples, and laying the dead to rest. Rituals for these events combine spiritual, magical, and ceremonial elements. While these ceremonies serve a social purpose, they also work on a supernatural level. Someone buried with the proper ceremony, for example, is less likely to remain tied to the past as a ghost. (Indeed, with magic an everyday part of life, most people among the spheres regard the “supernatural” as a natural part of life rather than as separate from “mundane” reality.)

Other ceremonies and rituals affect the entire community, not just individuals or couples. Ceremonies are commonly held for the solstices and equinoxes, as well as for other yearly events, such as the harvest or the first planting. Instead of solstices and equinoxes, many cultures celebrate “quarter days,” which are between the solstices and equinoxes. These go by many names but are most commonly known as Beltane, Lughnasa, Samhain, and Imbolc.

Community ceremonies help assure the community’s continued health, including harmony within the community, good harvests, safety from enemies and plagues, and so on.

Healing and Medicine

Wherever there is pain, injury, and illness, people find ways to bring relief, healing, and recovery. Traditional remedies, folk magic, herbalists, and healers all contribute to the health of individuals and of the community. In the countryside, most people know something about herbs and other natural remedies, though they get help from healers when they need it. In cities (and not all realms have cities), the people have limited means to deal with illnesses, though specialist physicians are more common than they are in the countryside (for those who can pay).

In addition to healing illnesses, herbs and other agents can benefit healthy people. Plants that give laborers extra energy or prevent conception are examples.

Souls

The souls of the dead are reborn in new bodies, usually with no memory of past lives. A soul’s karma, however, follows it.

In between bodies, the soul spends some time in other planes or states. Some of these are

pleasant, some unpleasant, and some neutral. Experience in these “unearthly” states cannot be fully remembered or understood in relation to “earthly” senses or concepts. A soul with a deep need to return to a body can skip this intermediate state, moving immediately to a new body after death.

Some deities prepare special afterlives for their followers, and some even take them off the wheel of life and death altogether. Odin, for example, takes the souls of brave warriors who die in battle to Valhalla, where they enjoy themselves while waiting for Ragnarok, the Aesirs’ final confrontation with their enemies.

Some say that the soul has a “true name” that transcends the body’s name, and that no matter what body it is in, the soul can recognize this name when it hears it.

Some sages say that there is a karmic, or causal, connection between one life and the next, but that the past and present person are still not “the same person.” These same sages will say that even though there is a karmic or causal connection between you yesterday and you today, the two yous are not the same person.

Some souls do not go to an afterlife or to a new body but remain as ghosts at or near the sites of their deaths. Only a deep unfulfilled need will cause a soul to remain fixed to the earth and to its earthly past in this way.

Ghosts remain more easily in places where the energy of life is low. In a major city, a million people may have died over the last few centuries, but ghosts are not common because of the energy of all the living people there. In the wilderness, however, one may find a ghost where only one person has died. In cities that have them, ghosts are harder to find, less likely

HORIZON EMERALD, THE GREAT KING OF EVERWAY, SERVES THE GODDESS AND CAN INVOKE THE BRIGHT DAUGHTERS, HER MINIONS. THE BRIGHT DAUGHTERS ARE INVISIBLE, BUT THE SENSITIVE (5 WATER OR STRONGER) CAN SENSE THEIR PRESENCE. THEY PROTECT THE GREAT KING AND HIS COURT FROM HARMFUL MAGIC AND OTHER ILL EFFECTS.

to manifest, and so on. In quieter areas, any ghosts that are there are more likely to manifest.

Ghosts are fixed in the past. While a spiritually sensitive person may be able to talk to a ghost and learn about the past, a ghost can provide no knowledge about what has happened since the ghost's death. Some ghosts are so fixed in the past that they do not even realize they are dead.

Spirits

While ghosts are the souls of the dead, there are also spirits that were never in bodies in the first place. These spirits can fall into all sorts of different categories depending on how scholars choose to divide them up.

Demons: All manner of evil, harmful, and destructive spirits fall under the general title of "demon." Many are capable of taking physical form. They have various purposes: some seek to cause physical or emotional pain, while others are concerned with corrupting souls.

Angels: All manner of good, helpful, and creative spirits fall under the general title of "angel," or "spirit of light." Some angels bring comfort, healing, and other direct benefits, while others seek to elevate or advance the souls of mortals (and may be willing to cause pain and anguish to do so).

Godlings: Powerful spirits whose power is limited to a small area are known as "godlings." (Gods and goddesses transcend the spheres, finding worshipers on many different realms. Godlings, on the other hand, are limited to one

locale.) A deity of a particular grove or lake, for instance, is a godling, while a deity of lakes or forests in general would be a god or goddess (and could be found, perhaps in other forms, on other spheres).

Minions: Powerful spirits that serve deities are known as "minions." Sometimes they serve particular deities, and other times they serve pantheons as a whole. For instance, the Olympian deities are able to send the Furies to torment those who break taboos and laws, and the Furies are never found away from the Olympians.

Faeries

The term "faerie" is a general word used to describe magical, usually intelligent, often humanlike creatures. They vary from realm to realm even more greatly than animals do.

The faeries that people encounter most often are house faeries. They are usually small and often invisible. Some are a help to their hosts, cleaning, mending, and performing other chores at night. Others can be mischievous or sloppy enough to be a curse rather than a blessing. In many realms, nearly every house and farmstead in the countryside has faerie inhabitants in addition to its human and animal inhabitants. People in these lands leave food, milk, and other gifts for their "little friends."

Faeries of the woods, sometimes called "high faeries" or "Seelie faeries," are larger. They are secretive, occasionally dealing with individual humans but rarely establishing any sort of working or trading relationship.

Dark faeries, sometimes called "Unseelie faeries," are malevolent, sometimes bloodthirsty, and often cunning. They tend to be uglier than their Seelie counterparts, but they are sometimes blessed with seductive beauty.



The Cockatrice in Game Terms

Air	1	3	Fire
Water	5	6	Earth

A cockatrice's peck kills anyone whose Earth score is 5 or weaker and sickens anyone whose Earth score is 6–9.

In addition, its continued presence in an area creates a sickening miasma, which gradually stunts or drives away all living things from the area.

Faerie monsters come in all shapes and sizes. Some are truly horrible to see (and even worse to be seen by).

Different faeries use different kinds of magical abilities, but one common ability is “glamour,” the ability to make realistic illusions that have real effects.

Creatures Among the Spheres

All sorts of creatures populate the universe of **EVERWAY**. Image cards may suggest creatures of certain types, and the gamemaster may invent others to suit the needs of the quest. This section describes in detail six creatures that are commonly found among the spheres.

The Cockatrice

The cockatrice is a loathsome creature combining the features of a serpent or dragon with those of a rooster. They are usually creations of black magic, though in some realms cockatrices occur naturally. About the size of large roosters, they are as deadly as any creature, large or small. Cockatrices are all poisonous or deadly in some way. Some turn to stone those who meet their gaze, some kill with a venomous breath, and others spread disease and decay. The best thing about a cockatrice is that they do not live or travel in groups.

SEE P. 5 IN
GUIDE TO THE
FORTUNE
DECK FOR
INFORMATION
ABOUT
THE COCKATRICE
CARD.

Cockatrices can fly, but not very far or very high. They move slowly, as they don't need speed to catch sickened prey, and they fear few predators.

While deadly when confronted directly, the cockatrice is also dangerous to its environment. The longer a cockatrice lives in an area, the more sickly the area becomes. On some spheres,

whole realms have become wastelands due to the presence of cockatrices.

The cockatrice is tied to earth and water. While these elements are normally associated with fertility, the cockatrice represents a manifestation of their negative aspects. Some magicians claim to be able to defeat cockatrices by invoking the positive, fertile aspects of earth and water. Others say that only purifying fire and a cleansing wind can remove the stain of cockatrices in a land.

The deities have given worlds means to protect themselves from cockatrices. For instance, the ermine is immune to the cockatrice's poisons and is capable of killing it. Other animals, herbs, gems, and such in other realms are also wards against cockatrices or even lethal to them.

The Griffin

Griffins have the foreparts of eagles and the hindquarters of lions. They are the size of large lions and live primarily in mountainous areas. Some griffins are said to be intelligent (though not exactly "bright"), and many are capable of speech. Most, however, are about as cunning as eagles and lions are.

SEE P. 8 IN
GUIDE TO THE
FORTUNE DECK
FOR INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
GRIFFIN CARD.

Griffins are ferocious hunters and are a great danger to those who travel through their lands because they hunt for sport (whether they intend to eat their prey or not). Luckily, griffins love to chase down horses, and travelers have learned to avoid griffin attacks by jumping off of their mounts and letting the beasts fend for themselves. Even when no human lives are lost, however, the time and expense wasted in losing horses in a griffin attack make travel through griffin-infested lands an unattractive option.



The Griffin in Game Terms

Air	6	7	Fire
Water	4	5	Earth

Griffins are armed from tip to tail.

They fight with powerful beaks, savage talons, razor-sharp hind claws, and sharp spurs hidden in the tufts at the ends of their tails. They are even known to beat their prey with their bony wings, which are powerful enough to knock a person senseless.

Like eagles, most griffins live in lifelong mated pairs who often hunt together, although there are some griffins that live alone. On a hunt, griffins are straightforward in their strategy: They dive after prey of any size, fearless even of larger creatures or well-prepared warriors.

Some people have learned how to tame griffins as mounts, but a griffin will reject any rider it senses to be less brave than it is. Being rejected by a griffin generally means being bucked off at a great height. Even when broken, however, griffins can be dangerous mounts. They are prone to charging enemies, and a rider may have a hard time breaking off a charge once it's begun. Fighting on griffinback is also much trickier than on horseback, as the rider must take care not to strike the mount's wings. The beak and claws of the tamed griffin, however, more than make up for the rider's reduced combat capabilities.

Adventurers have braved the mountains where griffins live in order to get griffin cubs, which they sell to those who want a griffin without having to tame a wild one. Griffins raised in captivity are not as fierce as their wild cousins, and many griffin-riders refuse to ride them.

The Dragon

In the age before humanity, the gods and goddesses created the dragons: glorious, nearly perfect creatures that ruled the skies, seas, and lands. Taken with their own majesty, however, they rebelled against their creators. Their war was doomed, and the dragons were eventually defeated.

Though they loved their beautiful creations, the deities punished the dragons for warring against them. From each dragon, the deities took one or more gifts, such as flight, intellect, self-control, great size, magical ability, and so on. As each dragon's

punishment was different, each dragon's progeny bore a different flaw. This is why some dragons fly while others walk, some breathe fire while others cannot, and so on. They are the most varied of these six common types of creatures. Most dragons retain at least a predator's cunning, if not a particularly keen intellect, but most are prone to fits of rage, a response to their terrible, fallen state.

Dragons are rare creatures and tend to be solitary. They are isolated from people for two reasons. First, many dragons wish to be alone with their loss and resent the happy, prosperous humans. Second, most humans are anxious to pack up and leave when a dragon settles in the area. Many dragons are even loathe to live with their own kind; the faults of other dragons only remind them of their own tragic loss.

Dragons, however, do occasionally come together, mate, and rear offspring. As dragons do not die of old age, they do not need to mate often to maintain their population. Rarely, a baby dragon gets the gifts of both parents, so that a wingless, fire-breathing dragon and a winged, fireless dragon might mate and produce a winged, fire-breathing dragon. More often, though, the offspring has the gifts of one or the other, but not both. Most often, offspring are born with the flaws of both parents. Most offspring of the dragon parents in the example above, for example, would have neither flame nor wing. Thus the oldest dragons are the most powerful and the youngest lack even the gifts of their stricken elders.

The Phoenix

The phoenix is a marvelous bird that is larger than a peacock and just as brightly plumed. Every thousand years the phoenix builds a pyre of twigs and herbs. As the sun sets, the phoenix claps its wings together and sets the pyre on fire. The phoenix is consumed by the flames, but when the fire dies down, a

SEE P. 6 IN GUIDE
TO THE FORTUNE
DECK FOR INFOR-
MATION ABOUT THE
DRAGON CARD.

The Dragon in Game Terms

Air 7 7 Fire
Water 4 8 Earth

Dragons vary greatly, so the Elements listed above should not be taken as typical. These Elements represent a small or medium-sized dragon, rather than the rare larger type.

A dragon may have one or more of the following gifts, or none at all. Each gift

is tied to an Element, and the dragon's score in that Element determines its ability with that gift. The most typical dragon has the first five gifts (size, immunities, flight, fiery breath, and speech) but none of the others. Gifts are listed from most common to least common.

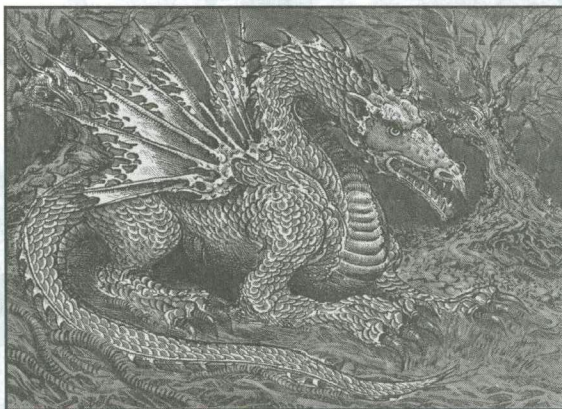
SIZE (EARTH): Most dragons are gigantic, but some are as small as cats.

IMMUNITIES (EARTH): Dragons can be immune to various things, including poison, magic, fire, and psychic intrusion.

FLIGHT (AIR): Most dragons can fly as fast as a horse can run.

FIERY BREATH (FIRE): This gift wounds or kills those whose Earth scores are weaker than the dragon's Fire score.

SPEECH (AIR): Dragons speak both their own lan-



guage (which they are slow to share with humans) and the Tongue. A dragon may have a strong Air score but be unable to speak. Note that some dragons without the gift of speech can still understand speech.

SENSING INTRUDERS (WATER): A dragon with this gift can detect those sneaking up on it, stealing its treasure, or otherwise intruding.

IMPENETRABLE SCALES (EARTH): Some dragons have scales that deflect all normal weapons (though the deities gave every such dragon at least one weak spot in its armor).

MAGIC (ELEMENT VARIES): This gift is generally the magical ability to speak Words of Power, which is tied to Air; different magical styles are related to different Elements.

VENOMOUS SMOKE (FIRE): The smoke the dragon creates weakens those who inhale it and poisons its surroundings.

SHAPESHIFTING (FIRE): Some dragons can take particular shapes (the human form is common), while others can change into almost any shape they care to.



The Phoenix in Game Terms

Air	8	2	Fire
Water	10	10	Earth

The phoenix can anticipate attacks and avoid them. It is also immune to magic cast by anyone younger than it is (which means it might be vulnerable to a dragon's magic). If anyone manages to kill or seriously wound a phoenix, it bursts into flame and reappears unharmed. Those nearby are burned (and they do not regenerate as the phoenix does).

young phoenix can be found among the ashes.

The phoenix has a single, golden feather on its breast. Anyone who can snatch the feather from the phoenix is assured good luck and prosperity for life. The feather doesn't grow back until the phoenix is reborn.

Some scholars suggest that every sphere has just one phoenix. Those who hold that there is one phoenix on every sphere believe that the phoenix is somehow tied to the life of the sphere itself. In rejuvenating itself, they say, the phoenix keeps the sphere alive and fresh.

SEE P. 11 IN
GUIDE TO
THE FORTUNE
DECK FOR
INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
PHOENIX CARD.

Because they are immortal, phoenixes often know many secrets about bygone ages, which they have been known to share with those who can find them. They favor dry lands and have been known to fly far from home. The phoenix has a remarkable ability to sense danger and to keep itself from harm, so those who hunt it are rarely successful. Sometimes it even intentionally goads its pursuers, all the while keeping out of reach. Still, the promise of assured good fortune is enough to send many people in pursuit of the fabled bird.

The Satyr

Satyr's are human from the waist up but have goats' legs. They also have goats' horns and thick body hair, especially the males. Satyr's live in woody areas, sometimes far from humans, sometimes on the border of civilized lands. Their bands contain anywhere from several to a hundred individuals, though these bands rarely work together to form an even larger group. Satyr's are great lovers of rowdy pleasures, including strong drink, wild dancing, mad

SEE P. 11 IN
GUIDE TO THE
FORTUNE
DECK FOR
INFORMATION ABOUT
THE SATYR CARD.

flutes and drums, brawling, and physical passion. These tendencies prevent satyrs from being loners, as they seek others of their kind for the sake of the parties. They also prevent satyrs from holding together as a large group too tightly or for too long, as their parties inevitably lead to fights and hard feelings. Usually satyrs keep themselves entertained, but sometimes they raid human villages and drag humans off to join their parties. During these raids, they also take the opportunity to restock their reserves of wine.

In some places, satyrs behave themselves well enough to trade with humans. The satyrs provide pelts, meat, and other goods from the woods. In exchange, they want wine, pipes, metal spearheads, and so on. While satyrs can interact peacefully with humans, it's a rare satyr that can actually live among humans without eventually being driven out or killed.

Satyrs can be dangerous, as they've been known to form bands and attack travelers. Sometimes they are after loot, but they've also been known to attack people for the "sport" of combat. Fortunately, satyrs don't have the armaments, training, discipline, or planning to make them really dangerous to prepared human warriors.

While satyrs can hardly be said to worship, they do revere and adore Pan, god of the Wood. They say Pan comes to their wilder parties, but who believes satyrs?

The Unicorn

In its most common form, the unicorn is a white horse with a spiral horn on its forehead. It lives alone in wild areas. With its horn as its primary weapon, the unicorn is a fierce fighter—strong,



The Satyr in Game Terms

Air	2	5	Fire
Water	3	6	Earth

Satyrs fight with spears, which they throw or use in hand-to-hand combat. They never wear armor. They are remarkably resistant to magic, poisons, and pain, and they recover quickly from wounds. Luckily, cunning humans find it easy to trick them.



The Unicorn in Game Terms

Air 8 7 Fire
Water 8 6 Earth

The unicorn's strong Air score partially represents the creature's superior hearing and swiftness. (It "runs like the wind.") These attributes, along with its great sensitivity, allow the unicorn to stay out of sight of most pursuers.

fast, and brave. As with horses, unicorn stallions are larger, stronger, and wilder than the mares.

The unicorn is attracted to humans, but only to those of exceptional virtue. Only the virtuous can tame and hope to ride the unicorn. Once a unicorn has bonded with a human, it will accompany its friend everywhere and gladly die to protect the one it loves. Those who ride unicorns into battle make dangerous enemies, but the rarity of unicorns and their choosiness regarding riders prevent unicorn-riders from ever serving as cavalry.

SEE P. 13 IN
GUIDE TO THE
FORTUNE
DECK FOR
INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
UNICORN CARD.

The horn of the unicorn is proof against poison. A cup made from the horn renders harmless any poison drink poured into it, as spoons and forks will render poisoned food harmless. Ground unicorn horn is also a chief ingredient of healing poultices, potions, and powders.

Hunters after the high price that a unicorn horn can bring search futilely for the animal. It is too clever, fast, and sensitive to be brought down by arrows or spears. Some daring hunters stand in front of trees and goad unicorns into charging. If a hunter can dodge to the side at just the right time, the unicorn will miss the hunter and impale its horn in the tree. The hunter can then saw the horn off. This style of hunting, however, is very dangerous. If the hunter jumps aside too early, the unicorn will veer and impale the hunter. Hunters who jump too late are likewise impaled.

Among the spheres, there are many other kinds of unicorns. They can be small and gentle, large and ferocious, sleek and docile, or any of several other types and temperaments. Some unicorns resemble white, single-horned goats. Others have horselike heads and bodies, but also have antelopes' legs, goats' beards, and lions' tails. Still others are horse-shaped but have unusual coloring.

Other Creatures

Creatures of all description have been found among the spheres. Gamemasters can invent creatures for their quests, and players sometimes invent creatures that are part of their heroes' backgrounds. In addition, players often invent creatures to be companions for their heroes. Below are some examples of creatures that may be found among the spheres:

- mermaids whose beautiful songs lure sailors to the rocks
- vampires that feed by night on the blood of the living
- statues that have been brought to life by magic
- elemental creatures whose bodies are made of fire, earth, air, or water
- badger-sized rats that run in great packs
- bull-like beasts that eat poisonous herbs and therefore have deadly breath
- talking owls that can tell friendly people what's been happening in the area at night, but not during the day
- intelligent cats that dupe their "masters" into thinking they're just normal cats but secretly run affairs in the town
- large hounds that only appear during nights of the full moon, roaming and hunting in packs
- trees that talk and move about but care little for the ways of humans
- brutish ogres that menace travelers through wild lands
- serpents that have second heads where their tails ought to be, and whose breath is foul because they can't excrete their wastes
- suits of plate armor that move about and fight with weapons, but are empty

Mythic Creatures



The world's myths provide plenty of ideas for monsters, such as the Minotaur, Hydra, and Sphinx of Greek mythology. Gamemasters can create monsters for their quests based on these creatures if they wish. One question a gamemaster needs to answer, however, is whether these creatures are unique, as they are in the original myths, or members of a population. For instance, the Minotaur of myth was a unique creature, the only one of its kind. For EVERWAY, however, the gamemaster may choose to invent a race of minotaurs. I prefer to keep creatures such as this rare and solitary, or even unique, to preserve their specialness. I may put a minotaur in a labyrinth, but I won't invent a race of minotaurs. Questions like this, however, are matters of personal taste, another reason that each gamemaster's quests are different from every other gamemaster's quests.

- huge, serpentine sea monsters
- fish so large that when they float sleeping on the water's surface, dirt and plants settle on them, and they are mistaken for islands
- stealthy, agile cat-people
- beetles whose bites cause madness
- giant octopi that drag hapless people from shores and from the decks of ships
- serpent-people that wield ancient magics and speak the language of the dragons
- ogres that look like humans but eat human flesh when they get the chance
- seal-people that can take human shape, and that sometimes give up their seal ways when they fall in love with humans
- talking apes that are gentle and friendly unless riled


Fortune

NOTE THAT
HEROES HAVE
FORTUNES VERY
SIMILAR TO THOSE
REALMS HAVE (SEE
PP. 75-77). SEE
GUIDE TO THE
FORTUNE DECK
FOR MORE INFOR-
MATION ABOUT
THE FORTUNE
DECK.

The Fortune Deck is a deck of thirty-six cards that describe the basic forces that rule the cosmos, from a person's life to the fate of spheres. Each realm has three cards associated with it—known as its "Virtue," "Fault," and "Fate"—that define how the realm relates to these cosmic forces. Collectively, these three cards are known as the realm's "Fortune." These cards can change as the realm changes; they represent the current forces acting on the realm, not the realm's inherent nature.

The natives of a realm may know their realm's Fortune, or they may not. If they know the Fortune,

Men and Women Among the Spheres



Traditional roles for men and women vary from realm to realm. In some realms, there are clearly defined roles for men and for women. In many of these realms, people of one gender are accorded superior status, while the people of the other gender are regarded as anything from lesser people to (in extreme cases) property. In most realms with clear gender roles, however, men and women maintain a rough equality (even if most people think that theirs is the best gender). In many realms, one's gender does not lead others to expect any particular pattern of behavior from one.



When they create their realms and quests, gamemasters (consciously or unconsciously) determine what role gender plays in the lives of people among the spheres.

Playing Through the Fortune Deck



Before you begin play, shuffle the Fortune Deck. Each time you draw a card, place it off to one side in a discard pile. You can place the discarded cards face up if you want the players to see them or face down if you want the players not to see them. At some point you may want to shuffle the discarded cards together with the cards left in the deck (if any) to start fresh. You can reshuffle at any of these times:



- During a significant break in the action, such as when the spherewalkers go from one sphere to another, or after a climax of some kind. Reshuffling at this point indicates that the heroes are "starting over" in some way.



- After you draw The Usurper. Reshuffling after drawing The Usurper means that The Usurper is always in the deck, able to be drawn. It never goes to the discard pile.

- After you draw some other card, which you selected at the beginning of the session. This card should be important to the quest somehow, such as the Fate of the realm that the heroes are in.



- When you have only one card left in the deck. If you reshuffle before drawing the last card, that means that each time you go through the deck there is one card not brought into play, so each time through the deck offers a slightly different array of cards.



- If nothing else, you need to shuffle and start over when you run out of cards.



If you don't draw fortune cards often, you might rarely, if ever, have to reshuffle during a session.

they may label the cards differently, with terms and images that fit their culture better. For example, a hunting and gathering tribe that lives in a temperate, forested land might have The Lion as its Virtue. Since lions are unknown in their land, however, they may term their Virtue card “The Cougar” or “The Bear.”

Virtue

A realm’s Virtue card represents a strength, such as divine protection, traits of the people, the people’s position in history, and so on. For example, a realm whose people are especially mentally gifted may have The Eagle as its Virtue. A realm watched over by nature spirits may have Nature as its Virtue. For a realm that has a strong and just ruling senate, The King may be an appropriate Virtue. (Scholars may debate about whether the Virtue results from the strong senate or whether the realm is blessed with a strong senate because of its association with The King card.)

Fault

The Fault card may represent a weakness in the people themselves, a peril they face from spiritual forces, or mundane circumstances in the realm. For example, a realm of people who have no love of justice may have The Smith—reversed as its Fault. The Cockatrice would be an appropriate Fault for a realm plagued by unclean spirits that attempt to undermine the people’s spiritual or bodily health. A realm that has had good fortune in the past but is now suffering from a decline in discipline may have The Satyr as its Fault.

Fate

The Fate card indicates the central issue of the realm, a fork in the path of the realm’s future. It examines the two ways that the people may develop or decline, depending on their actions. For instance, a realm that is expanding and growing may have Summer (*energy vs. exhaustion*) as its Fate. This Fate would mean that the

people may either grow into a dynamic culture or dissipate and decline, depending on their actions. In many realms, powerful outsiders (such as the heroes) may tip the scales and help determine which way the Fate gets resolved.

Once a realm has met its Fate successfully, it gets a new Fate, and possibly a new Virtue and Fault to go with it. It may also get a new Fate (and Virtue and Fault) by meeting its Fate and failing in the face of it, or such a failure can leave the culture virtually unchanged and able to try again. The gamemaster determines how a realm’s Fortune changes after the realm has met its Fate.

Types of Realms

Below are several types of realms. Each description outlines a relatively typical realm, but the details are general enough that they don’t describe any particular realm. As a player, you may use this information to describe your hero’s background. As a gamemaster, you can use these realms as the basis for realms you create.

These guidelines focus on the more practical and general aspects of a realm’s description. As outlined above, the gamemaster can also add details about a realm’s Fortune, ceremonies, magical traditions, and so on.

City-State of the Holy Temple

An independent, walled city.

Rule: A hereditary king or queen rules the city-state. The ruler is either also the head of the religion or has the blessing of the religion’s leaders. The ruler controls the populace through an army, as well as by charisma. In good times, the ruler establishes order, while in times of decline, he or she prospers simply by robbing the other inhabitants.

Religion: The realm devotes itself to one deity above all others and may take its name from that deity. The other deities related to this patron enjoy worship as well. The center (spiritually, if not physically) of the city-state is the temple, the deity's home when visiting the city. Typically, the deity inhabits and animates a statue in the temple. The statue is inert when the deity is not present. The statue is the center of the temple, which is the center of the city, which is the center of the realm. The further one gets from the city (and thus further from the deity), the wilder and more dangerous the land becomes.

People: Racially, the people are mostly homogenous because the population is small. However, certain different ethnic subgroups live in the city. These groups may have special (usually lower) status. The people (except, perhaps, for those in these subgroups) consider themselves aligned to the temple, the deity, and the ruler, who are all interlinked. These people may also see themselves as like the inhabitants of neighboring realms but different from more distant people.

Economy: The city-state lives on the surplus of the surrounding farms and herds. (The surrounding land is fertile enough to support a small city but not a huge one.) They also trade with other city-states and have access to goods from distant realms. A strong city-state has a few other city-states that pay it tribute, and a

weak one owes tribute to a neighbor. Many are independent of others.

War: When it's strong enough, the army raids or conquers neighboring city-states. Usually, however, the army is busy deterring neighbors from attacking.



Magic: The priests and priestesses of the temple are the realm's magicians. They support the population, protect the ruler, impress visitors with their power, and so on. The nature of their powers is linked to the nature of the patron god or goddess, but the priests and priestesses also have magical knowledge that works independent of the deity's intervention.

Technology: Smiths work mostly with copper and bronze (which is much stronger than copper but also much more expensive). The buildings are made of stone or adobe.

Learning: Scribes, who are few, learn writing by using sticks to imprint words on clay. Even the scribes know little of distant lands.

Domesticated Animals: Cattle, asses, horses, mules, chickens, pigs, and cattle are abundant.

Common Foods: Grain, made into bread and beer, is the land's staple.

Outsider Contact: The people look to outsiders with a combination of suspicion and avarice. They

are often incredulous of those who speak of realms that are any larger or grander than their own.

The Priestess's People

An expansive nation united by ceremony and ritual.

NOTE: THE PRIESTESS REPRESENTS "UNDER-STANDING MYSTERIES." **Rule:** Priests and priestesses for various tasks have authority commensurate with their experience. Representatives from each village meet at the central city to bring news, appeal for rulings, and relay orders.

Religion: A single religion serves the entire populace, but different clans have different cults and ways of worship. Each cult has its secrets and rites, but all take part in the communal rituals. The communal rituals assure the favor of the deities, allowing the people to prosper in the dry, harsh climate. During these rituals, representatives from various clans don costumes and "become" deities.

People: The people are racially homogenous. Outsiders who wish to join must be adopted by members of the nation. The people divide themselves into clans, and individuals earn more or less respect depending on merit, but there are no castes or classes as such.

Economy: Extraordinary goods are traded among clans and villages, as well as with other nations across the land. Villages and families, however, are mostly self-sufficient.

War: War priests and priestesses conduct war when necessary, mostly to defend the nation from less civilized neighbors. The people fight only with hunting weapons: spears, slings, bows, and knives. The only weapon made just for warfare is the shield. The people depend as much on ritual as on strategy to keep their land secure.

Magic: Clans all have their own magic techniques and secrets. Magic is an everyday part of life, with symbols used on even the simplest implements. Certain clans and individuals, however, are particularly adept at magic. In addition, some sever clan ties and live on the outskirts of the society to pursue magical or mystic paths.

Technology: Smiths work with silver, gold, and sand-polished gems for ornaments. Tools are made of flint, wood, leather, and clay. All work is done by hand. They do not have the wheel.

Learning: A large array of symbols preserves the peoples' wisdom, but they have no written language as such. The people learn both national and clan histories and philosophies.

Domesticated Animals: Dogs serve for watching and hunting.

Common Foods: The people cultivate corn, gather vegetables, and hunt game of all kinds.

Outsider Contact: They are cautious in dealing with outsiders, whom they often find shallow or violent.

Land of a Million Deities

A land steeped in tradition and filled with gods and goddesses of all descriptions.

Rule: The emperor or empress, first-born child of the imperial bloodline, rules a vast land and dozens of hereditary kings and queens, each of whom rules a kingdom. A kingdom may comprise anywhere from ten thousand to a hundred thousand people. The priests and priestesses, however, officially grant the kings and queens the sanction of the deities. Should any ruler displease the priests and priestesses, the blessings will be revoked, and the ruler will fall.

Religion: The gods and goddesses number in the millions, and each of them enjoys a great number of worshipers. Several deities in particular, however, stand out, and most people choose to worship only one (believing all the gods and goddesses are manifestations of the One). There is no fixed system of worship: some pray, others meditate, others make sacrifices. Shrines and temples have ornate carvings that teach people about the deities and about the realm's spiritual history. (Creating religious art is an act of worship in and of itself.)

People: There are basically two social groups: those who live in the countryside (which is relatively wild) and the dominant group of village-dwellers. The two groups rarely mingle. The villagers divide themselves into a hierarchy of hereditary groups (castes), which are socially isolated from each other by elaborate customs and taboos. The culture contains a few distinct ethnic groups.

Economy: A sophisticated monetary system prevails, with a multitude of coins and moneylenders. One's caste determines one's choices of possible occupations, and hereditary guilds govern the economy. This system leads to a smooth-running interdependence among the castes and helps induce a great tolerance for neighbors with strange or even offensive beliefs.

War: A noble warrior-class composes a standing army, which conquers new territory and pacifies outposts of the realm. The soldiers have magnificent equipment and excellent training. During good times, the soldiers are distant, noble, and even-handed. During times of decline, they are haughty and heartless.

Magic: Wizards and fortunetellers are commonplace. People regularly call upon various deities to bless them or help them.

Technology: Scholars teach and study in large, fine universities, amassing great academic knowledge in their chosen fields. Artisans and engineers, however, are slow to implement innovations in their work. Developing new ways of doing things is seen as a sin against the memory of ancestors who performed the tasks before.

Learning: Reading and writing are common among the upper castes, but the poor and lower castes are mostly illiterate. The courtly traditions of poetry, drama, and song are elaborate, combining innovation with tradition. Dramatists, however, do not write tragedy because they believe that karma rules the world and that no one suffers worse than is deserved.

Domesticated Animals: Cows, bulls, sheep, chickens, and camels provide food and labor.

Common Foods: Cooked grains and vegetables, fish, meat, and eggs. One's caste determines one's diet, though certain holy people avoid eating flesh. Tea is a common drink.

Outsider Contact: Visitors find that the scope and high civilization of the realm make trade profitable. In addition, the caste system makes the natives used to dealing with people they consider "strange," so outsiders find themselves welcome.

The Plains Hunters

A nomadic tribe of hunters.

Rule: Individuals exercise authority in proportion to the renown they've earned. No one person is the ruler of the tribe, though there are chiefs for war, for worship, for bison-hunting, for rabbit-hunting, for shield-making, and for any other activity for which one can benefit from another's expertise.

Religion: A patron deity guides and protects the tribe and in return expects the people to follow

the path of virtue. The people know of other deities and tell stories about them but do not worship them.

People: The people are racially homogenous. Occasionally children from other tribes are adopted, but this is rare. The people generally live in different areas, spreading themselves out so as not to tax the land's bounty. They gather for great purposes, however, such as bison-hunting, worship, and war. The people of the nation consider themselves a large family; murder in this tribe is as heinous a crime as kin-killing is in most other realms.

Economy: Most people know how to make most goods, so there is little trade and no money. Valued items are those things that one has made one's own through magic and ritual. Since the magic will not work for those who steal such items, and since common items can be made by nearly anyone, theft is virtually unheard of. Nevertheless, these people do trade with others for unique and extraordinary items from distant realms.

War: The people war only rarely. They fight with hunting weapons; the only military weapon they have is the shield. Those who wish to devote themselves to war join a special band of "wild ones." They are both socially and physically separated from the rest of the tribe. Wild ones use dull, wooden spears in battle; they

prove their courage by touching enemies, not by killing them.

Magic: Everyone uses magic, including through participation in ceremonies and rituals. Every shield is magical, with its abilities linked to its owner, who is also its crafter. In order to keep a shield working, its owner must comply with certain ritual duties and oaths; the more powerful the shield, the greater the restrictions. Duties and oaths can include right conduct, bravery, voluntary hardships, service to the tribe's patron deity, and so on.

Technology: The people use stone, wood, and animal products for their tools. As they are nomadic, they keep personal possessions to a minimum. They use horses for riding and hauling, but humans provide power for everything else. They do not have the wheel.

Learning: The people maintain their tradition orally. They know little about other people, even those whose paths they cross regularly.

Domesticated Animals: Horses are ridden and used to haul goods.

Common Foods: The people eat all manner of game, especially bison. As they are nomadic, they do not plant crops but instead gather foods of all kinds.



Outsider Contact: They regard others as having little in common with them. Outsiders must earn every bit of respect they receive.

The Middle Kingdom

A sophisticated kingdom administered by a cadre of scholars and functionaries.

Rule: A king or queen rules over several provinces that once warred with each other but are now united. During good times, the ruler rules the land as one would fry a small fish: gently. During times of decline, the ruler is a tyrant who uses force and executions to keep nobles in line. Supporting the king or queen is a huge bureaucracy of scholar-officials and administrators, whose ranks depend on their performance in examinations. During good times, these scholars are wise and just; during decline, they are schemers, or aloof and uncaring bureaucrats.

Religion: This society is tolerant of all religions, but the most important belief systems are philosophical and atheistic, not strictly religious. These philosophies show their followers the paths to wisdom, understanding, and immortality. The closest people to the deities in these beliefs are those who delay their own ascension to heaven or nirvana so they can help people on earth.

People: The people are united by a kinship based on the concept of family. It is believed that strong family bonds encourage mutual respect, kindness, and strength. Social status is based on occupation, with nobles ruling, followed by the military, civil servants, artisans, peasants, and merchants. Merchants are regarded as the lowest class because they profit from the work of others, making nothing themselves. Skill and cleverness enable one to change station, but most prefer to excel in their hereditary fields. The

kingdom includes people of different ethnic heritages. The king or queen arranges marriages between nobles of different groups to encourage intermarriage and harmony among the people.

Economy: Trade is common, with caravans, riverboats, and seagoing vessels heading out in all directions. (It is this expansive trade that gives the natives the impression that they are in the "Middle Kingdom.") Trade, especially the export of refined goods, has made this society quite wealthy. Coins and ingots are the most common means of exchange, but paper money is also in limited use.

War: A powerful military class commands great respect, but it is considered more prestigious to prevent conflict through careful diplomacy than to win a war.

Magic: There are three basic sorts of magic practiced here: alchemical, medical, and scientific magic practiced by philosophers; rituals to control demons; and rigorous physical training that brings forth miraculous spiritual abilities.

Technology: Encouraged by their rulers, these people have invented countless new devices, including new alloys, the printing press, sophisticated types of paper, kites for testing air currents, kites large enough to carry a person into the air, etc. Clockwork creations of all kinds are common. Alchemists produce a great variety of medicines as well as explosives.

Learning: Most people outside the peasantry receive an education. Printing makes it possible to disseminate the wisdom of renowned masters. The people highly prize the three arts of writing, poetry, and painting, and many people read books, especially those devoted to philosophy.

Domesticated Animals: Cattle, horses, chickens, and pigs are common farming animals. The

wealthy ride horses or use them to haul carriages. Fishers train cormorants to catch fish.

Common Foods: Ordinary people live on beans, grains, vegetables, and very little meat. Food is usually steamed or stewed, but to save on fuel, food is chopped into small pieces for frying. The cooks are experts at blending herbs and spices, not only to disguise the taste of food gone bad but also to enhance the flavor of their otherwise bland meals. Freshness is paramount to cooks who can afford fresh food. The people drink tea and plum wine.

Outsider Contact: Far-ranging trade means that the people have been exposed to many foreign ideas, if not to many actual foreign people. An ambassador's fleet has been set up to travel the world to visit other lands and demonstrate the kingdom's great naval power. As the kingdom is large and prosperous, outsiders are likely to be accepted, provided they pay due respect to this "mightiest of all kingdoms" and its "most exalted ruler."

Tribes of the Sun Lands

Tribes of eternal summer.

Rule: Each village is led by a headman or headwoman, the person who has proved most able to hold great festivals, gain respect, and provide good things. The villages respect a great chief who can lead all the people in times of war or other crisis, but the great chief must earn the position. The way to earn status is by giving goods away. Village leaders bring gifts to the great chief, who gives them gifts in exchange. Leaders who are able to make their people prosper can offer the greatest gifts, so they earn the highest status.

Religion: The people turn to a variety of gods and goddesses to help and guide them

through various challenges. The most important deities are those that provide guidance in the most important areas, such as war and fertility. Shamans intercede between the earthly and spirit worlds, protecting mortals from demons and gaining the aid of angels, as the wilderness and the night are full of spirits.

People: The people are racially homogenous when compared to others outside the nation, but they regard each village and clan as distinct. People of various villages are mostly separate from each other, but they gather a few times a year for festivals of various sizes. These festivals are opportunities for trade, gossip, and courtship. At these festivals, leaders of families, clans, and villages exchange gifts, the primary way to earn status.

Economy: The people trade goods, such as pelts, crafted items, iron implements, and the like. While often the people barter directly for goods they want, usually traders exchange goods of general value, items that serve almost as money. There are no coins used.

War: The great chief can lead the people to war, but he or she usually spends more time making peace among the people.

Magic: Shamans are the magicians of these people, dealing with spirits of all kinds. A shaman's power is linked to some permanent injury or lasting illness; whole and healthy people do not become shamans. Evil people, however, may join a secret society of sorcerers; the price of entry is the lifeblood of a sibling.

Technology: Smiths use magic and their patron deity's help to work iron. They guard their secret spells jealously. Softer metals are worked by others, but most materials are those found in the jungle: skins, bones, feathers, sinew, and wood.

Learning: Storytellers teach the history of the people and their deities, the rules of proper conduct, and the way to understand life and one's part in it. The role of storyteller is revered.

Domesticated Animals: The people herd cattle for milk, meat, and leather. Hunters sometimes bring home the young of animals they've killed and raise them as pets.

Common Foods: Various vegetables grow in small plots, and many types of food are found in the jungle.

Outsider Contact: Outsiders who can offer good gifts are respected, but those who refuse gifts in return or who never offer gifts are not welcome. Those who bring worked iron goods may encounter resistance from the smiths, who do not want others to provide what they provide.

The Smith's Realm

A mighty realm with a strong military and brilliant engineers.

Rule: This huge realm is composed largely of conquered territories, whose people are very different from those of the capital. A royal ruler governs through regional governors, who are in turn assisted by city-level magistrates. A large body of law defines crimes and punishments, provides livelihood for lawyers, and establishes consistency, if not true justice. In the provinces, local people are allowed to run their own affairs, as long as such practices

do not undermine the authority of the governors or seem too heinous to the magistrates.

Religion: The people worship hundreds of different gods, goddesses, and their minions, though a handful are regarded as the most powerful and are therefore the most widely worshipped. In the capital and other central areas,



imported cults, mystery religions, and esoteric philosophies add to the smorgasbord of religious possibilities. People ensure divine favor through prayer or sacrifice. Everyone offers sacrifices to the major deities at central temples, and most venerate local gods and goddesses at smaller shrines. Animal sacrifices range from single birds to whole herds of cattle. People also sacrifice food and drink, burn incense on altars, and offer small items, such as coins or jewelry.

People: The three basic social classes are citizens, commoners, and slaves. The citizenry comprises governors and administrators, soldiers, and the wealthy. With merit or wealth, one can improve one's status. Men and women are relatively equal.

Economy: Coins are minted by imperial authority, and everyone across the realm uses these coins in everyday transactions. The most common metal for them is silver, but gold coins (each worth a hundred silver ones) serve for large transactions. The realm prospers through

trade and manufacture, both regulated by powerful guilds.

War: A standing, prosperous army maintains order and patrols the borders. Through service, soldiers can gain citizenship, land, and promotions to administrative positions. Forts in the provinces serve as trade centers and settlements. The soldiers often marry locals, helping spread the realm's culture and solidifying relations with the provinces.

Magic: Teams of priests and priestesses conduct massive rituals to bless and maintain the realm. Astrologers and sages sell their services to the wealthy. Secretive mages work their magic in isolated schools or alone, and others pass on their secrets through mystery religions.

Technology: Engineers perform feats that would be regarded as miraculous in other realms. Small-scale technology meshes with civil engineering on a huge scale. Aqueducts, for example, supply cities with water, and plumbing then takes that water even to buildings' upper floors. From individual craftspeople to government engineers, the artisans of the realm are remarkably skilled. (These engineers and their skills are what connects this realm to the Smith card.)

Learning: Well-off children study under parents or tutors, and nobles can train for careers in law or government. The wealthy can hire tutors from distant realms to provide specialized education. The poor receive no formal education, and children are put to work with their parents at an early age.

Domesticated Animals: Cows, goats, sheep, and chickens are raised for food. Dogs, cats, and small birds are common pets.

Common Foods: Diet centers on grains, beans, and a little meat. Disguising food with spices, sauces, and clever serving styles is fashionable. Few of the urban poor have kitchens, so they buy food from public stalls in marketplaces. Poultry and vegetables are common, but fish is expensive because it spoils so quickly. Dairy products such as cheese are also available. Wine is a common drink.

Outsider Contact: The realm is blessed with a peaceful life, made possible by the presence of the imperial army. Therefore, trade is easy and safe. Soldiers, politicians, traders, and even simple tourists travel freely across the realm, bringing new ideas and fashions from other lands. People from outside the realm, therefore, can find that they are easily accepted. In fact, they may find themselves popular in urban centers, where the wealthy are eager to meet exotic people with strange tales to tell.

Land of Castles

A realm where warlords rule from fortresses of stone.

Rule: Nobles rule as much land as they can control. In good times, a strong ruler unites a vast land, with each swearing fealty to a higher-ranking ruler, from petty noble up to the king or queen. In chaotic times, one's authority extends only as far as one's troops can patrol, and petty warlords squabble constantly.

Religion: An organized, hierarchical religion works separately from the rulers, and sometimes temporal and religious leaders compete with each other. The religion supports priests and priestesses, scribes, monks, administrators, and mystics. At the top, the religion is devoted to a single deity, which may be portrayed as omnipotent and universal. At the level of individual worshipers, however, local deities or

saints are more important than the religion's central deity.

People: A history of conquest has led to a racially mixed population. Some ethnic groups are legally recognized, segregated, and even persecuted, while others mix with a good degree of freedom. Three main classes predominate: the ruling warriors, the educated priests and priestesses, and the peasantry. People either spread themselves across the countryside or congregate around castles, where they can find shelter from raiders.

Economy: While the commoners rarely see coins, merchants and nobles use silver (and sometimes gold) as a medium of exchange. Periodic fairs are opportunities for peasants to trade for goods from cities or foreign realms.

War: Only the nobles and their knights may use weapons. Landholders owe military service to their rulers, so the rulers can muster armies without supporting them year round. Sometimes the rulers may find common cause and send armies against a distant foe. More often, they pose and squabble and fight among themselves.

Magic: Priests and priestesses use magic tied to their patron deity. As educated people, they can also learn other magical arts. The commoners, however, depend on local folk mages

for spells, healing, protective charms, and so on. The priests and priestesses see folk mages as competitors, but they lack the power to ban folk magic.

Technology: Smiths use steel for the most important implements: weapons. All manner of other metals are made into other tools, decorations, and so on. Engineers can erect large, stone fortresses, on which rulers depend. Horses, mules, and oxen provide power.



Learning: The peasants teach their children through stories, but the only formal learning is found among the priests, priestesses, and monks. Teachers value memorization more than innovation.

Domesticated Animals: Horses, mules, and oxen serve as beasts of burden. Pigs, chickens, sheep, and cattle provide meat,

eggs, wool, and milk. Dogs and cats serve their masters as guards, hunters, and mousers.

Common Foods: Farms grow rye, barley, wheat, oats, and vegetables. Eggs, cheese, and meat are also common, though expensive, foods.

Outsider Contact: The people, especially the nobility, are suspicious of strangers. The priests and priestesses, concerned about retaining control over what the people believe, may be particularly unwilling to welcome strangers.





This chapter explains how you create a hero for **EVERWAY**. This information is important for players, who create their heroes following these rules, as well as for gamemasters, who help the players along. As long as the gamemaster knows these rules fairly well, players can create heroes without reading or referring to this chapter.

Your Hero

The Setting

Before you can create a hero, you need to know something about the game's setting. The quests and stories that you create when you play **EVERWAY** take place among a million parallel worlds, all tied to the timeless world we see in myths and faerie tales. Among these worlds, one might find brave knights who ride brightly decorated steeds, a temple for worship of a hundred gods and goddesses sprawling in the middle of a bustling port, a lost civilization on an uncharted island, a flight of birds that portends doom, a secret society whose members take the forms of leopards, a shaman who has gathered strange items from across the world to work powerful spells, a magic mirror that reveals something hidden about each person who looks into it, an emperor who rides in a litter everywhere and never touches his foot to the floor, a wise woman who can cure illnesses with herbs and incantations, a noble family that harbors a terrible secret, a mighty dragon that shares its treasure with those who amuse it and eats anyone else who talks to it, dark woods that hide all



“Heroes,” “Players,” and Other Terms



As in a book or film, the fictitious people in *EVERWAY* are called “characters.” The term “heroes” refers specifically to the characters that the players portray, or “run,” and it carries a double meaning: Not only are these characters the “heroes,” or protagonists, of the stories that you and your friends create, but they are also “heroic” in their abilities and actions. Other characters, those portrayed by the gamemaster, are “background characters.” Just because they are called background characters doesn’t mean that these characters are unimportant. Relative to the heroes, however, they are part of the background.



The people who portray the heroes in a particular quest are players, a term that also carries a double meaning: They are both “playing” the game and “playing” (portraying) their characters. The person who runs the quest and portrays the background characters is the gamemaster. Even though the gamemaster plays the game, he or she is not referred to as a player because the gamemaster’s role is much larger than that of portraying a character. The gamemaster sets the scene, manages the pace, handles the Fortune Deck, guides the plot, and more. See also the Glossary of “Words in Game Play” on pp. 3–4.

manner of goblins and monsters, and rituals conducted under the full moon.

The Heroes

You will create a hero, a character from a fantastic realm of your design. Every hero is a spherewalker, someone capable of traveling through gates from sphere to sphere. You and the other players portray your heroes in the game, guiding their actions as they explore magical worlds and face various challenges.

The hero that you will portray has abilities well above the norm. An average hero can handily defeat most people in contests of tactics or cleverness, defeat two or more typical opponents in combat, resist magic and poisons that would bring down most people, and sense magical energies that most people cannot detect. (These abilities are measured by a hero’s Air, Fire, Earth, and Water scores, respectively. See pp. 88–95.) In addition, many heroes have special abilities or traits that also make them exceptional, and some cast spells.

SEE P. 5–10 TO
READ MORE ABOUT
SPHEREWALKERS,
GATES, SPHERES,
AND SO ON.

Each hero, however, is unique. Some are no better than average at particular tasks while having legendary status in other endeavors. You make these choices as you create your hero.

During play, your hero and those of the other players explore new realms, traveling through gates to move from sphere to sphere. In each new realm, the heroes face new challenges that test their courage, wits, and skill. Throughout the universe there are perils, injustices, sorrows, and catastrophes that heroic spherewalkers set to rights.

SEE P. 21 TO
READ MORE
ABOUT THE
LIBRARY OF ALL
WORLDS.

You determine why your hero is walking the spheres and why he or she aids those in need, but remember that your hero must be able to work with the other players' heroes or else the group cannot succeed.

Some spherewalkers explore new worlds to fulfill some quest, searching new realms for legendary goals. Others work for the Library of All Worlds in the city of Everway, gathering knowledge and wonders from new spheres. Some pursue the mighty goals of spreading justice and fighting evil, while others are simply restless and adventurous, finding no other way of life to be satisfying. Some spherewalkers have committed grievous crimes or caused great suffering, and they have been commanded by their rulers or deities to atone by righting wrongs in distant lands. Some seek their own gain, looking for rare treasures and precious secrets in other realms. Finally, some spherewalkers see new spheres and the challenges they represent as opportunities to learn both mundane and spiritual lessons, as testing grounds for their bodies, minds, and souls. Spherewalkers are above the norm, and many have noble goals that would be too great or subtle for the average person.

Creating Your Hero

You create your hero in six main stages: the vision stage, the identity stage, the Powers stage, the Elements stage, the Magic stage, and the questions stage. You can take these stages in any order and move back and forth among them freely. They are described here in an order that many players find easy to use.

These stages give you a complete hero, ready to undertake the quests that a game of **EVERWAY** is

Ready- to-Run Heroes



Twelve read-to-run heroes are included in this game set. While reading this chapter, you'll want to keep them at hand. Look them over when you read a section that particularly interests you or one that leaves you with questions. These heroes serve as examples of how the various aspects of a hero come together to define the character.



If you're an experienced roleplayer, you can play a ready-to-run hero as your own, especially if you don't have time to invent your own hero. All you need to do with a ready-to-run hero is participate in the questions stage of creating heroes. Each hero comes with "Questions for Development" to help you start thinking about the hero's background. In a pinch, you can even skip the questions stage and jump right into play. Creating your own hero, however, is a lot of fun, so don't pass up that opportunity if you don't have to. Beginning roleplayers generally have trouble portraying heroes that they haven't invented themselves, so don't try to run a ready-to-run hero unless you're experienced with roleplaying.

all about. Your hero, however, is never “finished.” The more you play, the better you come to understand your hero, and the more developed the hero becomes.

TO HELP PLAYERS
MAKE THEIR HEROES
MORE QUICKLY,
ESPECIALLY FOR A
FIRST GAME, THE
GAMEMASTER CAN
HAVE THE PLAYERS
SKIP ANY OF THE
FOLLOWING STEPS:
THE MOTIVE STEP,
THE VIRTUE STEP,
THE FAULT STEP,
THE FATE STEP,
THE MAGIC STEP,
AND THE SPECIALTIES
STEP. IF YOU SKIP
THEM, YOU WILL
NEED TO COMPLETE
THESE STEPS
ANOTHER TIME.

2. The Identity Stage

You develop the concept of who your hero is. Identity includes the following:

Name: Your hero’s name. Most names in EVERWAY are either common words or based on common words, such as “Fireson,” “Chance,” “Heather,” or “Heavensent.”

Motive: Your hero’s basic motive for traveling among the spheres.

Virtue: A card from the Fortune Deck representing your hero’s special strength, gift, or luck.

1. The Vision Stage

You develop the general vision of your hero in these steps:

Premise: The game-master describes the premise for the quest, or the players develop one.

Vision Cards: Select five vision cards and use them to develop a basic idea of who your hero is.

Introduction: Introduce your hero to the other players, who also introduce their heroes to the group.

Fault: A card from the Fortune Deck representing your hero’s special weakness or vice.

Fate: A card from the Fortune Deck representing your hero’s destiny.

3. The Powers Stage

You may choose special or supernatural abilities for your hero. Some heroes don’t have any Powers, though each hero may have one free Power. You have 20 points to distribute among your hero’s Powers (if any), Elements, and Magic (if any).

4. The Elements Stage

Four attributes define your hero’s basic capabilities.

Air: The Element of thought, speech, and intellect.

Fire: The Element of action, strength, and speed.

Earth: The Element of might, health, and endurance.

Water: The Element of feelings, intuition, and sensitivity.

Each Element has a Specialty, some area in which your hero is particularly gifted.

5. The Magic Stage

If you want your hero to have the ability to cast spells, you may spend some of your 20 points on Magic. Most heroes don’t wield Magic. Those who do are called mages (among other names).

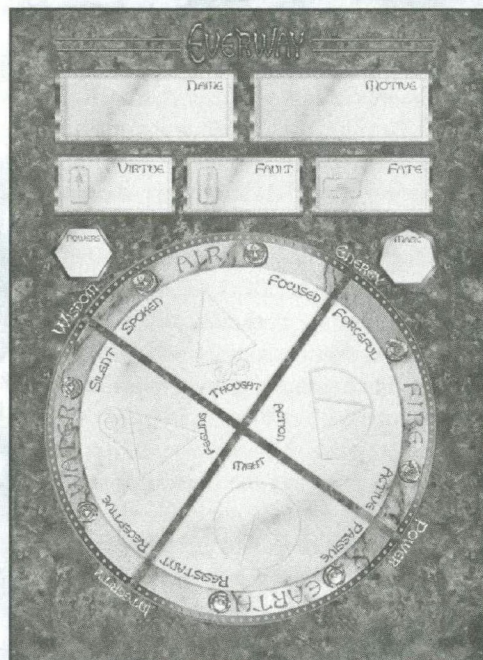
6. The Questions Stage

You and the other players ask each other questions about your heroes. This stage helps you define your hero better and lets you get to know the other players’ heroes.

The Hero Sheet

When you invent your hero, you record the details on a *hero sheet*. The hero sheets are the sheets with big circles on them included in the game set. Each detail about your hero corresponds to a space on the hero sheet. For instance, when you pick your hero's Virtue, you write it in the space labeled "Virtue." The back of the sheet is for things that could take up a lot of room: details about your hero's Powers (if any), Magic (if any), background, and possessions.

You can photocopy the hero sheets, for personal use only, so that you won't run out. One has been produced in black-and-white so that it looks good photocopied on a black-and-white machine.



The Gamemaster's Veto

Sometimes players invent heroes who will be a problem for the gamemaster. For example, one player of mine wanted a hero who could stop time for the people around him. This Power would have made his hero nearly invincible because he would have been able to escape or defeat just about any enemy. I was worried that the other players wouldn't have fun with this hero in the group because he alone would be able to overcome most of their problems. The other heroes would be irrele-

vant. I talked with the player who wanted this Power and said that I couldn't let his hero have it. Other gamemasters may have allowed it, perhaps with certain limits. Vetoing a hero's Power is always a personal judgment call.



Since the gamemaster has such a big responsibility in seeing to it that the game runs smoothly for everyone, players must grant him or her the authority to refuse to allow certain types of heroes into his or her quests.

The Vision Stage

Your vision for your hero is the basic idea of who the hero is. The details that come later are based on this vision.

Premise

The *premise* is the common ground, overarching plot, or general scope of the game that you will play. Each group of players may have a different premise.

The gamemaster has the option of setting the premise. The premise may describe how the heroes become involved in their first quest. For instance, if the gamemaster has prepared a quest that involves hunting down a notorious villain, then he or she may declare that all the heroes created will have to have some reason for wanting to bring this villain to justice. The premise may also describe the theme of an entire series of quests. For example, the gamemaster may say that the premise is that the heroes are going from sphere to sphere looking for an empress's scepter, crown, cape, throne, ring, and brooch; and that these items, once returned to the empress, will save the empire from being overrun by invading armies.

Gamemasters who plan to use the ready-to-run quest "Journey to Stonedeep" (beginning on p. 31 of the *Gamemastering Guide*) as the heroes' first quest may use the premise that all the heroes have some reason to explore a realm that has been out of contact with its neighbors for three hundred years.

If the gamemaster doesn't have a premise, the players may invent one (though the gamemaster

has to approve it). The premise may be as simple as a reason that the heroes have come together and met each other. For example, there may be a fair that attracts the curious, the bold, and the greedy from across the spheres, and it may be there that the heroes meet.

If the gamemaster and the players don't invent a specific premise, the general premise of the game is that the heroes are exploring new worlds and dealing with the dangers and evils that they find there. Each player may have a different motive for walking the spheres, but they have decided to work together.

Types of Premises

Below, the three most common types of premises are described.

Place: The gamemaster may specify a place to which the heroes are traveling. (This place will be the setting for the first quest the heroes undertake.) For example, the gamemaster may show you source card 3, depicting the Everway marketplace, and say, "Each of you has come here, to the marketplace in Everway, looking for something." In this case, it would be your responsibility to create a hero who has some reason for coming to this marketplace.

Theme: The gamemaster may specify a theme for the first quest (or for a series of quests that he or she has planned). For example, the gamemaster may say, "Each hero is committed to overthrowing Shimmerdim, a demonic tyrant who rules the realm of Scar."

Team: The gamemaster may describe a team, group, or "company" of which the heroes are to be a part. For example: "Each of you is part of a team sent to find new gates and explore the spheres that they lead to."

IF THE

GAMEMASTER

PROVIDES YOUR

VISION CARDS,

BE READY TO

GIVE THEM BACK

IF YOU STOP

PLAYING YOUR

HERO.

Vision Cards

You use *vision cards* to develop your hero's background and identity. First, look over the vision cards. Your gamemaster may provide some, as may your fellow players, and you may, of course, provide your own. Select five cards that attract you.

You need not decide right away what these cards will mean to your hero.

When you have selected the cards to use, look them over and invent a hero and that hero's background based on them. You only need a sketchy idea of the hero for now. You can write notes about your hero's background on the back of your hero sheet.

Keep your vision cards so that you can show them to other players. You may want to buy special sheets that hold, display, and protect cards like these. You will be getting more vision cards as your hero completes quests; your gamemaster gives these cards to you so you can have a visual record of your hero's activities.

What Sort of Hero Can I Play?

Can my hero be nonhuman? Yes, but it's important to that the hero be close to human. Weird heroes, such as centaurs or giant wolves, cause two problems. First, there are some quests on which such a hero would have a real problem, such as one in which the heroes visit a tribe that lives in tree houses. A centaur, unable to climb rope ladders, would be stuck on the ground while the other heroes pursue the quest in the trees. Second, weird heroes can disrupt the plot by calling attention to themselves. If your hero is a spectacle or an apparent menace, then every time the heroes come to a new realm,

they'll have to spend a lot of time trying to get the people there to accept your hero. For any unusual hero type, you need to get your gamemaster's approval.

Can my hero come from a modern or science-fiction background? No. The setting of *EVERWAY* is fantasy, and modern or futuristic elements, such as firearms, spaceships, and robots, don't fit. With your gamemaster's permission, you may play someone from a modern or futuristic sphere, provided that the hero can't return to that sphere and can't use sophisticated, high-tech tools, weapons, or skills.

Can my hero be part of a group? Yes and no. Yes, your hero may well be part of the group composed of the other heroes. Yes, your hero may be a member of a group whose other members are "back home." But, no, you cannot portray a group of heroes. It would be too difficult for you to run several characters at once. If your hero's background includes membership in some group, then you need to invent a reason why your hero has left that group behind to go on the quests that are the focus of the game.

Can my character be a villain instead of a hero? No. You can play a flawed hero, a well-meaning person with vices, such as a temper or a narrow mind. You can play a reluctant hero, someone who doesn't have lofty, charitable goals but who winds up doing great deeds. You can play an anti-hero, a selfish person who, through fate or circumstance, performs heroic deeds. But your character would cause too many problems in the game if he or she were truly a villain.

Can my hero be a character from myth or fiction? No. *EVERWAY* is about *your* imagination, not someone else's. You can create a hero

who is *like* a character from myth or fiction, but you can't actually play that character.

Ultimately, however, **EVERWAY** is a game of consent, not dogma. If the other players and the gamemaster don't mind, you're free to play heroes who don't fit the guidelines outlined above.

Three Rules for Heroes

When you start developing your hero's personality and background, keep three rules in mind. These rules will help you avoid creating a hero who doesn't work well in the game.

1. *The mind is sacred.* Hard feelings can develop between players when one player's hero can read or control the minds of other heroes. Players want the freedom to play their heroes as they wish, without another player interfering. Likewise, gamemasters hate to see their

mysterious plots ruined by a hero who can casually read the minds of treacherous villains. To avoid these problems, don't make a hero who can read minds or control other characters.

2. *Interact.* Much of the fun of a quest is having your hero interact with the other heroes and with background characters. If your hero doesn't interact with many people, you might not have fun running that hero for long. Curious, friendly, helpful, talkative, confident, active heroes often are more fun to play than apathetic, disdainful, quiet, shy heroes.

3. *Everything changes.* Develop a hero who has room to grow. You could even give your hero faults or vices, such as stubbornness or naiveté. Not only can imperfections be fun to roleplay, but they give the hero room to develop.

Developing a Hero Alone



If you develop a hero alone, leave some details unfinished. When you get a chance, have another player ask you questions about the hero so that you get some input from others before finalizing the hero (see "The Questions Stage," p. 110). You can even talk with another player over the phone or in email, though this prevents the other player from seeing your images.

Introduction

Now you introduce your hero to the group and learn about the other players' heroes.

Describe what you've already decided about your hero to the other players. Show them the vision cards that you've chosen, and describe briefly what these images mean. Don't worry if your concept for your hero is still vague; the process of introducing your hero to other players often helps you get a clearer picture of your hero.

At this point, the gamemaster and the other players ask questions about your vision for your hero. These are general questions regarding who the hero is. They'll have a chance to ask more detailed questions later. The questions help the other players get a better sense

of who your hero is, and, as mentioned earlier, they may help you as well. They are not a test of any kind; if you can't think of an answer yet, or if you want to change an answer later, that's fine. Example questions might include:

"Why is she walking the spheres?"

"What sort of realm does he come from?"

"How well does she fit into new societies?"

"How much experience does he have spherewalking?"

Sometimes two heroes have similar visions. When that happens, the questions can help distinguish between the two heroes.

If the heroes in the group have a limited range of abilities or types, you can alter your hero's vision during the introduction stage to fill an empty niche. For instance:

- There are three rude, gruff mercenaries in the group and one reserved scholar. This means that no one in the group is good at talking with strangers. One player might volunteer to alter his vision of his hero to include the ability to negotiate, speak well, and so on.
- There are several scholars, mages, and wanderers in the group, but no warriors. One

player might offer to alter her vision to include skill with weapons in order to give the group better odds should they get forced into a fight.

- A female hero hates all men, and a male hero hates all women. These attitudes will likely lead to conflicts between the heroes that could

detract from the game. The players may agree that for some reason these two heroes have taken a liking to each other (though neither will admit it).

Doing the Questions Stage Now

You may wish to skip ahead to the questions stage of creating heroes (see p. 110). Some players like to establish the basic identities of their heroes through freeform questions, and then add the rules-related details later. If that's true for you and your group,

you can ask questions back and forth until your heroes' identities are quite well established and then come back to the identity stage. Doing the questions stage first is an especially good idea for beginning players. Other players prefer to get to the rules first to see how the game system works and to get an idea of the limits on heroes' abilities. Then they feel more confident inventing answers to the questions that other players pose in the questions stage. If that's true for you and your group, go ahead with the identity stage now.



Example Vision: Fireson



Throughout this chapter, I'll use the ready-to-run hero Fireson as an example of how to create a hero. Fireson really is my hero,

one of the first that I invented. At this stage, you probably don't have a name for your hero yet. I didn't either when I was this far along. But since you and I both know that his name wound up being "Fireson," I'm just going to call him that from the start.



Vision card 55 shows Fireson. This scene is from his earlier years, when he was a respected priest and powerful person in his realm. Vision card 24 is some sort of ritual or test that Fireson was in. Vision card 25 shows the desolate wasteland into which Fireson was banished for blasphemy. Vision card 66 shows Fireson, now dressed in rags, coming to an

oasis. Perhaps this is the first oasis that he came to after his journey through the desert. Vision card 59 shows a temple that he

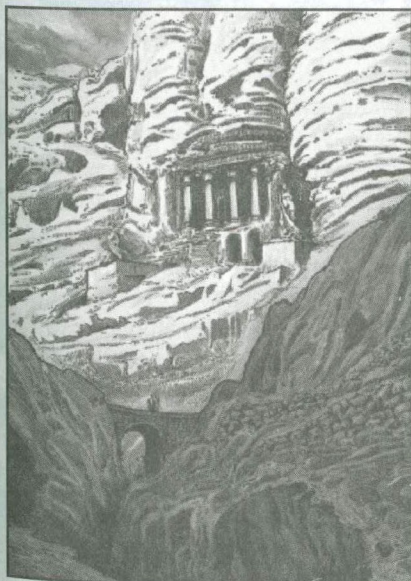
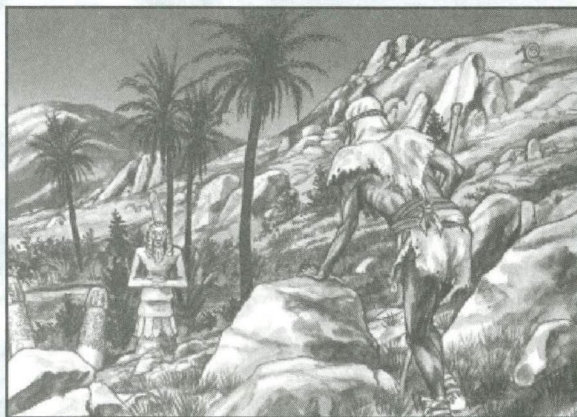
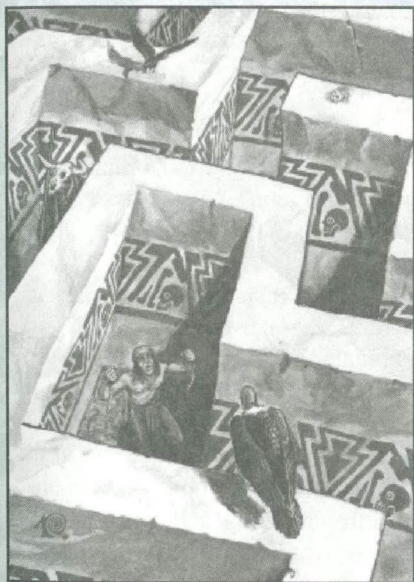
visited in his travels.



From the vision cards, I developed a vision for the hero: a fallen priest who retains some priestly abilities even though he has been stripped of his status and position. He is a wanderer who has seen a lot, someone who has known both luxury and hardship. The images portray a hot, dry land, so it came to me to make him a priest of a fire deity.



This outline is still sketchy, but it's enough to work from. The details of Fireson's life and abilities will come later. (If you have more details for your hero at this stage, that's all right.)



The Identity Stage

The aspects below help define what sort of person your hero is. They help you decide how to portray your hero, but they do not define your hero's specific abilities.

Name

A hero's name is not a trivial matter. A name is often part of others' first impressions of a hero. In the imaginary game world, naming is also a central part of magic, and a baby's name may be a blessing, a curse, a prayer, or a promise. Adults may also choose new names to represent where they have been in life's journey, where they are, or where they're heading.

Choose a name for your hero. You may choose a name at any point in designing your hero. Some players think of names right away; others start the game without being quite sure of what to name their heroes. Write the name in the space provided on the hero sheet.

Names in the worlds of **EVERWAY** generally mean something in everyday speech rather than being merely traditional. A name may refer to the hero's traits or attributes, the hero's reputation, the attitude of the hero's parents when the hero was born, the parents' hopes for the child, and so on.

Your hero's name may be more or less normal, such as "Heather," "Ruby," "Dawn," "Robin," "Jay," or "Victor."

The name may relate to the hero's birth. For instance, a hero whose mother died in childbirth might be named "Sorrow," and one who was

born into a dying tribe may be named "Hope." The name may relate to the hero's personal history. A hero who has been exiled may take the name "Outcast."

The name may refer to the hero's characteristics, such as "Mighty," "Persistence," or "Swift."

The name may refer to special traits, such as "Firedancer" or "Thunderfist."

The name may be prophetic and enigmatic, even symbolic, such as "Earthcradle" or "Sparkbringer."

A name can tell something about the hero's culture or upbringing. Those who live in cities in a realm of commerce and knowledge may choose more abstract names such as "Faithful" or "Lightson." Those who live the farming life may choose more natural or earthy names, such as "Strongarm" or "Lark." Those who live in tribes may have names related to wild animals, such as "Bearbrother" or "Wolfrunner."

Fanciful Names

Your hero may have a name that would draw little attention in the real world, such as "Faith," but he or she may also have a very unusual name. Names such as "Keeper of Hidden Lore," "Feet-of-Antelope," "Mighty-Spear-of-Ishtar," "Sun Killer," and so on are all possible. The hero may choose to use part of the name, such as "Keeper," "Antelope," or "Spear," for general use if the whole name is too long. In fact, different people may know the same person by different parts of the name, so that "Keeper of Hidden Lore," for instance, might be known to different people as "Keeper," "Hidden," and "Lore."

Multiple Names

Depending on your hero's culture (which you invent or choose), your hero may have more than one name.

Some cultures use a parent's name to identify someone, such as "Trueheart Gentlesdaughter," which means "Trueheart, daughter of Gentle."

The name of a family, tribe, town, or land may be part of your hero's name, especially if your hero has left his or her homeland. For instance, a hero may be known as "Righteous Miracle," identifying her as part of the Righteous family or tribe. Or if she's from the town of Skybright, she may be known as "Miracle of Skybright."

In some lands, each child has several names, each given by a different person or group. A child might have the names "Joy," "Wonder," "Hunter," "First Grandchild," "Mighty Shield," and "Waterdark," with these names given by the mother, father, mother's parents, father's parents, village headman, and village shaman, respectively. The hero would claim all these names, probably in no particular order. The hero could choose which name to go by when meeting new people.

A hero may have a public name and a private name. (You may wish to remember the secret name but not write it on your hero sheet, in order to keep it especially secret.) The secret name may be used for rituals, or it might simply be a private matter.

Nonsense Names

While they are uncommon, nonsense names, such as "Azavar," "Raysa," and "Melnon," are also known among the spheres. They may arise from particular traditions in the culture that the hero comes from. Gods and goddesses have

personal, unique names (though they are often known by common titles, as Poseidon is known as "Earth-Shaker"), and parents may give their children unique names to make them stand out or to connect them to a hero, deity, or ancestor who had that name.

Heroes with uncommon names may find that others confuse or distort these hard-to-remember names. For example, Raysa may find herself called "Razor." After all, most people among the spheres don't read and write, so names are passed along only by word of mouth. It's easy for names to be changed as they are passed along since almost no one writes them down.

The mystic language of Cleacuun uses words that are different from the Tongue, which is the language most mortals speak. A mage parent who knows a little of Cleacuun may use words that sound like Cleacuun to name a child. The actual Cleacuun word, however, is more than its pronunciation. The name "Rana-kai" may sound like the Cleacuun word that means "eternal vigilance," but one cannot actually *say* the word without truly *understanding* it, without its being a part of him or her.

The hero may come from a land whose language has been confused so that the people there no longer speak the Tongue. In this case, the hero may have a name that sounds like nonsense but that actually means something in his or her homeland's special language.

Place Names

Like names for people, names of places usually have a common meaning, such as "Greendale," "Snowpeak," "Great Salt Sea," "Cemetery Road," "Dimdwell Forest," "Highthrone," "Marketmeet," and so on. Place names may be part of a personal name, as in "Lightstep of Stonekeep."

Example Identity: Fireson



I chose the name "Fireson" to indicate my hero's connection to fire. The term "son" shows that he feels deeply connected to fire and to his deity. While a son may be not as wise, as powerful, or as mature as a parent, the son and the parent are the same type of being. Fireson, likewise, identifies with fire and with his deity, not as a follower or servant, but as a potential equal.



Fireson's Motive is "adversity" because he has been cast out of his comfortable life and forced into a life of wandering.



I chose The Lion (the body prevails) as his Virtue because I see him as a physically powerful man. He is tied to fire, the element of action, so I pictured him as a man of action.



For his Fault, I chose Death—reversed (stasis) to indicate his closed mind. As a man of high status in his former culture, he regarded his culture as superior to the others through which he's been forced to travel.

For Fireson's Fate, I looked for a card that would reflect his having failed in his duty and having been cast out of his land by his deity. I wanted a fortune card that would relate to this conflict. The Cockatrice (corruption vs. recovery) made some sense, but it didn't seem to fit because I didn't see Fireson as "corrupted" by an outside force, or even really corrupted at all. He just hadn't done what he was supposed to do. The Creator (nurture vs. abandonment) seemed to make sense, too, as heaven had "abandoned" him to some degree, but it wasn't Fireson who'd abandoned anyone or anything, so this card didn't seem personal enough. Finally I settled on The Soldier (duty vs. blind obedience). I wasn't sure where the "blind obedience" fit in, but I knew that his destiny was tied up in duty somehow.



As it turned out, this Fate fit Fireson better than I first imagined. See p. 123 to see how he resolved his Fate.

Motive

There are seven general *motives* that spur heroes to walk the spheres. For your hero, choose one of these motives, or invent your own.

Mystery

The hero seeks no mundane goals but wishes to confront mysteries on other worlds. He or she seeks a secret or subtle understanding, though others may label such stuff mere lunacy. The hero may be guided by signs to which others are deaf and blind.

Wanderlust

The hero wanders the spheres with little or no care for a purpose. Wherever the sun rises and sets is called “home,” though no one place is home for long. While he or she feels no over-riding purpose, a purpose may dawn on the wanderer some day.

Knowledge

The hero seeks knowledge to be found in new realms and new worlds. The knowledge sought may be mundane or hermetic. The hero may seek to share knowledge with those he or she meets or may simply wish to gather knowledge.

TO READ ABOUT
THE LIBRARY OF
ALL WORLDS,
SEE P. 21.

Some spherewalkers work for Chamber Platinum, a group sponsored by the Library of All Worlds in the city of Everway. They are charged with exploring new worlds and reporting their findings to the library.

Beauty

The hero seeks to share or to experience that which is beautiful: art, music, romance, poetry, aphrodisia, and more. No one world or realm alone can sate his or her appetite for the beautiful. For some seekers of beauty, the evening star

heralds pleasure and delight. For others, the morning star portends a day of fresh possibilities.

Conquest

The hero lives for challenges and loves to exert power. The hero may be a master of martial abilities or may enforce his or her will through trickery, wordplay, or magic. The hero may be dedicated to battling evil and serving justice, may simply take pride and pleasure in using his or her talents, or may be seeking fame and fortune.

Authority

The hero is the hands, the eyes, the mouth, or the sword of some authority, such as a deity, ruler, or holy order. He or she may take the role of arbiter or lawgiver, eager to bring justice and right-thinking to realms plagued by tyranny or corruption. While the hero takes this role seriously, he or she may also display the joviality of a confident person in power.

Adversity

The hero is under some compulsion to walk the spheres. Perhaps he or she is atoning for a crime committed against a deity or monarch; or perhaps no realm feels like home, and the hero must keep moving in search of contentment. Such a hero may have a saturnine disposition, though he or she may punctuate this gloom with energetic revels.

Virtue

Your hero's *Virtue* represents some way in which he or she is particularly gifted. A card from the Fortune Deck represents your hero's Virtue.

Choosing a Virtue

Look through the fortune cards



or through the list of cards in the *Guide to the Fortune Deck*, and select a card that represents your hero's Virtue.

Your hero's Virtue may be related to the Virtue of the realm from which he or she comes (as may the hero's Fault and Fate). For example, an intelligent, well-educated hero from a realm where learning is highly valued may have The Eagle (*the mind prevails*) as his Virtue, the same as the realm from which he comes.

Write the card's title (and its meaning, if you wish) in the space labeled "Virtue" on your hero sheet.

What Is a Virtue?

A Virtue can mean many things, depending on what fits your hero.

A Personal Trait. You could choose The Priestess (*understanding mysteries*) as your Virtue to mean that your hero is in touch with unspoken mysteries. In this case, your hero's Virtue represents a special trait. (You would also want to give your hero a high Water score to fit this trait; see pp. 94–95.)

A Magical Gift. You could choose The Eagle (*the mind prevails*) as your Virtue to mean that your hero is gifted with forethought. Instead of being simply a personal trait, this Virtue could be a connection to the spirit world or a gift from a deity. For instance, if your hero's totem is an eagle, he or she may be gifted with intelligent insights because of this spiritual connection. (You may also want to give the hero a strong Air score to fit this gift; see pp. 92–93.)

An Aspect of Fortune. You could choose The Creator (*nurture vs. abandonment*) as your Virtue to mean that your hero is fated to find good luck concerning nurture. A hero can

have a Virtue that affects his or her life even if the hero has no personal traits or spiritual ties that connect to that Virtue.

Fault

Your hero's *Fault* is a way in which he or she is particularly weak or vulnerable. A card from the Fortune Deck represents your hero's Fault.



Choosing a Fault

Look through the fortune cards, or through the list of fortune card meanings in *Guide to the Fortune Deck*, and select a card to represent your hero's Fault. Write the card's title (and its meaning, if you wish) in the space labeled "Fault" on your hero sheet.

What Is a Fault?

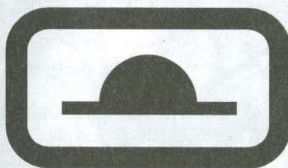
A Fault can represent many things, including the following concepts:

A Personal Trait. You could choose The Lion—reversed (*weakness*) as the Fault, meaning that your hero is physically weak and vulnerable. Note that some physically weak people can compensate for this weakness well, but choosing it as your Fault specifically means that your weakness makes you vulnerable and can sometimes lead to your downfall. (You should select a low Fire score, a low Earth score, or both, to fit with this Fault; see pp. 88–91.)

A Magical Curse. You could choose The Dragon—reversed (*blind fury*) as the Fault and define it as a curse put on your hero. Perhaps it's a curse that causes him or her to fly into a rage, a curse put on the hero by someone he or she harmed in anger. A strong Fire score would

match this image, though someone with a weak Fire score and placid spirit could also be cursed with unusual bouts of wrath.

An Aspect of Fortune. You could choose The Cockatrice (*corruption*) as the Fault, defining corruption as the weakness that the hero is destined to face. The Cockatrice could have nothing to do with the hero's traits or spiritual connections; it could simply be part of his or her destiny.



Fate

The *Fate* is your hero's current challenge, where the hero is in her life's story. A card from the Fortune Deck represents your hero's Fate. The Fate is temporary; it is a stage. When your hero has completed that stage, fulfilled that potential, or faced that destiny, he or she will move on to a new Fate.

SEE P. 122-124 TO READ ABOUT FACING ONE'S FATE. The Fate card is neither upright nor reversed. One might say that it is "sideways," to show that no one knows which a the hero's Fate will turn out. Your hero's actions will determine which of the possible outcomes indicated by the card's meanings finally comes to pass.

To represent your hero's Fate, select one card of your choice from the Fortune Deck. Choose a card that relates to something at once important and uncertain about your hero. For example, you could choose War (*great effort vs. effort misspent*) as your hero's Fate, indicating that the hero must face the conflict between a great effort and that effort going awry. Perhaps the hero is on a mighty undertaking that may be all for naught. Perhaps the hero is very powerful but not very wise, so that

being misled is a constant danger. Maybe you don't even know for sure why this Fate fits, but you sense that it does. With time, you'll learn what your hero's Fate means.

Record your hero's Fate (and its upright and reversed meanings, if you wish) in the space labeled "Fate" on your hero sheet.

The Powers Stage

You can invent magical, psychic, or unusual Powers for your hero. While these Powers give your hero advantages, you must "pay" for them with *elemental points* that you would otherwise distribute among you hero's Elements (see below). That means that having Powers makes your hero stronger in some ways and weaker in others.

Record the total number of points you spend on Powers in the hexagon labeled "Powers" on your hero sheet and write about the Powers on the back of the sheet in the area labeled "Magic and Powers." The space for points spent on Powers is a hexagon to remind you that spending more than 6 points on Powers might be a bad idea; spending more than 6 points doesn't leave many points for your Elements.

Powers are limited in scope and have specific effects. If you wish your hero to wield magic, which implies a more general knowledge

YOU HAVE 20 ELEMENTAL POINTS THAT YOU USE TO DETERMINE YOUR HERO'S POWERS, ELEMENTS, AND MAGIC. THEY ARE CALLED "ELEMENTAL POINTS" BECAUSE YOU SPEND MOST OF THEM ON ELEMENTS. YOU MAY SPEND THEM ON POWERS AND MAGIC, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO. IN FACT, MOST PLAYERS SPEND NO POINTS ON MAGIC FOR THEIR HEROES AND ONLY A FEW POINTS ON POWERS.

and ability, see the section “The Magic Stage” (p. 99). You can skip ahead to that section now if you want to see how Magic differs from Powers.

useful), major (having a big effect on play), and versatile (useful in several ways). For each of these factors, the cost is 1 point.

Types of Powers

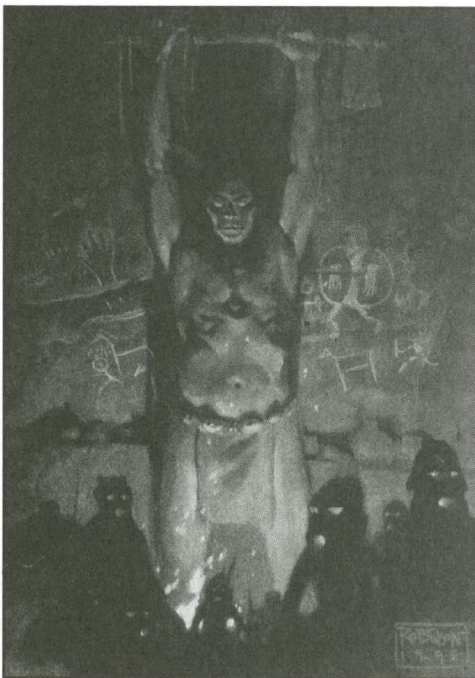
You can give your hero just about any kind of Power you think fits his or her background or that interests you. The more powerful your hero's Powers are, however, the lower his or her Elements (see p. 85) will be. Powers can include healing, flying, singing enchanted songs, changing shape, and so on.

It's possible to take advantages that come from some object or creature rather than directly from the hero. For instance, your hero may have a familiar animal, a wand with magical properties, a flying boat, or the like.

Cost of Powers

The more useful a Power is, the more elemental points you have to give up in order for your hero to have it. Each hero starts with 20 points to allot among Elements. Having Powers reduces this number. A hero with Powers can do special things, but his or her Elements are weaker.

To determine how many elemental points you need to give up for a Power, determine whether or not the Power is frequent (often



- A frequent Power, a major Power, or a versatile Power costs 1 point.
- A frequent and major Power, a frequent and versatile Power, or a major and versatile Power costs 2 points.
- A Power that is frequent, major, *and* versatile costs 3 points.

Determining whether a Power is frequent, major, or versatile is always a judgment call. The gamemaster OKs all costs and always has the final say. If you, as the gamemaster, are uncertain about how to rate a

Power, just use your best judgment. Nothing terrible will happen if you rate a Power differently from how another gamemaster would rate it. Below are examples of what kinds of Powers are frequent, major, and versatile. These examples use three specific Powers to demonstrate what the labels mean.

Fast Healing: The ability to recover quickly from wounds.

Spell-Reversal: The ability to cause spells cast on the hero to affect the caster instead.

Magical Singing: The ability to sing with magically enhanced effect and affect the mood of the audience.

Is It Frequent?

If the Power is something that often makes a difference in play, the Power is called *frequent*. For example, Fast Healing is a frequent Power because it comes into play often. Since traveling among the spheres and doing heroic things is dangerous, heroes often get hurt.

Spell-Reversal is not frequent because the Power is only useful when a spell is cast on the hero. This Power would be frequent if the hero could reverse all sorts of magic, not just spells cast on him or her personally.

Magic Singing is not frequent because affecting the mood of an audience isn't helpful in many situations. A hero may sing almost all the time, but since the Power rarely affects play, it is not labeled frequent. Charging lions, falling rocks, dungeon doors, and unhappy ghosts don't care to listen to songs. If the player defined the Power as being able to work on charging lions, falling rocks, dungeon doors, and unhappy ghosts, then it would indeed be frequent.

Most abilities are frequent. After all, most players invent Powers that will often make a difference for their heroes.

Is It Major?

If the Power has a big effect, especially on another character, it is considered *major*. Count as major anything that greatly changes the hero's capabilities. The ability to reverse a spell back on the caster is major because it has the powerful effects of protecting the hero from magic and harming those who try to cast harmful spells against the hero. Sometimes the Power will have a minor effect (such as when the original spell is minor), but since Spell-Reversal is capable of a major effect, it's a major Power.

Rapid Healing is not major because it doesn't greatly change the hero's capabilities. It doesn't

Spherewalking



Every hero has the ability to spherewalk, meaning that they can all successfully walk the astral paths that connect gates to each other. If you want your hero to be able to guide other people along these paths, then the hero will need a Water score of 6 or better. (A score of 6 lets someone guide one or two people. A score of 7 lets someone guide a group. Higher scores are needed to guide large contingents of nonspherewalkers along the astral paths.) Alternately, a 1-point Power lets a hero guide groups regardless of his or her Water score, and a 2-point Power lets a hero guide large contingents.

help the hero fight enemies, solve mysteries, or perform other important tasks. If the player defined the Power as working instantly, so that wounds disappeared in a heartbeat, then it would be a major Power because it would greatly help the hero in dangerous situations.

Magical Singing is not major because altering the mood of an audience is not a powerful effect. If the player defined the singing ability as being capable of, for example, stopping charging warriors in their tracks, then it would indeed be major.

Note that if the Power is major in two or more ways, the gamemaster may assign the "major" cost two or more times. Thus a Power can cost more than 3 elemental points.

Is It Versatile?

If the Power can be used in many different ways, it is called *versatile*. Magic Singing is versatile because the hero can alter moods to produce a variety of effects. The hero can raise people's spirits, soothe bad feelings, stir a crowd to action, and so on. The player could define the musical ability as being much more limited than this, such as only being able to cause sadness, in which case the Power wouldn't be versatile. It would then be a 0-point, free Power (see below).

Fast Healing is not versatile because there's only one thing a hero can do with it: recover from wounds quickly. If the player defined the Power as helping the hero recover from all sorts of things quickly—illness, drunkenness, heartache, sleep, confusion, enchantments, and so on—then the Power would be versatile.

Spell-Reversal is not versatile because there's only one thing a hero can do with it: reverse spells. If the hero could reverse all manner of energies—magic, emotions, heat, and so on—this Power would be versatile.

Extraordinary Powers

If a Power doesn't have the drawbacks or weaknesses that naturally belong to it, or if it is especially powerful, the gamemaster may assign a higher cost to it. For example, Invisibility is generally a 2-point Power because it's frequent and major. Invisibility, however, has drawbacks. Guard dogs can smell an invisible intruder and people with keen hearing can locate invisible people. If the player decides that the hero not only can't be seen but also can't be heard or smelled, then the gamemaster should decide to have the player pay an extra point for it.

Free Powers

Each hero may have one *free Power*, one that is not frequent, major, or versatile. For instance, the

Power to make an instrument play by itself fits none of these categories, so you can give such a Power to your hero without spending any elemental points. Note that a free, or *0-point*, Power can be something that the hero uses often provided that it doesn't often make a difference in play. For example, "Winning Smile" counts as a 0-point Power. A hero with this Power may use his or her winning smile all the time, but it's rarely, if ever, going to make a real difference in the hero's capabilities, so it is not categorized as frequent.

For any Power past this first free one, however, you must pay at least 1 point. You cannot have more than one free Power.

The following are examples of free Powers:

Bird Tongue: The hero can talk to birds.

Friend to Fire: The hero is unharmed by fire.

Friend to Water: The hero can breathe water.

Horse Friend: The hero befriends horses automatically.

Marching Song: The hero can walk and sing indefinitely, provided he or she does them both at the same time.

Phantom Musician: The hero can make a musical instrument play by itself.

Riding Master: The hero can ride any sort of mount without training.

Sight of the Soul: The hero can tell by sight whether a person is awake, asleep, or dreaming.

Universal Reading: The hero can read any alphabet (but not any language, only "the Tongue").



See the ready-to-run heroes for some more examples of free Powers.

Does My Power Work?

As with any other action or contest of ability, your hero's Elements and a draw from the Fortune Deck determine whether your Power works. If your hero sings a magic song to soothe an angry dragon, the gamemaster may compare your hero's Air score (which determines vocal ability) to the dragon's Earth score (which determines its resistance to being swayed). Unless your hero's Air score is at least as high as the dragon's Earth score, it will take a very good draw from the Fortune Deck for the hero to succeed.

SEE PP. 86–97 TO
READ ABOUT
ELEMENTS.
SEE PP. 124–142 TO
READ ABOUT HOW THE
GAMEMASTER USES
ELEMENTS AND THE
FORTUNE DECK TO
DETERMINE WHETHER
SPECIFIC ACTIONS
SUCCEED OR FAIL.

Your hero may also have to contend with background characters who are protected from the hero's Powers. For instance, since monarchs among the spheres have to protect themselves from magical threats as well as from mundane assassins, most of them have means to detect magic and resist spells. Just as the gamemaster may assume that a queen has someone to taste her food for poison and

someone to guard her chambers at night, he or she can assume that the queen has mages or enchantments to protect her from supernatural threats. If you think your hero can get away with anything by being invisible, you're in for a rude surprise.

Example Powers

Each Power can have several costs depending on how you define it. Below are general categories

for Powers followed by some specific Powers within each category. Note that these are just examples, not a list from which you have to select. For more ideas, see the Powers of the ready-to-run heroes.

Companion

Pet Viper, 1 (major): A large, venomous viper has befriended the hero. All it can really do is strike those who threaten it or the hero; its poison sickens and incapacitates the average person (3-Earth). The viper's Elements are 1-Fire, 2-Earth, 1-Air, 3-Water.

Cat Familiar, 2 (frequent and versatile): An intelligent cat is the hero's devoted companion. It can talk to the hero (and only to the hero), and it is as intelligent as a child. It has no other special abilities. The cat can spy, carry written messages, stand guard, and so on. The cat's Elements are 1-Fire, 2-Earth, 2-Air, 5-Water.

Wolf Companion, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): A clever, loyal wolf is the hero's constant companion. It can do a few specific tricks, but it's just a clever animal; it does not have human-like intelligence. The wolf can fight, follow people by smell, stand guard, hear faint noises, and so on. The wolf's Elements are 4-Fire, 3-Earth, 1-Air, 4-Water.

Ape Sidekick, 4 (frequent, twice major, and versatile): A talking ape is the hero's companion. It can speak and use tools as well as most people, and it is very strong. The ape's Elements are 6-Fire, 4-Earth, 3-Air, 3-Water.

Create Fire

Your hero's Fire score helps determine how effective these Powers are.

Sweat Fire, 1 (frequent): The hero can make fire

come forth from his or her skin. The flames are small enough that they do not improve the hero's combat abilities much (though they may be very useful against monsters that are vulnerable to fire).

Throw Fire, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can produce fire from his or her bare hands. The fire can be formed into balls and thrown, and these large, hot flames can also be used to increase the hero's combat ability.

Mastery of Flame, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): The hero can create heat, light, and flame at will. The flame can be used as a weapon in hand-to-hand combat as well as over a distance.

Healing

Your hero's Earth score determines how well he or she normally recovers from wounds.

Fast Healing, 1 (frequent): The hero recovers from physical wounds seven times as fast as normal, so that a day's rest is as good as a week's would be to a normal person.

Instant Healing, 2 (major and frequent): The hero's wounds close nearly instantly, so that no wound lasts for more than a few seconds. A blow that kills the hero instantly, however, is still fatal.

Immortality

The Earth score can help determine how well your hero resists wounds and other forms of harm.

Ageless, 0: The hero does not age. While this ability may eventually be very useful, it has little direct effect on play, so it counts as a free Power.



Unkillable, 2 (frequent and major): The hero cannot be killed, though he or she can still be hampered by wounds, sickened by poison, knocked down by blows, weakened by disease, and so on. Sphere-walkers' quests often bring them into danger, so this Power is frequent. It is major because it changes the hero's abilities dramatically.

Invulnerable, 3 (frequent and twice major): The hero cannot be wounded or poisoned by normal means, though he or she

can still be struck down by forceful blows, knocked unconscious from lack of air, or killed by hunger or thirst.

Invisibility

Water, because it rules stealth, can help determine how effectively and easily a hero becomes invisible.

Standing Unseen, 1 (frequent): The hero can become invisible but must remain still and silent or be revealed.

Walking Unseen, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can become invisible and can move about without breaking the spell.

Persuasion

For persuasion Powers, the hero's Air score, the Earth score of the person that the hero tries to persuade, and the context of the situation help the gamemaster determine whether the hero is successful.

Winning Smile, 0: The hero's smile is charming. It helps the hero stand out and may make some people more favorably disposed toward him or her, but it won't sway the hearts of enemies and such.

Persuasive Voice, 1 (frequent): The hero has a soothing voice that can sway the hearts of others. It will not, however, sway those who are hostile to the hero.

Charming Voice, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can win the affection of those that he or she can talk to at some length. It will not work on those who refuse to listen, and those who have been charmed may realize what's happened when they're away from the hero. (The gamemaster may restrict you from choosing such a Power unless you promise not to use it against other heroes. Manipulating other heroes is a fast way to ruin a game.)

Dominating Gaze, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): By speaking firmly and gazing into a person's eyes, the hero can exert some control over the other character's will. The weaker the subject's Earth score, the more the hero can get him or her to do. This control is usually unpredictable, and it's possible for a controlled character to snap out of the spell. (The gamemaster may restrict you from choosing such a Power unless you promise not to use it against other heroes.)

Instant Control: A Power that would give a hero instant and complete control over other characters would ruin too many plots, so it is not allowed.

Priestly Powers

Various Elements affect priestly Powers, such as Water, which determines how open one is to divine messages, and Earth, which may determine how well-grounded one's rituals are. Many priests and priestesses are mages, in which case their Powers are covered by the rules for Magic (see p. 99), instead of by these rules.

Priestly Rites, 2 (major and versatile): The hero can lead worship services and divine ceremonies to channel energy. Effects that fall within the scope of Priestly Rites include forging oaths, blessing unions, bringing fertility to crops, improving an army's fortune in war, and so on. The hero's abilities depend on having a congregation to lead, and they are at their peak on holy days.

Invocation, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): The priest or priestess, apart from any worshipping congregation, can invoke the power of deities to bless people, sanctify oaths, provide guidance, and so on. This Power is frequent because the hero can use it without relying on a congregation. If the hero has magical abilities that are even more directly under his or her control, they count as Magic (see p. 99), not as a Power.

Shapechange

Shapechanging isn't directly related to any one Element, though Water is important in determining how easily one can change forms.

Werewolf, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can turn into a powerful wolf that is immune to normal (nonsilver and nonmagical) weapons. (If the hero can only become a wolf on nights of the full moon, then the Power is major but not frequent.)

Bird Form, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can turn into a particular type of bird, such as a crow or hawk

Werehawk, 3 (frequent and twice major): The hero can turn into a powerful hawk, which is immune to nonsilver, nonmagical weapons. The Power is “twice major” because the hawk can fly and is immune to most weapons.

Shapeshifting, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): The hero can take the shape of any natural creature up to the size of a horse and use any abilities that this form provides. For example, as an eagle, the hero could see well, as a snake he or she could be poisonous, as a hound he or she would have a keen sense of smell, and so on. Shapeshifting is a frequent Power because the hero will often find a new shape to be handy. It is major because the hero can use deadly and powerful abilities thanks to these forms. It is versatile because the hero can take on a great variety of shapes and thus a great variety of skills. (By severely limiting the range of shapes, the player could make this Power no longer versatile. For example, if the hero can only change into different types of house cats, the Power is no longer versatile. If the hero can turn into lions, leopards, house cats, lynxes, and so on, then the Power is still versatile because the hero can use the Power to gain fighting ability, night vision, leaping ability, extraordinary hearing, small size, an innocuous appearance, and so on.)

Speech

Your hero’s Air score helps determine how well he or she can use these Powers.

Bird Tongue, 0: The hero can speak to birds. The birds, however, don’t necessarily want to talk to the hero, and the hero may find that they have little to say.

Speak to Animals, 1 (frequent): The hero can speak to all manner of animals. This Power, however, doesn’t mean that the animals want to talk to the hero, or that they have much to say.

Animals in general may have a lot to say about their lives, but they’re not likely to know much about the world of humans. For instance, if your hero asks a fox to describe the humans it saw lurking in the woods, it may reply, “All humans look alike to me.”

Shadow Whispers, 1 (major): The hero can speak to the dead (though some ghosts are in no shape to hold a conversation, and some simply don’t want to talk).

Visions

Your hero’s Water score helps determine how strong these visions are.

Glimpses of the Future, 1 (major): During times of stress, the hero gets visions of the future. These visions are not consciously controlled and are usually hazy, general, or incomplete.

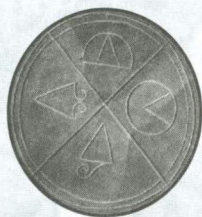
Visionary Ritual, 2 (frequent and major): The hero can perform rituals to gain visions of the future, though the visions are usually hazy, general, or incomplete.

Glimpses Through Time and Space, 2 (major and versatile): During times of stress, the hero gets visions of the future, of the past, or of distant places. These visions are not consciously controlled and are usually hazy, general, or incomplete.

Mystic Eye, 3 (frequent, major, and versatile): The hero can concentrate to gain visions of the future, of times past, or of distant places. The visions are usually hazy, general, or incomplete.

All-Seeing Eye: The hero can get clear visions of the future, the past, or remote locations that would ruin plots that depend on mystery. Such a Power is not allowed.

The Elements Stage



The four *Elements*—Fire, Earth, Air, and Water—represent four basic aspects of your hero. The gamemaster uses them to determine what your hero is capable of and what happens when your hero takes various actions.

Look at the large circle on your hero sheet. Each quarter of the wheel is for one Element. You will give your hero a rating for each Element, a quantitative measure of his or her strength or ability in that area. You have 20 elemental points with which to grant your hero Powers, Elements, and Magic. The points that you have not devoted to Powers and that you don't plan to use for Magic are what you use to rate your hero's Elements. Choose a score between 2 and 9 for each Element such that the four Elements, plus the points for your Powers (if any), plus points for your Magic (if any) total 20.

ELEMENTS

(FIRE, EARTH,

AIR, WATER)

+ POWERS +

MAGIC = 20

POINTS

A perfectly balanced hero has 5 for each Element, though any hero with Powers or Magic will have a lower average score. An average hero's scores are usually between 4 and 5, as most heroes have 1 to 4 points devoted to Powers or Magic. A beginning hero's minimum score in each Element is 2, and the maximum is 9. The following pages, however, also describe scores of 1 and 10 because some very rare background characters can have scores this low or high. It may also be possible for heroes, through extraordinary fortune or tragedy, to achieve a score of 10 or to drop to 1 point in an Element.

The Semicircles



In addition to looking at each Element individually, you can look at how your hero's Elements balance when they are paired up to divide the wheel into halves. The semicircles of wisdom, power, energy, and integrity have no direct effect on play, but they can help you get a feel for your hero's capabilities.

Wisdom and Power

The left-hand semicircle represents "wisdom." Air represents spoken wisdom, while Water represents silent wisdom. The right-hand semicircle represents "power." Fire represents active power, and Earth represents passive power.



A hero with strong wisdom but weak power knows what needs to be done but is unable to do it. A hero with strong power but weak wisdom can control the natural and social environment but is unable to determine wise courses of action.

Energy and Integrity

The upper semicircle represents "energy." Air represents focused energy, and Fire represents forceful energy. The lower semicircle represents "integrity." Water represents receptive integrity, and Earth represents resistant integrity.



A hero with strong energy and weak integrity is dynamic but poorly grounded, effective but vulnerable. A hero with strong integrity and weak energy can withstand adversity but is less able to affect the environment, enduring but not dynamic.

A hero, remember, is an exceptional person. An average person has Elements that total 12, not 20, so a well-balanced average person has a score of 3 for each Element.

Record each Element's score in the corresponding quarter of the circle on your hero sheet.

The Four Elements

Air: Thought, focused energy, and spoken wisdom.



Fire: Action, forceful energy, and active power.



Earth: Might, resistant integrity, and passive power.



Water: Feelings, receptive integrity, and silent wisdom.



Example Powers: Fireson



As a priest of fire, Fireson needed some fire-related abilities. First, I gave him the Power "Sweat Fire." I wanted something flashy but not too powerful, so I defined the Power as frequent but not major (or versatile): a 1-point Power. Then, to make him a priest and not just a "fire-guy," I gave him "Priestly Rites." While this Power is major and versatile, I wanted to make it a 1-point Power on the basis that it was part of Fireson's past, something that he'd hardly ever use now. John, however, who was the gamemaster, said that I should pay the full 2-point cost, as that would add some teeth to the idea that Fireson had fallen from grace and paid a price for it. While I groaned at John's ruling, I knew he was right. I also chose a free Power for Fireson that was related to fire: "Friend to Fire," invulnerability to heat and flame. In play, I use this Power as a gimmick, as when Fireson delights children by juggling live coals. If I'd turned it into a weapon, as by having Fireson repeatedly swaddled in oil-drenched cloths and igniting himself, the gamemaster would have been right in finding some way to penalize me for getting a frequent, major effect out of a 0-point Power.

Elements



FIRE



EARTH



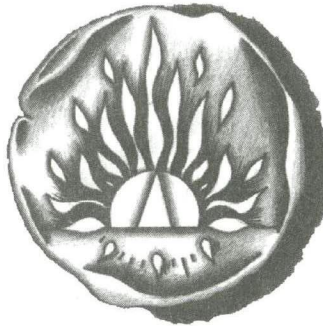
AIR



WATER

R	1	weak	sickly	limited	closed-off
	2	lethargic	unhealthy	dim	insensitive
A	3	average	average	average	average
	4	energetic	robust	bright	sensitive
T	5	boisterous	tough	brilliant	sensitive to strong energies
	6	powerful	enduring	genius	empathic
I	7	superhuman	superhuman	superhuman	superhuman
	8	vital	indefatigable	mighty genius	sensitive to weak energies
N	9	overflowing with energy	filled with vital power	phenomenal	selfless
	10	unstoppable	immune to adversity	super-genius	cosmic

F i r e



FIRE MEASURES VITALITY, FORCE, COURAGE, SPEED, AND DARING. HEROES WITH STRONG FIRE SCORES ARE ENERGETIC AND CAPABLE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES. A HERO WITH A STRONG FIRE SCORE MIGHT BE "FIERY" OR "HOT-HEADED."

A HERO WITH STRONG FIRE BUT WEAK AIR MAY BE A POWERFUL WARRIOR BUT COULD NEVER BE AN EFFECTIVE GENERAL; THE WEAK AIR SCORE WOULD KEEP THE HERO FROM BEING ABLE TO INSPIRE TROOPS THROUGH SPEECH OR TO MAKE SUPERIOR PLANS. A HERO WITH STRONG FIRE BUT WEAK EARTH MAY BE DEADLY IN COMBAT BUT UNABLE TO WITHSTAND WOUNDS OR TO ENDURE IN A LONG-LASTING BATTLE.

YOUR HERO'S FIRE SCORE DETERMINES IN GENERAL HOW GOOD THE HERO IS AT SWORD-FIGHTING, SPRINTING, CLIMBING WALLS, DODGING SPEARS, THROWING SPEARS, BREAKING DOWN DOORS, AND SO ON. FOR EACH SCORE LISTED, THERE IS A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE AND AN EXAMPLE OF HOW CAPABLE IN COMBAT A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE MIGHT BE.

If a hero's Fire score is. . . the hero will be:

1 Weak, listless. A hero may not have a score of 1 in any Element.

Example: The character is helpless in combat.

2 Lethargic, lacking energy, worn out.

Example: The character can easily be defeated by an average person in a fair fight.

3 Average.

Example: The character may win or lose a fight with an average person, depending on other factors, such as Earth scores, weaponry, training, and so on.

4 Energetic. This score is low to average for a hero.

Example: The character can usually defeat the average person in combat.

5 Boisterous, fit, in perfect health. This score is average to high score for a hero.

Example: The character can defeat an average person even if the opponent is better-armed. Given equal armaments, the character can defeat four average opponents.

6 Powerful, possibly a mighty warrior. This score is the normal maximum for a human.

Example: The character can kill, disable, disarm, pin, throw, or otherwise vanquish an average warrior at will, despite armaments and most other advantages. In a fair fight, the character is the equal of eight average opponents.

7 Past normal human limits.

Example: The character can face a mighty monster, such as a dragon or a giant, though he or she may need some advantage to vanquish such an opponent, such as a ruse or knowledge of the creature's weakness.

8 Filled with vital energy.

Example: The character can face mighty monsters as equals.

9 Overflowing with power and energy.

Example: The character can defeat numbers of mighty monsters and can challenge the mightiest creatures if he or she is able to get some sort of advantage.

10 Unstoppable. A hero may not have a score of 10 in any Element.

Example: The character is the equal of the mightiest mythic beasts, such as ancient dragons and gigantic sea serpents.

E a r t h



EARTH GOVERNS A HERO'S HEALTH, ENDURANCE, FORTITUDE, WILL, DETERMINATION, AND RESILIENCE. HEROES WITH STRONG EARTH SCORES CAN WITHSTAND DAMAGE, SHAKE OFF THE EFFECTS OF POISONS, AND RESIST MAGIC. SOMEONE WITH A STRONG EARTH SCORE MAY BE "EARTHY" OR "GROUNDED."

SOMEONE WITH STRONG EARTH BUT WEAK FIRE IS TOUGH BUT UNABLE TO ACT QUICKLY OR FORCEFULLY. SOMEONE WITH STRONG EARTH BUT WEAK WATER IS CUT OFF FROM POSITIVE ENERGIES, SUCH AS EMOTIONS, AND NEUTRAL ENERGIES, SUCH AS MAGIC, AS WELL AS FROM NEGATIVE ENERGIES.

EARTH DETERMINES YOUR HERO'S ABILITY TO SUFFER DAMAGE AND KEEP GOING, TO RECOVER FROM WOUNDS, TO ENDURE WITHOUT GETTING TIRED, TO RESIST MAGIC, AND SO ON. FOR EACH SCORE LISTED, THERE IS A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE AND AN EXAMPLE OF HOW A CHARACTER WITH SUCH A SCORE COULD WITHSTAND BEING POISONED. (THE FIRST SEVEN EXAMPLES ARE BASED ON A POISON THAT WOULD BE DEFINED AS "STRENGTH 2—LETHAL." SEE PP. 152–153. POISON OF THIS STRENGTH IS COMMON IN SNAKES AND THE MOST POISONOUS SPIDERS; IT'S DANGEROUS BUT NOT USUALLY DEADLY. POISONS OF DIFFERENT STRENGTHS WOULD HAVE DIFFERENT EFFECTS THAN THOSE IN THE EXAMPLES HERE.)

If a hero's Earth score is . . . the hero will be:

- 1 Sickly, bedridden, fragile. A hero may not have a score of 1.

Example: The mere smell of the poison makes the character ill.

- 2 Unhealthy, easily tired.

Example: Poison kills the character unless medical attention is given, in which case the character may live, though it will take weeks for a full recovery.

- 3 Average. Healthy, but with normal ills, aches, and fatigue.

Example: Poison makes her sick, weak, and helpless. It may kill her if she gets no medical attention.

- 4 Robust. This is a low-to-average score for a hero.

Example: The poison weakens the character, but he or she can still act. Medical help would assure a strong recovery.

- 5 Tough. This is an average-to-high score for a player's hero.

Example: The poison slows the character down. Medical help would speed recovery, but the character will recover quickly even without it.

- 6 Enduring, filled with vital energy, apparently tireless. This is the normal maximum for a human.

Example: The poison gives the character a headache and may make him or her

feel a little light-headed.

- 7 Beyond the normal maximum for humans.

Example: The character doesn't notice the effect of a typical poison. If the poison tastes good, the character could use it to flavor his or her food.

- 8 Indefatigable, vital, tireless, impervious to pain, able to go without sleep indefinitely. The character can go without water for a month with no ill effects, survive without food for a year, and hold his or her breath for two hours.

Example: Only a super-potent, magical poison, such as alchemically refined dragon venom, can kill the character.

- 9 Filled with vital power. The character can go without water for an entire season with no ill effects, survive without food for years, and hold his or her breath for several hours.

Example: Only super-potent, magical poisons can weaken the character or knock him or her out for a short time.

- 10 Immune to adversity. The character needs no food or water, can hold his or her breath for a day, and is almost impossible to kill. The character will recover from any wound that is not instantly fatal. A hero may not have a score of 10.

Example: No poison has any effect on the character.

A i r



AIR DETERMINES INTELLIGENCE, SPEECH, THOUGHT, LOGIC, ANALYTICAL ABILITY, ORATORY, AND KNOWLEDGE. A HERO WITH A STRONG AIR SCORE KNOWS A LOT, SPEAKS WELL, AND CAN FIGURE THINGS OUT EASILY. SOMEONE WITH STRONG AIR MAY BE "SWIFT" OR "INSPIRED."

SOMEONE WITH STRONG AIR BUT WEAK FIRE CAN SPEAK ELOQUENTLY BUT IS UNABLE TO PUT "FIRE" INTO HIS OR HER SPEECH, LIMITING HIS OR HER EFFECTIVENESS AS A LEADER. SOMEONE WITH STRONG AIR BUT WEAK WATER UNDERSTANDS LOGIC AND SCIENCE BUT IS BLIND TO THE UNSPOKEN WORLD OF EMOTIONS, LIMITING HIS OR HER ABILITIES AS A SINGER OR POET.

YOUR HERO'S AIR SCORE DETERMINES HOW WELL HE OR SHE CAN COMMUNICATE, WORK WITH LETTERS AND NUMBERS, MAKE PLANS, AND SOLVE PROBLEMS. AIR RULES READING, WRITING, GEOMETRY, AND MATHEMATICS, BUT THESE SKILLS ARE ONLY FOUND IN CERTAIN REALMS; A STRONG AIR SCORE ONLY MEANS YOUR HERO IS GOOD AT THESE SKILLS IF THE HERO HAS BEEN TRAINED IN THEM. FORMALIZED TYPES OF MAGIC REQUIRE A STRONG AIR SCORE, AS DO OTHER SCIENCES. FOR EACH SCORE LISTED THERE IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE AND AN EXAMPLE OF HOW WELL SUCH A CHARACTER CAN UNDERSTAND, USE, AND CREATE TOOLS.

If a hero's Air score is. . . the hero will be:

- 1 Limited. The character cannot understand, develop, or communicate thoughts well. A hero may not have a score of 1.

Example: The character can use simple tools if trained to use them. The character could probably sew but not use a loom.

- 2 Dim. The character uses words and ideas, but not easily or well.

Example: The character can use the tools of his or her trade but cannot use them in new ways. A character who is a weaver can use a loom but cannot envision new and imaginative patterns for his or her weavings.

- 3 Average. The character can think and speak well but misunderstands some things and believes some things that are false.

Example: The character can use the tools of the trade competently and can pick up other skills with some practice.

- 4 Bright, well-spoken, and knowledgeable. This is a low-to-average score for a hero.

Example: The character can figure out how to work tools that he or she hasn't used before. A character with this score who's never used a loom before could figure it out.

- 5 Brilliant; possibly a scholar, philosopher, or engineer. The character may have a gift with languages or be a noted storyteller. This is an average-to-high score for a hero.

Example: The character can figure out how to use complicated tools and how to follow complicated procedures. With time to experiment in a smithy, the character could forge simple iron implements without training (provided the character's from a culture that works iron).

With some time, the character can figure out how complex tools or machinery work he or she has never seen before.

- 6 A genius. This is the normal maximum for a human.

Example: The character knows how to use most tools and make most things in the character's culture, even if he or she has never done them before. The character can engineer new structures or invent new tools to meet new demands.

- 7 A legendary mind with great insight.

Example: The character can easily figure out how to use any culture's tools or machinery, showing an understanding of these devices that even those who work with them regularly don't have.

- 8 A mighty genius, capable of administering crumbling empires, conceiving new types of machines, founding schools of philosophy, and so on.

Example: The character can construct devices, compound medicines, or refine substances to meet most special circumstances.

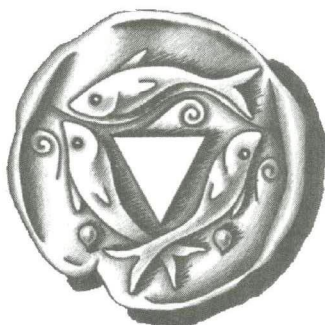
- 9 Someone of phenomenal insight and intelligence, with a vast amount of knowledge.

Example: The character has a thorough understanding of all artificial creations. With time, he or she can invent machines, forge tools, compound medicines, and refine substances as if trained to do so.

- 10 A seemingly divine philosopher, scientist, or sage. A hero may not have a score of 10.

Example: The character has complete understanding of all artificial creations and is capable of creating new devices, medicines, and substances as if he or she had been trained to do so from birth.

Water



WATER GOVERNS INTUITION, SENSITIVITY TO THAT WHICH IS UNSEEN AND UNSPOKEN, RECEPTIVITY, PSYCHIC POTENTIAL, AND DEPTH OF FEELING. HEROES WITH STRONG WATER SCORES ARE GOOD AT SENSING LIES, FEELING MAGIC, INTUING HIDDEN EMOTIONS, ADAPTING TO NEW SOCIAL SITUATIONS, AND SO ON. SOMEONE WITH A STRONG WATER SCORE MIGHT BE "DEEP" OR "FLUID."

A HERO WITH STRONG WATER BUT WEAK AIR CAN SENSE THINGS BUT HAS A HARD TIME PUTTING THEM INTO WORDS AND EXPLAINING THEM TO OTHERS. A HERO WITH STRONG WATER BUT WEAK EARTH CAN SENSE FORCES AND ENERGIES BUT IS UNABLE TO WITHSTAND THOSE ENERGIES IF THEY ARE STRONG.

SINCE WATER RULES THE UNSPOKEN AND THE NON-VERBAL, STRONG WATER ALONE NEVER LETS ONE "READ" ANOTHER'S MIND. "READING" RELATES TO WORDS, AND AIR, NOT WATER, RULES WORDS.

(BESIDES, YOU SHOULD NOT GIVE YOUR HERO THE ABILITY TO READ MINDS, AS THIS ABILITY CAUSES PROBLEMS DURING PLAY. SEE P. 70.) A STRONG WATER SCORE CAN, HOWEVER, ALLOW ONE TO TUNE IN TO OTHERS' EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL STATES, SINCE THEY ARE NONVERBAL. HAVING THIS EMPATHIC ABILITY DOES NOT USUALLY RUIN PLOTS BECAUSE THE INFORMATION GATHERED TENDS TO BE VAGUE.

THE WATER SCORE DETERMINES YOUR HERO'S ABILITY TO SENSE EMOTIONS, FEEL MAGICAL FORCES, UNDERSTAND "UNWRITTEN RULES" OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES, AND SO ON. FOR EACH SCORE LISTED, THERE IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE IS LIKE AND AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT A CHARACTER WITH THAT SCORE COULD INTUIT ABOUT A SPECIFIC SOCIAL SITUATION. IN THIS CASE, THE EXAMPLE SITUATION IS THAT THE CHARACTER IS SPEAKING WITH A HUSBAND AND WIFE ABOUT AFFAIRS IN THEIR REALMS.

If a hero's Water score is. . . the hero will be:

1 Closed-off. The character is cut off from the world and from human society, a condition typical of the worst recluses. A hero may not have a score of 1.

Example: The character doesn't even realize that the man and woman are married.

2 Insensitive. The character is awkward in social situations, unable to interact with animals and children, lacking in spiritual feeling, and unable to appreciate art.

Example: The character understands the facts of the others' statements, but that's all.

3 Average. The character is aware of social, spiritual, and internal energies but sometimes distracted, biased, and self-centered.

Example: The character can tell that the wife is troubled by something.

4 Sensitive. This is a low-to-average score for a hero.

Example: The character can tell that the wife secretly resents her husband.

5 Able to sense strong energies. This is an average-to-high score for a hero.

Example: The character not only sees that the wife secretly resents the husband but also senses some sort of evil energy at work.

6 Normal maximum for a human. The character can sense the emotions of those present. The character can understand the feelings, basic motives, and intents of any sentient being, regardless of language.

Example: The character intuitively that the

wife has an evil energy invading her psychically, causing her to resent her husband. The husband is pulling away from her emotionally to protect himself, but he does not realize that she resents him, nor is he aware of his unconscious self-defense.

7 The character can understand the desires, intents, and feelings of even animals and can sense moderate energies.

Example: As above, plus the character can feel that the energy affecting the wife is growing in power.

8 The character can sense weak energies, such as energies that used to be powerful in a place and are now gone, or traces of powerful energy on people who have been exposed to it.

Example: As above, plus the character senses that the energy is coming from a relative of the wife.

9 Selfless. The character can sense weak energies without even trying. He or she knows most people better than they know themselves.

Example: As above, plus the character sees that the energy is coming from the wife's brother. It will culminate in the wife murdering the husband within a week.

10 In constant commune with natural, social, and spiritual environments. The character is selfless and nearly returned to cosmic consciousness. A hero may not have a score of 10.

Example: As above, plus the brother's evil magic is part of a growing influence created by someone from another sphere. This influence will corrupt this realm within a year if it is not stopped.

Example Elements:

Fireson



I'd spent 3 of Fireson's 20 points on the Powers Priestly Rites and Sweat Fire. I didn't intend for Fireson to have Magic, so I had 17 points to use for his four Elements.



I decided that his most important Element was to be—can you guess?—Fire. After all, his name, his deity, and his Virtue are all tied to fire. (Actually, the fortune card The Lion is tied to both fire and earth.) I wanted this Element to be quite high so that it would really stand out.



Fireson's second most important Element, I decided, was Water. As a priest, he would need to be sensitive to spiritual energies. Many months after I invented Fireson, I realized that his Fault is a reversed card tied to water. If his Water Element represents his priestly nature, then having a reversed water card as a Fault fits him, as a failed priest, very nicely. I didn't make this connection, however, when I first chose the Fault.



I also wanted Fireson to be a good speaker (strong Air), because he would have needed that skill as a priest, and a tough fellow (strong Earth) because he's been through a lot.



In my dreams, Fireson would have been 7 Fire, 6 Water, 4 Air, and 4 Earth. But that added up

to 21, and I only had 17 elemental points left. I decided that I could live with lopping 1 point off each Element to meet the 17 point limit. I really wanted to keep the 7 Fire so that he'd be superhuman, but that would have meant having a 2 in Earth, a 2 in Air, or a mere 4 in Water. I decided that I couldn't live with any of those scores, so I dropped his Fire to 6, his Water to 5, and his Earth and Air to 3.



In terms of the game world, Fireson still has a tremendous amount of physical energy (6 Fire), meaning that he can outspint, outfight, outdance, and outjump most people. His average endurance (3 Earth), however, means that he's likely to tire himself out quickly. His sensitivity (5 Water) indicates that he's able to read unspoken hints, sense strong magical energies, and so on. His average intelligence and speaking ability (3 Air) mean that he can get along in conversations, but not much more. (In play, I had to be careful to use simpler words and phrases than I'm used to; I usually play well-spoken characters. Sometimes fancy sentences would slip out of my mouth. I'd say, "Certainly Your Majesty recognizes the danger inherent in delay" when Fireson should have been saying something more like "But King, if we don't act now, we're dead!")

Using Scores

When your hero opposes another character or some force in the game world, the gamemaster uses your hero's scores to judge whether he or she succeeds. For instance, when two heroes fight, the one with the stronger Fire is likely to win (other factors being equal).

Each Element covers a broad range of activities, and heroes are generally assumed to be equally good in all the activities covered by a single Element. For example, strong Water means a hero is sensitive to magical energy, deception, others' feelings, the presence of spirits, and so on. Of course, not everyone who is sensitive to magical energy is equally sensitive to deception, emotions, and spirits. You can use Powers and Specialties (see below) to make your hero's abilities more precise. For example, if you want a hero who can see and talk to spirits but who isn't particularly sensitive otherwise, you can take Speak to Spirits as a 1-point (major) Power and give your hero an average Water score. If you want someone who's sensitive in general but particularly sensitive to deception, you can take a Specialty to reflect that special sensitivity, and give your hero a strong Water score.

TO SEE
HOW SCORES
ARE USED
IN PLAY,
SEE PP.
124-126.

You and the gamemaster can also take into account your hero's background to determine what the hero can and cannot do. For instance, a 6-Air hero from a literate society can almost certainly read and write, while a 6-Air hero from an oral society almost certainly cannot.

Careers and Elements

Below are some typical roles that different heroes fill depending on their strongest Elements. Your hero is not limited to the listed roles. Instead, this

list simply gives you some ideas of what Elements might be important to your hero and demonstrates how the abstract Elements are made concrete in the careers of characters.

Fire: warrior, acrobat

Fire and Earth: athlete, soldier, smith

Fire and Air: orator, leader, general, messenger

Fire and Water: hunter, dancer, thief, scout

Earth: guard, crafter, laborer, farmer

Earth and Air: magistrate, inquisitor

Earth and Water: healer, priest, sea captain

Air: scholar, preacher, teacher, alchemist, engineer

Air and Water: poet, physician, singer

Water: mystic, artist, seer, lunatic

Specialties

Each hero has four *Specialties*, one for each Element. These Specialties describe areas in which the hero is especially capable. For instance, the Specialty "Stealth" indicates that the hero is stealthier than his or her Water score alone would indicate. Generally, a Specialty allows a hero to perform an act as if the score were 1 point higher than it is.

The most common type of Specialty relates to the actions that the Element rules. For example, the Specialty "Oratory" is related to the Element Air because Air rules speech. That is, your hero's Air score determines how well the hero speaks in public.

In the same way, the Specialty “Archery” would generally be tied to Fire because Fire rules action in general and especially combat. If your hero has 4 Fire and a Specialty in Archery, the hero uses a bow and arrow as well as if he or she had a 5 Fire.

Cross-Specialties, however, relate to the physical element that the hero’s Element is connected to. The Specialty “Archery” could be tied to Air as a Cross-Specialty because arrows fly through the air. In this case, the hero’s ability with Archery is rated as the hero’s Air score plus 1. A hero with 6 Air and the Archery Cross-Specialty would shoot arrows as well as a 7-Fire archer, even if the hero’s Fire score was very weak. In the same way, Swimming usually relates to Fire because it’s a physical activity, but it could be tied to Water as a Cross-Specialty. Pottery would usually relate to Air because it’s a craft, but it could be tied to Earth. Resisting Heat is normally tied to

Earth because it’s an aspect of fortitude, but it could also be tied to Fire.

Specialties (including Cross-Specialties) must be specific. For example, “Climbing” is a fine Specialty, but “Athletics” is too general. If you want your hero to be a good athlete, he or she needs a strong Fire score (and secondarily a strong Earth score).

Specialties cannot relate directly to magic (see below). A hero’s Magic score represents magical ability, while Specialties are for representing the hero’s other capabilities.

Write each Specialty in the quarter of the wheel that corresponds to the Specialty’s Element.

Here are example Specialties listed for each Element. For Cross-Specialties, the normal Element for that Specialty is listed in parentheses.

Example Specialties: Fireson

For Fireson’s Fire Specialty, I wanted something that referred literally to fire, not to physical activity. After all, he’s a fire priest. I could have taken “Withstanding Heat,” but Fireson’s free Power is Friend to Fire, which makes him invulnerable to heat anyway. I decided to make his Specialty “Fire Magic,” meaning knowledge of magical connections to fire: fire symbols, fire spells, legends about fire, and so on. Note that this Specialty is simply knowledge, not practice. Fireson could use this Specialty to identify a spell to summon fiery spirits but not to cast the spell. Since this Specialty refers to knowledge, it would normally fall under Air, but I took it as a

Cross-Specialty. Since Fireson’s Fire score is 6, his knowledge of Fire Magic is effectively 7.



I wanted Fireson’s other Specialties to relate to his training as a priest. Even if these Specialties might not be as useful as Specialties related to exploring realms, dealing with people, fighting monsters, and solving mysteries, they help define Fireson’s identity. For his Earth Specialty, I chose “Maintaining Vigils.” For Air, I chose “Speaking to Crowds.” For Water, I chose “Sensing Divine Energies.” These Specialties all represent activities that Fireson undertook as a priest.

Example Fire Specialties

Archery
Climbing
Jumping
Running
Smithing (Air)
Swordfighting
Withstanding Heat (Earth)
Wrestling

Example Earth Specialties

Farming (Air)
Mining (Air)
Resisting Magic
Resisting Persuasion
Resisting Poisons
Tireless Stride
Thick Skin

Example Air Specialties

Archery (Fire)
Herb Lore
Lying
Occult Lore
Oratory
Singing
Smooth-talking

Example Water Specialties

Diagnosing Illness
Sensing Ambush
Sensing Death
Sensing Divine Energy
Stealth
Swimming (Fire)
Tracking

The Magic Stage

Magic is the ability to wield supernatural energies in order to cast spells. Most heroes do not know magic, though they may have supernatural abilities because of their Powers. If your hero knows magic, then you must use some of the elemental points allotted to give your hero a score in Magic. The term *mage* covers all characters who use magic, though specific terms such as “healer,” “shaman,” “spirit doctor,” and so on may be more appropriate for certain practitioners of magic.

Record the number of points spent on Magic in the space labeled “Magic” on the front of your hero sheet. This space has seven sides to remind you that 7 is the highest number of points you can spend on a single type of Magic. Describe your hero’s magic abilities in the space labeled “Magic and Powers” on the back of your hero sheet.

Magic is a tricky art for players and gamemasters to use well. You must look to your gamemaster to establish the limits of what your

mage's spells can accomplish. Your gamemaster is the final arbiter of what your character can do, so be sure that you make yourself clear about what you expect your hero to be capable of. It may be that you will have to take a higher Magic score than you expected to at first in order for your mage to be able to do the sorts of things you want. Even if you and the gamemaster agree at the outset, problems may arise during quests when you think your mage can do something and the gamemaster disagrees. If you are not ready to concede to the gamemaster's judgment, don't run a mage in the first place.

If your gamemaster doesn't feel up to handling the intricacies of magery, something that is likely to be true for gamemasters who are new to the game, then he or she can restrict you from creating heroes that have magical abilities.

Magic Level

Each mage has a score representing his or her ability with magic. Hypothetically, this *level* can be between 1 and 10, but 7 is the highest a hero can start out with. Level 3 is average for normal mages.

Your hero must have one Element that is at least as high as his or her Magic level, the Element to which that type of Magic is linked. Since you only have 20 points to divide among the Elements, each of which must be at least 2, the absolute highest Magic level your hero can have is 7, and anything above 5 will certainly leave the hero deficient in at least one Element. All ten levels of Magic ability are described here, as background characters or experienced heroes may rise beyond the limit of 7.

If a hero's Magic score is. . . the hero will be:

- 1 **Apprentice:** A beginner, capable of both modest tricks and catastrophic mistakes.
- 2 **Weak Mage:** Capable of a decent spell or two; has an understanding of magic as a science.
- 3 **Average Mage:** A humble practitioner with some impressive powers in his or her area of specialization, but not one to tackle great magical challenges. A town of a thousand people might have one such mage.
- 4 **Gifted Mage:** A talented spellcaster with a good grounding in magic and some real promise. A city of ten thousand people might have such a mage.
- 5 **Powerful Mage:** Well above the average; capable of facing powerful magical threats. A kingdom of a hundred thousand people might have one such mage.
- 6 **Mighty Mage:** The mightiest living mage that most people have ever heard of; a master of magic. A realm of a million people might have one such mage.
- 7 **Legendary Mage:** The most powerful mage from sea to sea. A continent of ten million might have one such mage. A beginning hero cannot have a higher level than this.
- 8 **Supreme Mage:** A sphere of a hundred million people might have only one such mage.
- 9 **Archmage:** Most spheres have no one this powerful living among them.
- 10 **Avatar:** Past mortal. Such a mage has channeled so much magic that he or she is no longer human. The mage has become a force of nature or of supernature. He or she is indeed incredibly powerful but is also beyond mortal understanding.

YOUR MAGE CANNOT
HAVE A SPECIALTY
THAT IS MAGICAL.
FOR INSTANCE, IF
YOU HAVE 4 EARTH,
YOU CANNOT HAVE
"SOIL AND STONE
MAGIC" AS YOUR
HERO'S EARTH
SPECIALTY AND
THEREBY HAVE A
MAGIC SCORE
UP TO 5.

Types of Magic

There are many different types of Magic, each tied to an Element. (That's the Element that must be at least as high as your hero's Magic level.) You can invent your hero's magical style or use one of the examples provided here. Types of magic are variously known in the game world by terms such as "paths," "schools," "arts," "styles," and "traditions."

Mages of different realms study different types of magic. Your mage may study a type of magic that is common in his or her realm or may study an unusual type.

Below are four examples of types of magic. You can use one of these for your mage, or you can invent your own. Each type of magic is listed with the element that rules it, a general description of what that type of magic does, and examples of what the mage can do at each level of magical ability. In addition, the four ready-to-run mages use these types of magic. The specific abilities of each ready-to-run mage are listed along with each type of magic.

Note that most effects of magic require the presence of the mage for maximum effect. For example, a mage who uses Words of Power can inscribe a portal with a magical ward, but it won't be nearly as powerful as a ward that the mage could hold and present personally. To work permanent enchantments of any power, a mage must sacrifice something: magical materials, a great length of time, or even bit of himself or herself. Permanent enchantments are therefore rare.

Flux

Element: Fire

Fire magic transforms things, as fire can transform wood to ash, sand to glass, water to steam, and ore to iron. Like the effects of fire, the effects of this magic last only a short time, usually about a day.

As sight is the sense connected to fire, fire magic works through the concentrated gaze of the mage.

AT THIS MAGIC LEVEL. . . A MAGE CAN:

- 1: ALTER MINOR FEATURES ON SMALL OBJECTS, SUCH AS MAKING A PEBBLE SMOOTHER.
- 2: ALTER MINOR FEATURES OF SMALL ANIMALS, SUCH AS MAKING A SQUIRREL MORE ENERGETIC OR CHANGING A LADYBUG'S COLORING.
- 3: ALTER MINOR FEATURES, SUCH AS AGING MILK, FRESHENING AIR, FORTIFYING WINE, WEAKENING ROPE, AND RUSTING METAL.
- 4: ALTER PETTY FEATURES OF AN AVERAGE PERSON, SUCH AS SCENT, HAIR COLOR, AND SO ON, CHANGE THE SIZE OR SHAPE OF AN INANIMATE OBJECT.
- 5: ALTER AN AVERAGE HERO'S FEATURES, SUCH AS HEIGHT OR RACE.
- 6: TRANSFORM THE BODY OF AN AVERAGE PERSON (3 EARTH) INTO THAT OF AN ANIMAL.
- 7: TRANSFORM THE BODY OF AN AVERAGE PERSON INTO THAT OF A VERY SMALL OR VERY LARGE ANIMAL; TRANSFORM AN AVERAGE PERSON (BODY AND MIND) INTO AN ANIMAL.
- 8: TRANSFORM A MIGHTY BEAST (5 EARTH) INTO ANOTHER CREATURE.
- 9: TRANSFORM A REALM (USING A MONTHS-LONG RITUAL).
- 10: TRANSFORM A SPHERE (USING A YEARS-LONG RITUAL).

Serenity's Magic

The ready-to-run hero Serenity has Flux Magic at level 5.



Serenity can transform people and things. She needs no words to do her work, but she must stare at the thing to be transformed and project her energy with hand gestures. As sight is the sense connected to fire, this magic works through her concentrated gaze.



Serenity can easily make minor changes in little animals and small objects, altering textures, colors, hair coverings, and other details with hardly any effort. She can also change the

sizes and shapes of inanimate objects, though this takes more effort. All these changes are temporary, and the altered things revert to normal within a day. (Certain actions, such as naming the transformed thing or touching the thing with iron, can make it revert to its normal form sooner.)

Serenity can also alter people's features, but she cannot turn them into animals or the like, nor can she switch their genders. She can alter hair color, skin color, facial features, height, and so on. She can make a person about a foot

taller or shorter and alter a person's weight by about one-fourth more or less. Anyone with an Earth score of 5 or stronger, however, is hard to transform, unless the character also has a strong Water score and welcomes the change. These changes are also temporary.

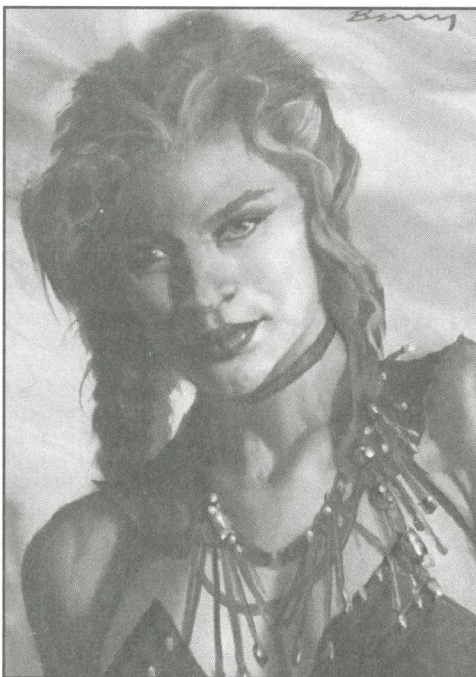


As Serenity's magic is tied to fire, the least predictable of elements, her magic some-

times has unpredictable results.



Transforming things is hard work, but Serenity's good Earth score (4) allows her to cast a fair number of spells before wearing herself out.



Soil and Stone

Element: Earth

The mage can draw on the fertile energy of soil and the enduring power of stone. The mage is a healer, a ward against evil, and a source of strength and health.

As touch is the sense connected to earth, this magic works through physical contact, especially with the hands.

At this Magic level. . . a mage can:

- 1: Aid the ill.
- 2: Speed healing.
- 3: Counter diseases; ward someone against a particular danger or magic.
- 4: Bless crops; counter poisons; keep a mortally wounded person from dying.
- 5: Counter curses; let a mortally wounded person recover (slowly) from wounds.
- 6: Save a realm from plague; heal a dying person; destroy spirits of corruption.
- 7: Ward a group of people against harm.
- 8: Cleanse a plague-afflicted realm.
- 9: Bolster a realm against evil magic.
- 10: Raise the dead; bring health to an entire realm.

Words of Power

Element: Air

This form of magic uses spoken and written words to affect living things, spirits, and magical forces. The mage can inscribe charms with magic words and symbols, but the charms don't have the same effect

as a directly spoken word. This form of magic is very versatile, but it is especially useful for binding spirits, sealing portals, warding chambers, compelling lesser creatures to obey, and striking down opponents with power words. If a spoken word has a lasting, rather than immediate, effect, then speaking another such word of power negates the first one. For example, if a mage compels a cat to go into the next room and scratch the first person it comes across and the mage uses another word of power before the cat has completed its mission, then the spell on the cat is lifted.

As sound is the sense connected to Air, this magic works through the mage's words.

At this Magic level. . . a mage can:

- 1: Inscribe charms to bring (slightly) good luck; command bugs by voice.
- 2: Command domesticated, peaceful animals to do simple tasks.
- 3: Inscribe charms for various minor purposes; force back wild animals.
- 4: Bind spirits; misdirect mortals; inscribe charms for protection from specific dangers.
- 5: Force back an average person (3 Earth) with a magic word.
- 6: Bind powerful magics; kill an average individual (3 Earth) with a word; force back a group of average people (3 Earth) with a word.
- 7: Kill a small group of average people (3 Earth) with a word; force back a large beast (5 Earth) with a word.
- 8: Kill a large beast (5 Earth) with a word; delude a city's population through charms and words.
- 9: Kill a mighty beast (6 Earth) with a word; delude a realm's population through charms and words.
- 10: Create creatures by word; inscribe runes that shape spheres.

Cleft's Magic

The ready-to-run hero Cleft has Soil and Stone Magic at level 5.



Cleft draws on the fertile energy of soil and the enduring power of stone to work his magic. He is a healer, a ward against evil, and a source of strength and health.



As touch is the sense connected to earth, Cleft's magic works through touch, especially through the hands. He also uses the bounty of the earth—plants, herbs, dust, and clay—to work his strongest healing magic.



In a single day, under his direct and constant care, a simple wound heals as though two weeks have gone by. If Cleft tends a wounded person daily but not constantly, the person recovers twice as fast as normal. His touch can ease pain, stop bleeding, and keep a wound clean. With great and constant effort, he can prevent a mortally wounded person from dying and nurse that person back to health. Depending on the wound, it can take

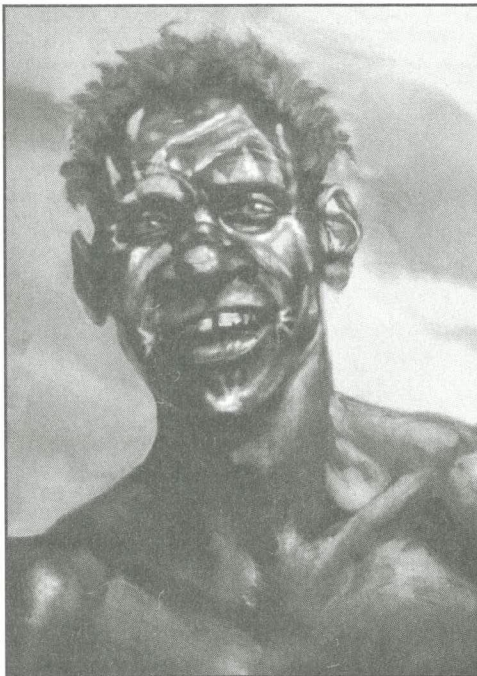
days to weeks of care to heal the person to the point at which death no longer threatens.



Cleft's touch and care can also (in order of increasing difficulty) cure diseases, neutralize poisons, lift curses, and banish malignant spirits. Particularly deadly or profound diseases (such as leprosy), potent poisons (such as that of the cockatrice), powerful curses, and mighty demons, however, can resist his magic.



Cleft can promote health and prevent harm by blessing people, crops, wagons, and so on. He can improve a person's resistance to a particular



danger (such as poison, Words of Power magic, or cold), and such a blessing lasts three days and nights. (He paints a hand on the person to be protected to focus his protective power there.) He can, through a long ritual, bless fields to encourage bountiful crops. He can even give some protection to a large, unified body of people, such as an army, though only through a long and tiring ritual.

P r a i s e s B e ' s M a g i c



The ready-to-run hero Praises Be ("Praise" for short) has Words of Power Magic at level 6.



Praise's magic uses spoken and written words to affect living things, spirits, and magic. His spells fall into three general types: spoken words, rituals, and inscriptions.



By speaking magic words, Praise can compel a spirit to obey him, kill an average person (3 Earth), or force a group of average people to back away. (Average people forced back cannot approach Praise again for about a minute, but those with strong Fire scores can approach again much sooner.) He can easily force back or command animals, but they are no easier for him to kill than people are. The effects of one word of power are negated when Praise utters another word of power. For instance, if he has caused bandits to hold back with a word of power, and then he uses a word of power to kill one of them, the others are freed from their spell and are once again able to attack him.



Praise can inscribe objects with magic words so that the objects have magical effects. A magical inscription, however, takes a lot of time and energy to do, and it's not as powerful as a spoken word. For example, Praise could create scrolls to be used as talismans

that protect their wearers from Magic of level 3 or weaker. (Thus, a mage with a score of 3 would not be able to cast spells on the protected person.) If the name of the wearer is worked into the inscription, it protects against level-4 Magic, and if the name of the mage whose magic is to be countered is worked into the formula, it protects up to level 5 (the most powerful protection Praise can offer). Praise can also work talismans to protect people against other supernatural dangers or to have other magical effects. Depending on the strength of the talisman, it takes Praise anywhere from an hour to a day to inscribe one, with more powerful talismans taking longer. Talismans' power wanes quickly.



Praise's rituals are for major magical actions, such as imprisoning a powerful demon, warding an area against magical intrusion, and other such feats. Praise's rituals last from an hour to a day, and they leave him weary.



Praise's average Earth score (3) means that he tires after doing any significant magic. His Magic score is so high that he can quickly fatigue himself to unconsciousness if he casts powerful magic too quickly.



Praise's magic depends on his ability to speak words or to inscribe words and symbols.

Open Chalice

Element: Water

The mage is receptive to energies, powers, and spirits. For example, the mage can sense strong emotions in a location where they were experienced, allow spirits to speak through him or her, sense energies that are ruling or affecting a realm, and so on. The mage can see auras of increasing subtlety as this magical power increases, but interpreting those auras can be tricky. A new type of aura seen for the first time carries little information to the mage; only experience teaches the mage what different auras mean. The mage can allow negative energies to “pass through” without doing harm.

As water rules intuition, this magic works mostly through the unconscious senses of the mage. As taste and smell are the physical senses ruled by water, this magic sometimes uses magic drinks, smoke, incense, or other aids.

At this Magic level. . . a mage can:

- 1: Sense strong energies.
- 2: See strong auras, such as those of powerful mages or mighty magical artifacts.
- 3: Call and channel spirits with varied success.
- 4: Communicate nonverbally with animals; call and channel most spirits.
- 5: Communicate nonverbally with plants; call and channel spirits with facility; accept and neutralize petty negative energies.
- 6: Open up to and channel powerful spirits without harm.

7: Sense multiple layers of magical energy; accept powerful negative energies without harm.

8: Channel, and possibly redirect, powerful energies.

9: Channel the words and powers of deities or divine powers.

10: Commune directly with heaven.

Mages and Elements

A mage's Elements are important to the use of magic.

Air: Mental strength and intellect are important to mages, especially those who work with magic words and formulas. A mage with strong Air may specialize in mental magic, communication over great distances, speech, and so forth, or in air- and weather-related magic. A mage with weak Air may not have the mental ability to master complicated magical formulas.

Fire: Forceful energy is important to mages, especially those who use violent spells. A mage with strong Fire might specialize in spells related to fire, heat, light, destruction, change, and action. A mage with weak Fire may have spells without much force behind them.

Earth: Inner strength is important to mages, especially to healers. A mage with strong Earth might specialize in fertility, healing, and earth-based spells. A mage with weak Earth may be easily influenced or manipulated by outside forces. As with physical tasks, an Earth score also determines a mage's endurance; magic is a demanding art, and a mage with weak Earth gets tired after casting a few big spells.

W h i s p e r W a l k e r ' s M a g i c

The ready-to-run hero Whisper Walker has Open Chalice Magic at level 4.



Whisper Walker can sense energies of all kinds, though particularly subtle energies may be difficult or impossible for her to identify. Negative energies disturb her, and very powerful, negative energies can weaken her or even knock her out.



Whisper Walker can see unusual auras of any kind, noticing supernatural disturbances and extremes. She can tell that an item is magical, that a person is a mage (or is otherwise magical), that an area is imbued with some sort of energy, and so on. She cannot tell if someone is lying or detect general personality traits. Only extremes of some sort are visible to her.



Whisper Walker can open herself to spirits, call them into herself, and let them act through her. (While a spirit is "possessing" her, the gamemaster runs Whisper Walker.) She can usually reassert herself at will. She can also communicate with spirits that others cannot see or hear. Powerful spirits are likely to

overcome her and may resist giving up possession of her body. The most powerful spirits may not even "fit" in her; contact with spirits of this kind can hurt or damage her. Whisper Walker's magic puts her in a dangerous position: she is advanced enough to accept spirits without always being powerful enough to control them.



Whisper Walker's magic lets her communicate with animals, but the communication is always nonverbal. (Her Magic is tied to Water, not Air, so it is silent, rather than spoken.)



Whisper Walker has a special ability that she calls the "Soul's Wall of Stone." It is her technique for erecting a psychic barrier to prevent intrusion. (In game terms, it's simply her Earth Specialty, giving her an effective score of 5 to resist magical intrusions.)



Whisper Walker has incense and herbs that she uses in her rituals. Some herbs she burns or crumbles into dust. Others she steepes, forming a drink. If she has time to prepare for a ritual, she is more likely to meet with success.

Ready-to-Run Mages and Their Elements



Praise's average Earth score (3) means that he tires after doing any significant magic. His Magic score is so high that he can quickly fatigue

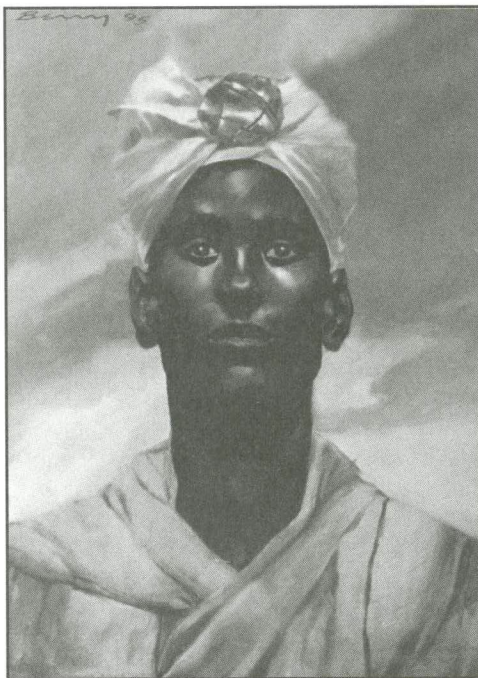
himself to unconsciousness if he casts powerful magic too fast. His average Water score means that he's no more sensitive than the average person, though his Specialty, "Sensing Magic," at least gives him a hint when powerful magic is in the works.



Whisper Walker's Earth is 4, better than average but not spectacular. She can handle the rigors of calling spirits into

herself better than most could, but it usually leaves her drained, and a powerful spirit could drive her to unconsciousness. Her Water score of 5 means that she is very sensitive; since her Magic level is lower than the Element to which it's tied, Whisper Walker has untapped

potential. (That is, if she could find a way to improve her Magic level, she could do so without first having to raise her Water score.)



Transforming things is hard work, but Serenity's good Earth score (4) allows her to cast a fair number of spells before wearing herself out. Her average Air and Water scores mean that she's no wiser or more perceptive than average; she may well wind up misusing her power if she is not careful.



Cleft's strong Earth (5) means that he can use

his magic for long periods of time before wearing himself out. His other Elements are average, so he's unlikely to be capable of doing much outside his field. When it comes to identifying magic runes, dealing with spirits, and so on, he's basically no better off than anyone else.

A mage's Earth score is the primary determinant of how much magic the mage can use before becoming worn out.

Water: Intuition and a connection to the unconscious are important to mages, especially to seers and clairvoyants. A mage with strong Water may be psychic or sensitive, or maybe a specialist in water magic. A mage with weak Water is closed off to unconscious and unspoken forces and thus in danger of being misled.

Magic Power in Perspective

Magic is an ability that can be used in countless ways. Its limits can only be tested in play itself; neither the gamemaster nor the players will know from the start what a given mage is fully capable of doing. It is therefore important that the gamemaster and player agree on as much as they can before play begins and that the player is willing to let the gamemaster be the final judge of magic's effect. If you as a player are not ready to let the gamemaster be the final arbiter in what your mage can and cannot do, then you're not ready to play a mage.

The Two Elements Test

What is too powerful for a given Magic level, and what is not powerful enough? To answer these questions, apply the Two Elements Test. What could a hero do with two Elements equal to the mage's Magic level? For example, to imagine what a mage with level-6 Magic can do, imagine what a hero with 6 Fire and 6 Earth could do. Such a hero would be a mighty warrior, able to handily defeat several average warriors. It is fair, then, for a level-6 mage to have equivalent effects. A mage using Words of Power with a Magic score of

6, for example, can kill a person with a word. While this is less valuable than 6 Fire and 6 Earth when the mage is being rushed by eight warriors (as some are bound to get to the mage before he or she can kill them all), it's more useful for discreet assassinations, so it's about equally valuable to a combat-oriented sphere-walker.

Imagine what a hero with 6 Water and 6 Air could do. Such a hero could sense the underlying emotions in another person and talk so smoothly and persuasively that the hero could get most people to do what he or she wants them to do. A Words-of-Power mage with a Magic score of 6 can say a word and hold back a group of warriors who would otherwise attack. Each of these abilities is useful in different circumstances, but they are roughly equivalent in overall usefulness.

Limiting Magic Power

Sometimes a mage's abilities get out of hand. If at any time a mage's abilities begin to ruin quests, the gamemaster has the right to limit the magical abilities below what they used to be. For example, if a mage has the ability to make people invisible, and the heroes defeat almost every obstacle by being invisible, then the challenge and fun of the game are in peril. The gamemaster can limit this magic power directly, such as by imposing a limit on the amount of time or number of times a hero can be invisible, or indirectly, such as by creating quests in which invisibility does little good, or is even useless. (For example, enemies with strong Water scores, good senses of smell, or magical wards might be able to detect even invisible heroes.) Remember, magic is never an exact science, and the gamemaster is free to change the rules to preserve the spirit of the game.

The Questions Stage

In the questions stage of creating heroes, you and the other players ask questions of each other to help develop more details about your heroes. You learn more about the other players' heroes, and the other players inspire you to invent details about your own hero. For many players, this is the most enjoyable part of creating a hero.

Generally, if your group is small (four or fewer players), you can all participate in one group. If the group is larger than four, split into groups of two, three, or four. (If the group is too big, the pace can get too slow.) If possible, split into groups so that the players whose heroes are likely to know each other best are together. That way you, as a player, know best the heroes that your hero might also know.

The players again show their vision cards to each other and explain what they mean, as they did in the introduction stage. Then each player asks questions about the others' heroes. You can each ask a single question at a time, or you can ask several at once. You and the other players take turns asking questions. The goal is to develop a good sense of who your hero is and who the other players' heroes are. You may of course volunteer information that the other players don't ask about. Their role is to help you develop your hero, not to restrict you.

The players ask questions for any length of time. Generally, the gamemaster determines when this process has gone on long enough. The questions stage, however, never really ends. At the beginning of every session, you can start out with a few minutes of questions to help the players remember who the heroes are and to develop them further.

Types of Questions

You can ask various types of questions for different purposes.

"In-Character" Questions

You can ask questions as though you were asking the hero, not the player. When you answer questions, you can answer them as your hero would. This practice is often best because it involves you more immediately in the heroes' lives and lets you practice taking on your hero's role.

Out of Character:

First Player: Where does your hero live?

Second Player: She lives in an imperial capital, a really big city where all sorts of things are always happening. It's not a perfect place, but she thinks it is.

In Character:

First Player: Where do you live?

Second Player: I live in an imperial capital, a really big city where all sorts of things are always happening. It's not a perfect place, but I think it is.

Really In Character:

First Player: Where do you live?

Second Player: I am proud to make my home in the ever-glorious city of Ivory Spire, long may she stand. Ivory Spire is the capital of a mighty empire, and it is, by any objective measure, the best place in the world to live.

Broad and Narrow Questions

At first, your questions should be broad. Broad

questions help you and the other players establish the basics of who the heroes are. For example, these are good broad questions with which to start:

“What sort of person are you?”

“What are your most remarkable traits and abilities?”

“What sort of realm do you come from?”

As you get to know the other players’ heroes, you can ask more detailed questions, such as:

“What is your greatest fear?”

“What do you consider to be the most important virtue?”

“Whom do you love the most?”

Pretty soon you can ask specific questions about particular heroes. For example:

“What was the happiest event in your apprenticeship?”

“How did your family react when you renounced the throne?”

“Why did you run away from the invaders instead of staying to fight?”

Questions About Vision Cards

You can ask questions based on the vision cards that describe the other heroes, such as:

“Who is this person in the background?”

“Is this fancy clothing typical for these people, or is this some sort of festival?”

“What happened when you met that mermaid?”

“What the heck is *that*?”

Vision cards have questions on the back, which you can use to inspire you to think about the images on the front.

Breaking Character

It’s also possible to “break character” and ask questions that the player can answer but the hero cannot. For instance:

“What do you know about your hero that she does not know about herself?”

“In what ways is your hero lying to himself?”

“What lessons in life does your hero still need to learn?”

These kinds of questions help establish the hidden, secret, or unknown sides of the hero. They also make room for the hero to grow as a person. By establishing things that a hero doesn’t know, these sorts of questions help the player invent things that the hero can discover during play.

Joint Character Questions

Once you and the other players know each others’ heroes well enough, you may want to ask questions about heroes’ interactions with each other.

“I usually can’t stand nobles, but you are different somehow, and I find myself liking you even though you have noble blood. Did your parents bring you up differently from how other noble children are raised?”

“When I brag about my exploits, how do you react?”

“If I showed up at your cottage asking for shelter, how would you treat me?”

P O S S E S S I O N S



Whether anyone asks you or not, you should decide what possessions your hero owns. These possessions will be important in determining what you can do on a quest, and they also help you to develop your hero's background.



Your hero can have any possessions suitable to his or her background. A warrior may have weapons, armor, and perhaps a steed. A mage may have a wand, potent herbs, and possibly a scroll or two containing magical or scholarly knowledge. A wanderer may have a walking staff, snares and traps for catching food, tools for surviving in the wilderness, a bedroll, and maybe a tent. If your gamemaster thinks that your hero is carrying more than his or her Fire and Earth scores would allow, he or she may require you to trim your list of possessions.



Less practical items are common, too. Your hero may have a musical instrument, a gift from a loved one, a pet chipmunk, or some other diversions.



Heroes may also have some valuables for trade, such as gold coins, gems, furs, salt, spices, or other easily portable items.

Experienced spherewalkers usually carry a variety of small, precious valuables for trade in new realms.



In addition to items carried, a hero may have other possessions that are stored somewhere else. Many heroes have permanent homes somewhere, usually inhabited by their extended families, where they may store things. For instance, a scholar may have a library, a sorcerer may have a study full of equipment, and a warrior may have a collection of war trophies.



You must get your gamemaster's permission to have any possessions that might interfere with the game. For instance, a harquebus (a primitive firearm dating from 1400 A.D.) might work for some gamemasters, but others may feel that even primitive firearms change the tone of the game and therefore may not allow heroes to have them.



If any possessions are powerful enough that they duplicate powers or magic, then you'll have to pay for them as Powers or Magic. For instance, if your hero has a ring that lets him fly, then you have to buy it as a 2-point (frequent, major) Power.

Answers

Answering Tough Questions

Sometimes other players may ask you questions that you don't know the answers to. If a question is important, you need to make up an answer. For example, if someone asks you what weapons, if any, your hero carries while traveling, you ought to have an answer because you should probably know that before you begin play. If you don't know, you need to invent an answer. Otherwise you'll probably end up making the answer up on the spot during your first quest. For less important questions, however, it's OK not to know the answer. Tell the player who asked the question that you don't know offhand, and then think about it. When you decide what the answer is, whether that's in a few minutes or a few weeks, let the other players know.

What the Heroes Don't Know

By asking questions about the other players' heroes, you will learn a lot about those heroes. Remember, though, that your own hero won't know everything that you know. For example, another player may run a hero who pretends to come from a noble family although she was really abandoned at birth and raised in a temple. You, the player, may learn the hero's true history even though your hero doesn't. Part of playing your hero is keeping straight what your hero knows and what your hero doesn't know.

You can use the secrets you know as a player to make roleplaying the characters more fun. For example, during a quest your hero could ask the hero who is pretending to be of noble birth about her childhood. You know that the details that the other player's hero provides are all part of an elaborate lie, but your hero doesn't. An exchange like this lets the other player ham it up for a bit and helps to define the other hero.

What the Players Don't Know

Sometimes players leave "blank spaces" in the stories of their heroes. You might, for instance, decide not to detail what your hero's childhood was like at first. You can come back and fill in details later on, when you know your hero even better. If players ask you about parts of your hero's background that you don't want to invent yet, it's OK to tell them that you don't know the answers yet.

You might also want to include things that neither you nor your hero knows. For example, the hero who's pretending to be a noble doesn't know who her parents were. The player running her might know or might not know. If the player doesn't know something, then the gamemaster might invent details that the player doesn't know about. For example, the gamemaster might invent a quest in which the hero who pretends to be a noble finds out who her true parents are.

What Gamemasters Need to Know

Sometimes your gamemaster needs to know details about your hero in order to know how your hero will fit into a quest or what capabilities your hero has. If you don't have an answer ready, your gamemaster can insist that you come up with one. If the gamemaster needs to know the answer, the game won't run smoothly without that information. For example, a gamemaster who's planning to run a quest involving elves and other faeries might need to know what a forester hero's experiences have been with these creatures.

Changing Your Character

As you develop your hero, through questions or just through play, it may turn out that the details you've chosen, such as the Virtue, Powers, and Elements, don't match your new vision of your hero. It's all right to go back and alter these details to fit your developing image of the hero.

EVERWAY: Your Hero at a Glance

Name

Names in EVERWAY are almost all based on common words, such as "Miracle," "Glamourbright," "Heather," or "Victor,"

Magic

Magic is the ability to cast spells by manipulating general laws of magic. Each type of magic is linked to a particular element. A score of 3 represents average ability.

Motive

A hero's Motive is one of seven general reasons that the hero has undertaken a life of adventure, representing the hero's general attitude toward his or her journeys.

Wheel of Elements

The four Elements—Fire, Earth, Air, and Water—describe your hero's basic capabilities. An average person's Element scores are each 3, whereas heroes' scores average around 4 or 5. A score of 6 is the highest score normal people can have, while 9 is the highest score a hero can have. Basically, Fire represents physical ability, Earth represents mental and physical fortitude, Air represents mental ability, and Water represents psychic and emotional sensitivity.

Virtue, Fault, and Fate

A hero's Virtue is a card from the Fortune Deck that represents a special gift, strength, or blessing. A hero's Fault is a fortune card that represents a special lack, weakness, or curse. A hero's Fate is a fortune card that represents the central issue, dilemma, or challenge that the hero will face. You know your hero's Fate, but your hero may not.

Your hero has a Specialty in each Element. When taking actions related to that Specialty, your hero is as capable as if the Element were 1 point higher. For example, if your hero's Fire is 5, and your Specialty is "Running," your hero runs as well as someone whose Fire is 6.

Powers

Powers are special abilities of your hero. You must "pay for" Powers with elemental points. Each hero gets 20 points for Power, Elements, and Magic.

Background and Possessions

The back of the sheet is for details about the hero's background and possessions.



This chapter explores how players and gamemasters work together in the game to create the events that take place in the game world. The first section is mostly for players, and the remaining sections are mostly for gamemasters, but whether you're a player or a gamemaster, you can learn a lot by reading the whole chapter.

How to Be a Player

This section is written to players. It provides some advice for both beginning and experienced roleplayers.

What Heroes Do

The adventures of your hero and the other players' heroes are what a game of **EVERWAY** is all about. If you don't have a hero yet, look at some of the ready-to-run heroes in this game set for an idea of what heroes are like; that will help you understand this section better.

Being a Spherewalker

All heroes are spherewalkers. In most quests, they travel together as a group to some new realm. Often, they get to these new realms by traveling through gates that connect the spheres. Each new realm presents the spherewalkers with new experiences and new challenges.

As spherewalkers, the heroes are often more experienced, more powerful, more open-minded,

and more cosmopolitan than the people they meet among the spheres. They have to learn how the inhabitants of each new realm think and try to fit in, but they often have a broader perspective than the locals. Spherewalkers have to be careful not to offend the locals accidentally. For example, asking to buy beef in a land where (unknown to the spherewalkers) cows are sacred could be a big problem.

Spherewalkers can expect hospitality from most people they meet, and their hosts expect them to be respectful in return. In most realms, people grow up, live, and die among people they've known all their lives. Wanderers and strangers, therefore, are very unusual, and people in most realms feel a moral obligation to help those who do not have kin and friends around. In return, strangers are expected to repay hospitality with kindness and perhaps with service or gifts. The exception to this rule is found in the larger cities, where most people are strangers to each other, and outsiders can expect little hospitality unless they can pay for it or impress the wealthy.

Going on Quests

On a typical quest, your hero and the other players' heroes come to a new realm where some danger threatens the locals or the heroes. The heroes use their skill and wits to overcome the danger. If they are clever and brave, and if fortune is with

**TO READ
MORE ABOUT
REALMS,
GATES,
SPHERES, AND
SPHEREWALKERS,
SEE PP. 5-10.**

Portraying Your Hero

Once you've created your hero, you may feel that you are done. You're not. Just as a character in a novel changes as the author writes the story, and changes some more as the author writes sequels, so your hero really comes to life during play. Below is advice for how to go about bringing your character to life.

Interacting With the Gamemaster

As a player, you'll spend a lot of your time interacting with the gamemaster. Together, you talk out the story that the heroes star in. Whether the heroes are battling ferocious monsters, wooing delicate faeries, drinking with rowdy goblins, or debating the nature of the Good with talking trees, in real life this all comes across as dialogue among the players and gamemaster.

For instance, the following dialogue might occur as part of quest in which the heroes Opal, Fireson, and Puma are looking for the soul of a prince, which an evil wizard has stolen. They have sneaked into the wizard's study.

Opal's Player: What's in here?

Gamemaster: All sorts of stuff. It's a real mess. Charts, scrolls, ink, little animal bones. And it smells. There's a writing desk, a table for exper-

iments, and it's got bottles and twisty tubes all over it. There's a window, too, but it's shut, so it's dark in here.

Fireson's Player: I look for candles or lamps or anything, and I light them with my candle. . . .



Gamemaster: OK. You light a lamp, and it lights up the room—

Puma's Player: And I'm closing the door. I'm pressing my ear up against it. "I'll listen in case the wizard comes back."

Opal's Player: Good idea.

Gamemaster: [To Opal's player:] What are you doing?

Opal's Player: Now that we've got some light in here, I'm looking around under things, to

see if there's anything hidden. I'm figuring the soul would be hidden somewhere. . . .

Gamemaster: What's your Water score?

(Before the quest, the gamemaster made notes about where the soul is hidden: in a jar in a small chest tucked away in this room somewhere. He knows the chest is here, but he's not really sure whether Opal can find it easily. He is using the hero's Water score to determine how sensitive the hero is and how likely the hero is to find the chest.)

Opal's Player: Seven.

Gamemaster: That's really good. OK, you find some dirty clothes, something that looks like it used to be a dog, and—a small, locked chest bound in dingy brass.

Opal's Player: “Hey, I found something.” I grab the chest and pull it out into the open. . . .

Gamemaster: It's pretty small and not too heavy. Maybe this big. [*Gestures with hands*]

Opal's Player: So I get it out into the light?

Gamemaster: Right.

Puma's Player: Do I hear anything?

Gamemaster: No, nothing.

Fireson's Player: Open the chest!

Gamemaster: It's locked.

Opal's Player: I'm looking for a key, on the table and stuff. . . .

Gamemaster: OK, but that'll take a while.

(The gamemaster knows that there is no key in the room, but Opal won't know that until she's looked through the whole place.)

Fireson's Player: I'm looking for something heavy, like a pipe or something. . . .

Gamemaster: There aren't any pipes in this realm.

Fireson's Player: Well, you know what I mean, like a crowbar.

Puma's Player: Like a rock. Hey, is there a doorstep?

Gamemaster: Yeah, it's a big, smooth rock.

(The gamemaster hasn't made notes about a rock being used as a doorstep, but it is a good idea, and he decides to run with it.)

Opal's Player: I'm still looking for a key. . . .

Gamemaster: You haven't found one yet, but you've found a lot of nasty little things.

Fireson's Player: I get that rock, and I pound on the lock. . . .

Gamemaster: What's your Fire score?

(The lock can be broken, but the higher the character's Fire score, the easier it will be.)

Fireson's Player: Six.

Gamemaster: Bam! With a single blow, you've knocked off the lock, and you can force the lid open.

Opal's Player: What's inside?

Gamemaster: There's a little bottle with a thin neck, with a stopper in it, and it's been sealed shut with wax.

Fireson's Player: I get it.

Gamemaster: [*To Puma's player:*] Something's coming down the hall. . . .

Puma's Player: [*In a stage whisper*] “Hey, something's coming.”

Fireson's Player: [Expletive deleted]

The Joys of Pigheadedness



Everybody has a bias. Everybody sees the world a little skewed. You can use this fact to your advantage when portraying a hero. When I ran Fireson, I portrayed him as confident, good-natured, and tolerant, but ultimately prejudiced against those who were different from him. In one quest, Fireson and the other heroes met two groups of people, one group that was linked to the sun and one that was linked to the moon. Our task was to reunite the groups. The other players and I had a long discussion in character about this situation. During the conversation, I portrayed Fireson as simply assuming that the rightful place for the "moon people" was serving the "sun people." (He is a priest of fire, after all.) When the other players talked about reuniting the group, Fireson assumed that they meant putting them back in their rightful relationship, with the sun people as rulers and the moon people as lessers. The other players became both more delighted and more exasperated as their heroes tried to get across to Fireson that the two groups might be reunited as equals. Finally the heroes agreed to disagree and got on with the task.



Foibles and flaws help make heroes more lifelike. Remember that even heroes are imperfect, and that just makes the game more fun.

And so the dialogue goes, with breaks now and then to get snacks or to discuss strategies or to talk about the latest movies. Eventually the action leads to a climax and a conclusion, with the heroes succeeding in their quest, or failing, or maybe doing a little of both.

Note that, as a player, you decide what your hero does, but you can't decide what the other heroes do or what the background characters do. The other players decide what their heroes do, and the gamemaster decides what the background characters do.

This is all right: "I'm going to try to sweet-talk the guard into giving me the key."

This is not: "I sweet talk the guard, and she gives me the key."

Interacting With the Other Players

Sometimes you'll spend your time interacting with the players, with the gamemaster looking on, ready to intervene, answer questions, or get the action moving should the player start to get bored. Often the quest will present a problem to the heroes, and the players will have to discuss what the heroes' response should be.

Sometimes you'll discuss strategy, such as how to lure a cruel baroness out of her castle so that you can capture her more easily. Sometimes you'll discuss ethics, such as what to do with the baroness once you've got her. Sometimes you'll discuss philosophy, such as whether the baroness is truly evil, only misguided, or simply a nonconformist. If you enjoy portraying a character, especially someone different from yourself, these discussions can be lively and very enjoyable.

SEE THE BOX
"READING THE
CARDS" ON PP.
129-137 FOR
OTHER EXAMPLES
OF HOW PLAYERS
AND THE
GAMEMASTER
INTERACT.

Portraying a Character Vs. Telling a Story

There are two things you're doing when you're running a hero. On one hand, you're portraying a character who has an internal logic, private motives, a history, and a personality. You can often determine what course of action your hero takes by taking these factors into account. For instance, you might think, "Puma's never been in a tall building before; I bet she'd be nervous, but she'd try not to show it." On the other hand, you're also helping to tell a story, and you can also deter-



mine what your hero should do based on the needs of the story. For instance, you might imagine that when coming to a large city Puma would wander off on her own to marvel

at the sights. Allowing her to do so, however, especially near the climax of a quest, might

slow the plot down and distract from the story.



So which is more important: being true to a hero's nature or supporting the plot? Personally, I'd say that the story is more important because the enjoyment of the whole group is at stake, and portraying a hero accurately is mostly a personal pleasure. But there needs to be a balance, and everyone feels comfortable with a different one. There is

no right answer. Every player answers this question differently. Bear that in mind when other players' heroes do things that you'd rather they not do.

Point of View

Consider these two sentences, either of which could come from a player running Fireson.

In Character: "I sweat fire out of my right hand to get some light and see what's making the noise."

Out of Character: "Fireson sweats fire out of his right hand to get some light and see what's making the noise."

Both ways work; both do pretty much the same thing in terms of the plot. They affect the player differently, however. A player who refers to a hero in character, as "I," identifies more closely with the hero, while one who refers to a hero out of character, as "he" or "she," keeps a greater distance.

Different players have different play styles. You can use whichever point of view you wish.

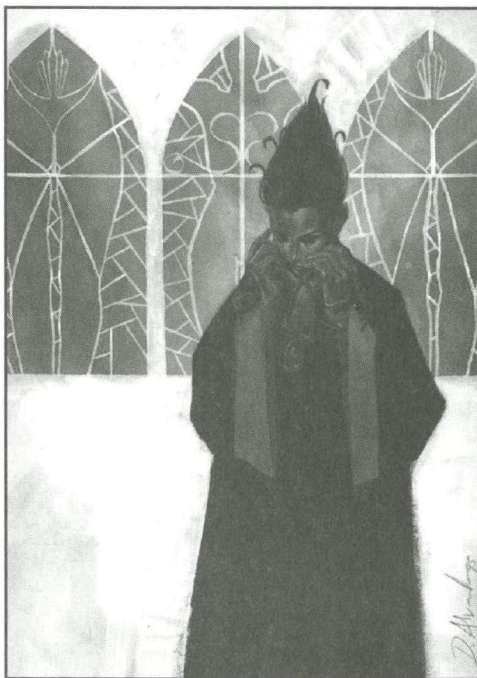
Sometimes the game is more enjoyable if you play in character and refer to the hero as "I" because you get deeper into the hero. Using "I" can help you empathize more strongly with the character. For some players, this deep involvement is roleplaying's greatest pleasure. Sometimes you can keep a better perspective on the story, the plot, and your hero's personal development if you play out of character, referring to your hero as "he" or "she." Do what works for you.

Facing Your Fate

As described in the *Heroes* chapter, each hero has a Fate, which is represented by a card from the Fortune Deck that is neither upright nor reversed. At some point in the game, your hero may face this Fate.

This encounter or event is a personal climax or challenge, and how your hero handles it determines whether the Fate card becomes upright or reversed. There are three ways heroes can face their Fates.

SEE P. 77
FOR MORE
ABOUT YOUR
HERO'S FATE.
SEE P. 12 IN
THE GUIDE TO
THE FORTUNE
DECK FOR MORE
ABOUT THE
SOLDIER CARD.



Karma and Fate

"Karma" means "work." Your hero can pursue his or her Fate and face it because of his or her actions. Consider, for example, a hero with The Soldier as her Fate. The Soldier stands for "duty vs. blind obedience." The hero may try to fol-

low a code of honor or fulfill certain obligations without ignoring other important parts of her life. When she has done so to your satisfaction, or when she has failed substantially to do so, you can say that she has met her Fate.

Drama and Fate

If, during play, the hero undertakes actions that show that she has accomplished, or dramatically failed to accomplish, her Fate, you may decide that she has met her Fate. For instance, if the

Fireson Meets His Fate



During one quest, Fireson gave himself up as sacrifice in order to allow two other heroes and some smelly dwarf's daughter to escape a minotaur. Fireson had a pretty good idea that this sacrifice wouldn't be lethal (as the minotaur had made it sound), but he didn't give himself up until he had accepted the possibility that it could mean his death, and I didn't have Fireson give himself up until I was ready to accept Fireson's demise. If Fireson was killed, it would mean that I'd never play Fireson again. Fireson survived, however, and his sacrifice resolved the quest.



Fireson's Fate was The Soldier, representing a conflict between "duty" and "blind obedience." Until Fireson met his Fate, I hadn't known what this conflict meant. I thought it meant that Fireson was neglecting his duty by spherewalking and not settling down into a priest's proper role. That interpretation wasn't perfect because it's really a conflict between duty and negligence, not duty and blind obedience. After the encounter with the minotaur, I saw Fireson's Fate differently.



By giving himself up as a sacrifice, Fireson was accepting his duty. He learned that he could fulfill duty as a spherewalker, not only as a priest. The compulsion to return to the priesthood and the guilt he felt from not doing so were the real results of blind obedience, an

inability or unwillingness to imagine himself leading a fulfilling life differently from how he had before.



Fireson's Fault, not coincidentally, had been Death—reversed, meaning "stasis," or the inability to let one stage pass so that a new one can begin. I had chosen that Fault to indicate that Fireson has been stuck in his own culture and unwilling to accept different cultures as equal. Now, with opened eyes, I could see that this cultural pigheadedness was merely a surface symptom of a deeper stasis: the unwillingness to accept that his deity's banishment of him was not a temporary punishment but a shove into a new stage of life. Fireson's stasis had been his fixation on his role as a priest.



Fireson has changed. No longer looking to his former life as the only legitimate life for him, he has become able to accept that different cultures may hold equal value in their own right. He is also reconsidering his past. He knows that his deity banished him for questioning the deity's actions. He had assumed that his doubt was blasphemy. Now he wonders whether it was wisdom.



Fireson now has a new Virtue, Spring; a new Fault, Striking the Dragon's Tail; and a new Fate, The Priestess. These cards represent the new life opening up to him, with new promises and new dangers.

hero with The Soldier as her Fate were to cause great harm because she was following instructions without considering them carefully, you could declare that she had indeed met her Fate, even though she did not set out to do so. (You also have the option of letting her keep her Fate so that she can try again to meet it successfully.)

The gamemaster may also set up a quest that lets a hero meet his or her Fate. The quest is usually a sort of test (though the hero and the player don't know it) to see whether the Fate will resolve itself as upright or reversed.

Fortune and Fate

If, during play, the gamemaster draws the fortune card that is your hero's Fate, then the gamemaster has the option of improvising an encounter between your hero and his or her Fate. For instance, if your hero is hunting down a mysterious spirit doctor to protect a peace-loving town from his evil magic, and the gamemaster draws The Soldier (either upright or reversed), he or she could improvise a new plot or subplot to fit your hero's Fate. It may be, for instance, that the mage is frightening to the townspeople but has not actually committed the crimes. The test for your hero is whether the hero will attack the mage without learning more or consider the mage carefully before using violence. (In other words, is the hero "blindly obedient," or does the hero fulfill his or her duty with foresight?)



Resolving Actions

This section, written to the gamemaster, shows how to determine the outcomes of the heroes' actions. While the players get to decide what their heroes do, it's up to the gamemaster to determine the results of those actions.

The Law of Karma

When applying the law of *karma*, you, as gamemaster, assess the difficulty of the task, judge the capabilities of the hero making the attempt, and rule on the result. The hero succeeds if, in your judgment, the hero has the abilities necessary to meet the challenge of the task. The hero fails if, in your judgment, the task is too difficult for the hero's capabilities.

People often take "karma" to mean cosmic reward and punishment for good and evil acts, but the word "karma" simply means "work," "deed," or "fate." It implies cause and effect. Physical causes have physical effects, and spiritual causes have spiritual effects. Understood this way, karma means both that doing evil will call down evil on oneself and that dropping a brick onto one's foot will cause pain. Thus karma rules mundane as well as cosmic actions.

What the Numbers Mean

Each increase in an Element score indicates roughly a doubling of power. Other things being

equal, a character with 4 Fire will handily defeat a character with 3 Fire in a foot race, an arm-wrestling match, or a fight. A character with 5 Fire will, in turn, handily defeat a character with 4 Fire, and so on.

The “doubling” factor is meant to give you a feel for different rankings. Don’t take it literally. For example, consider running speed. An average person (3 Fire) can easily run ten miles per hour, but that doesn’t mean that an exceptional athlete (5 Fire) can run forty miles per hour.

When a hero’s action is covered by a Specialty, treat the Element score as if it were 1 higher than it is. For example, a hunter with a 5 Water score might have a Specialty in “Tracking.” If so, this hero’s Water score is treated as 6 to determine whether he or she can follow tracks.

Penalties

Sometimes heroes try things when circumstances are against them. For instance, a hero might try climbing a tree while wearing heavy armor, casting a spell while deprived of sleep, or fighting a battle while wounded. The simplest way to take these difficulties into account is to treat the hero’s Element or Magic scores as if they were lower than they really are. For example, a wounded warrior with 5 Fire might fight as if her Fire were 4. For very serious difficulties, you can apply even more serious penalties.

Karma As Cosmic Justice

Spiritual actions produce spiritual effects, just as physical actions produce physical effects. Usually gamemasters use the law of karma to decide the results of heroes’ physical actions, but karma can also determine the results of spiritual or morally significant actions. The results of heroes’ actions can follow them from realm to realm and from sphere to sphere. For instance, a hero who repeat-

The Three Laws of Action



There are three laws of action that you, the gamemaster, can use to resolve any situation. You use these laws, usually in combination but sometimes separately, to determine the outcome of heroes’ actions.

The Law of Karma

A hero’s Elements, Specialties, Powers, Magic, and tactics determine the outcome of that hero’s action.

The Law of Drama

The needs of the plot determine the outcome of a hero’s action.

The Law of Fortune

A draw from the Fortune Deck determines the outcome of a hero’s action.

edly sets aside his own goals to help holy people that he meets might find at some point in the future that holy people help him when he is in need. On the other hand, a hero who steals from others because she thinks she can get away with it by traveling through gates may find she faces unexpected difficulties as a result.

It is up to you to interpret when “poetic justice” applies and how it makes itself known.

Examples of Karma from Play

A water priestess hero has just arrived on a new sphere. She holds a small amount of water in her

hand, goes into a trance, and senses what the water wants to do and where it wants to go. The water wants to go down under the ground, north to the river, and then finally to the sea. The hero's Water score is a phenomenal 8, and she is a water priestess, so the gamemaster rules that

she can learn this information from the drop of water. This information tells the hero where the nearest river is. Later she finds out that it has even more significance, that the water in this land travels through underwater tunnels rather than via streams on the surface, and that this pattern relates to the customs of the land.

THE FUN PART OF FACING AN OBSTACLE IS NOT ALWAYS WHETHER THE HEROES CAN OVERCOME IT (FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER THE PRIESTESS CAN GET DOWN THE ROPE), BUT HOW THE PERSONALITIES OF THE HEROES INTERACT AS THEY WORK TOGETHER.

IN THIS CASE, THE HERO WHO CAUGHT THE PRIESTESS HELD HER AN EXTRA MOMENT TO SHOW OFF HIS STRENGTH, AND THE PRIESTESS ICILY ASKED TO BE SET DOWN. SHE WAS NOT PLEASED TO BE HELPED SO PERSONALLY BY SOMEONE SHE CONSIDERED INFERIOR.

THE RICHER THE HEROES' PERSONALITIES ARE, THE LESS THE PLAYERS ARE CONCERNED WITH WHETHER THEY SUCCEED AT CERTAIN TASKS AND THE MORE THEY'RE CONCERNED WITH HOW THE HEROES ACT AND INTERACT.

A hero tries to fly toward a king and his entourage, who are floating away in a hot-air balloon. In the king's retinue is an air mage (6 Air, 6 Magic) who calls up a wind to whip the flying hero around and ground him. The hero tries to resist, but his Fire score (representing energy) is 5, so the mage's spell beats him, and he's grounded. He tries to keep up with the retinue on foot, but he's wearing armor, the noonday sun is shining on him, and his Earth is only 3 (average), so he can't keep up. He gives up pursuit and flies back to the other heroes.

THESE THREE EXAMPLES COME FROM THE QUEST IN THE REALM OF BRIGHTWIND. GAMEMASTERS CAN SEE PP. 10-11 IN THE GAMEMASTERING GUIDE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THIS QUEST.

The Law of Drama

When you, as gamemaster, apply the law of *drama*, the needs of the plot determine the outcome of events. As in a novel or play, events proceed in such a way as to make the plot and story more engaging and enjoyable. The hero succeeds if doing so helps the plot. The hero fails if that helps the plot.

Drama lives within the range of the possible and the probable. If you use drama to create events that are hard to believe, the players will find the story less satisfying.

For instance, if the heroes have been thrown into a dungeon deep below the tower of a terrible sorceress, and they have no way to escape, you might want to contrive a way for them to get out so the story can continue. The heroes *could* find a loose stone that leads to a secret tunnel out of the dungeon, or they *could* find a key to their cell in the dirty straw on the floor, but these solutions are hard to believe.

The water priestess tries to climb down a rope hanging over a steep fifteen-foot wall. She's led a sheltered life, and she has no real experience with ropes, but she tries to climb down after the other heroes anyway. She has 3 Fire, suggesting average physical ability; that's enough to keep her from falling, but her lack of experience makes her unsure. The gamemaster rules that she winds up hanging on the rope unable to descend, afraid that if she tries to climb, she'll just fall. She calls for help and lets herself drop into the arms of another hero. The one catching her has 7 Fire, suggesting superhuman physical energy, and that's enough to catch her without much trouble.

What Heroes Do



- Heroes do all sorts of things on quests. For example, a hero might
- hold a door shut against an angry mob,
- woo a dancer,
- impersonate an imperial official with important business,
- engage in a drinking contest with a troll,
- join an enemy's retinue under false pretenses,
- debate philosophy with a guard at a toll bridge,
- harvest beneficial and potent herbs from a meadow.

A better solution might be to have the sorceress's daughter come to the cell door and offer them a deal: she lets them out, and they promise not to kill her mother. Why does she make this deal? Maybe she sees that her mother is getting deeper and deeper into black magic that she knows will soon destroy her, and she wants her mother stopped before that happens. And since she can tell that the heroes are good people, she thinks she can trust them to be true to their word.

The sorceress's daughter gets the heroes out of the dungeon and moves the plot along just as well as a key or secret tunnel, but it's more believable, and it makes the story more interesting.

Examples of Drama from Play

A shaman tries to summon up demons and bind them to his will. He succeeds at summoning up *something*, but the creatures are not what he expects. He tries to bind them, but he fails. He and the assembled crew flee from the newly summoned and uncontrollable creatures.

These "creatures" are none other than the heroes. The shaman's half-successful summoning has brought them across the spheres into this realm. The result of the summoning was necessary for the plot. The heroes needed to arrive on the new world, so the summoning had to call up the wrong creatures. And the heroes needed to have free will to do what they wanted, so the binding had to fail.

If the gamemaster had instead used karma to determine whether the summoning succeeded, and had ruled that it wouldn't work at all, then the heroes would never have gotten to the realm and the quest would never have happened.



The water priestess wanders about trying to find a snake to talk to. (She can talk to animals.) The snakes in this realm are a key to the underground mysteries that the heroes can discover. Finding the snake would let the heroes establish friendly relations with them and help

UNLIKE THE LAWS
OF KARMA AND
FORTUNE, THE LAW
OF DRAMA APPLIES
TO GAME PLAY BUT
NOT TO THE FANTASY
WORLD IN WHICH
THE HEROES LIVE.
PEOPLE IN THE
FANTASY WORLD CAN
TALK ABOUT THE
RESULTS OF ONE'S
ACTIONS DEPENDING
ON KARMA OR ON
FORTUNE, BUT THEY
DO NOT TALK ABOUT
"DRAMA" AS A FORCE
IN THE UNIVERSE.
JUST AS THE
CHARACTERS IN A
BOOK DON'T UNDER-
STAND THEIR ACTIONS
AS BEING DETER-
MINED BY THE
BOOK'S LENGTH
AND CHAPTER
BREAKS, THE
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EVERWAY DO NOT
UNDERSTAND THEIR
ACTIONS TO BE
DETERMINED BY THE
DRAMATIC NEEDS OF
THE GAMEMASTER
AND PLAYERS.

them learn about this strange, new realm. If the hero doesn't find a friendly snake, then the heroes will have to spend more time exploring the setting before they discover its mysteries. And if the priestess *does* discover a friendly snake, it could tell her a lot or a little. It could even conceivably tell them about the missing princess, who is central to the plot.

The gamemaster decides that the priestess finds a large, wise snake that is willing to talk to her, that it tells her about the caves and streams underground, but that it doesn't know anything about the princess. In this way, the plot is advanced, but the heroes still have plenty to learn.

If the priestess lied to the snake, tried to kill it, or otherwise offended it, however, the snakes would not become friendly to the heroes even if it would have suited the plot. Drama has its limits, and when the dramatically-best result doesn't make sense, most gamemasters apply the law of karma instead.

The Law of Fortune

When you, as gamemaster, apply the law of *fortune*, a card from the Fortune Deck determines the outcome of an action. If the card's meaning is positive, the event in the game world is positive for the hero. If the card's meaning is negative, the event or outcome is negative.

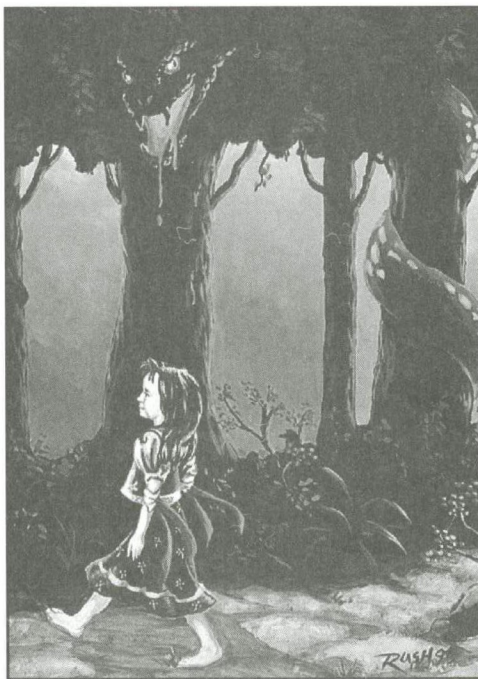
To apply the law of fortune, draw a card from the Fortune Deck and "read" it, incorporating the card's meaning into the plot. Generally, the law of fortune is most important and most powerful when neither karma nor drama presents an obvious result. When common sense presents an answer (that is, when a ruling based on karma is

obvious), or when the plot demands a certain answer (that is, when a ruling based on drama is obvious), then a fortune card usually has little influence on the result. When rulings based on karma and drama are least clear is when fortune has the biggest effect on play.

You can interpret a fortune card based on many things: the card's name, the listed meaning, the card's elemental and planetary correspondences, and the art on the card. How much weight you give to each

of these factors is entirely up to you.

Even when drawing a fortune card, most gamemasters still apply karma and drama to the situation, letting the cards influence or color the results but not determine them entirely. For example, if a weak hero with 2 Fire tries to fight a mighty dragon with 9 Fire, impenetrable scales, and foot-long claws, even a good card will not mean that the hero vanquishes the dragon. Instead, a good draw may mean that the dragon chooses to capture the harmless and amusing hero instead of simply killing her.



Reading the Cards

Below is a sample interpretation for each card in the Fortune Deck. Imagine, for these examples, that a powerful warrior (a hero) is confronting a mighty ogre in its cave. The warrior is a better fighter than the ogre and is armed with a sword and shield. The ogre is stronger than the warrior but not as skilled and armed only with a crude, wooden club. (In game terms, the warrior has a higher Fire rating, but the ogre has a higher Earth rating.) The warrior's player says, "I draw my sword and attack, raising my shield to protect myself and slashing at the ogre."



Below are thirty-six examples of how this encounter could play out, depending on which fortune card is drawn, whether it is upright or reversed, and how the gamemaster interprets the card. Based on karma and drama, the gamemaster expects that

the warrior will defeat the ogre but will be wounded in the process. There is also a risk that the warrior will be defeated, and there's always the chance that some new element in the plot will arise. If the card's meaning is positive or ambiguous as to the warrior's victory, he will succeed. If it is negative, he may be badly injured by the ogre before he can kill it, or he may be defeated altogether.



Many of these examples end in the warrior's defeat. On most quests, however, heroes work together so that if one falls, the others can come to the rescue. Even when the whole group is defeated, the heroes almost always survive.



(Note that some upright cards have negative meanings and some reversed cards have positive meanings.)

Autumn

Meaning: Plenty, a positive meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior's training bears fruit. He has sown diligence, and now he reaps victory.

Gamemaster: You expertly deflect the monster's heavy club and slash its belly. The thing thrashes at you as it falls.
Player: I try to block the thing

while pressing my advantage.

Gamemaster: With a few thrusts, you leave it bleeding to death on the cave floor.

The Cockatrice

Meaning: Corruption, a negative meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: Corruption prevails by infecting others, not through force. Something bad comes of the warrior's victory.

Gamemaster: You expertly deflect the monster's heavy club and slash its belly. Blackish blood splashes out onto your arm, chest, and face. The ogre is falling to the ground. . . .

Player: I step back to keep it from getting to me and hold my sword and shield ready.

Gamemaster: The ogre thrashes about on the ground, dying. Your face begins to burn. . . .



Player: I wipe the blood off!

Gamemaster: Your wipe some of it off, but you can feel it soaking through your armor and clothes. You're feeling dizzy. . .

(How badly the warrior is hurt by the ogre's corrupt blood depends on his Earth score and on the plot, that is, on karma and drama.)

The Creator

Meaning: Nurture, a positive meaning, but one with no direct relevance to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: Nothing especially bad happens to the warrior.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is hurt.

Death

Meaning: Change, a positive meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The ogre is killed, and something new is created.

Gamemaster: You kill the ogre. Its dark brown blood splashes over the rocks. The blood soaks into the cracks, and strange, mottled plants grow out of them. Each plant

has a blood-red blossom.

(These plants could have a special property, which the gamemaster can determine now or later. Some gamemasters don't like introducing new plot elements, such as these flowers, into a quest. Others draw heavily



from the spontaneous inspiration that the fortune cards provide.)

The Defender

Meaning: Safety, a positive meaning that relates directly to physical danger.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The hero prevails safely.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you handily defeat the ogre.

The Dragon

Meaning: Cunning, a neutral-

to-positive meaning that applies well to an intelligent warrior fighting a less intelligent opponent.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The more intelligent warrior prevails.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you find that the ogre falls for the simplest warrior's feints and tricks. You vanquish it unscathed.

Drowning in Armor

Meaning: Protective measures turn dangerous, a very bad meaning for an armored warrior in battle.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior's shield and armor turn against him.

Gamemaster: The ogre's blow is so fierce that it twists your shield, snapping your wrist. The force prevents you from landing a solid blow on the ogre; you cut it, but not deeply.

Player: I try to press in so close that the ogre can't swing its club at me, and then I slash it.

Gamemaster: The ogre drops its club, grabs your shield, and yanks on it, knocking you over. The pain from the shield, strapped to your broken arm, makes you gasp

and nearly go into shock. . . .

Player: I try to roll out of the way.

Gamemaster: The ogre's grip on your shield is too strong for you to get away. It slams the shield into your helmet, knocking your head against the stone floor of the cave. You sink into unconsciousness. . . .

(The hero's fate from this point on may depend on his Earth score, karma; on the plot, drama; or on another draw from the Fortune Deck, fortune.)

The Eagle

Meaning: The mind prevails, a positive meaning for an intelligent person struggling against a less intelligent opponent.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior knows his tactics ahead of time, giving him an edge over the less intelligent ogre.

Gamemaster: With your superior forethought and skill at arms, you stay one step ahead of the ogre and defeat it handily.

Fearing Shadows

Meaning: Unnecessary fear, a very negative meaning for someone fighting a scary monster in a dark cave.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior fears the wrong thing and is thus at a disadvantage.

Gamemaster: You charge the ogre, and suddenly black things come looming out of the shadows on all sides of you. . . .

Player: I throw up my shield to protect myself and lash out with my sword to keep the things at bay.

Gamemaster: The black things rush past you, and you see that they are bats. Your sword swings through the air, connecting with nothing.

Player: Forget the bats; I'm swinging at the ogre.

Gamemaster: Too late. You lost your momentum, and now the ogre's club is already coming down on you. It smashes into the side of your helmet and collides into your right shoulder. In pain, you drop your sword.

Player: I bash the ogre with my shield, using my good arm.

Gamemaster: It's too strong. You smash into it, but it just grabs you and slams you into the wall of the cave. The world goes black. . . .

(Note: If the player had said that the hero paid no attention to the bats, the warrior would have

prevailed; karma still has effects even when the gamemaster is consulting the Fortune Deck. The gamemaster did not simply tell the player "Bats fly out of the shadows and scare you," because that would have made the player feel as though the hero's actions were up to the gamemaster. In order to keep control of the hero in the hands of the player, the gamemaster set up a scene in which the hero might be afraid of the bats, but it was ultimately up to the player, not the gamemaster, to determine how the hero reacted.)

Fertility

Meaning: Growth, a positive meaning but not one directly associated with combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The combat goes as expected, or a little better.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is hurt.

The Fish

Meaning: The soul prevails, a positive meaning but not one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The combat turns out at least as well as expected.

Gamemaster: The ogre hits your shield so hard that your arm is hurt, but with your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat it. It lies on the ground and, with a shudder, gives up the ghost.

The Fool

Meaning: Freedom, a positive meaning but not one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The combat goes as expected, or a little better.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is hurt.

The Griffin

Meaning: Valor, a very positive meaning since it is linked to fire, the element that rules combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior vanquishes the ogre easily.

Gamemaster: With speed and courage, you dispatch the ogre.

The Hermit

Meaning: Wisdom, a positive meaning for a wise person in a contest with a being that is less wise.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does a little better than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is slightly hurt.



Inspiration

Meaning: Creativity, a positive meaning for a creative person in a contest with a less creative being, especially in combat, as this card is tied to fire.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does better than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is hurt.

The King

Meaning: Authority, a positive meaning but not one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does a little better than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is slightly hurt.

Knowledge

Meaning: Truth, a positive meaning but not one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does a little better than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is slightly hurt.

Law

Meaning: Order, a positive meaning but not one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does a little better than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is slightly hurt.

The Lion—Reversed

Meaning: Weakness, a very negative meaning for a warrior engaged in battle, especially because it's tied (negatively) to fire.

Gamemaster's Interpretation:
The warrior is badly injured.

Gamemaster: Your swing hits home, but the ogre's clubs slams into your shield, and you're not strong enough to keep your footing. . . .

Player: I scramble to stay up.

Gamemaster: Your foot catches on a large bump or rise in the cave floor, and you tumble over. . . .

Player: I block with my shield while I back up and get to my feet.

Gamemaster: The ogre pounds you on the back while you're scrambling up. The pain's really bad. . . .

Player: Can I keep fighting?

Gamemaster: Yes, but maybe not for long.

Player: I press the attack then, trying to slash it and slow it down. . . .

Gamemaster: Your sword is a better weapon than the

ogre's club, especially considering your training. You slash the ogre up, and it falls, but not before it gets in a nasty knee shot. You're both down, but you're in better shape than it is.

Player: Can I finish it off?

Gamemaster: With a final burst of energy, you finish



it, but then the pain in your arm, back, and knee get so bad that you pass out.

The hero won't die from these wounds, but he won't be fighting any big fights any time soon, either.

Nature—Reversed

Meaning: Energy sapped, a negative meaning that is tied negatively to earth.

Gamemaster's Interpretation:
The warrior is badly drained

by the fight. The reversed earth-related card represents the negative aspects of the cave.

Gamemaster: You manage to slash the thing, but it's not perturbed, at least not yet. Likewise, it manages a few blows against you, most of which you're able to deflect almost harmlessly. Now you're breathing heavy. The dank air in the cave is oppressive. It feels bad in your lungs. . . . (At this point the hero has a chance to draw the ogre out of its cave and into good air. If the hero takes it, the fight will still go well for him. If not, it will go badly. Thus, karma comes into play.)

Player: I press on and try to finish it off quickly.

Gamemaster: You get a few more licks in, but then your sword arm gets slow. You realize that you're getting weak. And then there's this terrific pain on the side of your head, and the world goes black.

Overlooking the Diamond—Reversed

Meaning: Recognizing opportunity, a positive meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation:
The warrior does well.

Gamemaster: You charge in, and the ogre raises its club up over its head, leaving itself open. . . .

Player: With my shield to protect me, I stab at it while it's open.

Gamemaster: Before it can even get its club down, you've stabbed it, and it crumples to the floor of the cave.

The Peasant—Reversed

Meaning: Lack of vision, a negative meaning, the opposite of "simple strength."

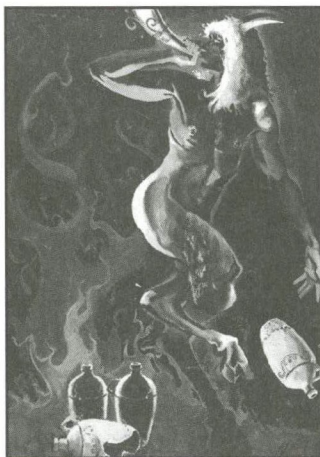
Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior, confident in his superior abilities, fails to see how this enemy is different from those he's defeated before.

Gamemaster: Your speed and skill give you an edge, but this creature is not fazed by the nasty cuts you give it, and it pounds you hard before you finally drop it. By the time you defeat it, you're shaken, and your left arm is badly hurt.

The Phoenix—Reversed

Meaning: Destruction, a remarkably negative meaning, especially as it's tied to fire, which rules combat. The *Guide to the Fortune Deck* says, "Water quenches a fire, and both the water and the fire are destroyed."

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior destroys the ogre but is badly injured or even killed in the process. If any card means the death of the hero, this is that card.



Gamemaster: You strike the ogre and give it a mortal wound, but it stubbornly continues to fight, pounding you mercilessly as it dies. You feel bones break again and again before you finally fall, senseless, to the cave floor.

The Priestess—Reversed

Meaning: Impracticality, a negative meaning, but not hopelessly so.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior's skills and tricks don't work well on the ogre, which must be faced with very straightforward tactics.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is badly hurt.

The Satyr—Reversed

Meaning: Moderation, a neutral-to-positive meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does as well as or slightly better than expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is slightly hurt.

The Smith—Reversed

Meaning: Evil effort, a negative meaning, especially for combat, as it's tied to Mars, the planet of war. (If it were upright, it would be very positive.)

Gamemaster's Interpretation: Some ill-advised merchant has traded iron spikes to the ogre, and the ogre has impaled them through the end of its club, making the weapon more fearsome. The warrior is badly hurt before he can defeat the monster.

Gamemaster: As the club swings at you, you see

large, sharp spikes sticking out from it. You cut the ogre, but the club smashes into your wooden shield and sticks into it. Against a human opponent, it would help you to have your enemy's weapon stuck like this, but the ogre is strong enough to wrench you around by your shield. With a mighty jerk, it pulls you to your knees. . . .

Player: I cut at its feet—no, at its legs. It can't block me.

Gamemaster: You cut it across the shins. The ogre bears down on your shield, and since your right hand is wielding the sword, it's not there to support you. You fall under the ogre's weight, belly to the rock. . . .

Player: I yank my arm out of the shield. . . .

Gamemaster: You strain your arm doing so, but OK, you're free.

Player: Now I leap up and catch the ogre by surprise. It probably can't move its club fast enough to block me. . . .

Gamemaster: You get it between the ribs, and, no, it can't block you, but it does smash into your side with the club, to which your shield is still attached. Without the shield to protect you, you take a really bad blow, and ribs are

probably broken. You fall, but the ogre falls too, vanquished.

The Soldier—Reversed

Meaning: Blind obedience, a negative meaning. As a reversed card that's tied to



Saturn (the planet of surviving adversity), it can be very bad for someone facing difficulty.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior is badly hurt by the ogre.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that it breaks the shield and your left arm.

Sowing Stones—Reversed

Meaning: Ceasing fruitless labor, a positive meaning but not

one directly related to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior will have a chance to find an easy way to defeat the ogre.

Gamemaster: You slash the ogre across the belly, and it's bleeding pretty badly. It swings its club at you, but you deflect the blow. How do you proceed? (At this point, the hero can get an easy win by backing off until the ogre is weakened from loss of blood, but if he presses the attack he'll be hurt. Since the outcome now partly depends on tactics, the law of karma is coming into play.)

Player: How bad does the cut look?

Gamemaster: It's pretty bad. The ogre's swinging at you again. . . .

Player: I'm blocking, dodging, and backing up. Does the ogre seem slowed down?

Gamemaster: Not yet, but it's still bleeding.

Player: OK, I play defensive and wait for the ogre to get tired. . . .

Gamemaster: With your shield and some fancy footwork, you keep away from the thing, and it slows down. But your sword is getting heavy in your hand. . . .

(The warrior's Earth score is lower than the ogre's, so he can't fight too long.)

Player: Before I get any more tired, I'm going to move in on the weakened ogre. . . .

Gamemaster: Now that it's been softened up, the ogre falls quickly when you attack.

Spring—Reversed

Meaning: Stagnation, a negative meaning but not one directly tied to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior's plans don't work well, and he is injured while defeating the ogre

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is badly hurt.

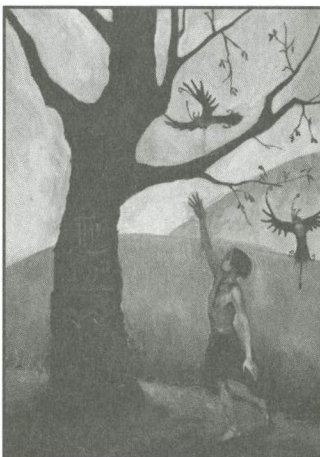
Striking the Dragon's Tail—Reversed

Meaning: Recognizing the larger problem, a positive meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior can see the problem he's up against and has a chance to overcome it.

Gamemaster: You cut the ogre across the belly, but it swings its heavy club. You deflect the

blow with your shield, but your shoulder is jarred. This thing is strong. You know that you won't be able to rely on your shield to protect you the way you can when you fight another human. . . . (The outcome is



now partly up to karma, as the warrior has a chance to come up with a good plan.)

Player: I back up to get another look at this guy and see what I can do.

Gamemaster: It yells and takes a few steps after you. . . .

Player: I'm looking for a soft spot or vulnerable point, where I can get a swift kill, and I'm keeping back away from the club. . . .

Gamemaster: The thing's stepping toward you, keeping the distance short, but you're out of the way. The monster's skin is thick, warty,

and leathery, but its neck looks baggy and soft. . . .

Player: OK, I wait for it to swing its club past me, and before it can backswing, I lunge for its throat.

Gamemaster: Like lightning, you're in and out, giving the ogre a mortal wound. It raises its club for a last swing but then drops it to the stone floor. In another heartbeat, the ogre pitches forward and lands with a thud.

Summer—Reversed

Meaning: Exhaustion, a negative meaning, especially for a warrior engaged in battle, as it is a fire card and fire rules combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does not have the energy or speed to overcome the ogre before it can smash him up.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but it pounds you a few times before you have it down. Your shield arm is bruised and wrenched, and the ogre got in a nasty leg shot, too.

Trickery—Reversed

Meaning: Subterfuge revealed, a neutral meaning in relation to this battle, in which the hero has superior Fire and Air (the card's corresponding

elements). "Revealing subterfuge" is a good thing, but a reversed fire/air card is bad for combat, so the overall result is neutral.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior prevails and does as well as expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is hurt.

The Unicorn—Reversed

Meaning: Temptation, a negative meaning but one without relevance to combat.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does slightly worse than might be expected.

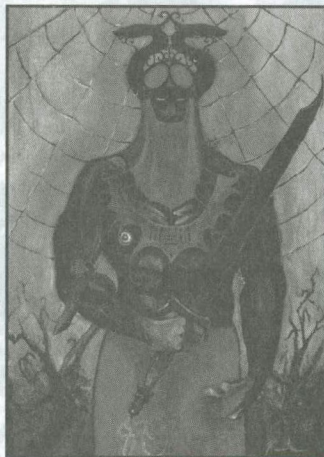
Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is badly hurt.

The Usurper

Every realm has a different Usurper. It's up to the gamemaster to determine the relevance of this realm's Usurper (if any) to this particular battle. If the realm has no Usurper, the gamemaster draws again.

War—Reversed

Meaning: Effort misspent, a negative meaning, and one that is remarkably bad for battle, as it is a fiery, martial card and reversed.



Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior's great efforts are misdirected. Wounds that would pain, slow, or bleed a normal opponent do not faze the ogre, and it defeats the warrior.

Gamemaster: You slash at the ogre and open a long cut, but its blood is so thick that it oozes out rather than pouring out. The ogre's club smashes into your shield, but you deflect most of the impact. . . . (If the warrior backs out at this point he'll escape. If he presses on, though, he'll be defeated.)

Player: Then I'll go for deeper stabs and try to get at its vitals. . . .

Gamemaster: You score a good stab, but the ogre doesn't seem to care. With a sweep of its club, it knocks your feet out from under you. . . .

Player: I scramble away, using my shield to block me.

Gamemaster: The club comes down again. Since you are against the stone floor, you can't roll with the blow. There's no give. It hits you full force. Bones break, and your breath leaves you. . . .

Player: I roll away!

Gamemaster: You start to move, and another blow comes down on you, and then blackness.

Winter—Reversed

Meaning: Inexperience, a negative meaning.

Gamemaster's Interpretation: The warrior does worse than would be expected.

Gamemaster: With your superior speed and skill at arms, you defeat the ogre, but during the battle it hits your shield so hard that your left arm is badly hurt.

When to Draw a Card

Different gamemasters draw fortune cards at different times and for different reasons. You will develop your own style as you find out what works best for you. The examples above show how to use a fortune card to decide the result of a specific action, but there are other times when you might also want to consult the Fortune Deck.

For a Simple Yes/No Determination:

Draw a card to determine a simple success/failure result. If the card's meaning is positive, the hero succeeds. If it's negative, the hero fails. Of course, the content of the card may inspire you to invent additional results beyond the simple success/failure.

For example, imagine that a hero is trying to pick a lock. You know that the hero has the ability to pick locks, but you haven't decided how sophisticated this lock is, so you can't use karma to determine whether the hero succeeds. It's not vital to the plot that the hero fail or succeed, so the law of drama doesn't suggest a result. Draw a card. A card with a good meaning, such as *The Peasant (simple strength)* means that the hero has succeeded.

To Determine the Results of a Strategic Action:

Draw a fortune card to guide you in interpreting the results of a large-scale event. For example, the heroes spend several days

traveling secretly and coordinating a revolution in the lands of a tyrant. There are too many variables involved for you to know how this scheme will work based simply on the heroes' Elements, and you want to provide the tension that chance creates rather than making a decision based on drama, so you draw a fortune card. The card rules the whole campaign to

start the rebellion. For example, *The Satyr—reversed (moderation)* could indicate that the heroes work slowly and steadily until they've built the support they need to lead a successful revolt.

To Improvise Details:

Use the Fortune Deck to spark creativity, especially when you need a good idea fast.

For example, if a hero travels to a realm that is not part of the plot and for which you have no plans, you can draw a fortune card to help determine what is happening in the

realm. *The Cockatrice (corruption)* could mean that the queen is ill. A detail such as this one can help you set the mood of the people, the look of the palace, the attitudes of courtiers, and so forth. Without details like these, a new kingdom you improvise may seem like "just another kingdom."

How to Be Sure

Interpreting the meaning of a card can be tricky, and sometimes it seems like two or more very different meanings could come from a single draw.



For example, if you draw The Phoenix—reversed (*destruction*) during a fight, does it mean the heroes are destroyed or that they destroy their enemies? If one side is destroyed, how badly hurt are those on the other side? What if the players disagree with your reading? There are three ways to help you be sure of your interpretation.

Determine the Likely Outcome First: Before drawing the card, determine in your own mind what the most likely outcome is. That way, if the draw is neutral, you know what the results are, and you have a standard on which to base positive and negative draws. For example, if a 6-Air elf is trying to charm a 3-Earth, 3-Air hero, then most likely the elf will succeed. A good draw may mean that the charmed hero has a little will left, so she may still be able to escape. On the other hand, the same elf is unlikely to charm a 6-Air or 6-Earth hero successfully. With a hero like this, the same positive draw may mean that the elf has lost a battle of wills and has come under the hero's control.

Draw from the Heroes' Point of View: Let a card with a negative meaning be bad for the heroes, and one with a positive meaning good for them. This rule clears up a lot of ambiguity in the card results. You don't have to use this rule all the time, but it can be a good general rule to follow.

Keep the Card a Secret: It can be dramatic to show the players the cards you draw, but it can also lead to debates about the cards' meanings. These disagreements distract you and the players from the story unfolding in the game world. There are also plenty of times when it's *essential* that you keep the card a secret. For instance, if the heroes meet someone who is in disguise, and try to see through the ruse, you might draw Trickery (*deceit*). Naturally, the heroes fail to

see through the disguise, but if the players saw that the card was Trickery, they might suspect something.

Feel free to show cards to the players, though, when the cards are especially telling and when you're certain of your interpretation. Learning how to make the Fortune Deck part of the show is part of learning to be a dramatic gamemaster.

Virtue, Fault, and Fate

Generally, a hero's Virtue, Fault, and Fate are guides to help the player portray and describe the hero. If you, as gamemaster, wish to keep track of what the heroes' Virtues, Faults, and Fates are, however, you may use the optional rule that says that these aspects affect play directly. If you use this rule, drawing any hero's Virtue, Fault, or Fate causes something special to happen.

Drawing a hero's Virtue indicates that the hero does especially well, or, more accurately, it means that his or her special strength or gift comes into play. For instance, a hero with Summer (*energy*) as his Virtue would have great amounts of energy with which to succeed at the task at hand, even against great odds. Even if the meaning of the card doesn't exactly apply to the circumstances, the draw is still considered to be very good.

Drawing a hero's Fault indicates just the opposite, that the hero's particular weakness undercuts his or her efforts. For instance, drawing a hero's The Griffin—reversed (*cowardice*) Fault might mean that he is overcome with fear and is therefore unable to accomplish the task, even if it is normally an easy one. In circumstances in which "cowardice" doesn't make any sense, the draw still indicates a bad outcome. For example, if you draw a card to see whether a pickpocket robs the

Fate or Chance?



When a hero's fortune is determined by a random card, does this represent fortune as 'destiny' or fortune as 'chance'? Either way of looking at it is valid. Is the fortune card you drew truly random? Does chance rule the world, or are there unseen, underlying meanings behind even seemingly trivial events? You can decide how to answer this for yourself, but don't expect everyone to agree with you.

hero, "cowardice" does not apply because the hero doesn't even know that the pickpocket is nearby. Nevertheless, The Griffin—reversed means a bad thing for the hero, so in this instance it could mean that the pickpocket steals something very valuable from the hero.

Drawing the opposite of a Virtue or Fault has no special meaning. For instance, drawing an upright The Griffin for a hero with The Griffin—reversed as her Fault has no special effect on play.

Drawing a hero's Fate (upright or reversed) can mean that it's time for the hero to face his or her Fate, though you may have to improvise special circumstances to allow that. It's up to you whether you think the hero, the player, and you are ready to play out the hero's Fate. For exam-

ple, if a hero's Fate is The King (*authority vs. tyranny*), and you draw it when you want to see how the people of a village react to the hero when she first arrives, you can improvise a new plot. The village's wise woman has died, and the villagers are leaderless. They have to decide how to settle a feud that's erupted between two families, but no one trusts any other villager to assume the wise woman's position because everyone in the village has already taken a side. You have set up circumstances that test the hero's willingness and ability to assert authority for a good cause. (You're also careful not to show the card to the player running the hero so that she doesn't know that the hero's being tested).

Now if the hero fails to take charge, or if she takes charge but is incompetent, she's failed to face her Fate. You may or may not let the player know afterwards that the village scenario was an opportunity for her hero to face her Fate.

If the hero takes charge and does well (in your estimation), then she's faced her Fate and succeeded. The player may now choose a new Fate, Virtue, and Fault to represent the hero's advance to the next stage of personal development.

If she takes charge but is heavy-handed, she's faced her Fate and failed. The player may either adopt a new Fate, with a new Virtue and Fault to go with it, or she may decide that the hero is "stuck" in this stage of development and will retain her Fate, Virtue, and Fault.

Having a hero face Fate can shift the emphasis of the plot or launch the heroes on a whole new plot. If you're not ready to handle such a sudden shift in the story at the turn of a card, then ignore the hero's Fate when you draw it and instead set up other quests ahead of time that will allow heroes to meet their Fates.

The Thirty-Sixth Card

When the gods and goddesses created the Fortune Deck, it had thirty-six cards, but a deity of chaos stole one. Now there are thirty-five. In some realms, however, a usurper force has taken over the void that the thirty-sixth card used to fill. When you draw The Usurper, this force (whatever it may be for this realm) rules. If the realm does not have a Usurper, then ignore the card, put it to one side, and draw another. (Better yet, remove the card before play begins.)

You may use a vision card to represent the usurper force for a realm. If you decide to do this, show the vision card to the players when you draw The Usurper. (You can't shuffle the vision card in with the Fortune Deck because the two types of cards are different from each other.)

Three Styles of Ruling on Actions

Generally a gamemaster relies on all three laws of action, karma, drama, and fortune, but some gamemasters rely more heavily on certain laws and less heavily on others. As you develop your own style, experiment with the different laws and work with the ones that suit you best. Below are some of the ways different gamemasters approach the laws of actions.

Karma: Cause and Effect

A gamemaster who relies heavily on karma might say, "I understand the world, the heroes' abilities, and their opponents' abilities well enough that I can usually determine the outcome of any action. Sometimes the heroes do things that keep the plot from advancing, or they even do things that bring a quest to an early failure, but that's OK. When they succeed, it's because they're smart, not because I'm

A Player's Question About Actions



IF MY HERO'S SUCCESS AND FAILURE DEPENDS ON
DRAWING A RANDOM CARD THAT IS EITHER GOOD OR
BAD, ISN'T THAT LIKE FLIPPING A COIN TO SEE
WHETHER HE SUCCEEDS?



Not at all. Before drawing a card, a gamemaster usually determines the likely outcome of your hero's action. The gamemaster bases this decision on your hero's attributes and tactics (karma), as well as on the plot (drama). The card can alter the outcome, but it takes a particularly positive or negative outcome to alter it much.

manipulating the quest to let them win. And when they're not smart, they fail."

A gamemaster who doesn't rely much on karma might say, "I don't want to concern myself with calculating odds and deducing results from a bunch of data. The story and the cards give me all the guidance I need."

Drama: A Good Story

A gamemaster who relies heavily on drama may say, "My friends and I get together to have a good time, and what we look for most is a good story. Just like a director or a novelist, I manipulate the plot, raising and releasing tension at the right times. Usually I don't even know what Element scores the heroes' opponents have. I determine the outcome of battles and contests by instinct."

A gamemaster who doesn't rely much on drama might say, "I set up a quest with a life of its own. The heroes come into the story and interact with the setting, and it's up to them to guide themselves. I stay neutral, using logic and the Fortune Deck to determine the outcomes of the heroes' actions."

Fortune: The Cards Never Lie

A gamemaster who relies heavily on the Fortune Deck might say, "The games run better when I'm open to the unpredictable draw of the cards. I don't have to worry so much about who can defeat whom in a fight or how a king is going to react emotionally to a hero's plea for help; I can just draw a card and see what happens. I also don't try to force the heroes into particular plots for the sake of a story. We go where the cards tell us to go, and everyone has a good time."

A gamemaster who doesn't use the Fortune Deck much might say, "I use the Fortune Deck when I'm stuck for an idea, but generally I can guide the game based on the actions of the players and the needs of the plot. Sometimes I'll draw a card that doesn't make sense, and I'll just determine the outcome of an action on my own. Well, in that case, why bother to draw the card in the first place?"

Combat

There are three basic ways for the gamemaster to handle combat, each dealt with here. You, as gamemaster, can choose to use any one of these ways or to switch among them, depending on the needs of the quest. The three basic ways to handle combat are:

Summary: You summarize the results of the entire battle.

One-Card Narration: You draw a single card to rule the combat and talk out the battle with the players step by step.

Blow-by-Blow Narration: You draw a card to rule each action that a hero takes.

Of course, you can handle combat however you want, using any of these systems or your own.

Summary

Based on karma, drama, and fortune, you can determine how the fight will end up and summarize it for the heroes. Summarizing combat lets you move swiftly through battles.

For example, imagine that three heroes who are exploring a dismal swamp are threatened by a pack of dog-sized rats. The rats have 3 Fire and 3 Earth, so they're nothing special, but there are a lot of them.

Gamemaster: The rats are moving closer from all directions. Some are climbing onto logs, and they look like they're ready to leap. What do you do?

YOU CAN USE THESE THREE SYSTEMS FOR ANY SCENE OR SET OF ACTIONS, NOT JUST FOR COMBAT. THIS SECTION APPLIES THESE SYSTEMS TO COMBAT BECAUSE DURING COMBAT THINGS HAPPEN QUICKLY, SO IT DESERVES SOME EXTRA ATTENTION.

Oak's Player: I'm going to protect myself with my shield and use my torch to hold them off or drive them away.

Morning Star's Player: If any of them come near me, I'm going to whack them with my staff.

Softtalk's Player: I've got both swords out. I'm going to provoke them to attack me and then carve them up as they approach. They're just animals; I think I can predict their actions well enough to goad them to attack when I want them to.

(The heroes have good plans, and Softtalk has strong Water and Fire scores, so he may be able to control the rats as he plans. Still, there are too many rats for the heroes to be sure that one won't get past their defenses. They should be able to drive off the rats while suffering only minor bites. The gamemaster draws a card: The Smith (*productivity*). Not only is its meaning positive, but the implications of thoughtful effort and successful accomplishment resonate with the heroes' plans. In this situation, The Smith is a very good card.)

Gamemaster: Softtalk, you sense that the rats like to leap on exposed backs. You can turn circles, exposing your back, goading rats to leap toward you. Then you can kill them as they come at you.

Softtalk's Player: OK. Sounds good. . . .

Gamemaster: Several rats fall for the ruse. They leap at you and you cut them down in mid-air. [To Oak's and Morning Star's players:] The squealing of these rats makes the other rats nervous, and they charge toward you, but the two of you work together to drive them off. After a few breathless moments, all the rats have either scampered off or sunk beneath the murky water of the swamp.

One-Card Narration

You can read the inclination of a combat with a single card and then narrate the results interactively. In this case, especially good or especially bad actions by the heroes can have more effect on the outcome because the players get more opportunities to interact in the battle.

Imagine the same scene as that described in the previous section. The gamemaster has drawn The Smith but does not show it to the players. The dialogue continues:

Gamemaster: The rats are squeaking quietly to each other. One is pacing nervously back and forth on a fallen log. Others seem ready to pounce. Softtalk, how do you try to coax a rat into attacking?

Softtalk's Player: I crouch so I look smaller, and I relax so I look a little weaker. . . .

Gamemaster: None of them are advancing. You know that if you don't provoke one or two to attack, they may charge all at once, and that will be a lot harder to deal with.

Softtalk's Player: I approach one, slowly. . . .

Gamemaster: It squeaks at you. Out of the corner of your eye, you see another rat getting ready to pounce at your back. . . .

Oak's Player: I guard his back with my shield. . . .

Gamemaster: A different rat moves in on you. . . .

Oak's Player: I hold out my torch at it. . . .

Morning Star's Player: I whack it with my staff. . . .

Gamemaster: You whack it. The rat is splashing around in the water. It didn't get to you, Oak. More rats are moving in. One's moving in on you Morning Star. Softtalk, what are you doing?

Softtalk's Player: I'm turning to face the one that was getting ready to pounce. . . .

Gamemaster: It relaxes, but you hear claws scrambling against wood behind you. . . .

Softtalk's Player: I turn and slice through the air with a sword. . . .

Gamemaster: You slice a rat that was hurtling

through the air. You deflect it with the sword, and it lands in the water. Morning Star, there's a rat swimming through the water and about to reach you. . . .

Morning Star's Player: I whack it. . . .

Gamemaster: It grabs hold of your leg and bites your knee, but then you whack it a few times and it lets go.

Morning Star's Player: I yell, "It got me," and keep whacking it.

Gamemaster: Oak, more are moving in on you. . . .

Oak's Player: I'm using the torch and shield so that they can't get at me. . . .

Gamemaster: One scrambles up your shield, and you see its eyes and teeth glinting over the top of the shield. . . .

Oak's Player: I stick the torch in its face. . . .

Gamemaster: It lets go and splashes in the water. Softtalk, what do you do?

Softtalk's Player: I'm listening for another rat to attack. . . .

Gamemaster: You hear a splash and swimming sounds behind you. . . .

Softtalk's Player: Spin and slice. . . .

Gamemaster: Another dead rat.

Softtalk's Player: I turn my back to another rat, ready to spin and slice. . . .

Gamemaster: Another one launches itself at you, and you slice it. A few more come at you, but you get them all before they can close on you. Oak and Morning Star, you keep the rest of the rats at bay. Soon

enough the rats have all scuttled out of sight or sunk beneath the water.

In the above scene, the heroes failed to follow their plan at the beginning. They overextended themselves, and the rats moved in. Since they did not follow their good plan, Morning Star was bitten.

If the gamemaster had used the summary style to determine the outcome of the fight, the players would have had less input and would have had neither the

chance to do especially well nor the risk (as seen here) of blowing their advantage. The one-card narration style helps the players feel more involved. The drawback is that one-card narration takes longer than the summary method.

You don't have to stick to one card when you use this method. Once the battle changes enough that you feel you need more input, you can draw another card to rule the fight from then on or to rule until you think you need yet another card.



Blow-by-Blow Narration

Blow-by-blow narration uses fortune cards throughout a battle to determine the effectiveness of individual actions. It can provide a lot of detail, but it can also slow down narration because you have to think about every card that's drawn.

Once again, consider the scenario of the three heroes facing the rats. The gamemaster does not draw a card to rule the entire combat. She has determined that their plan is a good one, and that the heroes are likely to escape with minor bites if the cards go well.

Gamemaster: Oak and Morning Star, you're waiting for the rats to move in. The rats are squeaking quietly to each other. One is pacing nervously back and forth on a fallen log. Others seem ready to pounce. Softtalk, how do you try to coax a rat into attacking?

Softtalk's Player: I crouch so I look smaller, and I relax so I look a little weaker.

Gamemaster: [Draws *The Smith* (productivity)] Your plan seems to work. A rat leaps through the air at you. . . .

Softtalk's Player: I slice it with one sword and keep the other out to protect me from other rats. . . .

Gamemaster: You slice the rat and deflect it to one side. It splashes into the water and sinks. . . .

Softtalk's Player: I try it again, crouching and thinking "small." . . .

Gamemaster: [Draws *The Satyr*—reversed (moderation)] The other rats seem more cautious than the one you just sliced. They're closing in as a group. . . .

Oak's Player: What about us?

Gamemaster: The rats facing you seem agitated by hearing the squeals of the rat that Softtalk killed. They're moving in, too. . . .

Oak's Player: I lunge with the torch the first time a rat comes within reach. . . .

Gamemaster: [Draws *Striking the Dragon's Tail* (underestimating the challenge)] A rat comes close. . . .

Oak's Player: I lunge!

Gamemaster: You hit it, and it squirms around, but you've opened yourself up. Two other rats charge in. . . .

Oak's Player: I block them with my shield. . . .

Gamemaster: You can only block one. The other has latched onto your leg and is chewing on your thigh. Morning Star, what are you doing?

Morning Star's Player: Are rats attacking me?

Gamemaster: A few rats are moving in, yes, they're closing in on you.

Morning Star's Player: I'm not going to lunge or anything. I'm just going to keep knocking them back, keeping them at bay with the staff. . . .

Gamemaster: [Draws *The Lion*—reversed (physical weakness)] You whack one of them, and then another, and then the one you whacked first is chomping on your leg. Apparently you didn't hit it hard enough. . . .

Morning Star's Player: I was swinging really hard.

Gamemaster: Tough rat. It's biting you. . . .

Morning Star's Player: I'm smacking it. . . .

Gamemaster: All right. Now Softtalk, the rats are closing in. . . .

Softtalk's Player: I hear my friends screaming—

Oak's Player: I'm not screaming.

Morning Star's Player: I am.

Softtalk's Player: So I hear Morning Star screaming. I know my friends are in trouble. I've got to finish these rats fast. I yell, charge them with both swords, and just try to dice and rout them so I can get back to my friends. . . .

Gamemaster: [Draws *The King* (authority)]

With regal confidence, you move in and lay down the law for these lesser creatures. You dice a few, and the others scamper away.

Softtalk's Player: I'm hurrying back to Morning Star. . . .

Gamemaster: All right. Oak, there's a rat chewing on your leg. . . .

Oak's Player: I grit my teeth and stick the torch in the thing's face, while still using the shield to block other rats. . . .

Gamemaster: [*Draws The Fool—reversed (lack of connection)*] The rat gives up your leg and falls into the water, and you feel another rat scratching at your shield. But in the confusion your back has been left open. You feel a weight on your back, and something's biting the back of your neck. . . .

Oak's Player: "Aah! Get it off. Get it off!" I'm sticking my torch over my shoulder at the thing. . . .

Morning Star's Player: Let's hope your hair is wet.

Gamemaster: The rat lets go, but you're feeling a little dizzy. Now Oak, there was a rat biting you, too. . . .

Oak's Player: The end of my quarterstaff is going right down its throat. . . .

Gamemaster: [*Draws The Defender—reversed (peril)*] You're smacking it on the nose, but the thing just keeps chewing on

you. Other rats are moving in. . . .

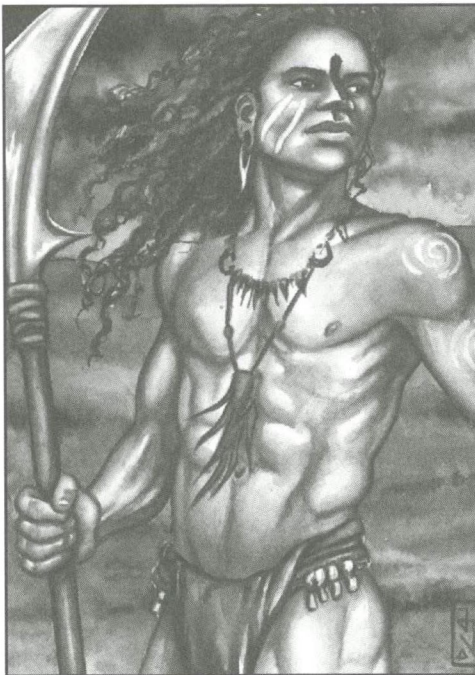
Softtalk's Player: I'm slicing them. . . .

Gamemaster: [*Draws The Creator (nurture)*] Spurred on by the cries of your friend, you slice up a bunch of rats headed toward Morning Star, and you get a perfect shot at the one chewing on him. Morning Star, you see this silver blade whiz toward your leg, and then the rat falls off, dead.

Morning Star's Player: I turn to cover Oak's back. . . .

Softtalk's Player: Me too. . . .

Gamemaster: [*Draws The Hermit—reversed (isolation)*] The rat gets another bite in on Oak before you send them all scurrying away. They've all backed off now, either that or sunk into the swamp.



Note that in this battle the heroes fared much worse than in the one-card scenarios. Blow-by-blow combat is generally no riskier and no

safer than one-card narration. In the one-card examples, the very positive Smith card ruled the whole combat. In the blow-by-blow example, cards with good and bad meanings ruled individual actions (and Oak suffered three bad draws: Striking the Dragon's Tail, The Fool—reversed, and The Hermit—reversed). If the one-card combats had been ruled by a negative card, such as The Smith—reversed, they probably would have been worse than the blow-by-blow narration.

Supernatural Abilities

This section, written to the gamemaster, explains some of the ways to determine what happens when heroes use supernatural abilities. Supernatural abilities are a special challenge to you, as a gamemaster, because different people have different ideas about how supernatural abilities might work. The same players who agree on how running, fighting, sneaking, and other natural actions work may quarrel over the scope and limits of supernatural abilities.

There are no hard-and-fast rules as to what heroes are capable of when they use supernatural abilities. If a player wants to use supernatural abilities, work with the player so that you each understand what the other thinks the power is capable of. Then use your best judgment.

This section looks at supernatural abilities from the perspective of karma, drama, and fortune. As with other actions, most gamemasters use all three laws together.

Supernatural Abilities by Karma

Applying the law of karma to supernatural abilities requires a good understanding of what those powers are able to do. To get this kind of understanding, be sure to talk to the players about their heroes' abilities. You can do this in the questions stage of hero-creation. You can also ask questions during the game itself if you need to know more about the heroes' capabilities.

When applying the law of karma, keep in mind that magic and supernatural abilities in general are tied directly to the psychic environment as well as to the physical environment. This psy-

chic environment includes many factors that are relatively subtle, including the hero's mental state, mental or magical activity in the area, astrological factors (from time of day to positions of planets), and so on. By taking such factors into account, you make the proper use of supernatural abilities more interesting and varied.

Magic works by intuitive laws. Circumstances that seem to have no direct effect on a situation can affect a hero's magical ability if those circumstances are related on the level of *meaning*. For example, imagine that a hero has been cursed by an angry priestess and is dying. The hero Cleft has Soil and Stone Magic at level 5, which is normally enough to break a curse, but the gamemaster rules that this priestess's power is especially strong now because the moon is new, and that's when her power peaks. By the time the moon shows itself, the cursed hero will be dead. But if the heroes can strip the priestess of her power, then Cleft's magic will work.

SEE P. 103 TO
READ ABOUT
SOIL AND
STONE MAGIC.
CLEFT IS A
READY-TO-RUN
HERO.

Applying karma to magic is a matter of style because magic works according to varied and mysterious laws. By paying attention to such details, you make magic more exciting and rewarding.

Supernatural Abilities by Drama

The law of drama is especially important for supernatural abilities because these abilities can ruin plots if they get out of control. If your plot depends on a crooked government official's keeping a secret, and a mage hero uses magic to force him to reveal the secret, the plot can come to a swift, unfulfilling close.

Luckily, magic is a varied and mysterious enough force that you can get away with bending it to the needs of drama even more easily than you can other actions.

As explained above, supernatural abilities often depend on subtle connections to distant events. You can use these connections to further the plot. By setting up criteria that the heroes must meet before their magic works fully, you create conflict and drive the plot along.

As far as drama is concerned, supernatural abilities that allow heroes to gain hidden knowledge is both a blessing and a curse.

If one of the heroes is some sort of seer, you will soon find that you sometimes use the seer's abilities to move the plot

WHISPER
WALKER IS A
READY-TO-RUN
HERO WHO
PRACTICES OPEN
CHALICE MAGIC.
SEE P. 106 TO
READ ABOUT
OPEN CHALICE
MAGIC. SEE PP.
18-19 TO READ
ABOUT THE
WALKER'S
PYRAMID.

along but sometimes have to hold the seer back to prevent a plot from being revealed too quickly. When the heroes are stumped and don't know what to do next, the seer can get a clue that moves the plot along. But when the seer threatens to gain information that will bring the plot to an anticlimactic close, you may need to limit what the seer learns. Remember that seers of all types open themselves up to magical forces in order to do their work. This openness can make

them vulnerable to powerful magical energies, both benign and malign. For example, if Whisper Walker tries to contact a spirit on her first visit to Everway, she may be overwhelmed by the energies that the Walker's Pyramid concentrates there. This vulnerability can help you keep seers and similar heroes in line, especially

when you don't want them to find out too easily about powerful magical phenomena.



Supernatural Abilities by Fortune

Fortune can have a powerful effect on supernatural abilities. In terms of game play, this is because supernatural abilities are so varied and mysterious that it can be hard to apply karma to them. In terms of the fantasy world, fortune has a powerful effect because the forces

that the Fortune Deck represents have more immediate influence on magical and psychic activities than on more mundane activities.

When you draw a fortune card to determine the effects of a hero's supernatural action, it's sometimes easier for a player to accept the results when they are negative. Without the fortune card, the player can blame you for choosing a negative result. With the fortune card,

SEE P. 11 TO
READ ABOUT
EVERWAY'S
USURPER.

How Powerful Are Heroes' Abilities?

Imagine that a mage-hero tries to put a dragon to sleep so that she and the other heroes can slip past. The player thinks that her hero can perform this feat, but you think that the hero's Magic isn't strong enough. Inevitably, you'll run into conflicts in which the players think their heroes are capable of more than you think they are. These differences of opinion can involve any aspect of a heroes actions. There are two ways of thinking about such conflicts:



Less Is More

When in doubt, limit what the heroes can get away with. These limits force the players to invent creative ways to solve their problems rather than rely on their heroes' special abilities.

This approach is especially good for a beginning gamemaster because it limits the damage that the heroes can do to the quest's plot.



More Is Less

When in doubt, let players get away with more rather than with less. Players sometimes think it's unfair when a gamemaster rules that their heroes' abilities don't work as well as they'd expected. What many of them fail to see, however, is that relying on potent special abilities is dangerous. It promotes recklessness and a false sense of security. Heroes whose powers are limited become smart. Heroes who are given breaks become foolhardy and soon put themselves (and others) in greater danger than they would get into without their powers.

you have a neutral factor to support your ruling. The fortune card can also help you think of new and interesting results of the hero's action, an especially good benefit when dealing with supernatural powers. When the energy from the Walker's Pyramid overwhelmed Whisper Walker, for example, it was because

the gamemaster had drawn The Usurper from the Fortune Deck, and Everway's Usurper is The Pyramid. While The Pyramid's stated meaning is "order and cooperative effort," the card reminded the gamemaster that Whisper Walker was near a source, or collector, of great psychic energy.

Wounds and Other Perils

This section, written to the gamemaster, explains some ideas about how to handle injuries, wounds, poisons, fatigue, and so on. Determining the exact way that any given wound or other problem hampers a hero is up to the gamemaster, but these guidelines can form a basis from which to work.

Wounds and Injuries

Heroes suffer wounds from swords, fangs, claws, spells, and sharp rocks at the bottoms of cliffs. While no rules can completely account for the variety of cuts, scraps, and breaks that a hero might suffer, these rules give you some guidance for determining how badly heroes get wounded and how much their wounds hamper them.

How Bad It Is

There are four general types of wounds.

Flesh Wounds: Cuts, bruises, and scrapes that don't significantly reduce a character's capabilities. Special circumstances may make flesh wounds significant. For instance, in a haunted swamp there may lurk bloodthirsty godlings that can enter a body through a cut, no matter how small. Also, a character who receives a large number of wounds may be weakened by pain or loss of blood. Generally, however, flesh wounds have little effect on play. (Flesh wounds that are slightly more serious are often called *bad wounds*.)

Disabling Wounds: Sprains, cuts, and concussions that weaken a character. Depending on the wound, the character is hampered in a certain way. Head wounds cause weakness,

unconsciousness, or bleeding. Limb wounds make the character less able or unable to use a limb. Body wounds weaken the character. If a character tries to act in some way that a disabling wound prevents, the character is stricken with pain and fails. Even if the character takes actions not directly related to the wounds, it's fair to reduce a character's capabilities. For example, a character whose sword arm is disabled can't fight with that arm, but, due to pain and blood loss, the character may even suffer a penalty on tasks such as running and jumping. Treating a wounded character as if his or her Elements were 1 point lower than they are is usually fair.

Mortal Wounds: Punctures, cuts, and other wounds that threaten a character's life. A character with a mortal wound is dying, and only some sort of aid will prevent death. Often, the character is in shock or unconscious. Depending on the wound, the character may have only moments to live or may be able to hang on for days.

Special Wounds: Wounds that have some special effect. A less serious special wound may be a cut on the brow that causes blood to get into the eyes. A more serious special wound may be a broken arm that, unless set correctly, will knit wrong. A less serious special wound may cause no general hardship, but a serious special wound may cause enough trauma to reduce the victim's capabilities in a broad range of actions. (Many "disabling wounds" could be called "special wounds" as well.)

Wounds As Demerits

On the most practical level, wounds for heroes are like "demerit points" in an academy or "lives" in a video game. When the heroes fail in physical or violent conflicts, they get wounded. If they suffer enough wounds, they may be

captured, killed, or forced to give up the quest. Seen this way, wounds are a way for the players to judge how well they're doing. If they have lots of wounds they can tell that they're taking on enemies that are too tough or are otherwise doing things wrong.

Used this way, wounds add suspense to the quest. Each wound received is a setback. The players try to complete the quest without their heroes' accumulating too many wounds.

Wounds As Plot Devices

A wound threatens a hero directly and personally. Use wounds to get the players' attention. Use them to demonstrate how mean, nasty, and ferocious an enemy is. Use wounds as warnings, to encourage heroes to think twice about taking on tough opponents. Use wounds to prod heroes into action, defensive or offensive.

It often works well to give heroes flesh wounds first and more serious wounds as a conflict progresses; a flesh wound lets the player know you're serious so that the larger wound delivered later doesn't seem arbitrary. On the other hand, a vicious, disabling blow from out of the blue can really jar the players and get them sweating.

In the midst of battle, a wound can sway the balance among the combatants. A mighty warrior hamstrung by a devious opponent may have to call on a weaker friend for help. A mage who relies on hand gestures to cast powerful spells may be nearly useless if a stray arrow disables an arm. Turns of events such as these can make combat very dramatic, and even frightening.

Wounds As Symbols

You may want to use wounds for their symbolic value. For example, a hero whose Fault is The Fool—reversed (*lack of connection*) and who is

Flesh Wounds and Bad Wounds



Special wounds, mortal wounds, and disabling wounds can be more graphic than some gamemasters and players are comfortable with. In this case, more abstract wound types—flesh wounds and bad wounds—work fine. Flesh wounds generally have no effect on play. Bad wounds slow a character down and, if the character receives enough of them, can kill. Details such as where exactly each wound is, how bad it is, what effects it has on the character, and so on are ignored.

Counting Wounds



I've never felt the need to keep track of wounds very carefully, but you might want to. If so, you can use a system like this one:



When a hero has suffered a number of flesh wounds at least equal to his or her Earth score, treat those wounds as the equivalent of one disabling wound.



When a hero receives a number of disabling wounds at least equal to his or her Earth score, treat those wounds as the equivalent of one mortal wound. A hero with any disabling wounds loses a point in all Element scores until he or she recovers, in addition to any specific impairments resulting from the specific wounds.

relentlessly self-reliant may receive a wound in the back, one that he cannot tend to himself. Can he bring himself to ask a companion to help him? A hero who is blind to her own faults may receive a blow to the head that blinds her—until she learns to see her own faults. A hero who once suffered a wound while in a murderous rage may find that the wound opens and bleeds again whenever he becomes enraged. Used this way, wounds connect the material world to the emotional, spiritual, or moral world.

Other Perils

In addition to wounds, there are other perils that heroes sometimes face on quests.

Fatigue

Heroes do a lot of exploring, fighting, talking, searching, climbing, and other strenuous activities. It's up to you, as the gamemaster, to let the players know when their heroes have exerted themselves and need rest. Most of the time, there's little need to keep track of how tired the heroes are. Most heroes are able to carry out the actions demanded by most quests, such as hiking, fighting from time to time, chasing people and being chased, and so on.

Every once in a while, however, you might judge that the activities that the heroes are undertaking seem a bit extreme. Perhaps they're running around a strange city all night after hiking into town during the day. Maybe they're carrying sacks of treasure up trackless mountain slopes. Whatever the case, you're free to impose some reasonable limits.

The simplest system is to review the heroes' Earth scores. Some may have such heroic Earth scores that they're practically tireless, but others may be no more durable than the average person. Those whose Earth scores are not as strong need to rest or else suffer penalties. Simply treat their Element scores as though they were lower than they really are until the heroes get the rest they need.

Poison

Characters may get poisoned by tiny spiders in their bedrolls, by mighty dragons, or by devious dignitaries. The effect of a poison on a character depends on two factors: strength and effect.

Strength: You can designate a poison's strength by the strongest Earth score a character can have and still suffer the full effect. For example, a poison with a strength of 4 has its full effect on anyone whose Earth score is 4 or lower. Characters with stronger Earth scores may still suffer some of the effect, but not the full effect. Characters with much weaker scores may suffer even stronger effects than normal people.

Effect: A poison's effect can be just about anything: weakness, slow death, paralysis, delirium, debilitating pain, and so on. When a poison's effect is specified, that's the effect it has on a character whose Earth score equals that poison's strength. Characters with stronger or weaker Earth scores suffer lighter or more serious effects.

Disease

Diseases often don't seem very heroic. It's not as exciting to fight off the pox as it is to fight off a sea monster. That's why it's all right not to worry about what diseases spherewalkers might be exposed to from realm to realm; doing so would detract from the story.

Sometimes, however, a disease can be interesting enough to become part of a story. Diseases can result from curses, evil spirits, mucking about in unhealthy places, or simply exposure to infected people. As with poisons, different diseases have different effects, and the same disease can strike two people differently.

Often a particularly nasty disease becomes the motivation for a quest, as the heroes look for a cure before time runs out for a stricken character or infected population.

Getting Better

If you play independent sessions with a new quest each time, it's easy enough to assume that any wounds that a hero receives on one quest are healed before the next one. Sometimes, however, you need to know how long it takes for a hero to recover from certain wounds. As a rule of thumb, you can use the following times. Characters with higher Earth scores heal more quickly, as do those with better medical care. You can also draw a fortune card to see how well a character recovers.

Flesh Wounds: A week to a month.

Disabling Wounds: A month to a season.

Mortal Wounds: A season to a year.

Special Wounds: Varies according to the nature of the wounds.

Wounds all begin healing as soon as they're inflicted; the effect is not cumulative. For example, if a hero gets a flesh wound and a mortal wound at the same time, the flesh wound will be healed a week to a month later, while the mortal wound will be healed between a season and a year later. A character with lots of wounds, however, heals more slowly than normal.

Any wound but a flesh wound may require some sort of medical attention to make sure that it heals right. Even a simple flesh wound can result in a nasty scar if not taken care of.

Realistically, there's always the chance that a wound will permanently reduce a character's abilities. Unless you either have a special reason to pursue this possibility or want to wear the heroes away bit by bit, don't worry about it.

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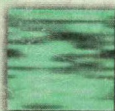
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Jonathan Tweet heads the Alter Ego™ Design Group at Wizards of the Coast. It is this group's mission to develop roleplaying games that can reach new audiences, as well as to appeal to roleplaying's current audience. His previous games include the roleplaying games **Ars Magica™** (co-authored with Mark Rein•Hagen) and *Over the Edge™*, and the trading card game *On the Edge™* (co-authored with John Nephew). Jonathan loves roleplaying because he believes in the power of the imagination.

EVERWAY



*encounter the fates
of a thousand worlds*